THE BRIEF PROFILE OF THE SLOVAK GEOGRAPHICAL COMMUNITY

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Abstract: *The admission of the Slovak Republic into the European Union in 2004 and joining into the EUGEO and the Schengen area in 2007 were in particular important events that influenced the life of the Slovak geographical community in the last years. The forthcoming 31th congress of the IGU, which will be held in Tunis in this year is also very good opportunity to reflect the present stay of the Slovak geographical community. Thereat we have an ambition to present a brief profile of the Slovak geographical community with emphasis on its institutional development, legislative position, and problems of geographical research and education.*
Key words: *slovak geographical institutions, slovak geography, geographical education, geographical research*

INTRODUCTION

The admission of the Slovak Republic into the European Union in 2004 and joining into the EUGEO and the Schengen area in 2007 were in particular important events that influenced the life of the Slovak geographical community in the last years. The forthcoming 31th International Geographical Congress, which is going to be held in Tunis in this year is also very good opportunity to reflect the present stay of the Slovak geographical community. Thereat we have an ambition to present a brief profile of the Slovak geographical community with emphasis on its institutional development, legislative position, and problems of geographical research and education.

THE INSTITUTIONAL HISTORY OF THE SLOVAK GEOGRAPHY

Slovak geography went through the complex historical development that had been influenced by various contexts. From the political-geographical formation it is possible to distinguish the three periods of development, specific for their forming conditions of geographical education and research – Hungarian (Ugrian), Czechoslovak, and Slovak context. The territory of nowadays Slovakia was a sphere of interest for the geographical explorers and researchers as early as the Ptolemaios era. They would be mainly the explorers from other countries. A notable survey about a vivid preoccupation of the European science with the territory of Slovakia notified J. Tibenský and V. Urbancová (2003). The intensification of research efforts dates back to 16th century, when the first groups of humanists appear in Slovakia. Bratislava (originally Prešporok) became the first education centre, where in 1467 the first academy of university character in the area of

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Slovakia was established - *Academia Istropolitana*. The concern over Bratislava increased soon after it had been stated a capital of Hungarian Kingdom (by the year 1783). In the following centuries some other centres had been forming, where the institutions of higher forms of education were established. An incentive factor for that had been the penetration of reformation with foundation of latin humanistic schools that had had active contacts with the European, especially German universities, what contributed to favourable conditions for the diffusion of progressive ideas into slovak territory. There was a turbulent period in Hungarian Kingdom concerning rivalisation between Catholicism and Protestantism. The Jesuits established Catholic universities in Trnava (1635) and Košice (1657). As a counterbalance, there was established an Evangelical college in Prešov in 1667, which should have become a university, but finally it did not realize. The Protestant scholars concentrated themselves also at the Evangelical lyceums in Bratislava, Banská Bystrica, Banská Štiavnica, Kežmarok, and Levoča. The Mining Academy became a very famous and important educational and research institution established in 1763 in Banská Štiavnica. In these conditions there appear the first geographical research representatives of the Slovak provenance. The pioneers of geography include for example Juraj Wernher (1497-1567), Ján Sambucus (1531-1584), David Fröhlich (1595-1648), Juraj Buchholtz senior. (1643-1724), Juraj Bohuš (1687-1722). The most widely known personality of the pre-modern era of Slovak geography was Matej Bel (1684-1749), the author of a monumental homeland study work „*Notitia Hungariae novae historico-geographica*". From among his contemporaries we can mention Daniel Fischer (1695-1746), Karel Otto Moller (1670-1747), Samuel Mikovíni (1686-1750), Ján Tomka-Sásky (1692-1762). Later on there we could have found geographical and homeland researchers like Karol Gottlieb Windisch (1725-1793), Ján Matej Korabinský (1740-1811), Samuel Augustini ab Hortis (1729-1792), Ladislav Bartholomaeides (1754-1825), and Dionýz (Dieneš) Štúr (1827-1893). The first university professor of geography in Budapest, who was born in the Slovak village of Veľký Slavkov and who had studies at the Evangelical college in Prešov, and later became a co-founder and chairman of the Hungarian (Ugrian) Geographical Society, was Ján Hunfalvy (1820-1888).

The second half of the 19th century was a significant period for the formation of modern shape of geographical science. However, the period was not favourable for the formation of Slovak geography, because of some political and language barriers that the Hungarian government put to hinder the constitution of Slovak scholar institutions (for example the number of schools with the Slovak teaching language decreased in 1870-1918 from 1822 to 94). Furthermore in Slovakia there persisted an ideological conservativeness fastened by religious dogmatism and by prevailing rural environment, what hampered the diffusion of ideas based on the latest scientific knowledge (Klas 2006, s. 33). For these reasons the Slovak geography did not dispose of the erudite specialists and geographical research used to be just rarely represented by the scientific-popularisation attempts of homeland study workers and secondary-school teachers. Some of them became involved in the Slovak Museum Society founded in 1895 (e.g. Ján Volko-Starohorský). This situation endured until the fall of Austria-Hungary in 1918, when the Slovak secondary school professors, Víťazoslav Cintula and Jožo Martinka, started to be publishing active.

