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INTRODUCTION

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Human and geographical issues of borderland territories (borderlands) are not new. They are derivative: originally, the category of border appeared and in connection with it – the notion of borderlands and borderland issues.

At the same time, these issues, in the context of specific international, national and regional challenges, acquire new features and characteristics. They need not only updated research methods, but also unconventional approaches and interpretations. In short, entire conceptual and terminological apparatus of limology theory (science of borders, borderlands, boundary lines and planes, etc.) requires theoretical comprehension as well as similar in subject matter scientific research disciplines - regionalistics, country and area studies.

In recent decades, a number of terms, notions, concepts and categories related to the notion of border entered scientific circulation and firmly rooted in. It depends primarily on emergence of new geospatial human realia such as *globalization*, *international integration*, *formation of inter- and intra-state regions* („Euroregions”), joint entrepreneurship, cross-border cooperation, etc.

These relatively new notions include „borderlands”, „small border traffic”, „frontiers”, „borderzone” and others. Particularly important among them is the notion of „borderlands”.

At first glance, it seems that everything is very simple. In fact, the question, first of all, needs argued substantiation. In particular:

- a) borderlands are not an ordinary piece of territory adjacent to border and characterized by certain features. Because the very characteristic of „being borderland” is the first essential feature of territory. The point is that these features must be suitable for typology of borderlands;
- b) it is important to take into account new factors of human geographical nature, which provide territory with „borderland sounds”. Thus, for example, from borders towards the center of a country, covering a certain distance, „borderland infrastructure” is intensively formed, and this should be considered first;
- c) „borderlands” as a space are becoming a factor in settling in it of non-traditional enterprises and institutions, unprecedented human activities. Primarily, it concerns localization of recreational areas along borders, oriented to the needs of foreign tourism. This is often associated with presence on borderlands of certain (often unique) natural, and historical and cultural resources;
- d) in traditionally interpreted borderlands, „growth poles” are emerging now, once depressive small and medium urban settlements are activating;

e) against the background of depression and recession of almost all regions of Ukraine, certain borderlands are showing signs of social and economic activation. Population in them is growing due to positive migration balance, emergence of jobs in free and special economic zones, etc. In short, instead of dividing function, borders are increasingly performing the integrational one. An important role here is played by "Carpathian" and "Buh" Euroregions.

These and a number of other characteristics of modern borderlands require paying to them more attention not only by state, but also by planning and design bodies, for example, Mistoproekt State Institute of City Design, and scientists. All the more so, as all borderlands together with borders themselves have socio-economic and, above all, state political content.

Among different kinds and types of borderlands of Ukraine, the West Ukrainian borderlands are specific. Its delimitation requires a separate substantiation. It is primarily about defining of „width” (more precisely – „depth”) of the borderlands in relation to the border itself. And also about „limits” of the borderlands in relation to their neighbors – the South and North Ukrainian borderlands.

The West Ukrainian borderlands include the territory of Ukraine, adjacent to the borders of Belarus, Poland, Slovakia, Hungary, Romania and Moldova. That means that, by its definition, the West Ukrainian borderlands have six sectors (according to the number of countries to which they come). In addition, each of the sectors is characterized by historical and political, and ethnic specificity.

Until recently, the western border had been not so much a border of Ukraine as a state border of the USSR. The paradox was that Ukraine as a pseudo-state (republic) had no jurisdiction over this border and its western region represented in the borderlands not Ukraine itself, but a „superpower” – the USSR. Moreover, this western border, contrary to the economic trend of integration of the so-called socialist countries, was probably the greatest barrier among all borders of the former USSR. It was most closely guarded. Deeply echeloned „defense” of various law enforcement agencies throughout the western region of Ukraine had the task to carry out psychological pressure on the local population and prevent penetration to the republic of „harmful” (from the viewpoint of totalitarian regime) ideas and thoughts. In fact, the entire western region was an ideological border.

Although, the West Ukrainian borderlands are entirely Ukrainian territory, there representatives of neighboring nations had been massively living for

a long time – Poles, Hungarians, Slovaks, Romanians, Moldovans and others. Now their culture and religion are in the process of revival. Just the same, cultural and religious, social and public life of Ukrainians across the border is gradually getting better.

