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CONSTRUCTIONISM IN THE SOCIOLOGICAL STUDY OF BORDERS AND CROSS-BORDER INTERACTIONS

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Abstract. The article identifies and describes the specifics of sociology in understanding borders and cross-border interactions in terms of multiparadigm of sociology itself. On this basis, a conceptual model of the study of borders and cross-border interactions has been developed, which consists of an appropriate conceptual and categorical apparatus and a set of a number of consistent theoretical positions, principles and ideas. Borders, which were originally the exclusive subject of research in political geography, are now being studied fruitfully by sociology. Borders are a dynamic phenomenon that is constantly reproduced in almost all forms of human activity. The constant process of (re-bordering) borders and, accordingly, cross-border interactions is an important object of attention of sociologists. That is why the theoretical provisions of the constructivist paradigm are the main methodological source for developing a theoretical basis for dissertation research.

Key words: border, frontiers, cross - border interactions, cross - border cooperation, constructivism, (re) bordering of borders.

In social development, there are often processes associated with the seemingly unexpected actualization of certain phenomena. These phenomena in their historical destiny seem to receive a «second breath», undergo a kind of social reincarnation. Something similar has been happening in recent decades with the social phenomenon of borders and scientific reflection on this phenomenon. The reason for the increased attention of the scientific community to the interstate borders is their complex and somewhat contradictory transformations. On the one hand, in much of the world there is a weakening of borders, even their deinstitutionalization; cross-border cooperation between neighboring regions of different countries is intensifying; states delegate their individual powers either to international supranational institutions or to local authorities and public organizations; the impact of globalization in general and transnational corporations in particular on cross-border interactions is becoming increasingly important. On the other hand, the issue of borders and related aspects has come to the forefront of public relations, in particular in the context of events such as

Brexit, uncontrolled flow of illegal migrants from conflict zones, exacerbation of terrorism, de facto suspension of Schengen agreements on simplified mobility regime between EU countries in the context of measures aimed at localizing the spread of the Covid - 19 pandemic, etc. These and other events are drawing the attention of states, scholars and the public to the issues of interstate borders and cross-border interactions, in particular to the dynamics of their barrier function. Today, a number of socio-humanitarian sciences are showing interest in the issue of borders and cross-border interactions.

Sociology plays an important role in understanding the nature and trends of borders and cross-border interactions. At the same time, it uses its own research tools, due to its specificity as a social and behavioral science. According to L. Bozhko, in sociology since the early 1990s the topic of borders has become extremely popular, the «renaissance of border research» begins, which is due to three reasons: first, it is due to the disappearance of the static East-West dichotomy, and also the revival of postcolonial studies; second, changes in the political map, particularly in Europe, have necessitated a redefinition of the links between cross-border social, ethnic and national identities; thirdly, the study of borders has become relevant in connection with the phenomenon of «openness» of borders, their relatively free crossing by people, goods and capital [2].

The purpose of this research is to outline the methodological foundations of the sociological study of borders and cross-border interactions in the context of the multiparadigm of modern sociology. For the first time sociological theoretical understanding and conceptualization of borders was carried out by G. Simmel in the early twentieth century. In his 1903 article «Sociology of Space.» In it, he first raises the question of the importance of the spatial conditions of society in comparison with its other definitions and development. To his important work in this plane we also include the characteristics of spatial qualities and spatial formations. However, space for him remains «in itself an inactive form», a vessel for social and spiritual meanings, and many important ideas for sociology in the stream of space have remained fragmentary, not united into a holistic concept. Reflecting on the framing of space by boundaries, the researcher uses the metaphor of the picture frame [3]. Simmel very clearly formulates the thesis about borders as a full-fledged object of sociological research and a social phenomenon in its essence: «the border is not a spatial fact with sociological consequences, but a sociological fact that is formed spatially» [13, p. 11]. Developing this view, sociologists talk about the importance of frameworks and boundaries for constructing social experience. An important step in sociological conceptualization was made by T. Parsons, who draws attention to the fact that any system exists and maintains equilibrium within certain limits. These boundaries «are not imposed from the outside, they are supported by special qualities that are inherent in the elements of the system during its operation» [12, p. 108].

