

FLEXIBLE BOUNDARIES AT THE SLOVENIAN RABA REGION

THE STORY OF TWO INFRASTRUCTURE DEVELOPMENTS

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National parks and protected areas are the outcomes of social spatialization. Similarly to other Central and Eastern European examples, one also finds protected areas at the Hungarian-Slovenian border. Based on the story of two infrastructure developments in the area, the author argues that local ecologies and boundaries are inherently socio-natural creations.

Keywords: border, national park, landscape, infrastructure development, Anthropocene

Nacionalni parki in zavarovana območja so rezultat socialnega prostorjenja; podobno kot v drugih srednje- in vzhodnoevropskih primerih so varovana območja tudi na madžarsko-slovenski meji. Na podlagi zgodbe o dveh razvojnih infrastrukturnih projektih na tem območju avtor trdi, da so lokalne ekologije in meje same po sebi družbeno-naravne stvaritve.

Ključne besede: meja, narodni park, krajina, infrastrukturni razvoj, antropocen

GROUPS, SPACES, AND PLACES¹

Since the rise of anthropological scholarship, anthropologists have focused on the interrelation between socio-cultural phenomena and natural environment. The formation of *Völkerkunde* in Europe in the mid-18th century relied heavily on geographical explorations and on the endeavor to locate and demarcate socio-cultural regions along with natural environments (Bucher 2002: 30; Vermeulen 2008: 272). The geo-location of socio-cultural units has created a further scientific challenge: the definition of boundaries that divide and connect cultures. Traditionally, when ethnographers and anthropologists wrote about boundaries and localities, usually they implied groups or cultures/societies. This is partly due to the long-standing and prolific impact of Durkheimian social theory, which has emphasized the integrated nature of society.

In my paper, I will focus on the emergence and diminishment of boundaries in the Hungarian-Slovenian border area, focusing on local discourse about two infrastructure developments in a tiny village community of Orfalu (Sln. Andovci) in Hungary. I will argue that locating the village according to traditional ethnographic regions and boundaries does not provide a relevant research frame for understanding local tensions in the community. I intend to demonstrate that it is possible to think in terms of other frames and boundaries, despite the fact that the Őrség region (Nemesnépi 1985 [1818]; Dömötör

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1960; Csapó 2008) and Slovenian Raab river region (Kossits 1828; Mukicsné Kozár 1999, 2003) as stable entities have traditionally provided the vantage point for ethnographic research in the area.

Before turning to this problem, it is necessary to clarify the difference between the concepts of boundary and border. In line with the robust development in discourse, focusing on the concept of boundaries, the interpretations of the concept became increasingly divergent (Lamont and Molnár 2002: 168). By taking a heuristic approach, I do not endeavor to sum up the literature on the concept of boundaries, but only focus on three basic components of the concept:

1. boundaries are the manifestation of social and/or symbolic discontinuity;
2. boundaries not only demarcate but also connect social units;
3. boundaries cannot always be spatialized.

I use the concept of border in a more restrictive manner by focusing on political and legislative differences. In my perspective, borders are the manifestation of linear spatial discontinuities between political and legislative units (cf. Amilhat Szary 2015: 13). In my research area, the two most important borders are the state border between Hungary and Slovenia, as well as the border between the protected areas managed by Órség National Park and the unprotected agricultural areas beyond it.

Anthropologists have approached the question of boundaries and the (geo)location of cultures according to various methodologies. One of the earliest approaches is inspired by the work of Franz Boas. Influenced by Adolf Bastian, Franz Boas and other advocates of the school of cultural relativism were devoted to a cadastral description of individual cultures, arguing that the relations between cultures are best understood by geo-location rather than by genealogy (Santini 2018). Even though Boas was aware of the significance of contact between groups adjacent to one another, he never actually paid close attention to them or to boundaries. For this reason, many regard his legacy to be the development of an archipelago of more or less isolated cultures (Hann 2004). This methodology led to the mapping of socio-cultural differences and the lateral comparison of cultures (Candea 2018), an endeavor best illustrated by the archive Human Relation Area Files (Murdock 1949; Ember 1997).

