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Mobility, work and citizenship in uncertain times. An ethnography of cross-border links at the boundaries of the European Union

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Abstract

This paper explores the role of the state border in the daily life of the borderlanders, the inhabitants of the Transcarpathia region in Western Ukraine. Based on ethnographic fieldwork in the two border locations, it offers an insight into the region which has been affected by the 'EUropeanization' (due to its geographical location and historical legacies) of the border regime on the one hand and, as entire country, by the post 2014 crisis in Ukraine. The study points to the practices of the use of the border and cross-border links as well as the changes the patterns for doing so have undergone. In the face of political crisis and economic recession, Ukrainians face greater pressure to migrate while in the country's Western borderlands an increased utilization of already existing cross-border links can be observed. The subject-matter is set it in the framework of transnationalism and borderlands studies.

Key words: state border, borderlands, migration, ethnography, transnationalism

Abstrakt

Artykuł omawia rolę, jaką granica państwa odgrywa w życiu codziennym mieszkańców pogranicza na przykładzie Zakarpacia w Zachodniej Ukrainie. Bazując na badaniach etnograficznych w dwóch przygranicznych lokalizacjach, przybliża region dotknięty z jednej strony (za sprawą geograficznego położenia oraz historycznego dziedzictwa) przez procesy 'Europeizacji' reżimu granicznego, a z drugiej (podobnie jak cały kraj) przez aktualny kryzys na Ukrainie. Studium wskazuje na wykorzystywanie granicy i transgranicznych powiązań oraz zmiany, jakie w nich zaszły. W związku z kryzysem ekonomicznym i politycznym, Ukraińcy i Ukrainki doświadczają zwiększonej presji migracyjnej. Na zachodnim pograniczu można natomiast zaobserwować zwiększone wykorzystanie istniejących już wcześniej kontaktów transgranicznych. Przedmiot badań wpisuje się w teoretyczne ramy transnacjonalizmu i badań nad pograniczem.

Słowa kluczowe: granica państwa, pogranicze, migracja, etnografia, transnacjonalizm

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1. **Introduction**[1]

The paper explores the significance of the state border in the daily life of the borderlanders, the inhabitants of the Transcarpathia (*Zakarpatska Oblast*) region in Western Ukraine which borders Romania, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland. It is based on ethnographic fieldwork focused on dealing with the border: its familiarization and making use of it. The subject matter is inscribed in the wider relations between the local inhabitants, the border and state apparatuses applied in it. I apply concepts that interpret borders as factors for both overcoming and preserving inequalities on the international, regional or local levels. Acknowledging individual and collective agency, I also pay attention to the role of borders as factors for negotiation and transgression.

The sites the study is based upon are Beregovo (circa 30 000 inhabitants) and Solotvyno (circa 10 000) which are located by Hungarian and Romanian borders respectively, both with border checkpoints either in the town or in its outskirts. Their specificities are also shaped by their ethnic (predominantly Romanian in Solotvyno, predominantly Hungarian Beregovo) and linguistic (mixed with occasional dominance of Russian in the former and predominantly Hungarian in the latter) compositions. Importantly, what this paper reflects upon is a common knowledge among the inhabitants of the region. This kind of local understanding of the border, its workings as well as potential benefits it offers, for a researcher serves as a window on the processes under study. I visited both towns in the Summer of 2016, however my experience in the region dates back to 2005/2006 and 2009-2011. The leading idea behind the recent visit was to trace the influence of recent political developments in Ukraine and beyond on the cross-border dynamics in the country's most Western region. In order to grasp the processes of interest, I stayed in the two locations, spent time and with its inhabitants, most of whom I

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knew from my previous visits. Depending on particular situations, I either accompanied my informants in their daily routines at home, at work or other surroundings, like cafes or held separate meetings. I held informal conversations and semi-structured and unrecorded interviews, but most of all I observed and took detailed notes in my diary. This kind of 'hanging out' served as a chance to participate, accompany and follow Transcarpathians in their daily activities as well as an occasion for the conversations on the subjects I found crucial. Staying in Beregovo and Solotvyno, I also visited Hungary (Nyiregyhaza, Debrecen) and Romania (Sighet) accompanying persons who travelled there on regular basis.

In what follows, I dwell upon the practices of the use of border and cross-border links, such as: migration, seasonal works, daily commuting, buying goods, registering cars abroad alongside the changes in the patterns for doing so. These changes are related to the national and international political developments, such as the ongoing economic recession in Ukraine or the 2011 amendment to the Hungarian Law on Citizenship. The latter enables the inhabitants of the territories of the former Kingdom of Hungary[2], regardless of their ethnic identification, to acquire Hungarian citizenship. As we shall see, Transcarpathia's regional specifics pave the paths either to migrate or to use the border in other ways. Bordering with Slovakia, Hungary and Romania, historical legacies of five statehood changes over the last 100 years as well as the region's ethnic composition and cross-border kinships translate into daily livelihood practices.