Today there are good grounds for distinguishing in the structure of modern sociological knowledge a separate subdiscipline of the middle level - the sociol-

ogy of borders and cross-border processes. At the same time, the very statement of this need is not enough, because middle-level theories must be embedded in a three-member vertical, led by a certain general sociological theory and with the appropriate methodological apparatus of empirical research at the bottom. Only then can reflections on borders and cross-border interactions be considered an institutionalized direction of contemporary sociological thought. But the problem is complicated by the fact that modern sociology is, in the words of J. Ritzer, a multiparadigmatic science. This circumstance makes it impossible to have a single approach to understanding borders and cross-border interactions and therefore requires the identification of different areas of sociological theorizing (as well as appropriate methods of empirical research), in which these phenomena are understood by sociologists belonging to different sociological camps.

One of the modern and promising areas of study of borders is constructionism. Social constructionism is a branch of sociology and philosophy that analyzes social constructs, such as class, race, gender, sexuality, morality, memory, and more. According to this trend, social constructs are a part of real life or all real life in general, because social constructs are in ontological equality with «objective» reality. The social construct is the product of a particular culture and fully illustrates the so-called Thomas theorem: what is perceived as real becomes real in its consequences. The idea of social construction has spread in the United States and Western Europe since the mid-1980s, based on the principles formulated by American social psychologists K. Jerden and R. Harre. The subject of interest of constructionism is, first, the construction of the social world (social constructs), and secondly - the construction of its images in the minds of social agents (socio-psychological and socio-cultural constructs). Social constructionism tends to consider the formation of social structures in collective and group social processes. In constructionism, the theoretical modeling of social phenomena is based not on an objective condition, but on a communicative action. The object of attention in this area, in particular, are the border regions, the study of which as social spaces has become an important milestone in the sociological understanding of cross-border phenomena. The school of constructionism emphasizes that the process of «regional construction», including safe cross-border interaction, is impossible without an intellectual component. The leaders of this process are considered by constructionists to be «intellectuals of action» - the media, managers and experts who seek to convert their knowledge into political influence. Non-state actors in the construction of cross-border interaction are considered by constructionists as a counterweight to the official authorities, for a deeper understanding of the essence of the processes of territorial dynamics, including those that directly determine the level of border security. To this end, regional political and academic complexes are created, which, in turn, are part of international «networks» and information «flows».

The representatives of the methodology of constructionism understand the issue of cross-border interactions as follows: the adjacent territories of different countries are characterized by a special borderline sociality, special characteris-

tics of the population living there. These features are formed both in a purposeful way and «by themselves», ie over long periods of time and under the influence of various factors [10]. The border can be interpreted as an institution created by society, through which people living in border regions mutually influence each other and which influences people's self-perception (in terms of identity, values and interests). Ukrainian researcher S. Hobta notes: "The state border is a key social institution, which sets the space for other social institutions of society. It delineates the boundaries of the fields of power" [5, p. 41]. In addition to the institutional dimension, the state border is also a cultural phenomenon. How exactly the construction of the «social and cultural aspects of the state border» takes place can be a separate object of sociological research [4], and we agree with this statement of O. Usenko.

People involved in cross-border interactions are subject to cultural change, as they share not only consumer goods and services, but also cognitive models and cultural practices. The integration of border regions is not only economic, but also political, social and cultural. Communities in border regions are a kind of embryo of transnational civil society. In this regard, E. Afonin rightly notes: "At the present stage of development, civil society is losing national and territorial borders. It is becoming more global and cross-cultural" [1, p. 11].

It is believed that the word «region» comes from the Latin verb *rego*, which means «to manage». Thus, the initial meaning is related to management, not to the restriction of space by a border. Later, the etymology of the concept of region began to be derived from the verb *regere* - even more associated with the performance of specific administrative and even political functions. A region is one or more adjacent administrative-territorial units of the state, where the current legislation establishes a certain mechanism of economic and other relations. E. Hurrell in his article «Explaining the revival of regionalism in world politics» points out that the region is a natural, organic principle of territorial organization of social, political, economic and cultural aspects of human society [11, p. 333]. Each region is, first of all, a territory, but the territorial component alone is not enough. In «Regions, Regionalization and Regionalism in Modern Europe» E. Thompson points out that the concept of regionalization in practice is quite amorphous and in the institutional and organizational dimension of the region can be considered such units that are between the levels of local and national governments. In the sociological theory of structuring E. Giddens notes the spatial rootedness of practices and the existence of regional subcultural loci, which are a form of organization of society, regulated in the legal, managerial, historical and cultural dimensions. The unity of the regional society is ensured by the similarity of life attitudes. In this process, interstate borders play a significant role, but this means that the latter is always a kind of Procrustean bed, which adjusts to the «living» society [9].

