

THE BORDERLAND OF CIVILIZATIONS AS A RESEARCH CATEGORY IN THE SOCIOLOGY OF BORDERLAND

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Current studies on the borderland territories suggest insufficiency of research tools, which, if applied, would improve the theoretical level of the conducted studies, particularly if that research would cover the borderlands of civilizations. Until now, the research on borderlands in Poland and elsewhere were dominated by the concepts of borderlands and trans-borderness. In my opinion, to cover the full scope of social phenomena and processes, which appear on borderland and trans-border territories, the new terms should be introduced: “borderlandness” together with the existing “borderland” and the “trans-borderland” to complement with the “trans-borderlandness”. In this paper I intend to present shortly the conception of the borderland applied in my research and, on this basis, I try to develop the concept of borderlandness as well as to stress its utility in the studies of borderlands, including the borders of civilizations.

Keywords: borderland of civilizations, borderlandness, identity, sociology of borderland, trans-borderlandness.

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Introduction

I would like to point out that the crucial information which would reveal the distinction of the borderland territory is that this territory is populated by at least two or more groups, which in social consciousness are perceived as distinct. It can be the result of some distinctive features, which are in social consciousness treated as indicators of being different or, quoting Frederic Barth, can be derived “from the order of respected values and moral standards, which frame the valuation of human actions” (Barth 1969: 9-38) as belonging to, or excluded from the group. After Barth I adopt the approach that “there are no simple relations between ethnic units and cultural similarities. The features taken into account are not “objective”, but rather viewed as important by actors themselves” (Nowicka 2004: 353).

For a couple of years, as a result of my research experience, I have assumed that the category of the borderland as the most general research category requires a farther distinction of several other, autonomous categories such as the social territory of the borderland and the territorial bond of the inhabitants. The category of borderland helps us to describe the full scope of inter-cultural contacts, which overlap on the ter-

ritory of the borderland and the social borderland or socio-cultural borderland as a specific form of social order, shaped by the borderlandness.

The social territory of the borderland and the territorial bond

The social territory of the borderland is a given territory (space, field) that permanently populated by the representatives of two or more social groups, which are having distinctive, separate cultures of their own or their autonomous parts, which are most of all treated as separate in the social consciousness. The category of a social territory of the borderland implies the study of borderland population in the statistical, structural, cultural and institutional perspectives, what will be farther discussed.

The study of the social territory of the borderland allows us to prepare social and cultural research maps, which can quite accurately describe social and cultural details: the historical character, the territorial extent, the contemporary spatial organization of the population, the level of their diffusion, the territorial range of selected distinctive features like the language, the complex sphere of customs and habits, the cultural canon, etc. In other words, the category of the social territory of the borderland would denote socio-demographic “photographs” of borderlands as the multiplicity of borders, being the starting point to conduct the sociological research on borderlandness, identities of the inhabitants and other.

The category of the social territory of the borderland helps to construct the research field of the sociology of the borderland as distinct from other research fields – economical, geographical, historical, administrative or even sociological, which can be characterized as describing borderlands as all kinds of territories, located in the proximity of borders with the complexity of problems of socio-cultural character.

What makes the social territory of the borderland special comparing to other “near-border” territories? In reference to Barth and Étienne Balibar, and to my own experience, I would like to insist, that living on the borderland corresponds with being aware of the existence of the multiplicity of borders and often with almost constant need to cross them (Balibar 2007: 317–325).

It is the territory of the specific condensation of political, historical, ethnic, religious and other socio-cultural borders, which forms a dynamic cultural feature of the borderland population (being the component of the contemporary consciousness or social memory of inhabitants of the given territory). In Polish, European and many other contexts, pointing at the cultural diversity of borderlands becomes less directly and openly connected with existing political and administrative borders, which became more transparent and usually do not cause political and spatial separations or segregations of particular socio-cultural groups. Within the European Union (EU) the borders and borderlands exist most of all as a result of the actions of social processes of exclusion and inclusion (Nowicka 2004: 348). The situation is different on the borders and borderlands of EU, where the interference or the specific configuration of political-administrative and socio-cultural borders can be observed.

