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## **THE BORDERLAND OF CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPE AS A SPECIFIC AREA FOR PRACTICES AND IDENTITIES OF YOUTH**

*The article analyzes the identities of youth (high school graduates) of a borderland of Central and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Poland and Hungary) and provides us with the research of practices that contribute to this identity. Borderland of Central and Eastern Europe is a socio-cultural space that produces a certain identity and identificational practices since identity is always the product of complex relationships of the objective and subjective, external and internal. Results of our study show that the boundary area is the focus of certain identities (Ukraine - Poland – the dominance of regional and ethnic identity, Ukraine – Hungary – the domination of a strong tie with the family and civil identity). Youth of the Ukrainian borderland are convinced of the fact that the status of the border region has an impact on the daily lives, while young people beyond the border disagree with it. This influence is carried out through such "means of communication" as language skills, the presence of relatives and friends beyond the border, active cross-border migration etc.*

**Keywords:** borderland, identity, youth, border, school graduates, space.

Constant processes of globalization and transformation, accompanied by the rapid growth of cross-border flows of people, information, goods, capital, energy, impact of cross-border subjects in different fields of activity are increasingly attracting attention of scientists to the study of a border and its borderland. This perspective is substantially updating, compared to previous years. The increasing "transparency" of borders makes a borderland an active subject of international politics and – to a lesser extent – the core of complex processes of reformatting the territory and creation of new identities.

Researchers consider a border as a social construction, a mirror of social relations, a factor of identity formation (Бреский, 2008). Territorial tendencies gain more and more weight in the social development. This means that the identities formed on the territorial basis will become more significant. Under these conditions, regional and local identities begin to acquire meaningful significance for humans.

Nowadays a borderland is not only the contact zone among the inhabitants of the border area, between states and its nations, but it is also a special area of identities. A. Filippova notes that "the global nature of the current economic and political processes is the precondition of characteristics of modern borders which are getting less dependent on their location. In the period of

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globalization a border can no longer be regarded as a certain panacea that saves you from "evil" because physical boundaries less than it was before, provide protection against external dangers, and on the other hand they cannot prevent problems arising in the middle of the national territory" (Филиппова, 2010, p. 395).

In this case, problems of correlation between European, national, regional and local identities are actualized. Their deregulation leads to an imbalance of the individual with the social environment, which manifests itself in the reduction of social status, uncertainty of value orientations which especially concern young people, the value world of whom is in the process of formation.

The aim of the article is to study the identities and practices of young people (high school graduates) of the borderland of Central and Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Poland and Hungary).

In this study we presume that identity is the totality of the phenomenon of object or personality itself, its qualitative self-identity in the vector of time. The identity of the given individual is based on its self-consciousness (Євтух, 1997, p. 68). It is the result of personal and group identity, the foundation of which is a variety of psychological, geographical and socio-cultural aspects: traditional characteristics (patterns of behavior, racial, linguistic, psychological) and modern ones (products of socialization and politicization of the society and its individual groups) (Прибиткова, 2001, p. 60).

Within the context of socio-cultural approach, where socio-cultural environment is considered as a space of identities and identification practices, identity is not only a social phenomenon or a social product, but a more complicated socio-cultural form, in which personal, cultural and social components interact between each other. This means that identity is multidimensional by its nature. It can be connected with personal, cultural or social sources and at the same time with all of them. So in some cases we are dealing with mostly personal, cultural or social identities, and in others - with some integral identities that involve union of all of the components (Ручка, 2002, p. 11). R. Shulga in her work pays more attention to the second socio-cultural component – culture. He notes that "without a clear understanding of the specificity of culture, we cannot understand the essence of the processes taking place in the social sphere" (Шульга, 2002, p. 127). The researcher believes that this factor prevails in the process of identification: "If we consider the manifestations of identity and various kinds of identifications exactly in the socio-cultural space, so in our opinion, the main problem that deserves special attention is the understanding of the specificity of the flow of processes of in the living environment that, on the one hand undergoes radical social transformations, and on the other – is marked by considerable inertia in relation to changes in the cultural sphere " (Шульга, 2002, p. 127). The researcher considers a "socio-cultural" as a definition, where `the cultural` defines a value

