

Wolfgang Berg (Ed.)

Transcultural Areas

CROSSCULTURE

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CrossCulture

Edited by

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CrossCulture is committed to a new understanding of culture: individuals or communities do have in common a particular set of cultural items, but other sets of rules and tools differ. There are no cultures which have borders like territories or states. Cultural change can thus be explained as cultural exchange.

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Transculturality

Wolfgang Berg

Up to date, not only in popular scientific discourses, people deal with “cultures” as if they are congruent with states/countries. Hence it seems to be clear that in Germany it is German culture what people practice and visitors can expect to experience. All over the world the nation states had claimed to be the political organization of one nation. And there are still national movements which pretend to save the national culture. Even if the nation is defined in terms of values and visions (liberty, equality, solidarity) or as a kind of “patriotism of constitution” like in Germany of today, culture is defined within the borders of the state. This is correct as far as the political system is the product of particular traditions and values respectively the basic rules are constitutive and implementing the political system: The political culture can be congruent with the territory on which it is executed. As soon as, however, the corresponding values and attitudes are neither restricted to people living within these borders nor in the same way relevant for and shared by all citizens of this state, even the political culture is not to be determined in terms of space and territory.

Actually modern states acknowledge, even appreciate the fact that they build a system which governs a multicultural society and includes different “cultures”, which can even reach beyond the borders of the state. Nevertheless it is a wide spread idea that culture is like a box or container which has borders and is something homogenous. Among others it is Welsch (1995) who has criticized this “culturalist” approach, which is also entailed in all multi-cultural and inter-cultural concepts, as they are highlighting the co-existence of cultures respectively relationships between them, thus claiming perpetually their distinct and homogenous character.

Transculturality, as Welsch has suggested, protects to overcome that view and thus became popular and even fashionable. His terminology, however, does not really solve the problem, either. There still remain the boxes or containers, even though they are heterogeneous, open and linked with each other.

Rules and Tools

In contrary to that we define culture as a multilayered system of rules (meanings, values, views, habits) and things (products, tools) people apply or use in daily life. Mostly people take all the rules and tools for granted, as natural, self-evident; people share these cultural items with others, and because of that all kinds of actions, including communication, do succeed – in general.

According to its social context each cultural item has a particular range. Individuals learn and share those rules and exchange those things with other people at any time as it is the premise and the result of communication and cooperation. Each community can be described as a group of persons who share various rules and tools with people in their surrounding, but there are also a few particular rules and tools this community has in common exclusively.

From a theoretical point of view the idea of an “entire, closed culture” is an exceptional case. Even if people living at one place share basic items, e.g. the way to produce food, with another community, they have not necessarily the same way to prepare this food, not to speak about other items like initiation rites or languages. It is evident that people are working out rules and tools in daily practice, in the long run, more unconsciously than explicitly, sometimes systematically (see legislation, institutional guidelines). In the same time one cultural item connects them with all other people who are involved, but makes a difference to others.

Cultural Items

Transculturality is a useful and fruitful concept if we approach to cultural items, i.e. rules and tools, with an empirical interest. We will found out that a particular item has its particular range. In former German “Volkskunde” it would have been called “Kulturkreis”: the area one item is well known, in practice or valid. A map might depict where this rule or that tool is in force or in use.

Of course, the size of the mapping depends on which item is in the focus. So, to give two examples, Christians all over the world celebrate the baptism of a new borne child, but there are some communities (within the Christian world) which accept the christening of adults only. From time to time, particular movements within the protestant church proclaimed a crusade against the consumption (purchasing, selling, and production) of alcohol, succeeding in its prohibition. Whereas those movements have remained Christian subcultures, they have targets and means in common with most of the Islamic communities.

There is a particular way bag-pipes are produced and used in Scotland or Ireland, but instruments like gaita, dudelsack, cornemuse, zampogna, mitsui etc., which are in use in Spain, Bulgaria, Germany, Italy or Tunisia, have the same structure, namely a sort of bellows and a wooden mouthpiece. But, of course,

focusing on particular elements like the number of the pipes or some blowing techniques, one might draw maps which depict those differences. An ethnologic approach would not hesitate to construct a “bag-pipe culture” (Celtic heritage, young men tending goats and sheep, etc.), but from the transculturalist point of view this is neither necessary nor possible. There are so many other items including the sound and texts, the dances, etc., but also the circumstances and contexts of performing bag-pipe music, leading to the diversity of social and economical conditions, under which the herdsmen or pipers are living.

Thus the maps of two different items, be it a particular dialect or a particular understanding of “time”, may overlap partly, but necessarily they do not totally. As far as two persons share the rules, e.g. of being “punctual”, they would – in old theories of culture – have been told to “belong to the same culture”. But again, there are so many other features, cultural items as we say, they do not share. Whenever, for instance, people do not estimate the same food, they do belong to “two different cultures”? To avoid an inflation of “cultures” (from Pizza- to Sushi culture) we formulate it as follows:

If actors share one particular rule, they are culturally equal, with respect to one and only one item. They might have the same taste, or the same way of life, or the same understanding of civil engagement etc...but rarely with regard to all these items.

Hence culture is not a “thing” (box, container), but an aspect. We do not use “culture” as a noun, but as an adjective/adverb. People share cultural items, human action can be explained culturally (not only in terms of socio-economic status).

Whenever actors come together, they share more or less a set of rules. That makes communication and cooperation easy. There are, of course, plenty of rules they do not share – which might be irrelevant in the given situation and thus do not disturb the interaction.

Ranges, no Borders

It is again due to the deeply rooted idea of the nation state as “one culture”, that people expect to enter another culture, when they cross a border, be it as tourists, be it as migrants. They just might be confronted with a couple of rules they do not know and they do not share. Many scholars, politicians, journalists and even the protagonists themselves use to describe the situation of immigrants as something like “living between two cultures”. Instead of thinking in distinct categories (boxes), people would rather realize items which differ, and realize at the same time the huge stocks of rules and tools, which are in common. Immigrants do not sit between the chairs; they have got a big sofa.

Many young people, wherever they grow up, have to cope with the problem that parents do not want to lose the control over them (and are suspicious about new friends and peers in general). In most societies children have to struggle in order to win control over their life and become independent. It is a widespread rule, too, that parents are respected; and thus it is not only the 20 year old son of a Turkish family who is reluctant or feeling uneasy to smoke a cigarette at home, in front of his father... In many families, with origins in Anatolia, youth might be expected to kiss the hands of old relatives. But everywhere young people have to make a decision whether they obey traditional rules or opt out like other peers (with or without migration background).

Transcultural Personalities

Living and acting in a postmodern society and globalised world all people, young people especially, have to cope with the variety and diversity of items they get in touch with. Identity becomes more than ever a construction which brings cultural items together, which are practiced in different contexts. Individuals have to find a set of cultural items which give sense to their life and appear to be – for the moment at least – cohesive. Individuality is just the unique combination of those items. As we know (not only young) people are mostly able to manage that “identity work” and combine and even unite rules and things which have different sources, which – as we would say traditionally – stem from different “cultures”. Even fundamentalists, for instance, are ready to use modern information technologies, even career oriented technological elites might refer to esoteric or romantic privacy.

Short term mobility like tourism and long term sojourns “abroad” like migration include encounters with other people and, as far as it leads to any interaction, the confrontation with more or less rules different to the own repertoire. The pool of common rules can be full even if the protagonists used to live in different countries. Young academics from a city in South Germany do interact with students from Ireland more easily than with an old fisherman in the North of Germany; they have a common language, knowledge, tools (for instance i-phones), interests (career). Insofar international or – in the old terminology – intercultural encounters are not necessarily difficult.

But, again, it is not to be neglected, that moving to another place, crossing the border of a state, might be a challenge. Not because of different cultural items (as most of them do not change exactly at the border), but because of the expectations which are traditionally linked with that. There is a kind of knowledge (be it true or not) people do have with regard to other people. Sometimes they use their knowledge about cultural items (e.g. the traditional food like cabbage or spaghetti) to make conclusions about the entire population

of a territory, nicknaming them “Krauts” or spaghetti-eaters, for instance. Again, it is about boxes or containers, and a too short, wrong table of contents.

Transculturality is a concept which allows us to describe the personality, in particular the personal growth, of people, who are mobile and have to cope with cultural items they have not experienced before. On the basis of biographies and also autobiographies, in particular cases also by considering the oeuvre (painting, novel, film, etc.), it is to be reconstructed how various protagonists integrate differing cultural items into their personality. Insofar “Exploring Transculturalism” is based on “A biographical approach” (s. Berg/Eigeartaigh 2010).

Areas

Not less fruitful appears to be the concept of transculturalism with regard to areas, places. Quite similar with personalities, each area can be “spelt” or “read” as an ensemble of cultural items, a sort of list or catalogue. Each item connects this area with other places, but not all items just with one and the same place only. The maps, drawn for each item, are differing in size and range, they are not congruent. Each item connects this particular place with particular places elsewhere. Transcultural areas are places where different cultural “influences” are merging.

Like the biographical approach, determined by the integrity and identity of a human being, the areas of consideration need to have a point of reference. We have the size of the map already in mind, and fill in the diversity of items then.

Towns

The reference is a type of settlements, villages, towns, cities which are defined as one “place” by the inhabitants and, often enough, by a formal act (foundation, promotion as a market or capital). Hence, given a piece of territory, with well defined borders (in former times: walls), it is to find out which cultural items are common to all inhabitants, which only to parts of them, and in any case with whom else these items are shared.

Methodologically spoken there are two approaches; the first one is diachronic and follows the chronology: We look for all things which have been brought in and remained, which can still be observed. We identify the changes in terms of “internal developments” or “influences” and “contributions”.

The second approach is synchronic, considering the area today (or at a former period of time): We try to “read” a town, i.e. to observe the daily life, the infrastructure, and the buildings in order to identify them as manifestations of cultural diversity.

Tourist guides practice both approaches. They give the visitors an idea of the “history”, i.e. which actors have had power and influence on the urban development. And the guides like also to explain the architectural style of the important buildings, thus talking about baroque churches or buildings which (dis)appeared because of the industrialization. The importance of Italian architects, be it Quarenghi in St. Petersburg, Tencalla in Vilnius, Morando in Zamosc, is obvious.

The city of Pécs, European capital of culture 2010, invites visitors or observers to have one view on the cathedral, the mosque and the synagogue in the same moment.

Transcultural areas are for instance cities like Buenos Aires (s. chapter 2) or Riga (s. Chapter 3).

Border Regions

Transculturality needs a point of reference: What does qualify a territory as one area? Unlike the settlements/towns/cities there are territories, which by definition build no area, but – for political reasons – are actually defined to be separated; the state borders constitute the sovereignty of the national states.

It is only the opposite political interest or the particular interest of the researcher, to bring things together: to show that on both sides of a border / demarcation people live their lives in not so different ways.

This is, for instance, true for Schleswig where the German minority lives in the South of Denmark and the Danish in the North of Germany. This is true for the Bohemian-Bavarian border region; interestingly enough, quite recently an exposition intended to give evidence for the commonalities on both sides of the Czech-German border (Riepertinger et.al.2007). Neighborhood is an opportunity, but no guarantee, that exchange and thus transcultural processes take place. The political reality, however, shows us, that the construction of regions remains weak, if the actors, in Northern Ireland prominently, are not ready to overcome historical boundaries (Chapter 4).

In this case, and not minor on the case of Bukovynia (Chapter 6), politics succeeds to oppress transculturality to some degree and for a particular period of time.

Chapter 5, however, demonstrates how Podlachia, the region in the very Northeast of Poland, is officially and practically an area where different cultural items intermingle.

Sea and Rivers

The third approach to transcultural areas is highlighting the fact that a sort of “natural” link leads to cultural exchange and thus, beside cultural differences

which exist for other reasons, constitutes plenty of commonalities. The famous work of Fernand Braudel about the Mediterranean area has been far from claiming “one culture”, but has given evidence to many cultural items (particularly in agriculture) which are practiced in North Africa as well as in Italy or Greece (Braudel 1985). Quite recently the Black Sea has been presented as an area, which is connected by cultural exchange between ethnically diverse actors (Raabe/Sznaiderman 2009). A rich research has been made about the Baltic Sea (in German: Ostsee), particularly in the context of the Hansa (s. Chapter 6).

Even more important appears to be the role played by the rivers. In Chapter 7 will be demonstrated that rivers do enhance communication and exchange along the course, but not less across, between the banks. Chapter 8 is dedicated to the river Neman which also gives name to a Euro-region involving territories in Lithuania, Belarus and Poland. The river connects people who speak different languages and are members of different churches (mostly Orthodox or Roman-catholic Christians). The lower reaches of Neman used to be, over centuries, a transcultural area, too, called “Memelland”.

Political systems (states) used to define natural facts like mountains or rivers as natural “borders”, just in order to demonstrate the exclusive claim of power over the territory. If the “borders” are open, social life and cultural exchange go across the river without any problem. Chapter 9 gives evidence for a river which connects communities in Finland and Sweden.

Roads

Beside the waterways (rivers) there are real roads which can be identified as transcultural areas in a double sense: as the basis for mobility of persons, ideas and things, and thus cultural exchange, but also as an area where people communicate with each other due to commonalities, in spite of many differing items.

Trade is a system which serves common (economic) interests, and which neglects or blends out (religious, political etc.) differences. It should be mentioned that the famous Silk Road as well as the Amber Road entailed more than one marked route, meandering according to the given conditions (climate, conflicts etc.). The Council of Europe has developed a particular program to document and vitalize “cultural routes – in order to promote the European identity in its unity and diversity”, to highlight “the links which unite its various cultures and regions” (Council of Europe).

Due to these political ambitions the reconstruction is also a construction: It creates a common sense which the historical actors have not had in mind at all.

This might be different for the Route of Romanic, as it collects all churches built according to the state of the art and belief in those times.

In the last decade one route has amazingly regained popularity: the Camino de Santiago. The Camino has all features of a transcultural area: The actors – from which countries, in which age, what gender, from what social shift ever they are – acknowledge the basic rules of a pilgrimage as a means of personal growth, more or less motivated and ambitious by their belief, following the symbol of St. Jacob's shell, whether they walk 20 or 400 km until they arrive in Santiago de Compostela. The Camino attracts (young) people not least because it provides the pilgrims with a sort of commonality which goes beyond all (other) borders.

Media and Global Products

What had been roads or rivers, nowadays is replaced or at least accomplished by the media, in particular the web 2.0. People all over the world (though in rich countries more than in poor ones) use the information technologies, the same tools, regardless which religion or political group they belong to. The term “glocalisation” expresses quite clearly the tension between global issues and domestic conditions: that is a transcultural process par excellence.

Defining culture as a set of rules (values, norms) and tools (things and the way of using them), changes are included for a given individual as well as a community, and of course changes are to be stated for any society (in the framework of political borders, nation states). No doubt, new technologies like fax, email or SMS, the mobile phone (called “handy” in German language!) have changed rules of communication; or to be more precise: people who make use of those technologies cannot but change the way they behave and expect others to react, thus establishing new rules. People do not make any appointments in the long run, or if so, like to modify or confirm or concretize it by mobile phone even a few minutes before.

Actually it is the technological change and innovation which, because they change daily life within years, even months, can be witnessed and recognized easily by everybody, contemporary of us. In former centuries societal life has not changed less fundamentally, maybe not so rapidly, because of the invention or introduction of new products or ways of production. It is not possible to open the huge field of cultural history here. Under transcultural aspects, however, it is important to take into consideration, how – just to focus on food/beverages – tea, sugar (cane), potatoes, coffee, cocoa, oranges, bananas and other products from abroad have changed the “taste” (rules about what is tasty, delicious, healthy etc) of Europeans in the last centuries – and to a certain degree have also equalized it. The (then) exotic goods have been integrated in local customs and – as far as

possible – also local production (e.g. sugar beet). The importation of cocoa butter had enabled wealthy people to enjoy “hot chocolate”, nowadays mild based chocolate is a mass product, available in every supermarket: it is part of our way of life, a commonality which share people everywhere regardless which other daily routines they live at their place.

This volume invites the reader to take part at a process which offers a new view on things we deem to be familiar with: to become aware of rules and tools, which connect us with other people when we enjoy cultural diversity.

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Buenos Aires

Claudia Messina

“(…) A mí se me hace cuento que empezó Buenos Aires, la juzgo tan eterna como el agua y el aire”.

“For me it is a tale that Buenos Aires has started, I judge it as eternal as water and air” Jorge Luis Borges (extract from the poem “Mythical foundation of Buenos Aires”, in Buenos Aires Fever, 1923 – Spanish edition)

Robins (2008) indicates that there were two big migration movements towards the European continent: the first one in the 1950s, and now we witness the second one at the beginning of the 21st Century. In fact as this author and others have pointed out, transnational migrations create challenges to the social and cultural organization of the place of reception. Challenges not only from the Governmental policies’ point of view that allow to receive those who are coming, and at the same time “preserve” or keep a certain order of the things that gives stability and security to the natives and to the new citizens, but also challenges at a more personal level point of view, at the level of daily contact and communication processes among the different people, between the people from the place of reception or those who have been already living there for a long time, and those who have just immigrated.

Along the history of migration movements and from the anthropological and sociological point of view, it has been studied the phenomenon that occurs when people coming from different countries share a common vital space. It has been pointed out then about the process of “acculturation”, showing the intention of domination of one culture against the other one (Gordon, 1964); “inculturation” or “enculturation”, related mainly to or originated around religious or ecclesiastic areas (Mujica Bermúdez, 2001); “multiculturality”, as the opposite term to “monoculturality”, pointing out that different cultures share a same social space, with mutual toleration (Welsch, 1999); and, finally, “interculturality”, not always very well defined nor distinguished from the previous concept of multiculturality. In principle, one of the distinctions establishes the multiculturalism as the term that shows the coexistence of different cultures at a same space but without any kind of exchange among them; while with the term ‘interculturality’ we step a bit forward by stating that they not only

share a same space but there is also a critical interaction that enables the mutual enrichment of the cultures (Gómez Lara, 2004).

There is also another concept within the field of Social Sciences to refer to this phenomenon; this concept is “transculturality”. Although some authors propose it as a new one (Robins, op. cit.), Miampika (2003) points out, however, that this notion is the result of the investigation work of the Cuban researcher Fernando Ortiz (1881-1969), who introduces this term in a book published in 1940, by a study of the history of two typically Cuban products: tobacco and sugar.

It is defined by Ortiz himself as follows:

“The word transculturation expresses better the different phases of the transitive process from one culture to the other, because this doesn’t consist only in acquiring a different culture, that it is what strictly indicates the Anglo-American term acculturation, but the process that also implies necessarily the lost or the feeling of being uprooted from the previous culture, what can be mentioned as a partial deculturation, and it also means the consequent creation of new cultural phenomenon that could be called of neoculturation. At last, ... in every cultural embrace happens what it happens with the genetic copulation of individuals: the creature has always something from both parents, but it is also always something different from each of them both. As a whole, the process is a transculturation, and this term includes all phases of its parabola. (1940, p.142, quoted by Miampika)

The introduction of this term moves us from the “old” (Europe) to the “new world” (Cuba, in this case), making us also to look back and reminds us that the migratory phenomenon did constitute the identity of the countries of this Continent. From the “adventure” of an *Italian* sailor financed in 1492 by *Spanish Kings* (a “transcultural” phenomenon?) to the mid 20th century, the countries of the new Continent have received millions of people from very different parts of the world, contributing, through a transcultural process to the creation of new identities. These identities are the result of the syncretism of the diverse contributions that each of the cultures of the “ones who arrived” to these lands not only *brought* with the intention to establish links and communicate with the natives, but also *elaborated* from the moment of the encounter.

The History of Buenos Aires

Among the capital cities of these new lands, one of them, Buenos Aires, has been always characterized with an analogy, the expression “*crisol de razas*” (“melting pot” in English). This concept is completely the opposite of “*mosaico de razas*” (patchwork of races), that are closer to what we have already said about “multiculturalism”.

The city of Buenos Aires has been founded twice: the first attempt was done by D. Pedro de Mendoza in 1536, but he was killed by the natives; the second and final attempt corresponds to Juan de Garay in 1580. Buenos Aires, at both moments, was part of one of the Viceroyalties that Spain had in the Continent, more precisely to the one of Perú. But in 1776 Spain created a new Viceroyalty, the Río de la Plata, and its capital city was Buenos Aires. As a result of the Napoleonic Wars, conflict between the British Empire and France, the English invaded it twice, too: the first time in 1806, and for some days it was under its sovereignty, and the second time they tried but were rejected by the population one year later, in 1807. The resistance and participation of the people were crucial at these two attempts of conquest, and it is said that this fact added to the difficult situation of Spain, invaded by France, and the arrival of “liberal” ideas, were the ground that gave place to the revolution in 1810 and the creation of the first native Government. In 1816 the final declaration of independence from Spain took place. And Buenos Aires was born as the capital city of the Federal Republic of Argentina (Luna, 1997)

Argentina, and particularly Buenos Aires, had an unusual concentration of mix and cross among the three main ethnic groups: European, Indigenous and African, as well as the tens particular ethnic groups that make up these branches, namely Italians, Spaniards, Germans, Poles, Jews, Mapuches, Diaguitas, Collas, Guaraníes (the last four ones are Indigenous peoples from South America), Bantúes, Yorubas (ethnic groups of Africa). The main migratory waves towards Buenos Aires during the colonial period (18th and 19th Centuries) seem to become integrated mainly by male immigrants who “mix” themselves with women of Indigenous and African ancestries.

We cannot talk about demography in Buenos Aires without referring specially to the Jews who came from different parts of the world. The Jewish Community in Argentina is the biggest of Latin America. In 2005 there were in Buenos Aires 233.000 Jewish. But they started to come very early to this land; escaping from the Inquisition in the 15th Century from Spain, Portugal and the North of Africa. And then also they went away from the racist and anti-Semitic policies in the 19th century in Russia and in the 20th century during the World Wars. It is documented that the Jews who came in the 18th century, for example, married with the daughters and granddaughters of the conquerors. So we have again an example of mixture (Franco, 1945)

At present this mix of ethnic groups still causes surprise to some Europeans that visit the city, as it is showed by this Spanish journalist: *“But the traveler immediately observes that there is something in the landscape that doesn’t suit: the faces, with the chin and features of the English people, the beardless faces of*

the Slavonic ones, those blonde hair of the Swedish, or a certain ashen Russian shade, so many green eyes from the Balkans...And up and down touches of Andean faces. There is an irrefutable proof of this mixture: the surnames..." (Bartrolí, 2004, p.62).

But all of them, as born in Buenos Aires, feel "porteños" with any doubt. That is what makes it so interesting. Although they are proud of their origins, at the same time they feel this *common feeling*: first, being citizens of the city, and secondly, "Argentine" which can be perfectly seen when the football national team plays: nobody is a fan of the national teams of their original countries or the countries of their parents.

To understand this cosmopolitanism that is so assimilated to every Argentinean, it is interesting to read this description: "*Buenos Aires did not create ghettos by nationality as did other cities in the world. Without much geographic meticulousness, the terms gringo (more or less to point all foreigners), ruso (Russian but also could refer to "Jews"), turco (Turkish), gallego (in Argentina we use it to refer to all Spanish, it doesn't matter if they come from Galicia or from other region of Spain), tano (these are the last syllables of "napolitano" (people from Napoli) but we use it to refer to any Italian) became popular, involving everyone without discriminating against anyone (...) The "porteño" (adjective to refer to people and things that come from the city of "Port of Santa María del Buen Ayre" – old name of the city) Babel is a fact. Buenos Aires carries the name of a Sardinian Virgin (Bonaira), imposed by an Andalusian knight (Pedro de Mendoza) and confirmed by the pen of a Bavarian chronicler (Ulrich Schmidel, 1567?). Its patron saint is a Hungarian monk who became a French bishop (San Martín de Tours) (...) Pizza and fillet painting (typical porteño painting for buses, posters, etc.) cannot deny their Italian ancestry. Carlos Gardel, the mythical singer of Buenos Aires (...) was French, or perhaps Uruguayan (...) The colors of River Plate, the soccer club, are Genoese, and the colors of Boca Juniors, Swedish. Also Swedish was the architect who built the first Government House. The first slave market and the first slaughterhouses were managed by the British and the downtown bars continue to practice the art of the sandwich, the clever invention of an English Lord"* (Goldstein and Passio, 2001, p.122; Explanations in parentheses by the author).

The Language of Lunfardo

Within this new area, the city of Buenos Aires, by the end of the 19th Century and the beginning of the 20th, diverse cultures exist close to cultural native elements that derived, at the same time, from the syncretism of the three ethnic groups mentioned before. In this scene there is a phenomenon of transcultural

mediation throughout different spheres of the life of the inhabitants which will mark in an intense and perdurable way a culture and a typical way of being worldwide recognized as “Argentine”. These spheres of daily life in which we can identify transculturalism in Buenos Aires are the language, the food, the costumes, the architecture, etc.

Among these we should stress the language. Although it is well known that the Spanish from America differs in tones, pronunciation and vocabulary from the one from Spain, in the case of Buenos Aires, for the particular characteristics of the migration waves we have already stated, there is a typical slang spoken by the inhabitants of the Río de la Plata (this area includes the people from Uruguay, although in this article we will only refer to Buenos Aires), the “lunfardo”.

