

UDC: 911.375+911.373(497.4)

Barbara TURK NISKAČ
Simona KLAUS
Saša STAREC

Urban living next to farms and rural living next to high-rises? Finding a clear boundary between urban and rural

This study mainly focuses on understanding the relationship between city and countryside (urban and rural) in the case of Ljubljana. By speaking with the residents of the city's Posavje District, we have attempted to establish their perception of where the boundaries between urban and rural lie, considering their interactions, practices and relations within that environment. The region discussed is that space "in between", where the shift from rural to urban is apparent. Representative features of this space include fields and villages in close proximity to city elements, those elements bonded to the urban way of life. It has become clear through our research that the perception regarding this area is different for those that inhabit

the BS 7 urban-planning area compared to those living in the surrounding villages of Savlje, Ježica, Kleče, Mala Vas and Stožice. How one understands space is closely connected with age because personal experience and individual interests affect the value system through which space is experienced.

Key words: urban anthropology, urban, rural, Ljubljana, Slovenia

1 Introduction

What is a city, what are its characteristics, how is it to be investigated and understood, and what is to be done with it – all of these questions have been posed since the end of the nineteenth century. On the one hand we have urbanism, with its science of city planning and its emphasis on city concerns. On the other hand, we have urban sociology and anthropology, which try to understand the city through the life of its inhabitants. When researching cities, we can either emphasise their physical nature (appearance) or their social nature (people). Urban/rural (city/countryside) is the primary binary opposition often connected with determining what a city is and is not. In our research we focused on this opposition, examining it through the lens of how people experience a space in which the physical elements of urban life and rural life overlap. What is the nature of this opposition, does the boundary between these two spaces exist, what does it look like and why does it exist if it exists at all? We tried to find answers to those questions in our research on Ljubljana.

Examining the map of Ljubljana, the city has the shape of a star with its arms spread. These spreading arms developed along the main city roads, those that connect the city centre with its outskirts along with other cities. As Ljubljana developed and

grew, villages along these main roads began to unite with it. The result of this development is today's image of Ljubljana, a city maintaining elements of rural space on its outskirts. How much of the original village appearance has been maintained – either in architecture or in practice through active farming – depends on proximity to the main roads because along them is where urbanisation most markedly took place.

One of the areas where city slowly transforms into countryside is a broad piece of the Posavje District, located between the north city bypass and the Sava River, five km from the centre of Ljubljana (Figure 1). It encompasses the BS 7 residential neighbourhood, with tall blocks of flats surrounded by the former villages of Ježica, Stožice, Mala Vas, Savlje and Kleče (Figure 2). This portion of Ljubljana has retained characteristics of rural life to some degree and in many places farming is still an active part of life – most noticeably in Kleče, which is the most distant from the main road, but also in Stožice and in the old part of Savlje.

The type of appearance characterising the Ljubljana outskirts makes the area a border one, where rural and urban overlap. The mixing poses the question about the boundary between those two overlapping elements. Is this boundary really so marked and fixed? What is the nature of it? Our study sought

