

“A BORDER THAT DIVIDES AND CONNECTS” MONUMENTS AND COMMEMORATIONS ON THE SLOVENIAN–HUNGARIAN BORDER

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The study analyses the process of establishing memorial sites and monuments on the Slovenian–Hungarian border, along with their underlying intentions and motivations. Following their inauguration, some memorials have remained in use by the border communities, which regularly hold commemorations at the sites.

Keywords: Slovenian–Hungarian border, monuments, memorial sites

Autor v razpravi analizira postopek postavljanja spominskih znamenitosti in spomenikov na slovensko-madžarski meji ter temeljne namene in motive. Po postavitvi obmejne skupnosti še naprej uporabljajo nekatere spomenike, kjer redno prirejajo komemoracije.

Ključne besede: slovensko-madžarska meja, spomeniki, spominska mesta

Since 2011, in the framework of research projects coordinated by the Institute of Ethnology at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, I have carried out fieldwork mainly in the Slovenian–Hungarian border area, which has provided an opportunity to examine several topics.¹ In the course of the research, project participants attached great importance to interpreting how the border appears as some sort of geopolitical entity in the cultural and collective memory of the communities and individuals living along the border.² Who organizes cultural and collective memory, and what interests drive them? How was it expressed in the past, and how is it expressed today?³

During successive periods of fieldwork, I observed that, alongside the former border posts or the roads that cross the borders, various types of memorial sites and monuments have been established since accession to the European Union, which even today provide an opportunity for holding various kinds of celebrations.⁴ Nowadays, borders are visualized and

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² Tatiana Zhurzhenko showed that European integration has radically changed the function of national borders and the symbolic meanings attached to them, but borders and borderlands still remain important sites of memorialization (Zhurzhenko 2011: 70).

³ For details on the goals and results of the project, see Turai (2015a).

⁴ It would require further research to compare the Slovenian–Hungarian border with the Austrian–Hungarian and Slovak–Hungarian borders from this perspective. There are specific places along the Austrian–Hungarian border that have been converted to memorial sites. One of the most important is the memorial park of the Pan-European Picnic. This was a peace demonstration held on the Austrian–Hungarian border near Sopron on August 19th, 1989. It was considered a significant milestone on the road to German reunification. There is another memorial site of the former Iron Curtain, established in 2008 by the local government of Hegykő (Harlov-Csörtán 2017: 209).

conceptualized by the appearance of various information boards, as well as by numbered and unnumbered border stones, the latter denoting the most important crossing points.⁵ Alongside them, or nearby, there have emerged monuments or structures with symbolic content, created by border communities, civic organizations, or other institutions for a variety of purposes. The research is far from complete because the formation of cultural memory is an ongoing process and the number of memorial sites is constantly expanding.⁶

The main goal of my research is therefore to investigate the memorial sites and monuments that have been established for various reasons along the Slovenian–Hungarian border in recent decades. I also examine how, and in whose interest, these memorial sites and monuments were established along this section of the border. Some of the memorial sites are still used by the border communities, and so it is necessary to address the rituals associated with them.

THE RESEARCH SITE

The Mura region comprises the area annexed to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes from the southwestern districts of Vas and Zala counties following the Trianon border changes, which is today referred to as Prekmurje in Slovenian. For centuries, different ethnicities (Hungarians, Slovenians, etc.) have lived in the area, resulting in a complex network of cultural relations. According to data from the 1991 census, 7,716 people in the Mura region declared themselves to be Hungarians, compared to only around 6,200 in 2002.

My research was carried out in Slovenia, in the section of the border between Hodoš (Hung. *Hodos*) and Žitkovci (*Zsitkóc*), mainly in settlements inhabited by Hungarians, although I also conducted interviews with members of communities in Hungary who played, and continue to play, an active role in establishing memorial sites and holding commemorations.⁷

From a cultural point of view, the Hungarian communities of the region cannot be considered homogeneous because the settlements they live in belonged to different cultural regions.⁸ Whereas the villages in the northern part of the border area—Hodoš, Krplivnik

⁵ In the sections of Hungary's joint borders with Serbia, Slovenia, and Croatia, the numbered white border stones are truncated pyramids with markings carved in black. The so-called marginal crossing points are marked by unnumbered boundary stones, of which two types can be distinguished. Larger structures feature the official abbreviation of the country name, whereas the smaller ones have no inscription or numbering (Vedó 2009: 141).

