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## SLOVENIA – A EUROPEAN CONTACT AND BORDER AREA

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### ABSTRACT

*The contribution aims to illustrate the basic research interests of the author in consideration of the convergence/divergence processes that could be detected and studied in European contact areas and societies. A theoretical-methodological introduction is followed by a longer case-study, presenting the fundamental factors and elements which make Slovenia not only one of the most typical European border regions, but also a peculiar area of natural, cultural and social contacts in a local, regional and wider geographical context. These elements have deeply influenced the development of colonization processes, the transformation of the social and ethnic structure in the country and the formation of internal and cross-border social links of its population.*

**Key words:** political geography, contact areas, Slovenia, minorities, political borders, cross-border contacts

## LA SLOVENIA – UNA ZONA DI CONFINE E DI CONTATTO EUROPEO

### SINTESI

*L'articolo ha lo scopo di illustrare gli interessi di ricerca dell'autore in merito ai processi di convergenza/divergenza che si possono individuare ed analizzare nelle aree e società di contatto europeo. Ad una introduzione metodologico-teorica fa seguito un ampio caso specifico d'analisi, il quale mostra i fattori e gli elementi fondamentali che fanno della Slovenia non solo una delle più rappresentative regioni di confine europeo, ma anche un'area peculiare quanto a contatti naturali, culturali e sociali in un contesto locale, regionale e geograficamente anche più ampio. Questi elementi hanno profondamente influenzato lo sviluppo dei processi di colonizzazione, la trasformazione della struttura sociale ed etnica del paese e la formazione di legami sociali della popolazione, sia interni che oltre confine.*

**Parole chiave:** geografia politica, aree di contatto, Slovenia, minoranze, confini politici, contatti transconfinari

## I.

The author of this contribution has been particularly involved in the development of various aspects related to social geographical and political geographical investigations of ethnic and border issues in Slovenia, socio-economic and socio-cultural aspects of cross-border cooperation in the Upper Adriatic, and problems of geopolitical transformation in Central and South-Eastern Europe.

On the local and regional level, he began to investigate these problems by means of the sociogeographical concepts. With analysing the structural and functional aspects of minorities in the process of modernization, and forming the models of ethnic and regional development of the ethnically mixed border areas, the questions were also studied in detail and published in numerous publications, about the inclusion of these communities into the transborder flows, the maintenance of their identity in the changed social and spatial conditions, as well as the fostering of multilingual practice and interethnic relations. He divided the process of ethno-regional development in contact areas into three different phases.

- The first phase is characterized by the stability of the ethnic and social structures, and lasts from the rise of modern territorial states to the beginning of industrialization. No particular interactions between centres and periphery are apparent and so this phase can be defined as a period of static coexistence between an immobile, ethnically clearly distinct agrarian countryside and nearby self-sufficient, ethnically mixed urban centres with a pre-industrial economy.
- The next phase is characterized by the rapid development of the industrialization process in the regional centres and growing trade between these centres and their hinterlands. The urban centres only have an indirect or fairly uneven impact on the rural space, triggering a wave of emigration among the agrarian population, but having little effect on the ethnic structure of the countryside, despite the fact that the standardization of state institutions, such as schools and public administration, also penetrates from the centres into the rural areas. The emigration of nationally quite aware ethnic Slovenes from their native territory to the nearby industrial areas and centres of employment, on the other hand, objectively increased the spatial extent of the Slovene ethnic range of action.
- The third and last phase is characterized above all by the strong growth in tertiary activities, a process which also spread centrifugally from the centres outwards. The difference is that ties between the urban centres and their hinterlands are now growing stronger and acquiring a reciprocal character. The effects of social innovations related to tertiarization

and the increasing spatial and social mobility of the population are particularly evident in the phenomenon of daily migration. As a result, the difference in the degree of socio-economic development between urban centres and their now essentially peri-urban environments is rapidly diminishing and a common urban way of life predominates. There is a growing tendency for the urban population to settle in the countryside and so ethnically mixed areas are also forming within the formerly "pure" Slovene ethnic territory. Nevertheless, the local minority population still maintains or even strengthens its regional function, particularly in those cases in which the growth of its economic base takes place at the same time as the growth of its social and political role.

This approach contributed to develop an original research methodology for investigating the functions of local communities and minorities in the border areas, as well as the cultural aspects of transborder connectedness. The methodology deriving from the cultural aspects of the study of the qualities of border regions opens up new dimensions, as researches are no longer concerned merely with a strategic political line or intermediate transactional zone in the pure economic or functional sense, but rather with something more. Nor are these investigations concerned just with the development possibilities of national minorities along borders. In discussing the cultural elements of integration and transformation of border regions, in general it is necessary to speak of the increased role of local or regional communities in the regional development of the territory of residence. This role is performed by these communities best of all when the educational structure is highly improved and they develop into conscious 'directors' of the space of their traditional habitation. Cultural and educational factors in the present post-industrial phase of social development thus become increasingly decisive for the entire regional development of a given region. At the same time the role of the cultural landscape in the spatial identification of a local community also comes to the fore, in the sense of so-called ethno-development with the simultaneous active integration of these communities in regional, national and international life.

With respect to this, the study of border and contact regions undoubtedly brings additional aspects to bear on the standard theory of the centre-periphery relation, while opening up a range of new problems which are becoming increasingly more topical in today's world, as we try to enhance mutual understanding in the culturally rich and diverse European space. The geography of borderlands in its social, cultural and political aspects is thus assuming an important role in the process of 'humanization' of the traditional geographical approach to borders and border conflict resolution. More importance than in the past is given to the study of a great variety of

micro-transactions in the field, supported by the border population while seeking to satisfy its daily needs concerning some basic functional categories, i.e. supply, work, free time or even education. But they are also the result of the activity of the border population in maintaining the traditional cultural links which are very often rooted in the relatively stable period preceding the appearance of the current political boundary. The stability of these cultural links contrasts sharply with the lability of the political partition. Paradoxically, we can notice that the greater the problems in the political partition of a homogeneous administrative, cultural and economic region, the greater is the probability for such a politically divided region to develop into an integrated "border region".

There are very few comparative studies which could help to reveal and define the basic processes taking place in border regions. The more researchers have delved into an analysis of these regions, the more complex has become the network of factors, effects and processes which characterise the structure and development dynamics of border areas. These are not just a result of the combined effect of various factors and elements in the cultural, social, economic and political fields at the bilateral level, but they also reflect the relationship between the local community and the corresponding centres as well as the relationship between the two local border communities themselves. As far as research practice relating to European border regions and cross-border relations is concerned, in contemporary human geography three often parallel but also complementary research areas have emerged:

- a critical assessment of the sources and bibliography of the development of the "border phenomenon" in the area under research, and an investigation of the relationship between the political borders and the administrative, ethno-cultural and other physical demarcation lines, along with research into the consequences of any boundary changes within the framework of the economic, social and cultural structure of the border region and the cross-border relations between the two sides;
- a regional analysis of selected socio-economic and spatial elements and their changing and how that affects attitudes towards the existing political border, and an assessment of the level of integration or structural differentiation of the territorial parts on each side of the border which constitute a former, current or planned cross-border region;
- an analysis of local cross-border relations, their intensity, structure and physical extent and of the evaluation of their own border position by each of the border populations, and an assessment of the level of social and cultural integration achieved within the border area.

The research fields outlined above are making a sig-

nificant contribution to the availability of more comprehensive information on the various long-term behavioural and situational elements dictating the development of border regions and on the current position of the areas in question; additionally, they offer two further research and applied possibilities. The first, more academic in nature, enables a comparative analysis of different border areas to be made and the specific features of individual border realities to be established within a more general theoretical framework. The second opens the way to formulating various plan-based proposals or scenarios with a view to consolidating functional cross-border relations and facilitating more integrated development (Bufon, 2001a).

The study of border areas and cross-border relations therefore leads us to deal with a complex of quite different although mutually connected problems and aspects, and also with their changing over time and in different places. Although the process of gradual European integration has partly eliminated the traditional role of "barriers" between societies that political borders played in the 19<sup>th</sup> century, and in this century too, it has in no way meant that the study of border areas and cross-border relations has lost its significance; rather, it is precisely in this period that it has acquired an even more important function in the ascertaining of factors that encourage or hinder social, economic and cultural integration, in the formulation of integrated plans for regional development and in the expanding of the new European culture, which promotes coexistence and mutual communication while respecting diversity (Bufon, 2001b).

## II.

This contribution aims to illustrate the fundamental factors and elements which make Slovenia one of the most typical European border regions, but also a peculiar area of natural, cultural and social contacts in a local, regional and wider geographical context. These elements have deeply influenced the development of colonization processes, the transformation of the social structure in the country and the formation of internal and cross-border social links of its population.

### **Slovenia: a natural, cultural, and social "contact" area**

We must first consider that the context of "contact" area creates some difficulties in the allocation of Slovene territory to standardized categories. From the point of view of *physical geography*, in Slovenia four European macroregions meet: the Alps, the Pannonian plain, the Dinaric-Karst mountains and the Adriatic-Mediterranean coast. Although the Alps are perceived to be particularly significant for Slovenes (Triglav is the national symbol of the country), the Alpine landscape, which are located in the north-west border area with It-

aly and Austria, make up only 15% of the entire Slovenian territory. Actually, the most typical Slovenian landscape consists of subalpine orography up to 1600 meters above sea level, which includes the Ljubljana basin and nearly the whole central part of the country. Thus only in a wider sense, considering both alpine and subalpine areas, the Alpine region represents more than 40% of the Slovenian territory and nearly half of its population. Similarly, both Pannonian and Mediterranean belts cover, in the strictest sense, two very small areas at the two extremes of the country: the north-eastern, and the south-western, respectively. However, the Pannonian and sub-Pannonian Slovenia are treated together, thus consisting of 21% of the total territory, and more than 30% of the total population of the country. This region includes Maribor and the entire eastern borderland with Croatia and Hungary. On the other hand, the Mediterranean belt is usually associated with the sub-Mediterranean part of the country, making up 9% of both the total territory and population, and including the Karst, the Vipava valley and the Brda region. This area represents the southern part of the Italo-Slovene borderland and the Croato-Slovene borderland in Istria. What remains is the least densely inhabited Dinaric-Karst high plateau, which goes from the Soča river to the Kolpa river and covers a great part of southern Slovenia and the central Slovenian-Croatian border area (28% of the territory and 16% of the total population in Slovenia, respectively).

The meeting-points between natural regions are thus characterized by a mixing of the properties of each, emphasizing the transitional character of Slovenia. For this reason, apart from the four above mentioned natural macro-regions, Slovene physical geographers (Gams, 1992; Perko, 1997) have identified 9 different sub-macro-regions and as many as 50 mezo-regions in the country. Both geographical configuration of Slovenia – where the mountainous landscape prevails, and plain areas, where an eventual concentration of population and economic activities could have taken place, covers only one sixth of the country – and a lack of natural resources, have resulted in a lower density of population and the relatively peripheral status of the area. In consequence the territory of present-day Slovenia has remained largely "uninteresting" for the neighbouring population giving the Slovenians the opportunity of surviving in spite of living next to politically and numerically stronger communities. Secondly, the internal variety and diversity influenced the social and cultural differentiation of the Slovenian population and the political and institutional organisation of the territory during the Austrian period, where the development of church organisation, the feudal fragmentation and the long-term links to different provinces and countries must be considered. This is clearly reflected in the existence of almost 20 dialects within which as many as 50 main

variations have been identified. This suggests that the Slovenian language, in terms of dialects, is one of the richest in Europe (Repolusk, 1998).

Just as it is impossible to define clear borders between the individual regions, so too, the borders between *dialect areas* are rather blurred, containing several transitional versions between each dialect group. Another important element which has influenced the existence of dialects, is the different speed and intensity of social modernisation in Slovenia. Only in the last two decades this process, associated with deagrization and mobility, has widespread. Because physical phenomena, such as mountains and rivers, have represented in the past a sort of barrier to social and cultural standardization, there is an interesting combination of natural, cultural, and social borders within Slovenia, as well as between the Slovenian ethnic area and the neighbouring areas. At this regard, the ethno-linguistic differentiation is also intertwined with processes of ethno-regional development. From the 13<sup>th</sup> century onward, four stable Habsburg territorial regions were gradually established in the area: Styria, Carinthia, Carniola, and then the Gorizia region. This long-term institutional division, on one hand, slowed down the process of Slovene national emancipation, which originated in the territory of Carniola/Kranjska and spread to the other regions of the Austrian empire, where Slovenians lived, only after the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century. On the other hand, it contributed, together with the combination of natural and dialect divisions, to the creation of the so called "classical" Slovenian regions (from west to east: Primorska, Notranjska, Gorenjska, Dolenjska, Bela krajina, Štajerska, Koroška, and Prekmurje). These regions have never had institutional validity, but, in spite of this, they have always been present in the Slovenian everyday discourse and they are still included in tourist guides.