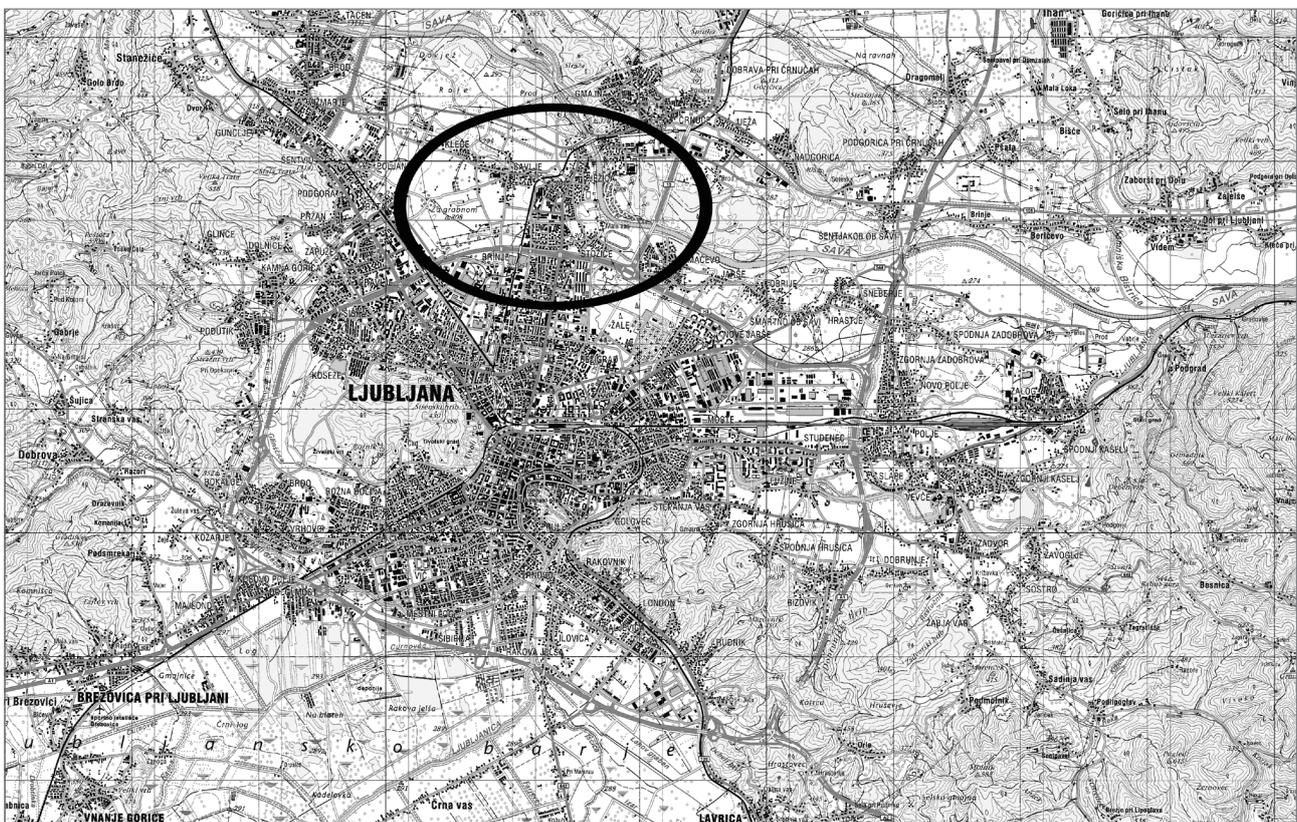


Figure 1: The area of research, the Posavje District, is marked with a circle on the map of the Municipality of Ljubljana (source: Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia, 2010).

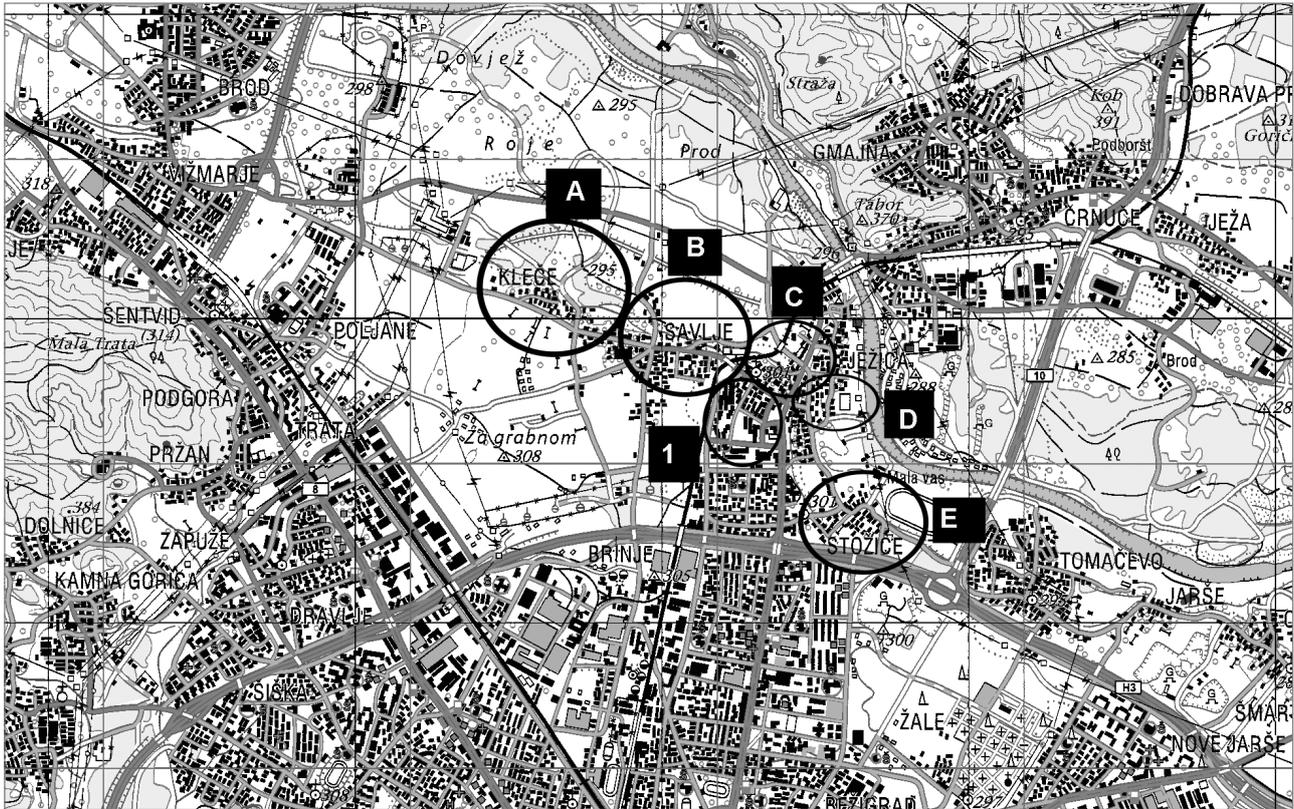


Figure 2: The BS 7 (1) residential neighbourhood: Kleče (A), Savlje (B), Ježica (C), Mala Vas (D), Stožice (E) (source: Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia, 2010).

to determine the boundary between the countryside and city in the case of the Posavje District and observe how individuals there construct boundaries with regard to their interactions, practices and relationships.

Our fieldwork in the Posavje District was carried out between June and August 2009. We carried out several semi-structured interviews with randomly chosen passers-by. Interviews were conducted with 29 people (13 male, 16 female). Their ages ranged from 15 to 75, and most were older, between 55 and 75 years old. We interviewed first in the area of BS 7 – in the public space of a nearby park and among the blocks of flats. Some of the people had been living in BS 7 for many years whereas others moved there not long ago or live there only temporarily. We also conducted interviews in Savlje, Kleče, Ježica and Stožice, realising that their interpretation of space might be different from that of BS 7's inhabitants.

