

## DOCUMENTATION

### GEOGRAPHY IN SLOVENIA\*

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Writing, education and research on geography have a long-standing tradition in Slovenia, and have their roots in the Austrian Empire's cartography, geographic writing and regional studies. The complexity of spatial interactions have long been the focus of geographical research. In the 1960s, as Slovene scientists experienced the diversity of western geography, two major fields gained their attention: the geography of the karst and human geography, the latter understood as "social geography" and as outlined by German and Austrian geographers in the second half of the 20th century. Contemporary Slovene geography does not concentrate on regional geography; rather, problems and process-oriented research is practised, most often in such fields as ethnic and political geography, geography of tourism, geography of environmental degradation, and geography of disaster processes.

#### Historical Background

One can go back to the times of the Holy Roman Empire and its successors, the Austrian and the Austro-Hungarian Empires, to find descriptions and cartographic works on areas settled by Slovenes. A nobleman, Janez Vajkard Valvasor, a member of the British Royal Society, published in 1689 *Die Ehre deß Herzogthums Krain*, with detailed geographical, historical and ethnographic descriptions and cartographic presentations of the area between the southeastern summits of the Alps and the northern Adriatic Sea. Some limited fundamental geographic research was accomplished and published thereafter, mostly in the second half of the 19th century. The Slovene nation is proud of the map first published in 1854 by Peter Kozler of Slovene Lands.

After World War One, most of the territory became part of the Kingdom of the Serbs, Croats and Slovenes. The university in Ljubljana was reconstituted in 1919 and geography was intro-

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duced as a regular program of studies. In 1920, with the founding of the Geographic Institute, a base for geographic research was established. Jovan Cvijić, a Serbian student of the Sorbonne and already famous for his work *La Péninsule Balkanique*, suggested that Arthur Gavazzi from Dalmatia should become professor and the Institute's head. Two years later the Slovene Geographic Society was established, following the lead of the Serbian one (1910). The Society started to publish its journal, the *Geografski vestnik*, in 1925.

In 1927 changes swept through the geographic community: the first Congress of Yugoslav geographers took place and Anton Melik, a Slovene who had studied in Vienna, became the head of the Institute. He influenced Slovene geography for more than three decades, and is still seen as the leading regional geographer of Slovenia and, in part, of the Balkan peninsula. His books on Yugoslavia and Slovenia from the 1920s and 1930s are excellent examples of regional analysis. Individual parts of Slovenia were described in four separate volumes (*Slovenski alpski svet*; *Štajerska, Prekmurje in Mežiška dolina*; *Posavska Slovenija*; and *Primorska Slovenija*), published after World War Two. Not many national geographic traditions produced such detailed regional descriptions as Melik's. Sadly, they were never translated into foreign languages. Along with Melik, his friend and colleague Svetozar Ilešič became well-known, particularly because of his studies on rural landscapes and geographical theory. His analyses of field patterns (*Sistemi poljske razdelitve na Slovenskem*) and agricultural density (*Agrarna prenaseljenost v Sloveniji*) were appreciated by the international community of geographers, and his textbooks for different levels of studies have made geography popular.

After World War Two geography was granted national status. In 1947 the Slovene Academy of Sciences and Arts instituted a geography research section, which later was named the "Geografski inštitut Antona Melika." A research station was set up in Postojna where the "Inštitut za raziskovanje krasa" put down roots. Both center their research on landscape forms physical geography. The University of Ljubljana introduced organizational changes in 1961. The former Institute of Geography was renamed "Oddelek za geografijo" and was housed, along with other departments of the Filozofska fakulteta, in a new building. A special

research centre, the "Inštitut za geografijo Univerze v Ljubljani," with its research focus on human geography, and the separate "Geografski muzej" were established. Geography became a study and research orientation of the Teachers Training Colleges and their Departments of Geography in Ljubljana and in Maribor also. The second Slovene university opened its doors in Maribor in 1975 and incorporated geography in its Pedagogical Faculty.

