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Border Metaphors in the Polish Sociology of Borderlands

Abstract: This paper treats Polish sociology of borderlands (mostly Eastern) as the rich resources of metaphors of borders, especially national and political ones. It shows how these metaphors are linked to different sociological imagery—modern and postmodern. Its aim is to reconstruct analytical strategies and research projects from this sub-discipline, focusing on metaphors of borders. These strategies and projects are based on very different approaches to metaphors. The first operation is an instrument which the theoretician uses to reconstruct the theoretical typology of borders and borderlands. The second operation is a tool which the researcher uses to reflect more deeply on the empirical data concerning individual and collective reactions to borders and borderlands. The third operation is a narrative tool used by examinees who inhabit the borderlands. The paper provides a broad and intensive discussion of the functions of different metaphors about borders in relation to the different intellectual approaches to problems of borderlands and borders. It stresses the needs for equal treatment in Polish sociology of borderland problems of borderlands and problems of national borders. Especially emphasizes the positive functions of academic interest in borders metaphors in this scientific treatment. Generally speaking, this analyse enhances many links between sociology of borderlands and cultural anthropology and is closely connected to the question of where these intellectual operations on metaphors belong in the project of an interdisciplinary approach to borders and borderlands.

Keywords: metaphors; borders; borderlands; sociological imagery.

Introduction

Michael Herzfeld (2007), distinguished anthropologist and researcher of cultural norms in times of crisis, is right when he points out the risks involved in the adoption of metaphors when trying to understand national reality. His authoritative statement does not preclude the benefits which may be gleaned from the study of metaphors, their nature and role in sociology and anthropology. Rather, it should encourage us to be careful how we deal with metaphors, to try to identify metaphors, and to reconstruct their uses and abuses in soundly defined types and approaches in socio-cultural analysis. Identification of the specific “theoretical type” to which a sociology or its sub-discipline belongs is not without bearing on the outcomes of such investigations.

According to increasingly widespread view contemporary sociology is “prone” to metaphorisation of its basic theoretical narratives. Depending on the branch of contemporary sociology we have either too many metaphors or too few. It looks as if metaphors are doing increasingly well in various sociologies and their sub-disciplines.

It seems that any researcher who tries to wage battles with metaphors in current Polish sociology more and more influenced by the “post-modernist turn” and its

sub-disciplines focused on ethnic and national reality is bound to be defeated. The Polish sociology of the nation or other sub-disciplines of sociology (f.e. community studies) and now strongly reconstructed sociology of different borderlands attests to this conclusion perfectly.

For the reasons just outlined I shall devote this paper to the Polish sociology of borderlands, mostly Eastern. This branch of sociology has been present in Polish sociology for dozens of years and is now attracting the increasing attention of researchers who deal with pure theory and those who deal with other branches of sociology such as the sociology of politics or the sociology of language. Recently, the sociology of borders has been succumbing to the sociology of everyday life on the one hand and social and cultural theories directly influenced by postmodernist approaches on the other hand.

Contemporary Polish sociology of borderlands, especially Eastern, is an interesting and convenient area in which to analyse metaphors in sociology. Metaphor analysis, will be limited to the reconstruction of metaphors of the border because borders, assumedly, are the basic research problem for this sub-discipline and the basic organising concept in the mapping of the most important and indispensable concepts.

In other words, taking the results of recent field studies and theoretical-historical research as my point of departure, I am going to suggest a *vocabulary of metaphors* which theorists and empirical researchers have been using to refer to borders. I am also going to use various metaphors of the border to demonstrate the most important analytical operations. The purpose of these endeavours is to reproduce the style of thinking about borders, the extent to which this thinking is saturated with metaphors, to show how these metaphors are designed and applied to develop a project of the basic strategies for the functioning of a sociology of borderland.

If we analyse the empirical work of Polish writers on the borderland¹ we discover that, entangled in attempts to define the nature and functions of borders, is quite a large repertory of borderland projects. This is especially evident when we pay particular attention to the authors' introductions and explanations. The entanglements are considerable. They are based on the belief that descriptions of border-borderland relations constitute the basic vocabulary of interpretations of both borderlands and borders, for example state ones.

Therefore, discovery of these relations seems to be one of the researcher's intellectual duties and that in doing this duty the researcher must choose the dominant strategy of interpretation of the data he will later have at his disposal. In other words, the researcher must choose between the following strategies: a) the external strategy as a dominant superimposed by sociologists or anthropologists, not all of whom specialise in this problem but who, "on the other hand," participate in their respective disciplines' basic discussions or b) the internal strategy as a dominant which is also superimposed but by the researcher himself on the basis of earlier field studies and

¹ Most of the analyses presented here are based on a series of volumes on transborder; see: Leszek Goldyka et al. (eds.) 1997 and 1999; Jerzy Leszkowicz-Baczyński (ed.) 2001; Maria Zielińska (ed.) 2003; Żywia Leszkowicz-Baczyńska 2005.

analyses or his own conceptualisations developed “here and now” for the sake of a strictly thematically and spatially defined field study (at a specific segment of the border and a specific place in the borderland) in a way which depends more than in other cases on the opinions and ideas of the subjects themselves.

In this state of affairs, border metaphors, their attributions and functions are very useful indeed. They easily focus the researcher’s attention and direct her imagination towards theoretical issues or towards subjects’ own imaginal resources to a greater or lesser extent. But above all metaphors economise the researcher’s efforts by laying the foundations of her knowledge of borderlands and, equally important, they help to broaden and diversify the interpretation of borders themselves. Last but not least, they help to identify a project’s dominant strategy and the nature of the relations between the two strategies. They do so thanks to the greater visibility of border metaphors in the projects and also thanks to the fact that it is easier to grasp their source: are they drawn from the vocabulary of the external strategy or the internal strategy?