2 Theoretical backgrounds

Since researchers have begun studying the question of what defines a city, varying definitions and defining criteria have emerged. This is a complicated issue because we can examine this question from many perspectives. When interpreting

space, urban semiotics focused on physical (visible) attributes such as nature, buildings and events. These are external characteristics of space, and the basis for which people can connect one space either with countryside or with a city. A city is often identified by skyscrapers, noise, traffic, the absence of nature, city buses, public institutions and roads. As main characteristics of urban space, Alister Scott et al. (2007) mention the size of the built-up area, the density of population, the planning of the functional area (including not only the built-up area but also rural villages) and impersonal and anonymous relationships among inhabitants. Countryside is in contrast identified as a natural space, peaceful, distant from main roads, an area of farms and agricultural land. Scott et al. also believe that more personal and intimate social relations can be found in rural areas. According to their research, we can define rural as non-urban with sparsely populated areas, extensive use of land and primary-sector economic activities and jobs. If we base our research on these space identifiers, we can clearly define a border between city and countryside with regard to the presence or concentration of these identifiers. However, the use of identifiers cannot be so specific because concepts of urban and rural always carry some ambiguity. "The concept of 'rural' is more complex and multidimensional. One problem lies in capturing the diversity of types of rural areas that exist. These

can, for example, range from small settlements on the fringe of large towns and cities to remote villages and hamlets . . . Another complication lies in the economic and social changes that have taken place in rural areas which create interrelationships with urban areas and cultures” (Scott et al., 2007: 4). These statements hold true especially in bordering areas where external identifiers overlap.

A second theoretical perspective draws attention to individual interpretations of environment and space. “Different people interpret their environments differently, accordingly to their background and environment. There is no one environment, rather environment is a mental construction” (Madanipour, 1996: 63). We should be aware that “our perceptions and reactions are spatially and historically specific” (Bender, 2001: 3). Space and time can themselves define individuals. At the same time, the presence of individuals in a space determines its nature. These processes are not static but rather are always in motion (Ardener, 1997; Bender, 2001). When we think about space we give, as Rajko Muršič writes, “preference to the process of its social construction, active spatialisation . . . and not to the space itself or its external identifiers (landscape, area, place, city, location)” (2006: 51). When we are conducting research and attempting to understand a city, we can examine the practices of everyday life with which individuals create a sense of space as either urban (city) or rural (countryside). In his ethnological study of a Brazilian city, Marvin Harris showed how the idea of city resides in people, their way of living, their everyday practices, mental maps and their appreciation of space. Harris (1956: 11) writes, “The city is here despite the absence of steel and concrete.” The city was revealed to Harris through the relationship the people had towards the space, through their practices that created the urban ethos of space. For Harris, what was important when understanding the opposition of urban/rural was that people in the city saw themselves as different from the people in the countryside. It was not based on number of inhabitants, density or other external signs. In his opinion, the idea of urbanism of space does not reside in appearance, but in the perception of people. It is constructed of images that have meaning in the creation of everyday human life. Experience and relationship towards space come out from respective living practices (how individuals manage space and how they use and construct it with their everyday practices) and the interpretation of physical environment, those each based on values and representations of what a city is, what countryside is and what urban and rural means. As another concept of understanding space, Setha Low (1999) uses a social construction of space that comes from phenomenological and symbolic experiences of space. Urban semiotics, which focuses on identifiers, cannot give us appropriate tools for understanding our studied area, those where

rural and urban elements overlap. The focus of this research is understanding where people that live on the outskirts of the city set that border between rural and urban.

3 Historical and spatial context of the studied area

The villages in the Sava Valley area that now make up the Posavje District were first mentioned in the middle ages. The village of Savlje was mentioned in 1282, the village of Kleče in 1359 and the villages of Ježica and Stožice in 1363. In 1850, all of these villages, together with the villages of Tomačevo and Jarše, were part of the Municipality of Ježica, which later merged with the City of Ljubljana in 1935. The position of these villages along the main road and their proximity to the city caused a development of agriculture that was geared towards the sale of products in the city. This is why cattle breeding and vegetable production had such major importance here, supplying the city with dairy products and produce. Towards the end of the nineteenth century, this area, especially Ježica, became a popular spot for day-trips for the people of Ljubljana. Proximity enabled these villages to maintain a constant interaction with the city and as a consequence they have been gradually adapting their rural nature since before the First World War. Urbanisation first took place in villages only along the main road (Mala Vas, Stožice and Ježica), but its intensity grew after the Second World War. Increasingly closer proximity to the city gradually altered the professions of the inhabitants. In the interwar years, non-agricultural working life became more standard. The majority became labourers but others craftsmen, salesman and innkeepers. The first workmen’s homes began to be built when peasant families with many children started offering inheritance in money or land. Workmen’s homes in this area were built in the villages of Stožice, Mala Vas and Ježica along Dunajska Cesta, the main road (Pajsar and Židov, 1991).