### Contemporary Status

Contemporary Slovene geography has three major institutional forms: the national association of geographers, the research institutes, and the educational institutions. The binding glue for activities in the field of teaching and research is the Zveza geografskih društev Slovenije.<sup>1</sup> This Association, with almost 700 members, is particularly interested in popularizing geography and in promoting better teaching of the subject. Its seven regional societies organize lectures and excursions. The Association arranges yearly seminars on geography teaching, co-ordinates a variety of research interests and provides goals for the national profession. Under its supervision a geographical congress is held every second year, and international and professional links are promoted: Slovene geographers became regular members of the International Geographical Union at the 27th International Geographical Congress, held in Washington D.C. in August 1992. The Association publishes two geographical publications. *Geografski vestnik* is Slovenia's oldest professional journal, in 1993 entering its sixty-eighth year of existence. It publishes articles on the research activities of the Association's members and invited guests. *Geografski obzornik* is a quarterly magazine aimed at popularizing geography and improving geography teaching.

Professional geographers work as teachers at the elementary and secondary school levels and at the universities. They are researchers at professional and non-professional institutions as well, including institutions of urban and regional planning, meteorological and hydrological centers, offices of the administration and tourist agencies. With the introduction of the market economy in 1991, some geographers have opened private research institutions. Still, most postgraduate students find jobs in

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two research centers: at the university<sup>2</sup> and at the headquarters of the Academy of Sciences.<sup>3</sup> Both employ close to 20 researchers. At the University Institute of Geography the main objective is the study of landscape patterns. Within the frame of so-called "social geography," detailed studies have been made on disappearing alpine pastures, ethnic impacts in border regions, permanent and part-time migration cycles, environmental degradation, the rapidly changing Slovene countryside, rural-urban relations and particularly on development policies and the impact of urbanization. Internationally-recognized studies have been completed on Slovenes in Austrian Carinthia and on the ethnically mixed region of the Triest hinterland. The past twenty-three issues of the Institute's *Geografica Slovenica* have included works on geopolitics and environmental and cultural geography; it frequently prints papers read by participants at scientific meetings held in Slovenia. Printings of old maps and old books are deposited in the Geografski muzej.

The Institute at the Slovene Academy of Arts and Sciences is engaged in research projects on the functional character of Slovenia's distinct natural environments. In particular, natural disasters and their impacts have been studied. Recent earthquakes have been carefully analyzed, flood areas determined and mapped. Measures against the devastating effects of disasters have been suggested. Geomorphology mapping, as well as the assessment of the Slovene glaciers, is this Institute's ongoing task. A fundamental study of alpine farming was performed. Longer regional descriptions and articles on topics of cultural geography have, along with the above-mentioned topics, been published in *Geografski zbornik*, the Institution's magazine. The "Inštitut za raziskovanje krasa"<sup>4</sup> belongs to the Academy as well. In the nearby Dinaric karst, geographic, hydrological, geological, biological and speleological studies are performed. A data-rich survey of karst phenomena (caves, dolinas) has recently been completed. A museum collection is attached to the Institute.

Graduate degrees in geography can be obtained at three major educational institutions. All are constituent parts of their respective

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universities. Both departments, in Ljubljana<sup>5</sup> and Maribor,<sup>6</sup> are involved in research as well, whereas the "Katedra za geografijo" in Ljubljana<sup>7</sup> provides pedagogical training only. All have similar educational programs. Students have to finish eight semesters of study. The study of geography is traditionally combined with the study of another discipline, most often history, sociology, ethnology or languages. Recently, however, a purely geographical program was introduced. Students have the option of specializing in teacher training, or choosing between two research-oriented programs and becoming employed in the professional, governmental and other non-educational institutions mentioned above. The interest in the study of geography is overwhelming. Yearly, almost 300 students apply, whereas only one hundred can be accepted. Interest is not diminishing, despite the fact that only about a tenth of the students who apply actually finish their studies at the undergraduate level and receive bachelor's degrees.