From many metaphors accompanying the two strategies, the internal one and the external one, selected are the following ones for the purpose of illustration.

First, the border metaphors used by Marian Golka to explain the phenomena and processes which take place at the borderlands. In Golka’s analytic proposal centre stage is occupied by the border-borderland relation and the border metaphors he created help researchers to understand the multifarious nature of borderlands.

Second, the border metaphors we ourselves used in this project, inspired by the interpretation of borders gleaned from our re-assumption of our earlier work. Thanks to these metaphors the names of borders which we used in our final report both stimulated us to undertake further investigations and facilitate the (didactic) reception of the report by non-specialists. The metaphors we used in the project became a visible sign of both continuation and receptivity to new theoretical categorisations on the one hand and new recipients on the other hand (e.g., local politicians, EU experts).

Third, border metaphors directly gleaned from transcriptions of the individual narratives of members of local elites from the Polish-Ukrainian borderland who participated in our study. Not in any way retouched or previously adjusted linguistically and stylistically, this empirical material is an essential component of the analysed project of operational metaphor reconstruction. The specific language of these narratives has been retained and so, therefore, have the respondents’ specific ideas, rooted in their vital experience and the cultural characteristics of the local communities in which they function. They are a very informative testimony of the experience of living in the proximity of the border, one which allows us to say whether a narrative is constituted by the narrator’s awareness of the border and borderland or not.² These metaphors are operational in two different senses. They are developed and applied “first” by the respondents and “later” by researchers who consult their earlier empirical data in search of a theoretical key, including a categorical project of feasible interpretative strategies. This third type of metaphor, largely generated by respon-

² J. Kurczewska & H. Bojar (eds.) 2002, 2005; J. Kurczewska 2004, 2005, 2006.

dents themselves, albeit almost immediately processed by the researcher, is deeply rooted in empirical experience and as such is a verbal representation of respondents' ideas, and the most salient or even spectacular representation at that. For this reason it helps to give direction to the research project and objectify the respondents.

To summarise, the three types of metaphors distinguished with respect to their attributions to specific subjects and the degree to which they have been mediated by the researcher's language and ideas as well as the moment of intervention into the structure of the research project are, not only a rewarding field of research but also an essential one. Together they do not exhaust the entire vocabulary of operational metaphors, however. They do not even offer a limited representation of that vocabulary. Rather, they signal the utility of this type of components of the creative process for the research project.

First Illustration: Five Influential Pairs of Border Metaphors

This illustration can be gleaned from the concept of borders and borderlands suggested by Marian Golka (1999, 2004), the anthropologist and sociologist. It is often referred to by researchers in the preliminary phase of project development or during the final re-assessment, as testified by the frequency of quotations and references. (This does not usually happen, in the thematically and territorially scattered community of Polish investigators of borderlands where the usual practice is to specialise in one strictly defined segment of the border or borderland). Compared with other concepts considered in this project, this one stands out thanks to the variety and colourfulness of interpretative suggestions with respect to both borders and borderlands and to the fact that this interpretative ingenuity and flexibility has been applied equally successfully to borders and borderlands. This is because the author highlights the theoretical and empirical importance of border-borderland relations and of their complexity, determined as it is by the two-way nature of these relations and the ensuing interpretative potential and hazards.

These unique characteristics of Golka's conceptualisation and its resonance are largely determined, by his use of border metaphors and borderland metaphors, their great susceptibility to acceptance by researchers with a variety of research interests, literary tastes and semantic habits. This original approach to the typology of borders and borderlands is articulated in the form of five pairs of metaphors which are evolving and orienting further ideas concerning the basic characteristics of borders and borderlands and staking out the immanent and relational notional field.

The typology of borders and borderlands expressed in the language of metaphors begins with the type expressed in terms of the metaphor of the extremes of war and ends with the type expressed in terms of the metaphors of everyday exchanges and encounters, the mundane and peace.

To begin with, we have the border portrayed as a line of trenches and borderlines as mine fields where, according to Marian Golka (1999, 2004) "Corpses are usually the common element on such borderlines (no more together...) because this type of

borderland is an area where each side strives to annihilate the other side.” The “line of trenches” metaphor seems to suggest that the division symbolised by borders is based on extreme and maximally visible forms of between-group antagonism which determine who is familiar and who is a stranger. This border comparison generates the image of the borderland as a minefield, a place from whence there is no escape and where the enemy must die. The “trench line” and “minefield” suggest that the division is maximally and unequivocally negative and final and open only to ultimate values: life and death. These metaphors, trigger associations based on the images of martial modernity: on nineteenth and twentieth-century conceptions of positional war, nations and states which resolve their power struggles by means of military power and notions thereof.

The second group of metaphors consists of “river” and “ferry” metaphors. The “river” metaphor suggests that divisions created by means of borders are still important albeit natural and not as dramatic as the first type of division suggested by the “trench” metaphor. It suggests passivity and continuity rather than dynamism and a certain uniqueness. It also clearly indicates the existence of two river banks—two sides, two groups etc. but does not rule out the possibility that people on both sides of the river are aware of their mutual existence and will not lead to an eruption or repetition of conflict but, on the contrary, may make an effort to establish more regular contact. The author matches another metaphor to the river metaphor—that of the “ferry.” This metaphor neatly highlights the dual nature of the border. On the one hand, because it is associated with nature, it is obvious and on the other hand, because it is associated with a social institution (the ferry is a human artefact), it can help to overcome or reinforce.

This second pair of metaphors marks another complexity of border and borderland attributions. It highlights the substantial inevitability of the border but also the fact that there is a choice: it can either be systematically crossed (or there is at least such an option) or it is possible to resign from such activity and demonstrate one’s power and difference instead. Together, this pair of metaphors signals that borders and borderlands are already open to a certain extent and, compared with the first pair, it highlights the obviousness of borders and borderlands and helps to construct conflict-free ways of dealing with them which are culturally, not naturally, determined.

