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Research Article

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Slovenia and the Census: From the 20. Century Yugoslav Counts to the Register-based Census of 2011

Damir Josipovič*

The article critically examines censuses in the Republic of Slovenia. Owing to its Yugoslav past, the censuses after 1945 have been closely scrutinized, and the common Yugoslav census methodology had a strong influence on the 1991 and 2002 censuses. The 1991 enumeration was carried out within the Yugoslav state; however the data processing and result publishing was done under the newly independent Slovenian state. The 2002 census was the last census to be carried out using classic *door-to-door* enumeration, since the 2011 census was completely register-based. The paper explores censuses in Slovenia since 1991, noting numerous changes and controversies. In 2002, in contrast to 1991, the applied definition of the resident population left out some 35,000 people working temporarily abroad. In addition, the 2002 census witnessed the highest ever number of ethnically non-affiliated respondents. An even bigger controversy was related to the erasure of some 30,000 people from the register of permanent residents for failing to apply for Slovenian citizenship after the break-up of Yugoslavia. The article also briefly reviews the difficulty in addressing the status of the constitutional national minorities and other unrecognized former Yugoslav nations in a situation in which specific data on their number, social and economic structure are no longer collected.

Keywords: census in Slovenia, minorities, ethnicity, discrimination

Introduction

This article analyses the development of statistical practices in Slovenia since 1991. In order to understand the post-independence period, the article examines the origins of the census structure and content, including Slovenia's development of census methodologies over time. The article also deals with the issue of the so-called "ethnic" questions, with special scrutiny of developments in the Yugoslav era in light of the impact of the Yugoslav legacy on contemporary census methodology and results.

The history of modern censuses in the present day Slovenian territory dates back to the 19th century, when the first general Habsburg census was carried out in 1857. The historical developments of different parts of the region (Austrian, Hungarian, Venetian Italian) led to varied practices in census

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methodology and execution. With the census of 1869, the former inner Austrian lands (Styria, Carniola, Carinthia, the Littoral, Gorizia, Trieste and Istria) developed different methodologies in comparison with the Hungarian parts east of the Mura River. For example, one of the most important differences was the language question. In the Austrian part, the population was asked about its *Umgangssprache* (colloquial language), while in Hungary the methodology included a question about *anyanyelv* (mother tongue).¹ Since the creation of the Yugoslav state after World War I, the census methodologies and the questions posed were intrinsically related to the political characteristics of a multi-ethnic state. Nevertheless, the core methodology was transferred over from the Austrian and Hungarian practices.

Censuses in the independent Republic of Slovenia cannot be examined without knowing its Yugoslav context. Constitutionally, the former Yugoslavia was a socialist federation consisting of six republics with one of them (Serbia) including further sub-units (the two socialist autonomous provinces, Vojvodina and Kosovo-Metohija).² Slovenia was the westernmost of the six republics, bordering the rest of the former federation only through Croatia. Though relatively small in size (20,273 km² or less than a twelfth of Yugoslavia's 256,000 km²), Slovenia occupied a geopolitically and strategically important area (Table 1). It was the only Yugoslav republic to border a capitalist country (232 km with Italy and 318 km with Austria). Geographically situated between the Adriatic Sea and the Pannonian basin it also shared a north-eastern boundary with Hungary (102 km).

The territorial boundaries of Slovenia changed a few times during the period after World War II, and these changes affected the census results, making comparisons more difficult. In 1945, many westward lying areas inhabited by a Slovene-speaking population were ceded from Italy to Yugoslavia and Slovenia respectively. After an initial post-war crisis - the short-term formation of the Free Territory of Trieste (1947–1954) - the Slovenian territory was increased from the pre-war 15,809 km² by almost a third, until 1956 when it more or less gained its present-day size.³ The immediate consequences of the new delimitation raised many questions, including population settlement throughout the country, but especially in the northeast (Prekmurje i.e. Trans-Mura region) and southwest (Istria, the Littoral).

¹ Josipovič, Damir. 2012. "Instrumentalization of ethnicity within multi-national countries: the colonization of Slovenes in the Austro-Hungarian part of the former Yugoslavia." *Two Homelands* 35, 135-148.

² While Vojvodina held the status of an autonomous province (*autonomna pokrajina*) from the beginning, Kosovo first had the status of a special district (*kosovsko-metohijska oblast*) within Serbia.

³ The contemporary boundary dispute between Slovenia and Croatia is to be solved by an ad hoc Arbitration Tribunal in the Hague. It is expected that the verdict will be reached in 2015. It must be noted that except for a Macedonian-Serbian agreement on their mutual boundary, all other former internal Yugoslav boundaries remain subject to dispute.

