

Borderland

Subjects: **Regional & Urban Planning**

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The word “borderland” has many meanings; however, it is most often considered from the geographical and sociological, or, in other words, spatial and cultural perspective. The borderland is an area or a territory located near the border or far away from the centre. Within the borderland, socio-cultural contact takes place between various nations or ethnic groups. This is where the “new people and their culture” are formed. A borderland is sometimes precisely delimited, e.g., based on natural objects such as rivers or mountain ranges, or on administrative attributes. It is, however, most frequently determined on the basis of settlement geography. Its actual area and range are determined by migrations, colonisation, and cultural diversity of its inhabitants .

cultural overlaps

heritage

cooperation

reconciliation

development policies

1. Background

In cognitive and biological sciences, memory is mainly conceptualised as an individual ability. On the other hand, in social sciences memory is most often interpreted as a collective phenomenon. Collective memory has been put to diverse uses, ranging from accounts of nationalism in history and political science to views of ritualisation and commemoration in anthropology and sociology. All these appeals to collective memory share the idea that memory “goes beyond the individual,” as Wilson ^[1] put it.

The study of collective memory has grown remarkably since Halbwachs (1925/1992) first discussed the topic many years ago ^[2]. As stated by Schwartz ^[3] (p. 302): “Collective memory is a metaphor that formulates society’s retention and loss of information about its past in the familiar terms of individual remembering and forgetting.” According to Halbwachs ^[4], memory is the product of a social group. It is a past that is shaped by and meaningful for a community. Communication is a critical element of collective memory. According to Edy ^[5] (p. 72), communication makes possible the unique capacity of collective memory to preserve pasts older than the oldest living individual.

Sociologists and social psychologists use the terms “collective memory”, i.e., the memory shared by groups or societies, or “social memory” ^[6]. Here, collective memory is used as memory built together by a group of people with shared lineage who live in similar socioeconomic conditions and pursue similar goals. This approach looks for a balance between the individualistic and collectivist approach to societal processes. It helps analyse a specific aspect of individual memories while considering their social frameworks and the public discourse about the past. The differentiation stems from different concepts of culture as such, which can be perceived subjectively (individually), or through the socio-public lens ^[7].

2. Borderland Areas

The word “borderland” has many meanings; however, it is most often considered from the geographical and sociological, or, in other words, spatial and cultural perspective. The borderland is an area or a territory located near the border or far away from the centre. Within the borderland, socio-cultural contact takes place between various nations or ethnic groups. This is where the “new people and their culture” are formed. A borderland is sometimes precisely delimited, e.g., based on natural objects such as rivers or mountain ranges, or on administrative attributes. It is, however, most frequently determined on the basis of settlement geography. Its actual area and range are determined by migrations, colonisation, and cultural diversity of its inhabitants ^[8]. Importantly, it should be assumed that in order for a borderland to emerge, a specific state of awareness needs to develop among the inhabitants of a particular area ^[9].

Primarily, the borderland has a spatial dimension; it is delineated territorially as an area near a border. However, perceiving a borderland exclusively in the spatial context, i.e., as a region located “near the state border”, is not very exhaustive in terms of the spatial and geographical aspect. In administrative terms, the basis of a cross-border region is the administrative division of units directly bordering on each other. The Polish-Ukrainian cross-border region is comprised of five regions, including Lubelskie Voivodeship and Podkarpackie Voivodeship on the Polish side, and, on the Ukrainian side, the Lviv, Volyn and Zakarpattia Oblasts (provinces in Ukrainian nomenclature) ^[10]. Borderlands, however, are not formed by the elites’ cross-border declarations or administrative and political borders on the map. Borderlands are established by the people who live there, through diverse contacts that occur when individual needs are being satisfied, and as a result of the formulation and achievement of collective objectives ^[11]. Similar to the identity, the borderland can be regarded as a synthesis of the relationships between the structural and the functional aspects. Nowadays, a borderland is a category for discovering new areas of cohesion and distinctiveness, freedom of choice and obligation, and a basis for the processes of information and participation in which various forms and levels of life are focused. Therefore, not only does a borderland appear in individual life but also in different systems, organisations, and institutions of social life ^[12].

Borderlands and constituent border regions are particularly vulnerable to changes in international relations, compared to areas located within the country ^[13]. Their specific attributes are: the nature of the state border, the geographical (geopolitical) location, differences in levels of development and the functioning of the economies of regions adjacent along the border, differences in the state of development in relation to border regions of neighbouring countries, the institutional distance associated with the competence inadequacy of neighbouring administrative regions and sub-regional units ^[14], socio-cultural conditions connected with the functioning of national and ethnic minorities, and stereotypes about the population of neighbouring border regions ^[13].