⁶ I carried out the fieldwork between 2011 and 2015, and since then I have followed changes and the construction of new memorial sites.

⁷ It would be worth carrying out such research in the northern part of the Slovenian–Hungarian border, where similar memorial sites and monuments have certainly been established.

⁸ To date, description and demarcation of cultural regions has been an important research topic in Hungarian ethnography. Since the nineteenth century, articles and volumes have dealt with cultural

(*Kapornak*), and so on—belong to the Őrség region, those near Dobrovnik (*Dobronak*) and Lendava (*Alsólendva*) form part of the Hetés region, and more broadly the Lendava region. The villages located between Dobrovnik and Domanjševci (*Domonkosfá*)—Središče (*Szerdahely*), Prosenjakovci (*Pártosfalva*), Motvarjevci (*Szentlászló*), Čikečka Vas (*Csekefá*) and Pordašinci (*Kisfalva*)—form a special transitional zone, which ethnographers have not truly classified into any specific region.⁹

The question then arises as to why the cultural regions defined by researchers play a role in documenting and examining certain contemporary cultural phenomena at the beginning of the twenty-first century. The borders drawn after the First World War cut across cultural regions, and today one can observe how these cultural entities appear and take shape as possible frameworks for cooperation in various types of projects. Through the *Mesés Hetés* (Fabulous Hetés) program, the Hungarian Greenways Methodology Association is endeavoring to reorganize relations and systems of relations between settlements separated by borders by means of cultural events. The organization is also trying to establish tourist routes that provide unique opportunities to exploit the local natural and cultural heritage. With the participation of local communities, the program thus aims to examine and preserve the natural and cultural features of Hetés, a region divided by the Slovenian–Hungarian border, as a cultural landscape, and to explore ways in which it can be used sustainably.¹⁰

The festivals held along the border, such as Őrség Days, which were introduced several decades ago, involve settlements in both Hungary and Slovenia, inevitably creating the appearance of a unified region that is not separated by a border. It seems that cultural boundaries can be given a new lease of life in the specific context of festivals and tourism, at the same time giving rise to efforts to create regional identities.¹¹ The question remains,

regions (Őrség, Hetés, and Göcsej) of western Hungary, which are represented in open-air museums in Szentendre, Szombathely, and Zalaegerszeg (Borsos 2017: 13–21). Today Őrség National Park and tourist agencies play an important role in constructing the image of the Őrség cultural region, which is one of the most popular destinations in rural Hungary today. The interpretation of the regionalization process requires further research, which should concentrate on the actors, intentions, and the images attached to these regions.

⁹ Based on geographical aspects, Sándor Dömötör extended the boundaries of the Őrség region to thirty-four settlements. At the same time, he called attention to the fact that, according to certain perceptions, the Őrség region also includes Domanjševci, Čikečka Vas, and Središče (Dömötör 1960: 9, 15–16). Recently, Albert Halász, a Hungarian ethnographer in Slovenia, made an attempt to summarize earlier research in the field and to outline the (geographical, national, and ecclesiastical) internal divisions and boundaries in the Lendava region (Halász 1998: 143–153; 1999: 24–30).

¹⁰ In February 2015, the program received the Hungarian Landscape Award, on the basis of which it became eligible for the Council of Europe's Landscape Award.

¹¹ According to Tatiana Zhurzhenko, cross-border cooperation, Euroregions, and joint cultural events often revived the symbols of former regional units. The political status and function of the internal borders of the European Union have changed radically because in many cases they have been transformed into places of reconciliation and communication (Zhurzhenko 2011: 63–84).

of course, as to whether border communities are able to identify with these forms of identity based on ethnographic regions. Does having an “Őrség” or “Hetés” identity add anything to their minority existence in Slovenia as residents of the Mura region?