In scientific terms, delimitation of the West Ukrainian borderlands becomes important. Existing research suggests that the notion of the West Ukrainian borderlands have several meanings: regional, state political, historical and geographical, and ethnocultural.

In regional meaning, the West Ukrainian borderlands are a large region of Ukraine, which occupies its western part and is adjacent to its West, including the South- and North-West, border. It has some specific features, including:

- a) geographical location – direct border with four countries of the former „socialist camp”, closeness to developed countries of Europe, location on international transport corridors and power systems, etc.);
- b) high socio-economic and ethnic diversity. Along with the relatively highly developed Lviv Oblast, there are subregions with significantly below the nationwide level (the Zakarpattia and Ternopil Oblasts);
- c) presence of a powerful consolidating territorial core – Lviv, which is an important industrial and cultural center not only of the western region, but of Ukraine as a whole or even of pan-European scale;
- d) specifics of mentality of the population, its nationwide „political ambitions” that, due to extermination of elite strata by occupation regimes in the past, do not always correspond to the real possibilities. However, cultural potential of the region against the background of the state in general can be successfully used for national revival of Ukrainian people.

State and political delimitation of the West Ukrainian borderlands is that it is a „borderline” in the western region, which is defined at several administrative and territorial levels: inter-oblast, inter-raion (the lowest raions), inter-community.

The first level is *inter-oblast*. In this meaning, the West Ukrainian borderlands are a set of six or even seven oblasts adjacent to the state border (the Rivne, Volyn, Lviv, Zakarpattia, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernivtsi Oblasts, and the Khmelnytskyi Oblast sometimes). So, this „borderline” shares borders with independent countries: southwestern Belarus, southeastern Poland, eastern Slovakia, northeastern Hungary, northern Romania and Moldova. Figuratively speaking, there are the six countries per the six oblasts of Ukraine. Only the Zakarpattia Oblast in

a certain sense is „central” because it comes to the borders of Poland, Slovakia, Hungary and Romania.

The second level is *inter-raion*. The West Ukrainian borderlands include a „borderline”, composed of a set of the lowest administrative raions, directly adjacent to the state border, starting with Rokytnianskyi Raion of the Rivne Oblast and ending with Sokyrianskyi Raion of the Chernivtsi Oblast. Altogether there are 32 such raions: Rokytnianskyi, Dubrovytskyi, Zarichnianskyi (the Rivne Oblast), Liubeshivskyi, Ratnivskyi, Shatskyi, Liubomylskyi, Volodymyr-Volynskyi, Novovolynskyi (the Volyn Oblast), Sokalskyi, Yavorivskyi, Mostyskyi, Zhovkivskyi, Staro-Sambirskyi, Turkivskyi (the Lviv Oblast), Velyko-Bereznianskyi, Perechynskyi, Uzhhorodskyi, Berehivskyi, Vynohradivskyi, Khustskyi, Tiachivskyi, Rakhivskyi (the Zakarpattia Oblast), Verkhovynskyi (the Ivano-Frankivsk Oblast), Putylskyi, Vyzhnytskyi, Storozhynetskyi, Hlybotskyi, Hertsayevskyi, Novoselytskyi, Kelmentskyi and Sokyrianskyi (the Chernivtsi Oblast). And then, the biggest borderlands in the Zakarpattia Oblast (together with the Chernivtsi Oblast), which cover eight raions (see the article by I. Hudzelyak and I. Vanda in this collection).

The third level – the West Ukrainian borderlands are formed by a set of territories of communities (in several cases, city councils, such as in Uzhhorod), adjacent to the state border. This is a line of about 20 km of width and of somewhat more than 1,200 km of length. It is truly borderland. Its „being borderland” is most clearly manifested near transborder crossings (Rava-Ruska, Mostyska, Dobromyl and others – in the Lviv Oblast).

