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Institute of Geography
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**THE ROMANIAN – HUNGARIAN BORDER REGION AND THE
CROSS BORDER COOPERATIONS IN THE CARPATHIAN
EUROREGION**

Theses of the PhD dissertation

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1. Introduction

As far as their relationship in the 20th century is concerned, Romania and Hungary have been enemies most often; however, there existed periods of time when they belonged to the same alliance. The two states belong to an alliance at present, as well, but the framework of this one is totally different from the previous ones. The two countries willingly joined this new European system, and they were not forced by foreign dictatorial forces. This new situation can be the basis of a prosperity relying on peace, thus creating the possibility for tolerance and dialogue, and cooperation to prevail over rivalry and enmity. It goes without saying that one of the most suitable spatial framework of this cooperation is the border region, the space where the two countries meet. The conditions are more adequate on the sub-regional level, as there is a possibility of spatial organization according to the local willingness, in line with the new European territorial ideology, regionalism. This local willingness has to set the direction of the cross – border cooperation in the future.

2. Aims and hypotheses

The aim of this paper is to map the institutionalized and informal ways of cooperation in the Romanian – Hungarian cross-border region in the Carpathians Euro-region, to determine the *social, economical, infrastructural* and *environmental* factors that could determine the possibilities of manifestation of the cooperation starting from the tetrahedron model of Tóth József and transplanting it to the complex, systematized research (TÓTH, J. 2003). Another aim of the paper is to research the cohesion of the neighboring regions toward a possible integrated border-region in the future. We also study the present and past effect of the border on the development of territorial inequalities, its preservation in time; we also look into the attitudes and expectations of the local people, if they are passive or initiative towards the new developmental prospects of the cross-border cooperation.

Based on the above mentioned aims we formulated the following hypotheses:

- the peripheral position of the border region enhances the development of a disadvantageous social and economical situation
- the territorial cohesion of the border region does not represent a problem as far as the future integrated region is concerned
- the attitude of the local people, especially the authorities is positive, communicative and cooperative on both sides

- besides the institutionalized forms of cooperation there is a developing trend of interactions related more to the everyday dimensions of the border region.

It is clear that based on previous studies the present paper considers the border an obstacle, an edge and a linking element in the same time (NEMES NAGY, J. 1998). As far as the planning of the research and the categorization are concerned we used mostly Andrea Kampschulte's model as starting point. This model, besides studying the cross-border projects and economical cooperation also studied the border as an element of the economical space, of the settlement network space and as an element of urban planning (KAMPSCHULTE, A. 1999). In addition we used the Hansen – hypothesis (quote in: BÉRES, K. 2001) to study the spatial effect of the proximity of the border on the interregional spatial systems and on the social-economical status.

3. Methods

During the study we used various methods, most of which are widely used in social sciences, such as:

- *active observing* to gather general information, most of the time "face to face" consultation and discussion with the local people (especially the authorities) who are competent in the management of cross-border relationships;
- related to the above method is the *primary analysis*, aimed at the authorities as well, from the quantitative point of view (questionnaires) and the qualitative point of view (unstructured interview)
- *secondary – mostly quantitative analysis* – processing of statistic data, using cartograms in the visualization of the results; factor analysis to decrease the number of variants, the possible disturbing variants and the following interpretations, thus increasing the internal validity.
- *Categorization* based on the above methods
- *Meta-analysis, studying the secondary bibliography, document analysis*, primarily to theorize the cross-border relationships as well as to categorize these, or the analysis of the data gathered by third parties;

The four neighboring counties were chosen as the territory for research based on the idea that it is not fortunate to predetermine the coverage of the border idea, to restrain this coverage only to the settlements near the borderline or to an area determined by a certain distance. The counties researched (Satu Mare, Bihor, Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg and Hajdú-

Bihar) represent an easy territory from the technical point of view, as the statistic data gathered for this territory and the larger territorial scale reflects in a better way how the presence of the border differentiates the neighboring territories from the inland territories. In relation to my research I had the possibility to study half a year at the Institut für Länderkunde in Leipzig, with an Alexander von Humboldt grant. When I presented my research plan to my colleagues their advice inspired me not to “pre-judge” the existence of a border zone, to allow the territory to unfold according to the indicators which helps or prevents the individualization of a border area. We also have to take into account that the cooperation takes place mostly on county level, as well as in the 2007-2013 HU-RO cross-border program, financed primarily by the EU, the targeted territories are the four neighboring counties.

Most of the statistic data used in the study come from the Statistical Institutes of the two countries, (country and county level). In addition specific data have been provided by the Romanian county councils, the Department for Agricultural and Rural Development, the SAPARD and PHARE offices, the Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the APEH (Hungarian IRS) and the Regional Cross-border Cooperation Offices.

The paper also tries to give insight into the ideas presented by the Romanian bibliography, thus providing a sample of the work of the specialists in the neighboring country.

We also have to mention the selection process of the sample taking part in the questionnaire and unstructured interview phase of the information gathering. We focused on people involved in the management of the cross-border cooperation as they have an inner vision of the processes and thus they have the power to synthesize. They were a good sample also because they had the skill to pinpoint the important questions thus helping to grasp the main idea. It proved to be the easiest solution from the technical point of view as well, since the individual research, lacking the necessary funds is not able to cover so many people, however, interviewing a random selection of everyday people would have given a much better insight on the day to day dimensions of the border zone. The mayors and vice-mayors had to fill in a questionnaire, which is mentioned in the literature as being comprehensive, thus the problem of the representativity of the sample does not appear, even though it was a small group.

The idea of the unstructured interviews is based on the same principle; we tried to assure that the representatives of the larger socio-economical regions of the border zone will be represented. The basic idea was to map the dimensions and variety of the cooperation, and the spontaneous discussion made it possible to involve other relevant details in the analysis. The

interviews took place with the help of Dr. Nagy Gábor, collaborator at the Regional Research Centre in Békéscsaba, in a mutual research project.