On the Eastern frontier of the EU, together with the configuration of political-administrative and socio-cultural borders distinguished with the use of the local, regional, national, religious and linguistic criteria, we observe the phenomenon that is still not sufficiently explored in the research – the civilization border and the borderland of the civilizations. The study of such phenomena can lead to a better understanding and interpretation of different kinds of borders and borderlands, concentrated on this territory. The plurality of borders on the borderland, usually of subjective character, is a consequence of the maintenance of the diversity of collective identities. The socio-cultural contacts on borderlands are connected with continuous contacts and crossing the borders, which connect or separate. We should point out that the process of crossing the borders is usually related to specific difficulties or barriers which should be coped with (crossed). The crossing of borders can be of spontaneous character – then it is connected with many difficulties, even with the possibility of causing tensions and conflicts – or somehow regulated, observed when the subject has cultural competences to cross the borders.

Generally speaking, the borders can be defined according to numerous objective and subjective criteria, but finally they are determined by a range of collective identities of their inhabitants, which means that those borders exist mainly in the social consciousness. According to Balibar, “all discussions about the borders are related to the institutions of given identities: national or other” (Balibar 2007: 318). Here we should make another assumption, namely that on the territories of borderlands there is a multiplicity of identities, defined and realized to a different extent, what influences the plurality and the level of clearness of borders existing in a social consciousness. Distinct identities imply clear borders of cultural range of the groups and, by contrast, weakly articulated identities tend to blur those borders. In a longer perspective, the borders as the institutions determine the identities, but also the identities determine the borders through “reducing their complexity” to specific socio-spatial ranges. “The historical core of the complexity of the term “border”, – states Balibar, – which emerges to us, and at the same time evolves, takes new forms and is the problem of institutions. Institutions and the ways of constructing the border, but also the border as a precondition of multiplying the institutions” (Balibar 2007: 324).

So far, the conceptions of the borderland in Polish sociological literature lack an important statement: what happens on borderlands should be usually related to the specific attitude of the groups, located there, to the territory they inhabit, furthermore the aspirations to the same territory is expressed by at least two or more cultural groups. All of them occupy “their” territory and expect to accept their location by others. It is hard to study the religious, ethnic, language, regional or even local group without defining their borders, the territory. It can be real or only imagined, but the territorial bond is the structural feature of the borderland. The territorial bond is the gluing factor which connects the group and its territory. In the subjective reality of the representatives of respective groups the territorial bond can have only habitual, personal character resulting from the birth or attachment, and can be only an assumption (or the belief that “this is my land”) of ideological character. In all cases this bond is propped

by the moral imperative which determines the code of duties referring to “my land”. As a result of the territorial bond and social actions of culturally diversified communities connected with it, the discussed territory becomes the social borderland.

The groups of inhabitation usually differ from each other in the way they define the criteria and the range of actions of taming their territory. In case of the dominant group, supported and organized in the form of the state, the rights to the territory stems from a long period of inhabitation, which means local conditions, but also from the rule of political and state sovereignty of the nation on the given territory, from the sense of belonging to the ideological fatherland, the component of which is the borderland.

In case of the minority cultural groups in the state, the taming of the territory is achieved as the result of a long time of inhabitation together with the emerged territorial bond, which usually takes form of treating the inhabited territory as the family land, the private homeland, but also with the sense of belonging to a broader ideological fatherland, which can be the state of inhabitation, the neighboring “foreign state” or some kind of autonomy, sovereignty of one’s own group.

In general, the territorial bond does not exist as an independent category. It often exists in the context of local and regional groups, being ethnic in different extent or national. However, the distinction of the territorial bond helps to underline that in a large extent the inter-group relations on borderlands exist in the territorial context; the territorial bond at least theoretically determines the rights of any socio-cultural group to inhabit the given territory and maps out the opportunities of achieving the equal character of those interactions. Is it possible to draw the territorial distinction of civilization borderland?