THE FORMATION OF BORDERS AND THEIR IMPACT ON EVERYDAY LIFE

The new borders that were drawn up after the First World War posed new challenges for local communities in southwestern Hungary because the centuries-old, tight-knit system of economic and social relations disintegrated almost overnight. When defining the new boundaries, decision makers did not fully respect the linguistic, ethnic, religious, administrative, and transportation relations. Villages with Slovenian populations remained in Hungary, whereas settlements inhabited entirely by Hungarians came under the jurisdiction of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes, despite the fact that the ethnic borders had been relatively well defined for centuries.¹²

Until 1949, those living in the region were able to continue agricultural production by means of “dual ownership” in the territory of the other country, although serious problems arose in terms of practicing religion. In some settlements in the Hungarian border region (e.g., Gáborjánháza), a new church had to be built in the 1930s because the congregations were unable to regularly attend the Catholic churches in Dobrovnik and Lendava, which had been annexed to the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes.

The Iron Curtain was in place from the second half of the 1940s to the collapse of communism.¹³ In everyday life, the Iron Curtain was identified with the method in which the boundary separating Western Europe from the Eastern Bloc was guarded, and by the technical means employed at the border, which initially comprised barbed-wire fences, minefields, footprint control strips and restricted zones, resembling theatres of war. Later, the hazardous minefields were replaced by an electric signaling system. Everyday life and agricultural activities were affected by the border zone reality. Many restrictions were introduced, and new technical equipment and more soldiers were assigned to the border area (Zsiga 1999: 70–80). With the imposition of the Iron Curtain, minor border crossing points were closed, and thus traveling a few kilometers could take an entire day, even if the authorities provided the requested permits (Lendvai Kepe 2007: 26–29). In the Hungarian part of the border area, a significant reduction in village populations was particularly noticeable, and this can be explained by the communist transformation

¹² Eight settlements in the northern part of the region, with a mostly Slovenian or mixed population, were annexed to Hungary. Eleven Hungarian villages and one Slovenian village in the central and southern parts of the region, as well as the surroundings of Lendava, became part of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats, and Slovenes (Mohos 2008: 46).

¹³ It ran along the entire border of Hungary and Austria in the west (356 kilometers) and after 1950 on the southern border between Hungary and Yugoslavia (627 kilometers) Harlov-Csörtán (2017: 193).

of agriculture, the emigration of young people, and difficulties in transportation. Because there was no radical restructuring of property ownership in Yugoslavia, the transformation of rural communities took place more slowly there than in Hungary. The proportion of people making a living from agriculture remained far higher, especially in the villages of the Mura region (Mohos 2008: 69). According to Mária Mohos, on both sides of the Slovenian–Hungarian border a process of drastic depopulation took place, resulting in minuscule hamlets with a population fewer than fifty, or small villages with a population between fifty and one hundred. The transformation of abandoned buildings into second homes and summer cottages has become an increasingly common phenomenon in Hungarian villages, a process greatly facilitated by low real estate prices. As a result of being neglected and undisturbed, the border region is particularly appreciated among certain urban social groups, who tended to buy up houses abandoned by the locals (Mohos 2008: 77).

After 1990, an intensive system of (minority and settlement-level) relationships emerged between the local governments of settlements along the Slovenian–Hungarian border, which were often materialized in the framework of joint projects and tenders.¹⁴ Close cooperation between civil society organizations, associations, and sports clubs (e.g., firefighters' associations, vinicultural associations, folksong circles, etc.) emerged, often in the form of joint events. Shopping tourism is currently directed from Slovenia toward Hungary, whereas labor migration shows a reverse trend, clearly due to the opportunities for higher earnings in Slovenia. Hungarian citizens are primarily employed in seasonal agricultural work, although craft activities and occasional employment also play a significant role.

MONUMENTS AND MEMORIAL SITES ON THE SLOVENIAN– HUNGARIAN BORDER

Before examining the role of monuments and memorial sites, one should bear in mind the specific aspiration of nation-states to create a uniform, continuous, and homogeneous space of nationhood in the governed lands. The Hungarian researcher Zoltán Ilyés pointed out that the inscription of power and dominance relations in the landscape, and the representation of the country's particular canonized history, can be regarded as a phenomenon typical of border regions and border areas. At the same time, the symbolic domination of a landscape or region, as a result of historical memory, traditions, and the built heritage, is not necessarily the privilege of the ruling nation. In the interpretation of the symbolic geography of border regions, the Finnish–Russian Karelia region provides an excellent example, in which national iconographies confront one another and live side by side. Not only borders and border regions in their linear-areal expansion, but also distinctive border