Until the 1980s, anthropological works usually attempted to provide spatial contexts for socio-cultural phenomena. By doing so, researchers tried to anchor specific cultural or social phenomena in the web of geographical coordinates (Gupta and Ferguson 1997). Now the field anthropologists engage with is usually not a spatially defined site (Lovell 1998; Rytter and Olwig 2011). Moreover, the idea of spatially anchored cultures rooted in a particular region has been questioned several times (Lederman 1998; Scott 2018). It is increasingly apparent that the problem of spatialization has caused numerous epistemological and methodological challenges in anthropological scholarship (Low 2009).

While examining boundaries, I do not intend to locate them. In my perspective, boundaries, unlike borders, are flexible, diminishing or proliferating in particular

circumstances. Social disruptions are not necessarily permanent, and they disappear and reappear in time. Bearing in mind the flexibility of boundaries, the argumentation of the article will go as follows. First, I will describe two opposing ways of reasoning in examining boundaries and borders. I will argue that in the Hungarian-Slovenian border region, the combination of the two ways of reasoning is expedient in understanding local tensions and conflicts. Then, I explore the notion of landscape: a concept that is equally important in local and academic discourse to describe social and natural discontinuities. I argue that the Cartesian vision of landscape relying on the distinction between Nature and Culture hinders rather than enhances our understanding of interrelated boundaries in the region. Next, I describe the story of two local infrastructural developments in Orfalu in order to demonstrate how elastic some of the boundaries are in the region, and how the interplay among various human and non-human agencies create integrated socio-natural boundaries.

INDUCTIVE AND DEDUCTIVE REASONING – GROUPS AND BOUNDARIES

Research has usually interpreted the geographical distribution of groups and boundaries in two opposing ways. If social units (i.e., groups) and boundaries mutually determine each other, then, boundaries may define groups, or – on the contrary – groups can define boundaries. I propose to label the first research design as inductive reasoning. According to this reasoning, the researcher aims at detecting and locating non-apparent boundaries by gathering data about groups. One of the most often cited, pivotal works is Eric Wolf's and John Cole's book on two villages in South-Tirol. After a meticulous study of individuals in the village community, the authors define a part of a significant boundary between Romance and Germanic Europe that was not manifest before the study (Cole and Wolf 1974). Despite identical ecological conditions, the authors pointed out a set of significant cultural differences between Tret and St. Felix, unfolding a section of the "hidden frontier" separating the Mediterranean world from Transalpine Northern-Europe.

The other research design, which I call the deductive way of reasoning, posits borders as axiomatic. The starting point of these studies is a well-defined boundary, and the research question is how this boundary influences the life of communities. These studies do not strive to locate and define borders; on the contrary, they take them as a vantage point for further research. In this perspective, although borders are a consequence of social processes, they are also anchored in geographical space. Out of the many socio-cultural borders, these studies usually examine the impact of state borders on local communities, because the whereabouts of these borders are defined and fixed by the spatial extension of political entities (Wilson and Donnan 1998). One of the emblematic examples for this approach is Pater Sahlins' monograph on the life of a Catalan rural society along the river Cerdanya, which is divided by the French-Spanish state border (Sahlins 1989). In his book, Spanish

and French nation-building efforts, as well as the invention of the national border (as a condition for local Catalans), play a pivotal role in the formation of local socio-economic conditions.

It is also possible to combine the two opposing ways of reasoning, as the example of research on phantom borders shows. Phantom borders are historical political borders (more often than not state borders) that no longer exist. Some of these historical borders, however, can still be detected by examining various forms and modes of social actions and practices (Löwis 2015). When examining phantom borders, researchers take once existing borders as a starting point and then intend to draw them back on the map by finding relevant indicators that make them visible again. These borders are especially important in Central and Eastern Europe, where borders were in constant flux throughout the last centuries.

For several historical reasons – including the changing of borders and the formation of new states in the 20th century (Munda Hirnök 2013; Ispán et al. 2018) – the Hungarian-Slovenian border area provides an excellent field site for carrying out anthropological research on invisible, visible and historical borders as well as social boundaries. I argue that the connection between groups and boundaries is not as self-evident as certain studies suggest (Linde-Laursen 2010). This is especially true in the Hungarian-Slovenian border area. In this case, current and historical political and legislative borders, as well as ethnic and cultural boundaries – together with a mosaic-patterned diverse landscape of ecological discontinuity – create an area of socio-cultural and natural dissimilarities. In my article, I argue that these dissimilarities create a web of relations, and, thus, state borders as well as social and ecological boundaries are embedded in an ongoing correspondence between human, non-human, and institutional agents. Migration processes, ecologies, and economies generate a joint agora of correspondence between plants, farmers, rangers, and animals (cf. Kozorog 2019). Thus, the diversity of landscapes is interrelated with changing social boundaries within the region.