4. Results – main observations of the research

The first chapter of the dissertation is the so called conceptual part, in which we discuss the interpretations of the border-region concept in the specific literature; we also look at the ways of studying and categorizing of the forms of cooperation, among these we used the cooperation-analysis model of Ricq and the Kampschulte discussion model as starting points (RICQ, CH. 2006, KAMPSCHULTE, A. 1999). The following large chapters take the spatial elements of the border region in thematic units, studying the level of overlapping between them with regard to the development of a possible integrated border region. In this respect we mention the natural – environmental substrate, the demographical processes, the settlement network, the economy, then the concrete relations of the border regions, which specifically model the space. The short summary of these and the analysis of the results is presented in the following.

4.1.Natural and environmental background analysis

The natural environment of the border region shows a great variety, although the plain areas are representative because of their predominance on the Hungarian part. The total surface of the studied area is 24110 km² from which 12148 km² is Hungarian part (50,4%) and it is entirely plain area. On the Romanian part all three types of relief are present, in Bihor county they are proportional, in Satu Mare county the plain area is predominant. The Romanian part is richer in natural resources (high agricultural potential, thermal waters, ore, large forest areas, potential for tourism) than the Hungarian part (high agricultural potential, thermal waters, potential for tourism).

The environment of the border region shows critical states from many points of view, mostly because of the significant pollution events of the recent past. This is why a priority of the cross-border cooperation must be the prevention and eradication of such events and the development of a mutual ecological salvation plan in the case of such catastrophes. The points of origin of the pollution (slurries) must be eradicated as, beside the negative environmental effect it also affects the bilateral good relations. In addition to the water environment, the atmosphere is also in danger but the possibility for this type of pollution is reduced due to the western currents, s on the Hungarian part, such a point exists only somewhat farther inland (Tiszaújváros).

An important part of the environmental issues is the problem of flood prevention and generally the problem of water resource management and its synchronization. From this point of view it would be useful to build a chain of several multifunctional reservoirs on the Tisza river and its affluents, high up the rivers in Romanian and the Ukraine, in order to prevent floods more effectively, and to eradicate extreme runoffs. In the same time, an equally efficient method of flood prevention would be the eradication of unauthorized deforestation and poaching.

From the point of view of flood prevention it is very important to mention the monitoring system on the upper flow of the Tisza River, helped by the cross-border regional cooperation. In the same time, on international level there must be a stronger accent on the principle of “the polluter pays” for prevention purposes.

As far as the protection of the environment is concerned, it would be important to have cross border national parks and protected areas. In this respect the Hungarian attempt to repopulate the Ecsed marshes is to be supported, thus, with the revival of the former water-world a tourist attraction would come to life besides the obvious ecological profit. In the same time, following western European models, the construction of mutual water cleaning plants would be possible, which would serve the villages near the border and each other. This solution would be more cost-effective as not all villages have the material resources for a water cleaning plant and from the ecological point of view it would protect the border region. Examples as these already exist on the Austrian – Hungarian border.

4.2 Population issues

It appears very clearly, that the Hungarian counties, although affected by the phenomenon of demographical erosion, have a more positive demographical situation as compared to the national average, as their population grows older more slowly. As far as the population structure is concerned, the Hungarian counties only show a more positive image in the case of age structure, than the national average. The proportion of the Romany population is large, especially in the small villages of Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county. The disadvantaged group character of the Gypsies should be eradicated as a priority; in order to achieve this synchronized cross – border measures would be necessary and special territorial and urban developmental projects for the settlements where the Romany population is numerous. As a priority, the question of vocational training should be solved, that is de-centralized, in order to make it easier for the Romany population to attend these classes, as their only chance to escape their almost desperate social condition is to have a job.

On the Romanian side of the border, the population is also in the phase of irreversible decrease. In spite of these the Romanian counties are characterized by greater attraction force for the population, better values as far as employment is concerned and by higher rate of infant mortality. The increasing lack of qualified work force in Romania and in Hungary has become an impediment for investments and employment in general.

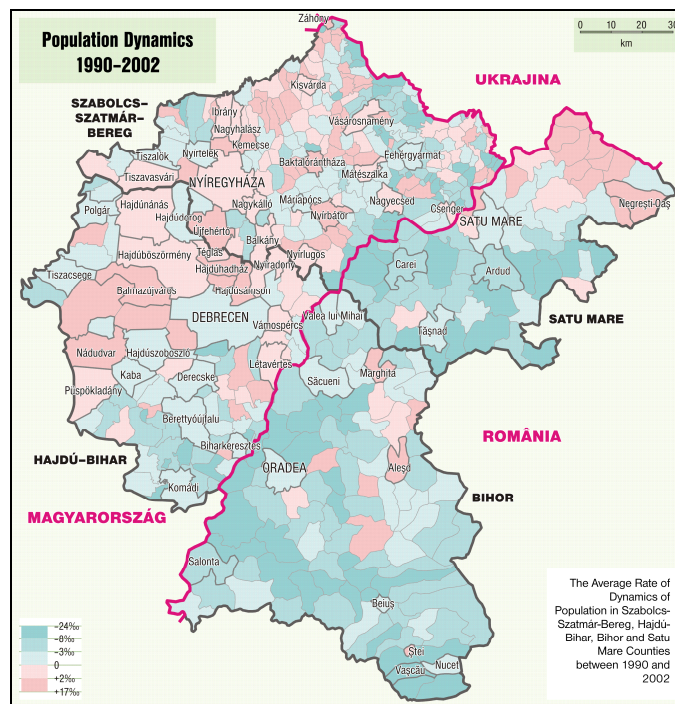


Fig. 1 – The average values of the natural growth in the studied counties in 1999 – 2002 (%) Source: The National Institute of Statistics both countries