The Department of Geography at the University of Ljubljana provides postgraduate programs in geography. Yearly up to five students enroll in three basic fields: physical, human and regional geography. The professors offer programs which are most often problem-oriented and in accordance with the interest of the students. Students can study for a master's degree or a doctorate. The University of Ljubljana has convocated 44 doctors and 23 masters of science in the field of geography since its inception. In the same time-frame 673 students have received bachelors' degrees, 419 of them in the last 30 years. Departmental teachers are members of research teams at other geographic, urban-planning or governmental institutions, and participate in research projects at the university as well. They are among the most productive writers in foreign professional journals. Since 1952, 430 articles have been published in languages other than Slovene, most of them in German (34.4%) and English (33.8%). The following topics are most frequently represented: ethnicities and minorities (19.8%), karst morphology (15.9%), rural development (13.8%), tourist patterns (10.8%), urban/rural settlement structure (9.2%). To make research results public, the departmental journal *Dela* was launched in 1985. Its discussions of geographic

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problems are appreciated by planning and developmental agencies on the local and national level. Foreign language articles are also published. *Dela 7* was trilingual, discussing as it did the cross-border regional development of the alpine area shared by Austria, Italy and Slovenia, a region that is a candidate for future Winter Olympic Games. The department's geographic library has close to 32,000 books and 35,000 maps and is considered to be the central library for spatial studies.

### **International Stature and Links**

The continued presence of geography in Slovenia seems assured. From its beginnings in the 1920s to the present day, the discipline has survived changing political fortunes and has grown into a large enterprise with five research centres, three institutions of higher education and five major professional journals. Until 1991, while Slovenia was a member of the Yugoslav federation, Slovene geography was often the national leader in the country. Volumes of *Geographica Jugoslavica* (a journal printed in English) were most often edited in Ljubljana. Slovenia was also seen as the gateway to East European knowledge. Joint Yugoslav-German, and well as Yugoslav-American geographic projects were organized and led by Slovene geographers; and the same was true of traditional Polish-Yugoslav geographic cooperation. Much-acknowledged cross-cultural studies were made in the field of tourism and in the broad spectrum of rural societal transition. Within human geography, so-called "social geography" was initiated among the geographers of Yugoslavia by Slovenes as well as by Croats.

Slovenia's presence in the international community of geographers is secured. Eleven Slovene geographers are long-time members of International Union's commissions or working groups, some with leading roles. Slovene geographers have recently organized the Union's professional meetings on tourism and borders, on the human impact of the karst, as well as on rural/highland transformation models.

The discipline has established links with international institutions in planning as well. The best scientific results were achieved in a working group of geographers from the (former) socialist countries, dealing with the problems of pollution and environmental degradation. Within the Alpe-Adria Regional

Cooperative, geographers from Slovenia contributed to the documents on environmental protection and tourist development. The Alpe-Adria member regions have also appreciated the Slovene experience from studies on ethnic patterns, especially along the border of Slovenia.

In particular the geography departments of Trieste, Udine and Padova (Italy), Klagenfurt, Graz and Vienna (Austria) and Munich, Regensburg, Bayreuth and Frankfurt (Germany) are interested in the region, have published works on Slovenia's geographic features, and have close relationships with colleagues and institutions in Slovenia. Geographers from Pecs and Budapest (Hungary), Brno and Prague (Czechia), Bratislava (Slovakia), Kraków and Warsaw (Poland), Zagreb (Croatia) and Skopje (Macedonia) participate in ongoing cooperation as well. Professional ties have been established with Portland OR, Austin TX, Boulder CO and Springfield MO in the U.S.A. Special research interests have linked Slovene geographers to colleagues and their work in, for example, Christchurch (New Zealand), Oulu (Finland), Grenoble, Mulhouse and Paris (France), Bern, Zurich and Basel (Switzerland).

The greatest contemporary problem for Slovene geography is a lack of cohesion and the low level of mutual exchange of knowledge between institutions and professionals. A stronger common bond amongst Slovenia's community of geographers is recommended, particularly with respect to the long overdue *National Atlas*. A planned modern regional geography of Slovenia, and of its constituent parts, faces a disaster, if such a bond is not found soon. Future work in national projects, for instance the GIS, the "new-border" regional analyses, studies on the alpine environment and on environmental vulnerability should be based on mutual cooperation of participating researchers.

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