The third pair of metaphors consists of metaphors of the border as a “wall” and the borderland as a “gate.” The first metaphor accentuates material solidity and the function of clear and definite division. The second metaphor just as firmly accentuates the solidity of the place which has been unequivocally appointed as the place of temporary crossing in both directions. It is important to remember that as far as this third pair of metaphors is concerned, the author has clearly elaborated a system of clarifications relating to more careful categorisation of subjects and the relations between them. Groups which the author describes not only with the help of such attributes as segregation and isolation but also temporary, two-way cancellation of these attributes (the borderland as gate) in psychological and psychosocial terms, are situated on both sides of the border-cum-wall. The antagonism which manifested itself as an element of this addition to the first two pairs of metaphors is greatly developed in

the third pair: it is connected with such categories as decisional “interests” of isolation or the feeling (or awareness) of distinctness and separation. We may even say that the material solidity of the border and borderland is quite effectively limited by the psychological specification of groups by means of paying attention to such attributes as reflection, activism or empowerment.

As far as this third pair is concerned, it must be added that such terms as transference and opening greatly reduce the impression of something static and permanent symbolised by the “wall” and “gate;” we may even say that these metaphors open up the project of border and borderland interpretation to construction and architectural effects while humanising it thanks to the mobility of individuals and groups who are forever enlivening the static, stable constructional forms. In other words, we may say that in addition to military-war metaphors (pair one) and painting-landscape metaphors (revitalised thanks to the existence of ferries), we now have a pair of architectural metaphors although we still remain in the imaginary realm of modern experience focused on the values of order (stability, static nature), antagonism and the necessities of an unequivocally defined distinction.

At first glance, the fourth pair of metaphors: border-cum-“fence” and borderland-cum-“playing field” is a continuation of its direct antecedent. This is not so, however, although the difference is not too great if, for example, we consider the segregating/isolating function. What really matters, however, is the different material (permeability vs. permanence) and also the nature of the construction (heavy wall, light fence).

The author apparently wants to make it clear that borders can be permeable and that it is permissible to observe others comfortably in order to recognise that they are both different and similar (as I well know from my own experience, one can easily have a peep at other people’s lives through a fence without any negative consequences...). According to Marian Golka, the perfect match for the “fence” metaphor for borders is the “playing field” metaphor for borderlands. This last metaphor is gleaned from the domain of sport and recreation and it certainly triggers different associations than the “mine field,” “ferry” or “gate.” The playing-field metaphor is the only metaphor which definitely suggests that the borderland is a meeting place: a place of peaceful, well-organised encounter with clearly-defined rules of the game. Moreover, the encounter-cum game takes place in a very special kind of place, one in which some people win and some people lose, where both parties want to put their best foot forward, where the contestants are treated according to generally accepted rules and where one can put oneself to the test and also test the real value of one’s opponent. In other words, in this conception of border and borderland, the pure, sharp antagonism which is so fundamental for the previous pairs of metaphors has been tamed by the rules of the game, neutrality, respect for opponents and the desire to present oneself from the best side. The fourth pair of metaphors deprives borders and borderlands of their solidity and stability and opens them up to different albeit just as clearly defined rules of competition.

The last pair of metaphors in the approach is that of “street” (border) and “marketplace” (borderland). This pair is quite distinct from the remaining pairs because

it is rooted not in some form of conflict or separation but in some form of communication, understanding or even co-operation (among various groups). It also differs in that both border and borderland are hardly visible at all. Compared with “wall,” “room” or even “screen,” “street” hardly divides those who live on each of its sides, it connects them and allows them to communicate. What is more, it symbolises a zone of freedom and voluntariness as testified by the additional information that inhabitants of both sides can be in the street or the marketplace in any way they please. Although this additional specification acknowledges the fact that inhabitants of both sides of the street have different values and behave differently, this by no means stops them from respecting the principle of reciprocity (e.g., expressing their respect).

A good match for the “street” metaphor is the “marketplace metaphor.” This latter metaphor excellently highlights another principle, not previously triggered by borderland metaphors, that is the possibility of beneficial exchange between the two sides of the street (and not only) and the consequent equilibration of diversity. Not only does the last pair of metaphors reject the vocabulary of conflict imagery, it actually replaces it with the imagery of exchange, benefit and freedom. More than any of the other metaphors analysed here, it triggers images of movement and mutually advantageous exchange, mutual benefits and freedom of action, and cancels images of inevitability and conflict.

To conclude this presentation of the first illustration of operations on metaphors let us consider the ensuing benefits. In other words, to reassume its interpretative potential. First and foremost these five pairs of interactive (mutually dependent) metaphors do not map all the interpretative possibilities of borders and borderlands (they fail, for example, to define the relations between the different pairs of metaphors or to provide a lucid hierarchy of their values).

The presented catalogue, though relatively small, is very stimulating and it seems to be presented with considerable insight and axiological consideration. It is stimulating both because the catalogue as a whole is valuable and because its components (i.e., individual metaphors and their pairs) have many valuable attributes. The catalogue and its components are historically and geographically universal and hence popular and also the component metaphors and their pairs are notionally valid (i.e., closely linked to the archetypes of conflict and solidarity). The metaphors’ stimulating value is further reinforced by concise yet substantive characterisations of basic norms presented within the framework of clearly formulated specifications. Last but not least, it is reinforced by the author’s clear presentation of guidelines for further development of these specifications. Despite its shortcomings, the analysed proposal deserves to be considered as a point of departure for further attempts to develop research projects for the study of borders and borderlands because it meets the criteria laid out by Joseph Weizenbaum (2008), one of the pioneers of the study of artificial intelligence. The following observation of this American scholar and visionary applies to this reconstructed catalogue very well: “By collating various contexts, metaphors and analogies can lead to the development of new ways of seeing things.”