Table 1: Territorial coverage, division, and changes of the former Yugoslavia from 1981 to 2002

	Census 1981	Census 1991	Censuses 2001/2002	Change (km ²)
Yugoslavia	255.804	255.813	255.882	+78
Serbia	88.361	88.361	88.361	No change
<i>Serbia Proper</i>	55.968	55.968	55.968	No change
<i>Vojvodina</i>	21.506	21.506	21.506	No change
<i>Kosovo</i>	10.887	10.887	no census	No change
Croatia	56.538	56.542	56.594	+56
Bosnia-Herzegovina	51.129	51.129	no census	No change
Macedonia	25.713	25.713	25.713	No change
Slovenia	20.251	20.256⁴	20.273⁵	+22
Montenegro	13.812	13.812	13.812 ⁽²⁰⁰³⁾	No change

Sources for 1981 and 1991 censuses: Federal Statistical Office of SFRY; Source for 2001 census: Statistical Office of Croatia; Source for 2002 census: Statistical Office of Slovenia

Historical review - censuses in the former Yugoslavia

Yugoslav censuses have been held since the formation of the Kingdom of Serbs, Croats and Slovenes, with the first carried out on 31 January 1921. Unfortunately, the population was not enumerated completely due to the partial occupation of Dalmatia by Italian armed forces after the break-up of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. The new Kingdom changed its name to Yugoslavia through the constitution of King Alexander I in 1929. The first census under the new name was carried out on 31 March 1931.

The main characteristic of both censuses was the absence of a specific question on ethnicity; however, it included a question on religion. The statistical methodology of the 1921 census used the respondents' mother tongue as a basis or proxy for ethnic affiliation. Based on the assumption of the common Serbo-Croatian language, the Serbo-Croatian ethnicity was therefore generalized. Since the Slovene language was recognized as a distinct category, it was possible to assume the linguistic difference amongst the Catholic population (e.g., Slovenian or Serbo-Croatian speaking Catholics). However, while it was possible to determine religious differences among the Serbo-Croatian speakers (Orthodox, Catholic, Muslim, Evangelical, etc.), it was not possible to distinguish ethnic differences among the Yugoslav Orthodox population since the Macedonian language was not officially recognized. Another important shortcoming of the census methodology was the incomparability of the administrative division of the territories included in the new state due to their different historical backgrounds (Habsburg versus Ottoman legacies).

Many of these shortcomings were present in the next census as well. The census of 31 March 1931 included both a question on religion and a question on mother tongue, but the census results (published after the war in 1945) reflected only the Yugoslav language by aggregating the Slovenian, Croatian and Serbian responses. In fact, cross-tabulations on mother-tongue and religion were prepared in 1940 but remained unreleased for political reasons and due to

⁴ The cadastral measurement accounts for only 20.253.12 km²

⁵ The new planimetric cadastral measurement used in 2002 census accounts for 20.273.00 km²

the outbreak of World War II. This major change was implemented by the September constitution of 1931 (*oktroirani ustav*). It fostered the use of “Yugoslavhood” (*jugoslovenstvo*) as a unifying concept for all the South Slavic peoples of Yugoslavia except for Bulgarians. Other linguistic census categories remained intact (German, Hungarian, Rumanian, Arnaut (Albanian), Greek etc.). The published census data in 1938 included only the religious affiliation of individuals, and no data on ethnicity. It is again difficult to compare data, as many political and administrative changes occurred in the Kingdom of Yugoslavia in the 1930s resulting in the reorganization of the *banovina* system.

Due to the outbreak of war on 6 April, the 1941 census was not carried out completely. The war further prevented the publication of combined religious-linguistic tables based on data from the 1931 census. The few surviving originals were taken to Vienna by the occupying Nazi-German army.⁶

The successor of the Kingdom, the Democratic Federal Yugoslavia was proclaimed a socialist republic on 29 November 1945, based on the AVNOJ (Anti-fascist Council of the National Liberation of Yugoslavia) congress held in Jajce (in Bosnia) on 29 November 1943 shortly after the Italian capitulation on 8 September 1943. During its post-war existence, Yugoslavia adopted four constitutions and held six censuses. Following the Declaration of Independence, the first constitution was proclaimed on 31 January 1946. The first thorough population census was carried out only in 1948, three years after the war, partly due to the difficult installation of the new state, the massive physical destruction, and the unfulfilled elements of peace treaties, but also in order to conceal huge demographic losses (about one million people, or 8% of the population).⁷ The Decree on the Short Population Census in the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia (published in The Official Gazette Nr. 22 on 10 March 1947) provided the legal basis for its implementation. Due to the severe political crisis in the country it was not until March 1948 that the census was finally conducted. For the first time the question of ethnicity (called *narodnost* or nationality) was posed to the population.⁸ The methodological peculiarity of this census was the institutionalized admittance that one's “national affiliation” was of a “subjective nature” in contrast to the pre-war “objective” indicator based on the mother tongue.⁹

The modernization of the census methodology was in line with Soviet views on the matter at the time. However, the “Cominform” crisis started that same year, and led the Yugoslav leadership away from its Moscovian tutorship. As a result, Yugoslavia introduced a socialist system with the focus on self-governance, so-called communal ownership (collective instead of state ownership), and abolished the presidium (*predsedništvo*) as a consulting body

⁶ Josipovič, Damir. 2014a. *Slovenci na Balkanu skozi moderne popise prebivalstva 1880-2012*, in *Slovenian immigration and society activities across the former Yugoslavia*, edited by Žitnik Serafin, Janja. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC, 67-89.

⁷ On the war losses see Kočović for the Serbian perspective and Žerjavić for the Croatian perspective. In the aftermath of WWII the official number was considerably higher at about 1.7 million casualties. This number was seriously questioned in the 1980s.