The relative peripheral condition that characterized Slovenia does not imply that Slovenia had not felt external influences. These can be seen, in fact, even in the development of different dialects and were, after all, the natural consequence of the fact, that the whole Slovenian territory, at different times and to different extent, was incorporated into different neighbouring social and political entities. Romance influences are more visible in western Slovenia, which includes Primorska and Notranjska regions; Germanic influences are more felt in northern Slovenia (Gorenjska and northern Štajerska); Hungarian influences can be detected in Prekmurje, whereas Croatian influences are present in Bela krajina and along the whole Slovenian-Croatian border area. We could say that, just as four European macro-regions meet on the Slovenian territory in the natural sphere, so the four more representative European *language groups* meet on the Slovenian territory in the cultural sphere: Slavic, Germanic, Romance, and Hungaro-Finnish. From this point of view Slovenia is, together with Aus-

tria, the only European country representing the contact area of all these language groups. But only in Slovenia these four linguistic groups coexist within one state. This used to be even more true in the past, when the Slovenian territory was part of the multiethnic Austrian monarchy, especially in the urban centres. According to the Austrian census of 1910 the Slovenian component on the territory of present-day Slovenia reached more than 80% of the total population. The other 20% was more or less equally divided between German and other ethnic groups, among which the greatest proportion were Italian and Hungarian. The Germans, as the dominant group in Austria, lived especially in some towns, such as Celje and Ptuj, where they represented between 40 and 45% of the whole population, and as much as 55% in Maribor, whereas in Ljubljana this community represented only 10% of the whole population. Germans represented then also an autochthonous territorial ethnic group in the area of Kočevje, in the southern part of Slovenia, where, in 1910, 17 thousand out of the 105 thousand Germans in present-day Slovenia lived (Klemenčič, 1988). In the area of present Slovenian Istria, in the municipalities of Koper, Izola, and Piran, in 1910, nearly 30 thousand Italians lived, representing 75% to 80% of the local population, whilst about 15 thousand Hungarians lived in the area between the river Mura and the present Slovenian-Hungarian border. Because the neighbouring ethno-linguistic communities, particularly the German, but also the Italian and the Hungarian, were quite powerful and dominant both at the local and regional level, the Slovenian population was subject to constant assimilation. This was even more evident on the "border" of the Slovenian ethnic territory outside present-day Slovenia, where Slovenian minorities are still present. According to Slovenian estimations there are currently more than 80 thousand Slovenes in Italy, more than 40 thousand in Austria, and about 5 thousand in Hungary (Zupančič, 1998), whilst 1910 censuses showed for the same areas quite different figures: about 130 thousand Slovenes in present-day Italy, 65 thousand in present-day Austria (but Slovenian estimations for that period was about 100 thousand), and about 10 thousand in present-day Hungary.

This process of "normalisation", or standardisation of the population structure within state systems, and the consequential assimilation of minority groups into the dominant nation, was, as in other parts of Europe, most evident in the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, when a number of intense political-geographic changes, which will be discussed in more details later, took place. At this point it is important to notice that a certain kind of "normalisation" took place in the Upper Adriatic area, after the First World War and particularly after the Second World War (Bufon, 1997a; 1999a). It was also the case in the rest of Slovenia (Gosar, 1993a), due to the emigration of German-speaking state employees, after

the First World War, and of a larger number of those associated with the invading forces during the Second World War. The size of the German, Italian, and Hungarian communities decreased drastically. By 1921, the German community had been halved, and barely existed after the Second World War (the census of 1991 shows only 750 Germans living in Slovenia). Similarly, the Italian community decreased most in the first decades after the Second World War: from 1961 onwards it stabilized at about 3000 persons. Only the Hungarian community went through a less severe reduction. According to the 1991 census, there are about 8500 Hungarians in Prekmurje.

Regardless of the different "atmospheres" and causes that led to a change of the ethnic structure in Slovenia after the First and the Second World Wars, a certain social and geopolitical "reorientation" of the Slovenian territory southwards may be detected, since it became first part of the Kingdom and later of the Federative Socialist Republic of Yugoslavia. However this "reorientation" did not have immediate consequences for the ethnic structure of Slovenia, which continued to remain almost "pure" until 1971, considering that about 95% of the population was Slovenian. Only after this year the population structure changed due to the intense immigration of labour from other Yugoslav republics. Thus the percentage of Slovenes was 90% in 1981 and less than 88% in 1991. The number of *immigrant communities*, which have only partly assimilated into the dominant community since the independence of Slovenia, still outnumber the autochthonous minorities (the latter are only 1% of the whole population of Slovenia), and are mainly present in the industrial centres such as Jesenice, Koper, Celje, Ljubljana, and Maribor, where, according to the 1991 census, they represented between 15% and 30%, and in Jesenice more than 35% of the population. Here, a certain territorialization of the immigrant communities is noticeable: the Croats (nearly 3% of the whole Slovenian population) are more present in the north-east and south-east of the country, whilst the Serbs (about 2,5% of the whole Slovenian population) live mostly in Ljubljana and western Slovenia. Mixed marriages are more typical between Slovenians and Croats in the border area, and therefore also the integration of the Croatian ethnic group into the Slovenian social context is the highest. In Slovenian Istria the immigrants from inner Slovenia or Yugoslavia have had an additional "revitalising" function. They have almost completely replaced the once dominant Italian population, which moved to Italy after World War II for economic and political reasons, and provided the demographic potential necessary for a quick economic growth of the area (Medica, 1987). Generally speaking, in a country where there has not been a demographic increase, only a positive migration balance can account for the demographic growth. Thus, similar to the situa-

tion in many European states, the extent of immigration to Slovenia from other Yugoslav republics, making Slovenia a sort of "Yugoslav Switzerland", has played an important role in the industrialisation of the country. In consequence Slovenia is, in fact, the only transitional state in central-eastern Europe to have experienced such a strong immigration flux equivalent only to that of Switzerland: in both countries the percentage of economic migrants exceed 10% of the whole population.

On the other hand, many Slovenes have *emigrated* from their homeland, in the past, because of the peripheral status of this area. This occurred especially from the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century onwards. After serfdom in Austria had been abolished, finally the modernisation of the administrative and social structure could begin. This emigration flux was directed towards Trieste, which developed very quickly between the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> centuries and thus represented, for the inhabitants of Kranjska and the eastern Adriatic coast, a kind of little "America". Moreover, even to reach America-proper people from southern and north-eastern Slovenia passed through the port of Trieste. It is interesting to note that at the beginning of this century the town with the biggest Slovenian population was Trieste, followed by Ljubljana and Cleveland in the USA. That said it is obvious that the urbanisation of the Slovenian population occurred mainly outside the present Slovenian territory, and it was rather more centrifugally than centripetally oriented. The emigration continued even after the First World War, when a major part of the Slovenian ethnic territory became a constituent entity of the Yugoslav kingdom, this time towards South America and Canada. There were not only economic, but also political migrants from western Slovenia, who had been ruled by an increasingly fascist Italy; the latter group was mainly directed towards Yugoslavia. Similarly, after the Second World War, both economic and political conditions persisted as reasons for emigration. On the one hand, there was an economic migration from Trieste and western Slovenia to Australia, and from central Slovenia to western Europe. On the other hand, there was a political migration of anti-communist and quislings, including the "domobranci", but also liberal intellectuals, who emigrated partly to Trieste and other European countries, and mainly to Argentina.

Today, the largest number of Slovenian emigrants is believed to live in the USA, where about 300 thousand persons of Slovene origin live. Besides, there are about 30 thousand persons of Slovene origin in Canada, about 25 thousand in Australia, 50 thousand in Germany, and about 30 thousand in Argentina (Genorio, 1993). Among all these, the community which has maintained the strongest link with its origins, is the "young", mainly political, community in Argentina, which has strong Catholic support and organisation. This community has expressed greater interest in obtaining Slovenian citizen-

ship once Slovenia got independence. Therefore, the Slovenians in Argentina made most use of the right to vote in the last political elections and even sent their representative to the Slovenian parliament. Since the independence of Slovenia, the Slovenians who had previously emigrated to other Yugoslav republics have found themselves in a totally new situation too; the majority of these emigrants can be found in Croatia (about 25 thousand) and in Serbia (about 10 thousand), especially in the big cities.

To the usual migrants, people who temporally work outside their country should be added. This category is, however, much more mobile and is therefore difficult to assess numerically. According to the 1991 census more than 50 thousand people, or 3% of the whole Slovenian population, have been working and living temporally in foreign countries, nearly half of them in Germany, the rest in Austria, Switzerland, and Italy. They are predominantly from the less developed parts of the country: Pomurje, Posavje, and Bela Krajina. Due to the vicinity of the employment centres in Italy and Austria, the labour force commuting from the border areas is, however, numerically larger than the census shows. This phenomenon, in fact, is so significant that it can influence the life of as much as up to one third of the families living in the border area, as we will see later. In these areas, especially in the Slovenian-Italian borderland, the local emigration of women from east to west is rather strong and it is often connected with marriage. This helps to improve the relationships between the inhabitants on the two sides of the border (Bufon, 1995a).

*Religion* is another element that proves Slovenia to be a social and cultural "contact" area. Although nearly all believing Slovenians (more than 75%) consider themselves Catholic, the Protestant religion has played a very important role in the development of Slovenian culture. Protestantism developed in Slovenia during the 16<sup>th</sup> century and created the basis of the first Slovenian books. It therefore played an important role in the standardisation of the language and the cultural unification of the Slovenian population. Today, Evangelism predominates only in northern Prekmurje with about 15 thousand believers, whilst the number of Orthodox (about 45 thousand) and Muslims (about 30 thousand), has recently increased due to immigration.

In this way, Slovenia has come closer to those basic border lines defined by Galtung for Europe. These are borders between geopolitical areas, that he called The United States of America and Europe (USAE), the Russian Union (RU), and the Turkish Union (TU) (Galtung, 1994). The above areas represent on one hand the global division between North and South, which was first set between the Catholics and Moslems during the crusades from 1095, on the other hand the division between West and East, based on the border between the Orthodox and Roman catholic churches which occurred

in 1054. Within the western part of the world, or the USAE, an internal border also appeared between the Catholics and the Protestant since 1517. Anyway, in the past many cultural and religious interferences occurred on this geopolitical units in Slovenia. Besides the pre-mentioned consequences of Protestantism and counter-reformation, there were many Turkish incursions throughout the 16<sup>th</sup> and 17<sup>th</sup> century and, as a consequence, the "Vojna krajina" was formed in the direct vicinity of the Slovenian ethnic territory. Moreover, between the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> and the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the pan-Slavic, and therefore pro-Russian and pro-Serbian, feelings in Slovenia were a means for the national emancipation of the country and its geopolitical orientation towards "East" and "South". The geopolitical division of Europe after the Second World War then directly influenced the setting of new political borders on the territory of Slovenia, and of that special entity, represented by Tito's Yugoslavia, which in some way represented the most effective realization of the "fifty-fifty" geopolitical division principle of Europe, foretold by Churchill. This, however, was not only a political entity oriented partly eastwards, partly westwards; it was also oriented northwards and southwards.

Slovenia is nowadays still "on the edge" or in the contact area of many *geopolitical and interest spheres*. This can be seen in its new political and social reorientation towards north and west. Therefore, its communication with Vienna and Brussels is as frequent as it used to be with Zagreb and Belgrade before the independence. The traffic role of Slovenia has changed as well: in the past the prevalent direction within the Slovenian traffic "cross" used to be NW–SE; nowadays, also due to the Yugoslav conflict, the direction SW–NE on the new European line Barcelona-Milan-Ljubljana-Budapest-Kiev is much more important. Although Slovenia has an important strategic and traffic and gate-way position (Černe, 1992; Klemenčič, Genorio, 1993; Pak, 1993), it is still somehow on "the edge" of the developing fluxes, being Ljubljana 300 to 500 km away from the nearest European metropolis. This condition of geopolitical contact area, traffic transitoriness and marginality brings a number of paradoxes. The largest number of Slovenian economic exchanges are made with EU countries, and Slovenia is one of the major candidates for membership of the EU. However, from a recent survey, is clear that only a few EU citizens know Slovenia well enough to support its application for a membership of the EU. Moreover, some Slovenian businessmen are convinced that it would be better if Slovenia maintained its status of "developed among underdeveloped" in the ex-Yugoslav context, rather than experiencing the unknown as the "underdeveloped among developed" in a EU context. Last, but not least, the relationship between the European political-economic integration plans and the

American political-strategic interests for the "control" of the Balkan as a contact point between USAE on one side and RU and TU on the other one has to be considered. During his visit to Slovenia, Clinton confirmed that Slovenia's claim to enter Nato has been blocked until a new role for Slovenia within the democratisation process of the former Yugoslavia has been defined.

Slovenia reacted, however, rather soon to such geostrategic challenges, forming interregional links such as the work group Alpe-Adria, formally constituted in 1978 but based on previously existing co-operation between the Yugoslav republic of Slovenia, the Italian region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and the Austrian land Carinthia. Even if the political work performed by this interregional community, which aims to link areas with rather different social and economic systems, has been taken over since the events in 1989-1991 by the Central-European Initiative, the will of strengthening the existing links and of further co-operation is still deeply rooted in the "hard core" of this community. These local or regional aspects of the border position of Slovenia will be discussed further on.