LANDSCAPE, NATURE AND CULTURE

The European vision on landscapes is a cultural construction that came into being on the basis of modernist Cartesian epistemology strictly demarcating human and non-human realms, and superordinating human activity onto natural forces (Thomas 1984: 20–22; Descola 2013: 45). This perspective draws a definite line between animate and inanimate entities as well as between culture and nature. Furthermore, it demarcates the domain of natural and cultural studies (Dijksterhuis 2012: 73). With this distinction and hierarchization, landscapes become the backdrop of human activities, where human agency by the utilization and transformation of landscapes creates specific areas of “certain physiognomic distinction on the surface of the Earth, where man dwells and performs economic activity” (Andreychouk 2015: 4).

Landscape in both scientific and popular discourse was represented as an assemblage of discrete natural and cultural entities. As Carl Sauer argues:

Landscape is the English equivalent of the term German geographers are using largely, and strictly has the same meaning: a land shape, in which the process of shaping is by no means thought of as simply physical. It may be defined, therefore, as an area made up of a distinct association of forms, both physical and cultural. (Sauer 1963: 321)

As a corollary of this approach, landscapes create a mosaic-like pattern (Wiens 1995). This mosaic of landscapes is perceived as a discrete entity; thus landscape is a vision, similar to a picture, which represents the world from a well-defined vantage point (Cosgrove 1984: 17–18; Cosgrove and Daniels 1988: 1). This vantage point or perspective distinguishes landscapes from maps. Maps are also the representations of the Earth upon a flat surface using projections distorting the real relief to a two-dimensional picture (Cosgrove 2008: 2–5). However, unlike landscapes, this projection is done from above, from an “objective” point of view.

This hierarchical relationship between humans and non-humans, as well as the vision-like perception of landscape, were characteristic of European anthropological and geographical discourse until the postmodern turn (Mitchell and Thomas 1994: 9–10). In the last three decades, a different standpoint has gained prominence in academic discourse. Landscapes are no longer perceived as static cultural images based on demarcations between the inner and outer world, the natural and the human. As Tim Ingold formulates it:

Thus, neither is the landscape identical to nature, nor is it on the side of humanity against nature. As the familiar domain of our dwelling, it is with us, not against us, but it is no less real for that. And through living in it, the landscape becomes a part of us, just as we are a part of it. (Ingold 1993: 154)

This dwelling perspective advocated by Tim Ingold resonated in anthropological inquiry and beyond, placing humans *in* rather than *on* the landscape and environment. Relations, activities, and moralities infuse landscapes (Kohn 2013). Therefore, landscapes are perceived as multi-dimensional entities, rather than two-dimensional pictorial images. A recent summary of the concept of landscape in anthropological scholarship enumerates the essential features of landscape studies (Tilley and Cameron-Daum 2017: 2–3).

In Orfalu, it is also apparent that locals do not perceive landscape (Hung. *táj*) as a distinct entity, alien from their human realm. For them, it is far more than a pictorial image or a culturally constructed concept. As a local farmer told me, the landscape is what we do and not what we see. However, even in this small community, there are disruptions in local perceptions of the landscape. According to the interviews I carried out in the village,

the concept of landscape may or may not contain the village with its built environment. The landscape starts beyond the last human constructions. Regardless of this difference, local people (including newcomers) generally agree that they are part of the landscape, and the relationship between landscape and locals cannot be restricted to agricultural activities. This relationship is deeply moral and intimate. Although locals regularly make and sometimes share pictures in social media about the Orfalu landscape, they are very much aware that the local landscape is much more than a pictorial image. An informant from the village told me that the landscape comes into being when she is collecting mushrooms in the forest and when she walks the narrow paths between pastures and hayfields.

Locals do not see the surrounding environment, the landscape, as a boundary between their economic activities and nature but as their home. One of the villagers' main criticisms of Őrség National Park's landscape management is that the landscape is becoming increasingly "wilder" and looks neglected. They feel that the park's rangers and employees do not care as much for the forests and meadows as did their parents. The familiar landscapes now look increasingly alien to them.