discourse of 'the social'. Hence, socio-cultural environment is considered as a formation or space where constant processes of different identifications take place. Since a person aims to a comfortable existence in this space and wants his/her identity to be consistent with the norms and values consistent with the norms of the society, thus a person is always looking for the accordance of his/her own system of values to the values of the surrounding sociocultural environment (Шульга, 2002, p. 131). This is especially applied to the youth.

Thus identity is always the product of complex relationships of the objective and subjective, external and internal, hence a borderland serves as a socio-cultural environment that produces a certain identity and identificational practices.

The Polish scholar A. Kloskowska draws attention to the borderland as a special space. She notes that "life of the individual in terms of a borderland has a special sense. It has a double impact on the consciousness of the individual regarding his national determination: on the one hand, the situation of a borderline culture intensifies this consciousness and causes safety guidelines for an alien nationality and culture, or vice versa - strengthening various cultural influences, leads to their uncertain, complicated national self-identity or to the absence of any clear determination of the individual "(Kłoskowska, 1992, p. 139).

It is not necessarily to consider a borderland of neighboring cultures in terms of geographical and political senses. It can be regarded in terms of proximity or amalgamation of individuals of different ethnic identifications. Impacts of different cultures, at least their fragments should not be restricted only to the situation of the geopolitical borderland or status of ethnic minorities in a multicultural society. It can be the result of traveling, participation in various international movements and institutions, finally, the general cultural information broadcasted by media. This kind of cultural influences, of course, do not definitively lead to a radical change in an individual national identity - instead, may strengthen or weaken national self-determination of the individual and his identification with national culture (Бреский, 2008, p. 37). In this regard Ukrainian researcher G. Korzhov notes that: "On the territory of the borderland it is often observed the intense migration, amalgamation of different people and establishment of strong regional identities which push national identity into the background" (Коржов, 2010, p. 108).

Polish researcher Z. Jasiński notes that the sense of identity is stronger when more changes took place in the territorial affiliation of the borderland. At the borderland we are dealing with fewer cases of the nationality changes. Frequent changes of the state nationality may lead to a reluctance to define your identity (ethnic or national), while people are more willing to choose regional identity instead (Jasiński, 1997, p. 88-89).

K. Shestakova (Шестакoвa, 2005, p. 90) suggests to characterize existing contexts and perspectives of regional identity (as the border area is a part of some of those regions), thus similar to the typology of factors of ethnic identity a suggested division requires an integrated application of all components:

*Psychological perspective.* Its key element is a measure of personal identification with the region, its society and culture. This identification is often expressed by the willingness of altruistic actions in favor of the region.

*Sociological perspective.* It suggests the division on `we` and `they` and provides with the sense of disparity that operates in the public consciousness. In this perspective, regional identity is often manifested through the appeal to a small Fatherland by symbolic or real conflicts.

*Geographical perspective.* Main key of this perspective is the affiliation with the territory, precisely the place and space.

*Ethnographic perspective.* The most significant determinant of regional identity is clothes, customs, cultural heritage, awareness of meanings and symbols of material culture and its correlates. In sociolinguistic and linguistic perspective language, dialect, local or regional literature is its particular element.

*Historical perspective.* It is characterized by individual and collective link with the actions of the given region, its heroes and historical institutions. In describing and interpreting this important link it is necessary to apply the perspective of long duration (*la longue durée*). The term was introduced to the social sciences by famous French scholar Fernand Braudel.

*Economic perspective.* Particular importance attained in terms of market economy and social transformation. The global nature of economic cooperation, inflow of capital, ideas and examples weaken well-balanced shapes of identity, based on regional management.

