

3.4.4. Lessons learnt from joint physical and social geographic projects focussing on karst terrains

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After decades of geomorphological research on karsts we recognized some typical features in the social situation of karst terrains, thus we turned to social geographer colleagues to work on a joint project. The basic hypothesis was that karst settings influence the social situation of local communities. We tested it by comparing social parameters (demography, employment, etc.) of neighbouring karstic and non-karstic settlements of selected karst regions in Hungary, Slovakia, Romania and Montenegro. We concluded that in the 21st century, karst terrains provide specific opportunities for tourism and nature protection, thus we initiated a new project about national parks founded on karsts that also incorporates physical and social aspects.

Besides the actual results, we could experience how physical and social geographers can work together. First, we had to find a common theoretical background. Nature-human interactions have always been in the core of geographical thinking, but today there are only few scientists who deal with these issues, and it is difficult to find conference sessions about this topic (the actual one is an exception). The modern „human-environment relations” term can outline our issue the best. We also experienced the differences between methods and attitudes: physical geographers often work in groups, collect and analyse data, and publish journal articles; social geographers preferably work alone, are postmodern thinkers and prefer writing books. Nonetheless, as we get through these differences, we experienced openness from funding sources and found that our common results can be disseminated to a larger public.

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