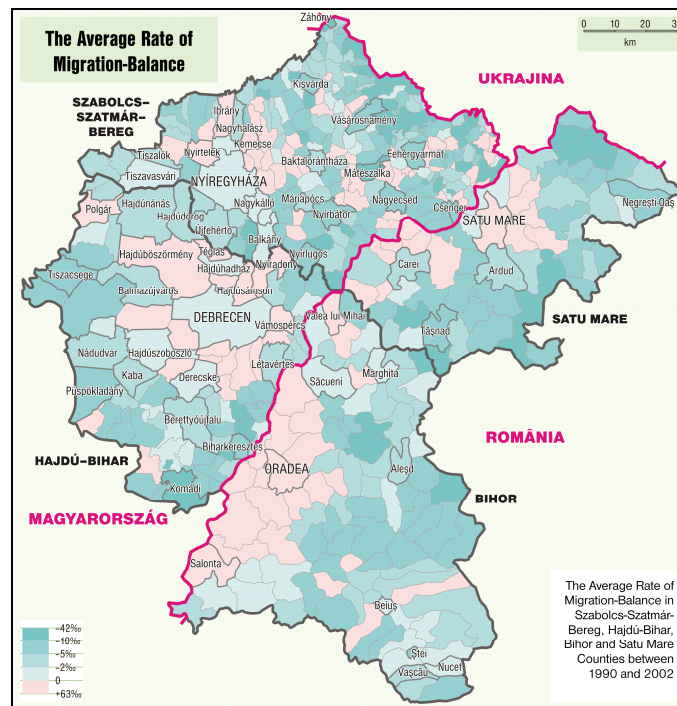


Fig. 2 – The average values of the migration difference in the studied counties in 1999 – 2002 (%) Source: The National Institute of Statistics of both countries

The mass growth of higher education on both sides has led to a dramatic drop in quality, thus degrading the diploma to the level of an A-level exam, which is hardly in accordance with the requirements of the workforce market. Thus, even if the number of university graduates on both sides of the border is lower than the national average, the increasing of the number of students is not suggested; instead the quality of the education should be increased by offering diplomas required on the market.

4.3. The settlement network of the border region

There are 996 settlements in the studied region, the majority (68,8%) on the Romanian side (in Bihor county there are 457 settlements in 96 communal structures, and in Satu Mare county there are 229 settlements in 60 communal structures). On the Hungarian side, Hajdú-Bihar county has 82 settlements and Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county has 228. As opposed to Romania, in Hungary every settlement has local authorities, with elected mayor and board of representatives. This wide territorial democracy is completely irrational from the economical point of view, it is not supportable financially, and it presses for the territorial – administrative reform of the country, which would concentrate the settlements of Hungary (around 3200 settlements) into a smaller number of micro-regional units with only one local authority. In the same way, it would be useful for both Romania and Hungary to decrease the importance of

the county level and to place the regional elected administration on the level of the developmental regions (NUTS II), thus making territorial management easier and more cost-effective. The social resistance and the county level lobby have so far resisted this initiative both in Romania and Hungary.

Urbanization is in a more advanced phase in Hungary; here the 746,869 city population represents 66.2 % of the total of the region. On the Romanian side, meanwhile, both Bihor and Satu Mare county have 967,527 inhabitants, and 447,339 (46.2%) lived in cities or towns in 2002. The Hungarian counties have a higher degree of urbanization and there's a larger concentration of population in the settlements, thus positioning them into a more advantageous place.

Rural population on the Hungarian side and in the Romanian Satu Mare county is concentrated in large villages, whereas in Bihor county in medium-sized villages. There is a region with small villages in the Szatmár part of the Hungarian Szabolcs-Szatmár-Bereg county, and typically farm areas appear in the Nyiregyhaza zone.

The settlement system in this border region is not a uniform system, due to the fact that it had been a region crossed by borders during the past century. The complete disappearance of the border in the Schengen Convention, as well as the reformulation of the developmental axes in the borderless space (primarily along the newly built highways and informational highways) can lead to the reshaping of the settlement hierarchy. The settlements of the border zone, without a border could become a uniform settlement structure with multiple interdependencies, with stronger interregional interlocking instead of the now existing extra-regional movements.

4.4 Economical cohesion along the border

We can state that the economical transition period has had high costs both in Hungary and in Romania. These costs can be ascribed to the high social expenditure that followed the collapse of the centralized pre-planned economy. The only positive outcome was the dawn of democracy which made the cross-border cooperation itself possible, increased the permeability of the border and enlarged the communicational potential. The market economy has selected the figures of the former economy, and the vast majority of them have been found uncompetitive in the new situation.

From our unstructured interviews it appeared that from the point of view of economical cooperation the Hungarian part was more active, probably because of the higher

entrepreneurial culture and the fullness of the Hungarian market's offer. This fact determines the local entrepreneurs to be more motivated in finding investment opportunities on the other side of the border than the more precautious Romanian investors who are still able to develop on the home market.

Hungarian investors have found what they have been looking for mostly in small scale retail, construction and processing. The economical crisis as of 2008 has seriously affected businesses on both sides of the border. The Romanian party considers that the governmental support system and the higher degree 'know how' on the Hungarian part represent clear advantage for these investors. They see possibilities of cooperation mainly in agriculture and in the related processing industry, in tourism and in construction.

After a systematic analysis of the social – economical indicators, which has been done in order to establish the spatial-territorial cohesion of the two sides of the border, we can state that at present the Hungarian side is at advantage as far as infrastructural development is concerned, especially public services; in some cases this statement is valid as far as human resource indicators and demographical indicators are concerned. However, these differences are not impossible to overcome and they cannot represent the obstacle of an effective cross-border relation network.