### Shaping Slovenian political borders

As Slovenia is located in an area where different geopolitical interests meet, external factors have played a rather determinant role in tracing and transforming former Yugoslav borders within the Slovenian territory. This is also due to the fact that the present borders between Slovenia and Italy, and Slovenia and Austria have changed considerably in this century. The tracing of borders has therefore caused many controversies, but also put the basis for bilateral agreements and co-operation policies.

#### a) *The Italo-Slovene border*

Although the present Slovenian-Italian border, 232 km long, was accepted at the Peace conferences in 1947, then slightly modified after the elimination of the Free Territory of Trieste in 1954, and definitely accepted with smaller corrections during Osimo agreements in 1975, the greater part of this border-line follows the historical border between Austria and the Republic of Venice, established by both countries with the treaty of Worms in 1521 and remained almost unmodified until the end of First World War (Bufon, 1992a). The current border line differs from the former one only because Breginj, Logje, Robidišče, and Livek in the Natisone Valley, and Senik, Golo Brdo, Vrhovlje, Hruševlje and Šlovrenc along the river Idrijca were part of the Republic of Venice, whereas Ibana, Dolenje, and Neblo were part of Austria, forming an enclave within the Venetian territory. The border in the plains followed the river Idrijca nearly to the point where it flows into the Corna, then it

went south of Chiopris, nearly as far as Palmanova, and then to the Torre river near Villesse, where it followed the Aussa in the Grado Lagoon. So the coast with Grado and Monfalcone remained part of the Republic of Venice, and the border went to the mouth of the Timavo, beneath the Doberdò plains, through Sagrado and San Canzian d' Isonzo in the south. The border was defined more precisely in the mid 18<sup>th</sup> Century, when it was rationalized and milestones were put to make it more visible, but the enclaves, however, were not eliminated. Between 1797 –1805 this border had functioned as an internal Austrian border, and then returned to a political function, by being its southernmost part shifted eastwards, as suggested by Venice already in 1583. The re-defined border went from the mouth of the Isonzo northwards to Krstenica between Anhovo and Kanal, then to Britof and down to Idrjica, where it reached the historical border. In 1809, in the war against France, Austria lost its Adriatic coast, which was partly annexed to the French Kingdom of Italy, and partly united in a new area called Ilirske Province. The border between the two French areas now followed the flow of the Isonzo, from its mouth to its source, and then along the water-shade in Rateče, which first became a border. After Napoleon's defeat in 1814 Austria received back its Italian territories, and the border of 1805 became again an internal border. From 1866 to the end of the First World War the same border became a political border once again, this time between the independent Italian Kingdom and the Austrian- Hungarian Empire.

Towards the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Italian demands for border changes, caused by *irredentismo* movements, increased. According to this conceit Italy wished to include in its territory the whole so-called "Italian" geographic area between the Adriatic and the Black Sea. This ideal was coherent with the geostrategic needs of the new Italian imperialist policy, which found its justification in the territory of the past Republic of Venice and the Roman *limes*. At the beginning of the First World War, Italy asked Austria in exchange for its neutrality the area of Trento, a new border on the east that would follow the water-shade between the Tagliamento and the Sava on the north, and then from the east bank of the Isonzo across the Doberdò plain to the mouth of the Timavo, and southwards the constitution of a neutral zone of Trieste that would go as far as Dragonja; in the southern Adriatic Sea Italy claimed the islands in the Dubrovnik area and the Italian authority on part of the Albanian coast. It is interesting to point out that the Italian claims for the eastern border were satisfied in many aspects after the Second World War. Considering that the Italian claims were related to parts of the Austrian territory, the Entente countries could promise Italy even much more for its co-operation. The secret London agreement, in addition to Trento, left Italy the whole South Tirol to the natural border in Brennero, Trieste,

the areas of Gorizia and Gradisca, the whole of Istria to Kvarner Sea, including its islands, as well as the administrative unit of Dalmatia with a major part of the islands.

At the peace conference in Versailles, that started at the beginning of 1919, 27 winning countries were present, but the agreements were prepared, however, by a minor group, represented by only four states: USA, Great Britain, France, and Italy. Italy prepared a memorandum for the "Adriatic" question, claiming not only the territory promised in the London agreement, but also Postojna, Cerknica, Rijeka and Bakar, which would ensure the naturally and historically determined border. The Yugoslav side presented a memorandum as well, following Wilson's principle of human rights and self-determination, emphasising that the whole eastern Adriatic coast from Monfalcone southwards was compactly and continuously inhabited by Slavic populations, except for five villages north of Pula. Additionally, these populations were said to be in majority in all urban centres except for Gorizia, Trieste and Istrian cities, Lošinj, Rijeka, and Zadar. On the basis of national principles, the Yugoslav delegation suggested a border which would follow the old Italian-Austrian border in the northern section, whilst its southern part would go beyond Cormons, through Gradisca to Monfalcone, leaving Gorizia to Yugoslavia, and Cormons and Monfalcone to Italy. Finally, the American delegation suggested a kind of compromise, leaving nearly the whole area of Gorizia and Istra, including Trieste, to Italy, and Notranjska, Rijeka, and Dalmatia to Yugoslavia. After a short and unsuccessful Italian-American discussion it was decided that the two states concerned should discuss their border directly. Since Wilson's electoral defeat negatively influenced the Yugoslav bargaining power, the Rapallo bilateral agreement passed in November 1920, representing a very satisfactory result for Italy.

The new border between the Kingdoms of Italy and SHS (Serbia-Croatia-Slovenia) did not follow any "natural" logic any longer. It represented, on the contrary, the actual geostrategic "war" border, that should function at the same time as the biggest hindrance between the two countries. This border followed the orographic line from the three-border point on the Pec mountain through Ponce to Mangart, then to Triglav between the Soča and the Sava Dolinka, to Možica between the Soča and the Sava Bohinjka, and finally to the Idrijski pass between the Soča and the Sora, where the borderline abandoned the water-shade, leaving the mines of Idrija and the roads to it to Italy. Then it went up to Postojna, Snežnik, and Učka. In the neighbourhood of Rijeka a neutral territory was constituted, including the road and the railway to Rupa, whereas Zadar and the islands of Cres, Lošinj, Srakane, Ušnje, Lastovo, and Palagruža became Italian enclaves.

At the end of the Second World War the western al-



lied forces imposed the rule of the Belgrade agreement, according to which they ruled the corridor Trieste-Tarvisio. The Yugoslav forces were obliged to abandon the conquered territories west of the Soča, and were later forbidden to trespass the so-called Morgan line, which divided the so-called "contested area". This includes the territory between the political border antecedent to the First World War, and the border resulted from the Rapallo agreement. It was first divided into two occupation zones: the Anglo-American forces ruled zone A, which included Tarvisio, Bovec, Kobarid, Gorizia, Trieste, and the enclave around Pula; the Yugoslav army controlled zone B, which included the rest of the territory. Even if this was only a military demarcation line, it influenced the later border negotiations and remained valid until September 1947, when the agreement of the peace treaty were implemented. The Morgan line differed from the previous Italian-Yugoslav line in the sense that it moved from Mangart to Predel and followed the left riverside of the Koritnica and Soča, to Sveta Gora near Gorizia, where it followed the railway, which remained in A zone, passed Štanjel and Štorje and then turned southwards through Glinščica and Osipo to Muggia reaching the sea at Debeli rtič.

During border negotiations, both the Italian and the Yugoslav party presented their own memorandums concerning the border. The Italian memorandum insisted on the so-called second Wilson line, which had been agreed previously by Yugoslavia, the latter, on the other hand, insisted on the respect of the existing ethnic borders as the basis for the new political border, and therefore claimed not only the Venezia-Giulia, as the Italians called the territory achieved after the First World War, but also the Beneška Slovenija, Resia and Valcanale. The first London conference named a committee of four winning countries which should study the course of the ethnic border and the possibility of internationalising the port of Trieste. Each of the four countries presented its own border proposal: these proposals were very similar when considering the northern part of the border, which was based on the historical border, but they differed in many ways when regarding the southern part of the border. Among these proposals, the French one was chosen during the second meeting of the Foreign Ministers in Paris, because it was the closest to the criterion of ethnic balance, which should have left about the same number of minority members to both states. During this meeting, also the constitution of the Free Territory of Trieste was planned, bordered on the south and east on the French line, and on the north on the Timavo. The Soviet Union agreed surprisingly quickly to the western proposal, and so it was definitely accepted at the beginning of 1947. The Free Territory of Trieste was never properly implemented because the superpowers could not agree on the identity of the governor, due to the increasing tension between the west

and the east. Therefore this territory remained divided into two zones by the Morgan line: zone A with Trieste and northwards from the Morgan line was ruled by the Anglo-Americans, zone B by the Yugoslavs. In 1954, however, the London Memorandum of agreement was accepted. According to this, zone A became Italian, and zone B Yugoslav; the border between the two zones was slightly modified on behalf of Yugoslavia, so that a new port in Koper could be built. The Italian-Yugoslav political border was confirmed, and the maritime border defined during Osimo agreement in 1975.

### ***b) The Austrian-Slovene and the Hungarian-Slovene border***

After the end of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire the Slovenian party was committed to define a new border in the north as well, so that it could unite all the Slovenians in one ethno-political entity. This northern border, from the Slovenian point of view, would have followed the line Hermagor-Villach-Klagenfurt-St. Veit-Voelkermarkt-St. Andrae-Dravograd-Radlje ob Dravi-Spielfeld-Radkersburg-Szentgotthard (ES, 1987). In juxtaposition to this, the regional government of Carinthia claimed that the whole German speaking territory of the region and the bilingual areas, too, should become part of the new Austrian state, if the population decided so. In the Styria region, the municipality of Maribor voted for Austria; at the end of 1918 the general Maister, the commanding officer of the Slovenian army, rebelled against this, and disarmed the German sentinels, occupied the line between Tainach and Radkersburg, and proclaimed himself the commanding officer of the town of Maribor and the whole Slovene part of Styria. At the same time volunteers from Celje occupied Bleiburg and Voelkermarkt, whilst in western Kaernten, the Slovenian army crossed Ljubelj and obtained the demarcation line that followed the river Gail/Zilja to its confluence with Gailitz/Ziljica, and from Drava to Breze in front of Voelkermarkt. During the Austrian-Yugoslav negotiations in Graz at the beginning of 1919, it was agreed that Carinthia would be divided by a line suggested by a board of American experts. This board of experts, supported by President Wilson's opinion, stated that the Klagenfurt basin was a geographic and economic unity which could not be divided, so the border should follow the Karavanke. New reciprocal armed attacks followed, until the Yugoslav army conquered the whole Carinthia, including Klagenfurt. New negotiations took place, and the provisional border confirmed the Yugoslav occupation of the southern Carinthia, except for Klagenfurt, which became part of a neutral zone.

In the meantime the Yugoslav delegation at the peace conference in Versailles, suggested that the border should follow the line from Hermagor to the Ossiach lake and St. Veit eastward, confirming thus the cease-fire

line; the Entente countries on the other hand suggested different borders. Finally it was decided that in the most contested area of Klagenfurt a plebiscite had to be held. The Yugoslav delegation rejected this proposal, arguing that this territory should be divided following the new border, so that the northern part would remain Austrian and the southern would become Yugoslav. Pressed by the great powers, the Yugoslav delegation at the end accepted the agreement, and the Yugoslav army had to move from the occupied territory to the previous border and the northern plebiscite zone (B zone) was occupied by the Austrian army. The western allies suggested different borders for the Styria sector, too, and then finally agreed on the border along the river Mura. In consequence, Radkersburg was destined to Austria, Maribor to the Yugoslav kingdom. The treaty between Austria and the Entente, accepted in September 1919, stated that the southern Austrian border should leave the valley of Mežica and the municipality of Jezersko to Yugoslavia, whereas Austria should keep the Gail valley with Villach, and Italy should keep Valcanale and the municipality of Fusine. This treaty also defined the Austrian-Yugoslav border in Styria, which should have been defined in detail by a special committee consisting by members of the great powers, Austria and Yugoslavia. In Carinthia, the plebiscite had to be held, first in Zone A: in the event of a positive result for Yugoslavia, a second plebiscite would have been held in Zone B. October 1920, in 51 municipalities of Zone A, 22 thousand people voted for Austria, and only 15 thousand voted for Yugoslavia, therefore the whole plebiscite territory became part of Austria, and the political border became that one suggested by the British in 1919. Although the question of the Austrian-Yugoslavian border was issued again by Yugoslavia after the Second World War, the 330 km long border has not changed ever since.

No further changes to the Hungarian-Slovenian 120 km long border have been made since the end of First World War, too, when, according to the Yugoslav proposal during the peace conference in Versailles, the former border between the Austrian and Hungarian part of the monarchy was moved to the point where the Mura meets the Raba.

