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INTERNAL RELATIONS AND COOPERATION BETWEEN BORDER REGIONS[*]

Summary: The article deals with boundaries, their role and meaning change of boundaries nowadays. It contains basic theoretical background, sociological point of view on boundaries and some chosen information from the regional policy.

Key words: border region, regional policy, cross-border cooperation.

1. Introduction

Role of cooperation between spatial units is one of the main ones especially in todays European space. It notably contributes to a development of single regions. In the current programming period which runs from 2007 until 2013 the regional cooperation is one of the regional policy objectives – the European territorial cooperation objective. This objective should strengthen cross-border cooperation through joint local and regional initiatives, interregional cooperation and exchange of experience[1]. It is based on the experience drawn from the former Community initiative INTERREG.

European regional policy tries to overcome a traditional meaning of borders so the borders will be barriers no more. On one hand a role of borders weakens, on the other hand the border theme strengthens.

2. Borders

Newman [2006]: "We live in a world of lines and compartments. (…) the lines… order our daily life practices, strengthening our belonging to, and identity with,

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[1] The population living in cross-border areas amounts to 181,7 million (37,5% of the total EU population) whereas all EU regions and Citizen are covered by one of the existing 13 transnational cooperation areas. EUR 8,7 billion (2,5% of total) is available for this objective.

places and groups, while… perpetuating and reperpetuating notions of difference and othering. (…) it is not possible to imagine a world which is borderless or deterritorialized".

The study of borders has undergone a major renaissance during the past 20 years. It is somewhat ironic that it is the globalization discourse of a borderless and deterritorialized world which has brought so many scholars from different disciplines together [Newman 2006].

Study of borders

There is no single theory of borders. What can be termed classic studies of borders/ boundaries are to be found in political geography and largely focus on descriptive analyses of boundaries, their location and the political and historical processes leading to their demarcation [Minghi 1963; Prescott 1965, 1987 in Newman 2006]. In next decades, in the 1980s and 1990s, a focus of studies has been the analysis of transboundary cooperation. The border was transformed from a barrier, through which the other side is invisible, to a place where reconciliation, cooperation and coexistence take place [Gallusser 1994, Galtung 1994 in Newman 2006]. This understanding of borders is also characteristic for European union which actively promotes the implementation of transboundary activity regions. But the EU itself is faced with its own border dilemmas, at one and the same time opening its own internal borders and encouraging freedom of movement, while creating a new external Schengen border [Berg, Ehin, 2006].

The study of borders draws together scholars with different specialties such as geographers, sociologists, anthropologists, historians, economists, international lawyers, philosophers and political scientists.

Geographers traditionally understood borders as constituting the physical and highly visible lines of separation between political, social and economic spaces. Recently they began to understand that it is the bordering process, rather than the border per se, which affects our lives on a daily basis [Newman, Paasi 1998].

For political scientists, borders reflect the nature of power relations and the ability of one group to determine, superimpose and perpetuate lines of separation, or to remove them, contingent upon the political environment at any given time [Gunster, Lorey 2005 in Newman 2006].

For sociologists and anthropologists, borders are indicative of the binary distinctions (us/them; here/there; inside/outside) between groups at a variety of scales, from the national down to the personal spaces and territories of the individual. At the most micro of scales, anthropologists remind of the personal borders, which determine our daily life practices to a much greater extent than do national boundaries – across which the majority of the global population do not even cross once in their lifetime [Alvarez 1995 in Newman 2006].

For international lawyers, borders reflect the changing nature of sovereignty and the rights of States to intervene in the affairs of neighbouring politico-legal entities [Ratner 1996; Lalonde 2002; Castellino, Allen 2003; in Newman 2006].

Borders and demarcation

Demarcation is the process through which borders are constructed and the categories of difference or separation created. Demarcation is the process through which the criteria of inclusion/exclusion are determined [Newman 2006]. Some scholars [Buchanan, Moore 2003; van Houtum 2002] ask for whom, by whom and in whose interests are some people excluded, or cut off, from their cultural, ethnic or economic living spaces? Borders are viewed as economic opportunities as well as economic threats [Johnson 2009]. Crossing the border may serve the fiscal interests of the border managers, the political and economic elites, much more than the maintenance of a closed and sealed barrier. The traditional function of borders has been to create barriers to movement rather than bridges enabling contact.

The entry to, or exit from, the diverse spaces and groups is determined by political and social elites as part of the process of societal ordering and compartmentalization [Newman 2006].

Borders still retain their essential sense of sharp dislocation and separation, a sharp cut-off point between two polarities [Newman 2006].

Sociological point of view

Sigurdson [2000, in Newman 2006]: "the removal, or opening, of the borders does not necessarily or automatically transform a member of a national State into a European, or global citizen. Even if we have become more mobile and find it easier to cross the boundaries that previously hindered our movement, most of us retain strong ethnic or national affiliations and loyalties, be they territorial-focused or group affiliations". The global access to cyberspace and the unhindered spatial dissemination of information and knowledge has, paradoxically, engendered a national identity. Language is the one great boundary which remains difficult to cross.

A spatial structure of society at present is a result of past events in a landscape. At the same time this structure determines what will happen in future. Geographical space is not just a passive receiver of consequences of human activities, this space can be seen also as an inert power which affects current society development [Forman, Godron 1993].

A space should not be seen only as a physical unit but also as a socially relevant dimension. This dimension is best seen when studying different communities living in different spaces [Musil 1972, p. 140].

We call community all cases when members of any group, small or big one, live together in such a way that they take part in basic conditions of daily common life. An attribute of the community is the fact that a life of an individual can be realized in its framework. All social relations can be found in the community. The community

is a room for social life with a certain degree of social coherency. A baseline of the community is a locality and a sociability feeling [MacIver 1961].