Local inhabitants often speak the neighbouring country's language or have relatives there which is likely to facilitate their travels, stay and search for employment. In the face of the crisis in the country as a whole, inhabitants of Ukraine are exposed to the increased pressure to migrate or use the state border in other ways. On the following pages, I show how the inhabitants of Transcarpathia maintain and make more extensive

[2] Kingdom of Hungary, also referred to as the Greater Hungary, existed between 1867 - 1919 as a part of dual Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and covered the territories of nowadays Slovakia, Croatia, Romanian region of Transilvania, Serbian region of Vojvodina and Transcarpathia. After the WWI, 2/3 of its territories, largely and in some regions predominantly populated by ethnic Hungarians, were granted to Romania and the newly established Czechoslovakia and Yugoslavia. In the interwar period, these borders were questioned by the revisionist circles among the political elites. Between 1938 and 1944 they were partially annexed back by Hungary to be lost again after WWII. As a "lost territory", the Greater Hungary plays an important role in Hungarian national(ist) ideology and its map can often be found on car stickers, T-shirts, cups and other gadgets in Hungary and among the Hungarian diaspora.

use of the already existing local cross-border links with Romania, Hungary and Slovakia. That in turn leads to the general increase of the role of the state border in every day life. However, I claim that despite the possibilities that the border offers and the borderlanders' agency while working-out strategies to overcome the border-as-obstacle, the social inequalities and exclusive mechanism inscribed in their functioning prevail. Obtaining foreign passports, applying for visas, making use of language skills and cultural competence appear to be a widespread practice but it does not mean that everyone does it. As we shall see, not everyone has required networks or, both social and material, capital to put this subversion of state border in motion.

2. Border locations and their ethnographic re-visit

Arriving in Beregovo from Hungary, one is not exposed to any changes in the landscape or to the natural geographical obstacles like border-river or a hill. There is also hardly any difference in the architecture, which looks pretty much the same on both sides of the border when compared to towns of similar size. The use of language slightly changes but the majority of communication around is still carried in Hungarian, however Ukrainian and to much lesser Russian can also be heard. It is a bit different in case of inscriptions, most of which are bilingual (Ukrainian and Hungarian). When we approach the town from within Ukraine, we might observe gradual changes in both natural and human landscape as well as the increase of the use of Hungarian language and the number of cars with Hungarian licence plates -most of them driven by the locals. If it was not for the queue at the checkpoint and a better quality of asphalt roads in Hungary, one might have found it difficult to spot the space where the actual state border is delimited.

Crossing the bridge from the Romanian town and municipal centre of Sighetu Marmației (or simply Sighet) to the Ukrainian town of Solotvyno, one can clearly see the border landmark - the river Tisa and the bridge over it. In the middle of the bridge joining two checkpoints on the two sides of the border, the border-line (officially delimited in the middle of the river current) is marked with a red stripe. However, on the Ukrainian side, the river bank is planted with the line of tall acacia trees. Thus, for the visitor, the border line viewed from Ukraine appears as hidden and blurred as clearly visible trees do not delimit neither the official border line, nor the publically accessible space. Here, the use

of languages slightly changes as added to the Romanian language one can hear Russian, which is not spoken on the Romanian side[3], as well as Hungarian and Ukrainian. The latter is noticeable on the Romanian side but not on such a scale in the public spaces. Entering Solotvyno from within Ukraine, one passes different villages, some inhabited almost exclusively by Ukrainians and others also almost exclusively by Romanians, to find him or herself in a multilingual space where Romanian, Russian, Hungarian and Ukrainian can be heard, often spoken by the same persons. This kind of local "ethnic map" depicts the way local communities function in bi- or multilingual conditions but also as "islands" within Ukrainian linguistic space. At least when seen and entered from within Ukraine. In Beregovo, around half of the cars have Hungarian license plates and single ones with Czech, Polish Slovak or German can be spotted. In Solotvyno, the "Ukrainian" cars are in minority, whereas most of them are registered[4] in the Czech Republic, Romania, Slovakia, Hungary, Poland and other EU-member states. These cars, apart from "Romanian" ones which are driven mostly by the visitors from that country, belong to the local inhabitants. However, describing their owners as "Ukrainians" or "Ukrainian citizens" would not present us with a full picture of thesituation, as many of them also have either Hungarian or Romanian citizenships and use the respective countries' passport for registering the vehicles. In both towns, Hungarian products (snacks, spices and meat products) are easily available in local shops and open air stalls. This is often the case in Western Ukraine, Polish products can also be found but here they are much less popular than the Hungarian ones.

