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EVOLUTION OF HISTORICAL REGIONS, BORDERLANDS AND BORDERS DURING LAST CENTURY (1916-2011) AT THE EXTERNAL EU BORDER CORRESPONDING TO NORTHERN ROMANIAN-UKRAINIAN SECTOR

Alexandru ILIEŞ
University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, 1 University str, 410087 Oradea, Romania & University of Gdansk, Department of Geography and Regional Development, Poland;
e-mail: ilies@uoradea.ro

Dorina Camelia ILIEŞ
University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC, 1 University str., 410087-Oradea, Romania;
E-mail: iliesdorina@yahoo.com

Cezar MORAR
University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC, 1 University str., 410087-Oradea, Romania;
E-mail: cezarmorar@yahoo.com

Gabriela ILIEŞ
"Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, Extension Sighetu Marmaţiei, 6 Avram Iancu str.,435500 Sighetu-Marmaţiei, Romania
E-mail: gabrielailies@yahoo.com

Jan A. WENDT
University of Gdansk, Department of Geography and Regional Development, 4 Bazynskiego str, 80-952 Gdansk, Poland &

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning, Romania;
E-mail: jan.wendt@ug.edu.pl

Marin ILIEŞ
"Babeş-Bolyai" University of Cluj-Napoca, Extension Sighetu Marmaţiei, 6 Avram Iancu str., 435500 Sighetu-Marmaţiei, Romania
E-mail: marin_ilies@yahoo.com

Grigore HERMAN
University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC, 1 University str., 410087-Oradea, Romania;
E-mail: grigoreherman@yahoo.com

Summary: This study aims at an analysis of the political space dynamic and limits, over the last century, on an area corresponding to the current Romanian–Ukrainian border area. It is analysed the impact of the successive changes of the border route and the border's role over the regional-territorial structures and the corresponding border areas. The sequences of phases of structural-political (re)modelling of the analysed geographical area are determined by three major thresholds: the two World Wars and the fall of the Socialism System.

Using analytical methods and certified instruments in the scientific literature (from Cartography, Statistics, History etc.) there are compared sets of cartographic materials from various sources, aiming at capturing the major changes over the generated border level system. It have been analysed the borders routes, the sequences of the territorial-political systems, the (re)adjustment of the Historic regional systems, the impact over the communication network, the diminution or extension of the polarization areas of several historic or regional centres.

It results a typology specific to the border areas with an increased dynamics, and finally there are identified the most stable and unstable territorial subsystems and border sectors, comparing to the current route of the EU/NATO external border. These results are elements with a high degree of specificity and they can be used in the contemporary strategies for (re)integration and building of the cross border territorial systems.

Keywords: Romanian-Ukrainian border, external EU border, territorial systems, borderland.

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Introduction

The geographical area of Central and Eastern Europe experienced after the World War I and especially after 1990, substantial structural mutations under the impulse of frequent changes and territorial (re)adjustments. Under these conditions, in a period of about a century (1916-2012), in the analysed area the border line changes and the affiliation to a particular political system led to four distinct periods: The period before World War I; the period between Worlds Wars I and II; the Socialist period 1946-1989 and the Post-Socialist period (after 1989). This time separation is characterized by the beginning, for each regional structure, of the internal self-regulating mechanism by (re)spatial orientation of the relations particularly economic, cultural, and political and also of their directions. At the same time each period successively left their mark on the analysed area by sudden changes in the relations systems established in the three intervals.

The analysis frame

The analysed geographical area is currently determined by the Romanian and Ukrainian border areas separated by a border with complex support generated by the alternating longitudinal (Tisa) and transverse (Siret) hydro-graphical network, by the mountain units (over 1000 m in Maramureş Mountains) and hills (Ilieş *et al.*, 2012). The Northern Sector of the Romanian-Ukrainian border, part of the external EU border has a length of 440.1 km and determines two border areas characterized by a wide morphological, structural, and ethno-cultural landscape variety. The structural complexity of these systems increase by overlapping the ethno-cultural component, extremely diverse and in the years following the First World War, was subject to strong political pressure with major implications in terms evolutionary, structural and spatial arrangement.