In Romania and in Hungary, as is the case in the countries of the third world, the differences (inequalities) in territorial development appear mostly along the city-village fault, between the different categories of settlements, whilst the inter-regional differences are more difficult to observe.

Regional inequalities start to develop in the same time with the rapid economic development (boom) (according to the Williamson-hypothesis – 1965, simultaneously with the revenue inequalities between different social categories, according to the Kuznets – hypothesis, 1955), (quote in: NEMES NAGY J. 2005), a period which follows the economic depression and stagnation, two characteristics of transition economies. Romania is going through this phase at present, a phase called "beta-convergence", taking into account the rapid pace of development and the low developmental base point (of course, all these have been temporarily set upside down by the economical crisis of the world). The duality of the developed and under-developed regions starts to gain importance in this period, whereas the differences in development between settlement categories (city-village) begin to lose importance. Thus, this process will later lead to a territorial leveling from the point of view of development, and in the later phases of economical development it will be completely

indifferent if the individual comes from a city or from a village; it will be more important if they come from a developed region or an underdeveloped one, but generally the differences in territorial development decrease with the advance of the convergence phase. As a result of this process development in general spreads as a network, generating salient and drop – off regions it selects the elements of the social space.

In Eastern Hungary, the external part of the borderline counties has more disadvantageous social-economical indicators than the internal part – *this fact proves that the presence of the border has a negative effect on the social space structure on the Hungarian part of the studied region.* The disadvantageous situation of the rural areas is due to the fact that following WWI they *lost their polarizing center.* Inner peripheral areas are also present, such as the Polgár micro-region. In contrast with this the Romanian side the borderline is in a more advantageous situation as this region overlaps with the city line near the border, which is a more urbanized area, with relatively well developed linear elements of infrastructure. The peripheral areas of the Romanian side appear on the northern and eastern parts of the studied counties, which overlap with some isolated hilly or mountainous areas or they are inner peripheral areas (the Királydaróc micro-region in Satu Mare county). The city-village dichotomy has been shown by the factor analysis as well, during which the dynamic regions have acquired specific shape (regional centers, Negrești-Oaș area, the central areas of the Beiuș basin, Hajdúhát and the Szabolcs plain). The underdeveloped, drop – off regions of Satu Mare county and Bihor county are their northern and southern parts, the Hungarian Bihar area, the Tiszamente and the Szatmár-Bereg plain.

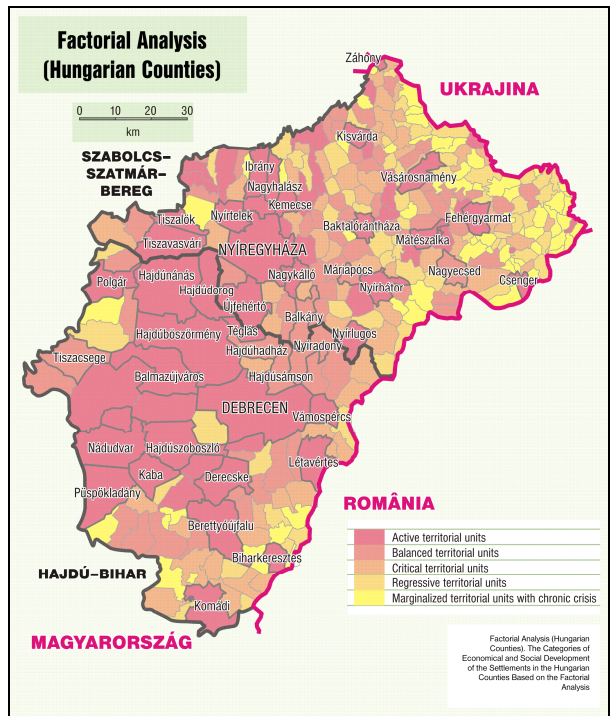


Fig. 3. The categories of the social-economical development level in the studied Hungarian counties (our own calculations)

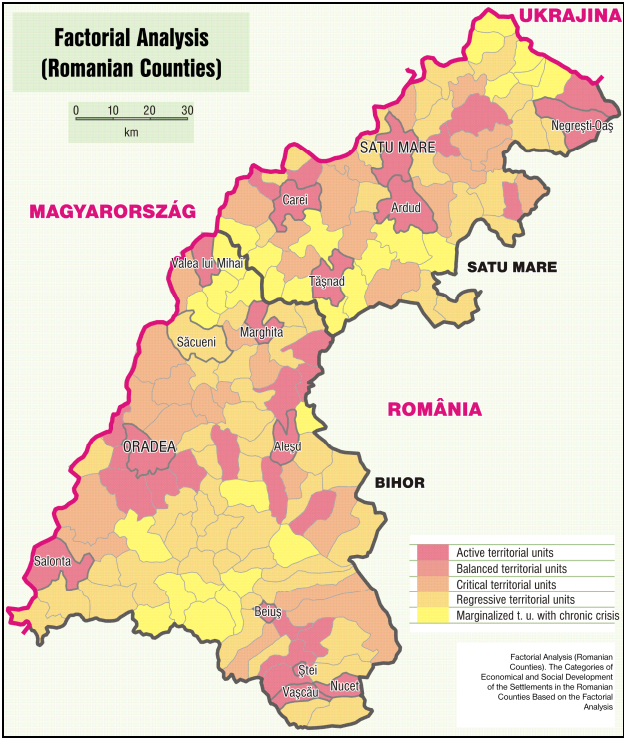


Fig.4. The categories of the social-economical development level in the studied Romanian counties (our own calculations)

As a result, the main forms of territorial inequalities in the border area appear on the following territorial levels:

- 1.) On the *city – village* level, the former being at advantage;
- 2.) Between the *inner territories* and *the borderline areas*, the former being at advantage on the Hungarian side;
- 3.) Between the *inner territories* and *the borderline areas*, the latter being at advantage on the Romanian side;
- 4.) From the *four studied counties*, the *two Hungarian counties* being at advantage;
- 5.) And last, but not least there appears a very striking *demographical inequality* in the Romanian Satu Mare county, between the *more dynamic northern part* and the *regressive southern part*.