After the foundation of Czechoslovak Republic in 1918 the conditions for science and geography development markedly raised. In 1919 the Comenius University in Bratislava

was established. In the 1920s the institutional fundamentals of geography in Slovakia were laid. Geography commenced to be lectured at the university ground back in 1921 due to an ethnographer professor Karel Chotek (1881-1967). In 1923 there was established a workplace at the Faculty of Arts called Geographical Seminar. The geography lectures covered the Czech professors from Charles University in Prague – Jiří Viktor Daneš (1880-1928), František Štůla (1883-1943) and Jiří Král (1893-1975) (Lauko 2006). Jan Hromádka (1886-1968) had a significant role in the formation of modern Slovak geography. He acted since 1930 as a private lecturer and since 1938 as an assistant professor of physical geography. In 1940 had been the Geographical Seminar moved under the newly established Faculty of Sciences as a Geographical Institute, and Jan Hromádka became its first director. At this time he also established the Geographical Institute at the Business Academy in Bratislava (later the Economic Academy, today the University of Economics). Throughout his short function (1938-1946) he educated the first generation of Slovak geographers, some of them later became well-known researchers and educators – for example Štefan Bučko, Štefan Fekete, Ján Hetteš, Ladislav Kvietok, Teodor Lamoš, Michal Lukniš, Matej Papík, Pavol Plesník, Dominik Polakovič, Anton Šíma, Eduard Šimo, Ján Verešík. Very important for the academic geography were also the two habilitations under leadership of Jan Hromádka. In 1946 Michal Lukniš habilitated under him for the physical geography, and in 1949 Anton Šíma for the human geography (Lukniš 1987).

Institute of Geography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts in Bratislava presented another institution, where Jan Hromádka acted. The institution was established in 1943 under the historian František Bokes. In 1944 for some personal problems the institution factually ceased to exist. The institution was re-established at the end of 1945 with the chairman Jan Hromádka. He remained a chief even after his move to Prague in 1946 until 1950.

Political contest for power in the post-war Czechoslovakia had affected the higher education as well, which however in the spirit of old academic traditions endeavoured to keep the apolitical spirit within its pedagogical and research-scientific activity. The change of political regime in February 1948 meant a principal turnover in the life of the nation and its society. Repression of academies and universities and their insertion into the new school system and culture was a basic precondition for the preparation of the intelligentsia under the communist ideology. The management system and the structure of academic, university and faculty organs led to the dissolution of relative independence and self-administration of the academic community and to establishment of a strict unitarian control. Despite of directive interventions from state and party organs, geographical institutions played an important role in the education and training of specialists. It was a period of significant quantitative development and complex institutional progress. Some workplaces were established out of Bratislava. At the end of the 1940s and beginning of the 1950s some geographical workplaces were established with specification on teachers´ training in Prešov, Banská Bystrica and Nitra. Some time these workplaces functioned also in Martin and Trnava. Social demand for geo-scientific knowledge led to formation of faculty of geological-geographical sciences that existed in 1952-1959. In connection with its foundation the original geographical institute was divided into the Department of Physical Geography and the Department of Economic Geography. In this time there was also an individual geographical workplace at the Pedagogical Academy in Bratislava.

On the basis of Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts there was established the Slovak Academy of Sciences (SAS) in Bratislava in 1953 including the Institute of Geography. The institute was classified among the institutes of the first section of sciences integrating the workplaces that explore the inanimate nature. Bezák (1993, p. 360) noticed that this, not quite an adequate classification, caused an unsymmetrical development of scientific discipline in favour of physical geography. There was also a positive effect, for the trends had kept the scientific research in human geography from the ideological influences and strict political control, which occurred at many social science institutes. One of the effects was rather a liberal personal politics what enabled some religiously or ideologically unreliable researchers fired from universities to find refuge at the institute.

The institutional structure of the Slovak geography had thereby stabilized and later on there occurred only little changes. In 1966 an individual research workplace, the Cabinet for the Landscape Research, was established at the Pedagogical Faculty in Prešov, which was in 1981 integrated into to Department of Geography. In 1974 there was established the Department of Regional Geography at the Faculty of Sciences in Bratislava. In Košice there existed in 1978-1992 a detached workplace of the Institute of Geography SAS, which focused on the research of The East-Slovakian Lowland.

After 1989 the social-political and economic conditions changed. The parliament democracy, market regime, and academic liberty were restored. The institutional development of geography partially reflected the new tendencies in the sphere of research techniques as well as the applied research. In 1992 there was founded the Department of Cartography, Geoinformatics and Remote Sensing. Several departments had renamed in reflection to their current specialisation (for example to the problems of geoecology or regional development). New geographical workplaces were established at universities in Košice (in 1998) and Ružomberok (in 2003).