"Foreign" cars driven by the local inhabitants can serve as one of the pre-indicators of local and regional cross-border links. Spotting a car with Czech, Polish or Slovak number plates in Eastern Hungary or North-Western Romania one can be almost sure that they are driven by Transcarpathians, who in turn might be travelling with Ukrainian, Hungarian or Romanian passports in their pockets. In both towns, much more often in Beregovo due to its size and administrative function, job adverts offering work in the Czech Republic, Hungary and Germany as well as intermediaries arranging Polish and Czech visas can be easily spotted. Some of the adverts precise that the work is

[3] However it can be heard occasionally among the visitors from Ukraine.
[4] In order of approximate popularity.

offered "to the EU passport holders", others suggest they require Czech or Polish visas. According to my informants, labour migration or small scale shuttle trade has been the case in both towns since the late 1980ies and early 1990ies, however in the face of the recession, the scale of the former[5] is much bigger than it used to be.

Basing on my observation, I can state that the number of job and visa adverts as well as cars with foreign number plates has clearly increased since 2011. As we shall see, the changes are not only about the scale, but even more importantly about the patterns and strategies which people apply in their border related activities. The Luzhanka-Beregsurany checkpoint is full of frequent commuters (some of whom travel everyday, others stay in Hungary for a few days), who cross the border on foot or by bicycles to reach the farms and orchards on the Hungarian side of the border, where their cheap labour is needed by the local land owners. After crossing the border, some of them wait to be given a ride by cars going to the nearby town (10 kilometres distant) of Vasarosnameny or a bit more distant (70 kilometres) Nyiregyhaza.[6] Dozens of cars are also parked on both sides of the border as many commuters prefer to reach it by car and cross it on foot. The traffic in Solotvyno is not as intensive but the phenomenon of daily commuting to work or to trade at the open air market in Sighet, where the stalls selling Ukrainian products can be easily spotted. What can also serve as an illustration to the local border intimacy and familiarization of state borders is the fact that some local drivers travel to Hungary via the Solotvyno-Sighet bridge and Romania due to better quality of the roads in the neighbouring country. The alternative would be to travel on the Ukrainian territory to the nearest (98 kilometres distant) Ukrainian-Hungarian checkpoint in Vylok.

In both locations, we can also speak of long-term and seasonal migration and the "traditional" destination for the migrants from the region - the Czech Republic - still appears to be the most common. Other destination is the UK while the attractiveness of Russia, which used to be particularly popular in Solotvyno, decreased.[7] Czechia remains

[5] The scale of the shuttle trade seems to be decreasing.
[6] There is also one bus a day from Beregovo to Nyiregyhaza and back and one to Budapest twice a week.
[7] Unpopularity of Russia is grounded not only in the tensed Ukrainian-Russian relation but also in the fall of Russian rubble which makes Russian labour market less attractive.

popular among those, who travel with Hungarian and Ukrainian passports [8].The latter often travel there with Polish visas, which are easier to obtain than Czech ones. while Great Britain appears as reserved for the EU passport holders. United Kingdom as a destination as well as Poland as a visa-issuing country appear as a relatively new phenomena, not observed during my previous studies. The process appears more diverse with Hungary, as some people work and settle there, others have their properties and registrations in both countries and share their life between them. Similarly to the border crossing with Romania, some travel to the neighbouring country every day, others do not do it at all. Slovakia, Hungary and Romania also serve as transfer for the longer journeys: Debrecen and Kosice international airports as well as bus stops and parking places in Sighet, Satu-Mare (in North-Western Romania, circa 60km from Solotvyno and Sighet) or Mataszelka (in Eastern Hungary, circa 60 km from Beregovo and less than 200 from Solotvyno) serving international bus and mini-buses connections, among other destinations, to the UK. Thus, even travelling to further (and 'non traditional') destinations involves local cross-border networks and strategies.

The current study, and the 2016 fieldwork, is inscribed in the idea of an ethnographic re-visit (Burawoy 2003) in the sites where I conducted my research in 2005/2006 (Beregovo) focused on ethnic identities in the borderland and 2009-2011 (Solotvyno) devoted to the state border and its role of local daily life practices. Following the path of the Extended Case Method, I tie 'ethnographic observations to outside forces' (Tavory, Timmermans 2009: 254) and extend them over time and space (Burawoy 2009: XV and further). I refer to the research conducted between 2005 and 2011 as well as my in-depth knowledge deriving from my frequent visits in the region over these 11 years. In that manner, I link the locally observed processes with wider phenomena of international political and economic issues and the way they impact the local realities. This is where I also turn to strategically situated and multi-sited ethnography, which provides us with connections between people, stories, places, biographies and their meanings (Marcus 1995). As put by George Marcus, *The*

[8] In Solotvyno, obtaining a Romanian citizenship is also a possibility, however the country's regulations do not favour Transcarpathia (which unlike the region of Bukovyna has never belonged to Romania) and are not as easily applicable as Hungarian ones (see: Jóźwiak 2014: 32-33). Between 2011 and 2016 I met only two people with Romanian passports while bearing or applying for Hungarian citizenship remained popular also among local Romanians.

strategically situated ethnography attempts to understand something broadly about the system in ethnographic terms as much as it does in local subjects. It is only local circumstantially (Marcus 1995: 111). At this point, my reference to multisitedness concerns the level of entanglement of locally observed phenomena in the large-scale processes, rather than connections between numerous locations as it is often associated in ethnography of migration.