4.5 Forms of cooperation along the border

As far as the forms of cooperation are concerned we can conclude that the four studied counties have developed a wide range of forms of cooperation under the shield of the Carpathians Euro-region or as part of the later established three sub-regions. At the beginning, on the Romanian part, only citizens with Hungarian nationality took active part in this cooperation. Fortunately this one-sidedness is decreasing as more and more Romanian citizens and organizations want to take part in the building of relations and management of programs. All these aspects refer to the *ethnic-cultural* and *socio-communicative dimensions* of the relations, as stated by German researcher Christoph Waack (WAACK CH. 2000).

The *political dimension* of the bilateral relations has somewhat overlapped the *socio-communicative* aspect which was especially active between 2004 and 2008, when the Democratic Union of the Hungarians in Romania (RMDSZ/UDMR) were the leaders of the County Council in both Romanian counties. This made the cooperation much easier on the linguistic-cultural dimension. This fact must not be overrated, though as other Romanian political parties, that is the ones based not on ethnical principles, considered it a top priority to cooperate with the Hungarian party. There are many positive examples before 2004 and in the present period. Aside from the period of the 1990', when Romanian political circles considered all Hungarian Euro-regional ambition an attempt to reestablish the former historic Hungary, as of 1997 the two Romanian counties are active parts of the cooperation as they became parts of the Carpathians Euro-region. However, de-centralization is not as advanced in Romania as it is in Hungary, where the counties and settlements have greater liberty in setting the direction of the cooperation. As far as co-operational projects are concerned, the

Romanian party is still very often dependent on the central ‘thumbs up’, a fact that many times hinders the advance of the projects.

The four counties along the northern part of the border have successfully identified the priorities of their cooperation and these have been outlined in the funding documents of the euro-region. These co-operational areas involve economical, natural and environmental, cultural, scientific and educational issues; the maintenance of good relationships with the neighbours, as well as the facilitation of building relations between the different nationalities of the euro-region. The concrete details of the everyday dimension of the cooperation are revealed by the unstructured interviews with the members of the local authorities. We can conclude that there have been results in the educational issue by establishing a so-called ‘sister-school’ system and through the teachers’ unions; as far as the health system is concerned there have been results through exchange programmes and by establishing a cross-border system of GP surgeries. In the case of the civil organizations it is important to mention the cooperation in social issues, in adult training, in assistance with projects and management of settlements.

The audit analysis resulting from our study is meant to uncover the disfunctionalities of the spatial economical system, the points of intervention with remedial purposes, especially to decrease the peripheral feature of the Hungarian side. The eradication of social-economical periphery status, as a result of the peripheral position of the border regions, and of the underdevelopment in the ‘interface’ territories of the EU (that is the border regions) would strengthen the territorial cohesion of the macro-regional integration, thus it is not only a national issue for the countries in question, but it is also an EU interest.

We can also conclude that in the Romanian – Hungarian border region there developed some euro-regions that function as “labs” or “incubators” in the process of reconciliation between the two nations, a process which has had its successes and failures and needs more patience. This cooperation is in a close relationship with the bilateral relations on higher level, in a sense that it can influence these relations in a positive or a negative way. On the level of formal cooperation the so called “sister towns” relations have proved to be very successful on county and city level as well, and the cooperating parties have shown the greatest formal activity.

According to Charles Ricq’s theory on the phases of cross-border cooperation, the Romanian-Hungarian cross-border cooperation has stepped into the *concrete cooperational phase (the third phase)* as cooperation takes place on institutional level, aided by consultative boards (RICQ, 2006). Local and regional authorities have shown a willingness to spread the

cooperation in various other directions. The preliminary, dialogue phase, promoted by the Carpathians Euro-Region, in the 1990's has had an important effect on the efficacy of the cooperation. These days, the operational part of the cooperation has been overtaken by sub-regional territorial formations (such as the Hajdú-Bihar – Bihor or the Bihar-Bihor Euroregions) as well as the regional operational programmes, which are more flexible and adaptable in carrying out projects focused on concrete problems. According to the analysis we can conclude that the border region is not threatened by such centripetal forces that would cause spatial dysfunction. As a conclusion we can ascertain that as far as the future is concerned the advantageous conditions that would make this region an integrated unit in the Schengen area already exist.

The questionnaires filled in by the mayors of the Romanian county have provided new and relevant information on the status of the collaboration and on the possibilities of its expansion. As opposed to the Hungarian leaders the Romanian mayors and vice-mayors did not feel they lived in a peripheral region, probably because Satu Mare county (average development) and Bihor county (developed) have a superior developmental status in Romania, and because the border region in Romania is a more developed, more urbanized area.

The majority of the Romanian mayors interviewed, irrespective of the fact if they have or do not have 'sister town' relations with Hungarian settlements, do not consider language problems, historically rooted distrust, different national mentalities and administrative problems to be an obstacle in the way of cross-border cooperation. Characteristically, those Romanian settlements that do not have 'sister town' relations blame this on the lack of information, whilst those having such relations have an equally differentiated opinion about its importance or lack of importance in the building of relations. Those without such relations consider that the legal-economical factors are responsible for the hindering of the cross-border interactions, whereas those settlements which had such relations had different opinions, in an equal measure, about the importance of this factor. Those settlements which already have cross-border relations consider, that the different territorial planning policies can be a serious obstacle in the way of cooperation (they probably have personal experience), while those settlements which lack such relations, underestimate the importance of this aspect, probably because of their lack of experience. Both categories of settlements consider that the different governmental subvention policies can hinder the effective cross-border relations (especially economical ones).