Methodologies and methods

Through this study we provide an analysis of this space, regarding the political morph-structural dynamics, for identification of the mechanisms capable of generating/obstruct the cross-border interconnection and regional impact of permanent changes of role and functions of the Romanian-Ukrainian Border. The degree of permeability, the density of the border crossing points, the direction, the intensity and the volume of the cross-border flows correlated with a good knowledge of the territorial realities are elements whose analysis can be the basis of future cross-border strategies, increasing this way the systemic interconnection of the two contiguous border areas. Also, in defining the types of border areas, next to the administrative criteria is taken into account the option (experienced in the literature) of their inward extension on a width of 25-30 km (Lichtenberger, 2000; Bufon, 2002; Taczanowska Ilieş *et al.*, 2010; Ilieş & Grama, 2010a). In this study, the border areas will be determined by the administrative-territorial composition, historical regions and the affiliation to political-territorial systems.

Knowing the territorial realities through field work, for capturing the specificity of the closely examined space, is a basic approach in order to achieve the correct combination with the theoretical component. To determine the functionality and polarization degree, or the polarizing area and its limits, an important step is "*to decipher its internal structure by identifying the main components and their role in defining its status*" (Ianoş, 2000, 21). Since the border areas on the one hand generate a specific internal relations and on the other hand major differences on relations with neighbouring spaces "internal" or "external", beyond the border have an important role in respect to their spatial delimitation criteria. Using joined geographical methodology (Cunha, 1988; Ianoş, 2000; Cocean, 2005; Topaloglou *et al.*, 2005, Ilieş *et al.*, 2009, Ilieş & Grama, 2010b; Johnson *et al.*, 2011;) with specific tools from Cartography, Statistics, History etc is the key to this approach to achieve measurable results applicable to future strategies.

The historical retrospective supports this step by understanding the causality behind the territorial changes repeated in terms of affiliation to a particular political system,

for the understanding of the mechanisms that led to the new (re)orientation and (re)integration in relation to the position and role of the border. Processing of statistical data from public and private institutions are carefully selected, tested and correlated with local realities of the space considered. Elements taken into account in determining the types and hierarchy of "border accessibility" and "cross-border connectivity" (Ilieş et al, 2012) are based on: the historical dynamics of the political space; the cultural heritage of roads (Grazuleviciute-Vileniske & Matijosaitiene, 2010); the structure of ethno-cultural component (Popescu, 2012), the morphometric characteristics of the border and the determined border area (Ilieş & Grama, 2011); the dynamic role and functions of the border and particularly examined border role and "*necessity of superfluous limits and boundaries*" (Leimgruber, 2005). In case of a border with complex role and functions such as the external border of EU and NATO on the Romanian-Ukrainian border, the interconnection strategies require the creation of specific methodologies and typologies (Ilies *et al.,* 2009).

Their role is to identify and prioritize the local and regional actors to create and implement a strategy aimed at increasing the cross-border interconnection, the cross-border accessibility and especially the (re)adjustment and volume to continue to exchange meanings and relations with areas contiguous in parallel with "*dynamics of transition processes in Southeastern Europe*" (Hall, 2000). Thus, the interdependence of the four key elements space, time, activities and communication (Williams, 1998) is the "gateway" to an end with high efficiency and viable solutions.

Analytical component of the dynamics of political space. Results and discussion

The important elements in the strategy of cultural and economic reintegration of a political space results from the analysis of such a system in terms of territorial-political internal dynamics, considering the administrative limits of them. Over the last century, in the analysed area, there were substantial structural changes and political impacts on regional and inter-regional relations systems. Each composing part which makes up a territorial system can be analysed,

interpreted and applied at the level of existing territorial structures with the amendment that an application of the general criteria of spatial regionalization (Cocean, 2005) and identification of mechanisms which assure the determination and functionality of territorial systems (Ianoş, 2000) could group the identified structures on territorial units with a high degree of functionality triggering economic development. In different contexts determined by the analysed periods „*...it is helpful to situate the rise of political interest in regions in terms of the broader processes of the contemporary restructuring of the state in terms of both „rescaling and the reworking of institutional and sectorial boundaries*" (Haughton *et al.*, 2010, p. 11).