¹⁴ Bajánsenye and Hodoš strengthened their relationship with a twin settlement agreement. Each year, local politicians hold a joint municipal meeting to report to each other on the events of the past year.

points, can be part of the national geography and feature among the sites of symbolic nation building and patrimonialization (Ilyés 2010: 114–125). Tatiana Zhurzhenko pointed out that the “work” of memory as a complex political process is particularly visible in the borderlands.¹⁵ In addition to central governments, local elites, political parties, NGOs, churches, associations, and ethnic minorities play an important role in memory politics (Zhurzhenko 2011: 70).

Representations of national history, with a few exceptions, are less typical along the Slovenian–Hungarian border, and the content related to the memorial sites and monuments examined is rather different. One of the exceptions is the monument inaugurated on October 5th, 2000 between Središče and Magyarszombatfa, which represents ancestral Hungarian statehood and the Hungarian national past on the “Trianon border.” The monument features the following inscription:

Szeretett hazánk Magyarország fennállásának 1000. évfordulója alkalmából állította ezen emlékművet a Vas Megyei Állami Közútkezelő Kht. a Szombathelyt Muraszombattal összekötő egykori 734.sz. Csákánydoroszló Muraszombati út 32+275 km. szelvényében. (This memorial was erected by the Vas County state public road maintenance company to mark the thousandth anniversary of the foundation of our beloved country, Hungary, at the 32.275 km section of former road no. 734 from Csákánydoroszló to Murska Sobota, which connected Szombathely with Murska Sobota.)

The other example is related to boundary stone 469 near Lendava, which since 2014 has been temporarily transformed into a symbol of the Trianon border in the framework of commemorating National Unity Day,¹⁶ when—according to the intentions of the organizers (the local government of Lenti and Rédic (Sln. *Redič*), the Hungarian community of Prekmurje/Muravidék, and the Lendava Consular Bureau of the Hungarian Embassy in Ljubljana)—representatives of the border communities that had been separated for decades are symbolically reunited. Wreaths, ribbons in the national colors, and mourning ribbons placed on the border stone temporarily raise the structure beyond its everyday use, transforming it into a kind of national symbol. Both of these examples are somehow related to national discourses that to some extent question the current borders, and in which the post–First World War changes clearly appear in a negative light.

When discussing memorial sites and monuments, it is important to mention the structure at the Hungarian–Austrian–Slovenian tripoint. The border stone has the form of a truncated pyramid structure on a platform, the sides of which feature the coats of

¹⁵ For more about collective and cultural memory, see Assman (2011), Halbwachs (1992), and Nora (1989).

¹⁶ The occasion is the national memorial day of June 4th, which was enacted by the Hungarian Parliament in 2010 and commemorates the anniversary of the signing of the 1920 Trianon Peace Treaty.



A bifurcated iron column between Žitkovci and Bödeháza. Photo: László Mód, 2015.



Iron fence in the Borderstone Park between Hodoš and Szalafő. Photo: László Mód, 2019.

arms of the respective countries and the date on which the peace treaties designating the border sections were signed. As mentioned above, its primary function is to designate the meeting point of the borders, although symbolic content is occasionally inferred on it, as discussed in detail below.¹⁷

Most memorials located alongside the border crossing points or roads that cross the border are related to the accession to the European Union on May 1st, 2004, as suggested by the dates and the twelve stars, one of the most important symbols of the organization. They sometimes also include the coats of arms of the two countries, or the names of the settlements between which the monument was erected. Only one of the memorials associated with EU accession bears a specific additional meaning. Based on a concept by the artist Endre Göntér, according to the artist the bifurcated iron column representing EU accession symbolizes collaboration between communities that are once again growing closer to one another. According to one of my informants, however, it depicts a deer's antlers, thus referring to freedom and free movement across the border. Commemorative plaques and memorials were inaugurated by politicians and church leaders as part of the accession celebrations. The monuments on the section of the border investigated that symbolize the act of joining the EU have the following spatial distribution:

