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## Theoretical deliberations on frontier location of cities

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## **THEORETICAL DELIBERATIONS ON FRONTIER LOCATION OF CITIES**

**ABSTRACT.** Nowadays political and socio-economic reorganization of the European space, where cities play a very important role, has a strong impact on peripheral areas, referred to as border regions. One can observe a changing role of these regions due to various functions and effects of internal or external borders in the integrated Europe. Internal border cities have gained new functions and a chance for the development. However, cities in the external European border regions may face serious development barriers which can result in the economic recession unless they can develop transportation or trade functions and thus become gateway cities.

**KEY WORDS:** frontier, border, city, border regions, cross-border co-operation.

### **INTRODUCTION**

The interest in frontier areas grew in connection to the new conditioning which appeared in Central European countries in the last decade of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. This interest concerns political and economical transformation, opening to the world economy, growing competition, as well as the access to NATO and EU structures. As a result, the issue of the market economy and the local territorial self-government in border cities gained special importance, particularly in peripheral regions near the external EU border.

This paper reviews the literature devoted to the aforementioned cities and their development, borders, border regions and cross-border cooperation issues. These topics are under the consideration of various sciences: geography, economics, politics, sociology, history or even anthropology. The studies of national borders and their influence on nearby areas, especially cities, is not a novelty in research tendencies. However, when thinking about the conditions such as the new

geopolitical order in Central Europe that occurred during last years, the border issue still requires consideration. One of the main questions is whether borders create chances for the development or risks of the recession to nearby cities.

The extend of the impact of the changing role of state borders on the development and transformations of frontier towns is the main reason for frontier cities research. The research in question is also crucial for the examination of the relevance of borders to the political-territorial reorganization of the EU and processes of the globalization. This impact will be different in the case of internal borders of the EU members, and different in case of the external UE border, which is Poland's eastern frontier as well. Taking the Odra and Bug borders into consideration one can have an excellent example of an analysis of such an influence on nearby cities and their transformations.

### **NEED FOR BORDER RESEARCH**

There is a growing body of researchers who are certain of the necessity for studying boundaries and the relevance of analyzing their political, economic and cultural significance (Paasi, 2001). There are various contributory factors lying behind the recent interest in boundary investigations. One of them is the removal of the east-west dichotomy. Security has traditionally been linked with national political identities, which have been perceived as dependent on boundaries (Campbell, 1992). Another background factor to the spread of interest in boundary research have been the occasionally violent attempts at redefining territorial and ethnic identities (i.e. in Eastern Europe). Another background factors have been globalization and the stimulation of flows of capital, goods, people and ideas and their effects on boundaries and the notions of sovereignty and governance. The current discussion of cross-border activities are symptomatic of changes in technology, but the movement of the people across borders still remains a more important factor (Paasi, 2001).

A border is a factor that has a strong impact on historical, economical, political and social conditioning that influences the changes in the development cities. To find out those interdependencies researchers carry on studies concerning local quality of life, the standard of living, infrastructure for social and cultural development (parks, galleries) and infrastructure for industrial development (roads, facilities, education) (Knox and Marston, 1998).

### **BORDERS**

“Borders have long been associated with the military defence of the national territory from opposing, and often neighbouring armies. They also have a history

as privileged sites of commercial regulation, such as customs and excise” (Walters, 2006: 188). Today, however, it seems that borders are becoming more and more important not as military or economic practices but as spaces and instruments for the policing of a variety of factors, objects and processes whose common denominator is their mobility (Adey, 2004), or more specifically, the forms of social and political insecurity that have come to be discursively attached to these mobilities (Bigo, 2002; Huysmans, 1995). The result of those aspects can be observed in the development or the recession of border cities.

There is no unanimity about the current meaning of the term boundary. There are three approaches. Some researchers

“(…) claim that nation states and their boundaries have lost much of their significance and that they will disappear entirely from the globalized world of the future, in which the new order dictated by information economics will give priority to mobility, speed, flows of various kinds and an entirely new type of economic region” (Passi, 2001: 133).