This slang is the inheritance that comes from the immense wealth of lexicon from the original countries of the immigrants of certain social strata that came to this city, attracted by the promise to make big fortunes in a short time (Casas, 1991). Even though many of them went back to their lands with empty hands and others had to resign themselves to live under bad conditions, the richness they did produce and that gave rise to this slang for the “porteña” culture is enormous.

Regarding migratory figures, the major level of immigrant is reached at the years immediately before the First World War, about 200,000 foreigners (Buesa, 1987; Barreiro, 1986; quoted by Casas). This wave stopped during the war to recover afterwards, at the 1920’s. From 1921 to 1932 arrived to this country up to 51 millions of Europeans. From then, 10 million came from Italy. The richness of the Italian dialects nourished especially the *Lunfardo*, but it was also nourished by other languages.

The Lunfardo is not only the slang of low classes and of the prisoners, but it is also the voice of the “Tango”, the typical music of Río de la Plata, for we can say without being wrong, that this slang is at present known and some of their terms are still valid even for young people.

In order to show the cultural influence that all these ethnic groups had in Buenos Aires, and specifically in its slang, Lunfardo, also to give evidence to the fact, that all social strata are included, the following examples, frequently used by all porteños, are to be considered:

- *Amarrocao*: kept, retained; also to collect. This word has to do with *marroco*, which it is useful to refer to bread. At the beginning a gipsy etymological origin was given: in *caló* also means ‘bread’; but then, others say there are enough bibliographical references to recognize its

Italian origin. *Marroco* in its form *maroc*, it is documented as slang from Turin to say ‘bread’.

- *Apoliyar*: to sleep; and it would derive from the Neapolitan term: *apollaiare*, which was a term used in the countryside to refer to the chicken when they went to sleep.
- *Bondi*: typical “porteño” term to refer to ‘bus’, it is a derivation occurred in Saõ Paulo, Brasil, at the beginning of the 20th century of the English word *bond*, here with the meaning of ticket (in this city the buses were managed by the British at that time)
- *Chamuyar*: talk; it comes from the gypsy-Spanish verb *chamullar*, where it means ‘talking in low voice’, and it is related to say things that are not really true or trustable.
- *Chanta*: very typical Argentine term that in general refers to someone you cannot trust. This term derives from the *campanio* (Italy, Campagna) dialect: *cianta-puffi* (to fasten nails), which is also used very often in Argentina without translation or adaptation.
- *Guita*: money; it is said that this word existed in the Germania and in the *caló* (the language of the gypsies), some etymologists consider it derives from the Gothic *wita* (band). It is the most common way for Argentine to refer to money.
- *Macana*: embarrassing fact or mistake, also a lie. According to the Real Academia Española (The Royal Spanish Academy) it comes from the Caribbean term: *macana*. There is also a common expression: ¡qué macana! that means: bad luck!
- *Mina*: woman, although can be understand as a pejorative way. It is a voice that is built from the *aféresis* of the Italian word *femmina*, and the contraction of the word from Galicia (Spain) *menina*
- *Pibe*: boy. It comes from the Catalan term *pebet*, which its etymology refers to *sahumadores* (vases to burn perfumes) with metallic legs.
- *Pucho*: cigarette. It has an Indigenous origin, either in *quechua* and also in *Mapudungun* means ‘remaining’. In Chile is also used as “cigarette”.

There are also other terms in the Lunfardo, that are part of the daily and colloquial language of the people, words that the African slaves brought to this territory, like: *bochinche* (noise); *canyengue* (way of walking, and also refers to the way people related to Tango moves, sings, etc.); *ganga* (bargain); *mambo* (party and delirium); *mucama* (maid, servant; only understood in Argentina not in Spain for example); and *quilombo*, (in its origin was a synonym of ‘brothel’ but since the beginning of the 20th Century, in Argentina means “problem”, “trouble”), the latest a very typical and frequently used word in Buenos Aires.

Other words out of the Lombardo slang, show also the transcultural language:

- *fiaca* means ‘laziness’, is a word that all Argentinians use, but it is completely unknown in Spain. Here they use *pereza*, which is for Argentine people too sophisticated. This term *fiaca* on the other hand, is perfectly understood by the Italians because it comes from an Italian term: *fiacca*. So in Argentina it is in use with the same meaning, but it was hispanized and written with only one “s”.
- Other words that come from Italian and are integrated in the daily vocabulary, and with no use in Spain, are: *gamba* (leg) but very informal; *ricotta* (cottage cheese) while in Spain they use *requesón*, and nobody in Buenos Aires would understand it; *¡guarda!* is a special expression that Porteños use to warn people, like saying “be careful!”, and they make a gesture sometimes accompanying this expression, by pointing out one of the eyes. This expression may come from the Italian verb *guardare* (watch) with the meaning of watching carefully.
- Many other words from many different cultures are also integrated in the speaking of the people of this city. Many English words, for example: *pullover*, *jumper*, etc. We have also French words, which the most common one is *placard*, to refer to those wardrobes that are built-in the walls. For this word in Spain they use “armario”, while in Argentina this is only used for other objects like hammers but not for clothes.

All these words and expressions show very clearly how the inhabitants of the city of Buenos Aires fused their original languages in order to establish new ways of communication and understanding, and how this “transcultural phenomenon” became an inherent part of the identity of the people of this city, the “porteños”. Because “*More than how we speak, the important thing is to understand each other*” (Nogués, 2003, p.160), and that was the attitude of all the people that migrated to this part of the world.

Tango

Many people from the inside of the country, from the provinces, don’t identify themselves with this music that all around the world is automatically identified with Argentina. But in Buenos Aires city happens the opposite. Tango is the music, the movement, the feeling of the city and its inhabitants.

As all the other cultural elements the Tango also recognizes the influence from Africa, Latin American and Europe, although it is generally accepted that its origins have been so much fused that it is very difficult to distinguish them

(Ferrer, 1998). Tango is a fusion and a result of the biological and cultural crossbreeding that occurred here, in this transculturalist area, developed by the pre-immigration people of the *Río de la Plata* (Indigenous, Blacks, Mulattos and Creole) and the later immigrants, mainly from Europe.

The Tango is born as an unmistakable musical art between 1895 and 1900 (Ferrer, 1998). This author says: “(Tango) *is, and will be, the same as happens with Buenos Aires – from what it is a son of its insides-, a city that has the Pampa as basement and, by virtue of its men and women, it feels able to increase itself with people, architecture, arts and uses of other cities and other national dynasties without blurring its essence, its soul and its face*” (Ferrer, 1998, p.51)

Among the different musical genders that influenced the Tango are the *Cuban Habaneras*, the Spanish Tangos and the *milonga*, a word that comes from the voice “Quindumbá” and means “word”, for others means “trouble” (op. cit., p. 39). Even one of its characteristic instruments comes from abroad, the *bandoneón*, which didn’t appeared until 1900 and was received from the German immigrants (Ferrer, 1998, p.64), and so it is a relative of the *Deutsche Konzertina* or *Concertina*.

Architecture

Buenos Aires was born under the influence of Spain, mainly of Andalusia. And Arabian influences then, some of these characteristic buildings and, for example, their strong colonial doors continue to be used until 19th century. But the architecture of the city developed with the different cultural influences which came from abroad. In the mid of this century, many Italians immigrated. Their influences can be seen everywhere: the houses with windows framed by arches.

About 1883 the President Julio A. Roca designated Torcuato de Alvear as the first Mayor of the city. Alvear was member of a very aristocratic and traditional family and so was close to people with power. He focused his work on the urban remodeling of the city and his major concern was to change the image of it. He promoted to copy many esthetic French restyling; one of his main dreams was apparently to convert Buenos Aires to a second Paris. And with that purpose he had as very close collaborator the French architect Carlos Thays. It is to him attributed the demolition of the old arcade that was in the park in front of the Cabildo (the colonial City Hall), typical in Spain at every Mayor Plazas where markets took place, and the creation of the present Plaza de Mayo. Alvear was also very impressed by some ways of urban style that came from France, and he had the mania for the caverns made by concrete. Such cavern can be seen at one famous park in Buenos Aires called Plaza Constitución which was designed by Ulrico Courtois, a French architect, in 1885. Unfortunately this cavern started to be demolished four years later around 1889 by a Mayor for sure

with different tastes. Another foreign architect, the Italian Juan Buschiazzo some years before, in 1882, built another cavern in the aristocratic area Recoleta (Schávelzon and Magáz, 1994).

The Avenida de Mayo (May Avenue) is famous for its numerous and beautiful cupolas. At a glance when looking at the sky, these cupolas may make us think that we are in a European city, better said, in an Italian city. The most famous one, the cupola of the National Congress was designed according to the Italian academic formalism of the end of the 19th Century.

Among these styles the “Porteños” live together with another area completely different but not less “porteña” for all of them: La Boca. By the end of the 19th century, as this was the main entrance for the ships, it started to be inhabited by Italian immigrants, mainly Genoese. These immigrants lived in big houses called “conventillos” (inner-city slums, where many immigrants from Poland, Hungary, Italy, etc. lived together) which started to paint with the remains of paint that the people from the ships had, what gave to La Boca its unmistakable look (but if someone has the opportunity to go the Italian/Venice island of Burano, will recognize the similarity immediately). It is a very colored area for the houses are painted with different colors; even one house is painted by at least three colors. The explanation most commonly given is that as the amount of one color was not enough to finish one house, they used then different ones. Today it has become one of the most popular touristic attractions of the city and a beloved area for the lovers of Tango. There is a famous Tango “Caminito” (Little Road) dedicated to this area.

Curiously the city of Buenos Aires has little colonial architecture. There was a time, coincident with the joy of the independence from Spain, that all that reminds to the “Madre Patria” (mother country) wanted to be demolished and forgotten. But still remains the “Cabildo” as its major model and some colonial churches are also still standing. Other inheritances of the colonial influence are the straight, narrow streets and sidewalks which can only be seen in its oldest area (Goldstein/Passio, 2001).

All these typical buildings, areas and cupolas live together nowadays with very modern and high buildings giving to Buenos Aires a special and characteristic air that is the reflex of the meeting of different cultures in one common space.

Kitchen

Like other cultural items, gastronomy is also the result of the indigenous kitchen and the multiple influences from the immigrants. “*The cuisines of the Old World and the New World live together in every Argentine home*” (Medina, 2005, p.8).

During the colonial times the people ate very much: many “pucheros” (stew), many vegetables like for example “mandioca” (tapioca, its origin has to be situated in Brazil and Mexico), grilled meat and river fish. The liquors came from Europe. These habits started to change by the end of the 19th century with the arrival of many immigrants.

The “Porteña” gastronomy has the influence of the Spanish food, and through it of the Arabian one, and has also received contributions from Italian and French cuisines. For example the sweets and the “empanadas” are influence from the Arabian. But the people from Buenos Aires are very fond of Pizza and Pasta. This one can be fresh or dry, and there is a huge variety of filled pasta and spaghetitis. Also the pizza is not really the one it can be eaten in Italy. Here the people gave to it their special touch, which sometimes disappointed some of them when they first arrive to the country of their parents or grandparents, and they see that what they eat as pizza is cooked not in the most appreciated way the “Porteños” eat it. So in Buenos Aires the pizza was taken as one of the food the people eat the most but was changed and made it “Porteña style, thicker spongy (“media masa”) or thin but crunchy (“a la piedra”); it is not Italian any more where it s mainly thinner, dryer and harder.

Although the Italian cuisine had the strongest influence, others must also be remarked as the German, the Jewish and the British. The Spanish kitchen was left for the specific restaurants and it didn’t give to the “Porteña” gastronomy its stamp. The Italians not only brought their dishes but also their customs and social habits around eating: the traditional pasta on Sundays, all the family together, the habit of the aperitif, drinking a Vermut or a Fernet; and made of Buenos Aires the third place in the world where Pizza is eaten very much (the first one of course is Italy, followed by New York City – where many Italians and their descendants live). Another typical dish of Buenos Aires is the *milanesa* that consists of a piece of breaded meat; and to give another example of transcultural cuisine there is *milanesa a la napolitana*: which is a strange combination of Milan and Napoli, two very different cities and distant in culture within the same Italy!

Two typical colonial dishes, very common around 1810, were the *empanada* (little meat pie) and the *locro*. Still today these are typical courses that many families in Buenos Aires eat. Empanadas, mainly, are eaten to celebrate particular events: birthdays, anniversaries, etc. for their easy way of cooking them. The dough can be bought already prepared and then the filling is very easy: minced, cheese and ham, chicken, etc. The *locro* is like a *cocido madrileño*, with some touches of the pre-Colombian cuisine and other influences of the north of the country.

Of course the “Porteños” eat *asado* (barbecue) but also here there is a difference in the way it is made, the fire is not so strong like in Spain, for example; it is more or less grilled and so the time it takes is much longer (Medina, 2005).

Regarding sweets there is one that is the most appreciated by the Porteños: the *dulce de leche* (milk caramel) that is an inheritance of the pre-colonial times too, as it was a traditional sweet of Latin America (in Mexico is called “cajeta”) before the arrival of the Spanish. The *alfajor* is a traditional Arabic confection found in some regions of Spain and then made with variations in countries of Latin America, after being taken there by the colonists. The authentic *alfajor* was made in Medina Sidonia (Spain) since ancient times; in the Americas, due to the lack of some ingredients, it is made in a complete different way (Junta de Andalucía, 2007). The *alfajor* is still a common sweet among children and they usually take one or two of them to school.

Another common sweet in Buenos Aires is the *pasta frola*, which is a cake that consists of dough filled with quince jelly and covered by strips of the same dough. It is said to be Italian, the name sounds from that country, but others say it is the Creole version of the “Linzer Torte”, a similar cake, but filled with strawberry jelly and that also contains cinnamon.

In Buenos Aires we can also find the influence of Germans in the sweets. *Facturas* (“bills”!) is the common name for the typical “Krapfen” introduced by the people from Germany in Argentina. They are very common to accompany a cup of coffee, mainly for breakfast. There are special shops, “panaderías” (bakeries) or “confiterías” (shop selling pastry) where they can be bought on Sundays, for example, and people queue for them. Of German origin are also the croissants called here *medialunas* (half-moons). “Café con leche y medialunas” (Coffee with milk and croissants) constitutes the typical “Porteño” breakfast, and the waiter will ask “¿Las medialunas de manteca o de grasa? (the croissants made by butter or by fat?) as we have two different “flavours” and they are also much smaller than in Europe. We have also the *tortitas negras* (small black cakes); the *berlinesas* (Pfannkuchen in German) but instead of being filled with marmalade, as they do in Germany, we fill in them with “dulce de leche” so they are “Porteñized”.

After all these specialties described we are not wrong if we say that the people from Buenos Aires speak Spanish (with all the variations we have already seen) but they eat mainly the Italian way.

Conclusion

At this point maybe we can wonder what is the real identity of the people of Buenos Aires. According to social psychology “Identity” is generally defined as “*those aspects of the concept that we individuals have of ourselves that derive from the knowing of our quality as members of groups*” (Fernández 2000, p.50). So what defines the “Porteño” culture is none of each of the specific cultures that arrived to this place, but all of them at the same time. They shared part of their cultural heritage and by fusing with those of others appeared a specific and characteristic way of life that identifies the people of Buenos Aires. This particular mix of cultural items makes them very different even from their neighbours in the same country, from the people of the provinces around. But at the same time all immigrants and their descendants kept some of their original elements without changing them and maybe also without sharing them; nevertheless all of them feel themselves “Porteños”. The cultural items from their countries of origin, transformed into commonalities, make the City of Buenos Aires a transcultural area.

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Riga

Wolfgang Berg

Transculturality is a particular view on societal conditions and daily life. Cultural differences and commonalities belong together. Whilst cultural diversity should not be underestimated, there still remains the fact of co-existence.

Diversity

Riga, for instance, is a city where, over the centuries, people from different areas have settled and different political powers have governed. This means that tourists quickly perceive the cultural diversity which makes this town so vibrant, rich and attractive. It suffices to mention here a few examples which illustrate the historical influences of various nations, namely:

- The Museum of Applied Arts, originally (since 1202) the Palace of the Knights of the Sword;
- Riga Castle, originally (1339) the residence of the Knights of the Livonian Order;
- The Swedish Gate, a citadel, dating from 1698;
- The cathedral with its famous organ, constructed by Walker (a German firm) and a pulpit dating from 1641; Johann Gottfried Herder, who lived in Riga from 1764 to 1769 used to preach, however, in other churches. For about five years Herder preached here; the dwelling house in Richard-Wagner-Street, constructed by the German architect Haberland in 1728; the Big and the Small House of the Guilds which belonged to the German merchants and craftsmen for more than 600 years; Riga joined the Hansa in 1282
- Various Orthodox churches (the Christ Cathedral, the Alexander Newski Church, etc.)
- The Statue of Liberty, erected from 1931 to 1935 as a symbol of Latvian independence.

The Livonian Order (until 1562), Sweden (until 1710), Russia (until 1920 and again from 1939 onwards) had control over Riga, whereas the German upper class wielded the de facto economic and political power until the beginning of World War I; and in both World Wars the Germans conquered and oppressed

Riga, from 1941 killing thousands of citizens, executing the shoah from 1941 until 1944. Having been integrated into the Soviet Union for 45 years, with strong immigration from Russia, the Latvian independence movement finally succeeded on 21st August, 1991: Latvia achieved its independence again.

Thus, it is taken for granted that Riga has been, from its very inception until the present day, a transcultural city. This understanding is, however, strongly challenged by recent research whose intention and aim is to show that in a town like Riga ethnic groups lived their own lives; that each “people” constituted its own particular Riga (Oberländer/Wohlfart, p.p. 7-8). In Riga, as the authors argue, the different ethnic groups had some contact with each other via work and trade, but in general people remained within their group, in many cases because the “newcomers” from the rural areas looked for secure networks and did not want to give up their customs (Oberländer, p. 29). The same was true for political organizations (parties, strikes), cultural institutions (theatres, etc.) and social welfare organizations (Oberländer, p. 30).

The tsarist order to introduce Russian as the obligatory language in schools and administrative circles may have strengthened ethnic bonds as well as giving rise to nationalist thinking. With reference to other towns in the Russian Empire, the authors are at pains to assert that the ethnic groups did not live together, but apart from each other (ibid., p. 30) in parallel societies, as it were, in various ethnic ‘Rigas’, with no real community, and no common rules, a multicultural city with more differences than commonalities.

On the other hand, focusing on the period between 1857 and 1914, this work by Oberländer and Wohlfart collects and presents abundant empirical material about the population of Riga, albeit differentiated along the lines of different ethnic groups. The challenge is obvious: to use this material in order to provide support for the counter-argument; that Riga represents the epitome of a transcultural society!

The Demography

In the 19th century Riga was part of the Russian Empire. Riga was an important commercial town with only small-scale industries at the time. In the second half of the century, following the tearing down of the town walls in 1857, the town started to develop rapidly. Whereas in 1867 the population of Riga numbered around 100,000, by 1913 it was already about half a million. In the same period of time the composition of the population changed remarkably in terms of nationality:

Germans: from 42.8 to 13.5%;

Russians: from 25.1 to 19.5 %,

Latvians: from 23.5 to 41.3 % of the entire population (Oberländer, p. 26).

In 1913 one third of the population was born in Riga, one third had migrated to the town from the rural areas and one third had migrated from other parts of the Russian Empire (Oberländer, p. 28). At that time about 210,000 Latvians, 99,000 Russians, 69,000 Germans, 47,000 Poles, 35,000 Lithuanians, 33,600 Jews and 9,000 Estonians had been counted (p. 29).

Ethnicity and Language

If people identify themselves, especially so in official polls such as those undertaken in the Russian Empire from time to time, as a member of this or that nation, ethnic group, etc. and/or if they “feel” like Latvians, Germans, etc., then they ARE part of that group in a subjective way. Of course this attribution, be it a selfattribution or attribution made by (meaningful) others, is based on language, customs and way of life, too – but it does not necessarily tell us HOW people behave, feel and think in daily life.

Hence two theoretical problems arise. Firstly, that we are overstating the significance of ethnic identity; or, to put it another way: that the differences that exist *within* an ethnic group may be so great as to outweigh the differences that exist *between* ethnic groups. Secondly, and linked to the first point, it may be that membership of an ethnic group is of lesser importance in comparison to membership of other categories of group, at least in particular situations (Berg 2001). The solidarity of workers or Christians or women or young people, for example, might rank higher in the layers of identity or might have more impact on actions and behaviour.

Our knowledge of nationalist conflicts in Latvia later on and our memory of the catastrophes caused by extreme nationalists until the present day, might mislead historians to overestimate the impact of “ethnic categories” on daily life at that time.

In the case of Latvians in Riga it is important to know that, not unexpectedly, social shifts have also been at play. Newcomers from the rural areas, though very often connected with the indigenous Latvians by family relationships, had to endure no small amount of hostility and arrogance on the part of the advanced, well-educated Latvian bourgeoisie.

Language Policy

As the Germans held political power – at the local level – until 1914, and dominated the town culturally, the daily conversation at street level was conducted in German. The upper middle class of Latvians wanted their children to learn German. Social mobility was not possible without a sound knowledge of German. In the 1880s children of Latvian families attended, if at all, German

primary schools in Riga, i.e. schools where German was the language of instruction (Wohlfart, p. 33). Only after the tsarist order (ukase) dated 1888 did this situation change, as Russian became the language of instruction. More and more pre-schools with education in Latvian and primary schools with Russian and Latvian lessons emerged in the late 1890s and the beginning of the 19th century. But doubtlessly, until the end of the century, public and private conversations, even within Latvian families, were mostly conducted in German (Wohlfart, p. 41). The Latvian language itself has been influenced by German vocabulary; many Latvians used a mixture of both (Wohlfart, p. 42).

Without going into great detail at this point, suffice to say that the former Latvian elites, and also, to some degree, the new generation from farming areas had a close connection to and even sympathy with the German language, later on with Russian. The languages of power (German, then Russian) and the mother tongue coexisted for rather a long time. A poll in 1891 revealed that more speakers of German than Germans lived in Riga: one fourth of the Jews and more than 10 % of the Latvians indicated that their language of daily usage/mother tongue was German (Lux, p. 76). Where the congruence of culture and “nation” was concerned, language as a distinctive criterion of ethnicity did not (at that time) work so well. This situation, however, changed rapidly in the first years of the 20th century. In 1905, for instance, the street signs, for the first time, were written in Latvian, not in German or Russian as before.

The cultural predominance of German came to an end in 1887. Officially the public administration of Riga had already been obliged to use the Russian language, but only with the tsarist ukase did Russian as the language of instruction become obligatory. German teachers and pupils (about 50% of the total) had to adapt and assimilate to the political reality (Lux, p. 100). Though later on some private schools were allowed where teaching in German became possible again, the education system had changed profoundly: German students had to learn (in) Russian; Latvians no longer needed German in order to gain access to the administration or academic world.

Increasingly the Latvians gained access to higher education. Most important was the Riga Polytechnic. According to a biographical note, of 1,770 students in the year 1900 about 200 were Latvians. Though it seems to be true that the students organized themselves in students’ societies along the lines of their mother tongues – but these lines were not the only and predominant ones. It is also true, that each of them had a socialist and a conservative alternative. The Polytechnic had been founded in 1861, and, authorized by the Tsar; lectures were conducted in German; only gradually was Russian introduced in the late 1890s.

Housing and Life Style

Until the turn of the century the old town of Riga was dominated by the German upper class. Only then did the first Latvian entrepreneurs like Berg (originally Kalnin), Ballodi, Dombrovski and Bauman acquire property there.

In general the Latvian workers and servants lived in poor neighbourhoods outside the old town, in the suburbs under horrible conditions, in wooden houses without water supply, or in new but simple houses close to the factories. To this extent housing was to some degree segregated, namely along the lines of social class as well as ethnicity.

In the second half of the century and essentially after the turn of the century the associations of Latvians were of stupendous importance for adult education, as the newcomers, most of which had come from rural areas and were now providing manual labour in the factories, did not have any formal education. The associations organized all manner of events and cultural activities, be it theatre performances in the Latvian language or summer parties. The associations provided their members with social support and also money in cases of emergency. For the new upper middle class of Latvians it was very important to found associations and also saving banks which allowed them to get credits for houses and other investments, as the established German banks had been more than reluctant to facilitate this (Wohlfart, p.60). Altogether, the associative life contributed remarkably to the self-esteem of the Latvians in Riga. This type of self-organization along ethnic lines, but due to social and cultural needs, also economic interests, was the basis of the national movement after the turn of the century. It was, however, at no time a closed or exclusive community; instead of building up a separate Latvian society it seems to have been a worthy endeavour to achieve the same standard of living as the traditional elites or at least the middle class.

Under the conditions of transculturality, one might say that the Latvian associations followed the model previously developed by the Germans. That is true for adult education as well as for all types of insurance schemes/mutuality, which were self-help groups of craftsmen or homeowners, whose purpose was to facilitate credits and loans. The associative life of the Germans was extraordinarily rich and differentiated, and, by the way, not exclusive – under the condition of assimilation. The beneficiaries of social projects or hospitals, for instance, were not restricted to Germans only (Lux, p. 107).