The value of this project results not only from its exceptional vividness as a whole but also from the fact that it reveals the author’s theoretical intentions (to relate

borders and borderlands) and hence gives greater direction to future conceptual searches. This approach also has its weaknesses, for example the failure to include metaphors of the social agents of borders and borderlands; were it otherwise, this would emphasise the *differentia specifica* of the different pairs of metaphors even more but also the lack of analysis (e.g., within the framework of their accompanying specifications) of the structuring of “familiar” and “unfamiliar” or other agents. This way we have social monoliths (typified by homogeneous systems of behaviour or values) on both sides of the frontier and it is not very clear what will happen to their differentiation when they crop up at a specific borderland. Also, the author’s focus on antagonism rules out any more subtle definition of the structure of relations between “familiar” agents and “strangers.” On the one hand that is a good thing because the clarity of the central, initial theoretical opposition is retained; on the other hand it is a bad thing because the logic of transformation of antagonism into co-operation is not well demonstrated (it is impossible to show new differences at the borderland).

Second Illustration: Local Community Studies and their Main Border Metaphors

The next illustration of operational metaphors includes:

First—a pair of border metaphors, or rather an opposition of the porosity metaphor and the sealing (closure) metaphor gleaned from theoretical analyses of the data concerning various historical forms of borders (taken from the literature and the language of Polish decision-makers who were responsible for border policy at the time of Poland’s accession to the European Union);

Second—the “event” metaphor taken from Durkheim’s conception of integration and the researcher’s conviction that metaphors can find support in the research context, the profound and multidimensional transformations taking place in Poland in 1989.

Although these are two different metaphors (as we shall see further on), they share the same socio-cultural context, that is, the political situation and the changes initiated by the process of accession of the Third Republic of Poland to the European Union and the resultant activities of the state administration on the country’s eastern border (transformation of the state border into the external eastern border of the entire European Union) and the new cognitive situation evoked by the cultural and civilisational phenomena of the opening of Poland not only to its neighbours but also to the globalising world. We may rightly say that the second illustration, as opposed to the first one, is a universal one, embedded in a strictly defined historical and spatial context, and that it is polonocentric here and now despite the nature of its theoretical determinants. As opposed to the third and last illustration, the two cases presented within its framework share the similar vital experience of the designers of the borders and borderlands who tried to define them as best they could. In other words, the second illustration is founded on the experience of transformation, including the experience of new borders.

Most importantly, this illustration demonstrates the metaphors which oriented the entire research project and were a frame of reference for previous and later empirical findings resulting from the analysis of narratives and also an idea of how to hook the researcher's imagination, oriented by the metaphors.

The oppositional pair of border metaphors consists of the metaphor of "porosity" and collector of variety and the metaphor of a "closed door" (sealing, shutting the door). The first of these two metaphors allows us to see the border not so much as something transient and lacking material solidity but rather as the agent of spectacular exposure of difference, diversity and heterogeneity, properties which are, in themselves, positive autotelic values. Thanks to this metaphor we may look at respondents' notions with axiological respect for difference and convince ourselves that diversity of values which are various expressed and transmitted over the frontier do not threaten our national culture, our country or our tradition. It also teaches us something about the sources of diversity and variety on both sides of the border and encourages us to abstain from shutting the knowledge thus obtained within the perspective of searching for homogeneous categories or pure analytical dimensions.

The second metaphor, the metaphor of a closed door, has derivations which, due to their historiographic, politological and mundane popularity, cannot be ignored. The most popular metaphor in this category is the metaphor of the iron curtain, an element of the operatic stage transferred to the theatre of ideological struggle between East and West. The basic metaphor and its most important derivatives which absolutise closure construct unequivocal separation; they accentuate the border's segregating function and strengthen the presumption of radical incompatibility of social entities on both sides.

In the project these two oppositional border metaphors have many specifications, most of which refer to the nature of the agents. According to the project's rationale, this opposition and its component parts were to serve as a point of departure for the discussion of both the evaluation of our earlier articulations and applications as a point of departure for the debate on choice of appropriate interpretative procedures. We may say that this pair of opposing border metaphors has become the label for two different (extended) procedures for the interpretation of borders and procedures for the exposure, "via the border," of various forms of social and cultural homogeneity, homogeneity of individual and group social agents and an alternative procedure of exposure of cultural and social diversity, its permanence, homogeneity or even clinical purity or perfection. In a way they have become a short-cut to these two procedures (the effect of reflection on previously obtained and generalised notion analyses) and also the anticipation of other interpretative possibilities. Most importantly, they serve as orientation points for the definition and hence construction of the basic procedure for the humanistic interpretation of borders. These are first and indispensable analytic steps leading directly to significant decisions as to what the researcher is going to do in his project: is he going to realise some form of pluralistic orientation toward social reality (e.g., a conceptual *bricolage* of not only borders and borderlands) or some form of monocentric orientation (monolithic, striving to purify the principles of division).

Also, taken separately, these metaphors are a good and convenient (in the sense of the economy of intellectual effort) indicator which consolidates and facilitates the recognition and naming of border narratives, mainly on the basis of the relevant literature. The metaphor of porosity and the collecting of variety signal the presence of some form of narrative which accepts variety, openness, the positive function of separations or the pursuit of commensurate values which enable communication based on partnership; it also suggests that we may continue to expect narratives built on the diagnosis of good neighbourhood, agreement between various institutions or countries, or differences which attract each other.

The closed door metaphor, meanwhile, has usually accompanied diagnoses of border cultures and not only, but also national cultures or public cultures formulated from the perspective of state structures belonging to opposing political camps, civilisational or denominational spheres, and are often expressed in the language of organisational activities such as the language of law and order.

These two different border metaphors help us to identify and tentatively classify their context in one or other basic scientific vocabulary: the language of physics, political geography or the language of sociology, history, political science, anthropology etc. For example, they can be used to discover the problematic-disciplinary affiliation of various definitions of borders and hence help the researcher to gain a better orientation in the literature and use that literature more effectively.