Borderland and borderlandness

The category of the borderlandness helps to describe the aggregate of the inter-cultural contacts which take place on the borderland territories, and even broader, to distinguish the contacts and their consequences in the form of the new socio-cultural phenomena on borderlands, which should be treated in the dynamic way: the dominant tendencies, the efforts to break the subordination and the relation of those contents with the economic, political and historical sphere. In short, according to Marian Golka in the way he sees trans-borderness, which he connects to the transparency of the borders (Golka 1999: 20), the borderlandness relates to the definition of the full scope of inter-cultural contacts realized on the social territory of the borderland. The inter-crossing of the borders is the specific phenomena whose importance and meaning can be observed as the result of a longer process of the research realized on the social territory of the borderlands. The borderlandness is the dynamic dimension of the borderland. It is the manifestation of the variety of individual and collective efforts to cross the borders, to meet the others, which implies the creation of the necessary institutional conditions. In contemporary context, the inter-cultural contacts are usually of institutionalized character and they manifest the need to use preferable rules, to fulfill the duties and responsibilities.

Crossing of borders on borderlands would most often mean that they are organized and normalized by institutions. Therefore the term borderlandness most of all relates to the phenomena (process) of mass and continuing flow (infiltration) through the borders: of people, their cultural patterns, values, in the relation with the active actions to support and develop those contacts through the neighboring groups, their institutions and individual inhabitants.

It can be for example the broadening of the scope of the listeners of the minority programs in media by the representatives of other groups, including the majority; attending the houses of worship of other religions and confessions or the knowledge of the languages of the neighboring groups; establishing relationships and friendships between the representatives of the diversified communities; and the relatively high number of mixed marriages treated as the indicator of inter-group integration. It is worth to add, that mixed marriages usually symbolize the processes of social assimilation and amalgamation as they are linked (at least formally) with the resignation by one of the spouses from one's own culture and acceptance of the culture of the other. Furthermore, nowadays we probably more often observe mixed marriages in which spouses declare keeping their own cultural identity. Preliminary research suggests that on borderlands only such type of marriages foster equal and partner inter-cultural closeness, and helps mutual understanding without sustaining prejudices and stereotypes.

Generally speaking, the very specific feature of the borderland may be the inhabitation of this territory by two or more groups which have cultures of a different level of separateness, but the fact of inhabitation or spatial relocations does not yet mean long-standing inter-cultural contacts. In theory it can be the continuum starting from the lack of inter-cultural contacts, the state of ethnic separation and segregation, through various forms of partial, selective contacts, to several types and intensity of cooperation based on different rules (domination and subordination, cooperation backed by the democratic rules). In this context we can speak about different level of borderlandness existing on respective borderlands. In a longer perspective, the character of the borderlandness forms a specific order of inter-cultural relations, which can be defined accordingly to the level and the character of inter-cultural problems solved in the culturally diversified society as a whole.

In my opinion, the social (or socio-cultural) borderland can be described as the totality of constant contacts between two or more ethno-cultural groups, which take place in the context of the specific relationship with the territory (inhabited or imagined), and whose actions tend to keep (or occupy) this territory, and the results of those actions.

The category of social borderland can help to describe the specific social order being the result of the borderlandness (culturally diversified borderland, or, stressing the inter-cultural contacts of partner type, the intercultural borderland). Avoiding the exhaustive definition of the social borderland, we should point out that it can emerge as the result of the borderlandness realized usually in a longer time perspective. Without introducing the borderlandness, the borderland can be described only as a social territory of the borderland.

Trans-borders, trans-borderlandness and civilizations

Similarly to the categories of borderland and borderlandness described above, we can distinguish the terms of trans-borderlandness and trans-border, which I examine closely in another paper (Bojar *et al.* 2008: 17–30).

To draw at least general, or working, distinction between the terms borderland and trans-borderland it is necessary to stress that as a result of the formation of nation-states, political blocks, different forms of institutional and spontaneous crossing of the state-administrative borders, different rules of transcending those borders, the category of the borderland most often describes the territories located by the administrative-political borders or just within the limits of the given countries; while the trans-borderland refers to several territories stretching on both (or several) sides of the administrative-state (political) borders.