Culture and Arts

The architecture of Riga is, to this very day, not only a symbol, but a real document of the economic growth, an extraordinary boom on one hand and the

emerging transcultural character of the urban development on the other. In the last years of the 1890s, and the first decade of the next century, the construction industry in Riga boomed, with Latvian firms and craftsmen participating prominently. The Latvian architects such as Bauman, Peksen, Laube or Vanag adopted and developed the “Art Nouveau” or “Jugendstil” in a particular way, for which Riga remains famous to this day.

Around the turn of the century the Latvian elites preferred to live in the centre, in their own houses, close to the Germans who continued to dominate the cultural life and with whom they communicated perfectly (in German). The Latvian elites (architects, lawyers, entrepreneurs etc.) built a close community – marriages between these few families were the norm. People met in theatre vestibules, at meetings of the various associations, in private saloons – a real bourgeois way of life, as Wohlfart stated (p. 66).

The cultural elite was not divided along ethnic lines. The painter Purvitis, who had won several awards in Germany, held exhibitions in Riga. He sold his paintings mostly to Germans, e.g. Baron von Engelhardt. The painter Rozental worked closely with a German colleague and made portraits of Latvian and German people in the same way (Wohlfahrt, p.69).

To the inhabitants of Riga, regardless of which nationality they belonged to, all gardens and parks were open. The same was true for other recreational pursuits; in 1909 there were 15 cinematographic theatres (“Buff”, “Amor”, etc.). The entrance fee was affordable for most of the people.

Russification

At a first glance, ethnic segregation is the opposite of a transcultural area. In Riga the so-called suburb of “Moscow” appears to have been, according to contemporary reports, a world of its own around the 1850s, in which Russian language, Russian-orthodox rituals, festivals and folksongs form one cohesive microcosm. But during those years immigrants from all over the Empire, as well as Jews from Vitebsk and Vilnius, entered the area (Volkov, p.11). Living close to the river Deena, the ethnically Russian population earned their living from the transportation, fishing, wood production and construction industries. They interacted with their customers and used the public infrastructure. More and more, alongside the political development, which can be called “Russification”, they moved to other places, as well as to the centre of Riga.

The visual evidence of the disintegration is represented by the orthodox churches which were constructed in all parts of Riga, as well as in the centre (Volkov, p.122). On the other hand, in view of the fact that the churches were mostly financed by donations and sponsorship from Russian citizens of Riga

(Volkov, p. 112), this can be interpreted as an example of thinking in ethnic terms again.

The access to lectures and libraries, however, was not restricted – the library, for instance, run by the Russian commission of popular education, had in the year 1900 besides Russian clients (65%), German, Latvian and Polish customers as well (Volkov, p.137). Of course, the activities of associations like the Education Society were primarily aimed at promoting the schooling of Russian children, as there was a high rate of illiteracy (45% in 1890) among Russians (Volchov, p.139). The newspaper “Rizski Vesnik” (Daily of Riga) played an important role in the cultural exchange. It translated German novels and historical essays, as well as Latvian traditions, folksongs or folk novels, into Russian (Volkov, p.125).

Transcultural Personalities

Just how uncomfortable or threatening was this “russification” perceived by the Non-Russians, in particular the Baltic Germans, is not easy to determine. Take, for instance, the family of Bergengruen, which had Swedish-German roots. Werner Bergengruen (a famous novelist) was born 1892 in Riga; his father, a medical doctor and prominent member of the upper class, decided in 1903 to move to Lübeck, because – according to different sources – he did not accept the tsarist policy of russification.

And then we have Heinz Erhardt, who, born 1909 in Riga, son of the music director and conductor Gustav Erhardt, attended the German Gymnasium, later working in a music shop, staying for some years with his grandmother in St Petersburg, and not leaving Riga before 1938 – because of his career as a singer and entertainer in Berlin. Heinz Erhardt, who had also learnt the Latvian language, became one of the most famous comedians in Germany in the 1950s and 1960s.

Two Cross-Cultural Events

The year 1901 marked the 700th anniversary of the foundation of Riga. The town was founded by a German bishop; the town was for a lengthy period under the governance of the German Order; and, though in the meantime it had become part of the Russian Empire, the municipality was still governed by the German minority. For these reasons the various ethnic groups might be expected to approach to that anniversary with little enthusiasm. Actually, no group hesitated to contribute to the event, be it with finances be it with actors, exhibitions, publications, music groups etc. (Lux, p. 82).

In July 1910 the Tsar Nikolas II paid a three-day visit to Riga. Though it was the 200th anniversary of the Russian victory over the Germans, the celebration was free of any chauvinist or nationalist undertones. The municipality, still dominated by Germans, had not hesitated to erect a monument dedicated to Tsar Peter. On the other hand it was the mayor of Riga, George Armitstead (with English roots, but part of the German community), who was ennobled by the tsar. Nikolas II planted an oak tree to mark the foundation of Peter's park (Lux, p.83).

If, to put it simply, people pay in roubles, work in factories, use the tramway, enjoy themselves in the park, and have to celebrate the Emperor's birthday, then they live together, not apart. They share much of the fabric of daily life.

Politics

Besides ethnic or cultural divides, if such existed, everybody in Riga lived under the same political system. There was no sort of autonomy or minority rights on an ethnic or cultural basis. In contrast, political power was not balanced fairly among the ethnic groups. In reality, however, in no way could the system be said to be democratic. Since 1878 political rights have been accorded to three classes, differentiated according to taxed income and restricted to about 5,000 citizens, the majority of them Germans. At that stage the town council comprised 66 Germans, four Russians and 2 Latvians.

In 1892 the voting rights were linked to the census, i.e. real estate property. Hence, until 1914, Germans continued to hold a large majority on the town council, though they had become a minority in the population of this rapidly growing city (Lux, p.88). In the elections held between 1901 and 1913 the majority of the (numerically small) electorate voted for a German-Russian (!) list, and so perpetuated local government by the Germans until the World War.

Political movements worldwide, no less so in Riga, had become increasingly dynamic, though the principles and strategies had diversified remarkably. Among the Jews of Riga, for instance, orthodox and liberal, Zionist and social democratic factions competed with each other. We must further concede that nationalist, i.e. anti-Jewish and anti-German manifestations, even fights and riots, took place. But as early as 1902 social democratic groups of Germans, Russians and Jews came together and founded a unified committee, which, however, did not survive for very long.

With regard to the economy, it is not correct to talk about divisions, rather of domination. So the public administration and academic sector, press and culture were strongly dominated by Germans; as were the crafts, services and trades – although not to the same extent. The working class, the manual labour in

the new industries, consisted mostly of Latvians, with almost no Germans. The entrepreneurship was culturally diverse; besides Germans Jews, Russians and investors from Sweden and other countries were also important.

Intermediate Groups

In 1913, due to the strong immigration alongside the industrialization, seven percent of the population in Riga consisted of Lithuanians, whereas 5.4 percent self-designated as Lithuanian language speakers, the others as Polish speakers (Jekabson, p. 215). Most of them were catholic, a few of them protestants. As early as 1881 a couple of Lithuanians, together with catholic Polish and Latvians founded a choir called Ausra (dawn), which became a Polish association some years later.

Another organization (for mutual support), founded by Lithuanians, also tried in vain to make the use of the Lithuanians language compulsory. Most Lithuanians communicated in daily life in Russian or Polish. On the other hand it was in Riga that various Lithuanians initiated their underground activities against the Russian Empire, for instance via the printing and distribution of newspapers. Later on, particularly after 1905, Lithuanians founded schools, theatre groups, students associations as well as mutual insurance schemes and financial institutions, largely in collaboration with Latvian or Polish people. There was a close connection between the Latvian social democrats and those Lithuanians who were active in the workers' movement. The Lithuanian people in Riga may appear disparate and squeezed by the other (small) ethnic groups; but perhaps their role is better characterized as a community that was linking and connecting people.

The same is true for the Jews in Riga. The tsarist legislation did not allow the Jews to enter Riga and Livland in general, but in reality there were Jews living there, maybe about 500 in the middle of the 19th century, among them at least one wealthy family (the merchant Berkowitz). Anyway, the tsar even granted an allowance to found a Jewish school (though a Jewish community did not exist officially). The school being committed to the liberal Jewish movement, teaching was conducted in the mother tongue of all Jews of Riga, i.e. in German. The headmaster was Max Lilienthal from Munich (Bogojavlenska, p. 162). In 1858 the Jews of Riga received permission to acquire realty; in the 1860s Jewish academics were generally allowed to move to Riga (p. 165). In the following years growth in the Jewish community was augmented by the arrival of Yiddish and Russian speaking Jews. A Russian speaking teacher managed to get elected as rabbi in 1872 – and started to preach in Russian (Bogojavlenska, p. 168). In the year 1871, the opening of the first synagogue, a rich and wonderful building,

was permitted. Others were to follow, even in the town centre. The Jews in Riga constituted a multicultural society in their own right, as there were traditional and progressive factions, Russian, Yiddish and German-speaking Jews, academics, merchants and craftsmen. The well-educated, wealthy bourgeoisie, who saw themselves as European citizens, did not want to be confused with the traditional, poor Jews “from the East”. Hence the Jews of Riga (and elsewhere) reproduced the tensions within the community – with loyalties and ties to Germany and Russia they even linked both communities.

Explicitly with this same aim, an association for the education of Jews in Russia had been founded 1863 in St. Peterburg by Jewish intellectuals (Schönfeld, Minz) and entrepreneurs (Schalit, Lunz etc.), to be followed by a local branch in Riga in 1898; which fact was not, however, greatly appreciated by the orthodox Jews (s. Bogojavlenska, p.178). The association was committed to the German arts and sciences, but conducted all meetings in the Russian language! (ibid, p.179).

The Jewish community was able to boast several distinguished members, e.g. Dr. Schönfeld, who opened the first psychiatric hospital in Riga, or Leib Schalit, who – as a Zionist – launched vocational training for youths who were planning to go to Palestine. The community had also grown in importance numerically; at the end of the 19th century about 22,000 Jews lived in Riga, almost 8% of its population. Regardless of the wealth of some Jewish families, the Jews of Riga in general lived under poor conditions, mostly in the suburbs. The majority of the Jewish workers joined the activities of the “Bund”, a socialist movement, which had to cope with anti-Jewish sentiment among the population; for example, in October 1905 Russian workers instigated acts aggression against Jewish beggars.

Conclusion

Although it is generally true to say that Riga has, over time, been a multicultural town in terms of ethnic groupings, but also shifts or classes, the divisions and loyalties which manifest themselves in language, life-style, economics, religion and political aspirations mean that it was a transcultural area: some aspects of culture were shared, whilst others were not. Cultural diversity existed, but the differences did not follow just one line. Differences of one particular cultural item were balanced by the commonality of another one. There was no gap without a bridge.

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Northern Ireland: Space and Identity Performance

Aoileann Ni Éigeartaigh

Ever since Michel Foucault declared that: “The present epoch will perhaps be above all the epoch of space. We are in the epoch of simultaneity; we are in the epoch of juxtaposition” (Foucault, p.22), the importance of space in the construction of identity has become one of the defining themes of contemporary cultural studies. Foucault’s assertion that the constricting, chronological narratives of history can be replaced by the more flexible, asynchronous narratives of space is particularly attractive to advocates of globalization, for whom the disruption of the historic metanarrative is synonymous with increased fluidity and the transcendence of traditional boundaries and borders.

Andy Bennett argues that as a result of increased global mobility, spaces and societies that were historically homogenous have become increasingly pluralistic and fragmented: “*Rather than espousing singular and essentialist meanings, they express a range of highly differentiated and contested meanings which are underpinned by the competing knowledge and sensibilities of an increasingly heterogeneous society*” (Bennett, p.4).

Such developments have led Wolfgang Welsch to argue that transculturality, which he defines as the inherent hybridisation of all cultures, is the only valid model of social interaction today.

This chapter proposes to test these claims of heterogeneity and fluidity against the conscious and visible structuring of their environment by both the nationalist/Catholic and unionist/Protestant communities in Belfast, Northern Ireland. Divided by ethnic, historical, political, religious and ideological affiliations, they have adopted a number of visual and linguistic strategies to assert symbolic ownership over their everyday spaces. Officially at peace since the signing of the Belfast Agreement in 1998, a variety of official and community-led initiatives have sought to confront the legacy of Northern Ireland’s troubled past and encourage a gradual transformation from divisive and exclusive signifiers of identity to more inclusive, transcultural narratives. However, recent demographic surveys suggest a deeply divided, sectarian society, whose inhabitants continue to live within visibly bordered areas. The central question is whether as a result of both local initiatives and global trends,

Northern Ireland's symbolic borders can gradually be dismantled enabling a truly transcultural environment to be forged.

In spite of the prevalence of theories of globalization, borders remain both a feature and a structuring presence for many communities. As Paul Ganster and David E. Lorey point out: "*Contemporary borders present an intriguing paradox. Globalization is proceeding everywhere at an astounding pace, merging economies and cultures through world trade, regional economic integration, the mass media, the Internet, and increasingly mobile populations. But, at the same time, political borders separating people remain pervasive and problematic*" (Ganster and Lorey, p.XI).

In spite of the dissolution of many political borders, and the increased mobility of people, commodities and cultural practices, in some contested spaces it would appear that borders are as present and as structuring as ever. Moreover, what is significant about many contemporary borders, according to Hastings Donnan and Thomas M. Wilson, is that it is not military or political might, but rather culture that underlines their social construction and negotiation (Donnan and Wilson, p.3).

As Henri Lefebvre asserts: "*Space is political and ideological. It is a product literally filled with ideologies*" (Lefebvre, p. 31). In other words, people continue to invest the surrounding space with a significance in order to structure and regulate it for themselves long after the visible mechanisms of the state have been dismantled. Lefebvre's point is that space is a social construct arranged to produce social meanings. When space is structured in a certain way, therefore, it affects the experiences and perceptions of those living within it.

The Irish Border

A succession of rebellions and attacks on British personnel in the aftermath of the 1916 Rising (collectively known as the War of Independence) forced the British Government to revise its policy in relation to Ireland. The Government of Ireland Act of December 1920 proposed establishing parliaments in Dublin and Belfast, both with powers of local government. The Act also partitioned Ireland, although it retained the provision of reuniting the country if the two parliaments agreed. The Act left the British Government in control of Irish defence, foreign policy and finance and also granted it the right to intervene in Irish affairs if necessary. Partition was formalized in the Anglo-Irish Treaty of 1920, in which the Irish Free State was granted dominion status. The Treaty also made provision for the establishment of a Boundary Commission whose function it would be to draw up the border now dividing the country. The Boundary Commission was composed of a representative from each of the parliaments, north and south, as well as a chairperson appointed by the British government. Its mission was: "To

determine in accordance with the wishes of the inhabitants, so far as may be compatible with economic and geographic conditions, the boundaries between Northern Ireland and the rest of Ireland” (Lee, p. 51).

In spite of the cross-community engagement implied in this statement, the border imposed on the country is generally considered to have been representative of unionist wishes. Most historians are critical of its composition. J.J. Lee makes the following comments about Partition: “*Partition had long existed in the mind. Now it existed on the map. But what a map! The geographical boundaries did not attempt to follow the mental boundaries*” (Lee, p.45). Lee explains that the border was a disaster for many of the local communities, as it “trapped” as many Unionists in the South as it relocated to the North. He rejects the idea that partition offered the only reasonable solution to the civil unrest, claiming instead that it was motivated solely in order to protect and advance unionist interests: “The border was chosen explicitly to provide unionists with as much territory as they could safely control. Its objective was not to separate unionists and nationalists in order to enable them to live peaceably apart. It was instead to ensure Protestant supremacy over Catholics even in predominantly Catholic areas” (Lee, p.45-6).

What is clear is that the ideological agenda that determined the position of the border played a significant role in the inter-community tensions that emerged almost immediately. It is as though the border provided both a catalyst and a focus for the growing hostility. Speaking of the role the border began to assume in the popular imagination, James Chichester Clark, Prime Minister of Northern Ireland from 1969 to 1971, stated that: “*The border was never intended, on our part, as a major international frontier, an emerald curtain. It was others who piled brick upon brick along that wall so we could scarcely see or comprehend one another*” (Quoted in Harvey, p.12). This rendering of an invisible, political border into a concrete representation of the bitter divide at the heart of Northern Irish society was due partly to its increasing visibility during the Troubles, its length frequently punctuated by military installations, check-points and watch-towers, which functioned as agents of either security or repression depending on one’s ideological viewpoint. However, more significantly than that, the border assumed the role of a signifying presence in the landscape, constantly reminding the inhabitants of the surrounding space of the political and ideological differences that divided them.

As Rosemary Harris notes: “*(T)he border certainly exerted a definite influence on the pattern of social relationships in the area. Most vitally, perhaps, it crystallised the opposition to each other of Catholic and Protestant....The border, close physically and omnipresent psychologically, brought into sharp*

contrast not only those actually separated by it but those separated because their opinions about it were opposed” (Harris, p. 20).

Most interesting of all was the impact the border had on the identities and sense of belonging of those directly affected by it. By dividing the island into a Catholic Free State and a Protestant Northern Ireland, the border reinforced the ethnic and cultural differences between these groups. Within both of these states, however, a significant minority of people found themselves suddenly living in a community with which they did not identify: *“Members of either community ‘trapped’ on the wrong side of the boundary drawn in 1920 were effectively in foreign territory. The ethos of the state built around them did not reflect their identity: indeed it was explicitly antagonistic....Thus, these minorities are effectively ‘outsiders’ both in relation to the states in which they live and in relation to the states dominated by their co-ethnics. However, instead of them moving across borders, borders have moved across them”* (Howard, p. 78-9). Such was the trauma experienced in particular by the nationalist community who now found themselves silenced and disenfranchised in the self-proclaimed unionist state of Northern Ireland, that Howard suggests they should be regarded in the same way as any other diaspora group who find themselves displaced from their ethnic homeland and forced to live in a society whose rules, customs and ideologies are not only unfamiliar, but even inimical, to their own.

The Borderlands

It is clear that the imposition of a border on the Irish landscape had significance far in excess of its original aim of demarcating the boundary between two national states. Donnan and Wilson suggest that this is because borders not only function to mark the limits of national territories, but have a transformative effect on the socially-produced identities of those living within their bounds: *“State borders in the world today not only mirror the changes that are affecting the institutions and policies of their states, but also point to transformations in the definitions of citizenship, sovereignty and national identity. It is our contention, moreover, that borders are not just symbols and locations of these changes, which they most certainly are, but are often also their agents”* (Donnan and Wilson, p.4). This last sentence is particularly interesting, suggesting that the very presence of a border in the landscape is what drives social division and discord.

Edward Soja reiterates the transformative effect of a border, stating that: *“Socially-produced space is a created structure comparable to other social constructions resulting from a transformation of given conditions inherent to being alive, in much the same way that human history represents a social transformation of time”* (Soja, p.80). Space should thus never be regarded as

neutral, but always as a specifically structured text. By suffusing the surrounding environment with their emotions and historic legacies, the communities who inhabit it transform it into a visible manifestation of their communal ideology.

Certainly the border has had a huge impact on the tactics used by both communities in Northern Ireland to assert and perform their own identities and by extension reject and other those of the opposing group. In fact Northern Ireland as a whole could be described as a “borderland”, as the divisive, segregated function of the official border is replicated throughout its villages and towns. The city of Derry, for example, has the dubious honour of having two versions of its name, the use of each reflecting the ideology of its user (the unionist “*Londonderry*” signifying an allegiance to Britain).

Belfast, a city situated about 50 km from the border, more visibly replicates the divisions of the border through the so-called “peace walls” erected to keep the warring communities apart at the height of the Troubles.

“No place in Europe has carried ethnic division as far as Belfast. The peace walls, put up in the 1970s to keep people in the same street from firebombing and murdering each other, are now as permanent as the borders between nation-states, twenty feet high in some places, sawing working-class Belfast in two” (Ignatieff, p.170). This physical segregation of the cityscape has had a number of significant effects on the communities living within it. Firstly, the very visibility of the divide heightens the hostility between the communities by rendering overt the differences between them.

As Peter Shirlow explains: *“The creation of rigid boundaries between communities aided the capacity to target the ‘other’ community....Ironically, the ‘protective’ walls that were assembled in order to protect communities were the very places within which the most numerous, insistent and unremitting violence was located”* (Shirlow, p.76).

It is thus clear that the presence of the dividing walls, rather than minimising the interaction and violence between the communities, actually intensified the sense of difference and provided inhabitants with a focus for their hostility. The statistics in this regard are compelling. Shirlow reports that over the course of the Troubles the interface areas consistently provided the locus for the much of the violence: *“A third of the victims of politically motivated violence died within 250m of an interface. The data further indicates that around 70 percent of deaths occurred within 500m of all interfaces. In addition, over 80 percent of deaths occurred within places that were at least 90 percent Catholic or Protestant”* (Shirlow, p.76). It goes without saying that this form of inter-community engagement is not what Welsch envisages when he describes all cultures today as being transcultural!

As well as othering the rival community and transforming it into a visible target, the presence of dividing walls has also had a significant impact on the self-identity of the communities themselves. Most notably, extremists within the communities effectively used their segregation to promote and solidify a sense of group identity predicated on difference: “Space, for those who articulate sectarian discourses, is seen to function in such a manner that it hosts historical ‘truths’ and collectivised communications. Community and history, for this group, serve as territorial constructions that strengthen the way in which spatial division presents sectarian hostility as a valid understanding of loyalty. Among those who advanced ethno-sectarian opinions, the need to perpetuate residential segregation is imperative in order to operate and promote inter-community difference” (Shirlow, p.84). What is clear from studying the impact of the erection of the ironically named “Peace Walls” between the communities in Belfast is that perceived ideological and ethnic differences become solidified because of their replication by the concrete divisions manifest in the surrounding space.

Belfast’s Murals

Michel de Certeau famously draws attention to the “tactics” used by the marginalized in society to challenge the narratives and controls put in place by the dominant. Graffiti is an obvious example of a tactic that can be used to restructure the surrounding social space in a way that resists the ideology of the dominant. By tagging street corners, practitioners redraw boundaries between different territories and allow for urban spaces to be seen or perceived differently. By far the most notable example of the use of such tactics by the rival communities in Belfast is the painting of large murals to visibly demarcate nationalist and unionist areas. The function of the murals in Northern Ireland is similar to that of graffiti, in that they delineate space along political lines. As well as creating an identifiable, communal, space-based identity for inhabitants of certain streets and areas, the murals also exclude outsiders.

The history of mural painting among the nationalist community dates only to the early 1970s. The unionist community, on the other hand, had been producing murals since the early twentieth-century. Their function, along with other visible manifestations of Orange culture such as parades and bunting, was to assert Protestant identity as dominant in unionist Northern Ireland. Initially, these public displays of identity were temporary, lasting only for the duration of the Twelfth of July commemorations. However, after partition, mural painting became a recognised element of Protestant popular culture and began to demarcate those areas in which Protestant communities lived. This had the function of transforming “areas where Protestants lived” into “Protestant areas”

(Jarman, 1998, p.3). Recurring themes in unionist murals are the figure of King Billy crossing the Boyne, which symbolizes the Protestant victory over Catholics, and more recently references to various unionist paramilitary groups. Rolston notes that apart from the universally celebrated figure of King Billy, the unionist community have very few elements of a shared history or mythology to unify them, a consequence perhaps of their easy assumption of power and dominance since the formation of the state (Rolston, 1991, pp.15-49).

While these Protestant murals had official status – Jarman notes that new murals were ritually unveiled by politicians every July (Jarman, 1998, p.3) – Catholics were not afforded the same opportunity to celebrate their own communal identity and demarcate their living environments. On the contrary, the forces of law and order were used to ensure that the Catholic community was prevented from visibly exhibiting its loyalty to nationalist principles: *“Although an area could be acknowledged as inhabited by Catholics, it could not easily or readily be regarded as a ‘Catholic area’ since all Catholics were regarded as Irish nationalists and therefore a threat to the status of Northern Ireland....Even the temporary erection of the Irish tricolour was seen as a challenge and an affront, and more permanent displays were almost unknown”* (Jarman, 1998, p.3).

As a result, cultural practices among the nationalist community tended to take place in unofficial venues and developed a strongly resistant ethos (Rolston, 1991). It was only as a consequence of the Civil Rights movement in the early 1970s, and its focus on equal rights for the disenfranchised nationalist community, that murals began to appear in nationalist areas, their reclamation of symbolic identity mirroring the other rights being sought. However, it was during the Hunger Strike protests in 1981 that murals really became prominent in nationalist areas, and joined Republican violence as a form of political strategy. Rolston notes that, unlike the unionist community, nationalists had a plethora of figures and events from Irish history and mythology on which to draw. By weaving episodes from the past with the concerns of the present, nationalist murals offered their community an opportunity to situate their current circumstances within a coherent historical metanarrative. In this way, the murals functioned not only to depict events from the nationalist past, but transformed these events into the agents of contemporary resistance: *“Through these cultural artefacts they articulate their political hopes and fears, their view of their own identity, their hopes of their past and future, and the political obstacles which they see facing them currently or in the future”* (Rolston, 2004, p.118).