If neither local nor anthropological discourse describes landscapes as interfaces between nature and culture, one may examine boundaries in the region as socio-natural phenomena co-created by various human and non-human agencies. Nevertheless, social and natural sciences define and perceive boundaries differently. In the following chapter, I would like to point out first a serious challenge of research on boundaries. That is the problem of scaling and the definition of the basic unit of research. I argue that it makes sense to theorize boundaries as fairly flexible and dynamic phenomena that are not fixed to specific locations. Secondly, I would like to show that despite the differences between the natural and social sciences concerning the theorizing of boundaries, it is possible to find synergies between their approaches.

THE PROBLEM OF SCALING

At the dawn of anthropology, in the second half of the 19th century, researchers in Great Britain and the United States focused on the genealogy, development, and differentiation/diffusion of human culture rather than on mapping the geographical scope of cultural phenomena. Thus, questions of temporality were more relevant anthropological problems than questions of spatiality (Carneiro 2003). As I have pointed out, the school of cultural relativism previously played a pivotal role in placing the problem of geo-location at the center of anthropological inquiry. However, it did not elaborate on the question of how boundaries and discontinuities emerge.

Encounters between groups and the social life of boundaries gained prominence as a consequence of the works by Fredrik Barth (1961, 1969) and Igor Kopytoff (1987). Both authors argue that the importance of cultural contacts and boundaries in the study of local

communities cannot be overemphasized. Cultural contacts at boundaries, in fact, are one of the essential constituents of the culture of local communities. Boundaries, thus, became one of the most frequently researched questions in anthropology. As a side effect of this focus, the very image of societies or cultures as more or less discrete units or instances has been identified as troublesome in anthropology. Since that time, there has been a steady development in understanding the spatial distribution of groups, cultures, and societies, as well as borders in anthropological scholarship.

Although the literature on boundaries is extensive, numerous theoretical challenges are not reassuringly resolved. Out of these, I discuss the problems of scaling and the basic unit of research. If anthropology focuses on societies/communities (and its borders), how is it possible to define the basic unit of research? Is a single village in the Slovenian Raba region a relevant unit for research, is it merely a fragment of the whole region, or is it both? Is it possible to theorize Orfalu as an integrated village-community, or is the settlement only a legal frame? One faces similar problems when identifying Órség as a relevant entity in regional research (Csapó 2008; Balázs 2017).

Anthropologists tried to overcome this problem by focusing on cultural traits and social institutions – that is, on abstract comparative categories. These categories, however, are difficult to apply in research as many have demonstrated (e.g., Needham 1975); some of our fundamental categories such as kinship (Sahlins 2012) either lack precise formulation or basic features common to each investigated community. For instance, one of the basic categories of “local” and “newcomer” (Hung. *telepes* or *gyüttment*) is applied in profoundly different ways depending on a village’s historical background (Baranyai 2012). These categories are not uniformly defined or used in the local vernacular throughout the region. Moreover, cultural and social discontinuities are difficult to locate in the Slovenian Raba region and Órség. This is particularly true in Orfalu, where the overwhelming majority of inhabitants are newcomers, arriving from various locations and socio-cultural backgrounds. As I will show in the following chapter, it is difficult to point out such boundaries in the region that are relevant to most of the villagers. Thus the question arises: if boundaries may emerge in different contexts for villagers, in what sense is the concept of boundary instructive for anthropological research? If I focus on the personalization of boundaries and on individual boundary experiences in the region, how is it possible to design a valid research frame?

My answer is twofold. Some boundaries are more permanent and consensual than others. Borders, for instance, are usually relevant and recognized discontinuities for most villagers. The state border and the legislative border of Órség National Park create a relevant framework for social actions in the village. This is not surprising. Local discourse and economic strategies are infused with the agency of these two borders. Improved control on borders and border side communities (Flynn 2008) not only creates disruptions in the physical space with the help of border infrastructure (Knippenberg and Markusse 1999: 6–7), but also helps centers to represent themselves at the peripheries. Therefore, the physical

presence of borders both diminishes and proliferates othering. Within the borders, it obliterates differences while reproducing and defining differences beyond border infrastructure (van Houtum and van Naerssen 2002).