1. A black marble plaque set on a concrete base near the road connecting Hodoš with Szalafő (Sln. *Glava Zale*), next to border stone no. 180. Inscription: *Szalafő–Hodos 2004. 05. 01. 'Szalafő–Hodoš, May 1st, 2004'*.
2. A black marble plaque set on a concrete base between Hodoš and Bajánsenye, near the border crossing. Inscription: *Bajánsenye–Hodos 2004. 05. 01. 'Bajánsenye–Hodoš, May 1st, 2004'*.
3. A standing black marble plaque on a memorial stone between Nemesnép and Kobilje (Hung. *Kebeleszentmárton*), next to the border crossing. Inscription: *1997 01/05/2004 EU '1997. May 1st, 2004, EU'*.
4. A bifurcated iron column between Žitkovci and Bödeháza, next to what is known as the Jósec Road. Inscription: *1/5/2004 2004/5/1 Žitkovci Zsitkóc Obcina Dobrovník 'May 1st, 2004, Žitkovci, Municipality of Dobronak'*.

Further structures were added to the border area investigated with the opening of the Schengen border, when a peace pole was erected between Kercaszomor (Sln. *Krčica*) and Domanjševci in December 2007. The inauguration was preceded by the “collection of good wishes,” when individuals or communities were invited to send messages from anywhere in Hungary. Slips of paper containing the messages were placed in waterproof bags inside the monument. At the same time as the inauguration of the peace pole, a “Hello, neighbor!”

¹⁷ After the First World War, other border regions in the Carpathian Basin set up structures marking tripoints, the symbolism of which can be regarded as simple, with no added national meanings, and which provide an equal site for self-expression by each country (Turai 2015b: 16).

bench was set up, donated by a Hungarian company specifically for this purpose. According to the original concept, half of it was to be in Hungary and the other half in Slovenia, although the international conventions in force meant that this was not possible, which is why the bench was finally placed entirely on the Hungarian side.

On May 10th, 2014, thanks to a project implemented by the Hungarian Greenways Methodology Association, Hetés Friendship Park was officially inaugurated between Bödeháza and Žitkovci near the border, where residents of the two settlements had celebrated the accession of Slovenia and Hungary to the European Union ten years earlier. Andrea Bedő, one of the project leaders, recalled the circumstances surrounding its creation in an interview:

I had attended the event two years previously, or three years previously, for the first time, and on that occasion I took my phone. . . . Then, when I went back to the same event, they'd already held a walk there, and I took along my camera so as to take a look at what happened at the event. I recorded the speech given by the mayor of Dobrovnik, which you can see on the internet, because I uploaded it. The mayor mentioned in his speech that there's this part here. That back then there was just the border zone and the road. At that time there was forest in all four parts. And that something will always develop here. . . . And the mayor added that the next step in the development might be to create a park here. . . . People just acknowledged it and went off home. But the idea of the park stuck in my mind, how nice it would be to meet up there and chat. At that time there was the border zone and a road, and then here we are. With all the champagne on the table, and we're standing here and chatting. It really seemed like the ideal location for a park, with a place for campfires, a nice little park wouldn't be such a bad idea. A meeting point, where people could come together and enjoy themselves, people from the Mura region, Slovenians and Hungarians together. To really make something of the park.¹⁸

After consulting with other professionals, it was decided to create a new “landscape value” within the project in the form of Hetés Friendship Park, where the *Borderless Bird* was set up, made out of remnants of the former Iron Curtain border by artists Anita Balog and László Árvay. The Hetés Region website published the following information about the work of art:

Two Hetés-based artists, Anita Balog and László Árvay, came up with the idea of turning barbed wire, with all its negative connotations, into something positive. The completed work can be seen here in the park. The *Borderless Bird* was formed out of old, rusty pieces of the Iron Curtain border, which had flown from

¹⁸ Quotation from an interview with Andrea Bedő (Dobrovnik, 29 July 2015).

the Hungarian to the Slovenian side, symbolizing freedom and the absence of boundaries.¹⁹

In addition, a wooden board was also unveiled in the park, featuring a local ornamental symbol, the tree of life. At the beginning of 2015, an information board was also erected in the vicinity of the park, indicating the still visible remains of the border surveillance, as well as showing the route of the Iron Curtain bicycle path. I regard this as clear proof that, with the permeability of the borders, the patrimonialization of structures relating to border surveillance has begun. The text on the board is a telling expression of this aspiration:

... there are many relics of the Iron Curtain along the border between Hungary and the former Yugoslavia, which can be visited along the walking path marked with green triangles. At the southern foot of the hill can be seen five pyramid-shaped concrete blocks that were once used as anti-tank obstacles. On the Slovenian side of the hill, a former border guard tower rises above the small, beautifully cultivated vineyards. The sight of the concrete bunker at its feet is a good indication of the conditions that prevailed along the cruel fence.

