

# DEVELOPMENTAL ASPECTS OF SLOVENE RURAL AND BORDER REGIONS

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In spite of its small size, Slovenia is marked by major regional differences – there are:

- developed urban areas where the majority of economic activities are concentrated, and
- extensive rural areas left to depopulation and the deterioration of the cultural landscape.



wide streams of commuters, which in numerous cases have evolved into permanent settlement in the areas of concentration.

Social erosion has mainly affected more remote areas, particularly border and rural areas.

The structural changes that encompassed Slovenia following independence profoundly transformed Slovenia's spatial reality.

There were some very important factors, which deeply influenced Slovenian society and territory respectively:

- the establishment of the new state,
- changed geopolitical situation,
- the establishment of borders,
- the transition from a planned economy to a market economy,
- democratisation,
- denationalisation,
- privatisation ...

Individual monostructural areas could not adapt to the rapid changes → numerous bankruptcies and mass layoffs of workers.

The reform of local self-government → numerous new municipalities with low populations and weak economic structure.

*»Regional development is a one-way process. The encroachment of human society, which is based on the predispositions of the natural environment, cumulates in diverse and unique spatial objects. Their reality is an interweaving of irreversible decisions from the past, each representing a new contribution – good or bad – to the whole and through a sequence of decisions creating a new foundation for further development.«*

Regional development is a long term process, so it leads us to the search for deeper and earlier reasons for current situation.

These reasons are:

- the medieval colonisation,
- the subsequent agrarian and industrial revolutions,
- the development of the railway system and other mechanised transport,
- electrification ...

### **Population shifts**

In Slovenia, major population shifts began in the decades following WW II.

| <b>YEAR</b>                  | <b>1961</b> | <b>1971</b> | <b>1981</b> | <b>1991</b> | <b>2002</b> |
|------------------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| <b>% of urban population</b> | <b>36.1</b> | <b>44.6</b> | <b>48.9</b> | <b>50.5</b> | <b>50.8</b> |

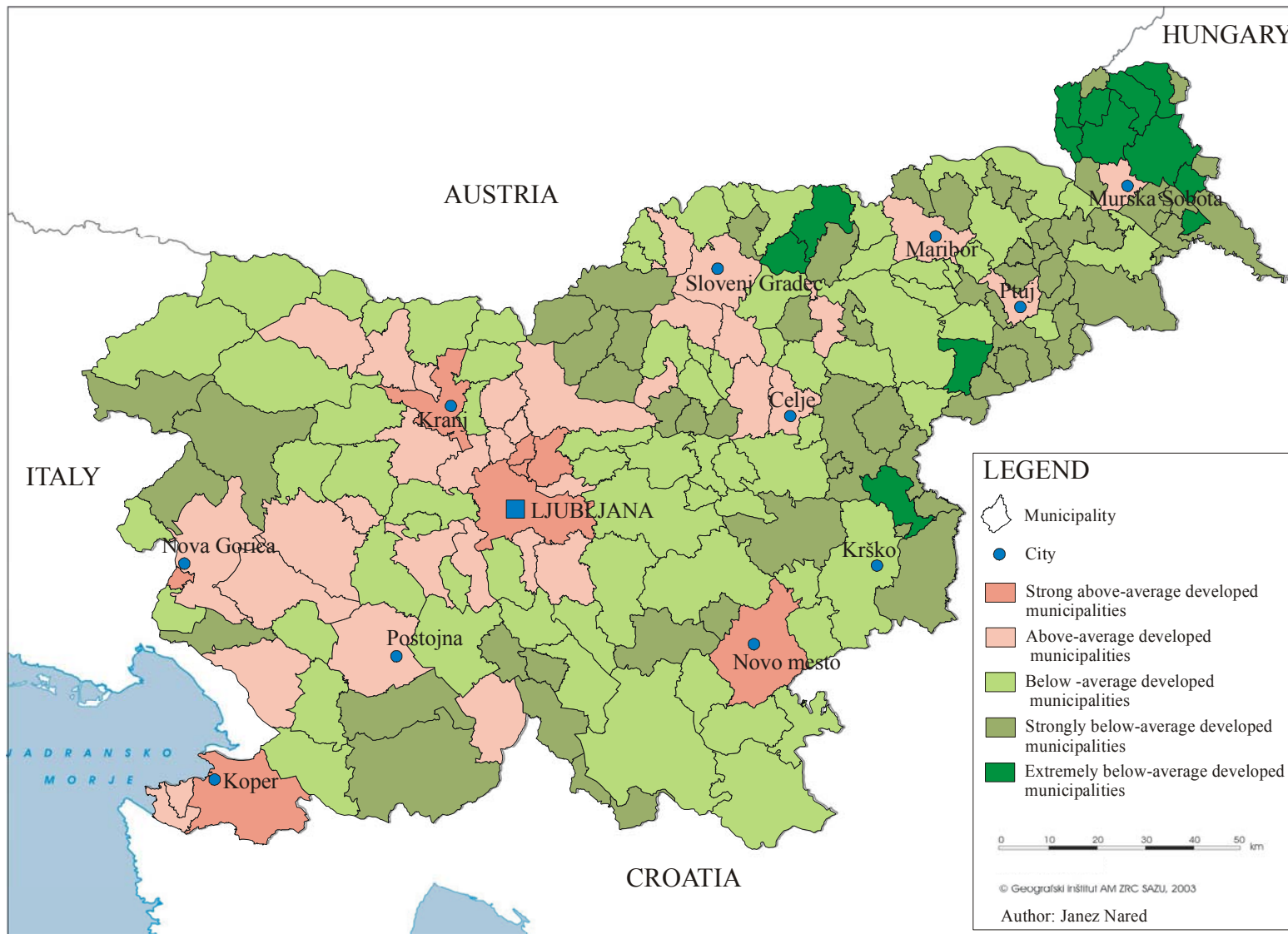
## The development level of Slovenian municipalities