The time after the Second World War was marked by accelerated urbanisation of the area and a great increase of inhabitants. The first stage of urbanisation was centralised along Dunajska Cesta – the main road leading from the city centre to the north. Villages were merging with the city, which grew with the building of detached homes and residential neighbourhoods. Rural villages that were far from the main city road were urbanised less intensively. This was the case for Kleče, partly for Stožice and for the older part of Savlje. Most dramatically changed were Ježica and Mala Vas, where detached houses with yards were built. In a 1961 study titled *Vplivno območje Mesta Ljubljane* (An influential area of the city of Ljubljana), town planners wrote that areas around main roads showed clear signs of urbanisation and inclusion into Ljubljana (Regional Urban Planning Institute of Ljubljana, 1961). They also mentioned

that villages found between the main roads and parallel to them (villages on the road from Kleče to Zadobrova) had a different character from those urbanised areas along the main road. These settlements “have, despite the fact that they do not lie far from Ljubljana, mostly kept their formal rural appearance; urbanisation skipped over them. Their physical appearance does not create an image of a village with city character. After the war, the life of the inhabitants changed. This area is part of the city because people are gravitating into the industrial regions; agriculture has lost its significance” (Regional Urban Planning Institute of Ljubljana, 1961: 25).

In the 1960s, the settlements near the Sava River were still seen as independent villages and not as a part of the city of Ljubljana, although they were under its administration. The main reason for this perception that it was not an urban area lay in the appearance of these villages. The criterion placing these settlements under Ljubljana’s administration was the fact that the inhabitants gravitated towards the city because of employment opportunities. The period after the Second World War was marked by a prevailing trend towards urban professions and a distinctive drop in the number of farmers (who now found jobs in the city). The rest of the rural inhabitants, mostly part-time-farmers, were now employed in various professions in the city (Pajsar & Židov, 1991). A severe blow to farming was made in the area when some of the land was taken from farmers to build flats to house the growing number of city residents. The largest urban development in the area is the BS 7 residential neighbourhood, which was built in several phases on agricultural land between the 1960s and 1980s.

Breda Mihelič (1983: 51) wrote that BS 7, “with its high structures, symbolises the most northern boundary of the city area in its silhouette.” The concept of neighbourhood, which later became the base “element of the organisation of the city” (Mušič, 1960: 4), had been put forward in Yugoslav as well as in Ljubljana urban planning (and architecture) in the 1960s. Planned construction based on urban planning, which neighbourhoods represented, represented opposition to the individual and private method of constructing buildings. As Vladimir B. Mušič (1960) claims, the neighbourhood was one of the most important entities to be created because it was meant to encourage and enable the development of personal and social relationships between city residents, areas where it was previously supposed that individualism was the primary characteristic. Private building construction was meant to enhance individualism within a city, so the residential neighbourhood with its design would create instead a feeling of mutual connectedness, and assure that rural surroundings would be incorporated into the city. The neighbourhood should create the possibility for residential community, defined by the town planners of that day as a “social and economic category within

the inner arrangement of the city” (Mušič, 1960: 4). Town planners saw it as “a self-governing unit, which should accelerate the development of the neighbourhood” (Mušič, 1960: 4). The construction of neighbourhoods was therefore carefully thought out by town planners and architects, whose goal was to construct an urban space that would be able to satisfy all of the residents’ functions. As Mušič later argues, the guiding motivation when planning the neighbourhoods was to take the needs of the people into consideration. The basic construction design of these neighbourhoods was to be based upon the consideration of these elements: apartments, public buildings (schools, social and cultural organisations, shops etc.), regulation of traffic (streets and parking spaces) and recreation areas, which were to make use of unexploited green areas and maintain a balance between urban development and nature.



Figure 3: Bratovševa Ploščad (photo: Barbara Turk Niskač).

Savlje, Kleče and Stožice are the parts of this area that most preserved rural elements because of their distance from main city roads. The Savlje area can be divided into two parts considering its physical appearance. The newer part is situated between the railroad and Saveljska Cesta. Construction of detached homes is distinctive of this portion and resulted in the construction of new roads behind the main road. The other part of Savlje represents the older village portion of the region with village-style architecture along the road and a few remaining farms. The settling in Kleče is situated only along the main road and



Figure 4: The old part of the village of Savlje (photo: Saša Starec).

did not spread into the surrounding area. Elements of rural life can be found in the form of local organisations such as the Savlje Kleče Agricultural Mechanical Society (a mechanical and agricultural cooperative established in 1907) and the Savlje Kleče Cultural Society, which organises a quintain competition (a folk event known as *štebvanje*) every year. In comparison to the other villages, Ježice and Mala Vas are the most urbanised, having lost their rural appearance. Only a few older, preserved homes remind one of the former villages. There are also some remaining hayracks (Sln. *kozolci*) and farms in Ježica. The construction of detached homes with yards, located mostly between Dunajska Cesta and the Sava River, was put into effect in both Ježica and Mala Vas. The centre of Stožice preserves characteristics of rural roadside settings and still has functioning farms.