My previous study revealed that living close to the check-point, speaking the neighbouring country's language or even having relatives 'on the other side' is not necessary accompanied by the regular visits or interest in visiting. They also pointed to the uncertain, often critical, ethnic minorities' attitudes towards their 'external national homelands', that is Hungary and Romania. However, I anticipated that this could change in the face of acquisition of 'foreign' (Hungarian and Romanian) passports (see: Jóźwiak 2014). The current research links to my earlier work and en-widens previous findings and anticipations with a perspective on more recent, uncertain times.

4. Uncertain times: turmoil and mobility. Political context

Due to its geographical location and historical legacies, Transcarpathia appears as affected by the 'EU-ropeanization' of the border regime and post-2013 turmoil in Ukraine. The very functioning as well as the social role of the border has changed due to the passport-visa regulations introduced by Ukraine's Western neighbours in the face of EU's enlargement. Thus even not being a member of the EU, Ukraine has been impacted by its regulations.

On the other hand, the country as a whole faces continuous political crisis since the November 2013 break up of the anti-government protests. The events of the so called Euro Maidan resulted in February 2014 downfall of the President and the government. This in turn was followed by Russia's seizure of the Black Sea Crimean Peninsula and the armed conflict in the Donbas region in the East of the country. The ongoing armed conflict covers less than 5% of the Ukrainian territory in the country's 'far East' while the region under study is located in the 'far West' and the regions are circa 1 500 kilometres

distant (1 534 between their administrative centers)[9]. Nevertheless, the impact can be sensed in the country as a whole, including the distant (Western) regions. Ukraine has experienced further, as it had already been affected by the 2009 one, economic recession: dramatic devaluation of the Ukrainian Hryvna[10], decreased GDP[11], further decay of the remains of the heavy industry and mining (partially related to the Russian market) and decline in foreign trade. As stated in the Centre for Eastern Studies (a Warsaw based think-tank) commentary: *The main reason behind the crisis has been the destruction of heavy industry and infrastructure in the war-torn Donbas region, over which Kyiv no longer has control, as well as a sharp decline in foreign trade (by 24% in 2014 and by 34% in the first quarter of 2015)* [...] *The conflict has also had a negative impact on the production figures for the two key sectors of the Ukrainian economy: agriculture and metallurgy, which account for approximately 50% of Ukrainian exports* (Iwański 2015: e-source).

Political breakthroughs, economic recessions and armed conflicts worldwide tend to result in increased mobility as people flee from the war-torn territories, escape political persecution or search for more stable economic condition (see: Tilly 1976; McKeown 2003). So is the case with Ukraine, where circa 1 500 000 of people from Crimea and

[9] According to official data from Ukrainian Ministry of Social Policy, Transcarpathia received the smallest, in comparison not only to Ukraine's East and Central regions but also to the neighbouring Western ones, number of the Internally Displaced Persons (IDPs). As for August 2015 it was 3 447 persons compared to the neighboring districts of Ivano-Frankivsk (4 607), Lviv (11 914) in or an almost neighboring Chernivtsi District (9 474). The numbers are far bigger in Central (for 148 093 in Kyiv itself) and Eastern Ukraine: 190 587 in Kharkiv District and 907 281 in Ukraine controlled parts of Donbas. The entire number of registered IDPs in Ukraine was 1 696 697 (source: http://www.internal-displacement.org/europe-the-caucasus-and-central-asia/ukraine/figures-analysis). This adds to the difficult to estimate number of persons who resettle from Donbas and Crimea without undergoing a registration process.

[10] The fall of the national currency rate and its instability is easily noticeable to anyone who lives in Ukraine or travels there. It is also a common reference in conversations. To provide basic statistics. Prior to the 2008 global economic recession, the exchange rate of UAH (Ukrainian Hryvnia) to USD (US Dollar) remained at the level close to 5:1. It was in the fall of 2008 than it started to drop until it reached 8:1 in January 2009. In that year it experienced some fluctuations (7.6 - 8.78) to stabilize at the level of 8 in Autumn 2009 until rapid fall in 2014 (around 10 in March, 11 in June, 13 in September, 15-16 in December) to reach as high as 33 in February 2015 and as low as 20 in May and September. Oscillating between 23 and 27 in 2016. Source: http://www.xe.com/currencycharts/?from=USD&to=UAH&view=10Y

[11] Ukrainian GDP experienced significant growth between 2006 (107 billion USD) and 2008 (180 billion USD), to fall to 117 billion in 2009, slightly increase in 2010 (136 billion) to gradually reach 181 in 2013. In two subsequent years it dramatically fell to 131 in 2014 and 90.6 in 2015. Source: http://www.tradingeconomics.com/ukraine/gdp

Donbass have left their homes heading abroad or to other regions of Ukraine. In addition, millions of Ukrainian citizens had already been working abroad prior to the eruption of the current turmoil which has only accelerated the process (see: Düvell, Lapshyna 2015; Lendel 2016; Erőss, Kovály, Tátrai 2016; Jóźwiak, Piechowska 2016).