Borderlands are a complex phenomenon in geospatial organization of a state. Therefore, they should be studied on an interdisciplinary basis. Except human geography, the following sciences should play a significant role in the study of borderlands: economics, sociology, jurisprudence, international relations, ecology, tourism studies, etc. The most important issues of interdisciplinary scientific research of the West Ukrainian borderlands are:

- 1) Problems of sustainable development of the West Ukrainian borderlands in the context of policy of the Eastern Partnership and European integration. In the modern conditions of the hybrid war of Russia against Ukraine and the revival of the Cold War between East and West, the West Ukrainian borderlands are the most stable among all regions of Ukraine. In this stability, the role of Poland and Slovakia is especially important.
- 2) Study of security aspects of the West Ukrainian borderlands as a representant of all Ukraine. Above all, there are problems of geodemograph-

ical, and ecological and geographical security; problems of geodemographical security are primarily connected with negative change of reproductive potential of the borderlands, particularly, intensive aging of population, increased external migration of local population and transit international migration of population of Asian subcontinent countries; ecological and geographical regional problems are based on: a) western transfer of polluted air masses from Central and Eastern Europe; b) presence of a dense network of roads, including automobile transport corridors of international importance.

- 3) Scientific substantiation of a network of protected areas of various types. Creation of natural national parks, bilateral and biosphere reserves, landscape reservants and others only partially solves the problem of environmental affairs. Protection of environment should be put on a complex landscape basis, especially with taking into account the systemacity in functioning of natural and natural-anthropogenic complexes.
- 4) Substantiation of location of the West Ukrainian borderlands in inter-Ukrainian, regional-Ukrainian and international geospatial division and integration of labor. This is connected to the fact that by this time, the West Ukrainian borderlands have been functioning as a system of depressive and recessive territories of Ukraine with specific – actually borderland – geographical location.
- 5) Comprehensive substantiation of impact of created trans-European transport corridors on entire geospatial organization of society of the West Ukrainian borderlands in the context of such impact on neighboring to the West Ukrainian borderlands borderland territories of neighboring countries.
- 6) Research of the socio-economic problem of quality of life of population. Regarding this issue, all other issues, including the aim of their solution, are derivative and often act as factors.
- 7) Research of socio-economic, demographic, ecological and geographic, and security problems of development of cross-border cooperation of Ukrainian sections of the borderlands with relevant sections of certain countries: Ukrainian-Polish, Ukrainian-Belarusian, Ukrainian-Slovak, Ukrainian-Hungarian, Ukrainian-Romanian and Ukrainian-Moldovan.
- 8) Substantiation of production and non-production cross-border infrastructure, particularly communication problems of creation and development of cross-border logistics points, hubs, ways, including multitransport highways. In particular,

construction of borderland lateral roads deserves attention.

- 9) In conditions of development of post-industrial and informational society, it is advisable to substantiate „Schemes of development and geospatial organization of society” on the both sides of modern inter-state borders with taking into account further borderland integration of territories of neighboring countries.
- 10) Elaboration and implementation of a system of cybersecurity of life activity of territorial socio-, economic- and ecological-geographical subregions of West Ukrainian oblasts. This system should have all features of rapid response systems, i.e. it should identify the nature of a cyber danger on-line, develop and implement in the same mode corresponding solutions, predict future conditions of respective complexes of borderland subregions, etc.

The present collection of scientific articles by scientists-geographers of Ukraine covers a wide range of issues and problems of the West Ukrainian borderlands, which have been relevant the last two or three decades. Here, in particular, an attempt to explore new approaches to the notions of „border”

and „borderlands” and related concepts was made; human, cultural and educational, natural and geographical (including recreational) potential of the region in general as well as its individual model subregions (the Lviv Oblast, Bug Euroregion, Lviv) was considered. An attempt to consider electoral mobility of population of the region as well as reforming of its administrative and territorial structure was made.

In the collection, the West Ukrainian borderlands are considered in most cases at the inter-oblast level. There are articles, dedicated to socio-geographical problems, the research of and solution to which would positively influence the life activity of population of the region as well as Ukraine in general. These problems include economical-, socio-, demographic and ethno-, ecological- and political-geographical. Historical and cultural heritage of the largest urban center in the region – the city of Lviv – was separately highlighted.

The scientists – the authors of texts of this collection – belong to research centers of several countries: Poland (one center – Słupsk), Ukraine (four centers – Lviv, Chernivtsi, Ternopil, Lutsk).

Editor is grateful to all authors and co-authors of articles texts.

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