There is a dire need for propositions on new ways of cooperation and on the expansion of the present ones in order to deepen the Romanian-Hungarian relations and to promote trust in the future. This can never be a finished process as it is a dynamic one. Hungary's relation with its south-eastern neighbor is a kind of "stop – go" relation; whereas with Romania a balanced relation is not only an economical must, but it is the only way to promote the interests of the largest Hungarian community outside the borders of Hungary. The relations with Romania start at the border, so the correct channeling of the social - spatial processes taking place is the geo-strategic interest of both countries – this can be stated without a doubt.

4.6 The synthetic spatial representation of the border region

In order to be able to model and synthesize the spatial network of the studied region we drew up a spatial model, meant to uncover the rules behind territorial organization.

We can thus conclude that the central part of the region is represented by that trapezoid unit which has at its apices the four regional centres, and the sides of the trapezoid are the axes of energy and information currents, which practically represent the frame of the region. This trapezoid is almost perfectly symmetrical, on the southern side there are the two primary regional centres (Debrecen and Oradea) while the two secondary growth poles are on the northern side (Satu Mare and Nyíregyháza). These settlements form a so-called 'twin city' structure, with advantageous cooperative possibilities, as they belong to the same dimensional category, and thus they "sense" each other better, they accept each other as equal partners. The third category of the growth poles is made up of those middle sized or small towns that have that critical social-economical critical mass that allows them to fulfill the role of small region centres (Hajdúszoboszló, Berettyóújfalu, Mátészalka, Záhony, Avasfelsőfalu, Nagykároly, Székelyhíd, Nagyszalonta, Belényes). These poles are placed either along the main growth axis or along the secondary one, thus functioning as the elements of the inter - axial space. We also have to mention that this role can be fulfilled only partially, as apart from Hajdúszoboszló, we can talk about the dominance of the small town. Taking the region as a whole it is obvious that there is a complete lack of middle sized cities, a fact necessary for the balance of the inhabited space, in order to counterbalance the dominance of the regional centers with hypertrophy.

The primary axis and the main communication highway of the region is the Budapest – Kiev – Moscow line of force, which crosses the central part of the Hungarian side of the border region, and it is made up of an international road and a high performance electrified

double railroad. The spinal chord of the traffic in this region is made up of the rail cargo transport, passenger train traffic is the most intense on the Budapest – Debrecen – Nyíregyháza line, but it is completed by the international passenger transport towards the Ukraine and Russia. This line of force is a visible residue of Hungary's Comecon orientation and it will go on being a primary axis of communication as long as the eastern-Hungarian highways connect to the "Transylvania" highway that is under construction in Romania. As soon as this has taken place the actual spatial structure might undergo some modifications, the direction of the main axis will shift from south-north to west-east or northwestern – south-eastern by providing a route for transit traffic to Northern Europe and inside the borders of the EU (Poland, Baltic states and Scandinavia). If, however, the M4 highway will be completed it is possible that the Budapest-Debrecen-Nyiregyhaza axis will regain its former importance. At present, due to low exploitation the Polgár-Nyíregyháza part of the M3 highway and the Görbeháza-Debrecen part of the M35 highway are only secondary axes, as well as road 42 (E 60, 1), an international road with intense traffic on the Püspökladány-Oradea-Cluj part as these have a less intense rate of traffic than main road 4. In the same time, on the Romanian side of the border this E 60 TEN play the main role in the spatial movements. There is a third degree axis on the north-south direction in the plain area of the Romanian side represented by the main road and railroad on the Halmeu-Oradea-Keményfok part (with an extension to the south, towards Arad, Timișoara, Belgrad). Among the third degree axes we also have to mention the Nyíregyháza-Satu Mare- Baia Mare road, which only permits road transport between the two countries, but in case that in the future the Nyíregyháza – Satu Mare railroad should be reintroduced the entire line of force will have a double function. Another third degree axis is the road connecting Oradea with the Beiuș basin (a road partly paralleled by the railroad) which extends towards Deva and has a connection to the transit road of the Aries valley. In the category of third degree line of force belongs the Satu Mare- Zalău- Cluj road, which is not paralleled by railroad, although there is intense traffic on it.

The main characteristic of the inter-axial space is determined by dominant ways of land exploitation and they appear as territorial units with a lax texture. The way land is exploited is also determined by the relief, each and every height level has its own forms.