### ***c) The Croatian-Slovene border***

The internal Slovenian borders within the territory of former Yugoslavia had a similar historical basis as the external ones (Klemenčič, 1991). The Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes was, of course, divided into three units reflecting the ethnic division of the state. The Serbian part, however, included Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Macedonia, and the central authority ruled the local authorities of Slovenia and Croatia as well. The region of Ljubljana included the region of Kastav, whereas Maribor included the whole

Medžimurje and the town of Čakovec. With the constitution of "banovine" in the kingdom of Yugoslavia in 1929, new changes were brought to the internal borders. The border between the Slovenian Dravska banovina and the Croatian Savska banovina was changed, and the provinces of Kastav, Čakovec, Prelog, and Črnomelj became part of Savska banovina. Dravska banovina, on the other hand, obtained the province of Čabar. This situation was modified again in 1931, when the province of Črnomelj and the newly constituted province of Metlika returned to Dravska banovina and the province of Čabar became part of Savska banovina. Thus, the new border between the Croatian and Slovenian banovine followed the southern border of the former Austrian regions of Styria and Carniola, and the historical border between the Austrian and Hungarian parts of the monarchy, excluding the new municipality of Metlika and part of the municipality Štrigova, which were in the Croatian part, and the municipalities of Osilnica, Draga, and Trava which remained in Slovenia.

After the Second World War the internal borders between the federal republics of Yugoslavia were defined or confirmed again. Thus, the border between the republics of Slovenia and Croatia was defined, and the same border became a state border in 1991. This "new" 670 km long border has a long tradition, especially in its central part along the Kolpa, Gorjanci, or Žumberačka gora, Sotla and Drava. It was created, in fact, in various periods between the 10<sup>th</sup> and the 12<sup>th</sup> century as the southern border of the Habsburg empire, and the line of this border was modified somehow only by the constitution of "Vojna krajina" in the 16<sup>th</sup> century. The eastern border section in Medžimurje appeared as an administrative border first in 1929, and in 1945 some modifications to this border were made, so that the villages of Gibina, Globoka, Kopriva, Razkrižje, Šprinc, and Veščica became Slovenian. The western sector of the current Slovene-Croatian border, from the mountains around Snežnik to the sea, was formed much later, even if it runs not very far away from the regional border of Istria during the Austrian period. The border section to the Free Territory of Trieste was defined in 1945, following previous local borders and the ethnic border between Slovenes and Croats. The last part of the border to the sea along the Dragonja, was defined after the division of the Free Territory of Trieste between Italy and Yugoslavia in 1954. This section mainly followed the ethnic border and was slightly modified in 1956, when the villages of Abitanti, Belvederi, Brezovica, Graden, Koromači-Boškini, Močunigi, Pregara and Sirči became part of Slovenia.

The "precatégorisation" of the previous republican border between Slovenia and Croatia, into a state border in 1991, brought new problems connected with a more exact and proper definition of the latter, but also of the new maritime border in the gulf of Piran (Gosar, Kle-

menčič, 1994). The problems connected with the definition of the border on the continent are mainly due to the regulation of waterways or modifications of waterbeds, considering that 44% of the Slovenian-Croatian border follows, in fact, the hydrographic principle. Bigger differences between the natural riverbeds and the new waterways after the regulation of border rivers can be noted especially along the Mura from Hotize to the border with Hungary, and along the Sotla at Rogatec. The most unusual border section with many invasions and functional enclaves on both sides, however, may be found around Brezovica north of Metlika, as a result of the partition of territory in the feudal period. Both states have already found an agreement about the "rationalisation" of the major part of the above mentioned border problems. Opinions differ in greater extent only for the westernmost border section from the village of Mlini upon the Dragonja, towards the sea, because the choice between the new and the old riverbed will determine the starting point for the maritime border as well. Croatia asserts the international maritime laws, that suggests median lines, which would divide the gulf of Piran in two equal parts. Slovenia, on the other hand, claims a division that would enable it to control the major part of the gulf, basing its claims on historical traditions of ruling the gulf and on its very slight maritime potential, thus the international law principles of *"uti posseditis"* and *"sui generis"*, which are part of the maritime law, too (Blake, Topalović, 1996).

#### Slovenia as a borderland, and general features of its border sections

The present status of Slovenia as a borderland is clear from the ratio between the surface of the state (20.256 km<sup>2</sup>) and the total length of the political borders (1160 km). On the basis of these two data we can calculate that there is 5,7 km of border per 100 km<sup>2</sup>. A higher proportion of borders to land is present in Europe only in Luxembourg (nearly 9 km each 100 km<sup>2</sup>). Slovenia is thus second, followed by Moldavia, Switzerland, and Belgium. Even if we consider as a criterion of defining the border status of the country, a 25 km wide stretch of border area, and multiply it by the length of the political borders, we realise that in Slovenia border areas include nearly the whole territory of the state, similarly to the already-mentioned small countries, where border areas represent more than 75% of the whole territory (Bufon, 1996a). The "borderness" of Slovenia can be understood more accurately by calculating the ratio between all the bordering municipalities, i.e. the municipalities which are located within a 25 km distance from the border, and all the municipalities in Slovenia. In this way we find that as much as 61% of the Slovenian municipalities are bordering municipalities. Even if we limit the border belt to a width of 10 km, the

percentage of bordering municipalities still account for a 50%. The border character of Slovenia is furthermore made evident by the fact that its capital town Ljubljana, if travelling by car, is only 60 km from the Austrian border, 90 km from the Italian border, and 110 km from the Croatian border. The most distant border from Ljubljana is the Hungarian, about 220 km.

The traffic crossing the Slovenian border is also coherent with the Slovenia's borderland status. The number of people crossing the Slovenian border by car increased between 1992 and 2000 from 140 millions to 180. This means that an average of half a million people travel across the Slovenian border every day. If we consider that 30% of these are Slovenian citizens, who make about 50 million border crossings a year, we find that about 140 thousand Slovenian citizens, or 7% of the whole population, travel across the border daily. This information is also an important feature in measuring the "borderness" of Slovenia, because it enables us to calculate that each Slovenian citizen (including children and elderly people) visits a foreign country on average once a fortnight. According to the information of the Slovenian Institute for Statistics, the foreigners who crossed the Slovenian border in 2000 were most often Croats (about 40 million, or 22% of all the crossings), Italians (about 38 millions, or 21%), Austrians (about 23 million, or 13%), and Germans (about 13 million), followed by Czechs (3 million), Hungarians (2,5 million), Swiss (2 million), Slovaks and Dutch (about 1 million). The inhabitants of other former Yugoslav republics made up in total about 2,5 million crossings. The above disposition show us that the structure of border crossing is a combination of dominant local or inter-state, and international transitional traffic, which is more frequent in the summer. Table 1 shows the division of border crossings in different border sectors, it also shows the structure of the crossings from year 1992 to 2000.

**Table 1: The change of structure of the border crossings in different sectors in Slovenia in 1992-1998 (SIS).  
Tabela 1: Spremembe v strukturi mejnih prehodov v različnih sektorjih Slovenije v obdobju 1992-1998 (SIS).**

Border	Passengers (in milion)			Passengers (in %)		
	1992	1995	2000	1992	1995	2000
SLO/I	51,4	74,5	64,9	36,0	41,3	36,3
SLO/A	39,4	50,7	48,6	27,6	28,1	27,1
SLO/H	1,9	4,8	4,1	1,3	2,7	2,3
SLO/CRO	50,2	50,3	61,3	35,1	27,9	34,3
Total	142,9	180,3	178,9	100,0	100,0	100,0

There has been a great increase in cross-border traffic on the Slovenian-Italian border until 1995 (from 51 to 74 millions, or an increase of 45%), and a stabilisation of this phenomenon to about 65 million border

crossings. This is a consequence of the introduction of fuel cards in Friuli-Venezia Giulia which permit the inhabitants to purchase fuel at an equivalent price to that found in Slovenia. The traffic across the Austrian-Slovenian border increased between 1992 and 1995 by one fourth, and it has stabilized at about 50 million border crossings a year. The biggest relative increase of cross-border traffic has occurred on the Slovenian-Hungarian border. This border used to be virtually hermetically closed before the 90's. The cross-border traffic increased by 150% in the period between 1992 and 1995 and since then has stabilized to 4 million border crossings a year. Such an intense increase has been influenced by the liberalisation of Hungarian society, and by the modification of the Hungarian borderland, and its adjustment to the cross-border traffic. The border city of Lenti in Hungary, has become, in fact, one of the most attractive shopping centres with customers from the whole of eastern Slovenia and even from Ljubljana. A bigger change in figures can be noticed on the Slovenian-Croatian border, which reached its maximum in 1994 with 66 millions border crossings, about one third more than in year 1992. The next year, however, the number of passengers crossing the border dropped visibly, but it has increased again recently. These fluctuations are due to the situation in the former Yugoslavia and it emphasises the gap among the number of border crossings in this border section, which are due to local or inter-state cross-border traffic, and potential transitory traffic, that could derive from other regions of former Yugoslavia. Generally speaking, in the period between 1992 and 2000, the structure did not change much.

About 36% of the total passenger traffic in Slovenia crossed the Italian-Slovenian border in both years, a slight decrease can be noticed on the Austrian-Slovenian border (from 27,6% to 27,1%), and the Slovenian-Croatian border (from 35,1% to 34, 3%). On the contrary a definite increase in border traffic occurred across the Slovenian-Hungarian border (from 1,3% to 2,3%).

It is evident from table 2 that the most intense cross-border traffic in the period 1992-2000, considering the length of the border line, was that on the Slovenian-

Italian border. This border section represents only 17% of the entire border line, but as much as 38% of the whole cross-border traffic. The traffic across the Slovenian-Austrian border is more proportional with its length, whereas it is disproportional on the borders with Croatia and Hungary. The Slovenian-Italian border is also the most permeable, and we find here 40% of all Slovenian border posts. This means more than 17 border passes per 100 km, and in the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border they are even more frequent with about 25 border posts per 100 km, or one per 4 km, whilst the general Slovenian average is 8 border passes per 100 km. The Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Hungarian averages are quite close to this average, with 7 border posts per 100 km, whereas the Slovenian-Croatian border has a rather lower average: less than 5 border passes per 100 km.

The border pass Šentilj, on the motorway Maribor-Graz, has the highest number of crossings out of all road border passes, nearly 19 million passengers in 2000. More than 10 million passengers crossed the border posts Škofije on the road Trieste-Koper, and the border pass Fernetiči on the Ljubljana-Trieste road. These most busy border passes are followed by border posts, where in the same year from 5,5 to 7,5 million passengers travelled: Obrežje on the road Ljubljana-Zagreb, Gruškovlje on the road Zagreb-Maribor, Vrtojba on the road Ljubljana-Gorica, Rožna dolina on the road Nova Gorica-Gorica, Sečovlje and Dragonja on the road Koper-Istra, Kozina on the Trieste-Divača-Rijeka road, Jelšane on the road Ljubljana-Rijeka and the Karavanke tunnel border pass on the road Ljubljana-Klagenfurt. All the above mentioned border posts represent 13% of the total number of Slovenian border passes. Other, more regional border posts (representing 31% of all border passes), registered in 2000 from about 1 million to 5 millions border crossings per year. Definitely more local are those border passes (56% of all border passes), crossed by less than 1 million or even 100 thousand people per year.

In addition to the cross-border road traffic another 3 million train passengers, and about 1 million passengers entering Slovenia by plane or ship, have to be added.

**Table 2: Some basic features of the Slovenian borders (SIS).**

**Tabela 2: Nekaj osnovnih značilnosti slovenskih mej (SIS).**

Border	Percentage of the total border length	Number of border passes with statistically relevant cross-border traffic	Percentage of border passes	Average number of border passes per 100 km.	Percentage of the total cross-border traffic (period 1992-1998)
SLO/I	17,4	35	38,5	17,3	38,0
SLO/A	27,9	24	26,3	7,4	27,6
SLO/H	7,6	6	6,6	6,8	2,2
SLO/CRO	47,1	26	28,6	4,8	32,2
Total	100,0	91	100,0	7,8	100,0

This traffic, however, does not affect the Slovenian border areas. Goods transport is mainly transitory and it is shipped on roads for the most part (77%). In 2000 more than 25,6 million tons of goods crossed Slovenia's borders and travelled on its roads, plus 8 million tons by railway. 63% of this was transit, whereas the rest was part of the Slovenian import and export. Goods are mainly shipped across 9 border passes (82% of the transits): Vrtojba (3,9 millions tons) and Fernetiči (3,7 millions tons) on the Slovenian-Italian border, Dolga vas (3,4 millions tons) on the Slovenian-Hungarian border, Šentilj (2,6 millions ton) and the Karavanke tunnel (1,8 millions tons) on the Slovenian-Austrian border, and Obrežje (2,2 millions tons), Gruškovlje (1,4 million ton), Središče ob Dravi (1,1 million tons) and Zavrč (1,0 million tons) on the Slovenian-Croatian border. A special case is the port of Koper which handles over 10 millions tons of goods, of which 45% to 60% are in transit. The countries which have used increasingly the port of Koper since the mid 80's include Austria, accounting for 40% of all transitional goods, followed by Hungary with 25%, and the Czech and Slovak republics, who together account for another fourth of the whole transit. It is interesting to note that the port of Koper has become the most important port for Austria, since 35% of the total Austrian maritime traffic travel via Koper. In this way the port of Koper has substituted the traditional Austrian port, Trieste, although the latter has an agreement with Austria which grants cheaper railway transport. Instead, the port of Koper has gained a considerable part of the Austrian "market" thanks, especially, to cheaper and faster services, and to the creation of a special terminal for the import of Asian cars. For the same reason it has become a concurrent with the port of Rijeka as an "additional" Hungarian port, in spite of the hindrances caused by the weak road connections between Slovenia and Hungary.