Furthermore, these two types of metaphor, “porosity” and its opposite, “closed door,” are particularly well suited for fertile albeit complex detective work, which is surely an advantage. They can be equally successfully used to identify both the axiological nature of interpretations rooted in the relevant literature (either the strictly theoretical literature or the literature developed from generalisations of specific empirical data) and the researcher’s freshest preliminary empirical data (obtained from pilot studies). To make it clear, they are a kind of litmus paper with which to identify the nature of borders or uncover the hidden meanings of borders in ramified, theoretically heterogeneous and extensive interpretations. We may say that these two types of metaphors are the essence of the procedure which every researcher applies in the preliminary stage of project development. On his behalf, as it were, they “pick out” various objects from the set of empirical data or theoretical conceptions which have already been processed by the literature or from fresh data and organise them by determining which of them give structure to and describe the interpretations of other objects (and the principles which make this possible), for better or worse. Thanks to this the researcher can finally decide what the border and their derivatives are in terms of a social entity.

In other words, the goal is to develop a preliminary procedure for understanding the border: to identify its ontological status, to determine whether it is founded on antagonism or exchange and co-operation and to find out whether it is a natural social form or a cultural construct, and if it is a cultural construct is it historically early or late etc., and to determine whether it is an open entity or a closed one. Therefore, these metaphors, or rather our reflections on them, encourage us to decide how we are going to understand the border, what it is for the researcher, what it is

for the project, how and by means of what scientific vocabularies it can best be conceptualised.

Thanks to this, and particularly thanks to the tension between the metaphor of “porosity” and the metaphor of “closed door,” and thanks to the ensuing interpretative suggestions, the researcher must investigate how the modes of existence and expression of the border affect the socio-cultural interpretation of social collectives, cultures and organisations. The metaphors help to outline the field of investigation of the nature of social and cultural artefacts: are they simple, complex, heterogeneous, homogeneous, based on real distinctions or standardised ones, does the openness refer to state structure or cultural structure, what role does the principle of national homogenisation play in the process? In addition to these specifying analytical pursuits they (most importantly) touch upon the issue which is fundamental for the investigator of borders (and not only), that is the role of the distinction between “familiar” and “strangers” when understanding borders: is the distinction dichotomous (as so perfectly expressed in the “closed door” metaphor) or gradualist, as so aptly expressed by the “porosity” metaphor (porosity is gradated!).

So far we have been discussing the advantages of metaphors for the interpretative project, for the researcher herself. Now, to conclude, let us consider the benefits of socio-cultural specifications for “metaphors themselves” and operations on metaphors.

Above all, the researcher, particularly the one who likes to define his social subjects reliably, tends to reflect on the subjects’ structural properties, the one’s to which metaphors directly refer. Hence it is frequent practice to problematise the level of social aggregation of these subjects, for example the border-cum-iron curtain: is it located at the macro level (state, nation, culture, civilisation, region, etc.), the mezzo level (among local communities on both sides of the border) or the micro level (the individual, the family, the neighbourhood). Another thing which is also quite often analysed is the nature of functioning of the subject to whom the metaphor directly or indirectly pertains (this in turn has a significant effect on the type of narrative in which it appears). The fact that the subject—person, institution or system—is called a conscious constructor in the narrative in question, an architect of some activity or cultural orientation, renders the “border permeability” metaphor (a derivate of the “porosity” metaphor) and the “door sealing” metaphor (a derivate of the “closed door” metaphor) more important than their close neighbours, the “matrix” metaphors. These changing roles and locations of the metaphors further reinforce the activism ascribed to subjects when the metaphors associated with a passive and often abstract subject—the East, religion, the regional or national cultural system—further exacerbate the impression that the narrative is concerned with the permanency or historical necessity of the border, and one which cancels the subjects’ consciousness or desire to act.

This last analysis allows to say that as far as the metaphors we are now discussing are concerned (“matrix” and their derivatives), we have a balance between the advantages of using metaphors and the advantages of using their sociological-anthropological specifications.

In the project I am reconstructing here step by step I have decided to link the element of reflection on the theoretical framework of the study of the border of the Third Republic, just presented, with the construction of the operational concept of border by means of the “event” metaphor. This metaphor, let me stress, is not gleaned from everyday language, particularly the language of the media in its attempt to reconstruct the real world with the help of major or minor events. It is gleaned from the post-Durkheim sociological vocabulary. In other words, I am not referring to events in the popular sense or to artistic events. I am referring to the meaning of events which utilises the concept of social bonding (attachment), community, temporal integration, etc. in order to draw attention to the fact that an event is a form of structured social process which takes place in a specific time and has significant consequences, both for future objective social forms and processes and for the mental structures of the participants of these processes and their followers.

I have decided to view the pre-2004 (i.e., prior to Poland’s accession to the European Union) Ukrainian-Polish border as an event in the aforementioned sociological sense because it was possible to assume, on the basis of existing sociological knowledge, that—due to its transformative significance—the political order in Poland and its neighbouring countries (or even the whole of Europe) already was and would continue to be such an event. This decision was possible because the arguments in favour of this interpretation of the border can be found not only in one of the basic traditions in the understanding of social reality but also in the empirical data which I and my collaborators have accumulated. These data clearly suggest that people who live near the Polish-Ukrainian border think that everything which is now happening at the border is important for them and their grandchildren (this phrase was often repeated by the respondents). It is even possible to say, on the basis of this material, that the processes taking place at the border constituted the respondents’ larger narratives.