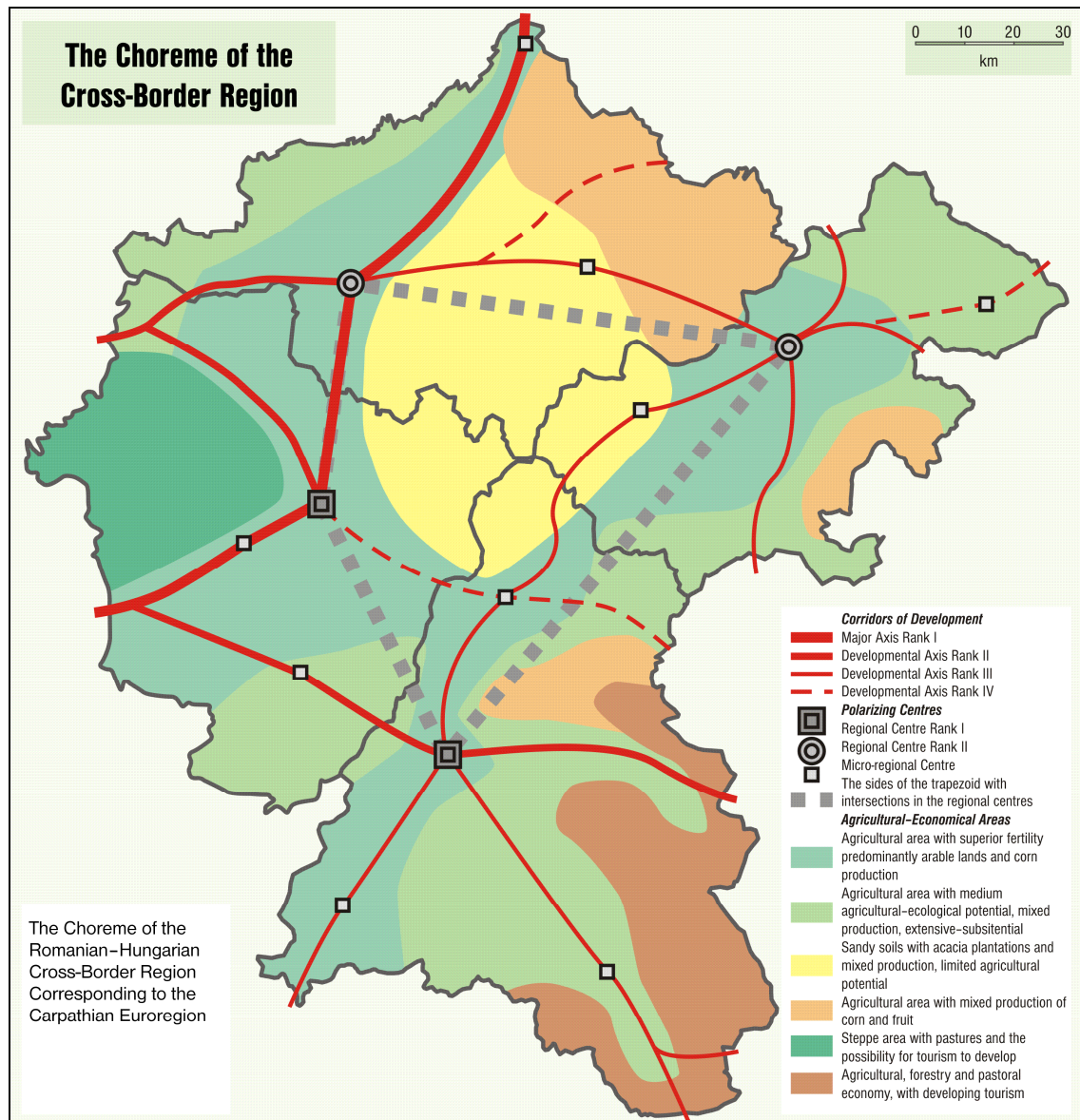


Fig. 5. The spatial model of the border region (our own map)

5. Conclusions and the future extension possibilities of the research

The studied border region is considered a peripheral area both in Romania and in Hungary, which wants to change exactly its marginalized character by using the possibilities of cross-border cooperation that have spread and have become institutionalized after the fall of the communist regime. The border region searches for opportunities of economical and social development and tries to reestablish the former status of integrated region, where the spatial continuity had not been disrupted by artificial lines of discontinuity. The cross border relations have also served a strategic interest, that is through the multiplication of informal contacts, the inter – ethnic and intercultural dialogue has deepened, a fact that could lead to

the disappearance of the mental barriers between the two parties, after two centuries of rivaling nationalism. In this respect the cross-border cooperation is a perfect means for dissolving prejudices and discontent and building mutual trust.

I. The studied region's resource substrate is varied, mostly due to the variation of relief on the Romanian side. Even if strategic resources do not exist, all the necessary resources for a balanced development are present. Among these most important are the fertile arable land, rich surface water resources, pleasant natural environment for tourism and the thermal waters.

From the natural-environmental point of view the critical medium of the region is the water environment, which needs protection against pollution, and the problems related to water management (flooding, inland waters, water reservoirs and drought). Since most of the water that reaches Hungary comes from the neighboring countries, the problems related to the quality and quantity of water affect regional relations and inter-state relations in a negative way. That is why we consider the synchronized management of these problems is a top priority in the cross-border relations.

II. It appears from the demographical analysis that the Hungarian counties, although affected by the phenomenon of demographic erosion, show a somewhat more advantageous image as compared to the national average, because the number of population decreases at a lower rate. On the Hungarian side the disadvantageous situation is worse than the average; it is also shown by indicators of human – resources development, because of the high mortality of some villages with old population or because of the high rates of neonatal mortality in the villages with a larger Romany population. The „periphery of the periphery”, that is the border line area also stands out because of its high rate of unemployment; in the same time, the migrational balance of the settlements near the border is constantly deficient.

On the Romanian side, similarly to the Hungarian counties the population dynamics processes have reached the phase of natural decrease. In spite of all these, due to the relatively more advantageous level of development, Bihor and Satu Mare counties remained the targets of inland migration. However, as compared to the Hungarian counties the rates of neonatal mortality are strikingly high. The Romanian side has better employment indicators. The level of education of the work force is almost the same on both sides of the border and there is a need to improve it, generally in secondary education, and more specifically in professional education, in order to increase the ratio of qualified work force. The mutual measures taken against the unfavorable social situation and poverty represent numerous possibilities for projects, and we have seen several good examples of that during our research. Cooperation

must be strengthened in the fields of adult education/inclusive education and the training of the workforce.

III. In the case of the two Hungarian counties the higher level of urbanization reflects more developed social-economical relations and the higher territorial concentration of the population as well as the lower density of settlements allow a more effective urban management of the region. On both sides of the border villages represent what is generally called underdevelopment; their dominant function is agricultural and related to agriculture. In order to achieve administrative equality in Satu Mare county the urban network must be strengthened and at least the informal micro-regions must be established. Other possibilities for cooperation can be found mostly in the synchronization of settlement management in the attraction areas that the two Romanian regional centers have in Hungary. In the same time, the presence of the disadvantageous “scissors” in the Romanian infrastructure system must be reduced, and the number checkpoints must be increased as part of the preparation process for accessing the Schengen treaty.

