

II. TRANSFORMATION PROCESSES IN EASTERN AND CENTRAL EUROPE

TRANSFORMING BORDERS FUNCTIONS IN THE LITHUANIAN-POLISH-BELARUSIAN BORDERLAND¹

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This article is an attempt to give an answer to the question: what are the consequences of the weakening factor of territorial belonging and how it in fact realizes in the Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland? In such a small territory as Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland it is possible to investigate two opposite, reciprocal processes: disappearances (the Lithuanian-Polish borderland) and strengthening of borders (the Lithuanian-Belarusian and Polish-Belarusian borderland). Borders as markers of division have different functions. Using a “boundary narrative” we will analyse such functions as “border-door”, “border-wall”, and “barrier”. A method of a free narration about a life on border will allow to create the generalized image of the inhabitant of a border zone, its way of life and to reveal its peculiar features. These peculiar features we will analyse in the case of Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland.

Keywords: border, borderland, cultural image, disappearances and strengthening of borders, socially responsible policy.

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Introduction: border as a metaphor

Borders and border regions are thus particularly revealing places for a social research, especially in the present era of growing globalization, and the growth of supra-state regions such as the European Union (EU). This article situates a growing interest in Eastern “borderlands” in a set of overlapping contemporary cultural and theoretical concerns. Metaphors are intellectual tools. In nowadays research literature we can find such definitions as “narrating space”, “mapping identities”, “the geography of identity”, “contradictory mapping of space”, “geographic or place-centered dramas of domination”, “sovereignty without territoriality”, “disappearances and strengthening

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of borders” which are very close to the metaphor. All of them connected with the problem of space, territoriality and borders. The study of territory and borders now constitutes a multi-disciplinary research focus, drawing by political scientists, sociologists, anthropologists, geographers, and lawyers. The significance of the Eastern borders of Europe is currently changing. Through a focus on the informal, everyday aspects of this, the article draws together existing knowledge and develops new understandings of the combined social, moral, and cultural elements of how these borders are experienced and thought about. Its aim is to develop a new approach for studying changes in the Eastern periphery of Europe, though exploring the process through which borders themselves become visible, strengthening, meaningful or disappearing, a simultaneous focus on what borders separate, and what they bring together, a focus on remaking borders, which means studying understandings of possible future as well as the past.

The study of “bordering techniques and procedures”, “phenomenon of emigration”, “emigration restrictions”, “border transgressions” gives us a possibility to understand relations between state and territory, borderland community and other population, to develop a new approach for understanding how borders appear or disappear, become significant, meaningful or meaningless. But in any case borders are used to mark difference, those who cross potentially threaten to undermine and subvert the distinction between “us” and “them”. For people which crossing border, the territory usually means both a physical space and an imaginary space.

European borders

Today some different ways exist to understand what a “border” exactly means, how it works and how it is reproduced. First of all every border has a double meaning, local and global: it is accepted, stable, visible line which separate territories as a “unity of different parts” or as “different parts of unity”. Imaginary patterns of space such as *core*, *semi-periphery* and *periphery*, center-periphery, developed and developing countries are also attempts to forecast the new coming relation between local and global borders. Today territory as an analytic category inscribes membership and identity in physical space (Berezin 2003).

The term “border” is extremely rich in significations. It is undergoing a profound change in meaning. The borders as an attempt to preserve all the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of territories; they are dispersed a little everywhere. Both border theory and border studies as a field owe much of their cross-disciplinary origins and development to Eastern European scholars. There are many characteristics of border management, border life, and borderlands that operate at borders everywhere, that inform the comparative and analytical foundations of border theory, and to which Eastern European borders are no exceptions. A border conflict becomes increasingly relevant to the future of governance in the EU as the Union enlarges, making it directly involved in an increasing number of border conflicts.

Territory, or territoriality, has become an increasingly prevalent notion in the discourse of the EU. We note two tendencies in the dialectical process of the borders: “territorialization” and “de-territorialization”. Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson in the middle of 90th underlined that “borders no longer function as they once did, or at least not in every respect... and globalization of culture, the internationalization of economics and politics have apparently resulted in the opening up of borders and the relaxation of those state controls which limited the movement of people, goods, capital and ideas” but at the same time they add that “the extent and the depth of these border transformations, which seem to fly in the face of numerous examples of international borders which have been made stronger and more impenetrable” (Donnan, Wilson 1999: 3).