⁸ For the Muslim population, three options were available: Serb – Muslim; Croat – Muslim; or unaffiliated – Muslim.

⁹ Josipovič, *Slovenci na Balkanu*.

of the president. The new constitutional law was adopted on 13 January 1953. The same year a new thorough census was carried out to record the outcome of the first *petletka* – the five-year economic plan 1946–1951 (interrupted by the conflict between the Warsaw Pact states and Yugoslavia). The legal base was represented in the Act on the Population Census on the Territory of the Federal People's Republic of Yugoslavia, 31 March 1953 (published in the Official Gazette, Nr. 60 in 1952). The census methodology generally remained the same, though many census questions and additional data elaborations were added.

It is important to stress the somewhat special position of Slovenia within Yugoslavia. At that time the question on the Trieste territory had not yet been resolved, and the Koper district in Zone B, administered by the Yugoslav military, was not under Slovenian administration. Despite the second Trieste crisis, the on-going dispute with the Soviet Union and the embargo imposed from the COMECON countries to Yugoslavia, the country continued with the census exercise. Furthermore, it introduced a question on religious affiliation,¹⁰ not just to assess the degree of “atheization” in the secular country, but also to persuade its western allies of its neutral political status. According to Edvard Kardelj,¹¹ seeking neutral status was the only way to ensure the socialist state's existence since the break from the USSR. However, this did little to persuade western partners (especially the USA and UK), since Yugoslavia was constitutionally an atheist country, and it was not until 1991 when a question on religious affiliation was posed again – this time on the eve of the dissolution of the federation.

The census of 1953 was very important for Slovenia from the perspective of territorial coverage. Among sixteen volumes of published results, book XV (issued in 1960) covered for the first time the whole area of Slovenia, Croatia, and consequently the whole of Yugoslavia (cf. Table 1). In 1954 the former Zone B of the Free Territory of Trieste was divided between Slovenia and Croatia, following another change in Istria in 1956, where parts of three cadastral municipalities formerly under the short-term Croatian administration were annexed to Slovenia.¹²

The 1961 census was the first to ensure the same methodology was used throughout the country. It was carried out according to the Act on the Population Census in 1961 (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 53 in 1960), around the time of the adoption of the third Yugoslav Constitution (7 April 1963). In addition to the change of the name to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY), the constitution gave a further degree of self-governance to its republics, as well as to the autonomous provinces in Serbia. The publication of the results had a certain orientation towards migration trends, and in support of such analysis, special demographic macro-regions (*demografski rajoni*) were formed within the republics and provinces. The

¹⁰ The census question asked about one's “personal relation towards religion.” The question was removed from the questionnaire for the next three censuses (1961, 1971, and 1981).

¹¹ Kardelj, Edvard. 1980. *Boj za priznanje in neodvisnost nove Jugoslavije 1944-1957*. Ljubljana: DZS, 130, 142-143.

¹² Josipovič, Damir and Vera Kržišnik-Bukić. 2010. *Slovensko-hrvaški obmejni prostor. Etnične vzporednice med popisi prebivalstva po letu 1991*. Ljubljana: Institute for Ethnic Studies, 130.

census results confirmed the tangible effects of industrialization and urbanization, but they also revealed the first signs of depopulation in the countryside and pronounced differences in fertility rates. Slovenia was seen to be transforming into an immigration destination, as the urban centres received many people from other republics, predominantly Croatia.

The 1960s also marked a period of extensive guest-worker emigration, predominantly to Germany and Austria. This emigration mostly affected the eastern and north-eastern parts of Slovenia, though workers streamed north from throughout the SFRY. This massive “temporary work” emigration led the federal statistical office to introduce changes in the census methodology. To avoid enumerating a considerable population outflow (estimated at some 5% at the time), the census of 1971 included a category for the absent “guest workers” (*zdomci*) and their family members on the basis of one’s permanent residence, which remained in Slovenia or elsewhere in Yugoslavia.

The 1971 census was carried out in accordance with the Act on the Census of Population and Dwellings in 1971 (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 32 in 1970), and it recorded a number of evolving changes. The membership of Slovenia in the Yugoslav federation had a massive impact on its overall development. Especially after the second period of industrialization in the 1960s, Slovenia became the most developed part of Yugoslavia, with strong immigration from other republics. The planned immigration was directed to strategically important infrastructure sites including the military, hospitals, railways, customs, police, etc.; or towards the developed urban centres, through a policy of so-called pseudo-voluntary migration.¹³

Due to its geographical position, proximity and open border to the west, and small population, Slovenia was a convenient subject for a series of more or less successful experiments related to counting the population. For example, it was the first republic to establish an electronic population register in the 1970s based on the Introduction of the Central Register of Permanent Population Act (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 46 in 1970). The register’s database was partially used in the 1971 census, while the census data were in turn used to correct the initial inputs into the Register’s database. The electronic processing of the collected data was another important achievement of the 1971 census, which became a standard for future censuses. As far as the results themselves are concerned, the census revealed high temporary emigration from Slovenia to the west (60,000 people or about 7% of the economically active population in Slovenia).