“Another group of researchers maintains that nation states and their boundaries will continue to be of importance as instruments of governance in the international system in the future” (Passi, 2001: 133). There are also those who emphasize the fact that “both the nation and the state will continue to be of significance but that the nation state as such will fall into disrepute” (Passi, 2001: 133). The argument in question is derived from a phenomenon that a nation is not necessarily restricted to a given territory but can exist on both sides of a border. It can also require bounds of its own that could not be congruent with existing state boundaries at all (Paasi, 2001).

Boundaries can be understood as a part of the process by which territories and their identities as well as meanings are formed and renewed (Passi, 1991, 1996). They are not only restrictive lines drawn on a map, but located everywhere in a society and in the socio-spatial delimitations. Boundaries are observable in politics (Rykiel, 2006), administration, economics, culture, the construction of ethnic relations, educational practices and many other forms of national socialization (Anderson, 1991).

Boundaries themselves serve a great variety of functions: they are accepted as administrative tools, instruments of governments’ political and territorial control, and they also act as structural factors of social identity. The meanings of boundaries are always contextual and historically conditioned; “they are infused with ideological significance, but also have material practices and consequences associated with them” (Paasi, 2001: 134). Boundaries also carry implications of power, politics and culture (Paasi, 2001).

Borders characterize towns as far as functions are concerned. On one hand, they are factors of separation between different political-institutional systems

but on the other, they can function as contact zones between different sets of people and societies (Fig. 1.) (Ratti, 1996; Jerczyński, 2002). The preponderance of one of these depends on historic factors. It is a result of postmodern changes that concern globalization, market and politics internationalization. It is also due to the creation of international political systems and the increase of the role of regions as territorial subsystems of states (Crook and Pakulski and Waters, 1992). The creation of transborder regions and the increase of cooperation of exclusion zones go with it. The task of the national border as a barrier or a link depends on its infiltration and the implementation of advantages of potential neighbourhood according to contacts and economic connections (Chojnicki, 1999).

Considering borders in terms of effects one can distinguish three types of them: barrier-border, filter-border and contact-border (Fig. 1.) (Ratti, 1996). The first one can have the strongest impact on the neighbourhood. The cities located near this kind of borders have the most difficult way of development and economic growth. The last type, contact-border, gives cities the chance of the development approximate to other cities located in non-peripheral areas. Filter-borders can have various influences on the development of nearby cities. The extend of such influences strongly depends on the strengths and weaknesses of the economy of every city.

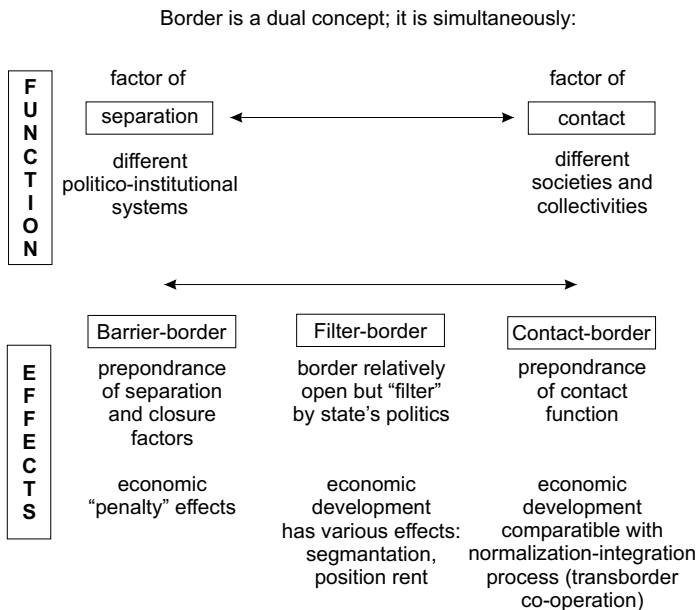


Fig. 1. Functions and effects of borders

Source: Ratti R., 1996, p. 42.