Per analogia, using the experience collected in the study of the borderlands, we can point out that the trans-borderland consists of social territory of the borderland, the territorial bond, the trans-borderlandness, and possibly, social trans-borderland.

Similarly, the trans-borderlandness relates to the crossing or the infiltration of the administrative-state, political borders. I am convinced that the above categories can be applied to the research of local, regional, ethnic-national, religious and civilization borders.

Until now, there were numerous research devoted to the borderlands using the socio-cultural criteria, what practically means that they described ethnic, national and religious borderlands. Nowadays, there are many publications in Polish devoted to the theory of the civilization (Znaniński 1990; Huntington 1997; Hanna 2004; Wallerstein 2004; Pawluczuk 2008). However, there is not much empirical research focused on the study of the civilization borders and borderlands. To answer the question of how to conduct such study on this kind of borders and borderlands seems to be a very difficult research task. It is necessary to start from the formulation of the methodology of the research on the borderlands of civilizations, which would consist of: the definition and operationalization of the category of civilization, and, optionally, of the borderland (borderlandness) of civilizations, to set the indicators and to define their accessibility in the empirical research. Afterwards to delimitate the territorial extent of respective civilizations, to define their contact and transitional zones. In all terms given above, there are no convincing theoretical stances, what makes the empirical research almost impossible. We can at least attempt to define a couple of theoretical assumptions as the foundation for the empirical study. When trying to distinguish the border of civilizations, it is necessary to accept the notion of civilization as a state of the culture, as a type of *ethnos*. “The civilizations in this respect, – says Włodzimierz Pawluczuk, – are the broadest type of *ethnos*, which can be characterized by the *longue duree* and the resistance to change under the influence of the external factors” (Pawluczuk 2008: 8). This is the cultural approach in the study of civilizations. According to Samuel Huntington, “the most important differences in the level of the political and economical development of the civilizations are rooted in the cultural differences” (Huntington 1997: 20).

The studies of civilization borders imply the existence of at least a couple of civilizations and the zone (line) between them. Although Huntington uses the term “the border lines between civilizations”, it would be more correct to assume that there are several civilization borderlands located on a large territory between respective civilizations. This observation is partly confirmed by Huntington who *inter alia* observes, that “the civilizations do not have strictly marked out borders, we do not exactly know, where they start, or where they end” (Huntington 1997: 46). Subsequently, one should define the relationship between a civilization and other collectiveness, distinguished accordingly to cultural and identity criteria, especially to establish indicators of civilization character, at least partially different from religious, national, ethnic, language and others. I assume that in the contemporary conditions civilizations differ from other forms of collectiveness distinguished through political, cultural and identity criteria. “Therefore, the civilization is the highest cultural level of clustering the people and the broadest platform of cultural identity, above which is only what makes humans different from other species” (Huntington 1997: 45–46). While writing about civilization, authors usually list its features which cannot be reduced to the features of other cultural collectiveness.

In democratic conditions, however, on the ground of the forming civilization identity treated as the “broader platform of the identification, which [a man] strongly identifies with” (Huntington 1997: 46), there is a historical rapprochement of the respective civilizations and political structures, religions, nations, ethnic and language groups. To study the civilization borders, especially to establish the rules of comparison between them, it is very important to educe the phases of the development of respective civilizations. For example, there are different ways of perception of values, believes and institutions in the civilizations which go through the growth or the fall phase.

The civilization borderland is the broadest type of the socio-cultural borderland. The civilization borderland can be defined as historically changing, located between the discussed civilizations territory with a specific concentration of historical, ethnic, religious, political, language and other borders. These borders form an active cultural “equipment” of the inhabitants (being a component of the contemporary consciousness or the social memory of the inhabitants of the given territory) and which help to realize the social processes of inclusion and exclusion. The bonding factor which constitutes the civilization border is the plurality of the constant trans-cultural (trans-civilization) contacts, which can be called the civilization trans-borderlandness.