The censuses of 1981 and 1991 were in line with the foundations laid out in the 1971 methodology (in terms of the principle of permanent population), and considered together with the changes in the 1974 constitution, occurred against a backdrop of continued decentralization which, with the benefit of hindsight, paved the way to the independence of various Yugoslav republics and the

¹³ About the immigration to Slovenia from other republics of Yugoslavia after WWII see Josipovič, Damir. 2006. *The effect of Immigration to Slovenia After WWII*. Ljubljana: Založba ZRC. About the concept of pseudo-voluntary migration see Josipovič, Damir. 2013. Pseudo-voluntary migration: the case of internal migration system in former Yugoslavia. *Ars & Humanitas* 7(2), 71-85.

dissolution of the Yugoslav federation. Decentralization stretched to census administration as well. These developments allowed for the autonomous execution of the 1981 census by the Slovenian Statistical Office based on a separate republic Act on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Socialist Republic of Slovenia in 1981 (Published both in the federal (Nr. 41) and in the Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia (Nr. 25) in 1980). However, this was not the case in other republics, which, with the partial exception of Croatia remained dependent on the central statistical office in Belgrade. The development of a complete electronic database for the 1981 census allowed for broader access to data (including by the research community), especially after 1991.

The 1981 census marked the end of a peak period in immigration to Slovenia. However, the results somewhat blurred the picture since some temporary emigrants (*zdomci*) eventually turned into *permanent* emigrants (the 1981 census showed more than 70,000 working legally abroad, while only around 26,000 persons who had been temporarily abroad had returned). Taking into account the number of temporary emigrants, the share of self-identified Slovenes dropped under 90% for the first time after World War II. Moreover, perhaps owing to Tito's death in 1980, the number of "Yugoslavs" soared from less than 7,000 in 1971 to over 26,000, mirroring ideological trends in other republics ("Tito after Tito"; *po Titu Tito/iza Tita Tito*).¹⁴ Another important census result was an unexpectedly high number of people temporarily present in Slovenia (82,000 or 4% of the population), i.e. present but without permanent residence.

The 1991 census was carried out at the end of the Yugoslav era. Except for the basic publication of the first results published by the federal statistical authority, all other results were published only later by the Slovenian Statistical Office as the region descended into war. The legal basis was very complex since the Act on the Census of Population, Households, Dwellings and Agricultural Holdings in 1991 (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 3 in 1990) was amended and published the same year (Official Gazette Nr. 72). The federal Act was supplemented by the republic Act published in the Official Gazette of the Socialist Republic of Slovenia Nr. 8 just before the adoption of amendments to the Slovenian Constitution which ultimately allowed for independence. It is fair to say that the last Yugoslav census of 1991 was simultaneously the first independent Slovenian census, at least as far as the data analyses and the scope of publication are concerned.

Post-1991 censuses: The census of 2002

After the simultaneous declaration of independence of Slovenia and Croatia and the outbreak of the Yugoslav wars, Slovenian statistical policy slowly started to divert from the Yugoslav statistical practices and doctrines. However, it was not until the 2011 census when Slovenia officially made a final break with the previous methodology. The census of 2002 was still very much like the census of 1991; only increased automation made it much quicker to collect, analyse, and publish the data.

¹⁴ Pirjevec, Jože. 1995. *Jugoslavija 1918-1992*. Koper: Lipa, 218.

The legal provisions and protocol in 2002 were much more complicated compared to previous censuses. First of all, in comparison with the preceding census of 1991, agricultural households were enumerated separately, a process that began already in 2000. Second, the definition of the Slovenian population changed in 1995, and so did the counting procedure. Namely, all persons temporarily residing in Slovenia were to be included in the population, while persons away for more than one year, regardless of possession of permanent residence in Slovenia, were not counted. Third, based on the Personal Data Protection Act from 1999 (published in The Official Gazette Nr. 59), the Census Act from 2000 was heavily disputed as was the financing for its execution. Fourth and foremost, due to political and public constraints, the census was carried out a year later than anticipated.

The main problem in 2002 was the debate on whether to ask people highly personal, subjective questions on their religious belief and ethnic/national affiliation. Tensions arose between the left and the right wing parties in the national parliament. On the one hand, the right wing politicians maintained it was of essential importance to know the situation of the ethnic Slovenes and the status of the dominant religious group (Catholics) in order to adopt some protective legal measures if it happened to be that the share of either Slovenes or Catholics might decrease. On the other hand, the left wing parties focused their argument on human rights standards and opposed any intrusion through the inquiries related to a respondent's beliefs, or of one's ethnic persuasion. Among the proponents for posing questions on religious belief and ethnic affiliation were representatives of different churches and mosques (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Muslim) as well as the members of ethnic minorities, either very small minorities protected by the constitution (Italians, Hungarians, and Roma, each with less than 10,000 declared), or the larger minorities (Croats, Serbs, and Bosniaks, each about 50,000 strong). The politicisation of the "personal questions" was so harsh that the parliament even failed to reserve finances in the national budget for the execution of the census in 2001, as there was no agreement.

After additional public debate, a compromise was achieved and the Act on the Census of Population, Households and Dwellings in the Republic of Slovenia in 2001 (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 66 in 2000) was amended in 2001 (published in the Official Gazette Nr. 26). The changes provided for *non-obligatory* questions on religious belief and ethnic/national affiliation. A special category was included for persons not wanting to answer. The question would be posed to all respondents aged 15 and above. In case of an absence at the time of the census-taking, people could send their statements on both questions separately on a special form. This procedure reflected the sensitive nature of these questions, as for other census questions, a family or a household member could supply answers for those absent.