Secondly, there are local issues where hidden boundaries suddenly emerge and create relevant frames for local discourses and social actions. Although boundaries are usually more ephemeral than legislative borders, they may be more influential in a given situation and may create robust disruptions. Moreover, boundaries may not only demarcate humans and social units from each other but may also be the manifestation of socio-natural discontinuities. That is, in the context of various human and non-human agencies, boundaries may connect humans and non-humans, as well as divide human communities. In the following chapter, I intend to show that it is possible to find synergies in the ways boundaries are interpreted in ecology and anthropology.

SIMILARITIES BETWEEN SOCIAL AND NATURAL BOUNDARIES

The second problem concerns the similarities between the concepts of boundaries in ecology and anthropology. Natural or ecological borders usually express actual spatial relations between uniform territories. Ecological boundaries thus have an eminent role in regulating ecologically important flows between ecological patches (Cadenasso et al. 2003). Landscape ecology generally examines the heterogenous distribution of organisms, materials, and energy in a given territory (Yarrow and Marin 2007: 463). Therefore, contact zones between territories of different ecological specificities are the arena of four major types of flow relevant to ecological systems:

1. the flow of materials
2. the flow of energy
3. the flow of organisms
4. the flow of information.²

At the same time, it is important to add that not all boundaries represent an abrupt change in all four flows, and ecological boundaries may differ in physical appearance, size, and spatial extension. As a corollary of this model, landscape ecology perceives the natural environment as a mosaic of patches, where patches are theorized as relatively discrete entities and borders are linear features with minimal spatial extension. Just like in the social sciences, there is in landscape ecology an apparent trend of turning away from static and descriptive aspects of boundaries to a more dynamic approach focusing on flows and processes as well as the impacts of ecological boundaries on ecological systems. This

² Note the similarity with Lévi-Strauss' ideas on social integration. The exchange of manufactured objects, food, and women creates relationships between groups (Lévi-Strauss 1969: 52–68). Although the flow of information is not incorporated into his grand theory on kinship, it emerges in his ideas on the transfer of myths between societies, both opposing and uniting them (Lévi-Strauss 1982).

dynamic understanding of ecological boundaries results in a shift from one-dimensional models (focusing on the change of one element) to oligo-dimensional models (Yarrow and Marin 2007: 463). Thus, similarly to social sciences, flows and processes in contact zones are gaining prominence in ecological scholarship.

Nevertheless, there is a significant difference between ecological boundary-making and social bordering. In ecology, the flow of materials, energy, organisms, and information is usually perceived as actual processes taking place in a concrete physical space. Therefore, the epistemological status of ecological borders is somewhat different from that of social borders. There is a specific location that ecologists point at when they examine ecological borders, edges, boundaries, and corridors between landscapes. The importance of ecological boundaries lies in their role as structural and functional components of the habitat mosaic. The role of humans in creating and maintaining ecological borders is increasing. As demonstrated in several studies, human activity transforms ecological borders or creates specific ecological borders. For instance, borders of particularly abrupt change in ecological features are usually created and maintained by human activity (Murcia 1995). An increasing number of ecological borders are partly created by human agency. This is also true in the case of the Slovenian-Hungarian border area, where the mosaic pattern of landscapes is the outcome of traditional means of agriculture and landscape management.

The integrated perspective on human agency and natural forces is especially relevant nowadays, as it is difficult to maintain a binary opposition between nature and culture in the Anthropocene era (Arias-Maldonado 2015: 5–6; Purdy 2015: 3; Biermann et al. 2016). As a consequence, it is important to reassess the relationship between nature and culture and reconfigure the basic set of categories by which anthropology may grasp current socio-natural processes (Moore 2015: 27) – including boundary making.

In line with the aforementioned theoretical considerations, I will present the story of two infrastructure developments in Orfalu. While introducing tensions in the village that contextualize both the construction of a road and the renovation of a house, I will focus on how boundaries suddenly emerge in the community and how natural and social differences form a common agora for negotiating local problems.