5. Borders of the borderless: ambivalence and transgression

Regimentation provided by the borders and control over mobility as well as policies related to migration, mobility and security (see: Torpey 2000; Feldman 2012) structure not only patterns of mobility, but also the horizons of belonging while living 'simultaneously on two [or more] sides of the border' (Follis 2012: 79). Even if perceived as ‘absolutely nondemocratic, or 'discretionary' condition[s] of democratic institutions' (Balibar 2004: 109), the ambivalent nature of state borders can create potential sites for transgression (Green 2010: 262) as well as 'zones of engagement' (Simonyi, Pisano 2011: 224) where different kinds of contact, inclusion and exclusion are possible. With their selectivity and non-democratic character, state borders are likely to preserve international (global) social and economic inequalities. In the case under study, it can be observed in differences between wages and living standards in Ukraine as compared to its Western neighbours and other countries that borders separate Ukrainians from.

Borders also relate to the Region's history of five changes in the state belonging over the last 100 years. In terms of ideology, as a world-wide pattern, they provide us with increased presence of the state at its boundaries. What is currently at stake can be described as Ukrainian – Hungarian struggle at the symbolic level. The involvement of Hungarian national ideology extends beyond the boundaries of the nation state and meets Ukrainian state-building and pursuit of territorial integrity. This symbolic tag of war is translated into particular policies of single against multiple citizenship. As the latter is de facto tolerated, Hungary appears as an allegorical winner[12]. And this is where the borderlanders enter the scene as actors and agents of negotiation and transgression as it

[12] Hungarian extra-territorial policy also takes shape of subsidies not only for Hungarian speaking schools and cultural institutions, but also health care institutions in Transcarpathia regardless of the language of their services. In the framework of “gesture politics”, Ukrainian cultural initiatives in the region are also supported (Erőss, Kovály, Tátrai 2016: 22-23).

is up to the local inhabitants to deal with these contradictions, navigate through them and make use of them.

Against the backdrop of evidenced inequalities as well turbulent history of the region and country as a whole, migration can be viewed as a part of core-periphery relations in the global economy (Brettel 2007: 119). In that manner, peripheral countries and regions have served as a cheap (surplus) labour reservoir for the core of the world-economy: colonial powers, industrial, banking and political centers where capital is accumulated. Referring to Ukraine, Volodymyr Ischenko (2013) and Andrei Malyuk (2010; 2014) point to the country's peripheral function in the European economy and a role of cheap workforce provided for the labour markets of the core. However, it was already in the 1980ies that Michael Kearney (1986: 339) suggested that researchers focused on ‘removal of surplus from the periphery’ while not paying enough attention to the flow in the opposite direction. This concern, as well as a step beyond a bi-polar and, center-periphery approach has been reflected in studies on transnationalism (Brettel 2007: 120) and circular migration and mobility (Triandafyllidou 2010: 12; Vertovec 2007). In this pattern ‘migrants operate in social fields that transgress geographic, political, and cultural borders’ (Brettel 2007: 120). In the borderlands, which appear as spaces where the state is subjected to subversion, the mutual influence of the values, ideas, customs and shared economic relations on both sides of the state border can also contribute to transnationalism (Donnan, Wilson 1999: 4-5). So is the case with the apparatus of state security which, according to Simonyi and Pisano, "contributes to the formation of local and transnational networks’ (Simonyi, Pisano 2011: 223-224) as individuals reinvent and renegotiate the rules and order as well as their social meanings at the limits of the state.

With their political, economic and symbolic functioning , state boundaries provide us with the context of protecting the relative welfare in one group of states and maintaining precarious work conditions, through the demand for immigrant workforce, in another (see: Green 2012; Feldman 2012; Arnold, Pickles 2011). International mobility appears as embedded in social transformations and the processes of societal change (Castells 2010: 1570) and can also be linked with progressing precarisation of work which makes further 'pressures for making labour more mobile geographically including cross-border employment' (Böröcz 2014: 91). Reflecting on contradictions inscribed in

the functioning of state borders in Europe, Sarah Green (2012) and Ruben Zaiotti (2007a; 2007b) point out to their functioning as a combination of surveillance, security and commercial enterprise. Entrepreneurial aspects of the state borders apply to the public and private investments along the border and around the checkpoints as well as other profit-generating activities (including a grey zone), such as shuttle trade, carrying passengers and the legal infrastructure (shops, gas-stations, open-air markets) that accompany them.