A brief typology of frontiers is presented by R. Ratti (1996). We can define boundaries as lines or zones in spatial approach, as well as fixed or mobile boundaries in time approach. In the EU we deal with the category of borders when integration and transborder co-operation are dominant functions of the economic realm. There are also socio-territorial boundaries in politico-institutional and socio-cultural realms. In this case countries function in a system of open boundaries in which states endeavour to lift the hamper of flows and transportation. At the same time the economy can operate in a system of exchange and co-operation (Jerczyński, 2002).

Ratti (1996) also points out different frontier-effects and their consequences (Table 1), with relevance to numerous sectors where the consequences in question may occur. The effects of barrier/filter-borders can trigger the marginalization, separation or even recession of nearby cities. It is very difficult for the economies of such cities to overcome a situation like that.

Table 1. Typology of frontier-effects and its consequences for the economy and spatial politics

SECTORS	TYPES OF FRONTIER-EFFECTS	
	FRONTIER AS A BARRIER / FILTER	FRONTIER AS A ZONE OF CONTACT
Organization of space	Development of both frontier zones	Competition / Cooperation inside the agglomerations
International transport	Strong frontier-effect / Concentration on the frontier	Spatial redevelopment of infrastructure and services (according to rules of ‘competition networks’)
Labour market	Segmented, even protected	New strategy in terms of “transborder basin of employment”
Localization of industry	According to vertical segmentation rules (branch, subjection)	According to rules of “milieu” network
High tech industry	Marginalization, except those that harness the rent of the situation	Catalyst effects due to the cooperation politics network
Education / University	Separation because of important structural differences and other rules of national educational systems	Mutual recognize of diplomas, Coordination of programs
Technology politics	Penalty approach, Centre – periphery	Creation of transborder milieus and structures

Source: Ratti, R. 1996, p. 44.

The second type of frontier-effects is far more beneficial for the development of border cities due to the fact that border regions are perceived as zones of contact. There is a wide range of cross-border co-operation events that may intensify the economic growth.

## CROSS-BORDER REGIONS AND CO-OPERATION

Border regions (Rykiel, 1990) may involve zones of underdeveloped territoriality. Many of them are still marginal, which means they have not been fully settled or do not have recognized economic potentials (Knox and Marston, 1998).

Martinez (1994) presented typology that refers to border regions in the interaction approach. The interaction, that takes place between neighbourhood border regions is a base to distinguish four types of regions: 1) isolated, 2) coexisting, 3) cooperating, 4) integrated border regions. Due to extremely disadvantageous conditions, there is no routine, everyday transborder exchange in isolated border regions. Coexisting border regions form in the situation when nation states endeavor to reduction of frontier conflicts. Borders are partly open and there are limited possibilities of mutual influences and the occurrence of relations between residents. Cooperating border regions characterize by the economic stability and social complementary that stimulate transborder interaction. These result in the development of transborder region, as well as the cooperation and friendship between residents. Integrated border regions occur between countries where there are neither big political differences nor barriers in trade and social contacts. The economies of both countries are functionally linked and there is a limitless flow of people and goods. The residents of such border regions feel membership in the same social system (Martinez, 1994).

Nowadays, “cross-border regions are part of an administrative landscape in most European border areas” (Perkmann, 2003: 167) In the context of the increasing Europeanization and internationalization of non-central governments, the cross-border co-operation between contiguous local and regional authorities is the example of the variety of other such initiatives (Perkmann, 2003).

The definition of cross-border regions, adopted by the Council of Europe, for instance, states that they are “characterized by homogenous features and functional interdependencies. Otherwise there is no need for cross-border co-operation” (CoE, 1972: 29). In other words, a transfrontier regions are potential areas, inherent in geography, history, ecology, ethnic groups, economic possibilities, but disrupted by the sovereignty of the governments ruling on each side of the frontier (CoE, 1995). Concepts such as natural economic spaces and natural economic territories (Scalapino, 1991) state similar objectives, implicitly arguing for the existence of intermediate units of natural economic development cutting through state borders (Ohmae, 1995).