*Urban-architectonic perspective.* It is primarily a question of national and traditional forms of construction, when in terms of globalization regional differences are erasing and becoming clear (for instant, in the case of modern spread of block buildings) (Шестакoвa, 2005, p. 90-91).

Regarding the future of the perspectives of locality and public identification researchers believe that local and regional identity inevitably disappear in the process of crystallization of public and ethnic consciousness. Instead empirical studies note a continuous growth of local identities, both in Poland and in Ukraine. M. Schepansky even argues that regional identity is the most significant to the borderline space. Describing it as a regional identity the author foremost connects it with individual and social (collective) or cultural identities (Шестакoвa, 2005, p. 92).

The empirical basis of the analysis are the results of the international survey "Youth on the border of Central and Eastern Europe" (detailed analysis of the methodology and research methods are presented in the introductory of the given article). Spatial boundaries of the the research object included the

following towns in Ukraine: Drohobych, Uzhgorod and Kharkiv, in Hungary - Nyiregyhaza, in Poland – Rzeszów, Przemyśl and Zielona Góra.

Results of the study were quite controversial. It should be noted that from the side of Ukraine quite different borderline spaces were chosen. Although the town of Drohobych and Uzhgorod representing the "old" western border area of Ukraine, but they considerably vary among itself. Drohobych is a part of the bio-cultural borderland, while Uzhgorod is the center and crossroads of multiculturalism. On the other hand, Kharkov presents the eastern borderland of Ukraine. Among the objectives of the study was to reveal the identities of young people of the border area. Results of the survey to the question "How much do you feel the relationship with these communities?" were obtained in the form of an index (a scale within 1 - 4 points, the highest score points a greater link with the given community).

According to the data obtained school graduates of the town Drohobych strongly feel a connection with their ethnic group and its region, respectively 3.6 and 3.5 point according to the scale. Youth of Uzhgorod indicated only a weak relationship with the citizens of their country and family, respectively 2.7 points, the rest - within 1 point, which shows a complete lack of connection with other communities. In 2010 the Department of Sociology of the Institute of Sociology, Psychology and Social Communication of the National Pedagogical University behalf of M.P. Dragomanov conducted a study of the western borderland of Ukraine which included Lviv, Ivano-Frankivsk, Chernivtsi and Transcarpathian region and revealed that ethnic identity remains secondary among youth, while regional identity is a predominant one (Гвоздецька, 2011).

Representatives of the eastern borderland (Kharkiv) noted a close relationship with their family, respectively 3.7 points and a weak connection with their city - 2.7 points respectively. Youth of the borderland of Hungary (Nyíregyháza) feels a strong connection with its family - 4 points respectively and a strong relationship with Europe - 3.4 points, public and ethnic identity - 3.2 points. Polish youth noted a very strong relationship with its region - 4.1 points and with its district - 3.9 points (Rzeszow) and 3.1 points (Zielona Gora); a strong connection also with Europe and ethnic group - 3.8 points (see. Table. 1).

Results of the study revealed that the youth identities are related to the borderland within the scopes of which they are formed. Thus we observe the dominance of regional identity on the border of Ukraine - Poland, the dominance of a strong connection with the family and public identity on the border of Ukraine - Hungary. It was important to find out the opinion of young people, high school graduates whether the status of the border region affects their lives and through which kind of practices it is carried out.