Between the West and the East: Central Europe as a borderland of civilizations

Now, having at least a working definition of the civilization border, I will try to examine closer the borderland between Western and Eastern Europe (popularly called the East and the West). I share the opinion of Tonny Judt (Judt 1998: 38) that the division between the East and the West is, at least partly, the consequence of the political-ideological myths, created by the West and exposed especially strong in the times and for

the use of the Cold War, the myths, which solidified the divisions on territories where we observe a similar, common European space (Judt 1998: 29). In this light, following the standpoint of Huntington, I accept the assumption about the division between the Western Europe as the basic element of the Western civilization, and the Eastern Europe as the base for the Orthodox civilization.

Usually, when defining the territories situated between the Western and Orthodox civilizations the authors use the term Central Europe. I assume that this is the territory of the civilization border. According to Krzysztof Pomian, the territory stretching between Western and Eastern Europe was shaped by the whole millennium. “It is populated by the nations, although in majority catholic and protestant, more or less secularized, which have remained for centuries or at least decades in the state of territorial neighboring, coexistence in the frames of the same political entity, domination or subordination with at least one nation in majority Orthodox. This territory, we shall call it the Central Europe” (Pomian 2008: 26). Furthermore, Pomian says that Central Europe is historically and culturally tied with Western Europe, and the basic criterion which constitutes it is the situation of neighboring or subordination to the Orthodox nation (or nations) organized in the nation-state. Judt, on the other hand, points out that the territory described as Central Europe, consists of the mixed areas on which “the elites had to choose who should they trust: the church, monarchy, communism or Europe” (Judt 1998: 45). No matter how we will closer define Central Europe, I propose to view it as the region located between two civilizations, on the one hand symbolized by the Western Europe (roughly speaking, located west from Odra River) and the Eastern Europe (recently most often identified with Russia). The characteristic feature of this territory is the perception of the multiplicity of the inner borders defined with the use of different criteria. During the whole Cold War period, the East and the West were separated by a strict border (the Iron Curtain). This line was broken together with the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the German Reunification, which confirmed its inadequacy to the civilization border of cultural character. Fundamental and generally credible is the civilization border marked out by Huntington (Huntington 1997: 21), the border shaped by the contact of Catholic and Protestant religions with the Orthodox. It is not, however, the only border, and it functions in the context of many other borders. Central Europe, whose borders, at least in working definition, determine the civilization borders, lay between Western and Eastern Europe. What are its borders? It is generally assumed, that on the West it starts with the Odra River and probably on the German – Czech border. What about the East?

There are at least two standpoints. According to the first, the frontiers of the Central Europe on the East are constituted by Orthodox confessions, corresponding to the borders which historically were shaped as the division between Western Roman Empire and Eastern Roman Empire with the Byzantine influences. Judt, who claims that the religious delimitations and cultural experiences decide on the durability of the divisions in Europe, points out that “two forms of Christianity become to describe two separate regions of Europe” (Judt 1998: 33). According to this standpoint, the Eastern

border of the Central Europe is identified with the Eastern borders of the countries like: Poland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Hungary and Czech Republic. According to Pomian, “the eastern border of the Central Europe are eastern borders of Finland, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Croatia” (Pomian 2008: 27).

The second standpoint, which I agree with, suggests that the countries like Belarus, Ukraine, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Serbia and Greece should be included into Central Europe. In my opinion, the important argument, confirming this standpoint is that these are the middle or small sized countries which remained in the past under the influence of empires, in majority Orthodox, but religiously diversified, with different political affiliation and often historically remaining under the influence of European values as well. In their collective identity those countries, long ago (Greece) or recently (Ukraine), assimilated European values and they organizationally belong to the EU or only tend to different form of European affiliation.