The event metaphor—both Durkheim’s one and the one taken (together with its specification) from the empirical research broadens our view of border and borderland reality. We may say that they draw attention to the need to diversify our categorisations (normal vs. pathological, accidental vs. long-term, technical vs. axiological etc.) of phenomena and processes taking place “at the border” and, more generally (in relation to the border and by means of these categorisations) they create a new research object, a new social collective, brought to life by, and focused on, the transition of the border from a state of sealing to a state of opening.³ We may say that this was a formative event because it strengthened (or perhaps triggered, this we do not know for sure) the respondents’ awareness that they were a borderland, both real and symbolic.⁴

In other words, the event metaphor, a metaphor of dual origin, draws attention to the need for the researcher to take note of a new community, to identify it and capture its meaning when superficial (surface?) sociological observation has great difficulty doing so. Although at first glance, the new collective created by the two events, sealing

³ Note: this applied to the pre-2004 period and the period after 2004–2006.

⁴ G. Babiński (1997).

and opening of the border, appears to be “superimposed” on their participants (if only by the dozens of questions asked by masses of researchers who are studying the eastern borders of Poland and by the increasing political importance of these “events”), it is more permanent than a crowd at the border or a borderland collective featuring in the state administration’s registers. This claim seems to be justified because the respondents’ own opinions, taken into consideration in the project (*a priori*), said that most of the respondents, when asked to say how they were getting on without any hint that the interviewer wanted to know how they were responding to the specific nature of living at the border, spontaneously mentioned the importance of the border, now and in the future, told the interviewer what people did at the border and what important consequences this would have. In other words, everything which goes on at the border is an event.

There are two more observations to conclude my discussion of the second illustration. The first observation concerns the permeation or overlapping of metaphors, especially the two event metaphors: the sociological (academic) one and the lay one. The second observation concerns the peculiarities of the metaphors’ social functions.

The “porosity” and “closed door” metaphors (and their derivatives) reconstructed earlier ‘intervene,” so to say, with the contents of the two “event” metaphors and, in the latter two cases, strengthen the “goodness of fit” with what is currently happening at the Polish eastern border and considerably broaden their communicative utility.

This utility is very enriched and extended by the overlap of two genealogically distinct event metaphors: “event” conceived with the help of Durkheim’s sociological vocabulary and the much wider array of notions of popular (everyday and holiday) events: beginning with the event as a long-term process with significant future consequences (rather similar to the sociological event) and ending with the event as a holiday celebrating the signing of EU and international agreements (when children do not go to school).

We cannot possibly ignore a form of “sociological” event metaphor propagated by the researcher (this problem certainly merits more serious presentation and discussion), that is, introduction of the event to the consciousness of the borderland respondents and the ensuing possible enhancement of their readiness to experience the border and borderland more intensely.

There are two different ways of introducing the metaphor to wider social circulation: introduction of the event metaphor to respondent’s mentality by means of the appropriate selection of items in inventories (mainly of the interview type) and acquaintance of respondents with the findings of earlier studies of their borders and borderlands. This research propaganda with its basic categories for the mapping of the study-specific sociological imagination renders their significant metaphors (especially the operational ones) markers of the new social situations and new collectives. If the results of such work are published, and if they function in extra-scientific circles, among borderland people and institutions and hence orient the local public opinion, we may say that they participate in the development of new forms of social solidarity which result from similarity of life experience and the inherent metaphors can participate (to what extent—that is worth investigating) in the construction of the border,

for example with the help of the “event” metaphor, its derivatives and accompaniments (e.g., “closing the door” of the border). The list of metaphors involved in such social processes cannot be overestimated because their existence in the minds of inhabitants, local media, various political documents etc. signals the nature of deeper awareness processes and long-term and multifarious changes which are difficult to grasp.

It therefore seems that the metaphors reconstructed in this paragraph deserve to be called by several names: links between researchers and their subjects, markers of deeper social processes, but also promoters and detectors. It would seem (although the sharing of such an observation by an investigator of borders and borderlands may seem rather conceited) that dissemination of research findings (which often boils down to the propagation of just some findings and the most spectacular metaphors) could trigger and foster the development of a social adjustment process to no lesser extent than media discussions or discussions at the central and local level. EU membership with all its consequences, including border ones, and the role of metaphors in this complex process should not be taken lightly.

Summing up, the metaphors presented in the second illustration constitute, together and separately, an extremely valuable metaphor vocabulary for the development of research projects because they are highly operational. Of all the metaphors presented in the two illustrations they stimulate the researcher’s imagination most, rendering it most receptive to the imagination of respondents who live and function in the range of influence of the state border.

Third Illustration: Border Metaphors from the Narratives of Local Elites at the Polish-Ukrainian Borderland

The last illustration of operational metaphors consists of metaphors adopted in field studies of selected localities at the Polish-Ukrainian border which preceded the constructed project. To be more precise, these are metaphors which applied to the future of borders in general in the individual narratives collected by means of the interview method, and applied in particular to the future of the border between Poland and independent Ukraine (which is not a member of the EU but is a member of NATO).

Before we take a closer look at these metaphors let me recapitulate the most important research findings on notions of the border which were found in the respondents’ narratives. Notions of borders usually had the form of a *bricolage* of many generalisations: they were variations on the theme of three relatively pure notions of the border: a) the border as an event or series of political and economic events relating to the process of newly regained sovereignty as a process of Poland’s multiphasic accession to the EU, completed in 2004; b) the border as a permanent and incessantly self-reproducing political institution and nation-state, cultural institution; c) the border as the difference between three connected spheres of reality: politics, the economy and culture.