In order to not only detect the permeability level of different Slovenian border sections and their importance within the total cross-border traffic, but also to create some means of categorisation of the Slovenian border areas, a social-economic analysis on the basis of a certain number of indicators was carried out (Bufon, 1993a). At this point it is important to note that 40% of the Slovenian municipalities, where nearly 42% of the whole population live, border to one of the neighbouring countries. There is a rather balanced population density in the Slovenian-Italian border area, considering the surface of the territory: about 19% of the territory and of the inhabitants of Slovenian borderlands. The same may be found in the Slovenian-Croatian borderland (about 40% of the territory and of the inhabitants of Slovenian borderlands). On the contrary, in the Slovenian-Austrian border area, due to the inclusion of the municipality of Maribor, a minor demographic "surplus" can be seen (33% of the territory and 37% of the in-

habitants). The Slovenian-Hungarian border area, on the contrary, is characterized by a demographic "deficit" (9% of the territory and only 4% of the inhabitants). Generally speaking, there are only two bigger urban municipalities with more than 50 thousand inhabitants in Slovene border areas: Maribor and Novo Mesto. Nevertheless, in the demographically "strongest" part of the Slovenian-Italian, and Slovenian-Croatian border areas, and in the whole area of Slovenian Istria, municipalities with more than 10 thousand inhabitants are more typical.

As far as the ethnic structure of the border municipalities is concerned, these are prevalently homogeneous with more than 90% of the population being Slovene. However, municipalities where other ethnic groups from former Yugoslavia, ranging from 7% to 17% of the total population, live alongside the dominant Slovenian ethnic group, are also rather common, especially in the central parts of the Slovenian-Croatian borderland and in the western part of the Slovenian-Austrian borderland. There is an even higher percentage of non-Slovenes in Slovenian Istria (especially in the municipality of Koper) where it also includes an autochthonous Italian ethnic group. In fact, the latter is more numerous in the municipality of Piran. A similar type of ethnic structure consisting of Slovenes, migrants from other former Yugoslav republics and an autochthonous ethnic minority, in this case the Hungarian, is found in the northern part of the Slovenian-Hungarian borderland. Only the municipality of Lendava in the southern part of the Slovenian-Hungarian borderland is peculiar: here, Slovenians and Hungarians each make up 45% of the population, whilst 10% are immigrants from other parts of the former Yugoslavia.

The social-economic analysis considers 18 different variables, as it can be seen in table 3. The social-demographic indexes are generally closer to the average values in the Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Croatian border areas, which is especially true for the index of social dependence, whereas the index of ageing in the Slovenian-Italian (110) and especially in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area (144) is much higher than the Slovenian average (79), which is partially met only in the Slovenian-Austrian border area. Better results can be found in the Slovenian-Austrian borderland section along Drava, where there is an average of one elderly inhabitant to every two children. On the contrary, in the northern part of the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, the situation is reversed: one child for every two elderly people. The index of economic independence is generally lower in border areas than the country average (72), and only in the Slovenian-Italian border area it reaches 65, whereas it is extremely low in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, where only one third of the active inhabitants work in the municipalities of residence. At the same time, in the bordering municipalities, there

**Table 3: Selected social-economic indexes and their values for the Slovenian border areas in 1991 (SIS).**  
**Tabela 3: Izbrani družbeno-ekonomski indeksi in njihove vrednosti za slovenska obmejna območja leta 1991 (SIS).**

Index*	SLO/I	SLO/A	SLO/H	SLO/CRO	Average index for all Slovenian border areas	Average index for the total Slovenian territory
1	40	37	41	38	38	37
2	110	82	144	97	99	79
3	65	51	36	61	56	72
4	69	69	75	71	70	60
5	16	24	52	32	28	22
6	16	28	9	14	18	18
7	47	50	60	51	51	49
8	6	8	7	8	8	7
9	45	46	50	45	46	47
10	40	45	57	45	45	45
11	2	4	10	4	4	3
12	16	15	0	6	10	37
13	5	8	8	8	7	5
14	31	20	9	19	21	44
15	102	53	16	27	49	93
16	13	21	56	27	25	14
17	41	42	25	39	39	41
18	45	38	19	34	36	46

- \*1 – Index of social dependence (percentage of the population under 15 and over 60 years of age);  
 2 – Ageing index (ratio between the number of inhabitants over 60 and the inhabitants under 15 years of age);  
 3 – Index of economic independence (percentage of employed among the active population within the municipality of residence);  
 4 – Index of spatial mobility (percentage of daily migrants among the active population);  
 5 – Index of agricultural potential I (percentage of intensive land use on rural surfaces);  
 6 – Index of agricultural potential II (percentage of farms with more than 10 hectares);  
 7 – General index of activity I (percentage of active population among residents);  
 8 – General index of activity II (percentage of unemployed population among residents);  
 9 – Gender-specific activity index I (percentage of female population among active population);  
 10 – Gender-specific activity index II (percentage of active among female population);  
 11 – Index of social-economic erosion I (percentage of temporary absent in foreign countries among residents);  
 12 – Index of social-economic erosion II (ratio between the temporary absent and the temporary present population);  
 13 – Index of education I (number of illiterates out of 1000 people);  
 14 – Index of education II (number of highly educated out of 1000 people);  
 15 – Index of education III (ratio between illiterates and highly educated);  
 16 – Social-economic index I (percentage of active population within the primary sector);  
 17 – Social-economic index II (percentage of active population within the secondary sector);  
 18 – Social-economic index III (percentage of active population within the tertiary sector).

is a higher percentage of daily migration than the national average of 60% with a value of 70%. The Slovenian-Hungarian border area is different again with a value of 75%. The highest agricultural potential can be found in the Slovenian-Croatian and especially in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, where intensive cultures account for 52% of the agricultural land, a percentage which is two times the national average (22%). On the other hand, farms with bigger surface areas are more characteristic in the Slovenian-Austrian borderland because of the extent of forests. On the other hand, the major surface partition is found among the farms in the

Slovenian-Hungarian borderland. In this area, a higher than average percentage of active population can be found, due to the fact that the primary sector still represents the main activity (about 55% active). On the contrary, the secondary and the tertiary sector are still below the Slovenian average. The tertiary sector reaches the Slovenian average (about 45% active) only in the Slovenian-Italian borderland, and especially in its southern part where the tertiary employing structure is already dominant. The Slovenian-Hungarian borderland is peculiar again, considering the gender-specific activity index. Here, in fact, the percentage of women among

active population (50%), as well as active among women (57%) is higher than the national average (about 45% in both cases). Something similar happens to the indexes of social-economic erosion. In the Slovenian-Hungarian borderland, in fact, the percentage of temporary emigrants is 10% of the whole population, whereas the national average is 3%. Generally speaking, the social-economic attraction in border areas is centrifugal rather than centripetal, as is evident from the ratio between the number of those temporary present and temporary absent. Values higher than the national average can be found especially in the municipalities of Maribor, Muta, and to a certain extent in Nova Gorica. The percentage of illiteracy is higher than the national average everywhere, except for the Slovenian-Italian borderland. In the same areas, the number of highly educated is, of course, smaller than the national average as well. The highest percentage of highly educated (about 30 out of 1000) is found in the Slovenian-Italian borderland, the lowest (about 10 out of 1000) in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area.

So far, the analysis of the Slovenian border areas, on the basis of some selected social indicators from the 1991 census, shows deep negative differences from the national average in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area. This is the logic consequence of a long term peripheral condition and closed borders. The further hierarchic "cluster analysis" based on the values of the chosen indicators, enables us to create a more detailed typology of bordering municipalities (Bufon, 1996a). By so doing, two basic groups of bordering municipalities have been identified, characterized the first, by higher values for the chosen indexes than the national ones, and by lower values the second. A further step in the cluster analysis has shown six basic typologies of the bordering municipalities, three for each group. Within the first group, we have identified the typology of "urbanized" municipalities, where particularly higher values in all indexes are present, especially in relation to the index of social dependence, percentage of employed in the municipality of residence, the ratio between the temporary present and temporary absent population, the ratio between the number of illiterate and the highly educated, and the percentage of active population in the tertiary sector. The type of "old industrialized" municipality also has higher values in almost all indexes, whereas the typology of "newly industrialized" municipality shows a combination between positive values, especially in relation to the degree of education and social-economic improvement, and negative values especially in the indexes of social dependence and gender activity. The second group is made of the "peripheral developing municipality" type, where negative values are combined with positive, particularly in the social-demographic structure and the economic dependence. The type of "less developed peripheral municipalities" presents negative values in a

greater extent, and they concern especially the possibility of employment within the municipality of residence, the percentages of unemployment and illiteracy. Finally, the "undeveloped rural municipality" type is characterized by strong negative values in nearly all indicators, except for the percentage of intensive cultures, and the gender indexes of activity.

The typology of the "urbanized" municipality is mainly present in the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border area, in Slovenian Istra, and sporadically in the eastern part of the Slovenian-Austrian borderland, where, as it happens in the central part of the Slovenian-Croatian border area, the typology of "old industrialized" municipality is prevalent. The typology of "newly industrialized" municipality is more frequent in the northern part of the Slovenian-Italian border area. In the eastern border area, along the rivers Mura and Sotla, the "peripheral developing municipalities" type is present, whereas the rest of the eastern Slovenian-Croatian border area has the majority of less developed peripheral municipalities. The far north-eastern Slovenian municipalities bordering with Austria and Hungary represent the "undeveloped rural" typology. According to other social-economic analysis (M. Klemenčič, 1993), two major developing types of bordering municipalities are evident: those that anticipate general development processes (these are present along the Slovenian-Italian border and the Slovenian-Austrian border), and those which are continuously falling short of the average development level (the Slovenian-Hungarian border area and the eastern part of the Slovenian-Croatian border area).

The first categorisation of the Slovenian bordering municipalities was made by the "pioneer" of the Slovenian geography of border landscapes, Vladimir Klemenčič (1987; 1993a), who also defined three critical factors that influence the extent of border openness:

- The orography of the border, which divides the border areas of the two neighbouring countries;
- The level of economic development and the intensity of cross-border regional links;
- The political relationship between the two countries.

From the surveys carried out previously in the German border areas (Maier, 1983), Klemenčič noticed that among the structural factors which enable a higher degree of cross-border communication, the following are particularly important: equal industrial development on both sides of the border, command of the neighbour's language, and a general positive attitude towards the neighbouring population and cross-border co-operation. On the other hand, the factors which influence the closing of the border are: a lack of traffic connections, the consolidation of the border area on national basis, a lack of mutual planning, a low degree of social-economic development and so on. On this basis Klemenčič asserts that the border area in Slovenia with the highest level of urbanization and cross-border regional

linkages between people, economy, and culture is the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border, whereas the less developed border area is the Slovenian-Hungarian one. Since the author developed this typology combining demographic – development indexes with the permeability of different border sections, he argues that reasons for the underdevelopment and the demographic decline in the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, are not only due to the political factor of a closed border, but also the long-lasting peripheral feature of this area in relation to the developed centres of both countries. The exact opposite is found at the southern Slovenian-Italian border, where mutual co-operation has reached such a high level that it can be regarded as a new "Euroregion". The intermediate typologies of the Slovenian border areas are characterized by cross-border links at certain points only. This means that the cross-border communication is limited to few border passes, where transit traffic is predominant and border dwellers are only marginally involved.

#### **Cross-border relationships in the Slovenian border areas**

A survey of the studies of Slovene borderlands shows that the Slovene-Italian border area, particular in the Gorizia region, has been most intensively studied (Bufon, 1994a; 1994b; 1995b; 1995c; 1995d; 1996b). In the process, a special methodology has been developed, which has recently been applied to other Slovenian borderlands. This method involves firstly the analysis of the existing borders and their interdependence, duration, and location with special consideration to the effects of new borders on the formerly united regions, and on the development of cross-border co-operation. At this point the permeability of the political border is important. It can be assessed according to type of border posts, the number of border passes, and the cross-border passenger and goods traffic in different sections and in different periods. Moreover, the regional structural analysis of the border area is important, as well as the assessment of social-economic cohesion or differentiation on both regional and micro-regional level. Last, but not least, regional changes due to the presence of the border have to be considered. Quantitative surveying methods for regional analysis are used for this purpose. Firstly, statistical information from both sides of the border must be standardised. Next the influence of the border on regional transformation and differentiation can be considered. Finally, a more qualitative study of social-cultural links among the border area population, and of attitudes towards one's own border area and the neighbouring one can be conducted. This will show the motivation, direction and intensity of cross-border movement, as well as the extent of different functional and cultural cross-border spaces in the performance of spa-

tially relevant social activities of the border population. This methodology is based on a well prepared questionnaire and on a sufficiently large number of representative respondents. Moreover, it enables us to divide the studied border area into typologies and to compare different Slovenian border areas with European ones. The use of this methodology in the Gorizia border area showed that the degree of affinity of the population on either side of the border, and thus the degree of cross-border social integration, is not only higher than in other Slovene border areas, but even higher than in most European comparable borderlands. This could be explained by the fact that the border area of Gorizia is rather "young", and there is a socially and ethnically homogenous population. The surveys carried out so far have proved that these factors are an excellent basis for the creation of more integrated social spaces and for the development of better cross-border co-operation in the border areas (Bufon, 1998a; 2000c).