Murals in Belfast. Source: Photos by W. Berg (1995)

Interfaces

The location of many of the murals at the points of interface between the communities – on the gable end of rows of houses, for example – may suggest that the dominant function of the murals is to send a clear message to the rival community that the space has been marked and declared as ideological and political. This is after all predominantly how urban graffiti functions (gangs tag their territory as a visible challenge to their rivals). However, what is intriguing about the role of the murals in Belfast is that in apparent contradiction to Welsch’s theory of transculturalism, their function is primarily to address their

own community rather than to engage in a dialogue with the other. Numerous studies of the murals have emphasised this lack of inter-cultural communication.

Rolston, for example, claims that: “(F)or the most part, the murals of each side do not talk directly to the other side. Instead, each side’s murals are about political mobilization within their respective communities....In that sense, they are intended more as a form of political education or reinforcement than as megaphone propaganda” (Rolston, 2004, p.118).

Jarman notes that although the flourishing of nationalist murals in the 1980s led to a huge increase in unionist murals, the themes and messages of each were addressed solely at their own communities and not, as might be expected, intended to provoke or taunt the other: “*The two bodies of mural works have developed in parallel over the last decade or so, and depict many similar themes and images; but the two communities are not engaged in a debate with each other via the murals – rather it is the shared socio-political environment that has helped to generate the similarities. The murals remain a part of two largely separate internal discourses*” (Jarman, 1997, p.209). Moreover, the content of the murals rarely even acknowledges the rival community, concentrating instead on transmitting a sense of unity to its intended audience: “*The colour-coded lampposts and kerbstones often mark the entry into a distinct territory; but most murals tend to be hidden away in back streets. They are rarely painted as provocative statements, and rarely make any obvious reference to the other community or to any sense of conflict....The messages on the murals are not intended to convert the unbelievers*” (Jarman, 1997, p.210).

It would thus appear that Welsch’s claim that single cultures are no longer tenable in the contemporary world due to the fluidity and permeability of borders may not be applicable to cities like Belfast, which not only continues to be rigidly divided along sectarian lines but whose inhabitants appear to have no interest in engaging with each other.

If the function of Belfast’s murals is not to issue a warning or challenge to the rival community, then clearly their focus is inwards, encouraging their own community to unite behind the communal identity being promoted. As Jack Santino reflects, the function of the murals is to tell people “where they are” (Santino, p.36). Thomas Paul Burgess puts it more succinctly when he states that the murals ultimately tell people *who* they are and how they can function to best preserve the values and social identity of their kinship group: “*Emerging from this notion of a collective identification is the perception of a shared, collective experience. A belief that the individual’s life chances are bound up with the prospects of the group as a whole*” (Burgess, p.34).

For many inhabitants of these divided communities, therefore, segregation is seen not as a negative thing, but rather as something that protects and strengthens communal identity.

This definition of an ethnic community as unified by a series of historical, even mythological, narratives is, of course, a common theme in cultural studies. Benedict Anderson's hugely influential statement that political nations are no more than "imagined communities" (Anderson, p.6), underlines many contemporary approaches to globalization and transculturality. At a micro level, however, it would appear that individuals continue to embrace the sense of commonality and solidarity that membership of a specific national or ethnic group appears to afford them. That such binds are constructed, according to Rolston, does nothing to undermine their impact and acknowledging a shared sense of belonging together (Rolston, 2004).

Although this sense of sharing a common history and purpose usually unfolds organically, Donnan and Wilson suggest that in the case of a community living in a contentious environment, a more active approach to the creation of a unified social group is often in evidence: "*Ethnic groups are not simply the automatic by-product of pre-existing cultural differences, but are the consequences of organizational work undertaken by their members who, for whatever reason, are marked off and mark themselves off from other collectivities in a process of inclusion and exclusion which differentiates 'us' from 'them'*" (Donnan and Wilson, p.21).

For the nationalist community in Northern Ireland, who find themselves displaced in a state with which they have neither ethnic, neither religious nor political affiliations, and who moreover have been effectively forgotten by their historical allies in Ireland, it seems that forging a shared identity gives them a sense of purpose and validity. It is for this reason that mythological events and figures feature so prominently in nationalist murals, writing and songs: they provide a community marginalized from the centre of power and influence with a myth of origin that strengthens and reinforces their sense of social identity and belonging.

What is clear about the presence of historical narratives in Northern Ireland, as Santino points out, is that the issues they raise are real and material, rather than abstract and metaphorical. Clashing interpretations of history and contested spaces are realities that people confront every day, so that the conflicts of the past and those of the present are often merged in the popular imagination. The problem for Northern Ireland is that it is not a shared negotiated history that will transcend the traditional differences between the communities that is being forged, but rather two separate metanarratives that will continue to crystallise and perpetuate the differences between them. Unlike most transcultural areas of

the world in which rival historical interpretations gradually begin to fuse into more hybridized and flexible narratives, the inhabitants of Belfast continue to insist upon strictly delineated, monocultural identities.

Peace, Forgetting and Moving on from the Past

The Belfast Agreement (also known as the Good Friday Agreement) was the culmination of extensive peace negotiations between the British and Irish governments and representatives of Northern Ireland's political parties and paramilitary groups. It was signed on the 10th of April 1998 and significantly reimagined Northern Ireland as a political entity. It established the Northern Ireland Assembly, which had devolved legislative powers and – most astonishingly – a government formed by recent and bitter political leaders. On the 23rd of May, the Belfast Agreement was ratified in referenda held in both Ireland and Northern Ireland. A key component in the Irish referendum was the surrender of the claim to the territory of Northern Ireland, which had been enshrined in the Irish Constitution since 1937. As William J.V. Neill and Geraint Ellis state, the Belfast Agreement thus constitutes: “(A) significant re/deterritorialisation of relations between the United Kingdom and the Republic of Ireland” (Neill and Ellis, p.92) – an interesting phrase which draws attention to the central role that ownership and control over the landscape of Northern Ireland has played in its troubled history.

One of the main difficulties faced by the new Assembly was to try to find a way of transcending the deep ideological divisions that continued to define the citizens of Northern Ireland. Because many of these differences were predicated along historic divisions, an attempt was made to celebrate Northern Ireland as an autonomous region, thus isolating it from its own past and its contentious relationship with both Ireland and Britain. This strategy is explained in a document entitled “Shaping our Future”, which was published by the Department of Regional Development: “Together create an outward-looking, dynamic and liveable region with a strong sense of its place in the wider world; a region of opportunity where people enjoy living and working in a healthy environment which enhances the quality of their lives and where diversity is a source of strength rather than division” (Department of Regional Development, p.20). The repetition of the word “region” firmly suggests a policy of looking inward and viewing Northern Ireland as an isolated area in a bid to ignore the complex ethnic and ideological bonds that link the divided population of Northern Ireland with one or other of the surrounding nations.

This attempt to ignore a century of profound social unrest and political violence has been criticized as naïve and shortsighted by many commentators,

who argue that such an abstract though well-meaning attempt to establish an “alternative spatial imaginary” could never hope to displace “the geography of old sectarian politics” (Neill and Ellis, p.94). Neill and Ellis are particularly critical of the plan’s failure to take into account the deeply entrenched divisions that continue to define the landscape of Northern Ireland: “At a regional level, there is a danger of oversimplifying the complex ethnic geography, which features many enclave communities living in the territory of the ‘other’” (Neill and Ellis, p. 94).

Moreover, as B.J. Graham points out, the fundamental flaw at the heart of the focus on regionalism is that the population of Northern Ireland have no sense of shared history that would enable them to draw from the landscape a sense of solidarity and unity: “(O)ne of the primary cultural factors demarcating Northern Ireland from its southern neighbour is that it has never evolved that sense of an invented landscape which might help unify its population in a shared communal sense of identity” (Graham, p.265-6).

A visible consequence of the official decision to ignore contentious geographical issues is apparent in the spatial strategy adopted for Belfast in the post-conflict era. New shopping malls and office blocks have sprung up in the city centre, and an attempt to “re-brand” Belfast by establishing an entire tourism industry based around the building of the Titanic in the city’s Harland & Wolff shipyard, are all obvious signs of the planners’ desire to leave behind the divisions of the past. The problem with this strategy, as Neill and Ellis point out, is that it simply wallpapers over the cracks without addressing any of the underlying faultlines that continue to undermine the stability of Northern Irish society: “While we should acknowledge the fact that a regional strategy did actually emerge out of difficult circumstances, we should not deceive ourselves that it has the competence to really address these issues. A critical cause of this is not only the historical and contemporary context of a sectarian society but also the unwillingness of planners to raise sensitive issues of territory and the expression of cultural identity. Unfortunately, in the re-imagining of post-troubles Belfast, this results in a city which too often settles for third-rate copies of originals that exist elsewhere, leaving a swathe of historical challenges that the recently revived Assemblée will now have to address” (Neill and Ellis, p. 103).

Mirroring the confusion over the best strategy to adopt in order to deal with the legacy of Belfast’s divided landscape is the question of how Northern Ireland’s troubled history should be transformed into a vehicle for future growth and development. Colin Coulter and Michael Murray caution against undue optimism about the peace that reigns in Northern Ireland, stating that: “While Northern Ireland may no longer be at war with itself, neither can it be said to be genuinely at peace. Those hatreds that were in part the source of the conflict

remain clearly evident and may even in fact have grown. The persistence of ethno-political prejudice in particular suggests the need to exercise a little caution before speaking of Northern Ireland as a place that exists ‘after the troubles’” (Coulter and Murray, p.21). One of the difficulties with the Belfast Agreement, according to Patricia Lundy and Mark McGovern, is that although it offers a blue print for dealing with a wide range of issues that emerged as a consequence of thirty years of conflict: “(N)owhere did it make mention of a mechanism for dealing with the past” (Lundy and McGovern, p.34). It is argued that a certain amount of forgetting is necessary for Northern Ireland to move on from the past. The presence in government of former paramilitary leaders has required a form of selective amnesia on the part of both communities in order for the daily task of governing Northern Ireland to proceed. Lundy and McGovern refer to this as a “duty to forget”, but caution that while it might appear to be the best way for Northern Ireland to move on from its divisive, conflict-ridden past, compelling evidence from other societies emerging from periods of sustained conflict suggests that not dealing comprehensively with the past is unlikely to lead to a lasting peace.

Conclusion: Swapping Binarism for Transculturalism?

It is clear that the political will is to move Northern Ireland away from its divided history and foster a new sense of solidarity and cooperation between the two communities. The emphasis in political and tourist publications is on the economic boom being experienced by Belfast. During the decade after the Belfast Agreement, house prices increased more rapidly than any other part of Britain (Neill and Ellis, p.102), and Belfast city centre is now filled with the same kinds of bars and cafes found in any other vibrant city and usually thought to denote a young, multicultural and global social scene. The desire to represent Belfast according to such non-controversial – even illusionary – signifiers has, however, had the effect, as Shirlow notes, of further marginalizing disenfranchised communities by confining them to increasingly ignored and invisible areas of the city. The reality, as many commentators note, is that for the lower classes segregation remains the norm.

Ignatieff suggests that not only are mono-cultural neighbourhoods still common, but that they are in fact on the rise: “(C)ommunity segregation is growing. Sixty percent of the population now live in areas that are more than 90 percent Protestant or Catholic” (Ignatieff, p.170).

Such is the desire among these communities to continue to live segregated lives that the phrase “self-imposed apartheid” has been coined to describe the phenomenon (O’Hara) – perhaps a unique lifestyle choice among the generally

mobile, transcultural population of Western Europe. In spite of the many cultural practices shared by Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland – they speak the same language, watch the same television programmes, shop in the same stores – they continue to live largely separate lives. 90% of Northern Irish children attend separate faith schools with the result, as Cohen states, that: “(T)he overwhelming majority of Ulster’s children can go from four to eighteen without having a serious conversation with a member of a rival creed”. This segregation continues into adulthood with recent surveys indicating that less than 10% of marriages in Northern Ireland are interfaith, while participation in sports is divided along fairly predictable sectarian lines: Catholics play and support GAA teams (hurling and Gaelic football) and the Republic of Ireland soccer team, working-class Protestants support Northern Ireland’s national soccer team, while middle-class Protestants support rugby and cricket clubs (Gouverneur).

Even many workplaces are segregated. According to a 2002 survey conducted by Shirlow: *“Despite widespread support for the ceasefire, only one in five people would take a job on the other side of a peace wall, and just five percent of Catholics and eight percent of Protestants work in an area dominated by the other denomination. In both groups, a majority refuses to use shops, doctors’ surgeries, leisure centres and job centres in what they perceive to be the ‘wrong’ area, even when those facilities would be more convenient”* (Quoted in Ingram).

Shirlow, moreover, notes that the areas of interface between the communities have not led to a dissolution of differences and a growth in intercultural communication, but rather to an increase in inter-community violence and a subsequent need to erect more and higher barriers between them: *“The most evident interfaces are those marked by high walls that both sunder and demarcate the boundaries between communities....Somewhat ominously, there were sixteen interface walls in 1994, the year in which almost all the principal paramilitaries in the region announced a cease-fire. Since then most of these constructions have either been extended or heightened. Nine additional walls have been constructed owing to interface-related violence since 1998”* (Shirlow, p.79).

The impact of segregation on those who live within these areas is obvious. Shirlow notes that young people growing up behind the “peace walls” have only a partial geographical knowledge of the city, this blinkered view of the surrounding space thus compounding their selective understanding of history: *“Owing to such extensive segregation there are whole sections of the city that are virtually unknown to citizens living within Belfast....Growing up within a more intensively segregated city, within which boundaries have become more rigidified by violence, has a momentous impact upon the understanding of place”*

(Shirlow, p.81). It is thus unsurprising that inhabitants of these areas have rarely, if ever, come into actual contact with members of the other community. According to Shirlow's survey of 2002, when asked whether they would enter areas dominated by the other side, 88% said they would not do so at night, 48% would not do so by day and 58% would not shop there; 13.5% would not go for fear of being ostracised by their own communities (Quoted in Ingram).

The consequence of this refusal to engage across the community divide is an extensive – and ludicrous – duplication of services. Gouverneur explains that post offices and letterboxes, places of entertainment, businesses, shopping centres, sports grounds and even bus stops service the communities separately: “Buses follow complex routes to avoid crossing the sectarian divide. Early each morning, Belfast's dustmen split up into two work-teams, one Catholic, the other Protestant. If either community feels that the other is getting a better deal, it will take action. The small, liberal, inter-community Alliance party puts the cost of this duplication of services at 1.5bn a year”. Moreover, far from regarding the visible barriers in their surrounding landscape as an obstacle to interaction between the communities, the inhabitants are happy to defend the lack of interaction on the basis of “tradition” and view the continuation of enforced separation as an aid to the monocultural ethos they prefer. It would appear, based on such recent studies of life in the interface areas of Belfast, that the communities have no particular interest in addressing the physical and psychological barriers that continue to segregate them from one other and that they continue to privilege traditional monocultural narratives of identity over more flexible, transcultural ones. The result, as Cohen succinctly puts it, is that: “A bus ride through Belfast should convince doubters that the Good Friday Agreement created partition and called it peace”.

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Transculturality of Podlachia. Revitalization of Borderland Tradition

Dorota Misiejuk

According to the widely accepted definition the concept of multiculturalism entails a harmonious coexistence of different cultural or ethnic groups (Cashmore, 1994, p.216-217) in a given society, where “society” is understood as a collective group organised into a political administrative unit. Multiculturalism as a model of social co-existence usually refers to ethnic diversity and is focused on delineating borders and cultural differences, pointing to specific characteristics and cultural differences of ethnic groups and forgetting about the other part of definition and the idea of (common) society. In this way in everyday social life a clear interdependence between an ethnic majority and minority arises. This model is centered on the belief that it is the culture of majority that is a legitimate reservoir of values, the carrier of which is cultural heritage of a majority ethnic group and social life is organized around the tradition of this majority group.

In effect, in this kind of society institutional marginalization (social isolation) of ethnic majority groups can be observed. The multicultural society, according to the model of cultural pluralism in which national and ethnic groups have full rights and equal possibilities to maintain and develop their cultures, will act for the separateness of cultural heritage and tradition, and in consequence will create separate groups of social interest. This model assumes creating the political and legal conditions which allow not only maintaining cultural differences but also their growth. It is assumed that there are some permanent borders between individuals and groups defining people as belonging to specific national or ethnic groups, which leads to accepting the idea of closing people within those inherited archaic borders.

Therefore, this model does not only neglect the changes resulting from centuries-old and multi-direction assimilation process, but also, even more important, ignores cultural exchange due to interpersonal contacts over centuries (which is characteristic of borderland). Hence it does not pay attention to all the transformations in the form of new cultural combinations, taking over some groups by the other or creating syncretic or “mosaic” cultures.

Thus, the term of multiculturalism seems to create a situation where cultures compete and as a consequence of emancipation processes among minority cultures to ignite social conflicts rather than act for respect and tolerance as well as peaceful coexistence.

Let us therefore replace the static concept of “multicultural coexistence” by the dynamic proposal of “multicultural permeation”. In the contemporary literature this kind of reality is called transculturality.

Borderland is primarily marked by cultural exchange and mutual learning (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p.129-133), different cultural heritages are present in a specific area. The German philosopher Wolfgang Welsch (Welsch, 1999, p 194-213) transforms the concept of multiculturalism into the idea of transculturality. He breaks with the separatist, competitive idea of cultures where the social effect is usually the appropriation of cultural heritage as well as conflict of traditions, and promoting a network model in return whose effect is the social belief in perpetual cultural exchange, where the cultural life is a result of exchange and borrowings. In the author's opinion the consequence of cultural processes is a hybrid shape of cultural identity.

It should be emphasized, however, as observed by the author, that in the concept of transculturality the hybrid shape of cultural identity should be understood in at least two ways. Transcultural identities are undoubtedly observed in the ideas of cosmopolitanism although having its other side – local embedding. Transcultural identity generates both ideas. Obviously, the contemporary local context most frequently means the ethnicity or society an individual grew up in, but it does not need to be so. People may have their own choices according to their personal cultural context and experience (s. Welsch, 1999, p.212).

Podlachia

Podlachia is a good example of peripheral region. The term ‘periphery’ is used both in sociological (Popławski, 1994) and historical literature (Davies, 2010) and may be employed to signify that the history of people in a given territory or a description of social functioning of individuals and groups lies outside a general discourse for a specific centre. Very often this term is used to describe the historical and social reality of borderland. Podlachia is an example of this kind of territory and one of the reasons for its peripheral character is its geographic location on the outskirts of Europe, nevertheless oriented towards the European cultural processes.

Podlachia, both as a phenomenon of territorial history or as a name of a politically delineated province, has been shaped and is now created as a “multinational space” where different cultural items intermingle to give unique,

original forms shown by specific regional practices and customs, or artifacts of material culture. This is also the region where vital social interests of specific cultural groups compete with each other. Currently revitalization processes of cultural heritage in the traditional borderland Podlachia are to be observed.

Thinking in the categories of cultural heritage and cultural revitalization of a specific territory rather than in the categories of group tradition does stop the vicious circle of national myths, prejudice and stereotypes between groups. This way of dealing with the issue opens a perspective for “our common heritage” to us and refers to the canon of political correctness as a standard in intercultural communication.

In practice, various issues may be addressed, for instance sustaining the traditional cultural landscape in the region, which leads to decisions to sustain the traditional housing in the region as well as supporting different initiatives towards creating the symbolic significance of buildings owned by different cultural groups in the region. The perspective of cultural horizon and not the cultural border makes us aware of heterogenic character of the symbolic culture of the region. Furthermore, the standards of political correctness impose a series of original solutions with regard to the social needs of specific cultural groups in the region.

Periphery or Borderland?

Podlachia is an area where different cultural influences come together. First of all, it may be perceived as a borderland of cultures in terms of civilization, that of the East and West, which in a social dimension takes the form of Eastern and Western Christianity. This is a border of East-Slavic and West-Slavic ethnoses as well as Baltic influences. Finally, it is a territory of bordering symbolic cultures of the Polish, Belarusian, Ukrainian and Lithuanian nations.

Competition between cultures is normally structured by political influences and decisions, social standards and group pressures. All this takes place in a historical process. Co-habitation and construction of people's social world depends on current state ideology (historical period) on the one hand and on active social interactions on the other. Depending on the social standard of intercultural contacts, Podlachia may be regarded as a borderland or periphery.

Periphery is a state of affairs where on account of distancing from the centre (culture), cultural processes are delayed and subject to all kinds of aberrations. Periphery assumes the existence of a centre, a specific standard the periphery aspires to (Sadowski, 2004). Since in a specific territory more than one cultural centre radiates, it entails polarization of cultural attitudes and acute cultural social conflicts. With regard to symbols they usually entail taking possession of

cultural symbols, reducing them to one cultural interpretation or excluding symbols of whole groups from the social life of the region. This is usually the function of a country's policy or of the regional authorities.

The term borderland, however, draws our attention to social interactions. It acknowledges the legality of multiple cultural interpretations and focuses on adding significance to the cultural artifacts of the region (Nikitorowicz, 2009, p.125).

Old History

The area of today's Podlachia was a borderland between the Latin West based on the influences of Rome, and the Greek East determined by Byzantium. The Western tribes united by duke Mieszko I adopted baptism from the Czech in the Western Rite thus placing Poland in the Roman Catholic geographical location.

The East Slavs were baptized in the Greek Rite, which gave rise to the development of Orthodox Church structures, connected with the Kievan Rus'. Until the fourteenth century the territory had no state affiliation and the policies of those days mainly focused on establishing the political affiliation of the territory. The main aspirers to political domination were Rusyn and Mazovian dukes. Lithuanian dukes also claimed their rights to the political management of the land. History contains just events like joint raids of two parties against a third political contestant in the territory, and the role distribution changed constantly.

Another important factor from the perspective of our considerations was validating the possession of a specific territory by marriages of Mazovian dukes with Rusyn princesses and conversely: Rusyn dukes took, as they were then called, Lach princesses their wives, which was a common practice. For establishing a more lasting political stability the idea of consecrating king who as a God's anointed would have a political influence and open path to the stable regional policy. It was the idea of Duke Daniel Romanowicz (in Ukrainian historiography known as Danilo Halickij), which would be implemented by church union.

The cultural policy started with the proposal of conversion into Catholicism made by Pope Gregory IX in the year 1231. In this his way he tried to subject duke of Halitch to his jurisdiction and thus reformulates the cultural tints of the region. In response Daniel of Halitch (Danilo Halickij), who was actively involved in the policy of uniting Rusyn land and whose activity was mostly seen in the development and strengthening of Orthodox Church bishoprics, moved the capital to Chełm, and after the year 1245 we could observe a fast growth of church organisation. Thanks to Daniel's efforts the patriarch of Constantinople consecrated his chancellor Cyril to become the metropolitan of Kiev, who on account of the current political situation in the region (Kiev was occupied by the

Tartar and Mongol Golden Horde) stayed in the territory of Halitch and Volhynia Duchy. Therefore, in the first stage of constructing borderland there were no agreements entered into, but cultural borders were marked. The issue recurred on numerous occasions until the year 1253 when the papal legate Opizon brought the duke of Halitch the crown sent by pope Innocent IV. The coronation took place in an Orthodox church in Drohiczyn (s. Mironowicz, 2006, p.94)

Unfortunately, this historic moment had no further consequences. It seems that the original intention was not adequately understood by politicians and decision – makers of that time. The church union, whose symbolic beginning was Daniel's coronation, was opposed by the Orthodox Church hierarchs, and first of all by the already mentioned Cyril II. Thus, we can say that the border rather than borderland was established and the region in question was divided into two political bodies: the Crown (Poland) and the Grand Duchy of Lithuania (the Lithuania which ceased to exist in 1795 and whose successor is the contemporary Lithuania).

However, the view of the past from the political and cultural perspective gives a totally different picture: *“Grand Lithuanian dukes made excellent wartime chiefs in the thirteenth and fourteenth century Europe. They conquered vast areas ranging from their Baltic land to the South through the midland territory of Eastern Slavs, to the Black Sea. By occupying the areas left after the Mongol invasion of Kievan Rus' they annexed most of the East Slavic land”* (Snyder, 2006, p.29).

The Rusyn Orthodox boyars, however, severely affected by Mongol invasions, saw the political expansion of Lithuanians as liberation rather than occupation. They did not make any objections but just the opposite, they employed their cultural experience in the process of constructing state. In this way the Rusyn civilization with its Orthodox Church religion, Old Slavic language and a mature legal tradition of Kievan Rus', gave the foundation for a new political construct.

The union with the Crown (Poland), which took place in the year 1385, changed the distribution of political power and in consequence the cultural image of the region. Despite the fact that in the initial stage the Rusyn element played a considerable cultural as well as political and advisory role, the baptism of Jogaila (Jagiello in the Polish tradition) in the Roman Catholic Rite created ties with Western Europe and enabled the political influence of Poland. An example of vivid Rusyn tradition in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania could be Holy Trinity chapel, founded by King Władysław Jagiello (Jogaila in the Lithuanian tradition) in the Lublin castle. The chapel wall decorations of unquestioned Eastern origin

and first of all the text of inscription on the foundation plaque make us realize what cultural tradition the Lithuanian ruler and Polish king Jagiełło referred to as his own.