IV. In the market economy, cooperation is very difficult to manage from above, even influencing it is difficult, that is why the mutual projects must be confined to infrastructure development and market oriented education. The cooperation of the chambers in this respect is exemplary as far as consulting and the mapping of investment opportunities are concerned. The investments and the assistance must be exceptionally efficient in the border region as well, which represent cohesion, because as Danuta Hubner, former referent for EU regional policies, stated, “cohesion does not exist without competitiveness”. The economical analysis highlighted the fact that, paradoxically the economical decline in Hungary at the turn of the century and the robust economical growth in Romania until the global crisis set in (beta convergence) resulted in a negative leveling in the region, which strengthened the economical homogeneity on both sides of the border. It would have been better if the Romanian counties had developed without the Hungarian counties’ stagnation, but this was not the case.

IV. During the study of the concrete forms of cooperation through interviews and questionnaires our subject could give us information on most of the more significant projects, due to their functions. Among the cultural and sporting events, the most significant forms of cooperation were the official political ones between the neighboring local authorities and sister cities; the number of these forms of cooperation increased every year. Our subjects have also expressed their wish to continue and widen these forms of cooperation, and those settlements that lack such relations are looking for the opportunities to form them.

A positive aspect is the ongoing sub-regionalization, which rendered the cooperation more transparent, more manageable and more project-oriented. This contributed to the change of attitude; that is the committee level cooperation, after a long period of learning, has become concrete, more operative and project – oriented.

The future development of the border region is significantly aided by the fact that it can profit from its position, its possibilities of transit and its role of mediator.

VI. Our research in the future can be extended on the territorial scale, that is we can include the entire Romanian – Hungarian border region and its southern part extending to the Danube-Mures-Cris-Tisa Euro-region. A very intensive form of interaction would be the “shopping tourism”, its more detailed analysis, and on the southern side the more intense and more varied economical interrelations, which have an effect of attraction on the Hungarian side (workforce migration). In the same time, the further study of the dynamic real estate market development would be necessary; and observing the extent to which the more generous assistance provided by the EU 2007-2013 projects is used, which makes the partners even more eager to work together, thus strengthening cohesion.

VII. As far as the fulfillment of our hypotheses is concerned, we can state that they were quite valid.

The hypothesis according to which the position peripheral situation leads to social-economical peripheral situation proved to be partially true. The inner validity on the Hungarian side, supported by the factor analysis, is valid, whilst the Romanian counter example highlights the restricted character of the external validity; this hypothesis cannot be generalized in other terms.

As far as the hypothesis about the territorial cohesion of the borderline is concerned, the analogy intensified due to the approximation of several factors, even if this does not necessarily mean development. From the demographic point of view the Hungarian counties have reached a phase of decrease, and thus have the same direction as the Romanian counties. Due to their economical stop and the Romanian counties’ rapid convergence a negative leveling appeared. The compensatory effects of the thus appeared asymmetries can even prove positive, as the large number of workplaces on the Romanian side and the lack of workforce due to emigration to Western Europe, could represent a possibility for the Hungarian unemployed. Hungarian authorities in charge with unemployment can increasingly count on Romanian workplaces.

Our hypothesis that the willingness to cooperate on the part of local authorities does not decrease. Our data show that besides widening the existing relations, both parties are looking

for opportunities of forming new relations. Despite linguistic difficulties, communicational problems are not relevant – the numerous Hungarian population on the Romanian side of the border serves as the element of bridging this gap.

Our hypothesis concerning the diversification of informal relations on the everyday level is proved to be true by the school partnerships, familial relations, shopping tourism and relations concerning business activities that exist.

The direction of the Romanian – Hungarian cross border cooperation is absolutely positive. There is only one obstacle in the way of the cooperation and that is the fact that Romania's accession to the Schengen treaty has been delayed. If this obstacle be removed, the reintegration of the border region will only depend on the local communities.

6. The most important results of the research

1. Regional status analysis, which will serve as the basis for cross border plans of territorial and settlement development.
2. Mapping the forms of cooperation in the economy, highlighting the hindering factors, this could serve as guidance for local authorities in taking the appropriate measures to attract investors and in more efficient economical planning. This would primarily mean the increase of the complementary role of the workforce market, primarily in decreasing the unemployment of the Hungarian side, through the rapidly increasing number of workplaces in Romania.
3. The factorial analysis, which could serve as starting point in the planning of territorial development when targeting areas of intervention that could receive more concentrated resources. The identified inequalities and spatial processes could have a diagnostic role in this case.
4. The spatial framework model, which together with the things presented in the chapter of settlement geography could serve as starting point when setting the principles of territorial cohesion and could also have a role in strengthening the linear infrastructural relations.
5. The interviews conducted with representatives of civil organizations, schools, hospitals highlighted the positive and negative aspects of the cross-border cooperation thus pointing to directions of a more effective coordination in order to increase

cooperation. In the same time, the successful samples represent examples for those settlements that do not have such relations, and could also serve as source of ideas for making those first steps.

6. The same situation is valid for the interviews conducted with representatives of local authorities in Romania besides highlighting results and dysfunctional areas.
7. The sub-chapters dealing with forms of cooperation formulate and offer opportunities of diversification following the Western-European model, such as cross –border national parks, cross-border settlement units, micro-regions, agglomeration areas which would have a consortium character; common organization of public services, etc.

7. PUBLICATION INDEX

7.1 Publications on which the dissertation is based

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7.2.2 Conference presentations

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7.4 Other conference articles

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