At present, there are more than 70 cross-border regions in Europe at present, operating under such names as ‘Euroregions’, ‘Euregios’ or ‘Working Communities’. Although some of these initiatives date back to the 1950s, the

1990s witnessed a significant increase in the number of cross-border regions (CBRs) all over Europe. In fact, today there are virtually no local or regional authorities in border areas that are not involved in cross-border co-operation (CBC) initiatives(1) in any way (Perkmann, 2003).

The increasing cross-border co-operation and new forms of regionalization have been leading to the transformation of the alienated borderlands into interdependent borderlands, which eventually may integrate and form single regions (Martinez, 1994).

“As the first approximation, cross-border co-operation can be defined as a more or less institutionalized collaboration between contiguous subnational authorities across national borders” (Perkmann, 2003: 156). This definition of the cross-border co-operation is more detailed than the definition suggested by the international legal framework, the ‘Madrid Convention’ of the Council of Europe. The “Convention defines transfrontier co-operation as any concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighbourly relations between territorial communities and authorities within the jurisdiction of other contracting parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose”(2) (Perkmann, 2003: 156).

The definition of cross-border co-operation as “cross-border interaction between neighbouring regions for the preservation, governance and development of their common living space, without the involvement of their central authorities” (Schmitt-Egner, 1998: 63) provided by Schmitt-Egner assumes that there is a priori common living space. However, the evidence suggests that in many cases such common purposes are constructed by border communities in an ad hoc manner (Perkmann, 2003).

Co-operation initiatives among cross-border regions “(...) tend to focus on public policy co-ordination, provided they manage to go beyond merely ceremonial declarations of common cross-border visions” (Perkmann, 2003: 167). Nation states have been reluctant to grant new cross-border agencies more than to take the responsibility for ordinary policy functions. In the view of the lack of involvement in the private actor and small cross-border budgets, it is therefore premature to perceive CBRs as something akin to cross-border urban regimes (Harding, 1997) or new emerging scales of the production and/or consumption (Brenner, 1999).

Moreover, these co-ordination and co-operation activities in the public policy realm are in the majority of cases linked to and promoted by the implementation of European regional policy, reflecting the analyses presented by other researchers (Anderson and Bort, 1997; Church and Reid, 1999). “This provides the main explanatory factor for the sharp rise in cross-border regions that could be witnessed over the 1990s, when the EU launched its large-scale program promoting CBC (Interreg) (Perkmann, 2003: 167). By contrast, in



the period before the isomorphic pressures of the EU regional policy on local CBC initiatives, nation-state specific variables had played an important role in facilitating co-operation activities among border authorities (Perkmann, 2003).

One for the main requirements the for successful trans-border co-operation is the integration of two necessary organizational factors, i.e. the support and coordination of the central state administration while maintaining the grass-roots mechanisms of creating and developing such cooperation (Stańczyk, 2001:82).

## THEORIES OF CITIES

As it has been already mentioned, towns and cities in the border regions are the main target of border influences. They are not only the engines of economic development but also the centers of cultural innovations, social transformations and political changes. Experts on urbanization point out four fundamental aspects of the role of towns and cities in human economic and social organization:

- a) “the mobilizing function of urban settlement. Urban settings, with infrastructure and population, are the places for entrepreneurs. Cities provide efficient and effective environments for organizing labour, capital, and raw materials, as well as distributing completed products;
- b) the decision-making capacity of urban settlements. Cities bring the decision-making machinery of public and private institutions and organizations together. They come to be concentrations of political and economical power;
- c) the generative functions of urban settlement. The concentration of people in cities stimulates greater interaction and competition, which facilities the generation of innovation, knowledge, and information;
- d) the transformative capacity of urban settlement. The size, density, and variety of urban populations tend to have liberating effects on people, allowing them to escape the rigidities of traditional, rural society and to participate in a variety of lifestyles and behaviors” (Knox and Marston, 1998: 409–410).