With time, and especially in the aftermath of personal union with the Crown and creation of the Commonwealth of Both Nations after the year 1569, the Grand Duchy of Lithuania, then a political federation of Lithuanian and Rusyn land, changed into a centralized political body, and through political decisions concerning access to central administrative offices only to Roman Catholic followers, it caused two general cultural processes:

- Noble families (with political ambitions) assimilated into the Polish culture
- The cultural heritage of East Slavic people was marginalized.

Actually, a social stereotype emerged identifying social status with culture. The sign of which was a religious affiliation (with a Roman Catholic nobleman or magnate vs. Orthodox peasant or subject).

Podlachia in the Middle Ages

In the Middle Ages when Poland of that time got firmly established in the Western Christianity and was fast acquiring the benefits of western civilization, as early as in the eleventh century in Greater Poland and Lesser Poland regions construction started to thrive: rich monasteries and fortified castles were built. Even in the countryside Romanesque and Gothic churches in brick were erected: townfolk becoming richer thanks to trade, built defense walls and towers, but in Podlachia human colonies were rare and usually placed on rivers. Basically, it was an empty, uncolonized area without established state affiliation.

A strong settlement trend was the Vistula Mazovian colonization from the west. In the north the Baltic colonization was of ethnic kind, either Jatzvingian or Lithuanian. As early as in the tenth century the area was colonized by Rusyn dukes who conquered and took control of such towns as Mielnik, Drohiczyn, Suraż, Bielsk and Brańsk. The conflicts between Lithuanian and Rusyn duchies as well as Jatzvingian and Teutonic invasions depopulated the area again in the late thirteenth century and their political affiliation was not still established. The only surviving relics of those ancient times are artificial mounds where among inaccessible wetlands wooden grads were built. An extraordinary, well kept and thoroughly studied example of this kind of fortified settlement could be the remains in Haćki near Bielsk Podlaski (Fabińska, 2005). Sacral buildings of those times were mostly wooden and as such they did not survive to this day.

The mass colonization of the land took place as late as in the fourteenth century. From the west, just like in the previous settlement wave, the territory of the today's Podlachia was colonized by the Mazovian duke, Janusz I by settling

on its eastern edges families of minor Mazovian knights. The Lithuanian dukes also contributed to a new colonization of the land by establishing villages of Rusyn boiars along the contemporary border with Mazovia, mainly to defend the territory. Along with them the Lithuanian and Belorussian settlement started in the north and the Ukrainian settlement in the southeast.

The weakening of cultural Ruthenian influences in Podlachia could be observed in the late sixteenth century when the Brest Province was separated from Podlachia and then its remaining part annexed to the Crown, which ultimately stopped the activity of Lithuanian and Ruthenian civil servants as well as the inflow of Lithuanians and Belarusians, but not Ukrainians, since the political borders of the Crown encompassed the territory of Ukraine of that time.

Modern Times

„Here is Podlachia! I called reading the inscription: this is where the border of Mazovian Province ends”, wrote Kazimierz Władysław Wójcicki, a Polish author and historian from the era of Romanticism, a publisher of works by outstanding Polish Romantic writers. As it can be observed in the social perception of that time Podlachia was a region behind the border of Mazovia which meant that Mazurians and Rusyns were culturally alien to each other. A Mazurian was an inhabitant of Mazovia and a Rusyn was a descendant of the settlers from Rus' who have massively colonized the land over four hundred years ago from the fourteenth century onward.

In his diaries K.W. Wójcicki gives evidence of the multilayered culture referred to in the introduction and observes that “the province apart from its citizens [*this name applied to landowners, landed gentry*] and petty nobility, or hide nobility, comprises of Mazurian settlements and the settlements of Rusyns of Uniate denomination, differing in character, clothing, customs and dialect.” The author does not refer to the ethnicity of landed gentry and nobility viewing social status as cultural category. Gaining the status of citizen was at the time parallel to the Polish affiliation (Snyder, 2006), and since the very author was immersed in it, he does not see the need for a cultural analysis of this group. The cultural difference indicators apply solely to the status of estate owner, peasant and finally a subject. In his description he emphasizes the role of religious denomination. In the social perception of cultural differentiation in Podlachia until the present day religious denomination is one of the most significant indicators of cultural differences and does not only designate the ritual differences or signify faith, but also assigns ethnicity to a person described (Pawluczuk, 2008, p.131-149).

One of the indicators the author mentions is dialect. From the perspective of dialect studies the category of a Rusyn refers to two contemporary national minorities inhabiting the region of Podlachia, that is Belorussians and Ukrainians. It should be pointed out, however, that the concept of “Ruski” or its equivalent “Rusiński” (Rusyn) defined their adherence to the East Slavic cultures, excluding the Russian one.

Local Culture

An interesting cultural phenomenon of the region were the so-called “tutejsi” (the locals). This category referred to Orthodox people who in everyday life used dialects of the Belorussian or Ukrainian languages, but did not declare Belorussian or Ukrainian national identity. This group identity is caused by the marginalization of the East Slavic heritage. In Podlachia the “tutejsi” appeared in tsar statistics of 1798 or in the statistics of interwar period in Poland, that is in the years 1919, 1921 and 1931. Historian Timothy Snyder analyzes the issue in the following way: *“Tutejszość’ (local character) of the most noblemen was often a conscious rejection of ideologies which did not fit into the local tradition. The ‘tutejszość’ of the peasants was a practical response to the complicated model of language assimilation and diplomatic way to avoid taking sides, whether of the Polish speaking noblemen or of the Russian tsarist civil servants.”* (Snyder, 2006, p.54)

Józef Jaroszewicz, an outstanding scholar of Vilnius University since 1828, has observed that the population of Podlachia is multinational in character in towns and cities and almost culturally homogenous in the countryside. The indicator of this cultural homogeneity in the author's opinion is its Slavic affiliation, but the author also notices ethnic differences within the boundaries of the Slavic community and writes: *“When describing the population [.....] city dwellers and village inhabitants should be distinguished. In the first one the population [...] is varied with Russians, Poles, Rusyns, Germans and in the greatest proportion Jews. The other is inhabited by a Slavic people of dual kind, differing in their speech, religion, customs, clothing and appearance. [...] The seats of both peoples are distributed in such a way that the whole poviát may be divided into the Rusyn and Polish part [...] The western part of the poviát, closer to the border of the Kingdom of Poland, has the Polish and Mazovian population, whereas the eastern one, adjacent to the poviát of Brest, Pruzhana and Wawkavysk – the Rusyn one”* (Quote from Hawryluk, 1995, pp.97-98).

In the year 1854 similar observations were made by a local correspondent of “Gazeta Warszawska” emphasizing the separation of the region from the rest of Poland, who called the surroundings of Bielsk, Narewka and Narew the Rusyn Podlachia. He wrote that *“the one who approaching from Pinsk, for instance, to*

Białystok through Pruzhana, after a few day strenuous journey in which he rarely met a man, [...] has already gone through the Białowieża Forest and will emerge from the dark forests [...] stretching between Narewka and Narew, should know that he entered the Rusyn Podlachia. The land, once part of the Podlachia Province, constituted the whole of Podlachia and comprised of the Rusyn and Polish population. Today almost all of it belongs to the Hrodna Guberniya and only its small part lies in the Kingdom of Poland [...], but its boundaries are hard to tell clearly since the settlements of both tribes came into contact and intermingled so much that the Rusyn villages may be found in the land totally Mazovian, whereas Mazurians are found settled among Rusyns” (Quote from Hawryluk, 1995, pp).

Similar hypotheses were also offered from the scientific perspective (not only as current affairs). Zygmunt Gloger pointed to the uniqueness and separateness of the ethnic and demographic situation of the region from the rest of the country, Poland. In his writings he observed the settlement process of the area with its homogenous villages and settlements, though intermingled. He generally speaks of village inhabitants of Mazovian origin and of the inhabitants of Rusyn villages. He demonstrates the multitude of proper names of the inhabitants of Rusyn villages in the scientific studies of the period, such as Belorussian, Black Ruthenian, Little Ruthenian or Red Ruthenian. Nevertheless, he emphasizes the fact that for the very inhabitants the names are meaningless. They call themselves “tutejsi” (the locals). “We have been tutejsi for generations – say the people, and we have never been subordinate to lords as we are royal people.” (Gloger, 1907, p.12)

Generally, in Podlachia life is centered in towns: “*The stereotypical image of a provincial town presents a Polish or polonized landowner, a small middle class evidently of Jewish character and local illiterate serfs of Lithuanian or Ruthenian origin*” (Davis, 2010, p.272). The contemporary guidebooks point to the cultural coexistence in towns by attributing social status and occupations to specific ethnic groups. Thus, Jews dealt with trade, Tartars processed skins and Belorussians were craftsmen. Traditionally Gypsies traded in horses. Very often in the markets of those small and big towns Roman Catholic churches, Orthodox churches and Jewish synagogues were situated close to each other.

Revitalization

The contemporary Podlachia is a region of Poland whose identity is constructed around the “multicultural” paradigm. The diversity of languages and religions becomes its trademark and makes it different from other provinces by comparison. The University of Białystok, when presenting its mission, also sees

the borderland studies and analyzes them as important research tasks. The reference is made to the rich and diverse cultural heritages of the region.

An example for the rediscovery of the musical heritage of the Christian East is the annual Festival of Orthodox Church Music both in Hajnówka and Białystok. It is a festival characterized by a high artistic level, performances of international range Orthodox Church music as well as the performances of local Orthodox Church choirs. An example of popular music may be the work of “Czeremszyzna” ensemble, which – although basically active in the cultural centre in Czeremcha village – has already gained a broader artistic meaning.

Folk art and folk customs are presented in various ways. This is done by festivals which present the heritage of not only Mazovian (Polish) folk culture, but also the heritage of Rusyn (Belorussian and Ukrainian). The Museum of the Countryside near Białystok has largely contributed to it by organizing several events and also by becoming a renowned centre for studies and analyzes of the East Slavic folk culture (Gawel, 2009).

An original social solution and reference to the multicultural heritage is undoubtedly the idea of bilingualism in the system of education. There are preschools, primary schools in the region which include in their programme not only the cultural tradition of the majority but also take notice of the East Slavic traditions in education.

Calendar

Podlachia is a region where the social calendar observes the traditions of both Roman Catholics and Orthodox Church followers, which takes the form of, for instance, official holidays for students. The coexistence of two calendars, the official Gregorian one and the traditional Julian calendar in the Orthodox Church, concerns primarily the periods of Christmas, Easter and New Year. The difference is due to the fact that – opposed to the Gregorian solar calendar – the Julian calendar is calculating in reference to the Moon. It leads effectively to a 13-day difference in calendar.

Depending on a number of Orthodox pupils school work is organized differently in the holiday periods. If the number of Orthodox pupils at school is smaller than 30 %, then in the Orthodox holiday period (7-8 January) Orthodox children's absence at school is excused and in school practice teachers usually make pupils revise the material rather than learn new issues. If, however, the number of Orthodox pupils is higher than 30 %, all the pupils, regardless of their religious affiliation, have additional days off from school. The biggest regional university, University in Białystok, as well as other institutions of higher education usually arrange for additional time off work for all the students having classes in the holiday period defined by the Julian calendar.

The social situation connected with celebrating the arrival of New Year in the Julian calendar looks a bit different. 14 January is not a day off from work or school, but nevertheless small and big towns as well as Orthodox villages celebrate the arrival of New Year according to the Julian calendar. Restaurants, pubs and bars in town have a special offer for guests, and different Orthodox parishes also organise New Year parties. All inhabitants of Podlachia may attend such parties regardless of their national or religious affiliation.

Architecture

In the area of Podlachia there are buildings out of wood and out of bricks. The tradition of wood we mostly encounter on terraced villages whose plan goes back to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that is the period of land measurement reform. After the year 1539 in the royal estates in Podlachia planned and wide – ranging colonization activity started combined with the reform of agricultural structure: dispersed settlements were collected, whereas the land amassed and reorganized into plots again. As a result of this activity regular street villages appeared and the consequence of agrarian reform and land integration was the rearrangement of field structure. The process initiated by queen Bona contributed to the emerging of a new type of village with a very regular layout that is terraced street villages. There are large villages which have between a dozen to over two hundred cottages, such as Czyże, Klejniki, Ryboły or Trześcianka. This regular distribution of land has been kept up to date and started to become a symbol of the whole region. All tourist guidebooks are provided with aerial photos showing regular arrangement of fields and villages.

Currently, life in the Podlachian countryside is subject to fast change triggered off by globalisation and economic processes. Basically, the villages are inhabited by old dwellers, whereas the young migrated to big cities. The infrastructure and traditional types of buildings are currently viewed as heritage and the significance of material cultural artefacts is revealed anew. Old schools are now transformed into local museums of material heritage of the region and traditional work tools, clothes or crafts are collected there. These buildings sometimes become a sort of hostels and gathering places for the youth from several national minority organisations or Orthodox fellowships. Some owners of these houses transform them into tourist centres and run agrotourism activity there. The guests who come to stay at these households have a chance to learn about the local tradition of language, cuisine, customs and practices. Apart from the agrotourism movement sentimental reemigration is observed. The heirs “return” to home villages and make use of the house of grandparents or great grandparents as a vacation home spending their holidays there.

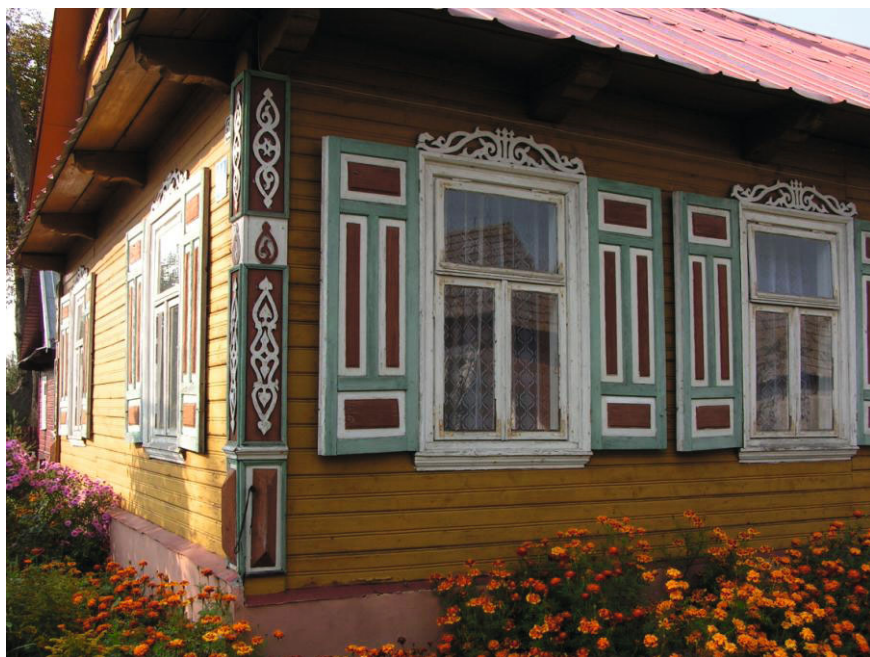
The owners of houses used in the way described above usually care of the old houses and try to recreate their historical character. Unfortunately, in reality it concerns only a small percentage of the buildings preserved. The majority of them are renovated with the use of modern building materials and deprived of their historical character.

The original regional ornaments of wooden houses are undoubtedly of historical significance. The ornaments reflect a centuries-long tradition of Ruthenian people in the territory despite the processes of change in state affiliation.

The house decorations are not only an effect of aesthetic preferences of their owners but epitomize a centuries-long cultural tradition. The decoration has deep symbolic connection with religion, and first of all with the Eastern Rite Christianity as well as folk beliefs of East Slavic community.

In Podlachia there were three social village organisation forms. The first one were private villages where the village dwellers had little to say in the matter of building or decorating peasant cottages. The decisions on architecture, decoration and esthetic standard were made by a village owner, a landowner, who was guided by other factors than originality. The other groups were villages with the treasury village past. To a large extent the principle of using land and housing was based on rent paid to the State Treasury, which in social terms gave house owners more decision making space. In these settlements the appearance of the house was an effect of determination, esthetics and financial possibilities of the house dwellers. It was mostly in the village areas of that origin house decorations survived. Nowadays the decorations are analyzed only as manifestations of specific cultural esthetics and when sustained and renewed they are a tourist attraction. In the past, however, these ornaments and decorations encoded Old Slavic beliefs, presented them in iconic forms and “entered” the space of village social communication as exemplifiers of the social position of house dwellers.

Currently, social movement for revitalization of this heritage is growing. Different associations and non-government organizations are engaged in projects and programmes to sustain the heritage for their part, and architects seem to be propagating the idea of traditional architectural solutions. The purpose is, taking into account the civilization needs of the inhabitants, not to interfere in the spacial and architectonic layout, for the cultural image to remain untouched. The works are largely supported by the Marshal's Office which organizes a competition for the best-preserved old wooden building in the region every year. Regarding both the historical records as well as social memory, the issue of transculture seems to be brought up theoretically in social sciences (nowadays) and existing “naturally” in the communities of borderland territory (“forever”).



Ornaments of Wooden Houses. Photos by Dorota Misiejuk

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Bukovyna: Fading Diversity

Anatoliy Kruglashov

Chernivtsi Region of Ukraine, one of the successors to the historical region of Bukovyna, is fairly considered a particular, multiethnic territory. This region is uniquely diverse as one of the multiethnic borderlands in Eastern Europe, and includes a variety of historical and ethnographic subregions with specific domestic and externally oriented traditions and inclinations. The region changed its national and political affiliation many times in the past, and passed complex ethnonational and ethnosocial evolutionary stages. A complicated history of the region has been reflected in its ethnic composition, traditional labor sector, and regional distribution of labor and resources

Myths of Austrian Bukovyna

The contemporary regional ethnopolitical situation in Bukovyna traces back to the past centuries but especially the 18th-19th centuries. There is no unanimity in scholars' opinions and estimations as for the content and direction of these developmental processes. Until very recently, the main dividing line separating scientists has been defined by a limited number of debatable issues. Students of the subject would present alternative views on which ethnic group should be considered autochthonous in this territory, be given precedence in its industrial and cultural transformation and which ethnic group should enjoy the 'historical right' to consider Bukovyna its 'own' ethnic territory.

Although the political history of the 20th century has resolved this issue, even if somewhat crudely, the debates linger and arouse interest not only among the academia, but also general public. First and foremost, this is an intellectual confrontation between representatives of the Romanian and Ukrainian national historiographies.

Bukovyna has been widely recognized as a region of multinational culture, its common denominator being a high, particularly in the specific East European context, level of tolerance in ethnic relations among local communities. Without touching upon these problems in historical detail, it is noteworthy that there are serious grounds to consider namely the Austrian period of regional history as a starting point for emergence of the regional model of ethnic relations.

It is evident that even at that time the territory of the current Chernivtsi Region and, before that, all of Bukovyna was not monoethnic. The region was inhabited by representatives of ethnic groups of different origin and level of cultural development. However, evidence of their developmental and ethnocultural legacy, even though meaningful, may hardly be related to the modern situation in their ethnic relations.

Emergence of the Bukovynian multicultural mosaic occurs in the Austrian period. At that time, the powerful Austrian Empire could ensure more efficiently, as compared to preceding rulers of the region (contrary to Ottoman Empire, first of all), its peaceful development. Due to the location of the region close to the border, Vienna was urged to give special attention to its internal stability. One of the important dimensions of this stability was absolute subordination in relations between ethnic communities of the region and the local as well as the central government. Relations between the Ukrainian and Romanian community were of the utmost importance to regional stability. At the same time, activities of the influential German, Jewish and Polish communities played an important – stabilizing and oftentimes coordinating – role in local social and political life.

More propitious conditions for improving the local ethnonational climate emerged from the mid-19th century. Since when this region acquired the status of the Dukedom of Bukovyna and certain autonomy which enabled it to deal independently with a number of technical, administrative and cultural matters, it developed under special conditions which made it different not only from the neighboring Galicia but also from other multiethnic territories of the dual monarchy. The Romanian population whose leaders represented mostly hereditary dynasties of medieval Moldova, preserved certain privileges and enjoyed, in comparison with the Ukrainians, greater opportunities in their ethnocultural and sociopolitical development (Luceac I. p. 26 – 34).

Romanians and Ukrainians

Gradual consolidation of the young Romanian state, subsequent to Romania's gaining full independence in 1878, resulted in strengthening positions of this ethnic group in the region. This situation urged the government in Vienna to conduct the policy of stick and carrot with regard to key policy-makers of the regional Romanian community. On the one hand, the latter enjoyed ample opportunities for exercising influence in the region and climbing up the imperial career ladder. On the other hand, the police and other institutions of state power attempted to avert well in advance emerging separatist sentiments and proliferation of the anti-Habsburg attitudes among the local Romanian elites.

In contrast to the Romanians of Bukovyna, the Ukrainian community did not have the corresponding neighboring kin state. However, feeling sharply

deficiency of such external support and understanding weakness of their positions in the dialog with Vienna, some Ukrainian policy-makers, Bukovynian and Galician by origin, invented a substitute of sorts, namely support by the Russian Empire. Russian political elites were well inclined to exploit periodically the Russophile and pro-Moscow sentiments of Slavs in Austria-Hungary if those met geopolitical goals and plans of St. Petersburg. Such interest was confirmed by active diplomacy of the Russian consul in Chernivtsi as well (Bukovyna, p. 170 – 171).

Hence, the Austrian government was compelled to conduct the policy of balancing interests of particular national communities and resort to conflict management. The decision-makers skillfully counterpoised their interests, and supported or persecuted some social and political movements, and later political parties, which aspired representation and lobbied interests of major ethnic groups. One must confess that until the last days of the Danube Empire, such policies yielded some fruitful results, in the sense of preserving state integrity. Neither the Romanian nor Ukrainian social and political milieus in Bukovyna engendered nationalist or separatist movements, while their leaders communicated with Vienna, exhibiting in the majority of situations their absolutely sincere loyalty, towards both the Emperor and the ruling dynasty, and only after that cherishing their own national and political ideals, and subsequently identities.

Germans and Jews

An important role in local life and activities was also played by the German, Jewish and Polish communities. The German segment was the prime executor of the imperial political, administrative and cultural policies, and ensured bureaucratic support for the imperial regime; consequently, it enjoyed certain, even though most probably informal, privileges. Nonetheless, this group's modest numerical size and limited resources for local sociopolitical clout did not allow the central power to rely exclusively on this community and, acting on its behalf, to satisfy its demands as the only priority (Osadchuk, p. 12 -17).

The Jewish community played a prominent and peculiar role in the dialogue of representatives of different nations and cultures. This ethnic group was overwhelming or, leastways, more sizeable in the cities and towns of Bukovyna (Corbea-Hoisie A., p. 29 – 42). In this agricultural region, Jews were eager to perform the role of founders and proponents of the values of elevated urban subculture. In fact, they were most active in spreading, consuming and supporting the German-Austrian culture and traditions of that time (Lichtblau A. & John M.). Well-educated local Jews were agents of the imperial culture; they

ardently performed these functions and were ready, in their most part, to abandon voluntarily, for example, their own traditional language – Yiddish. At the same time, their efforts were noticed. They received in response the level of support by the authorities unprecedented in Russia and/or, probably, in other European empires (Ingrao Ch., p. 10).

Tolerance

As a result of ‘belated modernization’ defined by the peripheral location of the region in relation to the European industrial processes, processes of formation of national consciousness in Bukovyna experienced less vibrant dynamics than in the neighboring regions and did not acquire features of sharp social antagonism. Over the 19th century, the regional system of economic labor distribution and relevant social roles emerged in Bukovyna which led to the complex system of relations and interdependencies among the citizens of its towns and villages. Within this system of interdependencies, the polarizing impact of ethnic differentiation was partially mitigated by religious cohesion, while social and class conflicts were dampened, to some extent, by ethnocultural solidarity and concomitant comprehension of common identity.

The experience of settled life in rural households acquired over many centuries made possible peaceful coexistence not only in circumstances of ethnically homogenous, but also in heterogeneous settlements (e.g., Romanian-Ukrainian, Ukrainian-Polish, etc.). Thus, the region witnessed evolution of the Bukovynian ethnocultural traditions as essentially tolerant ones, and in some aspects even symbiotic. Deficiency of numerical representation for some regional communities was compensated by their high social activity which rested on quality education (surely, by the then standards) and prestigious social ties. For example, Bukovyanian Poles were far from numerous, yet exerted considerable influence in the administrative and educational spheres of local life and, in this manner, felt rather comfortable as an indispensable part of the Bukovynian society (Strutinski W., Jaceniuk F., p. 118 – 129).