Table 1. Distribution of answers to the question "How much do you feel the connection with the given communities?" (in points)

	Ukraine			Hungary	Poland	
	Drohobych	Kharkiv	Uzhgorod	Nyíregyháza	Rzeszow	Zielona Gora
Citizens of their country	2,6	2,4	<b>2,7</b>	<b>3,2</b>	3,3	2,4
Family	1,6	<b>3,7</b>	<b>2,7</b>	<b>4,0</b>	2,4	1,4
City (village) in which you live	2,8	<b>2,7</b>	1,5	2,8	3,2	2,3
Their region	<b>3,2</b>	2,3	1,1	2,6	<b>4,1</b>	<b>2,9</b>
Their district	<b>3,5</b>	2,2	1,8	2,6	<b>3,9</b>	<b>3,1</b>
Europe	<b>3,4</b>	1,8	0,9	<b>3,4</b>	<b>3,8</b>	<b>2,9</b>
Their ethnic group	<b>3,6</b>	2,1	1,0	<b>3,2</b>	<b>3,8</b>	2,7

Any state border has natural, geometric and ethnographic characteristics. If we take into consideration the Ukrainian national and state history, it is worth noting the features of the western border of the country. According to A. Gumenyuk: "On the one hand, the official western border is often considered as the boundary of the eastern civilization in cultural, religious, political and legal terms. On the other hand, it rather combines than separates residents of the borderland who have a similar history, relatively young statehood and similar civilization experience. In the 1990s, these communities started a process of exclusion of a socialist world with its organizational, political and industrial structures" (Гуменюк, 2003, p. 60).

Based on the above, we can say that the integrity of our country and not only of our country and its future development depends to some extent on the socio-demographic group which will play a leading role in social processes. Young people possessing high intellectual potential, the ability to see the future in new paradigms, characterized by its mobility and flexibility, can influence the public process and determine the future trajectory of social development.

Researchers arise an important question whether young people are ready to perform an important function in the development of their state under the influence of the atmosphere and everyday practices of which their personality and values are forming. This is particularly true on the territory of the borderland where the formation of a young person can be influenced by the outlook and customs of the neighboring country. The results showed that most respondents of the youth of Uzhgorod (36,8%) and Drohobych (23,7%) believe that their status of the borderland has an strong impact on their lives. Most part of young people of the Ukrainian towns Kharkov (31,8%) and Drohobych (26,5%) and the Hungarian town Nyiregyhaza (29,5%) indicated the position of "in some cases affect, in some - not". Most young people beyond the border

indicated that the borderline status does not affect their lives. The youth of Rzeszow (24,5%) and Zielona Gora (24.1%) follow the views that this status does not likely affect their lives, while the youth of Nyíregyháza (24,5%) indicated that it does not affect their lives at all (Table. 2).

Thus, Ukrainian youth is mostly convinced of the fact that the borderland has an impact on their lives, while young people beyond the border believe that such influence is insignificant.

Table 2. Impact of the borderland status on the life of youth (%)

	Ukraine			Hungary	Poland	
	Drohobych	Kharkiv	Uzhgorod	Nyíregyháza	Rzeszow	Zielona Gora
Yes, it influences	23,7	13,3	36,8	10,9	10,2	18,2
Likely influences	11,7	12,6	14,3	11,1	17,3	15,2
In some case influences, in some -not	26,5	31,8	27,6	29,5	23,5	21,4
Likely does not have any influence	17,3	16,6	8,8	22,6	24,5	24,1
Does not influence at all	16,3	22,4	7,9	24,5	21,8	18,5

We tried to find out which kinds of practices could connect the youth of the borderland with the neighboring countries or influence it. Picture 1 presents which kinds of practices were singled out by the half of the respondents, namely language knowledge of the neighboring country – Kharkiv (81,8%), Zielona Gora (62,5%), Drohobych (60,2%); relatives living abroad – Zielona Gora (70,2%), Kharkiv (62,4%), Drohobych (56,1%), Uzhgorod (55,8%); friends living abroad – Kharkiv (51,6%), Nyiregyhaza (50,1%), Zielona Gora (49,1%). The smallest percentage was indicated to such positions as: "your parents work in a neighboring country", "celebration of holidays in the neighboring country", "frequent visitors of the neighboring country", "planning to study in the neighboring country".