6. Sites of inclusion, exclusion and subversion: voices from the borderland

Transcarpathia's ethnic and linguistic composition, its history and quite central location on the map of Europe is likely to awake the popular myths and phantasms of romanticised Central Europe among researchers, writers and other enthusiasts. It is in this context that an anecdote quoted by Judit Batt in her work on Transcarpathia, can be recalled*: A visitor, encountering one of the oldest local inhabitants, asks about his life. The reply: «I was born in Austria-Hungary, I went to school in Czechoslovakia, I did my army service in Horthy's Hungary, followed by a spell in prison in the USSR. Now I'm ending my days in independent Ukraine». The visitor expresses surprise and how much of the world the old man has seen. «But no!» He responds, «I have never left this village»* (Batt 2002: 155). Contrary to this 'oldest person in the village', many Transcarpathians, do travel a lot and have seen 'much of the world. Although I have never heard this anecdote in the field, I already could not resist quoting it elsewhere, and I am also mentioning it here in order to juxtapose romanticised history of the region with the actual experiences of those who actually face borders, checkpoints and travelling in their daily life.

Basing on my observations and conversations, some of them taken in the interview manner, some resulting from accompanying hanging out, with both towns' inhabitants, below I present images, voices and stories of those in one way or another affected either by living by the border, citizenship policy or long-distance labour migration. In this section, I directly refer to the examples of six persons, whose experience serve as ethnographic vignettes for the subjects of my interest. As the study

deals with some sensitive issues, such as dual citizenship which is prohibited in Ukraine or involvement in grey-zone businesses, to assure the anonymity of my informants, I decided not to give them pseudonyms so that they are not accidentally matched with other persons that could have been described in a similar manner. Instead, I refer to them with the capital letters, related to the order of my reference and not to their names or surnames.

Thinking of revisiting the sites and the subjects of interest, I shall start with (A) from Beregovo with whom I was acquainted between 2005 and 2008 before we lost track of each other. In his e-mail from 2014 I read: *Hi, a lot has changed here. My business died during the recession in 2009-2010* [...] *For three years I worked as a teacher in school. Than I* gave *it all up and went to work to Moscow. Acquired Hungarian citizenship, and this year I worked for half a year near Prague.* [...] *I was offered a job in England, and if it will not succeed, I will go back to the Czech Republic. As for now, I'm saving money for a business, but I don't want to do anything in Ukraine.* From our further correspondence, I got to know that he eventually ended up in the UK. After a period of short communications, we managed to meet in 2016 in Beregovo where he was paying his summer visit at family home. (A) had already had migration experience as he worked in the Czech Republic in the early 1990s and with his savings he decided to settle in his hometown. It was the economic recession which forced him to search for employment abroad and the Hungarian passport which made it easier. Living in England and visiting home twice a year, he intensively learned English, which according to his declaration, he knew better than Hungarian (with Ukrainian being his mother tongue). His plan was to generate his income "there" doing seasonal skilled works and live "here" taking benefits from the price difference between Ukraine and the UK. Staying in Beregovo, he also went to Hungary in order to withdraw cash from his British bank account in an ATM to avoid extra charges of Ukrainian banks. His holiday at home came to an end when the employer bought him the ticket to for the flight to London from the nearby Kosice airport in Slovakia.

For 10 years (2004 - 2014), "from Maidan to Maidan" as she describes it referring to the two waves of opposition protests in Ukraine with their epicentre at the Kyiv's Independent Square (*Maidan Nezalezhnosti*), (B) used to work as a school teacher in

Beregovo. Disappointed with the lack of positive changes regarding corruption, salaries and mafia-like structures in public institutions (including schools) after the post-Maidan breakthrough, she quit her job and was considering quitting her professional track as well. However through informal networks she got to know about a job offer at school in one of the villages near Vasarosnameny in Hungary, 7 kilometres from the Ukrainian border. And this was where her Hungarian citizenship, acquired 2 years before, became useful. She commutes to work 4 days a week either by bike, by car or a school bus, which picks her up on Hungarian side. Depending on the queue at the checkpoint, it takes between 2 and 3 hours to get there. At first, she found it difficult to get accustomed to the new realities and different culture of work in the neighbouring country as well as to its language.[13] Daily commuting is not easy and some teachers from Ukraine, who also work in the same or nearby schools, have settled in Hungary, some of them with entire families. But, to (B)'s account, she never seriously considered such a solution and she enjoys returning to her home, her family and sleep in her bed. She feels that she belongs "here" (Beregovo, Ukraine) and identifies as "Ukrainian patriot". She also does not look upon her Hungarian citizenship as any kind of "treason to Ukraine". For her it is just a way to find a better paid job. Truly better, as her salary has increased at least fivefold. She has no insurance in Ukraine but working full time in Hungary, she is insured and is entitled to Hungarian healthcare.

Similarly, her colleague (a fellow teacher), (C), commutes to Hungary three times a week and she would not mind going there every day,"if it was not for the border". As an ethnic Hungarian living on historically Hungarian territories, she found it natural to apply for Hungarian citizenship when it turned possible. To put in her own words, "It used to be Hungary", and "we don't even speak proper Russian or Ukrainian here". Like (B), until 2015 she only used the passport for occasional visits in Hungary but when we met in the Summer 2016, was happy with the possibilities it provides. Even though their social and family lives of both teachers are "here" (Beregovo, Ukraine), their careers, as well as health care services are located "there" (Hungary), while the state border and a check point appear as a daily routine. Using Ukrainian documents in Ukraine and

[13] Fluent in Hungarian, as a Ukrainian native speaker and declared Ukrainian, she never had any courses in it.