4 Results

The modern understanding of this area, from the viewpoint of its inhabitants, is made up of many layers and this is evident from our research. Most of the interviewees in BS 7, as well as in the villages of Kleče, Savlje and Stožice, perceive the area of BS 7 as an urban area or city. For the residents of Stožice, the city begins only within the city's bypass. When they were asked about BS 7, they consider it a part of the city as well because for them tall buildings are what define an urban space as opposed to a rural one. For the inhabitants of Kleče and Savlje, the boundary between city and countryside is the BS 7 area. Some of them do not yet consider BS 7 a real city space, but instead think of it as a suburb or an edge marker. It is interesting to note that those interviewees do not live in the BS 7 block settlement but in surrounding homes. For them, the city begins at Bežigrad or, as a younger interviewee stated: "[t]he city begins with the infrastructure near Bavarski Dvor, where the cinema is and more shops. There's no infrastructure here." For the interviewee, the fact that there are not many people out in the streets of BS 7, that there are not many shops, that it is generally a very calm area and that it seems like a bedroom community, gives the impression that the place is a suburb. He and his friends spend time together in the city centre and none of his leisure activities are connected to the area studied. Thus, the suburban nature of this area derives from a comparison with Bežigrad and the city centre, which with their appearances and infrastructure have more of the image of city for our interviewees. This shows us that area activity and social networks influence attitudes about a place. Most everyday activities take place in the city centre and the constant flux toward that inner part is needed, so everything that is out on the edge then seems like a suburb. In the case of some individuals' lives being more connected to the wider urbanised area of BS 7, and the city centre not being the place they frequently enter, then the area of BS 7 still represents

the city. For one of the interviewees, who spends most of her time with friends in BS 7 and little time in the city centre, BS 7 is still the city. We could say that the interviewee places her own experience of BS 7 into her conceptualisation of the boundary between city and suburb. If we suppose that behaviour and space are interdependent, then "the environment imposes certain restraints on our mobility, and, in turn, our perceptions of space are shaped by our own capacity to move about" (Ardener, 1997: 2).

There is consensus among our interviewees about BS 7 being an urban space. It is questionable, however, whether Savlje is rural or urban. For those people that were born on the "edge" (that is, the area that includes the villages of Kleče, Savlje, Stožice and Ježica) and those that lived here when the difference between rural villages and city was more distinct, this region undoubtedly belongs to the countryside. Among older generations, who were accustomed to stricter divisions of this territory, and especially among farmers, a negative relationship towards the city is perceived. Such negative relations intensify with the creation of new multi-storey buildings, which diminish the intermediate zone of cultivable land that would normally represent the physical boundary between urban and rural. We can see how important it is for some "locals" to not feel a part of the city. The residents of Savlje say that Savlje is countryside, and have negative attitudes towards the apartment buildings of BS 7. A lady from Savlje, who sells vegetables everyday on the market square known as Bratovševa Ploščad and is in constant interaction with this space and is dependant upon it, says that Savlje as well as BS 7 are suburbs. She says: "Savlje is countryside with an urban mix. In Savlje the houses are more city-like. Everyone wants to have I-don't-know-what kind of house. All of Kleče is not very countryside-like, more like a suburb." The perception of this area is especially interesting among those that came to live on the "edge" with their young families. Their idea of the urban or rural space is the most complex and depends on how each look upon the area. Their appreciation of their home on the "edge" is linked more with quality of living space – there is peace here, an opinion based on the distance from the main roads. Here is nature, something good for raising up children. For an interviewee that lives in Kleče, those reasons are why Kleče is more countryside-like than Savlje, because they are further away from the noise of the main road. In addition, there are farms, which people often perceive as being away from the city. For the young "immigrants" this space is more countryside-like according to external markings, but it is at the same time still the city. The sense of city derives from closeness to the city centre and with it the urban lifestyle. This is accompanied by city connectedness represented by school, work, leisure time, company location and friends. An interviewee from Kleče, who moved out of BS 7 to a newly built terraced home, told us that for

her this area (Ježica) is a city as well as countryside, but that BS 7 is clearly part of the city. The reasons for her perception of Kleče as countryside lie in its distance from city noise and closeness to nature, and as city because it is still close enough to the centre. Her opinion is that her children are city children because they go to the city's Danila Kumar Primary School (in the BS 7 neighbourhood) and spend only their free time in the countryside.



Figure 5: Glinškova Ploščad (photo: Barbara Turk Niskač).

Varying perceptions of the areas of Savlje and Kleče can be noted among the inhabitants of BS 7. Some say that, in the case of Savlje and Kleče, we can refer to them as countryside because there are farms and fields. Savlje is seen as a village mostly in comparison to BS 7: "This is a city, Savlje is already a village." For others, this area does not represent the countryside or, in other words, is becoming increasingly less countryside. Their opinion is that the few farms found in Savlje do not define it as rural and, in addition, the number of farms there is decreasing. For them, countryside is an area that is more distant from the city, representing a world that is more different from the one in the city. For some, this area is considered urban because of the city bus line. For others it is not to be considered "real" countryside because of the mixture of urban and rural elements that is too strong to sustain the ideal image of countryside. Countryside begins as far away as Gameljne for two of our interviewees, where they believe there exists another type of space and architecture, a cleaner environment, natural forests and more wooded places.

5 Discussion

The results of this study have shown that the perception of the boundary between city and countryside is very strong among the inhabitants of Savlje, Kleče and Stožice. This may result from their living practises being more elaborate in creating a differentiation between urban and rural space.

5.1 Village residents and their perception of the city

The interviewees' conception of space derives from their own experience of that space (organisation of and participation in the quintain competition, owning a farm, having views overlooking fields and barns, participation in the mechanical cooperative, having friends that are farmers, etc.). For a teenage girl from Kleče, who lives on a farm and has functioning farms in her vicinity, Kleče seems more rural than Savlje, where farms merge together with individual homes. In the case of older residents, we further identify rural connectedness based on the origin of these settlements and the sense of distance away from city life. This notion is also linked with a negative relationship to the city, which represents a different world, different from the world they are living in. This experience of living in a space away from urban life provides a more rational image of what is countryside compared to the borders distinguished between city and countryside by the inhabitants of BS 7.