THE ROAD THAT LINKS AND DIVIDES

Orfalu (Sln. Andovci) is a small village on the Hungarian side of the Slovenian-Hungarian border. The village, according to classical ethnographic descriptions, belongs to the Slovenian upper Raba region but is now inhabited mostly by newcomer Hungarians (the 2011 census indicates only 29 Slovenes in the village). As of 2018, there are 31 inhabited houses in the village, whose official population amounts to 75 people. This number roughly equals the data of the 1990 census and shows a 37% growth since 2009, when the population reached

its abyss with a mere 55 inhabitants. Traditionally, the villagers belonged to the Roman Catholic Church, but a tiny minority of Lutheran Slovenes was also present in the village. They moved to Orfalu from nearby Budinci (Hung. Búdfalva), which boasts of a vivid Lutheran community. The entire territory of the village has been under natural protection since 1978, and it has been managed and controlled by Őrség National Park staff since the national park's formation in 2011.

In this chapter, I will focus on the destiny of two infrastructure developments in the village. First, I introduce discourses contextualizing the construction (or rather the renovation) of a road crossing the state border. As early as 2008, the Hungarian state planned to pave the bicycle road from Orfalu to the border. At that time, the road on the Slovenian side was already paved and used for automobile traffic. The road construction went through two unsuccessful application processes in 2008 as well as 2010. However, in 2014, a Hungarian road construction company, the Pannonway Enterprise, handed in plans as well as preliminary environmental examinations of the area and asked for a permit from the West-Transdanubian Inspectorate for Environment and Nature to continue the works on the road.

All the villagers were not happy about the road construction, even though the Orfalu village authority full-heartedly backed the project and formed part of the village's 2010–2014 and the 2015–2019 development plans. Similarly to the road construction between Apátistvánfalva (Sln. Števanovci) and Felsőszölnök (Sln. Gornji Senik), local voices opposed the necessary small-scale deforestation along the planned road. One of them (in the case of the Apátisvánfalva road) even endeavored to retract the construction by suing the construction project. However, after the failure on the part of Védegyelet (one of the most important NGOs of environmental protection in Hungary) to prevent road construction, critical voices in Orfalu also fell silent. After several years of delay, the road construction was incorporated into one of the Interreg programs, the Guide2visit project. The construction began in 2018 and should end in August 2020 – however, construction works (according to the environmental plan) should not be carried out between March and August.

The road crosses several local boundaries as well as the state border between Hungary and Slovenia. Understanding the disruptions in the local community facilitates a detailed understanding of the conflicts between those who opposed and those who supported the road construction. The underlying idea behind the road construction was to facilitate economic and social ties between Budinci and Orfalu. However, contemporary social and kinship ties are already fairly weak between these villages, as the majority of Orfalu's current population consists of newcomer settlers having no Slovenian (locally also known as Vend) background. Consequently, the road does not reconnect two traditionally connected Slovenian villages, but, rather, facilitates tourism in the area. For some of the newcomers, the construction of the road does not contribute to the restoration of traditional connections, simply because they never had such ties.

For these people, the road bisects the landscape and causes undesirable disturbances in the area, thus harming the local landscape. Two victims of this damage mentioned in interviews are the alpine newt (*Ichthyosaura alpestris*) and the fire salamander (*Salamandra salamandra*). These animals are rarely spotted in the area – but they represent valuable and fragile animal species in local discourse. Those persons who complain about the road construction feel that connecting human communities results in disconnecting from the environment, from animals and plants. For some of my informants, the connection with the local landscape is more important than connection with Slovenians on the other side of the state border. The obliteration of the state border between Slovenia and Hungary results in the proliferation of boundaries between humans and non-humans.

Social tensions and debates regarding the road construction are embedded in local power relations, where boundaries emerge between newcomers and locals, between Slovenians and Hungarians, as well as between NGOs and state institutions. In this discourse, one of the most important notions is landscape, which recurrently reappears in debates as a conglomerate of humans and non-humans, an agora infused with various agencies, and not as a picture of nature seen from the point of view of culture.

THE TEAHOUSE CONNECTING AND DISCONNECTING LOCAL COMMUNITY

The second case more explicitly enlightens what problems emerge during local development processes and how social boundaries contextualize the presence of ecological and state borders. In the center of Orfalu, there is a multifunctional house called Fűszertár Fűveskert és Teaház (Spice Garden, Chamber, and Teahouse). The establishment of the teahouse is deeply embedded in local power relations. In 2007, the Órség National Park contacted all village authorities in the Slovenian Raba region to hand in joint applications for infrastructure development projects. This act was a call for a cordial relationship between parties, as relations between the area villages and the national park were burdened with tensions. Not all villages welcomed this initiative; however, the mayor of Orfalu gladly joined forces with the management of the national park. The mayor submitted an application together with a local enthusiast. After many twists and turns, in 2013, the village could renovate one of its central buildings, the so-called *nyúlház* (“rabbit house”), which had formerly been a pub, a public school, and the local house of culture. According to the application, the house should fulfill both touristic and communal functions in the village.