Tab. 1: *Institutional development of geography in Slovakia (1923-2007)*

name of institution	**seat**	**year of establishing (existence)**	**founder leader (contemporary leader)**	**contemporary name of institution**
Geographical Seminar of the Philosophical Faculty CU	Bratislava	1923-1940	Karel Chotek	
Geographical Institute of the Faculty of Natural Sciences CU	Bratislava	1940-1952	Jan Hromádka	
Geographical Institute of the Business Academy	Bratislava	1940	Jan Hromádka *Ema Mišúnová*	Section of Geography of the Department of Public Administration and Regional Development, National Economy Faculty, University of Economy
Institute of Geography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences and Arts	Bratislava	1943	František Bokes *Vladimír Ira*	Institute of Geography Slovak Academy of Sciences

Institute of Geography of the Pedagogical Faculty of the Slovak University	Prešov (do r. 1952 Košice)	1949	Matej Papík *Eva Michaeli*	Department of Geography and Regional Development, University of Prešov, Faculty of Humanities and Natural Sciences.
Department of Physical Geography, Slovak University, Faculty of Geological-geographical Sciences	Bratislava	1952	Michal Lukniš *Miloš Stankoviansky*	Department of Physical Geography and Geoecology, Comenius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Department of Economic Geography, Slovak University, Faculty of Geological-geographic Sciences	Bratislava	1952	Anton Šíma *Pavol Korec*	Department of Human Geography and Demogeography, Comenius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Department of Geography of Higher Pedagogical School	Banská Bystrica	1954	Jozef Fraňo *Pavel Michal*	Department of Geography and Landscape Ecology, M. Bel University, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Slovak Geographic Society under SAV	Bratislava	1955	Michal Lukniš *René Matlovič*	Slovak Geographic Society under SAV
Department of Homeland studies, Pedagogical Institute	Nitra	1959	Ján Szabadi *Alena Dubcová*	Department of Geography and Regional Development, Constantine the Philosopher University, Faculty of Natural Sciences
Department of Homeland studies, Pedagogical Institute	Trnava	1959-1982	Ján Sabaka	
Department of Homeland studies and History, Pedagogical Institute	Martin	1961-1964	Jozef Kosír	
Department of Regional Geofraphy, Comenius University Faculty of Natural Sciences UK	Bratislava	1974	Oliver Bašovský *Viliam Lauko*	Department of Regional Geography, Landscape Protection and Planning, Comenius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences UK

Department of Cartography, Geoinformatics and Remote Sensing, Comenius University Faculty of Natural Sciences CU	Bratislava	1992	Jozef Krcho *Eva Mičietová*	Department of Cartography, Geoinformatics and Remote Sensing, Comenius University, Faculty of Natural Sciences UK
Department of Geography, P. J. Šafárik University, Faculty of Natural Sciences	Košice	1998	Zdenko Hochmuth *Zdenko Hochmuth*	Institute of Geography, P. J. Šafárik University, Faculty of Naural Sciences
Department of Biology and Geography, The Catholic University, Faculty of Education	Ružomberok	2003	Rudolf Novodomec *Rudolf Novodomec*	Department of Geography, The Catholic University, Faculty of Education

SLOVAK GEOGRAPHIC SOCIETY

The scientific society presents a peculiar institutional structure of each scientific branch. In respect to a specific development of the Slovak geography within a Czechoslovak context, the social activity had been also realized within the Czechoslovak Geographical Society, which tradition dates back to 1894. The Slovak geographers would regularly participate in meetings and other events organized by this society. In 1946 the subsidiary in Bratislava was established called the Slovak Geographic Society led by Jan Hromádka. The development of Slovak geography as a science, its wider penetration into the school system on all level, and the continuous growth of personal background were the basic premises for the formation of independent geographical society. In 1955 the preparatory committee started to work (Mikuláš Konček, Michal Lukniš a Ján Hanzlík) and on December 8th in 1955 the constitutive meeting of the Slovak Geographic Society under SAS took place in Bratislava. The managing body had been built-up by seven membered Slovak central committee of the society led by the chairman. Michal Lukniš had been elected the first chairman of the society. The committee comprised of Mikuláš Konček, Pavol Plesník, Jozef Martinka, Ján Hanzlík, Koloman Ivanička and Ján Purgina. In 1959 the first regional subsidiary was established – the East Slovak subsidiary in Prešov. The first meeting of the society took place in Bratislava in 1959. At this time the society registered 175 members. In the following period there were established another regional subsidiaries – the West Slovak in Bratislava (in 1965) and the Central Slovak in Banská Bystrica (in 1966). Furthermore, in 1960 the speleological subsidiary was founded seating in Liptovský Mikuláš. The society had 372 members in 1967. The members would regularly meet at general assembly within the congress. Until now there took place 14 meetings (since1998 they are called congresses) – in 1959, 1961 and 1991 in Bratislava, in 1964 in Košice, in 1967 in Liptovský Mikuláš, in 1970, 1986 and 2006 in Banská Bystrica, in 1974 and 2002 in Nitra, in 1978 in Levice, in 1982 and 1998 in Prešov and in 1994 in Častá. At the head of the society were Michal Lukniš (1955-1970), Pavol Plesník (1970-1974), Emil Mazúr

(1974-1978), Ján Drdoš (1978-1986, 1990-1992), Oliver Bašovský (1986-1990), Michal Zaťko (1992-1998), Jozef Mládek (1998-2006) and René Matlovič (since 2006).