Thus delimited Central Europe, however, clearly distinct from the Western and Eastern Europe, is an entity internally dismembered and diversified. Within its limits we can distinguish clear internal borders, but still of supra-national character. Usually there is a further category of Central-Eastern Europe marked out while there is no dichotomic distinction of Central-Western Europe made. However, I think that we can clearly distinguish Central-Western and Central-Eastern Europe. The Central-Western consists of the countries and societies of Finland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Croatia and Slovenia. The societies and countries of Belarus Republic, Ukraine, Moldova, Romania, Bulgaria, Serbia, Montenegro, Macedonia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Greece belong to the Central-Eastern Europe.

The distinguishing factors are among others: the Roman-Catholic or Protestant confessions *versus* Orthodox (with enclaves of Islam), cultural tights with respectively Latin and Orthodox cultures, the national structure (the countries being in general unified nation-states *versus* nationally and ethnically diversified), dominant political and cultural attitudes. Those attitudes can be described as a larger or smaller attachment to democratic values, a larger or smaller level of anti-Russian actions in politics and social behaviors.

Further divisions within the Central Europe have political, national, linguistic, regional and local character. The Central Europe as a civilization border can be characterized by the strong and internally diversified concentration of different kinds of borders. It should be stressed that the characteristic feature of civilization border is the fact that every type of conflict caused by the crossing of internal borders can result in inter-civilization borders. Usually, this type of results is not the effect of intra-civilization conflicts.

Is it possible to cross those borders, not causing tensions and social conflicts? The general answer is vit that requires a development of the civilization trans-borderness in order to solve all inter-civilization tensions through civilization-cultural, not forcible means. Further we should point out that, in general, the inter-civilization relationships are not shaped spontaneously, but rather they require complex and long-lasting

research, experiences and practical applications. Primarily we should study the plurality of cultures within the respective civilizations and on this basis we should stipulate the possible cultural commonalities and differences. It seems necessary to develop a broad inter-cultural education, to supply the representatives of different groups and the groups as a whole with the essential cultural competences.

Together with inter-cultural education there is a need to develop the competence to carry on the inter-civilization dialogue. Milad Hanna points out that “there is no inevitability of war between civilizations... We can avoid violent clashes of civilizations, but this is possible only under one condition – that we accept the others” (Hanna 2004: 7).

Conclusions

In my opinion, the studies on civilization borderlands can relatively quickly give competent answers to many questions related to the crossing of civilization borders. The civilization borderland can be viewed as a miniature that contains a whole diversity of the neighboring civilizations. In such civilization, apart from differences, there are contacts, clashes, diffusions and overlapping of cultures. This is possible because on civilization borderlands the respective types of borders are constantly crossed, though with different costs and social consequences. A closer study of them can serve not only to satisfy academic, theoretical needs, but most of all can help approach the multiplicity of practical applications which lead to shaping the attitudes of the mutual acceptance, partnership, dialog and cooperation.

The study of civilization borders and civilization trans-borderness will broaden the scope of research, and thereby can foster the strengthening of a new sociological sub-discipline of the sociology of borderland.

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CIVILIZACIJŲ PARIBYS KAIP TYRIMO KATEGORIJA PARIBIO SOCIOLOGIJOJE

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Santrauka

Dabartinėse paribio teritorijų studijose nepakanka tyrimo priemonių, kurios galėtų pagerinti teorinę vykdomų tyrimų kokybę, ypač tokiu atveju, jei jie apimtų ir civilizacijų paribius. Iki šiol paribio tyrimuose Lenkijoje ir kitur vyravo paribio ir užribio konceptai. Pasak autoriaus, siekiant apimti socialinių fenomenų ir procesų, vykstančių paribio ir užribio teritorijose, visumą, dera pasitelkti naujas sąvokas. Jau vartojama sąvoka „paribys“ papildytina sąvoka „paribiškumas“, o „užribis“ – „už-ribiškumas“. Straipsnyje siekiama pristatyti paribio koncepciją, kurią naudojant siekiama plėtoti paribiškumo sampratą ir pabrėžti jos naudingumą paribio studijų, apimančių ir civilizacijų ribas, atžvilgiu.

Reikšminiai žodžiai: civilizacijų paribys, paribiškumas, paribio sociologija, tapatumas, už-ribiškumas.

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