The actual rate and amount of growth of cities depends on the extend of their economic growth. The economic base of cities consists of such economic functions that involve the manufacture, processing, or trading of goods or the provision of services for outside markets. The activities that provide income-generating exports for cities are referred to as basic functions. In contrast, nonbasic functions are those catering to the populations of cities and so do not generate profit from outside customers. The fundamental determinant of cities’ growth in population, employment, and income in the world’s core countries is the percentage of their economies focusing on basic activities. “The prosperity generated by basic economy activities leads to increased employment in nonbasic activities in order to satisfy the demand for housing, utilities, retailing, personal

services” (Knox and Marston, 1998: 433), and many others.

“The incomes generated by the combination of basic and nonbasic economic activities allow for higher potential tax yields, which can be used to improve public utilities, roads, schools, health services, recreational amenities, and other infrastructure improvements. Although such activities are also referred to as nonbasic, they all serve to improve the efficiency and attractiveness of cities for further rounds of investment in basic economic activities. The entire process is a of cumulative causation, in which a spiral buildup of advantages is enjoyed by a particular place as a result of the development of external economies, agglomeration effects, and localization economies” (Knox and Marston, 1998: 433).

The development of cities depends on location decisions in commercial and industrial sphere. These decisions, however, are strongly affected by the location of cities. Frontier location can hamper such a development. There are various key factors of location decisions, as listed below:

- a) “the relative importance of the accessibility to whatever material inputs are involved (for example, raw materials, energy);
- b) the relative importance of the availability of labor with particular skills;
- c) the relative importance of processing costs; these include the costs of land and buildings, machinery and hardware, software, maintenance, wages and salaries, facility bills, and local taxes;
- d) the relative pull of the market for a product or service, which depends on the importance of being neighbouring customers;
- e) the relative transfer costs that would be accrued at alternative locations. The transfer costs involve not only the costs of transporting inputs from various sources and of outputs to markets, but also insuring, storing, unloading, and repacking raw materials and completed products;
- f) the influence of the cultural and institutional factors that channel certain activities away from some locations and toward others. The most important of these are governmental policies of one kind or another. It is quite common, for instance, for local governments to offer tax breaks to companies in order to attract investments that will result in the creation of new jobs in the area;
- g) the influence of behavioral considerations that stem from the objectives and constraints affecting individual decision makers” (Knox and Marston, 1998: 85).

These location decisions vary due to the political and socio-economic issues of the settlement of cities.

The patterns of the economic development are not only the principles of location and economic interdependence but they are also historical in origin and cumulative in nature. “Even though the fundamental principles of spatial organization hold steady over time, societal and technological conditions change” (Knox and Marston, 1998: 289). As a result, economic geographies which owe

their shape to certain principles of spatial organization during one particular period are inevitably modified, later on, as exactly the same principles work their way through new technologies and new factors. For this reason, we find different pathways of economic development, according to various circumstances of timing and location (Knox and Marston, 1998).

Recognizing this, geographers are interested not only in uncovering the fundamental principles of spatial organization but also in relating them to geographical 'path dependency' (Mahoney, 2000; Pierson, 2004), the historical relationship between present-day activities in a place and the past experiences of that place.

"In principle, the path dependence leaves open the possibility of reading of various modes as well as directions of change from the historically contingent institutional configurations of specific political economies, if that is, the premises of resource power-theory are taken on board" (Engelen, 2006: 3).

When spatial structures emerge though the logic of fundamental principles of spatial organization, one can observe the relationship between past and present in ways guided and influenced by preexisting patterns and relationships (Knox and Marston, 1998).

## LOCATION THEORIES

Referring to **Christaller** theory of central places, border cities are specific ones, as they can be found at the edges of states, isolated both spatially and economically. They are characterized by reduced areas of influence. National frontiers cut up spatially complementary regions in an artificial way. The cities in question have small complementary areas and limited development. The development of trading activity at borders or in border regions can positively influence the development of border cities. Border traffic is often a stimulate activity for nearby cities. Selling and buying or storage of goods, earnings derived from them can strengthen the importance of border cities although they have no or almost no complementary region (Christaller, 1966).