Of particular importance was the fact that local populations were not only bearers of ethnic and later national identities, but also perceived themselves as Bukovynians, and proudly emphasized this regional identity of theirs. Such informal consent and insistence on common regional identity by members of different ethnic and religious groups cemented foundations of the regional consensus, which was additionally cultivated by means of everyday verbal communication. In this manner, components which shaped the Bukovynian identity were a certain common denominator, an integrating core in contrast to other types of regional self-identification – imperial, ethnonational, religious, social, etc. One should not underestimate Vienna’s well-thought policies towards

Bukovyna. They actively contributed to ensuring the local ethno-political climate in which threats to regional and national security were circumvented (Popyk S., p. 35-36). Local ethnic tolerance was cultivated by the central and regional authorities exactly because it was an efficient and convenient tool serving both domestic and foreign interests of the Empire. Simultaneously, this position was consistent with the local mindset and needs of regional populations, as well as vital interests of the members of Bukovyna's major ethnic and religious communities.

World War I

The historical synthesis of the intraregional sociocultural compromise and imperial policies with regard to the potential war-front borderland was neither completed nor resistant to deformations. In particular, it was WW I that seriously undermined the foundations of Bukovynian regional identity. It initiated the 'beginning of the end' to this remarkable regional multiethnic phenomenon. This unique culture suffered tremendous losses as a result of discouragement caused by armed combat and reprisals of the war period, as well as forced exodus of generations of local public figures. These people were proponents and bearers of the 'Bukovynism' culture, which was a rather viable regional synthesis of imperial patriotism and local ethnosocial conformism (Dobrzhanskyi A.V., p. 74-83). Successors to the Austrian era inherited a rich legacy of brilliant legends and tempting myths, especially if compared to earlier and later historical periods. From time to time, such estimations are revived in contemplations of the local intelligentsia and bolstered by nostalgia of ordinary citizens, as reminiscences of peaceful and tolerant coexistence of communities on the territory of the Dukedom of Bukovyna come to mind (Burkut I., p. 194).

Beyond any doubt, these mythologies rest on some rational grounds. Besides good will of regional policy-makers and common sense of ordinary citizens, the phenomenon of Bukovynism and Bukovynian ethnocultural tolerance owe their origination to other factors as well. Powerful processes of national renaissance and politicization of ethnic groups ubiquitous in Eastern Europe at the turn of the 19th-20th centuries, processes of social and ethnic mobilization were consciously and rather consistently dampened and neutralized by an intricate network of the Austrian political and cultural institutions, as well as a developing civil society (Nikiforak M.V., p. 60-62). Taking into account absence of the dominant ethnic group in the region, these institutions were well placed to perform a mediating function whenever discrepancies in opinion would arise. The mechanism of problem-shooting oftentimes involved the imperial

ideological paradigm as a pivot, on which interests of local populations, in all their diversity, revolved.

In addition, processes of modernization, up until the collapse of the Danube Empire, could not, and were not given sufficient time to, overcome the patriarchal inertia and political conservatism of citizens of this mainly pre-industrial region of Eastern Europe. In its idealistic representation, Bukovyna resembled an East European Switzerland. This was exactly the model advocated by the majority of local intellectuals and public figures of diverse national origins, should Austria-Hungary disintegrate. Futility of this project was vividly demonstrated during autumn months of 1918, when the whole territory of Bukovyna was occupied by Romania (Bevz T., Jaremchuk V., p. 18-24).

Hopes for fair and peaceful resolution of the issue of the Bukovynians' national self-determination, envisaging partition of the region into the Ukrainian and Romanian territories, were destined to fade into oblivion.

Romanian Government

Surely, Romania's annexation of the territory of Bukovyna did not meet expectations of many of its citizens, not only Ukrainians, but also representatives of other national groups. At that time, only the predominant Romanian population welcomed this development, which brought about a long-awaited status of representatives of the state, titular nation in the region.

Romanian authorities conducted the only policy of Romanization of this multiethnic region, in a resolute and oftentimes uncompromising manner. Such policies inevitably went hand-in-hand with conscious and systematic discrimination of national minorities. They meant tangible economic and socio-cultural losses for local Ukrainians.

Romania's official position on Bukovynian Ukrainians was theoretically formulated by Prof. Ion Nistor and pivoted on the statement that autochthonous Ukrainians were in fact Romanians who had "forgotten" their genuine national roots. In order to rectify this historical injustice exploited by Romania's adversaries, one should take all necessary steps to help them cure this national amnesia and restore their lost consciousness (Livezeanu Irina, p. 65).

Anxious about preserving its territorial acquisitions since 1918, in the interwar period Bucharest was not secure from its neighbors' efforts at revising new Romanian borders, especially taking into account the fact that the border regions were inhabited by populations ethnically akin to the titular nations of these states. It inevitably caused tensions in relations of Romania with its neighbors and, at the end of the day, made Bucharest perceive the majority of national minorities as the 'fifth column' of Great Romania's strategic enemies.

The conditions of the Jewish community could not compare with the Austrian period, either. Jews were not only ethnically, but also economically discriminated. Romania of that time was the country which widely practiced, if not cultivated, anti-Semitism (Shtein).

In general, ethnonational policies of the Romanian period of regional history may be assessed negatively. In the early days of the Romanian rule, in the 1920s, some remnants of regional autonomy still existed: multicultural educational institutions, local periodicals in different languages, national-cultural and even social-political organizations which represented interests of non-Romanian population of the region were still significant and influential. However, by the late 1930s these liberal freedoms had been trampled. In this period, political, institutional and socio-cultural fundamentals of traditional multiculturalism and ethnic tolerance inherited from the Bukovynian history were seriously damaged.

The chauvinism of Great Romania engendered and nourished reactive nationalism of other national communities, thus drawing the vicious circle of mutual antipathy, suspicions and persistent prejudices. Instead of previously cultivated ethnic and religious tolerance and cultural pluralism (not always supported by the authorities), the rulers officially propagated ethnocultural homogeneity. Instead of the traditional balance of interests of diverse national communities and their equal representation in the bodies of local and regional government, the authorities pursued policies of employment monopoly of the titular nation and ousting representatives of national minorities not only from the institutes of public management and educational sphere, but also from other prestigious economic and social sectors.

Soviet Model

The Soviet period after World War II was characterized by new socio-political, geopolitical and socio-economic living conditions for Bukovynians. A new region and constituent part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic was formed in the north-western part of historical Bukovyna. Bukovynian lands, northern parts of the historical and ethnodemographic region of Bessarabia and the former Hertsa cinut of Romania were arbitrarily included into a new territorial unit.

Internally, social and cultural dimensions of newly formed Chernivtsi Region of UkSSR were defined by various migratory processes. Firstly, early 1940s witnessed exodus of the traditionally important ethnic group of the Bukovynian population – the Germans. Secondly, the number of Polish residents decreased considerably. Thirdly, the ratio of ethnic Romanians also diminished

(less dramatically), primarily due to emigration to Romania, and sometimes even farther away. Fourthly, in the aftermath of WW II and guerilla fighting of the Ukrainian nationalist groups, the local Ukrainian population was decimated, and local intellectuals were those who suffered most severely. Reprisals practiced by the Soviet regime were not directed against any particular ethnic group, and affected almost all national communities of the region.

The ratio and socio-cultural structure of the Jewish population underwent most considerable changes. Exterminated or forced to emigrate, local Jews of Chernivtsi were replaced by Soviet Jews who resettled from Bessarabia and other far distant regions of the USSR. Nonetheless, these newly arrived Jews differed significantly from the traditional Bukovynian Jewish population by their educational level, traditions, as well as their place and importance in the ethnocultural mosaic of the region, as it was in the afterwar period. Thus, multiethnicity of the region was preserved to some extent, but the population was significantly socially simplified and culturally impoverished.

Additionally, in the aftermath of WW II the Soviet regime systematically pursued the policy of resettlement, which manifested itself in increasing numbers of immigrants from other regions of Ukraine and Union republics. The outcome of this policy was the influx of Russians who replaced, to some extent, the German community, at least numerically. Before that, presence of Russians in the region had been limited to islands of the 'old-believers' Orthodox community.

Liquidation of the local peasantry economic and social freedom, expropriations and reprisals against the bourgeoisie, processes of collectivization and industrialization resulted in a new, socially unified and all-national model of social life in the region. Bearers and creators of national consciousness were either physically exterminated or imprisoned, or bribed and neutralized by the new rulers through other available means (Marusyk T., p. 134, 141, 144).

Implementation of the Soviet national policy effectively meant that local intellectuals, as the main bearers and proponents of the national identity of leading ethnic groups of the region, possessed neither institutional nor socio-political levers of influence which would be separated from the official position, up until Gorbachev's perestroika.

The Soviet experience of the region was also marked by processes of forceful if not aggressive industrialization, in its usual Stalin-Soviet style. These processes made a pronounced impact on socio-cultural life. After all, residents of neighboring villages recruited by industrialization and urbanization, not only filled up certain vacuum engendered by consecutive tides of emigration from the regional center. First and foremost, they ensured formation of the local working class whose representatives were regarded as a social and political support to the

regime, and, after receiving further education, filled up lower rungs of the bureaucratic ladder. At the same time, this actively developing working class, together with the party, Soviet and industrial bureaucracy, as well as some representatives of the educational and cultural sphere, were an effective channel of Russification of the local population.

The ratio of the Russian population, even taking into account its significant demographic growth, was far from overwhelming. Nonetheless, these citizens, together with many Ukrainians, who had resettled from the Eastern parts of Ukraine, and Russian-speaking Jews, formed the new social 'apex' of local life here. It was this segment of the population that defined criteria for belonging to the high, urban culture, and pointed to the means of achieving this desirable status, i.e. the Soviet version of the Russian culture and language. No other language but the Russian – not Ukrainian – as language of the majority of the population in the region and the republic, was increasingly used as the main means of communication, acquiring the role of the language of ethnic communication, something very untypical of it ever before.

However, the Ukrainian language was not ousted from cultural and social life. In spite of restless persecution of whatever manifestations of the 'Ukrainian bourgeois nationalism' by the party and special service, the Ukrainian culture in this region reached a pretty high level of development.

The territorial, social, professional and other kinds of mobility of the local population in the 1950s-1980s of the 20th century additionally minimized dangers of ethnic tension accumulated in the previous periods and the first afterwar years. Salience of ethnic relations was somewhat dampened due to the fact that representatives of all nationalities in the region, with the exception of Russians, were de facto minorities at the union level. In such environment, with legal social and cultural channels of aggregation and expression of ethnonational interests absent, the importance of ethnic factors both at the regional level and in citizens' social and personal life, somewhat diminished. These trends were accompanied by brisk official propaganda, which permeated and thoroughly affected all spheres of people's lives, including private life, and formed dominating perceptions of unprecedented renaissance of national cultures in the Soviet Union.

There were some other facts which questioned the officially propagandized story of the harmonious and cloudless cohabitation of different nations even in the regions traditionally tolerant to ethnic communities, such as Chernivtsi Region. For instance, mass exodus of the Jewish population since 1970s gradually acquired political salience. Their emigration had a detrimental effect not only upon the Soviet labor pool, but it also stained the country's international

image. After all, mass outflow of Soviet citizens undermined the official myth about the miraculous country ‘at the forefront of all progressive humanity’, which is a dreamland for other world nations.

Today

Since the time of Ukraine becoming independent the ethnic situation in the region continued to change. Its negative factors were, in the first place, aggravation of the ethnic relations at the beginning of the 1990s when Romania made claims to Northern Bukovina and Bessarabia, which negatively influenced the relations of the Romanian and Ukrainian communities in Chernivtsi Region. Influence of the factor diminished upon entering an intergovernmental treaty in 1997 which decreased the contradictions between Bucharest and Kyiv, but not eliminated them until now. The second negative factor was further dynamics of emigration processes which resulted in disappearance of the Jewish population of the territory which, according to the 2001 census, amounted to just over 1,000 persons in the almost one million population of the territory.

The EU enlargement including Romania but leaving the citizens of Moldova and Ukraine outside its borders has influenced the ethnic situation in the border region ambivalently. In such conditions the policy of providing the citizens of Ukraine of the Romanian origin or whose ancestors lived in the territory of Romania prior to 1940 with the Romanian citizenship (and, automatically, of the EU) results in distrust of Kyiv in Romania, has an ambiguous effect on the relations of the main ethnic groups of the region.

In spite of the insufficiently positive dynamics of transformation processes in Ukraine, its lacking behind its western neighbours in the reforms required, in general, ethnonational relations in Chernivtsi Region remain balanced and non-conflict mostly. The region has undergone radical system changes in the field of ethnonational relations. It has turned into a region with a dominant ethnonational group represented by the Ukrainian population and other significantly smaller national groups.

The local Romanians amount 12.5 % of the population of the territory according to the recent census. Besides, this population group densely resides in Hertsa (94 %) and Hlyboka (67 %). The majority of Romanians resides in the rural areas (74.0 %). At the same time, 62.3 % of the representative of this ethnic group consider their national language as their mother tongue, 9.8 % consider Ukrainian as such, 3.5 % Russian.

The following community, Moldovan, loses a part of its members accepting the Romanian national identity. A proportional part of this group in the structure of the regional population amounts to around 7 % of the local residents. It mostly

resides in the rural areas as in the case of the Romanian population. All in all, the Romanian-speaking community of the region is 19.5 % of the population.

The educational policy in the region provides for preventing misunderstandings among the principal ethnic groups of the region. It is quite balanced although it does not correspond to the respective ethnic structure of the regional community (it is quite complicated to reach this outside the limits of dense residence of certain ethnic groups). Thus, e.g., 82.1 % of the school students study in Ukrainian in the region, 17.4 % in Romanian, 0.5 % in Russian. In the field of the general secondary education four languages of national minorities are studied. Of those, Romanian and Russian are the languages of pre-school and school instruction and education. As to the language 356 schools with the Ukrainian language of instruction (81 thousand 191 students), 74 schools with the Romanian language of instruction (13 thousand 282 students) operate in the region. In specialized general-education school No. 41 of the regional centre 310 students have in-depth studies of Hebrew. Over 200 students of the schools of Chernivtsi and Storozhinets study Polish as a core discipline and as an optional discipline. Grammar school No. 3 of Chernivtsi has a Polish Sunday school. This year 95 persons study in seven groups there (Sites of the regional state administration).

Whilst in the period of Austria-Hungary a regular and even poorly educated Bukovynian could easily communicate in four languages, German, Polish, Romanian, and Ukrainian (at least at the everyday-life level), currently such multilingualism is mostly an exception than a rule of the interethnic communication of the region's residents. At the same time, the situation differs for the better from the prevailing Russian-Ukrainian bilingualism or even monolingualism of other regions of Ukraine in the current conditions. The reason for that is mostly ethnically mixed nature of settlement of the principal communities, which could be traced by such an important index as interethnic marriages which were at a high level in the Soviet times as well. As a result of those, the family ties established outside the homogenous ethnic areas and multicultural educations influenced and still influence the identity of the region's residents. They increase the loyalty and tolerance of the local residents to the representatives of other ethnic groups in the region.

Daily Life

The streets of Chernivtsi and of other towns of the region not just imprint, confirm or, to a certain extent, sanctify the tradition of cultural diversity, harmonize the polyphony of languages and creators of literature, art, architecture etc. Thus, e.g., those streets have the name of the great Romanian poet Mihai

Eminescu next to the names of the famous local authors of the Ukrainian literature Yuriy Fedkovich and Olga Kobylanska, the Jewish German-speaking poet Paul Celan, and the story-teller Eliazar Steinberg. One of the central streets of Chernivtsi is named after the burgomaster of Chernivtsi of many years, of Polish background, Avgustyn Kokhanovskyi, and another one after the political figure Aurel Onchul. The city is decorated with monuments or commemorative tokens which personify the contribution of prominent figures of many nations to its culture: Ukrainian (Taras Shevchenko or Yuriy Fedkovych), Romanian (Mihai Eminescu), Jewish (Paul Celan) and others. The cultural diversity immortalized in stone and bronze also positively influences the new generations of Bukovynians, providing them with a worthy example of mutual understanding and respect.

Inviting representatives of other communities to their traditional national festivities which are welcomed and never ignored by those invited is a good tradition of the local communities. Besides the festival “Bukovynian Meetings” which was established by the Bukovynian Poles forced to the post-war Poland, festivities of the Jewish, Romanian, Ukrainian and other ethnic communities of the region take place. Among them, one could mention the festival of the Romanian language “Limba noastră cea română” which is organized by the largest union of ethnic minorities, M. Eminescu Partnership of the Romanian Culture.

An interesting TV contest festival “Diversity of Flower Garden” was initiated by the Bukovynian Art Centre of Revival and Contribution to Development of the Romanian Traditional Culture in the partnership with Chernivtsi Regional State TV and Radio Company. Since then the festival had become quite famous among the Romanian community of Ukraine, and received the international status. Among its principal events, there are performances of soloists on folk instruments, traditional ensembles, vocal, folklore, and dancing groups. The program also provides for holding a research and practical conference and a round table.

The language and cultural transfer, mutual penetration of customs and popular traditions, establishment of such a special phenomenon as the Bukovynian regional identity and its respective culture are of special interest for the researchers of the region, its history, and traditions. The synergy of polyethnic elements of the local culture is reflected not only by its manifestations and symbols immortalized in the architecture and monuments but also the traditional Bukovynian cuisine which amazes its amateurs and guests of the region by a unique combination of various ethnic elements into a new natural quality. All together confirms the fruitfulness of efforts of local residents’ numerous generations which have been able to understand each other, overcome

national, faith-based, and language barriers, and sometimes to jointly counteract the attempts to introduce intolerance and mutual hostility to the local atmosphere.

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Down by the Riverside

Wolfgang Berg

It is a widespread opinion that rivers are natural boundaries, cutting off communication and interaction between people living on either side, who, over time, lead very different lives. Thus, almost inevitably cultural differences or even “different cultures” might emerge. Historically speaking, rivers have always been borders between empires or states:

- In the Middle Ages, for instance, Slavic tribes used to live on the right bank of the river Elbe, while German tribes lived on the left bank.
- In the nineteenth century the aversion to the East-Elbian Prussian landlords was widespread not only among the small farmers, but also in mainstream society in the western part of Germany.
- During the Cold War the river Elbe symbolized (though only for a few kilometers south-east of Hamburg) the border between the eastern and western blocs. The line created by the rivers Görlitzer Neisse and Oder, acknowledged since 1945 by West Germany as the irreversible result of WW II, appears to distinguish eastern and Western Europe in terms of culture until this very day.
- It was on the pasture land along the river Elbe that the famous battle of Hradec Kralove/Königgrätz was fought in 1866. At this battle the Prussian army defeated the troops of the Danubian (!) monarchy and, from then, on the German and the Austrian Empire followed very different political paths until they eventually started WW I.

Other rivers are clear border lines, too, for example the Upper Rhine between Germany and France or the Lower Danube between Romania and Bulgaria.

But two important observations have yet to be made:

- There are not as many border rivers as one might expect.
- It is not the river which forms a natural boundary, but rather the political constellation, which intends to or needs to use it as a border for political reasons.

Rivers can be used as borders, are no borders as such.

Waterway

Interestingly enough, rivers provide people on both sides with important commodities, particularly water, food (fish), energy by the means of watermills, and mill ships, whose economic and ecological functions are often underestimated nowadays). Rivers are waterways and, if proper equipment, such as boats or steam boats (since 1818) is available, they serve as transport routes. Thus, the river Elbe connects the south-eastern part of Central Europe with its north-western part. Luxury goods, such as glass, copper and porcelain, or mass produced goods, such as flour, wood, salt, and coal can be transported more easily along such routes. Thus, the river Elbe has been connecting Bohemia and Saxony for centuries. Two examples are worth mentioning here: gingerbread from Pardubice reached the North of Germany by ship (s. Die Elbe, p.23); the Danish king, Christian IV, insisted on using sandstone from Pirna /Saxony as a basic building material for his castle in Copenhagen (Die Elbe, p. 22).

In the case of the river Elbe, its function as a waterway is, however, of limited importance. On the one hand, in the past the river connected Bohemia and Saxony, but so did some roads through the mountains; in general Prague, which is closely connected to the river Elbe via Vltava /Moldau, and other Bohemian towns, used to do more trade and exchange goods with Regensburg, Nuremberg, Vienna, and Crakow than with Dresden, Magdeburg or Hamburg (s. Die Elbe, p. 47). Today, from a practical point of view, the significance of the Elbe as a transport route might not be quite so great, since the river periodically suffers from the problem of low water which compromises its use by vessels with large draughts.

The larger the river is, the more obvious it becomes that rivers form natural boundaries. But due to various tools and technologies like boats, ferries and bridges, it is not “natural” at all that these boundaries prevent people from exchange and communication.

Fords and Bridges

In fact, mankind has always endeavoured to overcome any boundary, i.e. to cross it. The need to bridge the gap in the interests of trade, exchange and communication has long since given rise to services and settlements. To some extent, the history of European towns is inextricably connected with fords and bridges. Locations close to a river – on either side – have always been popular sites for human settlements. We can see this until today in many place names. Let us take the example of Erfurt, a ford on/through the river Erphesa, a town, which, in the Middle Ages, used to be one of the most important markets in Europe forming a centre of trade comparable with that of London. Another example might be Frankfurt, a ford across the river Main or the river Oder, from

which two well-known towns in central Europe originate. From Ox-ford we proceed to Cam-bridge: Towns which are a direct product of a bridge are in abundance, so Saarbrücken, Zweibrücken, Osnabrück, the Flamisch Brughes (Brügge), also the Czech town of Most. It is not by accident that one symbol of European Union, the Euro bill, depicts all kinds of bridges on one side.

Important towns – again taking the river Elbe as a good example – have been founded or have grown up on both banks of the river: Pardubice, Hradec Kralove, Usti, Decin, Pirna, Dresden, Wittenberg, Magdeburg, Hamburg, etc. Admittedly, other reasons played a role, too, for instance the need to control the river valley (which underpins again the importance of rivers as transport routes).

With regard to transcultural areas, two – somewhat contradictory – questions arise in this context and, in the following section, an attempt is made to answer these questions.

- Do rivers separate or “divorce” different cultures; or rather, do rivers somehow reduce the number of cultural items which are in common use on both sides of the river, compared with other areas?
- Do rivers, as areas of common practice, due to their unique character, enhance commonalities; do they support the exchange of cultural items and promote cultural assimilation on both sides of the river?

From a logical point of view, there is a simple answer to the second question. Whenever people have to cope with the same living conditions – in this case: living on the banks of a river –, and in particular when they communicate with each other, it is highly likely that they have the same tools and rules. Thus, this question only applies to larger rivers.

Elbe (Labe)

From an empirical point of view, there is little evidence to prove the first point. Again, if we consider the river Elbe, the research provides a clear answer: The Elbe does “not cause any cultural separation” (Plessingerova, 93). So, for instance, half-timbered houses and blockhouses are to be found in different areas of Bohemia, but the difference does not go along the river at all. A large number of features or items are the same on both sides of the Elbe – the music, the songs, the clothes (Plessingerova, 93). She is stating just one item, which ends at the river; opposite to the region south to Elbe, north of it there is no separate “kitchen” for the smoking like in the south (ibid. 93). Along the Elbe – moving further upriver – the landscape, the agriculture, the costumes and customs change remarkably, but on both sides of the river! (Plessingerova, 95).

A river like the Elbe does not constitute an area of cultural diversity to such a large extent because the cross-cultural processes go across the river, as well as

alongside it. It is quite obvious that, on a transport route in the past, cultural items moved back and forth. The backward movement, i.e. downstream, is to be seen in details, such as colourful silk scarves from Hamburg (the lower Elbe), which – according to a report (Die Elbe, 98) – young people used to wear at Carnival time in Postelwitz close to Dresden (the Upper Elbe).

There is much evidence to support the fact that the river Elbe has served as a waterway and transport route for centuries. Menzhausen refers to a 16th century Venetian painting which depicts the system of waterways “in Germania”, formed by the Elbe and rivers such as the Vltava (Moldau), Mulde, Saale, Spree, and Havel, thus connecting Budweis, Halle, Berlin, Hamburg. (Menzhausen, 113). The Emperor, Charles IV, chose the town of Tangermünde upon the Elbe as his second residence for very good reasons.

It is true that the Elbe (“Labe” in Czech) was used as a border between German and Slavic tribes in the 9th and 10th centuries. Fortresses and churches on the left bank of the river, in Meißen and Magdeburg for instance, were built to ward off attacks from the Slavic tribes. In fact, numerous settlements along the river Elbe and to the west of it are of Slavic origin; plenty of town names Dresden, Leipzig, Potsdam, etc. have Slavic origins. But, for centuries, German settlements have expanded to the east of the Elbe as well.

At least in late medieval times, the cultural exchange alongside the Elbe was frequent and widespread. In the late 15th century the stonemasons who had completed their work in Meißen, went to Prague to build a new part of the palace there (Menzhausen, 114). In the 16th century the stonemasons around Pirna (the Lower Elbe) adorned a myriad of castles, town halls and churches located upstream with their art and products made from the local Elbian sandstone. According to *Menzhausen*, the Reformation, which started in 1517 in Wittenberg upon the Elbe, spread almost everywhere, but had the strongest impact upstream and downstream, in the North of Germany and Scandinavia, but also in Bohemia where the Hussites had not lost their popularity. The residences of Prague and Dresden have many similarities, no wonder, as many artists and craftsmen worked at both sites, until the beginning of the 17th century (Menzhausen, 115). It was not by accident that the German Enlightenment “developed first in the Elbian area”, in Dresden and Leipzig, Halle and Dessau, Berlin and Potsdam (Menzhausen, 116).

