

# Scientific researches related to cross-border issues in Europe (1)



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# Introduction



- early 1990s:
  - integration process accelerated in Europe and spread more and more eastward
  - regionalism and more specifically cross-border regions appeared as a new research area
  - "Europe of Regions" and "Borderless Europe"
  - a great variety of disciplines
- „all borders and border regions are unique“
  - but the processes and events of history and economic life, nevertheless, proved that there are many similarities between each border region
  - so researches and studies related to the individual borders may be compared and categorised on the basis of the nature of the co-operation
- most authors: multi-, inter- or transdisciplinary approach
- most papers published on the topic are rooted in only a few disciplines
- geography explicitly concentrates on the spatial processes and relations



# Researches on borders and border regions in the European studies from a geographical aspect



- border interpretations in geography
- birth of border researches
- factors and events leading to the shift in focus of border researches in the nineties



# Border interpretations in geography (based on European researches)

## POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY

- state, nation, sovereignty
- nationalism
- economic policy
- critical geopolitics
- territorial redistribution
- cross-border regionalisation

## ECONOMIC GEOGRAPHY

- space of flows and places
- disappearance of borders/states
- cross-border interaction
- spatial annihilation

## BORDER INTERPRETATIONS

## CULTURAL GEOGRAPHY

- identity policy
- national culture
- ethnicity, „races“
- gender issues
- environmental, peace and women's movements
- refugees, migrants

## REGIONAL GEOGRAPHY

- demarcation of regions
- regions as social structures
- regions as products of historical processes
- regional identity





# Birth of border researches



- no theories have been created respecting borders and border regions for a long time
  - all borders and border regions were regarded unique and special cases
- „the states and state borders were explicitly stable structures between the 1950s (following the Second World War) and the beginning of the European integration processes, then even more specifically in the 1980s“ (O'Dowd, 1998)
- 1990s: Europe has undergone radical changes both in a socio-economic and political sense
  - consequently: several theories were created to explain the functions and effects of borders:
    - the borders of the European Union
    - the borders of the reborn Central and Eastern Europe



# Factors and events leading to the shift in focus of border researches in the nineties

- 1 the wall dividing East and West was demolished
- 2 the reinterpretation of the regional and ethnic identities
- 3 globalisation and the flow of capital, goods and information
-  4 distribution role of the electronic space
- 5 cross-border environmental hazards and damages
-  6 new sources of danger (increasing criminality rate, AIDS, etc.)



# Discussion

permeability of  
borders

globalisation

current focus of border researches in  
Europe





# Themes in present border research



- Cosmopolitanism, Globalisation and Europeanisation
- Migration, Mobilities and Refugees
- Citizenship and hos(ti)pitality
- Nationalism and Transnationalism
- Practices of Bordering, Ordering and Othering
- Perceptions and Representations of Borders
- Labour Market (im)mobility across Borders
- Borderscapes, Euregional and Cross-border Networks
- Post-Colonial borders



individual experts

research groups

regional research  
institutes

international  
organisations

universities

# Institutional framework

international scientific reviews



Centre for Border Region  
Studies, University of  
Southern Denmark  
(Sønderborg, Denmark)



Nijmegen Centre for Border  
Research, Radboud  
University  
(Nijmegen, Netherlands)



Centre for Cross-Border  
Studies (Armagh, Northern  
Ireland)



Centre for  
International Border  
Research at the  
Queen's University of  
Belfast (Belfast,  
Northern Ireland)



Peipsi  
Center for  
Transboundary  
Cooperation

Tartu, Estonia



Institute of Euroregional  
Studies (Oradea-Debrecen,  
Romania-Hungary)



# Economic geography and regional geography (Henk van Houtum: three theoretical trends)



## (1) flow approach

- follows the footprints of the classical economic geographers
- the physical movement („flow“) of the (economic) activities plays the central role

## (2) cross-border approach

- increasing rapidly since the early 1990s
- emphasis on co-operation: increasing interest in integration processes
- an obvious outcome of the accelerated integration endeavours and enlargement processes

## (3) people approach

- borders are not spatial phenomena but the attitude and behaviour of individuals and groups of individuals
- closely related to psychology, anthropology and sociology



# Flow approach




BACK

- 1940s and 1950s
  - borders approached from the aspect of their impacts on the economic activities
  - „State borders are barriers to the economic interactions“
  - „the border shrinks the area of the potential market“
  - Lösch, Boggs, Giersch
- „distance“ got an important role
  - the underdeveloped economic character of border regions was not necessarily the consequence of the geographical location - and although, these regions are usually in a peripheral situation but there are still some which can make an advantage from the proximity of the state border



# Cross-border co-operation approach



- „Europe without borders“ (O'Dowd and Wilson)
  - in this trend the limiting function of borders also gets a special role but here it is primarily treated as the barrier to the success of the flourishing integration and harmonisation processes
- the regional differences between the border regions are not accepted any longer and there are endeavours to create a social and economic balance (van Houtum, 2000)
- most of the researches analyse and interpret the regional policy of the studied border regions
  - look for strategies to generate the potential possibilities for cross-border relations, networks and integrations - hoping to overcome the limiting functions of borders

The studies mostly suggest that borders can be not only overcome but must be overcome so that a “Europe without borders” can be achieved.