Due to these changes, the National Statistics Act from 1995 (OG 45) was amended in 2001 (OG 9) in order to reflect the new requirements. In the preparation of the 2002 census the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia (SURS) acknowledged taking into account pertinent international recommendations. A UN Resolution on censuses and statistics (adopted on 19

July 1995 at the 44th plenary) aimed at fulfilling the expectations for censuses in the period 1995–2004, and to ensure advanced planning and timely dissemination of census results to all users. Another important programme affecting the data release, availability of results and publication was the 2000 World Population and Housing Census Programme adopted by the UN Economic and Social Council. According to its provisions, the state should take care of data dissemination, reporting to the UN and involving appropriate intergovernmental and other organizations to assist in studies on population development, the environment and socio-economic development. Slovenia also followed the European rules on statistics since it was progressing through the accession process.

The enumeration period began on 31 March 2002 at midnight. The data collection procedure was divided into three separate sub-censuses, for population, households, and for dwellings. To reduce costs, the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia pre-prepared forms within the questionnaires with data already gathered from various administrative and statistical sources. The pre-census database was prepared using data from the Central Population Register, the Permanent Population Register, the Register of Spatial Units, the Statistical Register of Employment, the Business Register of Slovenia, the Unemployment Register of the Employment Service of Slovenia, the Pension and Disability Insurance Database, the statistical survey data on students and graduates, and the 1991 Census data. Thus the census form was pre-filled and consequently much shorter. The pre-filled content included: place of birth, last migration, citizenship, marital status, field of education, employment status, occupation, job, usual working hours, and place of work. Along with these data sets, some data was partially used depending on prior availability: gender, the address of residence one year before the census, first residence after birth, educational attainment and place of education. The pre-filling process did not raise questions of data privacy since the data related mostly to date and place of birth, year of migration to present locality etc.; furthermore, the enumerators were bound to secrecy. Every enumerator had a maximum of 100 people to count.

The field work consisted of two possible approaches. The possibility of self-enumeration foresaw that answers to most questions on the P-2 census questionnaire for dwellings and the P-3 census questionnaire for persons were answered by the respondents themselves (for the reference persons of the household and for other household members). The person enumerating a given household would have to establish the number of its members and upon their request deliver a pre-filled census form. In practice this was not very common. Instead, a classical enumeration technique was predominantly used. In the latter case, census questionnaires would be filled in by specially trained enumerators on the basis of interviews with respondents or by an adult member of the household responding for absent household members and children under 15.¹⁵

The Population Census of 2002 was unique in many ways. Apart from the changed population definition, it also contained the last data collected on

¹⁵ Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia.

ethnic and religious structure (though as noted above, these questions were not obligatory). It was also the first census to reveal a decrease in the total population – 1,965,886 in 1991 as opposed to 1,964,036 in 2002, which rendered public opinion very critical to the census results as a whole. According to its methodology, the census enumerated only the resident population (the Slovenian citizens and the foreign citizens with a permanent residence in Slovenia at the time of the census), while this was not the case in the former census. The Slovenian Statistical Office (SURSTAT) restructured the results of the 1991 census to make it comparable to those of 2002. In doing so it subtracted all temporary migrants abroad (52,000) from the number of the total population. Thus it rendered a new total of 1,913,355 inhabitants, thus the total number of the population reportedly increased by 50,681 persons or +2.6% between 1991 and 2002. Despite the negative natural increase (–3, 500 persons during this period) this increase may be attributed to immigration (28,000 persons since 1991) and the legalisation of residence of former Yugoslav citizens who already lived in Slovenia at the time of the 1991 census.¹⁶ Thorough analyses, on the contrary, showed that the inter-census period produced an increase of +14,000 citizens permanently living in Slovenia. In the meantime, the natural increase was reduced by only 2,000 persons, and net immigration amounted to only 15,000 persons.¹⁷ Apart from 1,924,000 citizens, the census enumerated about 40,000 permanent residents (without citizenship), but did not enumerate those persons with a temporary residence permit regardless of the length or nature of their stay (e.g. continuing extensions). Thus the time-series was broken and the census data cannot be simply compared with previous censuses.

Another huge obstacle in data analyses was the question of the “erased” population. Slovenia erased some 30,000 persons from its population register as a reaction to (some would say punishment for) not applying for Slovenian citizenship when Yugoslavia began to fall apart.¹⁸ The majority of the “erased” was born in one of the former Yugoslav republics and were ethnically mostly Serbs and Muslims, but included Slovenes, Croats, and others as well. Due to its clear anti-Yugoslav perspective (the orchestrated but hidden procedure was applied to no other foreign citizens at that time living in Slovenia) this eradication has been referred to by some as an “e-genocide”.¹⁹ While drawing criticism for being overly dramatic and therefore devaluing the actual violent impact of the wars in the region, some said that the practical consequence of such a demographic “genocidal process” was the subordination of certain groups, through extermination, removal or suppression.²⁰ However, while the

¹⁶ Source: Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia. 2004.

¹⁷ Josipovič, *The effect of Immigration*, 258–263.