A border region is an area that is part of a geographical space determined by its location along a state border, on one of its sides ^[15]. However, a borderland is a transitional area between not only two or more countries but also between different nations or religious, linguistic or cultural groups. This may be a consequence of historical changes in the political affiliation of a particular territory, the mixing of populations due to colonisation processes, and the intersection of political influences. Settlement processes, migrations, and the national, linguistic, religious,

cultural, social, and economic diversity among the inhabitants provide the basis for the borderland zone delimitation. They are also the main factors that determine its distinctness and dissimilarity to other regions ^[16].

3. Borderland Types

In general, two borderland types are distinguished, namely, contact and zonal borderlands. This division is based on linguistic and ethnic differences ^[17]. The contact borderland is characterised by the fact that communities with clear linguistic distinctiveness are found within its area, e.g., Polish and German or Hungarian and Slovak. A zonal borderland concerns the related, e.g., Slavic, communities. Contact borderlands are usually more distinctive and have a smaller area, as opposed to zonal borderlands in which the focus of division is often blurred. A specific type of the borderland area is the so-called Kresy, or Polish former eastern territories. In Polish literature, they are most often considered equivalent with the southeastern ends of the First and Second Polish Republic, i.e., the area of contemporary Ukraine ^[16].

The eastern borderlands, which in the interwar period spread along the frontiers of Poland with Lithuania and Latvia on the north, the Soviet Union on the east and Romania on the south, had the reputation of an “exotic territory” on the one hand, and “uncivilized” and neglected on the other. Each region of this phenomenon was distinctive in terms of its cultural specificity outlined in the interplay of various religions, languages, and nationalities ^[18].

Moreover, ethnic borderlands, i.e., zones of contact between two or more ethnic communities, can also be distinguished. The existence of this borderland type is not necessarily related to the current course of national boundaries. It is often a consequence of population relocations, migrations, or historical, territorial, and political changes. Its space functions primarily in the inhabitants' consciousness. Certainly, nations are internally diverse in terms of their sense of identity, and the integration and assimilation processes lead to the blurring of ethnic differences, which hinders the precise typology of ethnic borderlands. There are known cases when even a part of a village or a town, situated on the other side of the river, is referred to as, e.g., German, Russian, or Polish. It also sometimes happens that the lines of ethnic division actually run within individual families, between persons connected by blood. In general, however, the area of an ethnic borderland has no clearly defined boundaries, even in public awareness ^[16]. The literature also distinguishes the cultural borderland, which is defined as an area of contact and interactions between at least two separate cultures and their representatives ^[19].

Economic globalisation and the development of means of transport have stimulated intercultural migrations, intensified the processes of intercultural communication, and contributed to the growth of cultural diversity through the extension of borderland areas from the periphery to socioeconomic and political centres. They have also multiplied the cultural diversity by bringing together, in terms of territory, the representatives of cultures which, in the past, rarely met or had no idea about one another. Hence, the so-called “global borderlands” can also be distinguished ^[19]. Moreover, according to Gładysz ^[20], the borderland areas may be regarded as an “entrenchment” (protection against all things alien), a bridge-head (an area acquired as a stage for further expansion), and as a “foot bridge” (the transition to the mutual exchange of material and spiritual values) ^[20].

4. Borderland Characteristics

The most frequently mentioned specific attributes of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland include: (1) its geographical location as well as the nature and function of the state border, (2) a peripheral position in relation to other regions, (3) a low level of development and urbanisation, (4) poor communication accessibility, (5) differences in the state of development as compared to border regions, (6) social and cultural determinants (including those concerning national and ethnic minorities), and (7) multiculturalism ^[21]. The socioeconomic development of borderland areas is determined inter alia by the diversity of institutional space, including the diversity of economic operators, the cooperation relations and the level of the development of negotiation structures on both sides of the border, the performance of formal communication channels, and the network of institutions that promote innovations, transfer of knowledge, and cooperation ^[22].

The diversity of borderland inhabitants is not only related to ethnic or religious issues but also to social differences in a broad sense, which are mainly formed due to the territorial expansion and the colonisation of the population dominant in a particular territory. The social, cultural, and economic differences occurring between the incoming and the local population are usually clear and may increase over time. Social differences are enhanced by the nature of colonisation, since the inhabitants of cities and villages differ in many respects, and the population coming to the borderland inhabits mainly towns and cities, while the majority of rural community are indigenous ^[16].

The social coexistence in borderlands is usually not a partnership in nature. As a rule, the group that is dominant, particularly in economic and cultural terms, and not always in terms of numbers, imposes its culture on indigenous people. The manifestations of socio-cultural contacts do not always have to take negative forms, as it is a very broad term—from extreme separateness and segregation, through confrontation, rivalry, willingness to dominate and subordinate, and finally assimilation, ending with harmonious cooperation ^[16].

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