Considering the relation systems and the political dependence of the contiguous border subsystems overlapping the analysed area, and whose purpose identifies with the idea that „*a territorial system is essential in defining a certain type of territorial development which aims to pursue some socio-economic and cultural finalities*" (Cunha, 1988, p. 181-198; Ianos, 2000, p. 21), we have identified four distinct periods: The period before First World War with domination of empires; The Interwar Period (1918-1946) with border territorial subsystems marked by the belonging to different systems dominant state and less by the role and functions of the border. It is the period with the most frequent changes of the route and direction of the border; The Communist Period (after Second World War until 1990) without transborderland relationship and with juxtaposed border systems; The Post-Communist Period (since 1990) marked by the "*extended the aggregate length of political frontiers, many of them contested, by thousands of kilometres...*" (Ostergren & Rice, 2004, p. 119) continuous change of role and functions of the Romanian-Ukrainian border, by the dynamic of occurrence or border crossings closing, by the volume and intensity of cross-border human flows and especially of NATO and EU expansion to the East.

The four periods were separated by three major thresholds: The First WW, The Second WW and 1990 marked the fall of the Socialist System in the European space.

The First World War and the Interwar Period

At the turn of the XIX-XX Century the Romanian-Ukrainian border system generated by the EU external border had a totally different political architecture (Fig. 1): the Western and Central administrative and political part belonged to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, while the Eastern part to Moldova. At lower hierarchical level, the Austro-Hungarian part consisted of two major historical provinces: Maramures to the West and Bukovina to the East while in the Moldavian sector it can be noticed the territorial unity of this space, bordered by Bessarabia annexed by Russia in 1812. Basically, in the context of this study theme, transposed a century ago, we noticed on the analysed area the existence of two state structures, bounded by a border disposed perpendicular to the current route (Fig. 1), asymmetrical and with varying degrees of autonomy. Corresponding to figure 1, a lower hierarchical level there were three territorial sub-systems with high functionality (Maramures, Bukovina and Northern Moldavia), arranged in sequences from west to east, including the whole studied border area and whose position generates borders and border areas (in the current sense) perpendicular to the current ones (Fig. 1).

Figure 1. Borders, historical regions and political territorial systems before First World War in the area of actual (2011) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (data sources: Ştefănescu *et al*, 2007a, p. 115; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29)

Another important aspect favourable to the connections between the territorial political systems and subsystems it was represented by the more permissive functions and role of the borders between them.

The first important threshold in changing the internal parameters, the degree of internal functionality of these territorial systems and especially for shaping a new system of relations with external nature was the First World War. The main impact on the regional territorial systems (Maramures, Bukovina) was the "amputation" of a domestic relations system by cross cutting it through the new political borders and the new generation of subsystems required to (re)organization of the internal functionality and (re)orientation of external system relations. If at the European political system macro-level the changes are generally of statistical nature, at local and regional level these were significant. Under these conditions,

1918 marked the end of the world conflict, the disappearance of Russian and Austro-Hungarian Empires, and the emergence and strengthening of the independent national states generated a regional context by remodelling of the territorial-political systems and subsystems and of their limits.

For the first time in the analysed area, the interstate borders system becomes complex because of the large state structures defined by them: Romania to the South, Czechoslovakia, Poland and the Ukrainian SSR (part of the USSR) to the North (Fig. 2).