Nowadays the Slovak Geographic Society associates above 300 geographers. It has five regional (Bratislava, the West Slovak, the Central Slovak, the East Slovak, and Košice) and the three specialised sections (s. of theoretical geography, applied geography, and school geography). Every four years the society organizes the congress, which includes the general assembly, the supreme body of the society. The forthcoming congress is going to be held in Košice in 2010.

CONTEMPORARY PERSONAL AND INSTITUTIONAL BACKGROUND OF THE ACADEMIC EDUCATION AND GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH IN SLOVAKIA

At present it is possible to depict the eight geography workplaces representing the base of the Slovak geography in the six centres (Bratislava, Prešov, Banská Bystrica, Nitra, Košice and Ružomberok). There is together 180 members of staff, 140 out of them are creative and 32 technical-administrative (situation to 15.1.2008). They include 13 professors, 30 associate professors (docents) and 58 other members of staff with PhD. degree. From the total personal potential point of view there is in Slovakia 16 professors including emeritus, appointed in geography any other geographical field (Pavol Plesník, Koloman Ivanička, Ján Košťálik, Jaroslav Mazúrek, Michal Zaťko, Ján Paulov, Jozef Krcho, Jozef Mládek, Anton Bezák, Eva Michaeli, Ján Oťaheľ, Mikuláš Huba, Jozef Vilček, Jozef Minár, René Matlovič and Viliam Lauko). The next two are going to be appointed professors (Pavol Korec and Robert Ištok). Besides them, the geographical workplaces have also some professors from relative fields (geology, environmental studies, landscape ecology) - Ján Harčár, Ján Drdoš, Vladimír Drgoňa, and Florin Žigrai. The bearing personal core of geography also includes associate professors who achieved a scientific degree doctor scientiarum (DrSc.) - Jozef Kvitkovič, Ľudovít Mičian, Jozef Jakál, Juraj Žudel, and Ján Feranec.

Within the Slovak geographical workplaces there are 14 bachelor, 14 master, and 6 postgraduate (doctoral) study programmes that is together 34 study programmes in a credit (ECTS) study system. There are together 3 328 students of geography at mentioned workplaces (31.10. 2007), 1 520 out of them of teachers' programme and 1 742 students of specialized studies. Geography disciplines have 88 postgraduate students. The most distinguished centre is Bratislava with the three workplaces – at the Faculty of Natural Sciences at the Comenius University, Institute of Geography of the Slovak Academy of Sciences, and at the National Economy Faculty of the University of Economy. These workplaces integrate 100 members, what is 57,1% from the total number of staff. Out of them there are 7 professors, 17 associate professors and 37 members of staff with PhD. degree. In Bratislava there concentrates 57,1% of all professors and associate professors of geography within Slovakia, and 61% of total number of staff with PhD. degree in Slovakia. Bratislava offers the widest scale of study programmes on the three levels - 4 bachelor, 7 master and 5 postgraduate study programmes, what is together 16 study programmes (47% of their total number in Slovakia). The Comenius University in Bratislava disposes of the right to hold habilitations and to appoint professors in regional geography. The

share of geography students at the Comenius University from the total number in Slovakia reaches 41,6%, and the share of PhD. students even 65,9%.

The oldest out of Bratislava geography education and research centre is the town of Prešov, which is situated in the Eastern Slovakia. Prešov is the third largest Slovak town, where is the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Prešov. In Prešov there act 17 members in the staff (9,7% of the total Slovak number), out of them 14 are creative (9,8% of the Slovak number), out of them are 3 professors, 2 associate professors and 7 members of staff with PhD. degree. In Prešov there concentrates 11,9% of all professors and associate professors of geography within Slovakia, and 12% of all persons with PhD. Prešov offers to study geography on all three levels – 2 bachelor, 2 master, and 1 postgraduate programme. It is the only one workplace, where it is possible to hold habilitations and appointing proceedings in the discipline of geography. The share of geography students in Prešov from the total number in Slovakia reaches 14,2%, and the share of postgraduate students 34,1%.

Banská Bystrica in Central Slovakia is another important centre of geography education and research, where is the Department of Geography at the Matej Bel University. There is 20 people in the staff, out of them 18 are creative. They have 1 professor, 4 lecturers and 4 PhD. people. Banská Bystrica offers 2 bachelor and 1 master study programme. The share of geography students in Banská Bystrica in total number of Slovak geography students is 9,8%.

Nitra represents a traditional centre of geography education, where is the Department of Geography and Regional Development at the University of Constantine the Philosopher. The department has 16 membered staff, out of them 14 are creative. Nitra has 1 professor, 1 lecturer and 4 PhD. people. The department in Nitra offers 3 bachelor and 2 master study programmes. The share of geography students at the department in Nitra is 13,1%.

In the last decade there grew out another geography centre in Košice, where is the Institute of Geography under the University of P. J. Šafárik. The institute consists of 12 people, out of them 2 associate professor and 4 PhD. people. The institute in Košice offers 2 bachelor and 1 master study programmes. The share of geography students in Košice presents 7,8%.

The youngest geography workplace within Slovakia could be found in Ružomberok, where is the Department of Geography at the Catholic University. The department includes 10 members with 1 professor, 2 lecturers and 2 PhD. people. The department realizes 1 bachelor and 1 master study programme. The share of geography students in Ružomberok is 13,4% out of the geography students in Slovakia.