5.2 Inhabitants of BS 7 and their perception of nearby villages

Inhabitants of BS 7 derive their perception of the area from their own experiences of city space and see in the countryside a contrast to city life – countryside as a place of nature and peace, farms and fields. Because this is a general idea about what countryside should be, there is no precise defining of Savlje as countryside among the interviewees from BS 7. In addition, their focus is towards the city centre and not towards the areas that are further away from it than they are. If we tie this in with Malcolm Chapman (1992), he said that cultural dynamics involved in the relationship of city centre and periphery have much to do with identity, with ways of being both alike and unlike others. "The periphery can be regarded as a rolling frontier, which might find temporary realisation anywhere between a centre and an edge. An intermediate periphery of this kind aspires to be 'like' a centre distant from itself and 'unlike' a position still more peripheral than its own" (Chapman, 1992: 96). If we presume that the centre represents a distinctive urban area, then the boundaries on the periphery are blurred and merge into one another. James Fernandez (2000) argues that where the boundaries are, other centres and peripheries also exist. He supposes that the centres need the periphery and that the experience of living in the periphery shapes the feelings of identity and ways of thinking. An individual is meant to be able to cross from the centre to the periphery and vice versa without crossing any boundary. Though boundaries and lines of separation may be natural and geographical, from his perspective they are mostly mental and not material.

5.3 The city, the countryside and “in between” living spaces

The character of the city’s outskirts, which both borders and exchanges urban and rural elements, poses a problem to BS 7 interviewees in defining the area as either urban or rural space. From their perspective, this fringe is a space “in between”. This was clearly the case with one interviewee that attends university in Ljubljana but comes from the countryside. As he says: “this here is a strange mix of urban and rural, a strange combination, it doesn’t match.” We may say that his experience of countryside has been different from the experience of the residents of Savlje, Kleče and Stožice, for example, who also live in the countryside.

The example of a boy from Črnuče, who now lives in BS 7, shows that perceptions can change according to our experience of living in a certain place. When he still lived in Črnuče, he thought it was part of Ljubljana, but now he sees it as a suburb. There is another factor that can change the perception of space: new buildings. An interviewee from Stožice explained that his village it is still countryside because the city’s new construction has not expanded to there. On the other hand, he says Tomačevo, which also used to be a village, is becoming part of the city because of the new buildings, which drastically alter its appearance. An interviewee from Kamnik, who sells her vegetables at Bratovševa Ploščad on Saturdays, shares the opinion that buildings diminish the countryside: “the countryside is disappearing on account of new home construction.”

Even though most of our interviewees agree that BS 7 is part of the city, the image of the city varies greatly among them. There are parts of the city that are more like the “real” city, which symbolise the city, and on the other hand there are parts of the city that are not the “real” city. For the residents of Savlje, the city starts at BS 7, at the railway bridge, whereas for the residents of Stožice it begins on the other side of the bypass. For them, blocks of flats in BS 7 represent an outgrowth of the city on the other side of the bypass. Nevertheless, the majority of our interviewees think that the “real” city begins where the football stadium is and continues towards the city centre. One of the interviewees, who moved to Savlje, perceives BS 7 as an urban space, but not yet part of the city. The real city is the centre. Her opinion is shared by a vendor that sells her produce at Bratovševa Ploščad: “the city expands; here it operates as a suburb. The rhythm of living is different here than in the city centre. Here there are fewer institutions than in the city. The bank and the post office are here, but not as many other things. The city has all the important things. I wouldn’t say that this here is city.” The centre is symbolised by noise, traffic, dense buildings, crowds, public institutions, and so on. BS 7 differs from the “real” city in the sense that it is

peaceful, remote and close to nature. People there appreciate the green surroundings, being within the vicinity of the centre, bus connections and good infrastructure – qualities that are reasons they would not move closer to the centre. They say that “everything is just near enough and just far enough.” They see the benefits of living on the outskirts because they are close to the elements that connect them to the countryside. At the same time, they are close to all other city functions and can thus say that they are part of an urban space. It seems as if the perception of the boundary between the city and the countryside changes according to the distance from the city centre. For the inhabitants of Kleče, their village is more countryside-like than Savlje. For inhabitants of Savlje, the city begins with the blocks of flats in BS 7, whereas for the inhabitants of Stožice it begins on the other side of bypass. Perception of urban space is focused towards the city centre, to the real city, whereas focus towards countryside is always turned away from the city centre. Chapman (1992: 95–96) explains the relationship between the centre and periphery:

Any part nearer the centre can function as the centre for any part further away; any part nearer the periphery can function as a periphery for any part nearer the centre. If you stand at the centre and look out, everything is periphery. If you look at the edge and look in, everything is centre. These are extreme conditions, however. For most people, the centre is in one direction and periphery in the other. The process is not, of course, simply spatial and geographical; it occurs also through social structures; the town can be a centre to the village, the middle-class suburb to the working-class suburb . . . These are very general statements and it is not always clear where the centre and periphery are.

The case of Stožice is the most interesting in this play of distance and indicators of type of space. It is situated just behind the bypass, before BS 7, and Dunajska Cesta divides it from direct contact with BS 7. That is why, when its residents look towards the city centre, they don’t perceive BS 7 as a physical marker to indicate the boundary between urban and rural. Interviewees from Stožice were asked about BS 7. Is it a countryside area or a city area? From their answers, it was noted that they do perceive BS 7 to be part of the city space due to the blocks of flats there, but for them the main boundary is the bypass and the construction of buildings they see in that direction.