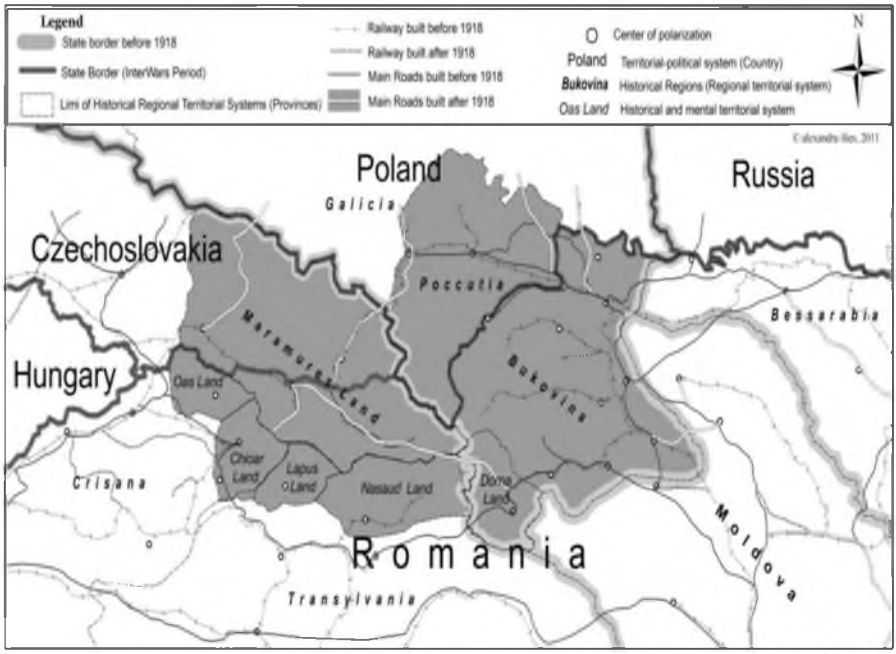

Figure 2. Borders, historical regions and political territorial systems before and after First World War in the area of actual (2011) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (data sources: Ştefănescu et al., 2007a, p. 115-116; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29)

At the regional systems level, the changes are substantial, Maramures is divided into a Romanian part and Czechoslovak unit whose function was only partially affected by the Czechoslovak-Romanian border, very formal and permissive. However, from this moment the two Maramures

subsystems are at beginning of a journey of over a century (four generations) of (re)orientation of the relations systems to the new structures they were incorporated in. Further East, the Bukovina historical territorial system is fully integrated to Romania but with the Polish state neighbourhood.

The asymmetry of the border system is determined by the existence of a unified Southern Romanian border area, and one Northern state composed of three subsystems (Fig. 2). The Romanian part of the current borders was tangent to its corresponding 10 administrative units (counties) of lower rank. The period between the two World Wars can be characterized as the most complex in terms of number of sectors, of their length, directions, of the number of contiguous administrative units and social and ethno-cultural implications.

Another short threshold (1940-1947) was generated by the Vienna Dictate when in the considered area the Maramures and Satu Mare are annexed to Hungary. As consequences of the analysed space, it virtually disappears the border which divided Maramures, but this is fully integrated into a new political-territorial system, being transferred from Romania to Hungary.

The consequences are reflected in the need to create a new strategy and a system of relationships regarding the functionality of the territorial system due to the administrative and political system radical change. In terms of border position and orientation in the Western part the new system is changed again, being oriented North-South exactly in the middle part of the current analysis (Fig. 3).