Dresden under King August the Strong became a synthesis of the rational Protestant style from the North and the Catholic, baroque art from Bohemia and Austria. Via the Elbe, influences from England also reached Saxony, for instance, the goldsmith’s art. It was the river Elbe which made it possible to transport porcelain from Meißen to Hamburg, London, Paris and Sankt Peterburg. And it was the river Elbe along which (after a long journey across the

Mediterranean, the Atlantic and the North Sea to Hamburg) white marble from Carrara was transported to Dresden (*Menzhausen*, 116). The transport of materials, attitudes and ideas, however, no longer depended on waterways alone once roads and railroads created a new infrastructure.

With regard to smaller rivers the transcultural aspects are not that obvious, in so far as it was easy to cross the natural “boundary” and the waterway was not an important transport route. However, the trans-cultural function should not be underestimated, as the following example serves to show.

Isar

The river Isar, although merely a tributary of the river Danube, formed the central axis of the Dukedom of Bavaria, the territorial government of the dynasty of Wittelsbach from 1280 until 1918. Due to it Munich developed as a metropolis. The local museum exhibited the “Lebenslauf” (curriculum vitae) of this river as early as the year 1983, thus serving as a model for many other expositions presenting local history along the river.

The transcultural aspect stems from the fact that the Isar served as a transport route. This was certainly true in medieval times, since in 1318 transportation by rafts played an important role, at least until the 1870s. The rafts, bound together and made from about 20 tree trunks, provided the town of Munich with plenty of construction material, primarily timber, but later limestone and quicklime, too. Timber and also charcoal served as energy sources needed by smiths, bakers and brewers – and thus contributed quite remarkably to the economic development of the region. The rafts departed from Mittenwald, where wine from South Tyrol, so-called *Etsch* or *Welsh wine*, could be loaded onto them. Historical documents prove that in the early 14th century the urban population consumed large quantities of wine which was to remain the most important drink for the next three or four centuries (Schattenhofer, 70). Thus, this opportunity to get wine delivered influenced the taste of the locals and their drinking habits.

In the 16th century raftsmen (women were not allowed on rafts!) from Munich organized transport down the Isar and also down the Danube to Linz, Krems and Vienna, which, since 1623, also formed a regular trade route with a fixed time schedule. Once again, the cargo was timber, but also beer and especially “Münchner Golschen”, i.e. linen with red and white or red and blue checks (Schattenhofer, 77) which seemed to fit the fashion then.

Transportation by rafts reached a peak in the 1860s when about 10,000 rafts per year landed in Munich, parts of them for other destinations. To be a raftsmen was a special profession which was bureaucratically regulated and highly

acknowledged; the raftsmen used to co-operate with each other, especially with regard to the ordinary services (rafting from Munich upstream). They had developed their own rituals, songs, costumes, and, to this extent, had a couple of cultural items in common which differed from the forest workers and farmers in the South of Munich as well as from those of the urban craftsmen in Munich. Of course, professional cultures can be defined in many other cases, too. The raftsmen represented and performed a particular kind of mobility, as some of them arrived regularly in Vienna; the above mentioned exposition of 1983 displayed a passport which allowed a young man from a small, remote village to repeatedly travel to Austria (Schattenhofer, 189). On the way back, the staff went on foot (which took about ten days), later they used the railway or a steamboat (for the Danubian part).

Danube

If we take the novel of *Fussenegger* into consideration, we can identify the beginning of a tradition or even literary genre: the report downstream? Nevertheless, it is merely a description from a traveller's point of view – in the case of Fussenegger's novel – be it an arrogant and somewhat chauvinistic one. However, three aspects are important:

Though the author is describing 'station by station', any place of importance along the river; at the same time she claims the Danube area to be something very special. The tributaries and all of the settlements are said to form the catchment area which, culturally speaking, is somehow touched and influenced by the river. Maybe the fishermen are living in the same way, perform the same sort of competition ("Fischerstechen" – two teams in their boats, using their oars to push their opponents into the water, s. Fussenegger, 33) – but, for sure, it is not only true of the Danube.

- The author claims a sort of collective identity; the people living in the catchment area around the Danube give themselves the attribution or are attributed as the Danube peoples; the river even seems to determine the whole territory in a political sense: "Donau – Monarchie" (Danubian monarchy, s. Fussenegger, 96). This attribution has, however, no equivalent in terms of behavioural paradigms and merely remains a territorial definition – and a rather inexact one at that. A moot point is whether there exists a sort of sentiment of belonging together, which allows a man from Donaueschingen to address a man in Russe (Bulgaria) or Galati (Romania) "We Danubians...".
- The author gives one interesting hint. There is a type of experience which people living close to the Danube or travelling on a ship on the Danube might have in common: They see the river and, upstream, the

sun is rising every morning (Fussenegger, 174)... Does this constitute a particular and common perception of the world, a kind of “*Weltanschauung*”?

It is not more than a historical footmark that the river Danube was transformed into a boundary (between Bavaria and Württemberg) by Napoleon in 1810, although it was far from being a “natural” border prior to and after this period. Thus in the 1960s, for political reasons, it became necessary to set up a platform for coordination and co-operation between Ulm and Neu-Ulm, the settlements on either side of the river.

Whoever reads the novel by Claudio Magris, will be immediately convinced that this “Danubio” (German subtitle: Biography of a river) forms an area of its own, where the river Danube brings cultural diversity and commonalities into a balance.

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The Neman River

Mirosław Sobiecki

Great European rivers for centuries played a major role for cultural exchange. As transportation routes they linked towns and cities situated on their sides, thus contributing to their growth and prosperity as well as the spread of ideas. The rivers also constituted important natural borders gladly used in political delimitation of territories. They became entire community boundaries or a first place where the communities met across the “borders”.

In Central and Eastern Europe one of such rivers is Neman. Neman is a river 937 km long and today flowing through the state territory of Belarus, Lithuania and Russian Federation's Kaliningrad Oblast. It rises in the vicinity of Minsk in Belarus and flows through delta into the Baltic Sea. Thanks to the system of channels it is connected with the estuaries of the Dnieper and Vistula rivers.

First of all, however, it is a river of profound significance to the nations inhabiting its estuary in both in the past and nowadays. It marks its presence clearly in the history of these nations constituting an object of numerous references. Unfortunately, very often the references to Neman as an important symbol of the nation are possessive in character and therefore they do not perceive the cultural diversity in the area around the river.

In the Belarusian language the river is called *Nioman* (Нёман), in Lithuanian *Nemunas*, whereas in Russian *Nieman* (Неман). It also has its name in the languages whose nations had been connected with it in the past: In German it is called *Memel* and in Polish *Niemen*.

To understand how significant the river is for the nations of Eastern Europe it is relevant to go back in time and especially trace back the history of Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian contacts.

History

The origins of dynastic relations between Poles and Lithuanians were marked by the marriage of Mazovian duke Boleslaus II with duchess Gaudemunda, the daughter of Lithuanian Grand Duke Treniota in 1279. It is worth pointing out that until 1385 when the most spectacular relationship between the Grand Duke of Lithuania called Jogajla (Jagiełło) and a Polish monarch Jadwiga started, which gave rise to one of the greatest dynasties of the fifteenth-century Europe,

another twenty Polish-Lithuanian dynastic marriages were contracted (Trimonienė, 2006, p.544). They started the intense Polish-Lithuanian cultural relations on the banks of Neman River.

As early as in the year 1323 Gediminas asked German Fransiscans to send to Lithuania four priests who knew Polish, Samogitian or Rusyn (Ibid. p.545). According to Artūras Dubonis, the ruler of Grand Duchy of Lithuania Vitoldus needed a large number of writers on account of his political aspirations. Almost all of those writers were foreigners that are Poles, Germans and Rusyns. In the office of one of Gediminas' successors, Grand Duke Vitoldus were two departments, Latin and Rusyn and some documents were also written in Tartar. For domestic matters of the Duchy the Rusyn language was used (Dubonis, 2006, p.515). This situation lasted until the Union of Lublin (1569) when the Polish language started to replace it.

Nevertheless, the cultural status quo was defended by imposing legal obligations on the judicial clerks of land courts in the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to prepare documents in Rusyn. The Statutes of Lithuania required that the judicial clerks of magistrate law be derived from nobility informed in law and Rusyn alphabet. This situation lasted until 1697 when the Seym of the Polish Republic obliged he courts of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania to prepare letters only in Polish (ibid p.516). For the whole duration the Grand Duchy of Lithuania was defined by its multinational character.

Religion

The Neman estuary lies where the western and eastern Christianity meets. From the beginning of the second millennium the place was reached by Christian missionaries of eastern and western tradition. Despite the fact that officially and finally the Grand Duchy of Lithuania adopted baptism in 1385 (Earlier there was a short attempt of baptism by Mendog in 1251) two centuries ago, Christian Eastern Rite churches were built here (An example could be, for instance, the Church of St Boris and Gleb in Hrodna). The intense cultural development of the Grand Duchy of Lithuania caused that the most beautiful religious buildings in the western tradition appeared on the Neman sides.

An important part of the community were Judaism followers. In the large Neman cities of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries they often made up a half of their population. In the fourteenth century at the instance of Grand Duke Vitoldus Tartars, the Golden Horde fugitives settled down in the area. In the seventeenth century they are strengthened by Tartars invited by the Polish King Jana II Sobieski.

With Tartars Muslim mosques became an inseparable part of the Neman landscape. Some of them survived to this day. An example could be the mosques in Iwie in Belarus and Kruszyniany in Poland.

Emblem

During the late eighteenth century the Republic of the Two Nations ceased to exist. Its eastern part was under the Russian rule. An attempt to regain independence brought the Polish, Lithuanian and Belarusian nations closer. The symbolic dimension of this closeness is a state emblem used during the uprising against Russia in 1863. In the emblem placed here we can see three fields with symbols of the greatest nations of the enslaved Polish Republic: the Polish emblem of White Eagle, the Pahonia (a charging knight on horseback with a raised sword) – the Lithuanian emblem and Archangel Michael, the Rusyn emblem. There is a crown over the shield, a symbol of monarchy.

The time of January uprising of 1863 was one of the last activities whose purpose was to join efforts of three national cultures within one state. It seems that the last attempt was made in the twentieth century by Józef Piłsudski. However, his concept of federalism was not met with adequate support both in the Polish and Belarusian circles which then opted for full sovereignty. The ongoing conflict over symbols also seemed significant here. The inflexibility of the Polish and Lithuanian side in their approach to the city of Vilnius caused that the attitude of both nations to the common heritage became totally different until as late as the twentieth century.

The political and social changes in Central and Eastern Europe caused that Poles, Lithuanians and Belarusians started to discover anew the once common interests. New political conditions are conducive, including Poland's and Lithuania's accession to the European Union as well as the European Union programme called Eastern Partnership for Belarus. In 1997 based on the agreement signed by the authorities of border regions of Poland, Lithuania and Belarus the Euroregion Neman was created with a total area of 20,500 km², inhabited by approximately 1,200,000 people. The Lithuanian part of Euroregion encompasses the regions with capitals in Alytus, Mariampol and Vilnius. This is an area of 19,500 km² with 1,330,000 inhabitants. On the Belarusian side there is the Hrodna District of 25,000 km², inhabited by 1,200,000 people.

The cultural wealth of the land situated in the Neman area is symbolized by three towns and cities situated in the three countries today, but once constituting one political space, the Polish Republic. In the history of Vilnius, Hrodna and Supraśl located on the outskirts of Białystok we can easily see exchange cultural items.

The above three towns are not equal in size or historical rank. They do not lie (apart from Hrodna) at the Neman river. However, their specific character is undoubtedly related to the area whose symbol is the greatest river in the region.

Vilnius

In Vilnius, the capital of Lithuania, we most clearly see the enriching effect of borderland and cross cultural encounters. Since the Middle Ages the city has been growing where two Christian denominations, Roman Catholic and Orthodox, met. Both are still present here today, somehow connected by Greek Catholics, who are Eastern Rite Catholics adhering to the Catholic dogmas and supreme authority of the Pope, but worshipping in Byzantine Rite. As a famous Lithuanian poet Tomas Venclova observes Vilnius became “the centre of Roman Catholic civilization on the outskirts of Rusyn land” (Venclova, 2003, p.9).

It was here where in the Renaissance the first books were written Lithuanian language. In the year 1522 the first printing house in Vilnius was established by Francysk Skoryna, regarded as the father of Belarusian culture. He printed the first prayer book in Rusyn. After 11 years new printing houses emerged which started to publish books in the Polish language and Latin. Towards the end of century in the year 1595 Mikołaj Dauksza published the first catechism in Lithuanian (*ibid.* p.21).

Because of its huge Jewish community, the city was once called “Jerusalem of the North”.

The iconostasis in Holy Spirit Orthodox Church in Vilnius, a work by Christoph Glaubitz, best reflects the syncretism of East and West in Christian art (Bardach, 1982, p.821). The whole Orthodox Church, and especially the iconostasis, is a place where West European Baroque meets the Orthodox Church spirituality. Glaubitz was a Lutheran, but he worked both for Lutherans, Orthodox Church followers and Roman Catholics (Raila, 2006, p.44).

Hrodna

Hrodna, the city located in the west of Belarus, was once a significant town in Black Ruthenia (Mironowicz, 2001, p.43), which encompassed the Neman zone of Dregovicz tribe's territory. The Rusyn chronicles mention its existence at the beginning of the second millennium. A valuable historical monument of that period is SS. Boris and Gleb Orthodox Church, which dates back to the eleventh and twelfth centuries (Jodkowski, 1936, p.7). In the eleventh and twelfth centuries the city was a capital of an independent Rusyn duchy, one of the Neman duchies.

Some sources say that around the middle of thirteenth century a Halitch and Vladimir prince, Daniel Romanowicz, the first and only king in the history of

Ruthenia, was supposed to rule Hrodna (Rąkowski, 1997, p.67). In the year 1270 duke Treniota ruled there, followed by Vytenis and Gediminas. And that is how the Lithuanian chapter in the history of Hrodna began. During the reign of duke Vitoldus (1401-1430) two castles were erected at Neman, the upper and lower castles.

In the vicinity of castles Vitoldus funded a wooden church where later a brick temple was built. The church survived until 1961 when as a result of decision by communist authorities the temple was blown up (Renikowa, 1999, p.12).

In the sixteenth century Hrodna was an example of harmonious co-habitation of Lithuanian and Rusyn people. We learn from the charter issued by Bona Sforza in 1541 that Hrodna had two mayors then: one Lithuanian and one Rusyn. The town's seal was in the custody of the Lithuanian mayor, but the keys were held by the Rusyn mayor (Dubas-Urwanowicz, 1939, p.11).

Poles started coming to Hrodna as early as in the fourteenth century (Ibid. p.15). In the aftermath of the Polish-Lithuanian Union of Lublin in 1569 Hrodna was within the boundaries of the Polish Republic, "which united one nation and one state" so far separate, that is the Grand Duchy of Lithuania and the Kingdom of Poland. In result, a federal state was created. The city became King Stefan Batory's favourite place. At his initiative the construction of a church intended for the Jesuit Order was started. The church, currently a cathedral, is known as one of the greatest baroque temples and one of the largest Roman Catholic churches in Belarus.

On 25 November, 1795 an abdication act by the last king of free Poland, Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, was signed in this city. The time of Russian rule started in Hrodna. The repressions of Russian authorities aimed at destroying the nations living in the land of former Grand Duchy of Lithuania. After the year 1863 a ban on publishing in Lithuanian was introduced. In the years 1866-1871 there was a ban on using Polish in public life. In protest the Polish community boycotted the events and performances by Russian ensembles. Polish cultural life was led in conspiracy and in private settings. One of them was a home of Eliza Orzeszkowa, one of the canonical figures in the Polish literature, the author of the novel *Nad Niemnem*.

In the years 1922-27 another Polish writer, Zofia Nałkowska, lived in Hrodna. Her best works are connected with the city. It also concerns *Granica*, the second novel after *Nad Niemnem*, which is on the school compulsory reading list in Poland, and which is directly related to the Neman reality. The writer also dedicated minor works to Hrodna, including *Niedobra miłość*, *Ściany świata* or *Węzły życia*.

In the 1920's the city became a vital cultural centre of the region. Numerous magazines of different national groups inhabiting Hrodna are published. The Poles issued "Nowe Życie" and "Dziennik Kresowy". The "Rycerz Niepokalanej" was edited by father Maximilian Kolbe, who in the years 1922-27 was staying in the Franciscan convent. The Jewish community issued "Grodner Moment", "Grodner Sztyme" and "Unser Grodner Ekspres". The Belorussian voice was represented by "Biełaruskaja Dolia" and "Biełaruskaja Dumka". Before the outbreak of the Second World War Hrodna had over 50,000 inhabitants, including 22, 000 Poles and 21,000 Jews (Milewski, 1939, p.197).

In the year when the Second World War started a well known Polish singer and composer Czesław Wydrzycki (1939-2004) was born. He received his musical education in Hrodna. In the year 1958 within the framework of the so-called repatriation he moved from Belarus to Poland, together with his parents. This is where he adopted the artistic pseudonym *Niemen* after the river flowing in his birthplace, Vasilishki village in the Hrodna region. In the second half of the twentieth century he was one of the most significant artists in the area of Polish popular music.

Supraśl

The town is sited on the outskirts of Białystok. Białystok is a relatively young city: it gained its city status as late as in the eighteenth century and only recently did it become a vibrant centre (apart from a short period in the Enlightenment connected with the Branicki family and their Białystok seat) The Orthodox monastery founded by Aleksander Chodkiewicz in 1498 became a "real cross between the Slavia Romana and Slavia Orthodoxa traditions" (Pacevičius, 2006, p.54).

The Orthodox Church in the monastery is an example of Gothic style in the Orthodox Church architecture. It was knocked down by Nazis during the Second World War and rebuilt at the turn of the twenty first century. In the year 1668 in the library of Basilian Order monastery there were 371 books, including 194 in Rusyn, 105 in Latin and 72 in Polish. In the second half of the eighteenth century the Supraśl publishing house printed books in the Lithuanian language. In 1792 *Pieśni nabożne* by Franciszek Karpiński came out. It was a collection of songs which constituted the canon of Polish religious compositions. In the nineteenth century the song opening the collection, *Kiedy ranne wstają zorze...* was sung in the majority of Polish homes on both sides of the Neman River and is regarded as one of the most permanent and beautiful elements of Christmas tradition in Poland.

Literature

The Neman River is a motif which often appears in the literature of the nations inhabiting this part of Europe. Literary motifs semantically related to water, the so-called aquatic motifs were often employed in the nineteenth century poetry. In the Polish literature it concerns, for instance Adam Mickiewicz, in the Lithuanian writing – Maironis, and in the Belorussian one Jakub Kołas. The rivers as “living waters” in literature served a purifying and revitalizing function, becoming an inspiration and a source of peace. The role was also played by the Neman in Adam Mickiewicz's poetry (*Do Niemna*) created in 1826.

The Neman River is also shown as an embodiment of all that is culturally close to the poet: the small Fatherland marked by the walls of family home. In this context the river appears in one of the canonical fragments in the Polish literature, *Inwokacja* to the poem *Pan Tadeusz* written by Mickiewicz when he migrated to France.

In the works of classic author of Belorussian literature, Jakub Kołas, Neman is symbolic of the national community of Belorussians. In the poem entitled *Neman* (Нёман) the poet writes about “our river” which “crosses the fatherland of Belorussians”.

Also in the Lithuanian literature the Neman becomes a symbol of nation and appears in the literary works of poets from the canon of national literature. So a poem by Jonas Mačiulis-Maironis, praising the river Neman, is regarded by many as an unofficial anthem of Lithuania. Another Lithuanian poet, Jonas Žilius identifies his fatherland as the area where the rivers Wilia, Neman and Sheshupa flow (Jurevičiute, 2005). Mickiewicz, Kołas and Maironis are three poets who are in the canon of literature in their fatherland. All three refer to the land at Neman and the very river as a cradle of cultures of their nations. And for each of these nations the Neman land is not located in the geographic centre of their territory.

Conclusion

Today this area has an enormous potential to become a place of new encounter. The national cultures are deprived from complexes. Belorussian, Lithuanian and Polish people may fully benefit from its multicultural heritage. The Neman is in the core of their identity and, in the same moment, it is connecting them profoundly. On both sides of the river the cultural heritage of Belorussian, Lithuanian, Polish, German and Russian people is still alive.

A borderland like the Neman area can become a more and more attractive laboratory to implement transcultural projects. The historical view leads to

cultural identity formation, which takes into consideration that cultural items have been coexisting and exchanged since ever.

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Neman on the Map in a Context of Contemporary Borders.

Source: <http://pl.wikipedia.org/w/index.php>

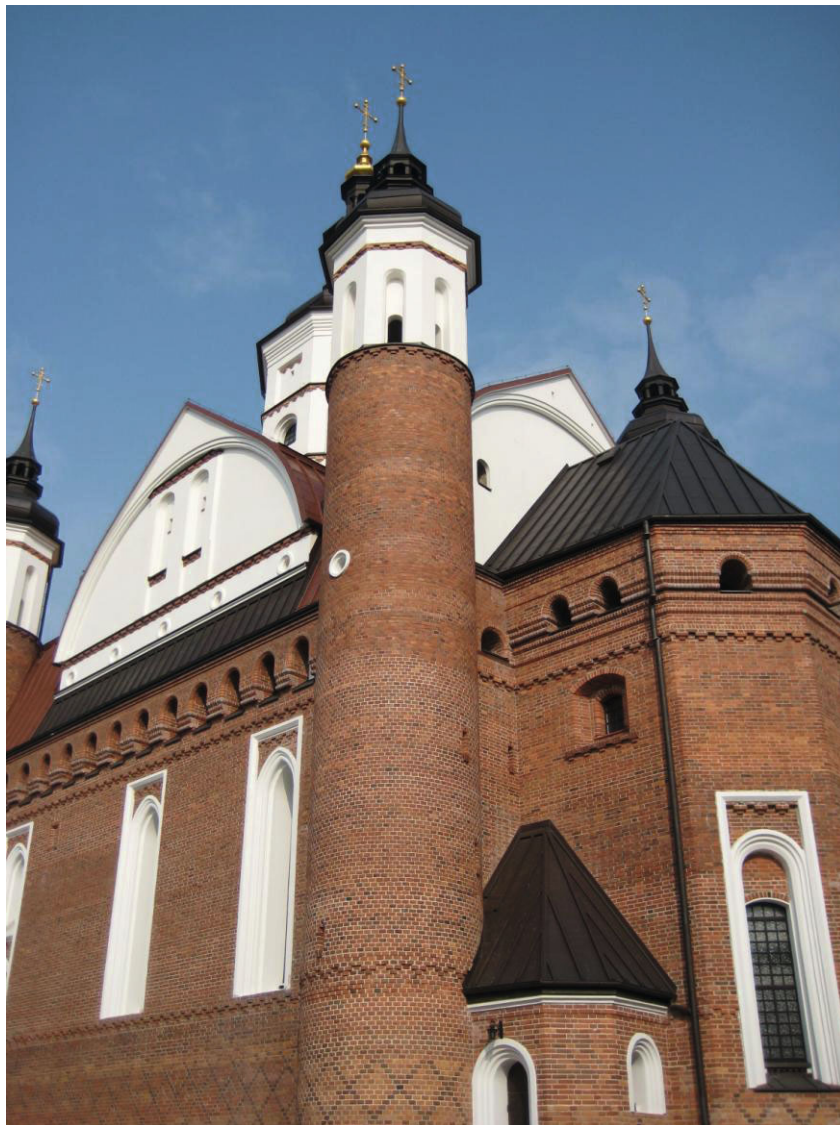


Euroregion Neman.

Source: <http://www.wigry.win.pl/niemen.htm>



Catholic Church in Białystok
Source: Photo by W. Berg



Orthodox Monastery in Suprasl
Source: Photo by W.Berg

Tornio Borderline Living

Ulla-Maija Koivula

Tornio River Valley is situated in the north parts of Finland and Norway on both sides of Tornio River which is marking the border of the two countries. The archeological findings have proved that there were inhabitants in the Tornio River Valley already 11.000 years ago. The first inhabitants in the area were the Sami people but they either moved further on or assimilated with the Swedish and the Finns.

Until 1809 Finland and thus the river valley were part of Sweden but during the war Russia conquered the eastern part of Sweden (Finland) and the border line was set to follow Tornio River. The border separated the former unified cultural area. The language spoken in the area is called “Meänkieli”, which can be considered as a dialect of Finnish language. The language is sometimes also called Tornio River Finnish. Another typical feature in the area is religion Laestadianism which originates from the middle of the 19th century and is a conservative Lutheran revival movement. The founder of the movement was Lars Levi Laestadius, a Sami-Swedish botanist and preacher.

Cross border trade and some jointly arranged services remain still active and “Meänkieli” is still spoken in the Swedish side of the border. On the Finnish side the former joint language “Meänkieli” was taken over by Finnish language.

What does the border signify? Is it more a geographical, cultural, economic or social? How living at the border effects on ever day living?