Presenting the economic development of border regions, **Lösch** stresses the fact that the goals of economic landscapes and states are different. Assuming that the ones typical of states are arranged in a descending order as follows: continuance, power, "Kultur", prosperity, the order in question must be exactly reversed for economic areas. Entirely opposite aspects of human nature are expressed in the political and economic orders (Lösch, 1954: 199). To create new gaps in a market network and to discourage industries from settling near a boundary, national frontiers hamper the crossing of boundaries by market areas. This also explains why new border regions often become depressed areas

after shifting political frontiers. Political boundaries are customs boundaries as well. Secondly, they are often national frontiers, which stands for the differences in language, requirements and national character. Moreover, they are administrative boundaries which on one hand means that public contracts are unlikely to be awarded beyond the border, and on the other, that business traffic does not cross the border. Border regions are regions of danger in case of war as well (Hansen, 1977).

**Giersch** developed a spatial model for the examination of the location consequences of political boundaries (Giersch, 1949–1950). His model assumes a large plain where transportation costs are proportional to distance. The plain is a circle surrounded by a desert, which Giersch regards as the strongest possible substitute for a national frontier and a barrier to international trade and factor movements. Additionally, natural resources, population, and production units are assumed to be equally distributed over the entire area. The larger market area the fewer entrepreneurs who choose location near the frontier. The entire system of networks tends to become denser in the center than in the extremities (Hansen, 1977).

Cities in the border areas can be named gateway cities due to location and special functions. They are cities developed between two regions with different level of investments. They serve as links between one country or region and others due to their special physical situation. They are gates, junctions and control centers that command entrance to, and exit from, a particular country or region. They are characterized by high levels of transport and wholesale in their economy structures (Burghardt, 1971; Knox and Marston, 1998).

## CONCLUSION

Nowadays we can see the reorganization of European space where the East is becoming disintegrated, and the West endeavors to integration (Jerczyński, 2002) and cities play very important, stimulating roles in the aforementioned processes. These factors have strong impact on areas that have very important but at the same time difficult geopolitical location – between the East and the West. We should also be aware of the changing nature and the function of state borders in the advanced industrialized regions at the beginning of the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Andreas, 2003; Andreas and Biersteker, 2003; Andreas and Snyder, 2000) and the growing importance of cross-border regions and cross-border cooperation.

Political, as well as economical transformations and the access to the EU structures have caused that frontiers are no longer only barriers for goods, capital, people, services and information flows. They have gained a new function, i.e. integration (Chojnicki, 1999). They also have entailed the change of the socio-

economic situation of border areas, especially cities, because their position has become one of the most significant factors stimulating local development. This situation can only concern internal frontiers of the EU. However, external frontiers are becoming the hard frontier of the EU which can hamper the flows of goods, capital, people and services due to increasingly strict policies and Schengen Agreement(3). The way of development of nearby cities is strongly affected by this kind of a border.

Borders themselves can be both positive and negative factors for the local development. New theories point out that not all border regions can develop from political and economy periphery into the zones of international co-operation and synergy (Herbst and Olejniczak and Smętkowski, 2002). The strengths or weaknesses of border cities are determined not only by their location but also by the way they are governed. Individual conditions are equally meaningful. Finding the reasons of the recession in border cities and offering them some pathways for the development appear to be vast fields of study for researchers.

## NOTES

(1) ‘CBC’ refers to the activity of cooperating across borders while ‘CBR’ refers to the outcome as institutional arrangement (Perkmann, 2003).

(2) The expression ‘cross-border’ is the alternative term to: ‘trans-frontier’, ‘trans-border’ and ‘trans-boundary’. The term ‘trans-frontier’ is derived from a literal translation of the French term ‘transfrontalier’ as used by the CoE, whereas ‘transborder’ and ‘trans-boundary’ tend to be used by American authors (Duchacek, 1986).

(3) Schengen Agreement is an agreement among European states which allows for common policy on the temporary entry of persons (including the Schengen visa) and the harmonisation of external border controls ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen\\_Agreement](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Schengen_Agreement) – 15.11.2006).

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