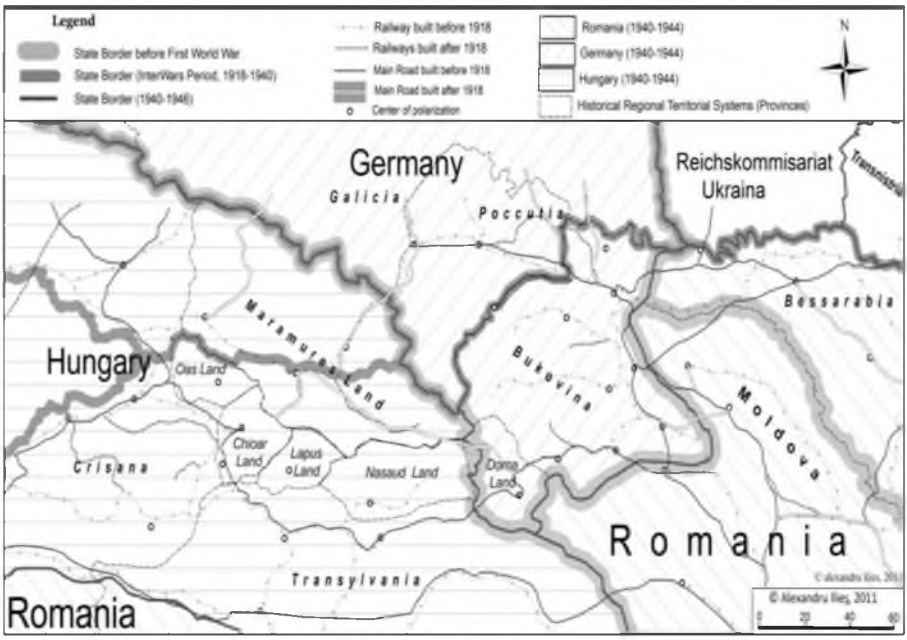

Figure 3. Borders, historical regions and political territorial systems before and after First World War and during the period of Vienna Diktat (1940-1944) in the area of actual (2011) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (data sources: Rey *et al.*, 2002, p. 17; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007a, p. 115-116; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29; Hajdu, 2009, p. 23)

The Communist Period

The Second World War simplified the borders system by USSR "overflowing" throughout the Northern Sector of the former Czechoslovakia, former Polish and former Romanian North Bucovina. Thus, in the border area which divides the unit into Maramures and Bucovina, the north being included in USSR, Ukrainian SSR respectively. From now it is laid down the "foundation" of a "hard", "militarized" border-state, with control and selective human and economic penetration. It outlines two juxtaposed border systems without collaboration and with the breaking out of all physical and cultural ties between the two sides.

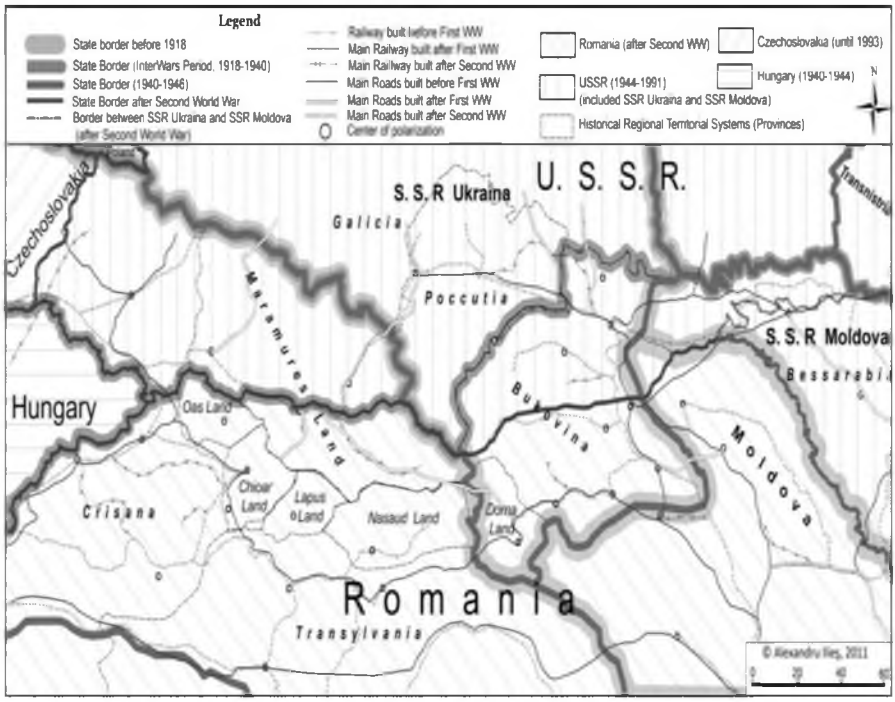

Figure 4. Borders, historical regions and political territorial systems before and after First World War, during the period of Vienna Diktat (1940-1947) and after Second World War (1947-1990) in the area of actual (2011) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (data sources: Rey *et al.*, 2002, p. 17; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007a, p. 115-116; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29; Hajdu, 2009, p. 23)

This is emphasized by the small number of border crossing points, by the reduced number of people receiving the border crossing right and by the large number of families separated by both sides of the border. During 1947-1990 we are witnessing a continuous decline until the disappearance of inter-human relations and commercial consolidated over time, especially in the historical regional systems as Maramures and Bukovina (Fig. 4).