In fact, the village authority could have managed the renovated building but was forbidden to generate income from its management until at least 2019. Therefore, after an open tender, the villager (also the librarian in Orfalu) that helped the mayor during the application process became the operator of the reconstructed building. She opened the teahouse and later, with the help of a local NGO (Szemle), they won further financial assistance for the

creation of an herb and spice garden. Now there is finely renovated teahouse welcoming villagers for village events surrounded by an herb and spice garden in the center of Orfalu.

This second story could have easily concluded with a happy ending. However, it seems that the whole process caused severe disruptions in the village community. As one of the villagers said during the village meeting held on April 28, 2015:

I didn't really want to get into this problem. I just want to say that when I came here once as a wife, this was a phenomenal village. I met friendly and helpful people. And now I can only hear instigations against one another. Why? What worries me most is that the village has broken up. We can't live together like this. It cannot be like this. I don't want hostility with anyone, I do not want to be in anger. I want to behave like a normal cooperative person. Not to scold each other, to scold one another, but to unite so we can live together. When I got here, I didn't experience that. And I tell you frankly, I don't feel well in the village anymore.

The tension within the village was at the same meeting theorized in another commentary as an opposition between different waves of newcomers and local Slovenians.

Just one more thing to say. Everybody's is angry with the newcomers or settlers, or whatever the locals call us. In this dispute, we are split into two, between locals and newcomers. But I do not see any Slovenians (Vend). We are sixty-five in the village, where are they.

Many villagers complained that the teahouse, which is public property, is now run by a newcomer family, who allegedly has considerable income from it. As another newcomer villager, a phytotherapist who runs her private touristic business and organic farm in the village, put it:

If you look at other villages in Zala and Vas counties, those mayors think ahead and make the kind of investments that provides income for the village. These investments also provide jobs for the villagers. And here was (...) about twenty-one million forint. Twenty-one million forint went to the teahouse, and the village actually used it only a couple of times. And only a single family could profit from it since they have been managing it for five years. And it happened in a village where people can't get together and talk. There is no community life.

To sum up, the renovation and the running of the teahouse caused severe and long-lasting tensions in the village. Thus, instead of helping to bridge differences – between the national park and the village authority, Slovenians and Hungarians, newcomers and old settlers, as well as herbs and humans – it provided disruptions and introduced new borders in the local web of relations. One of the complaints against the management of the teahouse

was that they asked for an eight Euro entry fee from tourists coming from Slovenia. In this way – according to the complainant – the teahouse even creates disruptions between Slovenian and Hungarian citizens.

One can see a similar process in the case of the teahouse. The major objective of the renovation was to dissolve boundaries between tourists and local people by creating a social space where they could meet up. The teahouse opened at a time when another local entrepreneur closed his pub called Vendégház.³ The Vendégház also aimed at dissolving boundaries between newcomer Hungarians and local Slovenians in the village; however, it closed only after a few years of operation. The teahouse was a much more ambitious endeavor, targeting tourists, locals and newcomers equally; furthermore, it was not only a social enterprise. Agricultural activities attached to the teahouse (goat keeping and the management of the herbal garden) were also integral elements of this project. By renovating the building and creating the herbal garden, the management of the teahouse intended to create a realm where humans, plants, and animals could join together in the local community and landscape.

Without having a full picture on how all these human and non-human agencies are joined up in the ongoing process of the road construction and teahouse management, it is impossible to understand what disruptions and borders come into play, and how developments may eventually cause more problems than benefits. The cases of the road and the teahouse certainly require further examination, but they are now part of the local landscape. One of them is in the village center, and the other one is outside of it.