Hungarian in Hungary, which also refers to the passports shown to each country's border guards, according to her statement (C) is "a kind of a different person here and there".

(D), an ethnic Ukrainian and a graduate of one of the universities in Lviv in Western Ukraine, refers to this kind of travelling strategy as "invisibility", as he does not receive stamps in any of his passports. He considers his crossing the border as unacknowledged (unregistered) by the both countries' authorities. Despite using his Ukrainian documents at home, he jokingly refers to his situation as to living as a foreigner in his own country. (D) lives and works in Beregovo but he owns three cars registered in Hungary and frequently goes there for shopping. As for the moment, his work was profitable enough to make a living on a satisfactory level but he was ready to give it up and go "wherever possible" if it ceases to be so. With experience in work in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, as well as with contacts in the former, he found it more than doable.

(D) shares his time circulating between Beregovo, where he grew up and spent most of his life, a 40 km distant town in Hungary where not only he and his car are registered but where he also actually lives, and Plzen in Western Czech Republic where he works at the construction sites. Carrying Hungarian passport, driving a car registered in Hungary and living in that country, he visits Beregovo at least twice a week to meet his friends and relatives, assist in renovations of their houses and cars etc. Carrying the Hungarian forints, Czech crowns, US dollars as well Ukrainian hryvnias in his wallet, he stops in one of the shops in Beregovo to buy cigarettes and food to be taken home. When we met and travelled together to the 30km distant Ukrainian town of Mukachevo, it was his first visit there over the last four years.

When I first met (E) in 2006, he worked as a night keeper in Beregovo. With his salary hardly enough to make a living, at that time he was full of bitter words towards the country he lived in (Ukraine): state of economy and industry, corrupt political elites, unemployment, poverty and lack of culture. His criticism however did not spare what he considered his actual motherland (Hungary), the country where he was treated like a foreigner, especially by the border guards, custom officers and police. Back than, Hungary did not allow its co-ethnics from abroad the right to citizenship, which was

rejected in the 2004 referendum[14]. He willingly and nostalgically recalled his visits at the markets in Nyiregyhaza and his work at construction sites in Budapest, Sopron and Komarom in 1990ies, as well as this earlier work of a truck driver during which he travelled around the Soviet Union. Further on (i.e. after 2006) he changed his workplaces a few times, but every time we met, his material situation was far from being stable. Prior to our meeting in 2016, I was wondering to what extent did his life change after acquiring Hungarian passport, as I was pretty sure he had obtained it. I also had some doubts whether I would still find him at his home in Beregovo, as I found it quite possible that he had moved to Hungary or elsewhere. It turned out that he still lived his previous life, only it was a Ukrainian pension of 1000 UAH (circa 35 EUR) which "secured" his life on a quite basic level, not the precarious jobs he used to do before. He applied for Hungarian citizenship already in 2011 and received it in 2012 but it did not change his situation much. For him, the retirement age in Hungary which differs according to the year of birth, was 64 while in Ukraine it was 60. Being 61 in July 2016, he was stuck in-between the two systems. As he explained, in order to receive a Hungarian pension, one needs to register there and for that, he or she needs money to buy or rent a property, which (E) simply did not have. Selling the place he lived in was not a possibility due to some ownership disputes. Bearing a Hungarian passport, he started to carry cigarettes across the border - the activity he, as a Ukrainian citizen, had given up more than 10 years before after being fined and issued an entry ban. However, given that the operation required getting to the 8 km distant checkpoint, bringing in the legal amount of two packets he considered not profitable enough and did not want to risk taking bigger amounts. He also attempted to take benefit of the passport in the summer 2016, when he went to work on a construction site in Budapest. He hoped to spend 4 months there, earn 1 000 000 HUF and buy a small house in the village of Beregsurany on the Hungarian side of the checkpoint, which would secure his Hungarian pension. However, on the first day at work, he fainted, was taken to hospital and had to go back home.

[14] In December 2004, the voters in Hungary were asked whether they favoured ethnic Hungarians (non-citizens and non-residents of Hungary) to be granted the right to Hungarian citizenship. Although majority of voted in favour, it was rejected due to the low turnout.