The territorialization mostly means the differentiation of space and construction of borders. From other side popular research position argues that we are moving into the era of de-territorialized and borderless world. De-territorialization means to take the control and order away from a place (territory) that is already established and a weakening of tie between culture and place, the removal of cultural subjects and objects from a certain location in space and time². Space and time can however be regarded as one unit in absolute or relative terms. Zygmunt Bauman named this situation as “the symbolic end to the era of space” (Bauman 2002). Re-territorialization, as contrasted with de-territorialization, is the process through which territorial configurations of power are continually ordered and re-ordered. In the same time both processes of de-territorialization and re-territorialization are processes which are going on and developing not only on physical territory but on psychological territory which designate the status of the relationship between groups or between individuals. According to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, processes of de-territorialization are differentiated into “relative” and “absolute” de-territorializations. The relative de-territorializations mean for him the possibility of re-territorialization or returning to the past situation. The absolute de-territorializations are marked by the impossibility of being territorialized again (Deleuze, Guattari 1994: 110). Not every author shares this point of view³.

Now the process of de-territorialization and weakening the importance of territorial belonging are the principal tendency for the EU. It is the possibility of going beyond the form of the nation. Europe in its actual phase of history is a new form of post-national construction. As Étienne Balibar says, Europe is a frontier. This frontier

² The de-territorialization as definition in the end of 90th years start to be linked not only with physical space but with virtual and cyberspace, internet connection, satellite TV, home employment or distance learning (Batty, Barr 1994).

³ In the book *Holding the Line: Borders in a Global World*, edited by Heather N. Nicol and Ian Townsend-Gault, the editors and all the contributors reject from the “borderlessness” principle. They shaded view about borders as “symbolic violence” and focus on specific topics such as border security which today mainly linked with trans-national terrorism and criminalized migratory issues (Nicol, Townsend-Gault 2005).

is one of the most important problems today. For him this representation of the border, essential as it is for state institutions, is nevertheless profoundly inadequate for an account of the complexity of real situations, of the topology underlying the sometimes peaceful and sometimes violent mutual relations between the identities constitutive of European history. In the lecture of Alexander von Humboldt, Balibar in fact discovered and made a list of some general features of European border (Balibar 2004):

- Territories in our political tradition are not only associated with the “invention” of the border, they are also inseparable from the institution of power as sovereignty. They combine in a single unity the institutions of sovereignty, the border, and the government of populations;
- Borderlines are a power to attach populations to territories in a stable or regulated manner, to “administrate” the territory through the control of the population;
- The borders of new socio-political entities, in which is being made an attempt to preserve all the functions of the sovereignty of the state, are no longer entirely situated at the outer limit of territories. They are dispersed a little everywhere, wherever the movement of information, people, and things is happening and is controlled;
- Europe is multiple. It is always home to tensions between numerous religious, cultural, linguistic, and political affiliations, numerous readings of history, and modes of relations with the rest of the world;
- The zones called peripheral, where secular and religious cultures confront one another, where differences in economic prosperity become more pronounced and strained, constitute the melting pot for the formation of a people, without which there is no citizenship in the sense that this term has acquired since antiquity in the democratic tradition;
- Border zones, countries, and cities are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere but rather are at the center;
- “Territorialization” would become a mere transitory aspect of a more basic process of “de-territorialization”. It does not necessarily deprive boundaries of every meaning, but it relativizes their function, detaches them from the idea of sovereignty;
- Borders start to be a “transitional object”, and an object of permanent transgression;
- European citizenship as a “citizenship of borders”;
- Europe is not only de-territorialized, but also de-localized, put “out of itself”, and in the end deconstructed. It may be a part of the imaginary, but less and less of the real.

From the viewpoint of Donnan and Wilson, the borderlands present an ambiguous status: on the one hand, it is the place where the state reinforces its presence in order to mark its sovereignty and to defend itself against external threats. On the other hand, borderlands develop their own culture, due to their peripheral position in relation to the center, and to the existence of an ethnically mixed population often connected by

economic, social relationships to the populations beyond the borders. “State borders in the world today not only mirror the changes that are affecting the institutions and policies of their states, but also point to transformations in the definitions of citizenship, sovereignty and national identity” (Donnan, Wilson 1999: 4). This transformation is more visible in the borderlands where “border people may demonstrate ambiguous identities because economic, cultural and linguistic factors pull them in two directions” (Strassoldo 1982: 123–135). Some researchers argue that especially these contact zones, as the borders, are not perceived by the population inhabiting them as dividing lines between themselves, but as merely resources, and bridges linking them (Rosler, Wendl 1999: 25).