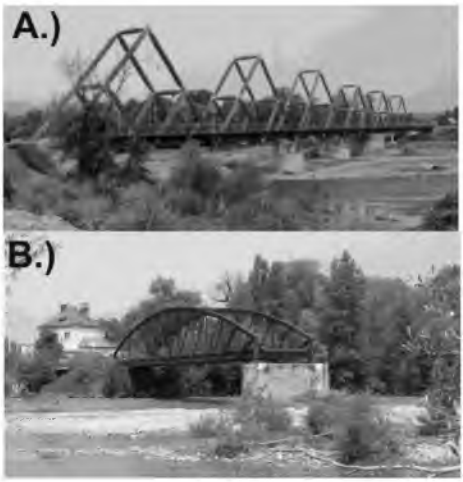

Figure 5.A.) "*Wooden Bridge*" between Sighetu-Marmatiei (Romania) and Solotvino (Ukraine); B.) "*Iron Bridge*" between Teceu Mic (Romania) and Teceu Mare (Ukraine)

Figure 6. Double Railway System: European (normal, Romania) and ex-soviet (large; Ukraine) in the Romanian borderland

The two contiguous border systems "back to back" during this period will "benefit" by the dominant military position of the border, leading to the development of a unidirectional system of relations within the political space, to the interior of the political space affiliation (Romania and the USSR). For example, in the inter-War period in Maramures county area there were eight connecting bridges over the Tisa River, and they were gradually destroyed (Fig. 5B), the only functional one is used exclusively by rail and transit through Romania for Soviet trains using wide railways (Fig. 6). It

should be mentioned that during 1946-1990 the border's both systems belonged to a socialist economic system with a planned economy. Another important element is determined by the "misalignment" of Romania (his own county system) to the administrative-territorial system imposed by the Soviets (regions and districts), as the country had its own administrative reform of 1968.

The Post-Communist Period (since 1990)

Compared to previous periods (1916-1989) the changes are not of territorial- structural nature, they are the result of continuous change at short intervals, of the role and functions of the state border, with major implications on the system of relations between the two contiguous border areas. Under the structural-political aspect, "*The most spectacular change was the breakup of the Soviet Union and the elimination of Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe ...*" (Ostergren & Rice, 2004, p. 119**)** and Ukraine and republic of Moldova became an independent republic and it will identify itself for the next period with the ex-Soviet analysed area. Significant changes are determined by the victory of the market economy over the planned economy, accordingly the existence in analysed space of a single system of economic relations. Since 1991 in the same geographical area, the Romanian-Soviet border area (Ukrainian in subsidiary) is substituted with the Romanian-Ukrainian one, the Ukrainian state asserting independence on 24 August 1991 (Fig. 7).

Figure 7. Borders, historical regions, euroregions and political territorial systems during the last Century (1916-2011) in the area of actual (2011) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (data sources: Rey *et al.*, 2002, p. 17; Ilieş, 2007; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007a, p. 115-116; Ştefănescu *et al.*, 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29; Hajdu, 2009, p. 23)

In these new circumstances, the assertion of independence and the fall of the Ukrainian state socialist system in which Romania and Ukraine were part, due to extensive structural changes in the political and economic European space is part of a set of processes that have opened in numerous ways the possibilities of cross-border cooperation, to restore the old relations and thus (re)integration of historical places (Maramures and Bucovina) economically and culturally (Boar, 2005; Bufon & Ilieş, 2011). Basically, from the two border systems "*back to back*", without inter-human relations and economic-oriented to "*towards the interior political space of belonging to*" open the possibility, at

least theoretically, of a horizon of opportunities for connections extended from 180° to one of 360°. With all 1990s enthusiasm, I found so far, that the mechanism was slow, with several legislative and structural change, and which, together with NATO and EU enlargement leads to a "limited opening" of cross-border connections, especially those relating to the human component (Bufon, 2006) but "*today`s borderlands may be tomorrow`s internal space*" (Bialasiewicz et al., 2009, p. 84). In this regard, the followings are some of the determinant role.