In addition to the features listed above, locals are keen to draw the attention of visiting researchers to the “anchor tree,” which in fact served as a natural lookout post for the border guards. The L-shaped pieces of iron stuck into its trunk functioned as ladder steps. These structures have been selected, and value has been assigned to them, although plans for their preservation and utilization have yet to be developed. Although the idea of painting the lookout tower on nearby Riganoc (Hung. *Rigánóc*) Hill has arisen, the necessary resources for carrying out the work have not yet been identified and set in motion. Another problem is that the structure is owned by the Slovenian Army. In 2015, the range of structures related to Hetés Friendship Park was extended by a roadside crucifix, which, in my opinion, adds a new level of meaning to the complex messages of the memorial site.

Efforts toward heritagization of the Iron Curtain era are also apparent in other settlements along the Slovenian–Hungarian border.²⁰ In recent years, local politicians and municipal representatives from Hodoš and Domanjševci have come up with the idea of displaying structures related to the former border surveillance in the vicinity of the border. In 2019, some of these ideas were realized in a rest area on the border between Hodoš and

¹⁹ http://www.hetesonline.hu/hatartalan_madar/

²⁰ Melinda Harlov-Csörtán interprets similar phenomena from the Austrian-Hungarian border zone, where diverse social actors take part in the heritagization of the Iron Curtain. She emphasizes that memorial sites construct a narrative about the past by contributing to its ideologization and hierarchization. They say much more about the people who erected them and contemporary evaluation of the represented past than about the particular event in the past (Harlov-Csörtán 2017: 195–196).

Szalafő, where a border park has been established that presents technical equipment related to the Iron Curtain and the systems put in place to prevent illegal border crossings. One interesting aspect of this project is that the uprights of the barbed-wire fence are originals and were previously used on the Austrian border.

COMMEMORATIONS AND CELEBRATIONS ON THE BORDER

After the fall of communism, it became possible to hold festivals on the section of the Slovenian–Hungarian border, which provided a ritual framework for the meeting of communities that had been separated for decades and for the restructuring of their relations. The year 1989 brought about fundamental changes in the use of the Hungarian–Austrian–Slovenian border stone, when the district office of the Patriotic People’s Front initiated the so-called friendship meeting. Having analyzed the slogans used during the festivals held there since the early 1990s, Imre Gráfik concluded that parties from different government systems and ideological backgrounds were seeking to establish relations with the rallying words *peace and friendship*, the emphasis clearly being on the permeability of former rigid borders.²¹ The commemorations gradually ceased as the border area became free to cross, and the tri-border region gradually turned into a destination for excursions in the context of hiking paths.²²

On April 30th and May 1st, 2004, on the occasion of the accession of Hungary and Slovenia to the European Union, various types of celebrations were held at the border crossing points and along the roads that crossed the borders, which were documented by Zoltán Lendvai Kepe in his study “EU-PHORIA, or Accession to the European Union among the Hungarians and Slovenians of the Mura Region.” In the Hungarian settlements, the Őrség–Göcsej–Hetés Regional Development Subregional Association in Lenti held a series of events under the title Friendship without Borders. The celebrations were promoted in English, German, and Slovenian, indicating the organizers’ intention of enhancing the international character of the programs. In his study, Zoltán Lendvai Kepe points out that the celebrations featured identical structural elements, which can be related to the central organization (Lendvai Kepe 2005: 215–226).²³

²¹ The structure did not have an immediate role in Hungarian national politics between the two world wars: it was primarily a destination for school trips related to Heroes Memorial Day. After 1945, it became inaccessible because the area was a restricted zone (Gráfik 2013: 203–231).