Notions of the border developed and used by people and institutions on the eastern borderland compared with the ones developed and used by inhabitants of

central Poland, quite distant from the territorial state borders of the Third Republic,⁵ are notions which merit special attention, not only for political reasons. They are the creations of subjects who are directly “at risk” of changes in border policy (in various forms, beginning with nation-state borders and ending with local ones) and who also develop their own ways of coping with borderland reality, including the constructing of narratives. These narratives, as research has shown,⁶ contain metaphors from various sources: environmental and occupational (they come from experts, politicians, history and geography teachers, etc.). These metaphors, help to construct and organise the narrative, style it, or at least name it (so that it can be distinguished from other narratives). We may probably say that they help to distinguish the border sealing narrative (which includes many transformations of the “closed door,” “closed gate” or “iron curtain” metaphors) from the open border narrative. These narratives, may I add, can assume a moralising-didactic form (when a respondent who is speaking about border officials on both sides of the border criticises the customs officers, calls them immoral and says that “they violate the Russkis’ personal dignity”) or technical form (when another respondent, a local clerk talks about the sealing of the border in terms of material benefits and losses for several local offices, or when a teacher talks about opening the border as an opportunity to learn about other work styles).

However, and this is the most important thing of all, the two types of metaphors, the metaphor of “meeting of diversity” and the metaphor of “closure,” seldom appear separately in the respondents’ narratives. These two types of narrative are two extreme forms but they usually mix and the respective metaphors appear side by side or permeate one another. This state of affairs, and metaphors have an inspiring role here, protect the respondent from the researcher’s excessive “artless simplicity;” from her tendency to avoid complex, ambiguous terms or phrases not to be found anywhere else. This proximity of two different types of metaphors, and often more, is a valuable marker of the hybrid nature of border narrative, a harbinger (prepared on the basis of analysed narratives from earlier research, i.e., based on reliable empirical foundations) of the fact that a researcher penetrating the same terrain and still interested in the subject can expect to find very many complex metaphors and narratives and will already be prepared to deal with an abundance of relations between people and institutions because of the border. The researcher will therefore be aware of the complexity of forms of co-operation and forms of conflict, forms of negotiation in the cultural domain and forms of struggle for power at the border at a time of radical

⁵ But not from the invisible, symbolic or customs borders.

⁶ In 2001, 2002 and 2003 my team studied a selection of segments of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland. The study was run in the following towns and cities: Przemyśl, Chełm, Wola Uhruska, Tomaszów Lubelski, Medyka, Rzeszów and Hrebenne and their vicinities. This was a qualitative study and it was based on interviews with the local elites. Each interview lasted many hours and was conducted on commission of the Institute of Public Affairs (cf. J. Kurczewska & H. Bojar. 2002; J. Kurczewska, H. Bojar & M. Bieniecki. 2003). All the interviews were coded so as to enable identification of the town where the interview was conducted without revealing the respondent’s identity. The first letters of the code are abbreviations of the town names: TL—Tomaszów Lubelski, Ch—Chełm, P—Przemyśl, WU—Wola Uhruska, ME—Medyka, etc.

systemic transformation. It would be impossible to give a detailed account of this problem here (although it would be worth it). We shall therefore illustrate it with a few select examples of narratives of the future.

Predominant in the analysed material were narratives focusing on a very extended present, with two extreme metaphors: “open door” and “iron curtain” which “closed” the way to the presence of other metaphors, e.g., closing the door, opening the event. Narratives concerning the future of the borders were marginal and they were very saturated with metaphors of porosity, membrane, dissolution or knocking down of walls, etc. They help (and we must say that narratives of the future were more “spiked” with border metaphors than narratives of the present) to bring out various images of the future of Europe, Poland, Ukraine, or the region.

The largest group of metaphors, and the most important one in terms of the research logic and its basic interpretations, consisted of metaphors relating to the future of Polish-Ukrainian relations and the place of Poland and Ukraine in the future European order. Our attention is particularly drawn to the optimistic metaphor of the border as a common home, a common world, brotherhood in life. Other metaphors in this group, more rooted in notions of the present, are metaphors of porosity, fluidity, a phantom or an “invisible giant.” It seems that the considerable saturation of the narratives of the future with metaphors compared with narratives of the here and now is caused by respondents’ greater tendency to talk about the future in ideological language shaped by the media and superimposed by the tradition of speaking about serious matters in the language of imponderables.

Metaphors of porosity and fluidity were a sort of ideational master key to the world of great transformations. They relieved the users from uncertainty, fear of the East being closed off by the West or Poland playing the role of a connecting room between East and West.

In addition to these metaphors, less frequent metaphors of the Polish-Ukrainian border as a new iron curtain brought to the respondents’ awareness the possibility that the present closure may persist in the future. As a consequence of the transfer of similar metaphors from the narrative of the present to the prospective narrative, the narratives’ functionality greatly increased.

It seems that metaphors, whatever the nature of their relations with here and now metaphors and narratives, can help to distinguish and name the respondents’ views of the future of the Polish-Ukrainian border as it is reconstructed by the researcher on the basis of his analyses of narratives.

The room for metaphors is mainly in the narratives of those respondents who disclose their fears in them (we may even call them their private pessimistic historiosophic utopia)—fears of being flooded by “an inferior race” from the East—and who therefore believe that “the West must be separated from the East and there must be visa” (ChPM5601). Here is an example from Chelm: “I had the pleasure of visiting the west of Europe and the border is symbolic there but here I would be very reluctant to take any motion because of the great danger, as far as these people [i.e., the Ukrainians—JK] are concerned (ChUP4805): “it would be like opening hell’s gates . We’d be completely flooded by Ukrainians and their mentality” (ChPM2814).

It looks as if metaphors (the ones just quoted) are involved in the defining of some fundamental cultural choice, very strongly dominated by a grand utopia, grand historiosophic visions, visions of the past, not some conceived future, and that they suggest a relation between the metaphors and narratives on the one hand and notions of the contemporary world on the other hand—a world governed by control, orderliness, segregation (the normal thing as far as pessimistic metaphors are concerned) rather than notions of postmodernity where borders are symbolic and open *ad libitum*.