CONCLUSION

It is well known in anthropological literature that national parks and protected areas are the outcomes of social spatialization (Fikfak and Bajuk Senčar 2015; Więckowski 2018). Similarly to other Central and Eastern European examples (Denisiuk et al. 1997), the majority of national parks in Hungary are situated in the vicinity of state borders. These national peripheries are associated with the idea of virgin nature exempt from human agencies. However, these protected areas are inherently social, political, and discursive constructions (Fall 2005: 267). Thus, local ecologies and landscapes are also intrinsically social creations. Therefore, we should not contrast ecological processes and human agency in understanding the socio-natural transformations in the area. The considerations of posthuman and Anthropocene anthropology force anthropologists to radically reconsider the basic frames of understanding human and non-human relations, as well as the flux of agencies between them.

³ The name Vendégház refers both to the word “guest” in Hungarian and to the Slovenian minority, often called “Vend” in Hungarian.

There is no point in demarcating natural and cultural borders if they create (as in the case of the Slovenian-Hungarian border) a web of relationships. In this region, agricultural activities resulted in a mosaic-like landscape with highly contrastive ecological borders and diverse flora and fauna. Ecological diversity prompted decision makers to establish a national park and thus create the social representation of biodiversity. Eventually, this process has transformed local agricultural activities and the ethos of villagers, who are now gardeners rather than farmers of their land plots (cf. Boscoboinik 2014). From this perspective, the two development projects in Orfalu that I presented provide instructive examples, demonstrate how modifications in the local landscape outside the village affect intra-community relations (the example of the road), and how the construction of a house within the village is contextualized by plant and animal species. These two examples also demonstrate that boundaries may quickly appear and disappear in the region and that a road linking communities, a teahouse connecting locals, and tourists may disconnect members of the local community.

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GIBLJIVE MEJE V SLOVENSKEM PORABJU ZGODBA O DVEH INFRASTRUKTURNIH RAZVOJNIH PROJEKTIH.

Avtor se v razpravi osredinja na nastanek in izginjanje meja na madžarsko-slovenskem obmejnem območju in v tem okviru obravnava lokalne diskurze o dveh razvojnih infrastrukturah v majhni vaški porabski skupnosti Orfalu/Andovci na Madžarskem. Izhodišče je, da postavitev vasi glede na tradicionalna etnografska območja in ločnice ni ustrezen raziskovalni okvir za razumevanje napetosti v lokalni skupnosti. Prav tako dokazuje, da je mogoče razmišljati tudi o drugih okvirih in mejah, čeprav sta območji Őrség in Slovensko Porabje kot stabilni entiteti tradicionalno zagotovili izhodišče za etnografske raziskave na tem območju.

Nekateri od pomembnih okvirov specializacije na tem območju so zakonsko definirane meje zavarovanih območij. Čeprav se zavarovana območja lahko zdijo kot nedotaknjeni naravni

prostori, so vendarle rezultat socialne prostorske ureditve. Podobno kot v drugih srednje- in vzhodnoevropskih primerih so tudi na madžarsko-slovenski meji zavarovana območja. Ta državna obrobja so povezana z idejo o neokrnjeni naravi, ki se zdi izvzeta iz človeškega delovanja. Vendar so zaščiteni območja že sama po sebi družbeni, politični in diskurzivni fenomen; lokalne ekologije in krajine pa so tudi družbene stvaritve.

Na tem območju ni smiselno razmejevati med naravnimi in kulturnimi mejami, saj ustvarjajo (tako kot slovensko-madžarska meja) gosto prepleteno mrežo odnosov. V Slovenskem Porabju in v Őrségu so kmetijske dejavnosti ustvarile mozaično pokrajino z zelo kontrastnimi ekološkimi mejami ter raznovrstno floro in favno. Ekološka pestrost je spodbudila odločevalce k ustanovitvi nacionalnega parka in s tem k ustvarjanju družbene podobe biotske raznovrstnosti. Sčasoma je ta postopek spremenil lokalne kmetijske dejavnosti in etos vaščanov.

Na primeru dveh infrastrukturnih razvojnih projektov na območju je mogoče trditi, da spremembe v lokalni krajini zunaj vasi vplivajo na razmerja v skupnosti (npr. ceste), kontekst graditve hiše v vasi pa so rastlinske in živalske vrste. Ta poučna primera potrjujeta, da se meje na območju lahko hitro pojavijo, a tudi izginejo; cesta, ki povezuje skupnosti, ali čajnica, ki družijo domačine in turiste, je lahko tudi razlog za odtujitev članov lokalne skupnosti.

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