Tab. 2: *Study programmes of geography workplaces in Slovakia (2007)*

Institution	***Bachelor study programmes***	***Master study programmes***	***Postgraduate study programmes***
Comenius University in Bratislava	• geography teaching, • geography and cartography, • geography in administration, • geography, regional development and European integration	• geography teaching, • geographical cartography, geoinformatics and remote sensing, • physical geography and geoecology, • geoecology and landscape planning *(in cooperation with environmentalistics)* • human geography and demography, • human geography in administration, • regional geography, regional development and European integration	• *physical geography and geoecology,* • *regional geography,* • *geography didactics*
Institute of Geography Slovak Academy of Sciences in Bratislava			• *physical geography and geoecology,* • *regional geography,*
University of Prešov	• geography teaching, • geography in regional development	• geography teaching, • geography in regional development	• *regional geography and regional development*
Matej Bel University in Banská Bystrica	• geography teaching, • geography and landscape ecology	• geography teaching,	
Constantine the Philosopher University in Nitra	• geography teaching • geography in regional development, • social geography	• geography teaching, • geography in regional development	
Pavol Jozef Šafárik University in Košice	• geography, • landscape structure and its transformation	• geography teaching,	
The Catholic University in Ružomberok	• *geography teaching,*	• *geography teaching,*	

Tab. 3: *Personal potential of geographic workplaces in Slovakia (15.1.2008)**

	Total number of staff	Total number of teachers and research staff	Professors	Associate professors	Other members of the staff with PhD. degree	Other teachers and research assistants
CU Bratislava	59	50	5	11	21	13
IG SAS Bratislava	43	23	2	5	16	7
EU Bratislava	3	3	0	2	0	1
Prešov	17	14	3	2	7	2
B. Bystrica	20	18	1	5	4	8
Nitra	16	12	1	1	4	6
Košice	12	11	0	2	4	5
Ružomberok	10	9	1	2	2	4
SLOVAKIA	180	140	13	30	58	46

*full professors and associate.professors only

Tab. 4: *Number of students at universities and SAS in Slovakia (31.10.2007)*

	Total number of students	Full time students	Part time students	Total number of students of the geography teaching study programmes	Total number of the students of the non-pedagogical study programmes	Total number PhD. students
CU Bratislava	1383	835	548	167	1216	58
IG SAS Bratislava	2	0	0	0	0	2
Prešov	471	448	23	241	202	28
B. Bystrica	328	292	36	232	60	0
Nitra	436	413	23	247	189	0
Košice	261	261	0	186	75	0
Ružomberok	447	333	114	447	0	0
SLOVAKIA	3328	2582	744	1520	1742	88

Source: Institute of information and prognosis of Ministry of Education SR (www.uips.sk).

THE LEGAL STATUS OF GEOGRAPHICAL SCIENCE IN SLOVAKIA

The position of geography within university education context in SR is being influenced by the System of study fields of academic education that had been issued by the Ministry of Education of SR. The system includes all geography fields of study in the group nr. 4 Natural Sciences, subgroup 4.1. Inanimate Nature Sciences. Here we can find the field of Geography 4.1.35. (it is specified for the first and second academic education) and fields for the third (postgraduate) level – 4.1.36 Physical Geography and Geoecology, 4.1.37 Human Geography, 4.1.38. Regional Geography, and 4.1.39. Political Geography.

Geographical Cartography, Geoinformatics and Demography are absent in the system of fields. This clearly implies that the position of geography is in total contradiction with the metageographical knowledge about the ontological and epistemological vindication of geography autonomy. Rather we propose to define an individual group of fields within Geography Science. It is also needful to include the following fields into geography – demography, geographical cartography and geoinformatics as the fields for the third stage of study. The position of geography as a scientific discipline in SR is legally stated by Edict of the Ministry of Education SR nr. 1055/2003-11), by which is in group 1. Natural Sciences and subgroup 1.6. Geography Sciences integrated only the 1.6.1. Physical Geography and Geoecology, 1.6.2. Geographical Cartography and 1.6.3. other related geographical fields. Another geography disciplines were involved into group 1. Natural Sciences, into the subgroup 1.2. Informatics Sciences was involved the Geoinformatics nr. 1.2.4. The group nr. 5. Social sciences and subgroup 5.10. Other Social Sciences include: 5.10.1. Human Geography, 5.10.2. Regional Geography, 5.10.3. Political Geography, and 5.10.4. Demogeography and Demography. Compared to the past, the Historical Geography has been removed from the nomenclature. If the position of geography within the system of study programmes is considered incorrect, the classification of geography disciplines into the fields of research and development seems to be a catastrophe for the Slovak geography. Geography as a science ceased to exist practically. On this subject it is repeatedly needful to achieve that geographical sciences would create an independent group of disciplines at the same hierarchic level as the natural or social sciences etc. Some halfway solutions seem to be groundless and metageographically unsustainable.