Operational metaphors directly gleaned from the narratives of newly interviewed inhabitants of selected segments of the Polish-Ukrainian border suggest that it is worth studying them and striving to reconstruct the collective imagination of the inhabitants of the Polish eastern borderland, their reactions to the fact that this border is becoming the border and borderland of the European Union. Like it or not, they are participants (how significant and how determined—that we do not know) of the changes taking place on these eastern borderlands, particularly the border revolution in individual and collective mentality. Hence we can call these metaphors the litmus paper of this mentality.

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I have reconstructed three types of operations on border metaphors which can be found in the most recent historical-theoretical studies and empirical research in Polish sociology of the borderland within the last twenty years.

This sub-discipline of Polish sociology is becoming increasingly visible in academic and public spheres. There are many reasons for this, both theoretical and socio-ideological. Researchers are becoming increasingly attuned to the changes which are taking place in the sociological vocabulary and especially to the increasing sensitivity of this vocabulary to the concepts and conceptual associations which are specific for postmodernist interpretation of social and cultural reality.

The first reconstruction of operations on border metaphors exposed these conceptual entanglements and drew attention to the ever-changing meanings of the border concept and also to the specifically postmodernist tendency to weaken the opposition between concepts and locate them on a continuum instead; it also revealed another typical postmodernist tendency—the tendency to obliterate the distinctions between scientific knowledge and literary interpretation or lay language.

Equally importantly, this first example clearly demonstrates the various stages of withdrawal from “military” concepts in the characterization of the national and national-state border in favour of such concepts as “peaceful” and “peaceful-integrative.” This evolution is likewise related to the postmodernist tendency to construct the sub-discipline’s basic conceptual vocabulary.

The first illustration and also the second one, although to a different degree, has demonstrated the process of development of increasingly strong links between the sociology of the borderland and cultural anthropology, and not only the anthropology of local communities (of course these were always important but they are now more numerous and more important). In other words, operations on the border metaphors

have demonstrated that Polish sociologists who are interested in various types of borderlands, especially national and regional ones, have crossed the demarcation line between two disciplines, sociology and anthropology and, just like anthropologists, are tending to view the problem of borderlands in a broader, much more heterogeneous, cultural and civilizational context.

The second reconstruction of operations of border metaphors draws attention to the role of the “porous” metaphor, to its capability to substitute the metaphor of “closure” in the sociological imagination of the Polish sociologist and researcher of territorial national borderlands. This substitution is very interesting and important for social practice. We must remember that it was superimposed on researchers despite the social and political situation in which citizens of the Third Republic found themselves in 2004 when they began to live in a nation-state whose eastern state border became the external border of the European Union. It seems as if researchers’ border metaphor highlighted their entanglement in postmodernist language (the “porous” concept) and their efforts to combine two different languages, the modernist language (the language of “closure”) and the postmodernist one.

The second illustration, or to be more precise, its second part, i.e., the analysis uncovering the role and place of the event metaphor in the imagination of the empirical researcher, drew attention to the classic works of world sociological thought (particularly the ones focusing on analysis of social bonds and the search for strong foundations of collective identities) as a source of interpretative inspiration.

Equally important is its accentuation of the importance, in the process of metaphor construction, of the rooting of the empiricist’s sociological imagination in the scientific and social experience of radical systemic reconstruction and the ways in which he experiences Poland’s new geopolitical situation. The novelty of this situation was particularly prominent in the Third Republic’s eastern borderlands.

It also exposed the increasing dependence of the researcher’s language on everyday language with its metaphors of borders, borderlands and social bonds. This everydayness is different from the everydayness of the first reconstruction, however. It has little in common with the everydayness directly constructed by literature and journalism but a lot in common with the language of respondents and the language of the documents of local borderland communities.

The third and last illustration was concerned with the border metaphors used by specific researchers in their diagnoses of specific localities at the Polish-Ukrainian borderland. On the one hand, I hope that this illustration demonstrated the narrative entanglement of the diagnosis in the respondents’ language, its concepts and phraseology with respect to their modes of verbal response to life in the shadow of the national-state border. On the other hand I hope it drew attention to the fact that the social interactions taking place between the interviewers and the respondents during the interviews increased the chance of mutual permeation of their respective languages as they presented their common local reality of the borderland and borderland culture.

Last but not least, in the same spirit as the first two illustrations but using different means of expression, the third illustration drew attention to the similarities between

borderland sociology practised from the perspective of the sociology of local communities and the cultural anthropology of small communities. This similarity can be seen in the researchers' great sensitivity to the specificity of individual narratives and their respect for the narrative interview method.

The operations on border metaphors presented in rather great detail above demonstrate not only the heterogeneity of metaphors but also their entanglement in various meta-theoretical (not only sociological) contexts and in the social imagination of the interviewers and the interviewees.

By presenting these three reconstructions I wanted to draw the attention of sociologists who study Polish national and state borderlands (not only Eastern) to the following problems.

First, to the theoretical entanglement of borderland sociology, its creative suspension between the Scylla of grand theories and the Charybdis of the everyday experiences of both interviewers and interviewees.

Second, to the suggestion that Polish borderland sociology should adopt a similar approach to national and state borderlands on the one hand and national and state borders on the other hand. I wanted this article to encourage researchers to take more interest in national borders and state borders. In my opinion, these borders "deserve" similar interpretative attention to the attention already given to borderlands.

Third, I think that all border metaphors which refer to the separation of nations and states, especially those we call operational, are fit to act as connectors between interest in borderlands and interest in borders. They are a good first step towards establishing such a connection. These metaphors draw attention accurately and concisely to the significance of borders and the significance of borderlands because they focus excellently on those places where social identities are developing, where the contours of relations between "us" and "strangers" are being drawn.

Fourth, interest in these metaphors not so much demonstrates as signals the possibility of developing an interdisciplinary program of empirical research and theoretical-historical studies of borders and borderlands, a program which could and should begin with cooperation between sociologists and anthropologists.

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