²² For a summary of commemorations and celebrations related to other tripoint stones, see Turai (2015b: 16).

²³ After the dedication of the EU accession monuments they were abandoned, no longer used by the local communities. Local governments and associations chose a different way to celebrate the permeability of borders.

Accession to the Schengen Area in 2007 provided new impetus for holding celebrations in the border region, when once again various events (e.g. setting up border stone 180, the Peace Pole and the "Hello, neighbor!" bench) took place at specific points in the border section. Such commemorations have apparently waned, although, in contrast, the border communities have gradually developed their own celebrations and rituals. Since the end of the 1990s, for example, on the last day of the year, representatives from the settlements of Dobrovník and Bödeháza have held a joint "clinking of glasses" at the border, which in 2014 was accompanied by a walk. In 2015, the ritual drink took place in Hetés Friendship Park, which suggests that the organizers intend to use the facility as a kind of community space in the future. As part of the walk, participants also visited structures related to the Iron Curtain.

Presumably, the date of EU accession may have played a role in the fact that local communities connected a previously widespread folk custom²⁴ to certain sections of the border. In recent decades, maypoles have been set up primarily by various associations in the center of settlements or in specific locations (e.g., the soccer field or association headquarters) in the Mura region. During the 1990s, the local cultural association of Hodoš reinvented the tradition, when a maypole was set up at a specific point in the village.²⁵ In 2004, on the occasion of accession to the EU, the idea emerged of setting up the maypole near the border, suggesting that the organizers hoped to present local traditions to the outside world. The pole in Hodoš is typically decked with paper ribbons and paper flowers, and a bottle of wine is even placed on it. While the women and girls make the decorations, the men deliver the tree, which is selected by the forester, by tractor from the village forest. Nowadays, especially in the northern part of the border section, the villages on the two sides of the border hold the celebrations jointly. In a given year, one of the settlements takes care of the tree, and the other settlement is responsible for taking it down, or "dancing it out" at the end of May. In 2015, the inhabitants of Domanjševci and Kercaszomor also held a joint celebration, increasing to four the number of points on the border where local communities regularly set up maypoles.

Unique symbolic content may occasionally be bestowed on certain structures that have a role in marking the border, when political representatives and community leaders from both sides of the border hold border-stone meetings around them. The first such event was held in 2003 between the villages of Szalafő and Hodoš, after which, the following year, on accession to the European Union, a marble plaque was also unveiled. In December 2007,

²⁴ In his research, Albert Halász points out that setting up maypoles in the Mura region was not linked to a specific date. On the top of the tree, they left the foliage, which they decorated with colored ribbons (Halász 1999: 169–171).

²⁵ According to Rozalia Totics, in the past maypoles were set up in Hodoš in front of houses where girls lived. In many cases they did not even know who had actually set the tree up. The custom also provided an opportunity for rivalry among the young men, which often took the form of sawing down trees set up by others.

the two settlements celebrated accession to the Schengen Area with border stone 180, and then in 2011 they renewed the meetings, which are no longer held due to a lack of time owing to the many other events. Rozalia Totics, the former head of the Hungarian local government in Hodoš, recalled her memories of the first border-stone meeting:

I'm still moved to tears when I think back to the first meeting at Szalafő. I have many relatives, but we could move freely, so, in the days of Yugoslavia, we could go as far as the border. There were no restrictions on going to the border, especially for those who had land there or who worked there. But on the Hungarian side it wasn't like that, because it was all ploughed in. And when people came out of that thick forest, all those former schoolmates, many of whom are no longer alive, and when they embraced each other there was only silence and crying, they couldn't say anything for ten or twenty minutes. Some of them hadn't been able to see one another for forty or forty-five years. . . . There are usually cultural programs. Usually we held some event, with food as well. Later we agreed to take turns each year, so one year we did it and the next it was their turn. We took out tables so there was somewhere to sit.²⁶

In June 2014, as mentioned above, the celebration at border stone 469 was closely linked to National Unity Day. The commemoration was held by the local government of Lenti and Rédics, the Hungarian community of Prekmurje, and the Lendava Consular Bureau of the Hungarian Embassy in Ljubljana, in the immediate vicinity of the estate of a local resident. In 2020, the hundredth anniversary of the signing of the Trianon Peace Treaty is likely to give new impetus to this type of commemoration, which may be a source of conflict between the two countries.