SCHOOL GEOGRAPHY

The position of geography in the system of education is in comparison with neighbouring countries quite positive. The meaning of geography has maintained by now. Geography as an individual subject has been so far implemented into the education at primary schools, grammar schools, and some types of specialized schools. Geography at primary schools became markedly popular. International comparisons show that this primary sphere belongs to the most successful one. The subject follows the former pathway of formal didactic aspect as in other subjects. Geography at secondary schools became, after some ambitions to suppress it, has proved and belongs to exceedingly preferred subjects. This might eventuate in certain exhaustion of teachers (markedly lower number of geography teachers than of the subjects involved in the natural scientific group, which are compulsory). Geography at secondary schools, especially grammar schools, belongs to trends determining subjects. The results of school leaving examination samples belong to the best from the whole scale of secondary schools (Tolmáči, Čižmárová 2006).

The preparing curricula reform presents a certain risk, since it might be inspired by several European education systems, where the position of geography is marginalised. Curricula reform reacts to the crisis of education system resulting from the over proportional factographic information from certain special sciences and from the lack of emphasis on the preparation of young people for everyday life. However, the geography might offer the path towards an integral view of the world in mutual connections. Geography synthesises the knowledge of natural, human and technical origin, thus it has the integral character and it is therefore inconceivable that it would dissolve in other integral block subjects (nature,

civics). This would definitely cause the loss of cardinal mutual relations among nature and human society in education, what would negatively influence the further education, intellectual development and environmental awareness of our incoming generation. Even today we might observe in our society and in the part of the political elites a certain disregard towards landscape demonstrative in a depredatory economy oriented exclusively towards short-time effects. In is necessary to strictly articulate the education contribution of geography by the preparation of curricula reform and do not allow the weakening of its position (Matlovič 2006).

GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH IN SLOVAKIA – MAIN EXTERNAL INSPIRATIONS BEFORE 1989

Already at the beginning of the formation of modern geography the regional-geographic research tradition and thinking has started to develop. These tendencies were growing due to Jan Hromádka and his followers. Jan Hromádka realised a half-year stay at the Paris Sorbona University in 1930s. At that time there acted A. Demangeon and E. De Martonne, and at the Collége de France there was J. Brunhes. The French regional-geographic concept, especially the *genre de vie*, have influenced Hromádka's regional-geographic works, mostly his synthetic work *The general geography of Slovakia* from 1943. His student Michal Lukniš has implemented similar approaches in a micro regional study of Jakubiany.

After 1948 the Slovak geography fell under the influence of the Soviet school based on dialectic and historical materialism. The research in the 1950s had markedly empirical character. Some sectional geography researches were developing (geomorphology, climatology, hydrology, pedogeography, geography of settlement, geography of industry etc.). This was to a certain extent connected with the denial of Hettner-Hartshorn chorological concept of geography. Geomorphology recorded the most significant development. It was influenced by German school oriented at climate-genetical problems. The crux of the research was represented by flat covers represented by conceptions of M. Lukniš and E. Mazúr (Urbánek 1993). Remarkable results were achieved in the carst geomorphology due to A. Droppa and J. Jakál. From the geomorphologic mapping point of view, there were significant monographies by E. Mazúr about the Žilina basin and the adjacent mountains from 1963 and by M. Lukniš about the relief of The High Tatras and their foreland from 1973. The modern human geography was established by Koloman Ivanička, that was under influence of the polish geographical school. He finished his studies at the Warsaw university. Gradually, the specialisation of Slovak geographers was growing to solve also different geomorphologic and other physical-geographic problems. The shift in geography orientation in Slovakia was confirmed by the scientific conference concerning theoretical problems of geography, which took place in Bratislava in 1961. Participants pointed out that the Slovak geography had overcome the geographical determinism, positivism and anthropo-geographical concepts emphasising the morphological aspects of the study. Relations between physical and economic geography had been also discussed in reflection to the conflict between monists and dualists in the Soviet geography. The conference draw attention to the need of synthetic research of territorial complex on the basis of materialistic dialectics and more intensive implementation of geography in the solution of problems concerning national economics and social practice. This confirmed

the new ideological and methodological basis of geography and there was approved a programme of socially engaged geography (Hanzlík 1961). As Lauko writes (2006, p. 48-49), the Slovak geography has become to the systematic orientation under the influence of physical geography, especially of the Soviet and German *Landschaft* school. These concepts were represented for example by Armand, Isačenko, Sočava, Neef, Haase. In our country it was the work of J. Drdoš (1965) offering theoretical-methodological knowledge about the landscape of the Soviet and German provenience. At the university in Bratislava Ľ. Mičian focused on the problem of theoretical-methodological complex study of the landscape and meta-geography. Another contribution to the landscape studies presented the work of P. Haggett (1972). The ambition of geography was to bring a complex portrait of a surrounding world and the environment and to solve the relation between man and his environment (Drdoš, Oťaheľ 2006, p. 128). This contributed to the development of landscape synthesis for the landscape planning. It was represented mostly by the members of the Institute of Geography SAV – E. Mazúr, J. Drdoš, J. Urbánek, J. Oťaheľ, M. Lehotský, M. Huba. By the initiative of the Slovak geography was in 1979 organised an international symposium about the state and perspectives of landscape research that supported the formation and function of the IGU working group for the landscape research (Landscape Synthesis) under the leadership of E. Mazúr in 1980-1988. These activities were followed on in 1992 by the programme within IALE, led by Mossom and Richling (Drdoš, Oťaheľ 2006). The concept of the Atlas of SSR (1980) had been also based upon the ideas of landscape synthesis.