The period 1990-2004 was favourable for trade, free movement of people, being removed the visa requirements for border crossing. There have been opened more border crossing points, joint companies were created, and it was considered the problem of land and property restitution by the Romanian state to Romanian citizens from Ukraine who have held properties until 1946. Also, the Valea Viseului-Câmpulung la Tisa wide railway used exclusively for Soviet trains began to be used by people who transited the border through a schedule. It was also built the historic bridge of wood from Sighetu Marmatiei (Fig. 5A) and many other border crossing points for local traffic only accessible to people living in rural border areas (Ilieş, 2003). On the same background, the military role and border control human flow decreased in the analysed system. To facilitate good relations and cooperation there were created the cross-border cooperation Euroregions: the Carpathian in 1993 (functional on the Romanian side in 1997) and the Upper Prut (Fig. 7; Suli-Zakar, 2002; Ilieş, 2007).

The period 2004-2007, marked by the integration in NATO and EU (2007) can be considered as one of restricting the facilities and increasing the border military function „role", as it becomes NATO's Eastern external border (Fig. 7).

The EU post-accession (after 2007) period meant reintroducing visas for Ukrainians, which again meant increasing of the control function role for the human flows (Ilieş, 2003). Basically, due to the closure of border crossing points, increase control and reduce the volume of transit goods, the Romanian-Ukrainian border role, which became part of Eastern external borders of the EU, increases the flow of human control in conjunction with the military (NATO) and custom ones. In the local communities the border is perceived

as having a role and sharing similar functions with the Communist period. In parallel, given to the limitation of the cross-border legal activities in recent years it has greatly increased the smuggling of counterfeit goods from Ukraine to Romania, intensifying also illegal migration. In conclusion, at present, the Romanian-Ukrainian border territorial system can be considered asymmetric, with declining trade relations, with increased criminal activity and significant differences life costs between the two contiguous border areas. In parallel, even if favourable policy frameworks exist, the interest in bilateral cultural activities greatly decreased. Finally, we are witnessing the consolidation of a system composed of juxtaposed border subsystems, with declining relationship and exchanges, and with "orientation" trends of the internal self-regulating system mechanisms within the subsystem.

Conclusions

Looking back at the beginning of the XIX Century there were two systems in the area of territorial historical study, Maramures and Bucovina, characterized by high systemic functionality from both internal relations and structures in relation to regional neighbours. Gradually, the first threshold determined by the First World War and the creation of national states introduced for the first time the meaning of inter-state border, whose role and functions are radically different from the contemporary situation. The Inter War Period can be considered as the "beneficiary" for the most border sectors, with sectors and orientations of high complexity, but with little effect on the mechanisms and elements that determine the functionality of the old historical territorial systems. Implementation of the Communist system on the Romania's border by Soviet control "overflowing" over the former territories of Czechoslovakia and Poland, led to increased separation of the two systems and the elimination of contiguous border bridges in all areas. It can be considered the most stable period in the Romanian-Soviet border system, consisting of two subsystems juxtaposed border without relationships. The fall of Communism, the breaking up of the USSR, the independent affirmation of Ukraine (august 2001), paved the way for opening of relations between the two parties (based the historical criteria) for a relatively short period

(1991-2004). NATO and EU enlargement to the East, then the inclusion of Romania in 2004 and 2007 in these structures, have reopened a chapter considered concluded in 1990, that of the restrictive borders. If in the political spaces of EU the external border measures favour its protection, at the local communities' level the consequences are in most cases unfavourable. Restrictions on the transit right (Ukrainian citizens need a visa), limiting the goods accepted for local border traffic increased the illegal activities on the one hand, and on the other hand reduced the locals' confidence for a common strategy development and for the integration of the contiguous of the two border subsystems, with long joint history and traditions.

It can be appreciated that the Romanian-Ukrainian sector at the external border of EU and NATO by its role and functions does not favour the creation of mechanisms and instruments favourable for mental, cultural and economic systemic (re)integration, mainly of the two historic provinces Maramures and Bucovina. At the same time, it generates a type of asymmetric cross-border territorial system with unidirectional relationships and "*inward*" closing trends of the two contiguous border subsystems. It derives a type of territorial border system common to the EU peripheral border areas.

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