CONCLUSION

After the Second World War, the politics of remembrance was determined by collective forgetting, although following the collapse of communism the permeability of the borders made possible the construction of commemorative sites and memorials by communities in the border region. Within the framework of celebrations associated with the structures, the communities in the border region, mainly ethnically Hungarian, can symbolically tear down the Iron Curtain again and again after several decades of division, and members of the communities can be in physical contact with one another. However, it would paint a very one-sided picture of this topic if only the aforementioned function of the memorial sites, monuments and associated commemorations were emphasized. The heritagization of the Iron Curtain is certainly in keeping with the local political elite's intentions to enrich

²⁶ Quotation from an interview with Rozalia Totics (Hodoš, July 28th, 2015).

and add new elements to the local tourist attractions. These memorial or border parks may soon become prime destinations for the cycling and hiking routes that are becoming increasingly popular in the region, thus creating favorable opportunities for encouraging tourism to the border region. As has been seen, various memorial sites and monuments have been established in recent decades along the Slovenian–Hungarian border, which are used in different ways by the local communities. Some have been abandoned since their establishment and inauguration, and others are still regularly used as venues for commemorations. Border communities have discovered that certain points along the border sections that previously had negative connotations and were an embodiment of isolation can function as community spaces or cultural resources.

Following the completion of the Hungarian version of this study, it seemed that the cultural phenomena investigated were soon to be radically transformed, or they would lose their former function entirely. The context for this was the 2015 migration crisis, when Hungary planned to seal its entire southern border. This would have reestablished the Iron Curtain on the Slovenian–Hungarian border, once again physically separating the communities of the border region. There was a risk that border communities could not hold their border rituals because the barbed wire and fence would prevent them from doing it. Fortunately, this did not happen, and so no significant change took place in the use of the memorial sites and monuments, and in fact even more were constructed and erected.

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“MEJA, KI DELI IN POVEZUJE”

SPOMENIKI IN KOMEMORACIJE NA SLOVENSKO-MADŽARSKI MEJI

Ob slovensko-madžarski meji so bila v zadnjih desetletjih postavljena različna spominska mesta in spomeniki. Nekateri so bili opuščeni kmalu po postavitvi, druge pa lokalne skupnosti še vedno redno uporabljajo kot prizorišča spominskih slovesnosti. Večina spomenikov ob mejnih prehodih ali cestah, ki prečkajo madžarsko-slovensko mejo, je povezanih s pristopom k Evropski uniji 1. maja 2004, na kar kaže sam datum postavitve. Opremljeni so z najpomembnejšim simbolom Evropske unije, z dvanajstimi zvezdami.

Avtor je raziskoval pretežno v Sloveniji, na odseku meje med Hodošem (madž. Hodos) in Žitkovci (Zsitkóc), predvsem v naseljih, kjer živijo Madžari; ob tem je opravil intervjuje tudi s člani skupnosti na Madžarskem, ki so imele ali imajo aktivno vlogo pri definiranju in postavitvi spominskih mest in samih komemoracijah.

Obmejne skupnosti so odkrile, da lahko nekatere obmejne točke, ki so prej utelešale izolacijo in bile negativno konotirane, še posebej po letu 2007, delujejo kot prostori skupnosti, kulture in kohezije. Dediščinjenje železne zavese omogoča lokalni eliti, da obogati lokalne turistične znamenitosti. Spominski ali obmejni parki tako postajajo glavni cilj za vse bolj priljubljene kolesarske in pohodniške poti; vse to ustvarja ugodne priložnosti za spodbujanje turizma na obmejnem območju.

Padec komunizma je omogočil organizacijo različnih prireditev v obmejnem slovensko-madžarskem prostoru. Ritualni spominjanja so postali priložnost za srečanja skupnosti, ki so bile desetletja ločene, in za preoblikovanje njihovih odnosov. Danes, zlasti na severnem delu meje, vasi na obeh straneh meje skupaj postavljajo “mlaj”, pri čemer eno od naselij poskrbi za drevo, drugo naselje pa je odgovorno, da ga odnesejo oziroma da ob koncu meseca “plešejo konec”.

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