Increased mobility across the border in turn creates demands for the means of transport. As already noted in the description of the Luzhanka - Beregsurany checkpoint, due to the still developing international public transport in this section, paid hitchhiking from the border to the nearby towns is a common phenomenon.[15] In addition, in both locations, there also operate drivers who specialise in short distance international transportation. In the face of fall of Ukrainian Hryvna (in 2014), which was also the time when people started to travel more extensively, (F) gave up his job of an office worker in Beregovo in order to become, together with two of his family members, a "full time[16] driver". Driving a minivan with Hungarian number plates he collects the passengers to and from Nyiregyhaza and Debrecen (80 and 120 km distant cities in Hungary) where he travels by addresses as well as arranges the pickups or drop bys at the railway station in the former and the airport in the latter. The route and the timing is set according to the passengers and their needs and if there are any seats left (sometimes he goes empty in one way just to pick up some passengers in Hungary), he tries to find someone at the border. Apart from buying lottery tickets in Hungary and occasional visits in the second hand electronic shop, he was not interested in bringing any larger amount of goods. Presenting Hungarian passport, which he obtained in 2012, to both countries' border guards, he claimed it to be less confusing than swapping the passports in between the controls, as many people do nowadays. To his own account, he treats the document as a kind of "insurance" that might enable his and his family's escape from Ukraine when "they start to shoot here". In spite of Hungarian passport, frequent travelling across the borders and making money from the developing migration industry, it is Beregovo where he feels at home in Beregovo and does not wish to leave.

In Solotvyno, driving his EU-registered car, (G) takes passengers to the airports in Kosice and Debrecen, bus station in Sighet, and in general stations and addresses in Hungary, Slovakia and Romania. Unlike (F), he also serves the connections within Ukraine - mostly Hungarian consulates in Beregovo and Uzhgorod or hospitals in the latter. He is also in contact with other independently operating drivers so that they can pass the clients (passengers) among or recommend each other when one cannot make the

[15] It has been so for years, however it increased together with the increased mobility

[16] The description in "full time" terms, as well as quotation marks are mine. This persons are referred to as "drivers" or "taxi drivers", as (F) explained it himself: "it is not fully legal".

requested route. Like (F), when crossing the border, (G) also uses only his Hungarian passport, which he always (together with Hungarian ID) carries with him, even in Ukraine. When we last met, he did not have a Ukrainian one, which expired and which he found useless, and was not planning to.

7. Concluding remarks

The state borders' impact on the life of the borderlanders is conditioned by the economic situation in the countries on its both sides as well as with bilateral and international regulations regarding passport - visa - work-permit or citizenship regimes. The latter also influences the intensity of various forms of cross-border contacts and wider international mobility. As described by Alain Smart and Josephine Smart, state borders structure the world, according to the situation depending mostly on one's citizenship and wealth, they act as full stops (which deny entry), semi-colons (which require the travellers to obtain visas and work permits) or comas "slightly slowing movement at various checkpoints" (Smart, Smart 2008: 175). In my previous study, I wrote that *Applying the metaphor to the bridge linking Solotvyno and Sighet* [which could actually apply to any EU border crossing] *would mean that it serves either as a 'full stop' or a 'semi-colon', and as a means of exercising control over the third country nationals (needed but also 'dangerous') in Romania and entire European Union* (Jóźwiak 2014: 36). After five years and related changes, the scale of this 'time-space punctuation' (Smart, Smart 2008) as well as groups of people it affects are different, but the mechanisms of inclusion and exclusion persist. Despite an increasing pressure to migrate or utilize the border in other ways, same as 'before': some of the local inhabitants cross the border on regular basis (even everyday), others have never been on its other side. It is the scale and applied strategies that have changed.

According to Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson, cross-border activities both on official and grassroots levels puncture the borders and subvert 'the state's own design' for them (Donnan, Wilson 2010:6-7). Added to the popularity of Hungarian and Romanian TV and radio, livelihood strategies involving obtaining other state's citizenship, registering cars on the other sides of the border contributes to the

transformation and increased role[17] of transnational spaces (in both social and geographical terms) in which people operate. These spaces together with phenomena observed there can also be interpreted as *gaps in the Fortress Europe* and *blurred boundaries of the nation state*. They also contribute to individual agency and entrepreneurship as well as *the precarious economy of the border* in the time of instability and uncertainty. Carrying more (Hungarian or Romanian passports) or less (Ukrainian passports with visas or Local Border Traffic documents) privileged documents when leaving Ukraine makes one privileged in the context of selectivity performed at the borders of the EU. However, safeguarding the rights to cross the border, to reside abroad and to vote in the neighbouring country (or its consulate "at home") does not eliminate the social inequalities. Excluding mechanisms inscribed in the functioning of the border are indirectly preserved. In order to fully enjoy the possibilities of the "golden tickets" to the EU, one needs certain resources. Carrying passengers on international routes requires capital to be invested in cars and their registration. Working abroad requires networks (in order to find a job) or a good health, in case of physical work, to maintain it. Receiving Hungarian pension requires registration and actual settling in the country, for which again, one needs funds.

Last time, I talked to (D) on the phone, he was already approaching the border by car on his way home. It was a few days before that (A) boarded a bus to Kosice at the station in Mukachevo with his final destination being London Stansted Airport. When I last called (G), he was cycling to the border - "8 kilometres there and return in order to earn 40 hryvnias" [less than 1,5 Euro].

[17] As making extensive use of the borders dates back till at least early 1990ies and the presence of the neighboring countries in the form of radio or TV station has been the case for decades, we cannot speak of the “formation” of transnational spaces.

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