

ABSTRACT

Key concepts: Urziceni/Csanálos, Vállaj, Swabians, boundery, border, frontier, borderland, borderlanders, border culture, border identity, alienated borderlands, co-existent borderlands, integrated borderlands, ethnic identity, naratives.

The study aimed to describe and explain the decisive aspects of the appearance and presence of borders, aspects that occur at the intersection of living and lifestyle of the population. My goal was to detect the social, economic, political and identity changes caused by the appearance of the border. The analysis revealed that action was the interaction, since the local communities influenced the boundary although at a smaller scale. Habitat changes of the local people resulted immediate social reaction on one hand, while developing long-term strategies the intention of acceptance and conflict avoidance was decisive (Keszeg 2004: 43).

My approach concerning the problem of border was that myself was trying to cross borders, namely the boundaries between the various social sciences dealing with the problem of border. My goal during my research was to give integrating responses to the diverse frontier research problems through detailed analysis of the selected terrain characteristics. The political boundaries projected on the map, and its – displayed around – effects on the geographical environment of the defined areas, calls attention to the border regions and border areas of research created by the political boundaries of (Martínez 1994). The political boundaries are exclusive by nature, but they generate rules concentrated in a geographically defined area (Hastings – Wilson in 1999, Carter in 2004, Parker 2006), in this context, the possibilities and conditions of crossing the borders become a key factor (Simmel 1909; Böröcz 2002).

In the study of symbolic and mental limits the territorially defined boundaries still can be found, at least as a reference point, a comparative basis (Barth 1969; Cohen 1985; Jeggle 1994). I wanted to synthesize the various methods of disciplines regarding border research through the study of contact history of Csanálos and Vállaj, the cultural development of mentality and value systems of the people living in the border zone. The political boundaries can be examined and assessed at the level of a nation-state, but only people living by its borders can give answers about its real and mental dimensions measured at the level of everyday life and the consequences of its presence. My research is based mostly on Bradley Parker's multilevel (geopolitical) border notion (Parker 2006: 77). I tried to adapt this notion to the tested area, but I completed it with problems laid down in research on symbolic and mental borders. Geographical location of my research was limited a narrow strip of Hungarian-Romanian border. I wanted to carried out a complex analysis of this border. I tried to achieve my objectives by the writing several aspects of the "story" of the border, keeping in mind the major categories border and the border region according to Parker's border situations.

I tried to answer the question that the identity of ethnic groups divided by boundaries - in our case Germans (Schwabs) of Csanálos and Vállaj - has experienced modification that clearly was forced upon them due to new borders. By reading the literature I assumed that short-term border constraint can not significantly influence the sense of national identity, just the opposite occurs, national feeling becomes stronger among groups that become minorities. In the course of my research and analysis I tried to trace the events, political, social and economic driving forces which could have an impact on the alleged identity changes of the two communities. The starting point of

my analysis was the territorial determination, which according to a number of researchers is also relevant to the Schwabs in Satu Mare (Bindorffer 2001: 76).

My presupposition was that the appearance of borders generated the feeling of exclusion and isolation among both communities. By examining the contact history of the two settlements I tried to find answers as to how they perceived the new situation: were there attempts to soften the consequences, and in what form they tried to increase permeability of the border. Furthermore, I wanted to learn more about what forms of voluntary, forced and community initiations were introduced in the past ninety years.

During the research I tried to find the events, turning points, which elicited the cultural, cognitive estrangement of the two villages, social, and of course, those efforts which focused on resolving or softening these factors. The residents of the two settlements by their means always tried to actively influence their destiny, and they did not managed then they tried effectively to adapt to the new framework. In the meantime, they did not loose their relations with the other side of the border; they tried to maintain it by the available legal and illegal methods.

In the section of 'Border narratives' I intended to examine local attitudes and strategies regarding to border that appeared after World War II and suffered many modifications. A variety of events related to personal experience about the border produced different types of narratives. Their large number proved my assumption that the lives of the residents of the two villages have been influenced by the border significantly up until now. The border does not appear as some external factor in the everyday life of the local people, but as an integral part, it is the starting point of the context of many actions and behavior.

In the course of the research I tried to map the contacts points and relations of the settlements on both sides of the border, Csanálos and Vállaj, from the creation of the border up till now. I tried to examine local people's relationship to the border by studying memoirs, narratives and archival material. During the research one can find separate narrative sets reflecting attitudes of different generations towards the border. While for the oldest generation border clearly has negative connotation, the synonym of loss, for the younger generation it is mostly a neutral category presenting some possibilities. The middle generations fluctuate between these two, they are the ones who directly experienced the limiting impact of the border, and their parents, grandparents, strongly influenced them by their narrative of loss. However, the resumption of ties was possible through them. Reclaiming and raising family relationships to a higher level of, however, did not happen at a community level, individual decisions and strategies are operating them. In contrast, reviving attempts of economic and cultural ties were successful, the local municipality offices set up a regional network of local Schwabs, by which they successfully competed for EU funds on several occasions.

The research results can be summarized in the following thesis:

- 1) In 1920, under the Treaty of Trianon a superimposed type of boundary was set up between Csanálos and Vállaj, which would affect the development of the intrinsically intertwined social networks – typically operated through kinship systems – of residents of the two settlements in a crucial way. The presence of a century-old border caused a progressive debilitating of the kinship systems.

- 2) As a result of border the mentality of people living in two settlements has changed. In fact, the context defined by the new government framework caused the division, the border as an

institutions of flow could not provide the level of information exchange between the two sides that would compensate the external forces. As they started weakening in 1990s, a process of leveling started. However it caused not the reorganization of former relationships, but mostly manifested in the development of institutional relationships.

3) Due to their Schwab origin, residents of the two villages very soon, at the time of the appearance of the border, found themselves in the crossfire of political games driven by powerful interests. The Schwab identity until the 1989 collapse of socialist system faced various challenges, so it followed a different development. It resulted large German emigration in Csanáros, and increased assimilation in Vállaj. After collapse of socialist system ethnic processes became uniform. Schwab identity nowadays is represented almost equally in the two villages.

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