5.4 Age and perception of BS 7

Perceptions of a space also depend on one’s age. Various personal experiences and interests depend on age and influence the value system with which one experiences a space. For the elderly population, the boundary between the city and the countryside is the most concrete. Elderly people that live in BS 7 perceive their place as part of the city, whereas elderly

people that live in Savlje and Stožice perceive these areas as countryside. We may say that all of the elderly people see BS 7 as part of the city and surrounding areas – Savlje, Kleče and Stožice – as countryside. The reasons for such clear-cut divisions of space are found in experiences that were shaped thirty or forty years earlier (before BS 7 was built). At that time the distinctions between urban and rural in the area were much clearer. For these people the city, with its blocks of flats, concrete and crowded areas, and the countryside, with its farms and fields, are in clear opposition. With older interviewees, who come from the countryside (they define themselves as such), we observe a negative attitude towards the city and other urbanised areas that expanded into “their” rural environment. A distinct opposition between city and countryside is also seen regarding elderly people’s choice of place for social relationships. Interviewees from BS 7 spend their social time in the centre of the city. They use public transport and are more attached to the urban space. In contrast, elderly people from Savlje and Stožice are more attached to their local environment. Within this age group, we did not observe the desire to feel more strongly connected to the urban environment, as was the case with young “immigrant” families. They choose to live on the “outskirts” in order to satisfy the feeling that they live in the countryside, and to a lesser extent to feel that they are part of the city. For them, the perception of boundary between city and countryside is more static. Generally, we may say that among the group of interviewees between the ages of twenty and fifty-five, there is the least agreement on where to place the boundary between city and countryside. For some, the area is countryside because of the presence of farms and its placement by open spaces of agricultural land. For others it is a city because there are city bus lines and the area is very connected to the city. We must emphasise that this discrepancy in boundary placement is more typical of the inhabitants of BS 7 and less so for the inhabitants of Kleče and Savlje. For the latter group, the area of Savlje and Kleče is undoubtedly countryside. A conversation with a group between the ages of thirty and thirty-five from Savlje, Kleče and BS 7 reflected this. They clearly defined the boundary between countryside and city: “the boundary is the railway bridge.” That bridge separates Ježica and Savlje. They explained that “if you ask someone from Savlje or Kleče . . . this is countryside, but if you ask people from the blocks of flats, they are from the city.” The youth between fifteen and twenty years of age all defined BS 7 as suburb, not like the real city (due to lack of urban elements) but also not countryside. However, they all share the opinion that the expanse beyond BS 7 (Savlje, Kleče) is countryside.

6 Main findings and conclusion

If we generally summarise the interviewees’ opinions, we may conclude that they for the most part agree that BS 7 is a city

space, while areas of Savlje, Kleče and Stožice are countryside. They define characteristics of city and countryside, upon which they construct boundaries between them:

- They believe that the countryside is a space where there are fields, farms, tractors, cows, nature, peace, sparse populations, better air and different customs than in the city (e.g., the quintain competition). They say that communication also differs because in the countryside everyone knows one other and everyone knows everything about everyone. In the blocks of flats, one does not know all of his or her neighbours.
- The city is a space where one finds city infrastructure, higher population density, few green areas, noise, traffic, crowds and tall buildings. These characteristics are meant to represent an image of what is city and what is countryside.

It is a matter of individual perception of space when discussing how these images are connected to the situation in the Posavje District. The closer an environment falls in relation to that image, the easier it is for an interviewee to define the place as either countryside or city. For the inhabitants of BS 7, Savlje is an area located in the direction away from the city centre and is not particularly interesting, except as a place of recreation or to buy agricultural products. Their perceptions of Savlje are adapted from their urban experience and they do not clearly recognise a boundary between the urban and rural. Their perception of Savlje is therefore more conditioned by their image of what city is or countryside is and less by their own practical experience of the differences. This may be the reason that the boundary between the city and the countryside varies greatly for the inhabitants of BS 7. The inhabitants of Savlje have a stronger sense of perception regarding the boundary between city and countryside, between the urban and rural space. We might say that their perception regarding rural environments derives from actual experience of that rural environment. In addition to these general interpretations, we must add that defining clear-cut boundaries between urban and rural is problematic because people do not perceive this space in concrete terms. Each individual creates (usually subconsciously) his own image and evaluation of the environment. The group of thirty-year-old interviewees defined the boundary between urban and rural most clearly, without hesitation placing it at the nearby railway bridge. Because the conversation took place just some ten metres from it, it seemed that it was easier for them to define the boundary with it being so physically close. The residents of BS 7 do make a distinction between city and countryside, but do not mark the boundary so clearly.