¹⁸ Dedić, Jasminka, et al. 2003. *Izbrisani (The Erased): organizirana nedolžnost in politike izključevanja*. Ljubljana: Peace institute.

¹⁹ Just as “genocide” is a highly disputed and controversial term in this context, Sémelin (2009) proposed the use of the term “mass murder,” arguing that the electronically “murdered” did not exist anymore. “We moved into the twilight zone, we ceased to exist, we were clinically dead,” as recalled by an “erased” 45-year old M.P. from Ljubljana. Josipovič, Damir. 2014b. *Avtohtonost, etničnost, narodnost in definicija narodne manjšine*, in *Zgodovinski, politološki, pravni in kulturološki okvir za definicijo narodne manjšine v Republiki Sloveniji*, edited by Josipovič, Damir and Vera Kržišnik-Bukić. Ljubljana: Institute for Ethnic Studies, 9-34.

²⁰ Sémelin, Jacques. 2009 [2005]. *Purifier et détruire: Usages politiques des massacres et génocides*. Éditions de Seuil, 349.

appropriate terminology is debatable, the process had undeniable demographic consequences. A careful reading of the above-noted information on the inter-census population increase shows that the National Statistical Office admitted the existence of more than 26,000 of the previously erased people, whose existence has finally been recognised and legalised (though the process is not yet finished).

Another change was related to data retrieval and subsequent analyses. The introduction of confidentiality (as part of the outcome of the aforementioned public debate) was regulated by the amended Act on the 2002 census (OG 26 in 2001). Data confidentiality was operationalized through the substitution of the small aggregate numbers or the individual data (based on the aggregate data for the settlement, category, or other statistical grouping) with the letter “z” (*zaupno* or confidential). The total numbers under 4, say, per village was not shown due to a possibility of cross calculation. When dealing with the ethnic and religious data, the minimum aggregate number was 10, for example, per municipality. In previous censuses, all data were published to the level of a settlement (e.g. village).²¹

The 2011 census

The population census of 2011 was the first entirely register-based census in Slovenia. There was no door-to-door enumeration. It was also Slovenia’s first census as a member of the EU. Its legal basis was covered with the Programme of the statistical research and the Act of the National Statistics from 2001. The decision on a register-based census was adopted in 2004 with the final report of the 2002 census. The problems in carrying out a classical census and the questionnaire content, as well as substantial financial savings, were among the main reasons for this decision. Methodologically the Statistical Office followed the EU regulations on censuses from 2008, as well as relevant regulations from 2009 and 2010. By 2011 Slovenia was one of nine countries in Europe to introduce this form of census-taking.²² The register-based census is basically *not* a census but rather a critical moment based break-down of the population situation in Slovenia according to the collected data of various registers.

The critical date was 1 January 2011, and the data sources for this aggregative process were broad. It included official statistical databases produced or administered by the Statistical Office (Statistics of births, migration, employment, student enrolment in tertiary education, recipients of scholarships, and the 2002 census database); Administrative registers managed by the Ministry of the Interior, including the Central Population Register and the Household Register; data from the Surveying and Mapping Authority of the Republic of Slovenia including the Real Estate Register, the Register of Spatial Units; and the Business Register of Slovenia maintained by the Agency for Public Legal Records and Related Services. There are several

²¹ The marginal aggregate number of any statistical appearance was 4. Numbers 1, 2, and 3 were deemed “unsafe” and replaced by “z” values. However, the marginal number with ethnic statistics was 10 and all aggregate numbers below 10 were replaced by “z”. This procedure was applied for the first time in the history of modern censuses in Slovenia.

²² Beside Slovenia, Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Iceland, Belgium, Sweden, Norway, and Austria use this approach.

other databases and registers supervised or covered by other public offices: recipients of social transfers by the Ministry of Labour, Family and Social Affairs, income tax by the Tax Administration of the Republic of Slovenia, unemployed persons by the Employment Service of Slovenia, national examination and graduates by the National Examination Center, recipients of pensions by the Pension and Disability Insurance Institute, and insured persons by the Health Insurance Institute of Slovenia.

This practice helps to cut costs, enhances data analyses and publication, and reduces the potential for harassment or a person's exposure to the intrusion of face-to-face inquiry. However, it also assumes a trustworthy system of gathering and entering data and transferring it to higher level data bundles, as well as effective quality control mechanisms. This method of collecting census data can lead to problems of presupposed data, untrue entries, as well as questions regarding the validity of the data (such as actual occupation of dwellings, fictitious population, etc.) some of which can only be supplied through direct interviews with the target population.

The census data covered a wide variety of features from the field of population, household and families, and dwellings.²³ It did not cover questions on ethnicity, religions, and language, since the various registers do not systematically collect this type of data. The census results were relatively quickly available and obtainable online in 2011. It was the first census to have published all the results exclusively electronically with no paper publication.

Conclusion – controversies and challenges

Slovenia's census history reflects its changed position and status throughout the past century, while its most recent census reflects its status as a member of the EU. However, as Slovenia moves forward with statistical data collection and analyses, a number of issues must be considered and improved if public policy is to be grounded in solid data. Three main groups of challenges and issues are noted below.