Table 1. Structure of available data.

| Group of indicators                  | Standards   | Indicators  |
|--------------------------------------|---|---|
| economic structure and labour market | economic power                                    | value added per employee, number of enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants   |
|                                      | quality of work places                            | gross earnings per employee, taxable earnings per capita  |
|                                      | level of unemployment                             | registered unemployment rate  |
| settlement and population structure  | sociogeographical structure of municipalities     | growth/decrease of population 1991–2002, age index  |
|                                      | physiognomic structure of municipalities          | density of population   |
|                                      | economic-geographical structure of municipalities | proportion of farmers among active population, number of work places per 1,000 inhabitants, index of daily mobility |
| standard of living                   | level of motorization                             | number of cars per 100 inhabitants  |

## Final classification of municipalities

|                                | No. of municipalities | % of Slovenian territory | No. of population | % of Slovenian population | No. of work places | Proportion of work places | Density of population | number of work places per 1,000 inhabitants | proportion of farmers among active population | number of enterprises per 1,000 inhabitants |
|--------------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------------|-------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|---|---|---|
| <b>Strongly above-average</b>  | 8                     | 5,7                      | 451788            | 23,0                      | 249160             | 35,7                      | 391,5                 | 551   | 0,5   | 97,3  |
| <b>Above-average</b>           | 34                    | 19,9                     | 599509            | 30,5                      | 245140             | 35,1                      | 148,8                 | 408,9                                       | 1,4   | 76,6  |
| <b>Below-average</b>           | 74                    | 44,0                     | 593824            | 30,2                      | 148772             | 21,3                      | 66,6                  | 249,3                                       | 5,6   | 58,3  |
| <b>Strongly below-average</b>  | 63                    | 26,2                     | 280580            | 14,3                      | 51325              | 7,3                       | 50,7                  | 182,9                                       | 13,6  | 52,8  |
| <b>Extremely below-average</b> | 13                    | 4,2                      | 38327             | 2,0                       | 4452               | 0,6                       | 44,5                  | 116,2                                       | 34,8  | 43,0  |
| <b>∑</b>                       | <b>192</b>            | <b>100</b>               | <b>1964036</b>    | <b>100</b>                | <b>698849</b>      | <b>100</b>                | <b>96,9</b>           | <b>356</b>                                  | <b>3,4</b>                                    | <b>71,8</b>                                 |



AUSTRIA

HUNGARY

Murska Sobota

Maribor

Slovenj Gradec

Ptuj

Celje

Kranj

LJUBLJANA

Krško

Nova Gorica

Postojna

Novo mesto

Koper

ITALY

CROATIA

ADRIANSKO MORJE

## **Border regions**

Because of its small size, almost half of the territory of Slovenia is under the influence of one border or another.

The border aspect is one of the most distinctive factors of developmental backwardness → »exclusive privileges« for border regions within regional policy.

- most of them are less developed regions;
- according to their backwardness, they were taken into account when the criteria for problem regions were discussed.
  
- The first law on enhancement of regional development was admitted in 1971;
- from then on, border regions have been treated as problem regions;
- when defining problem regions, border regions have been privileged while the criteria for defining problem regions were less strict in case of border regions.

### **Characteristics of border regions:**

- weak infrastructure,
- lack of jobs,
- decline in the demographic structure,
- insufficient social care,
- low level of education,
- remoteness from bigger centres,
- scarcely populated,
- weak economy,
- high rate of population works in agriculture,
- small market...

## **Is their specific location the only reason for their backwardness?**

- not the only one, but nevertheless very important one;
- low level of development is also connected with their remoteness from bigger centres;
- actually, the level of their development is related also on the intensity of crossborder co-operation...

## **Future**

- With accession of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU the importance of border regions will increase.
- Unfavourable impacts are expected on borders with Croatia.

## **To achieve harmonious development of Slovene regions there is a need to:**

- enhance some selected centres along the border;
- connect those centres with centres inside and outside the borders;
- improve living conditions in those areas;
- make the return of the vital population possible;
- enhance local economy...

The predominant part of Slovenia's border regions can be marked as demographically exhausted areas with weak economic structures, poor social services, and inadequate infrastructure.

The role of some more successful centres

## **Rural regions**

Agriculture is the activity that together with forestry occupies over 90% of Slovenia's territory.

72% of Slovenia's farm land is situated in areas with limiting factors for agriculture (irregular terrain, relatively high altitudes, the carst character ...)

Unfavourable social factors:

- relatively small farms
- larger number of scattered parcels



decreasing economic and social value of the countryside, its economic lagging behind, and depopulation.