On the basis of this study, we can conclude that in modern times it is difficult to define clear-cut boundaries between city and countryside. One of the reasons is that the connectedness

of the elements, those elements that normally would divide urban from rural, has blurred the distinction. This causes confusion for re-defining those boundaries. "Savlje is still the city, there are a couple of farmers . . . they have plenty of stalls, which is not the mark of a city, but there is a city bus." This quote reminds us how intertwined the urban and rural have become. Nowadays we observe new categories like an urbanised countryside (synonymous with peace and living in nature) or ruralised city (synonymous with farms providing produce to the city). Rural-type cities are mostly placed on the periphery of the city. Those in-between spaces are not completely urban because "urban" is defined by business, commercial and cultural centres, public spaces, and concentration of people and traffic. They are also not only countryside, which is defined as where farmers live, an area surrounded with agricultural lands and pristine nature. These in-between spaces are located between the city and the countryside and represent a second level to the outskirts. From the point of view of the "real" countryside they are its outskirts because there are so many influences of city lifestyle. From the point of view of the "real" city they are its outskirts, its outermost boundary and almost countryside. The biggest problem in understanding the question of where the city ends and countryside begins is the result of current ways of living, where physical boundaries are becoming increasingly less clear. Urbanisation of spaces has shaken the definitions of what used to be clear boundaries between city and countryside. Thomas Sieverts (2003) states that the romantic image of a world of countryside that begins where city ends has come to its end. Now we find urbanised urban-rural landscapes without any clear boundary between city and countryside. We find a mixture of different structures that all overlap. Sieverts calls this new structure of space settlement a *Zwischenstadt*, a type of built-up area that is in between the old historical city centres and the open countryside. It is neither city nor countryside – "it is a field of living which, depending on one's interests and perspective can be interpreted either as city or as country" (Sieverts, 2003: 3). This type of area was founded as a consequence of new social and economic conditions because it became more important where one lives. The quality/nature of living space is much more important than being close to the city's infrastructure and one's place of work. People move away from the city to have better living conditions: be close to nature, have more privacy and peace, not be disturbed by noise and traffic and then at the same time maintain a feeling of being close to the city's resources.

If we wish to understand this issue at the local level, by establishing clear-cut boundaries between urban and rural, we run into problems because these perceptions are too complex and multilayered, and are shaped as a response to the local dynamics connected to that space. A couple of decades ago, living

in the countryside was marked by living on farms or among them. Today, it is marked by being connected with the natural environment, away from noise and traffic, two fundamental characteristics of the city. The city outskirts were until recently known as an area of farms and agricultural land, but have now become the preferred area of residence for city people, those that wish to live in nature and yet close to the city. The absence of a clear difference between rural and urban life will continue to grow these "in-between" areas and erase clear-cut boundaries between city and countryside. The boundary will become more a part of mental perception rather than a function of exterior physical indicators. Walter Zenner (2006) confirms these findings. He states that the changes that occurred in the last half of the twentieth century made the difference or boundary between urban and rural less visible. According to him, the boundaries are being erased, but people still perceive the difference in their perceptions of space.

.....
Barbara Turk Niskač
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: turkowa@gmail.com

Simona Klaus
University of Ljubljana, Faculty of Arts, Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology, Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: simona.klaus@gmail.com

Saša Starec
Ljubljana, Slovenia
E-mail: sasa.starec@gmail.com

References

- Ardener, S. (1997) Ground rules and social maps for women: An introduction. In: Ardener, S. (ed.) *Women and space: Ground rules and social maps*, pp. 1–30. Oxford, Berg.
- Bender, B. (2001) Introduction. In: Bender, B., & Winer, M. (eds.) *Contested landscapes: Movement, exile and place*, pp. 1–18. Oxford, Berg.
- Chapman, M. (1992) *The Celts: The construction of a myth*. London, MacMillan.
- Fernandez, J. W. (2000) Peripheral wisdom. In: Cohen, P. A. (ed.) *Signifying identities: Anthropological perspectives on boundaries and contested values*, pp. 117–144. London, Routledge.
- Giarchi, G. G. (2006) Older people "on the edge" in the countryside of Europe. *Social policy administration*, 40(6), pp. 705–721.
- Harris, M. (1956) *Town and country in Brazil*. New York, Columbia University.
- Low, S. (1999) *Theorizing the city: The new urban anthropology reader*. New Brunswick, Rutgers University.
- Madanipour, A. (1996) *Design of urban space: An inquiry into socio-spatial process*. Chichester, Wiley.

Mihelič, B. (1983) *Urbanistični razvoj Ljubljane*. Ljubljana, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete, Partizanska knjiga.

Muršič, R. (2006) Nova paradigma antropologije prostora: Prostorjenje in človeška tvornost. *Glasnik slovenskega etnološkega društva*, 46 (3, 4), pp. 48–55.

Mušič, V. B. (1960) *O stanovanjskih skupnostih kot urbanističnem elementu*. Ljubljana, Urbanistični inštitut Ljudske Republike Slovenije.

Pajsar, B., and Židov, N. (1991) *Etnološka topografija slovenskega etničnega ozemlja: 20 stoletje. Občina Ljubljana Bežigrad*. Ljubljana, Znanstveni inštitut Filozofske fakultete.

Regional Urban Planning Institute of Ljubljana (1961) *Vplivno območje mesta Ljubljane*. Ljubljana.

Scott, A., Gilbert, A., and Gelan, A. (2007) *The urban-rural divide: Myth or reality?* Available at: <http://www.macaulay.ac.uk/economics/research/SERPpb2.pdf> (accessed 13 Aug. 2009).

Sieverts, T. (2003) *Cities without cities: An interpretation of the Zwischenstadt*. London, Spon.

Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia (2010) *Map of Ljubljana*. Ljubljana.

Zenner, W. (2002) Beyond urban and rural: Communities in the 21st century. In: Gmelch, G., and Walter, Z. (eds.): *Urban life: Readings in the anthropology of the city*, pp. 53–60. Prospect Heights, Waveland.