So generally, our results indicated that the borderlands are the focus of the specific identities of young people. It can be seen from the borderline space of Ukraine - Poland, namely the dominance of regional (Drohobych – 3,5; Rzeszow – 4,1) and ethnic identity (Drohobych – 3,6; Rzeszow – 3,8), Ukraine – Hungary - the dominance of so called `strong connection with the family` (Nyiregyhaza – 4,0; Uzhgorod – 2,7) and public identity (Nyiregyhaza – 3,2; Uzhgorod – 2,7).

Unfortunately, the events that are now taking place between Ukraine and the Russian Federation, made it impossible to include in the research the study

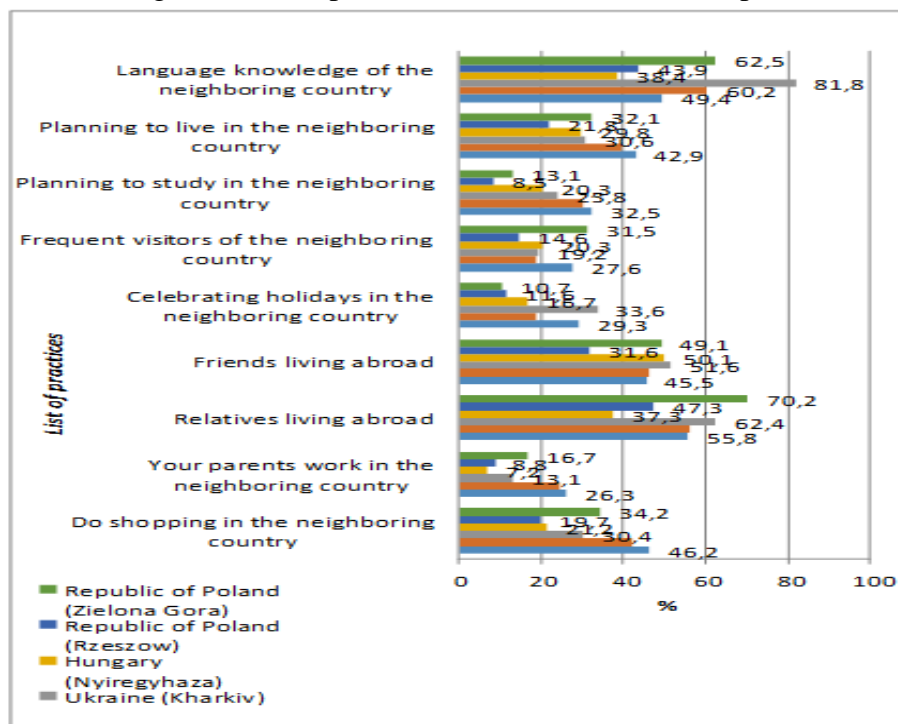
of the borderland of the Russian Federation which in some case made a significant gap in the borderland of Ukraine – the Russian Federation. The youth of Kharkov was distinguished by a strong connection with the family and local identity. Young people of the neighboring countries beyond the border marked a strong link with a non-national identity - European, what concerns Ukrainian borderland, only the youth of Drohobych pointed this kind of connection.

Reserchers indicated a clear difference of opinions of young people concerning the impact of a borderland territory on their lives. Answers of the young respondents of the borderline part of Ukraine indicate that the cross-border nature of the region at the level of everyday life greatly affects their lives. But the youth of the borderland of Hungary and Poland noted that the border character of the region does not affect their lives at all.

Main practices which show the connection of young people with the neighboring countries are language knowledge of the neighboring country, relatives and friends living abroad. Looking at the Figure 1, we can see that the responds of Ukrainian young people are characterized by a more likely tendency to active practices.

Events which nowadays are taking place on the territory of Ukraine is an evidence that the issue of the borderline impact on youth is extremely relevant and important because it can have both positive and negative effects on the formation of the outlook of young people. Therefore, we should take into account the importance of cross-border position in the further formation of identity and values of young people living on the borderland of cultures.

Figure.1 Youth practices within the borderline space





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