Human geography was developing in rather a reduced form than the economic one during the era of socialism. The stress was put on the problems concerning geography of production, rational space organisation, and processing of records for land use planning. The study of population preferred the topics relative to provision of labour forces. The geography of settlement focused mostly on the function of the settlement. Some synthetic shifts were represented by research of land use. The ideas of Soviet geography had been uncritically imported to the field of the Slovak geography. One of them was the conception of territorial production complexes. Over time in the 1960s there appeared certain diversification of thematic and methodological focus of human-geographic research. The geography of transport, tourism, market and services commenced to develop. The Slovak geography thus, with a certain delay, reacted to the new developing tendencies of the world geography thinking. At the end of the 1960s the first attempts to reflect the development of quantitative geography appear due to the Anglo-Saxon geography. It was especially concerned with some new research methods based on modelling, application of the general theory of systems, methods of regional analysis etc. This group of Slovak geographers includes J. Paulov, J. Krcho, A. Bezák, Š. Poláčik and other. Nomothetically oriented quantitative geography offered certain asylum for geographers who had not favoured the communist forced ideological Marxist geography. After certain release in the 1980s, the social-geographical orientation appeared in the Slovak geography, as well as the first attempts to reflect the humanistic stream of geography thinking start to appear (e.g. P. Radváni, V. Ira).

GEOGRAPHY RESEARCH IN SLOVAKIA AFTER 1989

Social-political and economic changes in 1989 and 1993 have markedly influenced the development of geography research in Slovakia. The renewal of parliament democracy and market economy gradually led to changes in spatial organisation of the Slovak society. Some new problems appeared like unemployment, poverty, regional disparities etc. the fall of former ideological restrictions enabled to develop some topics that had been forbidden before (political geography, election geography, geography of religions, social geography, cultural geography). The penetration of new technologies enabled in a larger extent to exploit the technologies of geographical information systems. The Slovak geographical community reflected also another factors. As Ira, Huba and Lehotský argue (2006), the development after the Cold War became more fluid and unpredictable, and the general atmosphere of big global economic, social, cultural, and environmental changes got to a certain extent out of control of the world community. This all demands a qualified reflection, a need to solve the new solutions and new organisation and administration of the world, what only confirms the social relevance of geography.

The transformation era has opened the opportunities to communicate with the world geography, brought larger variety of approaches, as well as increased the interest in new environmental and social-economic problems. The replacement of „unity" by plurality enabled the variety of research orientations. Immediately after the social changes, the group of nomothetically oriented quantitative geographers formed the general opinion in geography. As soon as the end of 1990s the younger generation of geographers honoured their word, who experiment with antipositivistic and post-modern conceptions, and besides quantitative methods they try to implement some qualitative research approaches. Beyond the positive aspects the changes have brought also some negative consequences lying in the fragmentation of geographical research. Insufficient financial support of science and research together with the decrease of social importance of a science and academic education have been negatively expressed in infrastructural and personal development of geography in Slovakia (Ira, Huba, Lehotský 2006, p. 57-58).

When evaluating the contemporary results of the research attempts of the Slovak geographers after 1989 we can issue from the work of Ira, Huba and Lehotský (2006). The authors consider the following positive aspects of nowadays era:

- geographical research commenced to deal with some new topics that had connection with the social interest (election geography, political geography, geography of religions, spatial organisation of public administration, regional disparities and regional politics, transformation of intraurban structures, poverty and unemployment, labour market, diffusion of foreign investment, sustainable development, land cover changes, land potential, natural hazards and risks of land exploitation, alternative resources, life quality, second demographic transition, etc.)
- partial penetration into the public politics by solving some all-society problems,
- implementation of geography in solution of some environmental and sustainable development problems,
- realisation of great atlas works (e.g. Atlas of churches, religious communities and religiousness in Slovakia 2000, Atlas of the landscape of the Slovak Republic 2002, Atlas of the population of Slovakia 2006),

- technological progress in implementation of modern devices of geographical research (geographical information systems, remote sensing),
- more intensive application concentration on the research concerning prognosis, local and regional development) ,
- more intensive cooperation of human geography with some social disciplines (sociology, politology, economy), and improvement of the cooperation of physical geography with some natural sciences,
- enrichment of theoretical-methodological knowledge (in regional taxonomy, regional analysis, interaction models, extrapolation models, qualitative spatial analysis data, sources and approaches in demogeography, urban geography, social geography, geography of time, methodology of geoecological research, morphostructure and neotectonics research, interpretation and creation of complex geomorphologic maps, new approaches in geomorphology and pedology, hierarchic model of morphology of water flows and river landscape, geomorphologic analysis of cave room, development of objectives and approaches towards identification of land cover structures and hydrological response and rational exploitation of water resources).