Members of any community are in mutual social relations and have a variety of interests especially because of using the same space and social infrastructure. In other words it is a company whose fundamental is common space and related activities [Musil et al. 1985].

Thompson [2004] defines local community as local social system which is in fact a set of social relations which occur in a definite location. The ones who bear these relations have higher or lower degree of a common identity.

Another definition of local or regional communities is by Heřmanová, Patočka [2006, p. 56]: local and regional communities are spatial groups of people who live in a geographically defined space and have numerous mutual social relations (friendly, familiar, working, exchange and other relations). Those are people who have emotional relations with each other and with the location where they live. It is also about people who share a life space which they use long time and which can be a basic reason for different local activities, mutual interactions or common experiences.

We mentioned an identity previously. Local and regional identity can be defined as an internal feeling of belonging to some local community and a locality itself [Heřmanová, Patočka, p. 98].

A group mentality is another quite frequent theme in regional sociology which is close to communities, identity and others. Group mentality are shared stereotypes of thinking, perception and acting of people. It is relatively stable characterization of group values, preferences, behavior strategies and so on. Specific perception of himself, own reflection and assessment are parts of the group mentality [Heřmanová, Patočka, p. 87].

The extent to which all borders are social constructs, partly imposed from above and, even more so, evolving from below, is played out through the border scenes. If we really want to know what borders mean to people, then we need to listen to their personal and group narratives. Bringing these case study narratives together at an aggregate level should help us understand the notions of "difference" and "other" in the real daily lives of people.

3. Cross-border cooperation and cross-border regions

The 1990s saw a large increase in cross-border regions all over Europe.

Cross-border cooperation (CBC) can be defined as a more or less institutionalized collaboration between contiguous subnational authorities across national borders [Perkmann 2003]. Perkmann further defines four criteria of CBC. First, CBC must be located in the realm of public agency. Second, CBC refers to a collaboration between subnational authorities in different countries. CBC is often based on informal or quasi-juridical arrangements among the participating authorities. Third,

CBC is foremost concerned with practical problem-solving in a broad range of fields of everyday administrative life. Fourth, CBC involves a certain stabilization of cross--border contacts.

Cross-border regions (CBR) are part of the administrative landscape in most European border areas today. The first official cross-border region, the EUREGIO, was established in 1958 on the Dutch-German border, in the area of Enschede (NL) and Gronau (DE). Since then, there is a large number of cases of Euroregions and other forms of cross-border cooperation throughout Europe. This expansion of cross--border cooperation can be, to a large degree, due to European integration and its regional policy. However, some authors do not agree with this statement. Anderson [1997] asserts that the EU's impact is often overestimated as it disregards the fact that CBC initiatives are bottom-up driven.

The relevant literature reveals several connotations of cross-border region. Such as.

The definition adopted by the Council of Europe states that cross-border regions are characterised by homogenous features and functional interdependencies because otherwise there is no need for cross-border co-operation (CoE 1972: 29).

Transfrontier region is a potential region, inherent in geography, history, ecology, ethnic groups, economic possibilities and so on, but disrupted by the sovereignty of the governments rulling on each side of the frontier (CoE 1995).

Raich [1995] defines a cross-border region as a territorial unit that has historical, socio-economic and cultural commonalities, as well as, at lest tentatively, its own regional identity and autonomous institutions and therefore claims autonomous definition of its needs and interests which it is capable to articulate and defend.

A cross-border region can be defined as a bounded territorial unit composed of the territories of authorities participating in a CBC initiative [Perkmann 2002]. Perkmann adds that the existence of commonalties is not a necessary element of CBR: „it does not matter whether a CBR is built upon cultural or ethnic commonalties, a common historical background, existing functional interdependencies or a mere community of interests as it is precisely the process of construction that matters".
Cross-border regions are regions where social, economic and cultural activities have come together across the border.

Euroregion

In its original meaning, the term euroregion refers to co-operation arrangement among adjoining local authorities belonging to different nation states located close to a nation state border. However, this definition is not sufficient nowadays. In some cases regional authorities are members, not only municipalities. In other cases third organizations, for example regional development agencies or interest associations, participate. That is the reason why other definitions of euroregion are more suitable. Denters et al. [1998] claims: "Euroregional co-operation stands for co-operation on a subnational level between authorities that are situated at the border".

Organisationally, euroregions usually have a council, a presidency, subject-matter oriented working groups and a common secretariat. The size of euroregions usually range between 50 and 100 km in width; and they tend to be inhabited by a few million inhabitants.

Euroregions as instruments of building border networks help to create social capital and a trust between neighboring states.

Krušnohoří is one of the regions which traditionally have premises for more intensive cooperation and meeting Czech and German cultural worlds.

Regardless of existence of euroregions, natural frontier of badly permeable mountains will still be a negative factor of closer Czech-German cooperation. This will be dangerous especially for regions without good transportation connections – Krušnohoří can be an example; it is important to focus on solution of these problems and find ways how to develop the border regions. That is why we have to try to identify internal relations which can be the crucial factor of further development.

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WEWNĘTRZNE RELACJE I KOOPERACJA MIĘDZY REGIONAMI PRZYGRANICZNYMI

Streszczenie: Artykuł odnosi się do zagadnienia regionów przygranicznych, ich roli i zmieniającego się znaczenia w dzisiejszym świecie. Opracowanie opiera się na teoretycznych rozważaniach, zawiera socjologiczne podejście do problematyki regionów przygranicznych oraz prezentuje wybrane informacje z obszaru polityki regionalnej.