The views of ethnic and religious communities about ethnicity and religion statistics

The last register-based census of 2011 was carried out rather quietly, and due to its register nature was rather detached from the public. Considering the

²³ Split into three major parts (Population, Household and Families, and Dwellings), the census covered exclusively the data already gathered by various registers and databases: Demographic characteristics (gender, age, legal marital status, de facto marital status, live born children, citizenship, usual residence); Migration (place of birth, ever resided abroad, year of arrival to Slovenia, previous usual residence, year of last migration, migration status of parents, immigrant background); Activity (activity status, status in employment, occupation, industry, size-class, type of sector, place of work); Educational attainment; Households (relation to the reference person, type of household, size of household, household status, tenure status of household, generational composition); Families (type of family, size of family, family status, position in family); Dwellings and equipment (type of living quarters, location of living quarters, housing arrangements, type of ownership, useful floor space, number of rooms, kitchen, electricity supply, piped gas, water supply system, toilet facilities, bathing facilities, sewage disposal, type of heating, type of building, number of floors, lift, construction materials, period of construction, occupancy status, number of occupants, number of households, density standard, seasonal and secondary use).

financial position of the central government, the economic crisis and austerity measures (regular door-to-door enumeration would have cost around 14 million Euros), the decision to implement a register-based census was politically well accepted.²⁴ Owing to European regulations and the non-obligatory status of questions on ethnicity and religion, the census was performed without much publicity. However, this was not so well accepted among the general public or within religious and ethnic communities, as many wanted to have a classical personal enumeration in order to gain some insight into recent changes and trends in the ethnic and religious structure.²⁵

One possibility to overcome this issue was to include the ethnicity data where possible. While many registers do not systematically include data on ethnicity, some are available; the system does collect data on ethnicity including statistics on births, conjugal status, deaths, migration etc. These data became highly volatile in recent years, since the ethnic affiliation of mothers giving birth was not noted in 70% of cases.²⁶ According to official sources, about one fifth of the population has a registered ethnicity in some register.²⁷ Use of such data would be problematic since ethnic affiliations can be subject to change. Such an approach would also not be consistent.

The constitutionally protected privileged Italian and Hungarian minorities have very little insight into the quantitative and demographic development of their communities. Traditionally inhabiting the Littoral (Italians) and, Prekmurje (Hungarians) in the east, over time, they lost a substantial portion of their former population. According to the last available data from 2002, there are about 2,300 Italians (3,800 with Italian mother tongue), and 6,200 Hungarians (7,700 with Hungarian mother tongue). In spite of these low numbers, Hungarians and Italians enjoy guaranteed representation in the National Parliament (one member per each minority).

In addition, the Roma population is also constitutionally protected, though to a limited degree. The first appearance of Roma as a category recognized in the Slovenian legal system was in the constitution of 1991, when they were noted as a protected minority at the same time as the new constitution introduced the term “autochthonous” for Hungarians and Italians. The constitution anticipated a special act on Roma, which was adopted in 2007.²⁸ The 2002 census was thus a kind of a stimulant for relevant legislation since the census enumerated as twice as many Roma as in 1991, even though the question was non-obligatory, and even though the census data were not used to determine the areas of Romani settlements. In 2002 there were 3,200 Roma (3,800 with

²⁴ One additional possible reason why the census of 2011 was not executed in the classical way is the unsolved question on the boundary course between Slovenia and Croatia. Hamlets along Dragonja River are subject to dispute – enumeration exhibits the *effectivité* principle. *Effectivité*, a principle in international law, describes which of the involved sides exhibit the control over a given territory. If for instance one side cannot “exhibit” an enumeration over such a territory than it would be considered “ineffective.”

²⁵ cf. The internal report of Government's position towards the conclusions of the Commission for ethnic minorities of the Republic of Slovenia (6.6.2013)

²⁶ Josipovič, *The effect of Immigration*, 159–160.

²⁷ Government's opinion of the Statistical Office of the Republic of Slovenia on the question of the Parliamentary Commission on the national minorities. Ministry of Interior, 6 June 2013.

²⁸ The Roma Community Act. The Official Gazette 33/07.

Romani mother tongue). In contrast with the legal position of Hungarians and Italians (where bilingual settlements were recognized for legal protection), Roma were allowed a municipal councillor in every municipality (and not settlement or locality), where Roma traditionally live, again regardless of census data. Roma do not have the right to a Parliament member.

In contrast to ethnicity, religious belief is not included in any register-based data collection. It can thus only be indirectly inferred from the data on religious communities. For this reason, many interest groups, i.e. ethnic minorities (especially the Hungarians and Italians, but also the minorities from the former Yugoslavia) and religious communities (Catholic, Protestant, Orthodox, and Islamic) questioned the usefulness of a register census. They expected other ways of assessing the ethnic and religious structure, but the state failed to provide such alternative solutions.