The article is based on theme interviews with four persons, age varying from 42 to 89 years, who have been living in the area, on the Finnish side, for decades. The persons are all related to each other and represent three different generations from Ylitornio, a small community at the river valley.

A Village Split in Half: Overtorneå and Ylitornio

The area became permanently inhabited by 1000-1100 by farmers. The present Ylitornio in Finland and Overtorneå in Sweden formed a joint community before the national border divided these villages in half. The river formed a primary transport route until 1830 when a road was built on the Swedish side. The situation of the two groups of residents started to differentiate after the border

was established. The inhabitants on the Swedish side, in Övertorneå, were forced to stop speaking their language, “Meänkieli”, at school and Swedish was introduced as an official language. This nationalistic policy was especially strong between 1800 and 1900. During that time Finland belonged to Russia and thus the people living at the border were considered to be a security risk if not assimilated to Sweden. This policy was levied gradually after the Second World War.

In general the attitudes towards minorities started to become more tolerant. In 1955 Finnish could be studied as a voluntary language in upper secondary schools and in 1957 it was decided that Finnish was no longer forbidden to be spoken in schools. It is estimated that “Meänkieli” is spoken by 25.000-70.000 people at present. In 1970 it became possible to study Finnish language as a home language at primary schools. This appeared to be difficult for children since the formal Finnish language differs from “Meänkieli” which the children were using at home. In 1980’s “Meänkieli” was approved as a language of its own. In 2000 it was granted a status of one of the five official minority languages in Sweden.

While on the Swedish side Tornio River Valley inhabitants were considered to be a minority group which needed to be assimilated to Swedish society and culture, on the Finnish side people continued to lead their life as before.

Everyday Living during 1960-1980

How did the border effect on everyday living? This question was discussed with four persons who belong to the same family, a mother, two daughters and a granddaughter. The mother of the family is now 89 years old and has been living in the area all her life. The daughters are between 50-60 years and the grand child at her forties. Only the mother of the family is still living in Ylitornio, the others as well as all other members of this family, have moved away – one to Sweden, others to elsewhere in Finland.

The family owned a shop in the border village of Ylitornio about 50 years from the early 1950s until 2001. The border trade was beneficial for both sides. Depending on the fluctuations of currency and different prizing of goods, certain goods were fetched from the other side of the border: petrol, sugar and butter from Sweden, meat from Finland. Typically, for the people living on the Finnish side, Sweden represented a more well off society where you could get some goods which were not yet available on the Finnish side.

“The Swedes were good customers, e.g. they came to buy meat, for instance ham for Christmas. Also we could get coffee from Sweden which you could not get from Finland during the Second World War.” (Mother, born in 1920s)

“When I was a new born baby my mother had to be a longer time in hospital. Then you could not get a dried baby formula from the Finnish side and my older sisters went on skis, in darkness, over the river to fetch it from Sweden (Daughter N, born in mid 1950s)

“There were two villages side by side, though both of them small, the shops were different. If you could not find what you wanted from Ylitornio, it did not take long time to cross the border and check the shops in Övertorneå....In Sweden the burger grills were much better, often we just drove to Sweden just to get a burger”. (Granddaughter, about life in the 1980s)

“All the toys were much better compared to those in Finland.... My sister actually stole one doll during one visit, just by mistake. Nobody noticed that before we got home that she was pressing that in her hands.” (Daughter M)

Besides shopping, Sweden offered also opportunities for freetime activities, e.g. swimming hall and icehockey hall both came first to Sweden. Also the nearest big dancing place, Folketshus, was on the Swedish side. On the other hand, on the Finnish side the restaurants were better and not so expensive and many from Övertorneå came to those. “The Swedish gave much better tips” (Granddaughter)

Generally, until 1980, the standard of living in Sweden was better compared to Finland. Sweden represented a richer society but as stated by one of the interviewees: “I cannot remember being jealous about that the Swedish were better off” (Daughter N). On the contrary, Sweden offered jobs and opportunities for trade. During the 1970s the prizes in Finland were low, and one of the daughters remembered that “there were so many Swedes in the shop that shopping carts finished” (Daughter N).

The benefits of the border trade were many: “The Finns in Ylitornio did not even have to mind about the strike of Alko’s staff, they just crossed the border to get the booze” (Granddaughter). Also during the Finnish Independence Day people went to shop Christmas presents cross the border. “The shops were much fancier and all the fashion came much earlier to Sweden than to Finland” (Daughter M).

The situation has now changed somewhat. From both sides the number of inhabitants has decreased and the economic life has become much more silent though the border trade is still active. There are only about 5.000 inhabitants now in Ylitornio, compared to about 12.000 in the 1980s. In Övertorneå the amount of inhabitants is about 4.000. All the small shops have been closed down and the trade is mainly handled by bigger markets from both sides of the river.

Social Interactions and Cooperation

“Everybody thought that we can speak Swedish but we could not, because everybody spoke Finnish, even in Sweden. We did not actually interact so much when we were children. Schools were different and we did not even use teachers from Sweden to teach Swedish language. It was taught by teachers who came from south of Finland.” This story told by one of the daughters describes that actually, despite the closeness and nearness of the other community, still people were living in their own countries and within their own cultural groups.

The situation changed during the teenage years. “The Finnish girls always dated Swedish boys. Also many Finnish girls dated Swedish boys, who had Daddy’s car and a lot of chocolate. (Daughter M, about youngsters’ life in the 1970s). Youngsters spent free time together in discos and restaurants and drove around in cars across the border. Many also got married, usually Finnish girls with Swedish boys. “Finnish boys considered the Swedish boys to be sissys... Maybe they were a bit jealous, more than us girls” (Daughter M). During 1960-80 the youngsters interacted quite a lot with each other during the free time. Some minor conflicts occurred, usually after the closing hours of restaurants outside, but there were no big conflicts.

The time difference between Sweden and Finland is one hour which was a benefit for the youngsters since the clubbing could be continued in Sweden when restaurants in Finland had closed. “The custom officers were really gossipers... they always checked when we came and with whom” (Daughter N).

But it seems that after the teenage and young adulthood social interaction was mainly restricted within one’s own community. Actually there are three different cultural groups living in the area:

- the Finns on the Finnish side,
- the original River Valley people on the Swedish side who speak “Meänkieli” and
- The Swedish who have migrated from other parts of Sweden and cannot understand Finnish at all.

“I cannot remember any Swedish men who would have married a Finnish girl and moved to Finland” (Daughter N). Still the “cross marriages” have also historically been a typical characteristic in the area.

Borderless Border

The river separated the countries but it also joined them. First the river was crossed by a ferry; the bridge was built in 1965.

“My sister’s children always changed the language in the middle of the bridge when they came to visit relatives in Finland. First they did not speak

anything for few days when in Finland before they again got used to using Finnish language.” (Daughter M).

The border area of Tornio River Valley has been a richness, not a limitation. The nearness of Sweden created some safety, said the mother. ”Somehow it felt safe to be so close to Sweden.” Also the employment options were better on the Swedish side and since “Meänkieli” is widely spoken in the area, the Finns could even cope with their own language.

But mostly it is the Finns who have moved to Sweden, not vice versa. The employment situation and options for Finns have been far better in Sweden. Today the area has been developed as a joint region, e.g. 24 hour health services are organized every other week on the Swedish side and the other week on the Finnish side. But still, it seems, though the border is now just an open crossing over the river, there is a cultural border which exists and is represented by language and cultural behavior. “Still there were two cultures. The Swedish were different, we behaved in different way on the Swedish side...there was always this other group...the language was different, the goods at shops were different...” (Daughter N). “The only place that you do not notice that you are in a foreign country is when you are skiing on the river” (Daughter N).

One feature of the borderless border is the joint festivities during the New Year eve. The celebrations are arranged first on the Swedish and then on the Finnish side – two celebrations for two communities. On the other hand sport events divide the fans, especially during ice hockey games, to Swedes and Finns. “But there are always those who do not know whom to support” (Daughter N). People pendle to work over the border, mostly again the Finns go to work to the Swedish side. Now the Finnish side has developed a lot economically and the former economic difference does not exist anymore.

Conclusive Words

This small article is based on the everyday experiences from a Finnish family who has been living in the Tornio River Valley. The borderline living gave more options both economically but also culturally. “Maybe it open a bit your worldview” (Daughter N). Living on the borderline – whether positive or negative – depends of course of the political and economic situation between the countries. The Tornio River Valley has been a peaceful border where the border nowadays means just crossing the bridge and maybe changing the language in the middle of it (like the sister’s children) or not changing even. “When I compare the border now and then when I lived there, you hardly notice the border anymore...When I visit the area now, I usually visit the other side once, just to see the shops. Usually you do not cross the border for any other reason.”

(Daughter N). The borderless border is still a border, not so much economically, but a socio- psychological border still exists. The region is being developed now as a transnational area but it remains to be seen how this might effect to the social interactions and to borders between different cultural groups.



Location of the Tornio River in Scandinavia

Source: <http://markinlulea.blogspot.com/2006/12/popular-music-from-overtorne.html>

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Markets Are Transcultural

Wolfgang Berg

According to the anecdote, the cashier at the supermarket check-out is not amused when people from Oriental countries start to haggle with him or her about the prices; the salesman at the bazaar in Turkey is very disappointed if the buyer, a tourist from Western Europe, instead of bargaining, immediately accepts the price which was initially suggested.

Market Rules

Whether rules differ from place to place or not: Markets have their own rules. Regulations are fixed by authorities or arise in the course of daily life. Who has access to the market? Which conditions do the sellers have to fulfill? How often and how long can a market be held and for which goods? Who fixes the prices? Which unit weights are acknowledged? Which coins are valid? At the same time, markets are a centre of communication. Sellers and buyers have to find a common language and the language becomes more important, the less the products speak for themselves.

Each market consists of a particular, elaborate set of rules; it has, to put it in a traditional way, its own culture. Whenever people trade with something in the marketplace, they interact with other people. The German language takes this combination into account, as the verb “handeln” has two main meanings, namely “to act” and “to trade”. And it can also be used (also as “verhandeln”) in the sense of “to negotiate.” Trade is certainly one of the most important forms of interaction, and there are rules which allow (or force) people to act appropriately: according to the rules of the market (be it a more or less free or, to some extent, regulated one). And these rules appear to contribute to ‘community building’ in the wider sense of the word.

Nowadays, there is some evidence of this if you consider the Common Market to be the keystone of European integration. But it is extremely important for the history of Europe, as the development of urban societies is largely due to the existence of markets. This is true for the Middle Age, and leads back to the Roman “forum” and the Greek “agora”. The market square is the centre of towns and cities all over Europe.

Exchange

On the other hand, markets mean exchange. Something is brought onto the market – by whom? Buyers and sellers do not necessarily share the same life experiences. On the one side, there are the farmers from the countryside, the workers in the factories, the craftsmen in their workshops, and on the other side, the noblemen, the bourgeoisie, and the tourists. They might indeed live in different neighborhoods, under different living conditions, have different legal statuses, etc. but, as long as they trade, they act as market participants, in a very particular role, which is existential and to a large degree it determines our lives. However, commerce is still not more than one dimension. The rules which are valid in a particular market place are cultural items with a specific, restricted range. In other words, they are not valid within the family, at church or at school.

Globalization has been going on for many years now and for centuries new products have been introduced onto markets, and trade has also taken place over long distances. Between producers and sellers there might be a long chain of transport and transformation, the rules of which might differ quite considerably. Merchants play a transmitting role. Once fruits are delivered to Europe, they are offered by Greek traders as “apples from China” (“Apfelsine” in German), or by Dutch merchants as “orange fruits” (“Orangen”).

Usually the market is dominated by domestic sellers who would like to fill gaps in the market themselves. As a rule, newcomers have to convince the buyers, too. But, customers do not change their buying habits so easily. Of course, what is “tasty” is determined by cultural traditions and can only be changed by “marketing”, i.e. making a new product marketable and fashionable. In Augsburg (one of wealthiest German towns in the 16th century) the patricians forbade the local people to dress in clothes made of silk because it was supposed to be something special which only wealthy people could afford. The Silk Road, to continue this example, is a long road with numerous stations along it: people involved in that kind of trade differ remarkably with regard to their daily life, the rules of behavior, their language. Little by little, step by step, communication and exchange are proceeding. Whether the merchant comes from where the products stem from or merely from one of its last stations – there is cultural interference. The trader does not speak the same language, does not use the same weights and measures, the same criteria of quality or taste... Translation and even transformation might become necessary.

Thus, the rules which are valid on a particular market square are cultural items with a particular range – and newcomers, i.e. market participants from outside do not share them from the beginning.

Hence, the market is a transcultural area: people are acting (and trading) though they do not share the same living rules, but they work out common rules so that they can at least interact and exchange goods.

Munich

Towns which owe their existence and importance to a market are plentiful. One example is Munich, as a duke, competing with a bishop, built a new bridge on the river Isar, a mint, and a new market square. The settlement had existed before, but the market rights had not been certified by the emperor until 1158 (Schattenhofer, p.17). Due to this infrastructure and stringent, but wise regulations, new market towns flourished rapidly. In the Middle Ages two types of markets can be distinguished:

- The annual market or fair, which in the case of Munich was dedicated to Saint Jacob (we know the importance of this saint, which continues until today, s. Camino di Santiago), and took place on the “Jakobsplatz” every year, a couple of days in July; merchants from abroad, trading in exotic goods, such as clothes, furs, spices, gold and silver had been explicitly invited.
- The weekly market, however, served the local trade (flour, vegetables, etc.) and very soon started to source out markets for special goods (cattle, flowers, etc.). A regulation by 1771 determined the access to the market as follows: in the first hours the local consumers, than local producers (bakers etc.), and only in the late hours people from outside, foreigners were allowed to purchase goods (Schattenhofer, p. 75).

Magdeburg

In northern Europe the territorial authorities (kings, dukes, and bishops) granted the towns a particular local constitution, the so-called “Stadtrecht” (Town Rights). The urban constitution of Magdeburg mainly served as a model for Prussia and Poland, as Lübeck had a similar influence on the Baltic States. The so-called “Mageburger Stadtrecht”, officially confirmed and thus documented by the Archbishop of Magdeburg in 1188, dealt with various aspects of Common Law, penalties, and procedures. In general, legislation contributes to fair rules for free people, and thus enhances trade and other businesses. The code of Magdeburg focused on many aspects of trade, such as liability provisions. One of its items, however, explicitly promoted long-distance trade as it forces traders to put cases immediately on the agenda if merchants from abroad were involved, who could not and should not be held in town for more than one or two days.

Whereas, in those days, the traders moved around a lot and thus often lived beyond the territorial state, they could be sure that legal standards became more and more similar. The territorial governments had entitled the towns to fix the respective market regulations, particularly the mint, the customs and the measures of quantity and quality. When the towns worked out these regulations, they built on the trade practice and referred to the fact that other towns needed to recognize these regulations as well. The traders, on the other hand, were interested in regulations and control which allowed them to trade under transparent and safe conditions.

At the end of the Middle Ages, large or special markets required sellers to trade in town and store their goods on the spot. These houses, mostly located close to the market square, enjoyed public interest, even beyond the times when they were in use.

Travel Literature

An important medium transmitting knowledge about foreign countries was the so-called travel literature. The most famous example of this is probably the report written by Marco Polo about trading activities in Central Asia and China. Travel books like Goethe's "Italienische Reise" show how fascinated the travellers and the readers had been by the hustle and bustle of the market squares. He is impressed by the abundance of vegetables and fruits, garlic and onions. (17 September 1786 in Verona, Goethe, p.50); altogether Goethe, however, did not pay much attention to the rules according to which the market functioned, as a local assistant took care of daily business.

As visitors used to have full access to those places, they frequently observed and described market scenes though they did not, in every case, understand the underlying rules and regulations. The famous German writer, Alfred Döblin, ("Berlin Alexanderplatz") has provided us with a detailed report about Poland in 1924 when he visited different places there. Thus, we can read a portrayal of "Rogatka Cerveli", a market in the working class area of Warsaw (Döblin, p. 32-35).

Krakow and Zamosc

Whereas the market square in Poland used to be called the main square or ring (rynek glowni), it is the place where the market takes place. A traveller from Cordoba (Spain), a Jew called Ibrahim bin Jacob, reported that at this time, the year 965, the trade between Krakow and Prague was flourishing. Traders from Russia, Slavic people, Muslims, Hungarians, etc. were busy, and goods like slaves (!), fur and pewterware were being exchanged (Adamczewski, p.11).

It is not clear why a house close to the market was called Kamienica Pod Murzynami (house of the Negro) and later on, in the 16th century, a pharmacy got the name “Pod Etiopy” (Ethiopian) (Adamczewski, p.66). Whereas in this case the names might also go back to symbols on the house facades or the admiration of Saint Maurice (a black martyr in Rome), other houses on the market square bear witness to its international links. There is a “Dom Wloski” (Italian house) and in particular “Dom Wenecki” (Venetian house) which underpin the important role of trade with Italy. When the famous (cloth) market hall – the “Sukiennice” (by the way “Souk” depicts the Oriental market) was damaged by a fire, a man from Padua, called Giovanni, reconstructed the hall – in Polish sources he was simply called Jan Padovano (Adamczewski, p.74).

Another Polish town, Zamosc, demonstrates the openness and multiple links to the “world” even more. In the late 16th century, the nobleman Jan Zamoyski, after having been a scholar at the University of Padua, engaged the Italian architect Morando to build a spacious market square. He invited people from far and wide and Jews, Scots, Greeks, Swedes, Germans, Italians settled there; to this very day the specially decorated houses of the Armenians bear witness to the multicultural character of this market town. With good reason, Zamosc was awarded the title of World Cultural Heritage site in 1992.

Hanse

Merchants have always organized themselves, in particular to safeguard their storehouses; one example is the Great Trade Organization of Ravensburg with deposits in Nurnberg, Milan, Toulouse, Budapest, etc. The most famous association, (later on not only of persons or companies, but of towns as well) is the so-called “Hanse”. This association initially comprising merchants and, later on, towns did work beyond and beside the territorial government, in a trans-national way. As Danish, German or Flemish towns were members of the “Hanse”, different communities which followed different rules in their daily lives, became associated.

For towns on the Baltic Sea, such as Riga, originally founded by the German Order, membership of the Hanse (since 1282) contributed remarkably to the economic development. The so-called “Schwarzhäupterhaus” (House of the Blackheads), first mentioned in 1334 although owned by the Great Guild, was rented out to the Blackheads Merchant Guild 1713. The Blackheads was an organization of unmarried foreign merchants and was in existence in several medieval towns in the region around the Baltic Sea. Today, this house, which has been reconstructed, is open to the public. The town of Riga remains an important market, though its political status has changed several times over the years. It

was governed by the German Order until 1562, under Russian administration until 1621, and then it was the second capital of Sweden, and eventually in 1710 became part of the Russian Empire for more than two hundred years.

The label “Hanse” is still promising and provides towns (“Hansestadt Hamburg”, “Hansestadt Rostock,” etc.) or other entities with a good reputation (see “Lufthansa”), and is sometimes also regarded as a model for European integration (Pichierri, p.11). As one of the “Major Cultural Routes of the Council of Europe” the Hanse is supposed to promote “the unity of Europe and its diversity” (see resolution CM/Res (2007)12, adopted by the Committee of Ministers on 10 October, 2007).

There is an abundant and still growing number of publications about the Hanse; the research already touches upon “towns on the edge of the Hanse”, like Halle or even Merseburg in Saxony-Anhalt, which are said to have been affiliated to the Hanse for a couple of years. Apart from the hard core of towns (Lübeck for instance) it is not easy to determine which town used to be a member as the Hanse, having started out as a type of self-organization of merchants, developed into a sort of network or loose confederation of towns (the subtitle of Pichierri “State of towns” is far from being correct). The so-called “Hansetag”, assembly of representatives, decided upon new members and, from time to time, also excluded towns officially, but there was no membership fee, no executive, and no authority governing this “state”.

The history of the “Hanse” has been depicted in hundreds of publications. As an organization of merchants in the 12th century, the confederation of towns came into existence in about 1256 when the town of Lübeck was founded and the towns east of the river Elbe grew up. The first General Assembly of the confederation of towns did not take place until 1356 in Hamburg. The decline of the Hanse might even have begun at that time (Pichierri, 97), but the end was certainly not before 1669 (the last assembly “Hansetag” in Lübeck). During these four centuries, 70 cities and about 130 smaller towns had belonged, to a lesser or greater extent, to the Hanse.

With regard to our topic, the Hanse is of great importance as a transcultural area, namely under the following aspects:

- The merchants were not only mobile, but also settled in other (member) towns (Pichierri, 49).
- Let us assume that people in London, Brughes, Lubbock, Luneburg, Novgorod, Visby, Riga, Königsberg, Gdansk – just to mention a few members of the Hanseatic League – lived their lives in different ways; nevertheless a small group of people practiced the exchange of goods

and thus a type of communication about carriage and logistics in general.

- The Hanse-members interacted with each other and moved personnel and materials from one place to another regardless of which political organization (State) they belonged to and which form of territorial governance they had to obey. The Hanseatic League was a sort of organization beyond, beside, and across the territorial states. It should not be forgotten that, by 1555 with the *Agreement of Augsburg*, the principles of territoriality had triumphantly succeeded. The agreement actually entitled the territorial authority (*cuius regio*) to determine the religious beliefs or affiliation of its subjects, be it Protestant or be it Catholic (*eius religio*). However, most members of the Hanse could avoid being involved in that conflict.
- In more than one respect, the Hanse was the counter model to the territorial states of the late Middle Ages: it had no boundaries. There was no central power or authority that was able to make sanctions or penalties – the only sanction was exclusion, and on the other side, a member could not address a governor or court, but just stop the membership.
- The area between the North Sea and the Baltic Sea, including the mainland of the North and Northwest of Central Europe was covered by hundreds of towns and ports, store houses and offices which were – more or less – used by the merchants’ organization.
- The “Kontor” was a sort of settlement, including a storehouse and an office. Novgorod in Russia, Bergen (Norway), Brughes (Flanders) and London were the most important places where goods were collected from all over the place, stored and distributed again. The “Kontor” was where the negotiations between the Hanseatic merchants and the hinterland, the territorial government took place; the “fondaco dei tedeschi” (not founded until 1598) was the place from which the German merchants could operate, but was also the place where they were obliged to be registered. The Kontor was also the place, where the transport to a particular goal was commonly organized. The Kontor was the arena where the league members – people from different areas – organized themselves beyond the cultural diversity they performed elsewhere and at home.

Diversity and Commonalities

With a population of merchants (and salesmen) coming from very different places, the cultural diversity was enormous. But alongside the fast developing Hanseatic League, the actors also developed a “common language”, in a literal and non-literal sense of the word:

- Whereas the first documents are written in Latin, Middle-Low German (the local language around Lubbock, the informal capital of the League) gradually became the common language; since in 1369 the protocols were no longer written in Latin, but in this specific and common version of German.
- The Hanseatic cities developed a common language of architecture: Most of the Hanseatic towns have the so-called Gothic redbrick style in common.
- As Nicolas was the Patron saint of all seamen, in most of the member towns a church dedicated to him was built in prominent places (Piccieri, 49).
- Due to their experiences, the “Hanseats” developed one model of ship; the cog (“kogge”) which was widespread and became the standard.
- The merchants elaborated procedures and rituals, e.g. the system of two speakers (Aldermen) at any spot. All decisions had to be certified and documented on parchment with seal and sent to all members

Two aspects of a “common language” are crucial, however: the units of measure and the money. According to Piccieri, the Hanseatic League tried to determine units of measurement, but did not actually succeed. Each product had a special look and packaging, which no producer wanted to change or “make uniform”! But they developed a kind of system for how to convert one (local) unit of measure into another. Though Piccieri emphasizes the economic and financial aspects, paralleled to the European Union, he does not even mention the problem of currency: the merchants did not only buy their goods from the producers and sell them to customers anywhere, they have also – and that is one of the main ideas of the Hanse – exchanged among themselves; and for sure, they did not swap one barrel full of herring for one bunch of fox fur – without valuation and conversion in terms of money.

Albeit the protagonists of the Hanse have created a myriad of common cultural items, these should not be confused with something like a “Hanseatic culture”: people did only partly share these items and these items were just relevant for parts of their life, rather mixed and combined with local customs or other loyalties.

As far as there is an area which – beside all cultural diversities – has, due to the Hanse, some cultural items in common, it can be called transcultural.

Today, we are witnessing a sort of revival. “Der Städtebund DIE HANSE”, based in Lübeck, is an organization which encourages the member towns to discover again or promote their Hanseatic tradition (s. www.hanse.org). Today, it is a network of 167 towns. Again one town invites all others to an annual assembly, called the Hansetag. In 2010 this modern Hansetag, which serves the exchange of ideas and experiences, has taken place in Pärnu (Estonia), the following ones will be in Kaunas (Lithuania), Lüneburg and Herford (Germany). It goes without saying that the contemporary association wants to promote tourism and suggests spending an “unforgettable weekend” in a Hanse town (s. www.hanse.org). There is even an advertisement for “Hansekrimis”, i.e. detective novels set in former Hanse towns like Salzwedel or Osnabrück. May the Hanseatic spirit spread out to numerous communities across the cultural diversity of Europe today!

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