On the other hand authors have identified some reserves and weak spots of the geographical research in Slovakia:

- ambiguity in the subject of geographical research,
- deepening dichotomy between physical and human geography, disintegration of geography into the group of free associated sector disciplines and their continuous dissolution in non-geographic specialised disciplines,
- lack of the new theoretical concepts reflecting the current problems,
- underestimating of geography as a science interpreting and promoting the area of Slovakia,
- displacement of the traditional position of geography by other sciences,
- the outflow of geographers and formation of certain polarity in orientation of geographers in connection with appearance of landscape ecology and environmental sciences what present a methodological problem for physical geography,
- absence of modern management of the science, and missing an adequate competitive scientific platform for the rising generations,
- insufficient operation with the newest world literature, what would enable to compare our results with the rest of the world,
- absence of popularisation system and geography marketing,
- insufficient penetration of geographers into renowned journals with impact factor,
- lack of interest of Slovak geographers of some relevant topics (for example new aspects of spatial organisation of society, spatial aspects of the function of financial sector, implementation of information and communication technologies, diffusion of information and innovation, European integration, impact of the transnational organisations, social-spatial consequences of globalisation, integrated management of drainages and water flows, methodology of natural hazards and their impacts, contemporary global climate changes and their responses),

- absence of a ”big idea” or common motive that would integrate the research ambition for bigger number of research workers, insufficient interconnection of research programmes,
- low level of integrating of Slovak geographers in wider international projects,
- insufficient involvement in interdisciplinary researches
- absence of cultural geography

CONCLUSION

Slovak geography community attempts to submit the state of geography to a certain reflection. An example for the above attempts was the scientific seminar, which had taken place in 2005 in Prešov. It was dedicated to the development, current state and perspectives of geography in Slovakia in 21st century. The following results stemmed from the seminar:

- to confirm the sustainability of geographical unity in the context of physical and human geography integration through the research projects,
- to pursue a holistic approach on the basis of the effective cooperation of scientistic (nomothetical) and antiscientistic (idiographical) ways of creation of geography knowledge, physical and human geographers – platform of a “new” regional geography,
- to emphasise the epistemological confirmation of geography position through methodological approaches, and by the application of remote sensing and GIS,
- to prefer the team solution of national and foreign research projects by use of the geography workplaces network (SAS and universities) and workplaces of other scientific disciplines,
- to lay stress on the conception of research-scientific themes based on the problems of common practice,
- to establish permanent communication forum of geographical community through the web pages (e.g. on the webpage of the Slovak Geographical Society),
- to form a space for the discussion of the leading geographical workplaces about their research-scientific specialisation (Slovak geographical council),
- to pay bigger attention to the actual didactics problems and creation of teaching aids for primary and secondary schools,
- to activate the function of theoretical geography section under SGS, and to prepare the discussion oriented to the creation of social opinion on the arrangement of geography within the system of study fields and its institutional classification within the academic system,
- to intensify the attempt to popularise geography and its results in media,
- to create a forum for the discussion of study programmes of geography at universities,
- to aim at the admission of a common statement of geographical community towards the project “Curricula transformation of general-education element of secondary education in the process of preparation of youth for the demands of labour market”,

or let us say to formulate some sectional topics with geography content that would be part of this project,

- to achieve an optimal proportionality of the basic and applied geography research on behalf on improvement of geography position in society.

In accordance with Florin Žigrai (2008, s. 29), it is necessary to stress, that the future development of geography is strongly connected with regional geography. The regional geography should play in the future the key scientific-managerial role in coordination of internal collaboration with other branches of geography on the one hand and in coordination of external collaboration with non geographical disciplines on the other one (Žigrai 2008, s. 29).

We are convinced that to achieve the above goals it is necessary to closely cooperate with the foreign colleagues. The Slovak geography is prepared to participate in those integration processes and with delight awaits the further fruitful cooperation. The Slovak Geographical Society became the member of EUGEO during the first congress of EUGEO in 2007, which was held in Amsterdam. The very important challenge for whole Slovak geographical community is fact, that the second congress of the EUGEO will be held in Bratislava in August 2009. Everybody from the world geographical community is invited to the capitol of the Slovak Republic.

Acknowledgement: This paper was prepared with the contribution of the grant VEGA 1/3050/06 „Kvalita života – konceptuálny rámec geografickej interpretácie priestorovej štruktúry mesta.“

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STRUČNÝ PROFIL SLOVENSKEJ GEOGRAFICKEJ KOMUNITY

Zhrnutie

V príspevku sa zaoberáme prezentáciou slovenskej geografickej komunity pri príležitosti konania 31. kongresu Medzinárodnej geografickej únie v r. 2008 v Tunise. Slovenská geografická komunita po vstupe Slovenska do Európskej únie v r. 2004 a do Schengenského priestoru v r. 2007 sa stáva čoraz výraznejšie integrálnou súčasťou európskej geografickej komunity. Potvrdzuje to aj vstup Slovenskej geografickej spoločnosti pri SAV do EUGEO – asociácie geografických spoločností krajín Európskej únie v r. 2007 na jej prvom kongrese v Amsterdame. Nesmiernym úspechom slovenskej geografickej komunity je získanie práva usporiadať druhý kongres EUGEO, ktorý bude v r. 2009 v Bratislave.

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