The theoretical basis for the implementation of such a form of cross-border cooperation as the Euroregion is constructivism, which was formed in the science of international relations under the significant influence of sociology in the

1980s. The first publications using this methodological direction to substantiate the feasibility of creating and disseminating Euroregions are associated with the names of T. Risse (Thomas Risse), J. Chekel (Jeffrey Checkel), T. Christiansen (Thomas Christansen) [7]. Constructivism is a broad, primarily sociological, methodological approach used to analyze various aspects of social life, including international reality. It belongs to the direction of poststructuralism, assuming that international reality is part of social reality [6]. Regions differ from states, but are similar in that they are human structures. They are the result of a twofold process of construction: first, they are represented by elites and the masses of the population and, second, they are created institutionally, through laws and other rules and regulations. The creation and functioning of Euroregions from the perspective of constructivism is a process of mutual formation of interests and identities of its participants. This perspective focuses on the values and principles that are essential for interaction and integration. In constructivism, not only the relations between the members of the integration structure play an important role, but also the contacts between this structure and the outside world. Social, political, cultural and economic interactions between players (ie states, regions, NGOs, businesses) located in a neighboring geographical location create a space that helps to create a common regional identity [8].

The border is one of the constructions that arises as a result of a double construction process: first, they are «represented» by elites and the masses and, second, they are created institutionally, through interstate agreements, laws and other rules and regulations. The creation and functioning of Euroregions, as the most institutionalized form of cross-border cooperation on the Ukrainian border, from the perspective of constructivism is a process of mutual formation of interests and identities of its participants. This perspective focuses on the values and principles that are essential for interaction and integration. In constructivism, not only the relations between the members of the integration structure play an important role, but also the contacts between this structure and the outside world. Social, political, cultural and economic interactions between players (ie states, regions, NGOs, businesses) located in a neighboring geographical location create a space that helps to create a common regional identity. The border is not considered a void and a transit zone, but as a place of creation of a social reality of a new quality. At the same time, borders not only perform integration functions, but also «produce» cross-border phenomena - social groups, practices and identities.

In my opinion, it is inexpedient to single out only the border as a separate and self-sufficient object of research, but instead to talk about the borders of neighboring countries, which form a special set of socio-economic, socio-cultural and institutional phenomena: from regional labor market to migration practices and identity structures of border residents. The optimal methodological basis for such a study is sociological constructionism, which captures the complexity of the relationship between the subjective and the objective in the modern world.

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КОНСТРУКЦІОНІЗМ У СОЦІОЛОГІЧНОМУ ВИВЧЕННІ КОРДОНІВ ТА ТРАНСКОРДОННИХ ВЗАЄМОДІЙ

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Анотація. В статті виявлено і описано специфіку соціології в розумінні кордонів і транскордонних взаємодій в умовах мультипарадигмальності самої соціології. На цій основі розроблено концептуальну модель вивчення кордонів і транскордонних взаємодій, яка складається з відповідного понятійно-категоріального апарату та сукупності низки несуперечливих теоретичних положень, принципів та ідей. Кордони, які початково були ексклюзивною темою досліджень політичної географії станом на сьогодні плідно вивчаються соціологією. Кордони є динамічним явищем, яке постійно відтворюється практично всіма формами людської діяльності. Постійний процес (ре)конструювання (re-bordering) кордонів і відповідно транскордонних взаємодій є важливим об'єктом уваги соціологів. Власне тому теоретичні положення конструктивістської парадигми складають головне методологічне джерело для вироблення теоретичної основи дисертаційного дослідження.

Ключові слова: кордон, прикордоння, транскордонні взаємодії, транскордонне співробітництво, конструктивізм, (ре)конструювання кордонів.

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