#### ***The Italo-Slovene border***

Let us now consider different Slovenian border areas, starting with the southern Slovenian-Italian border, where the intense cross-border links have their origins in the social-cultural and social-economic relationships between the urban centres of Gorizia and Trieste, which are located in Italy, and their hinterlands in Slovenia. These relationships are amplified by the presence of an urban or urbanized autochthonous Slovenian minority in these towns and the whole border area (Bufon, 1991). The intensity of these cross-border links is thus the result of a combination of functional and other movements, particularly for reasons of shopping, work, and leisure. They can be influenced by price fluctuations, exchange rates, or purchasing power of the inhabitants in both border areas, and are thus rather unstable, driving the people in either direction. But in addition, there are more stable social-cultural links, deriving from the tendency to maintain one's existing historical and cultural space. These local elements of cross-border communication are especially evident in the border area of Gorizia, which was divided by the current border only in 1947 and prior to that there was a united administration unity with its centre in the town of Gorizia (Bufon, 2001c). The 1947 territorial division was rather uneven: 8% of the territory, but 74% of the population were incorporated into Italy, including a considerable Slovenian minority. Thus the core of the former region of Gorizia was devoid of its natural hinterland, and the hinterland lost its centre. Both the Italian and Yugoslav states were aware that the urban area of Gorizia was threatened with "berlinization", and so, as early as 1949, an agreement that allowed the opening of the first local border passes for the inhabitants who owned property in both countries was passed. Immediately after the an-



nexation of Trieste to Italy, encircled on three sides by Yugoslavia, the 1949 agreement was also applied to this province, and a further liberalisation of the border regime began. At the suggestion of Yugoslavia this agreement was extended along the whole Slovenian-Italian border, where the Slovenian minority has been present, whilst the Italian party proposed to extend the special provisions for cross-border communication also to include the whole of north-western Istria, where the Italian minority was present. From 1955 to 1960, in consequence, the local cross-border traffic in the area of Gorizia increased by 900%. This is even more significant if we consider that it had represented 95% of the total Italian-Yugoslav traffic until the mid 60's when the visa between Italy and Yugoslavia became unnecessary.

Nowadays the local traffic across the southern Slovenian-Italian border still represents 40% of the total cross-border movement (nearly one third in the area of Trieste, and about a half in the area of Gorizia), whereas only 7% of this traffic crosses the northern part of the said border. The border dwellers cross at the local border passes weekly or at least monthly. On the Slovenian side, the population say that the main motivation for visiting the Italian side, is to buy clothes and food. This principal activity is often combined with two others: visiting relatives and friends, or work. Many men from the Slovenian side of the Gorizia borderland are employed in industries in Friuli, as well as seasonal work in the vineyards in the Collio. However this has decreased lately after the improvement of the vineyard industry in the Slovenian Collio, or Brda. Women from the Karst, and Slovene and Croatian Istria, are mostly employed in Trieste as housemaids. The inhabitants of the Italian border area combine five principal reasons when crossing the Slovenian, and, in the case of "Triestini", the Croatian border: visiting friends and relatives, the purchase of fuel, food (especially meat), eating in a restaurant, and excursions.

All the above mentioned activities are performed on both sides of the border within a rather limited area, usually not further than 5 km from the border, but it can reach up to 80 km in the case of employment. To support the social-cultural links, the cultural homogeneity of the population is very important, such as the presence of the Slovenian minority in Italy, which maintains a large part of the "institutional" cross-border links with regard to sport, culture, economy, information, and co-operation between municipalities. Generally speaking, in the 70's and 80's, the Slovenian minority in Italy represented a kind of Yugoslavian "gateway into the world", since a major part of the Yugoslav transactions with Italy and western Europe passed through the Slovenian bank in Trieste (Klemenčič, Bufon, 1991). In addition to this early homoethnic and spontaneous cross-border contacts, others have been developed. Since Slovenian independence, more formal and institutionalized types of

cross-border integration began. Some of these had already been present in other European Euroregions; others are new and go beyond the limited bilateral interests into a wider Alps-Adriatic context, such as the planning of cross-border broadcasting, which should also include the minority radio and tv stations, and the idea of organising the winter Olympic games in the border area between Slovenia, Austria, and Italy.

It is to be expected that the northern part of Istra will enter this cross-border region, as soon as the international questions between Slovenia and Croatia, and between Italy and Croatia are solved, since it has traditionally gravitated towards Trieste (Bufon, 1993b; 2001d). When Slovenia becomes a member of the EU, the regional influence of Trieste will increase, and it will gain its former function in relation to south-western Slovenia, although it should be noted that new centres as Koper and Sežana, have developed, and Trieste will have to cooperate more intensely with them (Minghi, 1994). On the other hand Trieste will become again more multicultural, and the autochthonous Slovenian population, after being kept restricted for most part of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, as Trieste was targetted by irredentists and fascists to become the "most Italian" town, will obtain again an important function in the communication between the Slovenian and Italian cultural space (Bufon, 1994c; Armstrong, 1998). Trieste has already been trying to become something more than a common shopping centre (with 10 shops per 100 inhabitants), where in the 70's and 80's people from different parts of Yugoslavia, even from southern Dalmatia and eastern Serbia, used to do their shopping, and who were partly substituted by purchasers from Hungary in the 90's, during the period of conflicts in former Yugoslavia. In the Gorizia border area there has been the separate development of Gorizia and Nova Gorica, with the latter becoming a kind of Slovenian "substitute" for the lost regional centre and recently almost a monostructural gambling centre for tourists from north-eastern Italy. Now both towns and communities on both sides will have to set more intense and cohesive links with each other, which will help in the creation of a single urban area, as it used to be before the existence of the border. As an example of the "backwardness" of the international policy towards local changes, the extraterritorial road under mount Sabotin, that links Goriška Brda with Nova Gorica, can be noticed: the building of this road had been already demanded by Yugoslavia during the peace conference, when the boundary line was accepted. It was built, however, only in the 80's, as an implementation of the Osimo agreement of 1975, when the major part of the traffic from the Brda already diverged from Nova Gorica to the urban centres in Friuli, which represent the traditional centres for the Brda/Collio area. When Slovenia becomes a member of the EU, this fenced road will probably become a tourist attraction, not just for its view of the twin-towns of Gorizia and

Nova Gorica, but also as a symbol of the divisional role of the political border in the area, similarly to the wired fence that in some parts divides these two towns. After the independence of Slovenia, the Italian post-fascists tried first to tear it down, because it was believed to hinder the Italian influence across the border, but later tried to reinforce it in order to prevent immigration from the "less developed" Slovenia.

In the northern tract of the Italian-Slovenian border the boundary line crosses less populated subalpine and alpine areas, following a long term established line (Bufon, 1992a). This border section, in fact, has not changed since its creation in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, and even if it had from time to time the function of an internal border in Italy or Austria, it has not particularly affected the cross-border contacts of the local population. Because the political boundary line here coincides with the orographic, we can say that natural barriers were stronger than political ones. The landform here has created a number of differently and unevenly connected valleys, which has influenced the structure of the population as well. On the Slovenian side things are a bit "simpler", because there is only the upper valley of the Soča, with its characteristic north-south orientation, which gravitates towards Gorizia, or to the Gorizia-Nova Gorica twin-town. On the Italian side, there is a subalpine system of valleys, upon the Natisone and its tributaries, which form a kind of fan relief converging then western of Cividale in the plain of Friuli. It is a subalpine sequence of narrow valleys, each of which flows in a separate piedmont centre. Three parallel alpine valleys (Resia, Reklanica, and Dunja), on the contrary, are not NE-SW oriented, but east-west, and they are totally isolated due to high natural barriers. Access to them is difficult even from the main valley of Bela, to which they are oriented. Finally, in the border area between Austria, Italy, and Slovenia there is the largest, again east-west oriented valley Valcanale upon the Bela, which has a road connection in the north-west direction along the Ziljica, meeting the valley of Zilja in Austria, and to the east, where it meets the upper Savska dolina in Slovenia. This peculiar configuration gave the Slovenians, who were the first colonisers of the northern part of the present Slovenian-Italian border, two settling directions: from the North, from the present Carinthia to the Valcanale in the 6<sup>th</sup> century, and to the valleys of Dunja, Reklanica, and Resia in the 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> century, where also the southern colonisation stopped. The latter, starting from the 8<sup>th</sup> century, included also the belt between the Soča and the Friuli plain north of Gorizia. Therefore, in the subalpine and pre-alpine area the Slovenes speak the so-called "littoral" dialect, whereas a Carinthian variety is spoken in the Valcanale. The valley of Resia, instead, represents a unique combination of the two, having lost, after the Friulan colonisation of the valleys of Dunja and Reklanica in the 16<sup>th</sup> century, any

contact with the northern population and took over the "southern" Slovene linguistic influences. Because of the isolation of the valley, the dialect of its inhabitants has maintained features lost a long time ago in the other Slovenian territories, and had already become interesting for many linguists in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

### *The "threeborders" region*

The differences between Valcanale and the remaining border area were partly caused by the political boundary line. The historical border, from Carnian Alps through Pontebba to Montasio and between the river systems of Soča/Isonzo and Tagliamento, left Valcanale and Carinthia, the upper Sava valley, part of Carniola, the Isonzo valley and part of the area around Gorizia to Austria. The rest of territory became property of the republic of Venice and later of the Kingdom of Italy. The Italian authorities committed themselves to an intense assimilation process of the autochthonous Slovenian population, especially from 1866 onwards. The traffic openness of Valcanale has also allowed bigger immigration fluxes. With the development of iron industry and economic exchange, Germans and Friulans started to populate this valley since the end of the middle ages. Germans became the dominant community until the end of the First World War. Then the valley became part of the Italian territory and hence the Italian population has become dominant (Klemenčič, 1996; Steinicke, 1996; 1998). An interesting example of how economic motivation can overcome natural barriers and political borders is the tunnel built between Log pod Mangart and the Cave del Predil plumb mine, with its mine railway which was used by the mine workers to travel from Slovenia to Italy, until the mine was closed after the Second World War. Today Valcanale is the only border area, where an Italian or romance population (80%) lives alongside the autochthonous Slovenian and German minorities, consisting of about 10% each. The initiative for a greater co-operation in the three border area of Austria, Italy and Slovenia was not born by chance and neither was the idea of holding the cross-border winter Olympic games in the Valcanale. This idea was later accepted by the Austrian, Italian, and Slovenian authorities and provided the basis for the first mutual considerations in the Threeborders area (Backe et al., 1990; Moritsch, Zimmermann et al., 1998). In the last few years the Valcanale has become a real corridor. The Alpe Adria motorway was built in 1986, and the building of a new railway has commenced. With 10 millions goods in transit and more than 20 million passengers it has become the second most important route, linking Italy with central Europe, after the Brennero.

According to a survey of residents in the Threeborders area carried out at the beginning of the 90's (Gosar, 1993b), there were some differences between the trans-

border activities of Slovenians and Austrians, when compared with Italians. Half of the Austrians and Slovenes interviewed said that they visit the neighbouring country once or a few times a year, 10% said that they visit it weekly, and from 25% to 30% monthly. Whereas, one third of Italians never travels to the other two countries, whilst 20% of the respondents visits the neighbouring countries monthly or even weekly. It has to be pointed out that these answers were given before the introduction of lower priced fuel for the inhabitants of the Italian border area. A typical feature of the functional cross-border visits is that the Slovenians come from the border areas and usually travel to the bigger neighbouring urban centres, whereas the Italians and Austrians usually come from the urban centres and travel to the nearborder area. A special case is the town of Tarvisio. With its 5000 thousand inhabitants it performs a similar function to Trieste, attracting purchasers from Austria, Slovenia, Hungary, and even Germany, who buy mostly Mediterranean food and clothing. About one third of the respondents in the Threeborder area has relatives in the neighbouring country. There is, however, a certain difference in the knowledge of the language of the neighbours: German is understood by 80% of those interviewed in Slovenia, and 70% of those in Italy; Italian is understood by 60% of those interviewed in Slovenia, mainly in the Isonzo valley, and 50% of those in Austria; Slovenian is understood by 40% of those interviewed in Italy and in Austria. Although the number of functional cross-border visits is lower than that in the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border, the potential social-cultural links, shown by the knowledge of the neighbouring languages, is rather high. This factor proves the assertion that cultural spaces are much more stable than political ones, in spite of evident changes caused by the partition of the original social and cultural structures, especially at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century (Moritsch, 1996; Armstrong, 1998). The elimination of outside factors, the normalisation of international relationships, and international integration, have helped to create linking elements, reducing the peripheral character of the Threeborders region, a condition that has not been lessened even by the high transitional fluxes. There are still differences among the Italian, Slovenian, and Austrian parts of the Threeborders. The Slovenian and Austrian part, are, in fact, much better integrated in the wider regional context than the Italian. The result of a recent survey along the Slovenian-Italian border is not a coincidence. About 60% of the respondents in Collio and Valcanale felt the need to improve cross-border integration, whereas this was not felt so strongly in the southern part of the border, and particularly in Trieste, where improvement of cross-border integration is supported by only 30% of respondents. The Slovenian results show a similar geographic disposition, although the respondents were not

so enthusiastic about the potential for integration (Bufon, 2000a). Unfortunately, no similar interviews have been performed in the Austrian part. In any case, no special enthusiasm is expected, with regard to the idea of stronger cross-border links.