The institutionalization of territories is long process which takes time. According to Anssi Paasi, the institutionalization of territories can be divided into some stages: the development of territorial shape, the formation of symbolic shape, the emergence of institutions, and the establishment of a region. The first stage, the development of territorial shape, includes the demarcation of space; the second, the formation of symbolic shape refers to the establishment of a number of territorial symbols, crucial for creating a symbolic significance for the demarcated region; the third, the emergence of institutions includes the crystallization of practices in the spheres of politics, legislation, economics, administration, media, education, etc. (Paasi 2003).

Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland

Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland is the centre of Europe and during all period after disintegration of the USSR remains the centre of stability and safe coexistence of various ethnos occupying it. In this region the tolerance and good neighborhood principle dominates, here there are separatism tendencies as no source of the conflict, borders of this region demand both multilateral research, and socially responsible policy. The Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland is a specific area which has three parameters: a space where historically coexist some ethno-cultural groups, historical stability of this phenomenon, and special type of the inhabitant who is belonging to several cultures. Prospective areas of current and future enquiry include the meaning of “national” borders in pre-, post-, multi- or trans-national societies. In many senses the territorial border becomes less a boundary dividing identities into two nations than a bridge linking them in mutual dependence. Researchers specify three making elements of a state border definition: legislatively established the frontier lines dividing the adjoining states; the state institutions defining and supporting borders; presence of borderlands regions adjoining borders and absorbed in the space of state territory. The process of European integration involving the EU in the activity of border control starts to be “a territorial state”. For Timothy Snyder, “present developments suggest that the EU “as a state-like entity is in the process of being born at its borders” (Snyder 2005).

Separating and connecting neighboring communities, territorial borders carry out functions such as “barrier” (“walls”, “fence”) and “bridge”. Liam O’Dowd in the arti-

cle “The Changing Significance of European Borders” adds that the nature and functions of borders have been changing dramatically in Europe and outline some changes of the key of borders: borders as barriers, bridges, resources and symbols of identity. The author points out that on the place of border’s abolition as economic barriers came the barrier of thinking which still very much alive in the debate and policies concerning the EU external borders (O’Dowd 2003). Borders also serve as resources: they are places of economic, social and political opportunity for various actors and groups (small-scale cross-border trade).

On such small territory as Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland it is possible to investigate two opposite, reciprocal processes: disappearances (the Lithuanian-Polish borderland) and strengthening of borders (the Lithuanian-Belarusian and Polish-Belarusian borderland). These contradictory processes of borders are the result of its separation on Schengen and non-Schengen zones in the same territory. “Schengen” is the name given to the common external border of the continental members of the EU, and to the absence of border controls among them. Snyder emphasizes, that “Europeans who are not citizens of the EU member states are no longer simply excluded from a set of nation-states: they are excluded from a unit which goes by the name of Europe” (Snyder 2005). Really we have a deal with the new dividing lines emerging from the re-bordering of Europe: the borders between insiders and outsiders. In the nowadays Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland we can find all border functions which were named in boundary studies. On this borderland border mostly is perceived as a “wall,” “fence,” “lock,” “barrier” and in the same time as a “bridge,” “opportunity,” “wet-nurse”. It has appeared possible thanking that most of “positive” opinion about boundary functions belong to Lithuanian-Polish border’s habitants and the opposite “negative” (divisive) opinion to Lithuanian-Belarusian and Polish-Belarusian border’s habitants which “feeling of border” as “feeling of a distance and tension” is enough strong. This aspect only starts to be a subject of our COST project research with the help of narrative and visual analysis.

Borders in today’s Europe are not only symbols of identity in the traditional sense of exclusive sovereignty but also as symbols of cross-border identities: sustained cross-border cooperation often contributes to a shared “we” feeling. A method of a free narration about a life and “we” feeling on border will allow to create the generalized image of the inhabitant of a borderland and to reveal its peculiar features such as: local mobility, domination of local regional self-identification in comparison with the state identification, specific type of people.

The Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland represents a concentration and crossing in rather small territory some ethnic borders. The borderland is a specific area where historically born particular type of the inhabitant with individual and group consciences which is defined by an accessory to several cultures (Sadowski 1992: 5–6). The peculiar features of the borderland’s inhabitant are following:

- Local mobility;
- Domination of local regional self-identification in comparison with the state identification;

- Specific type of people which characteristic include simultaneously in some cultures;
- Knowledge of several languages (mostly neighbors languages);
- Consequently much more openness to cultural diversity and as result to cultural innovations;
- Presence otherness as norm of daily life;
- Higher than in another territory the level of tolerance to the different kind of Otherness.

In D. Emily Hicks introduction to the book *Border Writig: The Multidimensional Text* she explains how holography creates an image from more than one direction: “A holographic image is created when light from a laser beam is split into two beam and reflected off an object. The interaction between the two resulting pattern of light is called an interference pattern, which can be recorded on a holographic plate” (Hicks 1991). From her viewpoint, by analogy, the border metaphor produces an interaction between the connotative matrices of more than one culture. The situation on the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Polish borderland is close to Hicks explanation and her “a holographic plate” possible to use as a symbolic image of frontiers narratives, which include elements of national, ethnic, cultural, religious identity of majority and minorities. They feel strong connection with the country of inhabitation and “foreigner motherland”. Lithuanians in Polish borderland and Poles in Lithuanian, Belarusians in Lithuania and Poland are the multi-level identity carriers. This “holographic plate” of their identity shows us that everyday life on the frontier gives for the inhabitants’ possibility to be more adaptive to the changing geopolitical situation.

Lithuanian, Polish and Belarusian society are the information society where rapid development of the Internet and the World Wide Web has been reshaping borderland. As a result, in the cyberspace of Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland as in whole world, we observe dead of distance, annihilation of places and softening of borders (Batty 1997). In the territory of Lithuanian-Polish-Belarusian borderland we traditionally observe two opposite processes: disappearances and strengthening of borders. Mostly we have to do it with political events but influence of information processes is not possible ignore today. Virtual world soft distance and promote disappearances of borders.

Conclusions

The weakening factor of territorial belonging is a general source for changing European borders discourse. The process of de-territorialization to refer to a weakening of the relationships between nation, culture, religion and place.

In this process, culture is simultaneously de-territorialized and re-territorialized in different parts of the world as it moves. As cultures are uprooted from certain territories, they gain a special meaning in the new territory which they are taken into.

The re-designed European border regime (Schengen and non-Schengen zones) has influence and changes the daily life of the people on the Belarusian-Lithuanian-Polish borderland.

The peculiar features of the borderland's inhabitant are following: local mobility, domination of local regional self-identification in comparison with the state identification, knowledge of several languages (mostly neighbor's languages) and openness to cultural diversity and innovations, acceptance otherness as a norm of daily life.

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KINTANČIŲ SIENŲ FUNKCIJOS LIETUVIŲ, LENKŲ IR BALTARUSIŲ PARIBYJE

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Santrauka

Straipsnyje bandoma atsakyti į klausimą – kokios yra teritorinės priklausomybės veiksnio silpnėjimo pasekmės ir kaip jis iš tikrųjų formuoja lietuvių, lenkų ir baltarusių paribį? Tokioje mažoje teritorijoje, kaip lietuvių, lenkų ir baltarusių paribys, galima iširti du priešingus abipusius procesus: sienų nnykimą (lietuvių, lenkų ir baltarusių paribys) ir jų tvirtėjimą (lietuvių ir baltarusių bei lenkų ir baltarusių paribys). Sienos, kaip padalijimų žyminiai, atlieka skirtingas funkcijas. Vartojant ribos naratyvą, analizuojamos tokias funkcijas, kaip riba–dury, riba–siena ir barjeras. Laisvos naracijos apie gyvenimą pasienyje metodas leis sukurti apibendrintą gyvenimo būdo pasienyje vaizdą ir atskleisti savitus jo bruožus. Juos analizuosime lietuvių, lenkų ir baltarusių paribio atžvilgiu.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: riba, paribys, kultūrinis paveikslas, ribų nnykimas ir stiprėjimas, socialiai atsakinga politika.

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