The question of the Erased population of 1992 and the status of ex-Yugoslav minorities

Many ethnicity-based cultural societies, representing mostly the members of former Yugoslav constitutive nations (Bosniaks, Croats, Serbs, Macedonians, Montenegrins) and Albanians (from Kosovo, Macedonia and Montenegro), openly laid claims for constitutional or legal recognition.²⁹ According to EXYUMAK (The coordination of minorities from the former Yugoslavia in Slovenia), there are more than 200,000 members of the former Yugoslav nations deprived of collective legal protection in Slovenia.³⁰

As noted, the so-called Erased population, was and remains controversial. The act of erasure was deemed illegal by the Constitutional Court through several verdicts.³¹ Some suggest that the state ought to repair the injustices and return to the Erased the status of permanent residents, notwithstanding the potential application for Slovenian citizenship. Others maintain that the Erased did not want Slovenian citizenship in the first place, and are thus entitled to neither residency nor citizenship. The problem is still not completely resolved. Representatives of civil society organizations working on behalf of the Erased pleaded for a classical census to determine the real extent of the affected population by the erasure.

This problem is in a way connected to the broader issue of xenophobia and public discourse on the idea that the population of ethnic Slovenes is decreasing and at risk of being extinguished. Even though thorough data analysis showed that the share of Slovenes did not decrease in the period 1991–2002, this did not stop public opinion from being somewhat influenced and informed by experts or by parties' spokespersons claiming the opposite.³² The

²⁹ Kržišnik-Bukić, Vera. 2014. *Kdo so narodne manjšine v Sloveniji?* Ljubljana: Zveza zvez kulturnih društev narodov in narodnosti nekdanje SFRJ v Sloveniji.

³⁰ Kržišnik-Bukić, Vera. *Kdo so narodne manjšine v Sloveniji?*

³¹ Constitutional Court Verdicts nr. U-I-284/94, 8 February 1999, and nr. U-I-246/02, 3 April 2003.

³² See for example, Šumi, Irena 2005: *Natives, newcomers and others: metalepsis of belonging in the borderland of Val Canale, Italy*, in *Culture and power at the edges of the state*, edited by Thomas M. Wilson, Hastings Donnan. Münster : LIT, 2005. (European studies in culture and policy ; vol. 3), 103–126.

main reason for varied interpretations of the 2002 census results, however, is methodological in nature. The number of the ethnically undeclared in the population rose immensely (from 42,000 in 1991 to 175,000 in 2002). Due to complicated census methodology, it is hard to penetrate the public sphere with more argumentative discussion. Domestic politicians are often inclined to misuse results related to ethnic affiliation, and a lower share of the ethnic Slovene majority could possibly increase ethnic tensions and xenophobia in the country.

Hiring quotas and public policy

Another issue was raised by questioning the suitability of the census data to arrange quotas for the state financing of religious personnel (priests, military curates etc.). The only way to roughly assess the share of Catholics was to employ the 2002 census data. A very high proportion of non-responses (persons who did not wish to answer the question on religious belief) led to diminished numbers of the religiously declared population. According to the 57% share in the 2002 census, the Catholic Church was allocated co-financing for 800 priests (health insurance and pension funds). The Catholic Church, however, claims the share of worshippers is around 80%.

In the Slovenian education system there is no general provision on the use of census data to determine quotas on teachers or students. Nevertheless, in the Italian and Hungarian minority areas, there are other legal provisions that ensure the principles of rotation, shares of the minority speakers etc. Among these the question of language use in official procedures is of paramount importance for both minorities. Their rights are based on a territorial principle (areas with legally recognized settlements or parts of settlements). But the lack of administration workers' linguistic proficiency in minority languages has led to a deteriorated position for minority members at the local level since they sometimes cannot efficiently communicate with the officials. Again, the lack of up to date information on these populations make relevant public policy difficult to implement.

The results of the 2011 census are mixed. On the one hand, as an EU member state Slovenia's use of the register-based method was useful in keeping costs down, ensuring rapid publication of results, and gathering the information which was felt to be most needed in the making of public policy. They were able to do this without introducing "sensitive" questions into the discussion that could have distracted from the other data collection goals. On the other hand, the absence of sensitive identity-related information has been criticized by those who believe such information is needed, either for the simple sake of knowledge or to determine certain allocations of public funding or representation. Moving forward, it will be interesting to see how Slovenia strives to strike a balance on this complicated and often controversial issue.

Since independence, the censuses in Slovenia have reflected heavy politicization. Soon after the 1991 census, the issue of the Erased population appeared. Though enumerated within the permanent population of Slovenia in 1991, the treatment of the Erased represented the first massive casualty of anti-Yugoslav and xenophobic sentiment. Only months after the erasure, the census results revealed a surprisingly low number of non-Slovenian, former

Yugoslav-descent respondents, thus demonstrating the practical impact of the policy regarding the Erased. The 2002 census results confirmed this. The Roma were one of the few minority groups who quantitatively benefitted from the constitutional recognition of 1991 and the Roma Community Act in 2007. In addition, it is interesting that these censuses revealed a generally lower share of *all* ethnic self-determination alternatives, as the non-response option was increasingly used.

In the two decades since independence, Slovenia has gradually moved from the Yugoslav-oriented census policy to a more Scandinavian approach. Previously the questions on ethnicity, language, and religion were censuses' *conditio sine qua non* – the central issue and by far the most eagerly awaited result. Such expectations endured well after 2002. Only the last census of 2011 breaks with the past and ends this era, though the Yugoslav legacy critically affected the formation of the census methodology and consequently its results in Slovenia. This historic break was informed more by financial shortcomings and considerations than by realistic political and policy preferences. However, the issue – and challenge - of effectively ensuring rights and representation continues.

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