Finally, the Threeborders region represents both the advantages and the disadvantages of the central European space and its social and political transformation which have opened processes of spatial convergence and divergence, respectively. The fact that this has long been a united cultural space with a common way of life, but where different ethnic-linguistic communities have coexisted, has to be emphasized. The creation of nation states divided this region into three parts and hindered the normal communication. Later social and economic development has created an area of intense transit in two simultaneous, but separate directions at the Slovenian-Austrian and Italian-Austrian border. The tourist flux has also become more consistent (especially in Slovenia), but it is not equally spread. Therefore, we can say that the "normalisation" of international relationships after the elimination of the "iron curtain" has not reached the local level yet and provided the basis for a stronger cross-border integration. On the macro-regional level, it brought Austria to become a EU member and opened this opportunity to Slovenia, too. But so far, hardly any change has been noticed on the local level since the elimination of the border formalities between Italy and Austria. We can expect that no major changes will occur when border formalities will be abolished on the Slovene-Italian, and Slovenian-Austrian border as well. This is also due to the lack of proper infrastructure and institutional decision-making to support the cross-border communication, such as the unification of border area municipalities, the creation of other common social, economic, and cultural institutions, or of a common co-ordination, plan, and information centre, as is the improvement of the roads in the east-west direction. The idea of organising the winter Olympic games may create the opportunity for greater co-operation in this sense, although it is quite likely that another rejection will decrease the interest of the institutions for further co-operation with the neighbours. Another issue that has slowed down cross-border communication is the past state centralist and standardisation policy. Other reasons can be sought in the lack of bigger urban centres, the low demographic and economic potential of the area, and in the lack of active national minorities on different sides of the border: Valcanale is the only ethnically mixed area of the Threeborders region, with only two-thousand Slovenians and Germans. Nevertheless, the answer to the original question can be found elsewhere: the existing local communities in the Threeborders region have maintained their features within a situation of coexistence, only because they did not use to communicate much with each other. This characteristic, typical of the

"old" borderlands and of the Alpine region in general, could continue to characterize the region even in the future and thus represent a possible way of cultural and spatial self-preservation of its diversity (Bufon, 1999c; 2000a).

### ***The Austrian-Slovene border***

Even stronger are the effects of this division on the intensity of cross-border contacts in the western part of the Slovenian-Austrian border, where the political border is based on the old regional border between Carinthia and Carniola following the orographic border between the hydrographic systems of the Sava and the Drava, that flow along the Karavanke. Because of this, the Slovenian autochthonous population in Carinthia has remained isolated from the major part of its ethnic group, as it happened to the so called "Venetian Slovenes" living in the valleys of the Natisone and the Ter (their name derives from the fact that they had lived in the Republic of Venice since the 16<sup>th</sup> century), especially after 1866. The difference is that the Venetian Slovenes could not take part in the Slovenian national movement and have, therefore, never developed a sense of national identity. The Slovenians in Carinthia, living for many centuries in that region, underwent a process of integration and assimilation into the German world so that their regional identity has become stronger than the national. This was quite clear during the plebiscite after the end of the First World War, when the majority of the Slovenes voted for the stability and the maintenance of the regional structure, and not for a possible annexation to the kingdom of Yugoslavia (Bufon, 1999c). It is still evident nowadays, since the majority of the Slovenes living in Austria call themselves "Carinthian Slovenes" or "Austrians" (Zupančič, 1997). For the same physical and social reasons the Slovenian population of Carinthia has not taken part in the cross-border movements in any greater extent to ethnic German Carinthians. Moreover, their attraction toward Klagenfurt and other urban centres has increased their presence in areas further from the border, but it diminishes their presence in traditionally Slovenian areas. However, only the bordering municipalities in Podjuna along the Karavanke have peripheral features, whilst the area around Klagenfurt and Villach, with highly developed tourist resorts, is one of the most dynamic Austrian areas (Steinicke, Zupančič, 1995). The intensity of cross-border contacts in this border area is very close to that of the Threeborders region. The population on the Austrian side cross the border principally in order to buy fuel, cigarettes from the duty-free shops, and eat in a popular fish restaurant. The latter has started a new trend: the development of "Mediterranean" restaurants in the Alpine region, which somehow emphasizes the Slovenian tourist slogan "on the sunny part of the Alps". The population on the

Slovenian side go to Austria for shopping, and also work. The Slovene language has gained the role of business language, similarly to what has happened in the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border. Its use has become stronger in the bordering area because of economic immigrants from Slovenia, and due to the presence of Slovenian capital in the Austrian banks following the creation of joint-ventures. This, however, decreased since the independence of Slovenia.

The cross-border links along the eastern part of the Slovenian-Austrian border, where the historical region of Styria was divided on ethnic basis at the end of the First World War, have been studied in less extent. The loss of the former hinterland, the interruption of the traffic fluxes, and the passage of land to the rule of the other state have negatively influenced the process of development, especially on the Austrian side, which has become one of the poorest regions in the country (Zsilincsar, 1993). Therefore, the local population has not shown particular enthusiasm towards cross-border cooperation. Local and innovative initiatives, both economic and social, have been started, encouraging cross-border contacts and co-operation in this area. The urban cross-border communication between Graz and Maribor is definitely different and more intense from the rest of the cross-border links in the less developed and more peripheral areas. In a more optimistically balanced situation an improvement in the development of the corridor Graz-Maribor to become the new centre of this part of the Slovenian-Austrian border, can be expected. The co-operation and economic complementarity of both towns might not strengthen the present situation in the strict urban area, but might help neighbouring rural areas to develop. For this purpose, the Austrian part should support the development of the area between the border and Graz and the Slovenian part should widen the development targets to the border (Steiner et al., 1993). Further development in this border area has been supported by intense local cross-border traffic, very similar way of life on both sides of the border, based on the previous coexistence in the same social space and the widespread knowledge of the neighbours' language. This is especially the case among the Slovenians. The presence of the autochthonous Slovenian minority in the Austrian part of Styria, in the area of Radgona, is also important, although it has not been officially acknowledged yet, nor had the opportunity to enhance its natural role of a cross-border linking element.

### ***The "fourborders" region***

The extreme north-eastern political border, where four countries meet: Slovenia, Austria, Croatia, Hungary, has influenced deeply the social-geographic development. The area east of the Mura together with the Croatian territory used to be part of the Hungarian part of the

Habsburg monarchy and it became part of the Yugoslav monarchy after the First World War. The new border broke the former traditional links, leaving a Slovenian minority in the area of Radgona, and in the Austrian and Hungarian territories nearby the river Raba, and a Hungarian minority in the area of Lendava and Goričko. It is interesting that the inhabitants of Prekmurje used to gravitate towards north-west, it means the Austrian part of the monarchy, to conduct their economic activities, rather than the east (current Hungary), or the south (current Slovenia). A later reorientation was hindered by the absence of a bridge across the Mura in the Slovenian part until the First World War, but also in the inter-war period the traffic lines westwards have not improved much. Although the political border has not been modified since the end of the Second World War, it functioned as a strong barrier between the countries, especially towards Austria until the 50's, and later towards Hungary. This caused the area to become strongly peripheral until the 70's and 80's when the Slovenian authorities tried to industrialize Murska Sobota and Lendava (Klemenčič, 1991). Prekmurje remained a kind of "dead area" until the end of the iron curtain and the liberalisation of the economic changes between the east and the west, which occurred mainly through the Slovenian-Hungarian border, in spite of the lack of modern roads and railways. In the past decades, however, the Austrian border has become more permeable: nine border passes have been opened, prevalently intended for local land owners' use, whose propriety is in two countries. As in other borderlands, especially in the southern part of the Slovenian-Italian border and in the eastern part of the Slovenian-Croatian border, this phenomenon of people who owning land in two states, is due to local social links between the people of an area divided subsequently by a political border. The solution of this problem along the Yugoslav-Austrian border was similar to that along the Yugoslav-Italian border: the inhabitants of the 10 km wide borderland belt were permitted to gain special rights to cross the border. This led in western Prekmurje to large numbers of daily and weekly workers employed in Austria. At the same time the nearly hermetic Yugoslav-Hungarian border caused temporal or durable migration, and an eventual demographic erosion (Olas, Kert, 1993).

In the current Slovene-Hungarian border there were nine border passes until 1948. Until the 90's only two have remained and farming on both sides of the border was not allowed. Of enormous importance for the cross-border contacts was the opening of the border passes Dolga vas and Hodoš in 1966, when the visa became unnecessary. In the next years another two border passes were opened, and after 1995 other two. Only a few surveys have been carried out on cross-border links of the inhabitants of the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, and they regard in particular interethnic relations

(Mejak, 1993; 1996). These show that the Hungarian minority in Slovenia is more interested in the visits across the border than their ethnic Slovene co-citizens: 44% of the former group travelled across the border weekly or monthly, and 24% of the second group travelled to Hungary with the same frequency (in year 1991). Among the principal reasons, shopping is the most important, especially in Lenti, where market day, which used to be once a week, now takes place everyday, occupying all available public and private spaces. The members of the Hungarian minority have of course other reasons for crossing the border: visiting friends and relatives (60% of the motivations listed) and cultural events (30%). Only 5% of the people interviewed in the Hungarian part travelled across the border, showing very clearly the situation along the closed border. The answers were more positive in the case of members of the Slovenian minority: 12% of them, in fact, travelled across the border. Among the major reasons was shopping (about 55% of the motivations listed) combined with visits to relatives (about 50%). Cultural events, on the contrary, influence only scarcely the cross-border mobility of the inhabitants of Hungary (embracing only about 10% of the motivations).

### *The Croatian-Slovene border*

The longest Slovenian boundary with Croatia has gained importance among geographers after 1991, when this republic boundary became an international border. Actually, the Slovenian-Croatian border is particularly interesting, because its central part is among the oldest European borders. It used to be the border between the Hungarian and Austrian parts of the Habsburg monarchy, and it had been established between the 10<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> century, as the present border between the Czech and Slovak republics. As such it has influenced the development of later ethnic spaces, and thus the absence of an autochthonous minority on each side of the boundary, is not surprising, in spite of its high permeability. The same ethnic principle was used after the First and Second World Wars to fix the administrative borders in the two "marginal" sections of the current Slovene-Croatian border, those in Istria and along the Mura river (Bufon, 1994d). The transformation of this long-lasting internal border into an international one has brought a number of problems regarding the rationalisation of the boundary line, based mainly on hydrographic lines, which have changed due to regulations, or on the land registers boundaries that originate from the feudal period. But it was the question of the new maritime border in the gulf of Piran that has generated great debates (Gosar and Klemenčič, 1994). The border, however, has not only divided the Slovenian-Croatian border areas in the political sense, but also in the psychological, and at the communication level. The events in former Yugosla-

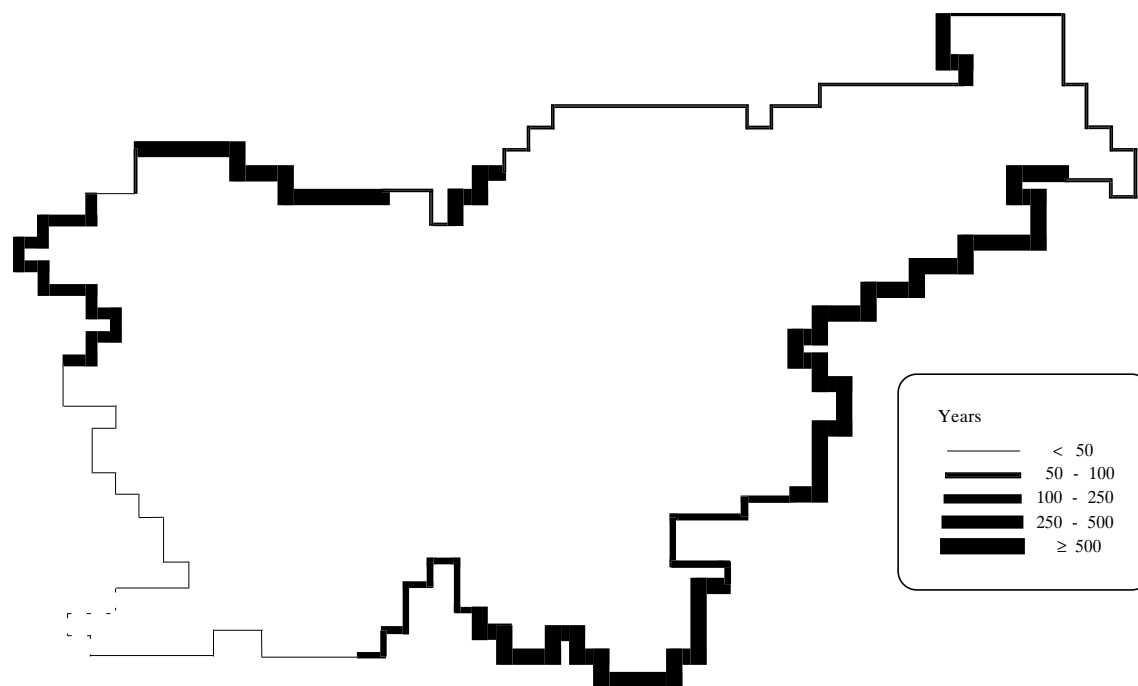
via have played an important role in this sense, too. Since 1991, 26 border passes have been opened, and 10 of them are international. The density of border passes is higher in the eastern part where the density of population is greater. If compared with 1985, the cross-border traffic has decreased by more than 60% since 1991 (Černe, Pelc, 1993), and has negatively influenced the local population, who has interrupted the former cross-border links. Therefore, it is quite urgent that the two countries solve their mutual border questions as soon as possible and find an agreement on the local traffic, similar to that which rules the Slovenian-Austrian and Slovenian-Italian border areas.

A more recent analysis of the Slovenian-Croatian border areas and its geographic feature (Repolusk, 1999) showed that in the period 1971-1991 only in the western sector of Istra was there a demographic increase on both sides of the border, whereas the central and eastern Croatian sector of this region suffered a slight to considerable demographic decrease. A survey conducted among the people in the border areas showed that it was quite common to work on the other side of the border. Cross-border commuters were present before 1991 in about 30% families on the Slovene side, and in about 70% families on the Croatian side, whilst after 1991 this phenomenon involved only 13% families in Slovenia and about 30% families in Croatia. About 15% of the interviewed in Slovenia have members of their family living across the border and 65% of them have their relatives too. These percentages are even higher on the Croatian side: about 25% of the interviewed have family members, and 65% relatives in Slovenia. The reasons for visiting the neighbouring area include visiting relatives and friends on the Slovenian side (about 45% of the motivations listed), whilst on the Croatian side the most cited motivation is shopping (about 45%); about 55% of the Slovenians visit the neighbouring area at least once a month, 30% of them at least weekly. The frequency of cross-border visits on the Croatian side is significantly higher: 85% of the interviewed visit Slovenia at least once a month, and 60% of them at least weekly. The Slovenian-Croatian border area is also the Slovenian border area where the good command of the neighbouring language enables the largest cross-border broadcasting (Medica, 1999). In the Slovenian area, in fact, 50% of the families watch regularly to often Croatian programmes, and 55% of the Croatian families watch Slovenian programmes with the same frequency. One fifth of Slovenian families regularly to often read Croatian newspapers; whilst Slovenian newspapers are read by one third of the Croatian families. Although the above data have not been clustered according to different sectors of the Slovenian-Croatian border, it seems that the intensity of cross-border contacts is higher in the eastern part, where we find a larger number of people, who have property in both states

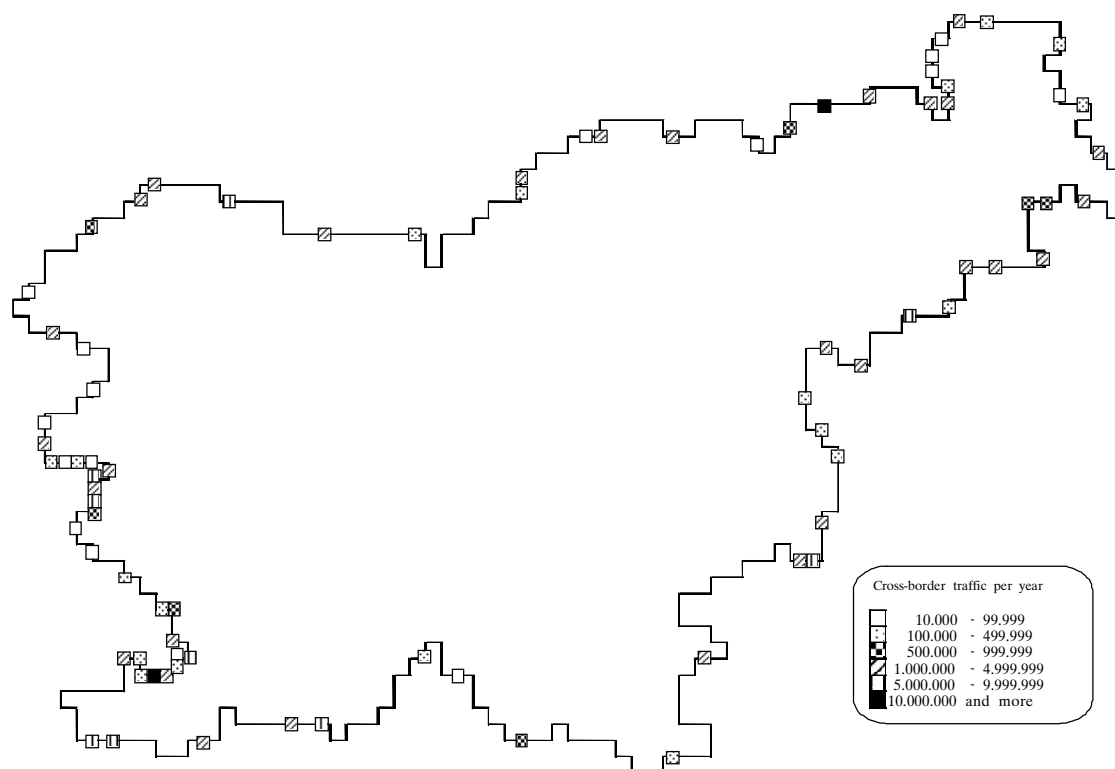
(Belec, 1993). Some differences between individual sections of the Slovenian-Croatian borderland have been detected in another recent survey, which refers to the Slovene side only (Ravbar et al., 1999). According to this survey, 50% to 60% of the interviewed in the Istrian border area have relatives on the Croatian side, but only 4% of them are employed there (before 1991 this percentage was 10%). About one fourth crosses the border monthly or weekly, and the most common reasons are visiting relatives or friends, and recreation. The intensity of cross-border contacts for the same reasons is higher in the central and eastern part of the Slovenian-Croatian border, where 40% of the interviewed cross the border at least once a month or more times. Homoethnic relationships are again very high, as intensity of cross-border contacts among Croats who live in Slovenia is four times higher than among Slovenians.

### Conclusions

It is quite clear that the development of border areas depends on a number of factors. These include different geopolitical situations and different historical experiences of each border section; the nature of political and economic relationships between bordering states; the extent of border permeability; regional conditions, the dynamics of social-economic development in the border area, and the attitude of the population towards the maintenance and development of cross-border links. It is possible to categorise different borderland types according to the number of border posts, frequency of cross-border movements, their functional motivations, and other factors. The surveys carried out in Slovenia so far show that the combination of international factors, such as the increase of economic exchange, tourist fluxes and transitory traffic, and regional factors, that are prevalently linked to the movement of people, goods, and communication within the border area, creates a more complete development, involving not only the traffic corridors and the border centres, but also wider border areas. In this way some border areas along the Slovenian borders have already become real border regions, although they do not have an institutional basis. In contrast to other Euroregions, they are based on spontaneous cross-border links, that involve smaller territories (Bufon, 1998b). Their common feature is the great influence of local factors, which derive from common territorial bonds, and not from momentary international-political and economic demands. Slovenian geography has developed new surveying techniques within social-geographic methodology, particularly in the study of the spatial functions of ethnic and regional communities in borderlands. The contribution of the Slovenian geography has been thus relevant in discovering the extent of spatially relevant social cross-border activities, and the spatial functions of border social



**Fig. 1: Duration of the current Slovenian political borders (graphic: N. Bogatec, 1995).**  
**Sl. 1: Obstoječnost trenutne Slovenske politične meje (graf: N. Bogatec, 1995).**



**Fig. 2: The structure of road border crossings in 2000 according to cross-border traffic (graphic: N. Bogatec, 1995).**  
**Sl. 2: Prepustnost trenutne Slovenske politične meje (graf: N. Bogatec, 1995).**

communities in individual border areas (Klemenčič, Bufon, 1994; Bufon, 1993c; 1996c; 1997b). It has emphasized the importance of border areas and cross-border relationships within them, not only for the development of social and economic integration on the international and interregional level, but also for the maintenance of cultural peculiarities, and for the development of multiethnic coexistence practices and inter-cultural links. This feature of the border areas is present especially in those areas where there are national minorities, and this is a normal condition, rather than an exception, for many European borderlands. On this basis, there is an evident predisposition towards stronger cross-border integration in all those Slovenian border areas, where autochthonous minorities or immigrant communities live, at least on one side of the border. However, this potential can be modified in a more or less effective way by different territorial and regional orientation of the border communities, which derive from the persistence and permeability of the border passes, the development and legal status of the minority group within a nation-state system (Bufon, 1999b; Steincke, Zupančič, 1995; Klemenčič, 1990; 1993b). All this shows a number of new aspects which have become more important for the process of European integration: the elimination of the traditional functions of political border and the improvement of mutual respect in a such a varied cultural space as Europe (Bufon, 2002).

The geography of border areas, due to its political, cultural, and social perspective, has gained an even more important role in the process of "humanising" the traditional geographic attitude towards political, cultural, and social borders (Bufon, 1992b; 1996d). Beside the "macro" cross border transactions within border

communities, "micro" transactions have become more important in the everyday life of local border populations and have helped to overcome conflicts and create harmonic border systems (Minghi, 1991; Bufon, Minghi, 2000). Since many social and economic "micro" transactions are linked, in fact, to cultural relationships among the local border population, relationships which remain quite stable in spite of political transformation, a paradoxical situation seems to occur: border areas which have deeply suffered from being divided, appear now to have the best opportunities to develop into an integrated border region again (Bufon, 2000b). These are, however, only starting points that have to be pushed further: the territorial behaviour of local and regional communities along the borders has to be studied as well as their cultural and spatial identities. As well as analysing those areas well interconnected for functional reasons, it is also necessary to establish the reasons for lower levels of integration in others; surveying methods have to be systemized on either side of the longest and most new border with Croatia, as well as on other border sections; the ratio between the spatial and social situation along internal and political Slovenian borders has to be checked; moreover the role of Slovenia as a borderland between the EU and the Balkans, both from the point of view of its economic and political integration, and the consequences for its internal regional development, must be analysed. Considering its dimension and the above mentioned aspects, Slovenia seems to be a handy "laboratory" for studying border phenomena, border relationships, and cross-border integration in a situation where cultural peculiarities are maintained, and which continue to influence "new" and "old" border areas of Central Europe.

## SLOVENIJA – EVROPSKI KONTAKTNI IN MEJNI PROSTOR

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### POVZETEK

*V članku so najprej predstavljene glavne teme avtorjevega raziskovalnega interesa pri proučevanju konvergentnih in divergentnih procesov v evropskih kontaktnih prostorih na primeru Slovenije. Opredeljene so socialno-geografske metode proučevanja manjšinskih skupnosti ter procesov družbene modernizacije, ki vodijo v oblikovanje sodobnega interetničnega kontinuuma, hkrati pa sodobne vloge manjšinskih in lokalnih skupnosti v pogledu družbene in prostorske integracije kontaktnih območij ter prehoda od potencialno konfliktnih v koeksistenčne oblike medetničnega in čezmejnega povezovanja. Proučevanje območij družbenega stika je še posebej pomembno v času evropskega povezovanja in odpravljanja učinkov pregrade političnih meja, ko je treba poskrbeti za učinkovitejšo upravljanje mejnih oziroma kontaktnih prostorov in v njih preveriti dinamiko, učinke in možnosti družbene integracije ter uveljavljanja nove evropske paradigme "združenosti v različnosti". V nadaljevanju je obširneje prikazan primer Slovenije kot enega izmed najbolj izrazitih kontaktnih območij v Evropi. Podrobneje so prediskutirani ele-*



menti naravnega, kulturnega in družbenega stika na območju Slovenije in slovenskega etničnega prostora, politično-geografski in geopolitični faktorji transformacije družbenega prostora, proces oblikovanja političnih meja na območju Slovenije ter lastnosti posameznih mejnih odsekov. Prispevek končno obravnava sedanji obmejni status Slovenije, vzroke in elemente čezmejne soodvisnosti slovenskih obmejnih območij ter medsebojno povezanost družbeno-kulturnih podlag čezmejne povezanosti s funkcionalnimi motivi čezmejnega sodelovanja, ki jih je avtor posebej utemeljil in poglobil na primeru slovensko-italijanskega obmejnega območja in na tej osnovi razvil posebno metodologijo proučevanja evropskih obmejnih in etnično mešanih območij. V zaključku se poudarja pomen proučevanja kontaktnih prostorov v Sloveniji, ki sodi med najbolj primerne "laboratorije" za razumevanje učinkov historičnih in modernih političnih meja na evropskem kontinentu, kakor tudi procesov evropske integracije na kulturno, družbeno in prostorsko strukturo stičnih območij.

**Ključne besede:** politična geografija, kontektni prostori, Slovenija, manjšine, politične meje, cežmejni kontakti

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