

The influence of the Polish-Ukrainian border on the socio-economic situation of selected border communes¹

Introduction

Recent years have brought along many social and economic changes both in Poland and in Ukraine, which results from socio-economic transformations. This is also a consequence of Poland's entry into the Western Europe's economic-political structures. The dynamics of spatial changes has accelerated considerably, simultaneously indicating clear regional discrepancies.

From the perspective of contemporary social and economic processes, Lublin region is a very interesting area. It belongs to the poorest regions in Poland and in the European Union. This backwardness undoubtedly arises from the existence of the spatial barrier represented by the state frontier. The eastern border of the province is a fragment of the state border between Poland, Belarus and Ukraine, it is also partly a border of the EU. The borderline location of this region could give rise to socio-economic and cultural development of the areas situated on both sides of the border.

The period of the upcoming few years will be of key importance in terms of choosing the course of spatial development of borderland areas located in the eastern part of Lublin region. This could be facilitated by more intensive activities directed towards the increase in the number of new border checkpoints and the development of the existing ones. Contemporarily, economic growth of border regions is concentrated mainly around the areas situated in the vicinity of border crossings, while peripheral regions located far from the main transportation routes are prone to socio-economic degradation. Therefore, the state border is a specific spatial barrier limiting the general socio-economic progress in border areas, however stimulating the

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development of areas around border checkpoints. Their number is still insufficient, and those existing ones need further investments.

The aim of the paper is to verify the above mentioned thesis about the influence of the Polish-Ukrainian border and checkpoints onto the socio-economic situation of Polish border communes. The research is based on the questionnaire survey conducted among the population of selected border communes and interviews with the employees of particular communes' councils.

Research area

The research area comprises two groups of communes situated in the northern part of the Polish-Ukrainian border region (cf. figure 1). The former group is represented by the communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk, located along an important transportation route, i.e. state road 12 linking Chełm through Dorohusk checkpoint and the main transportation route in northern Ukraine, reaching as far as Kiev. The latter consists of four communes peripheral to the local poles of economic growth and the main transportation routes – the communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek.



Figure 1. Research area

Source: own elaboration.

The research area is a typical countryside region, with no settlement of a city status. An average village usually has circa 250 inhabitants. This proves to a great pulverization of farming households and predominance of relatively small villages. It is a typical depopulation area. Over the recent years in all the analysed communes the population growth has had a negative tendency mainly due to the decreasing birth rate. The death rate has remained on the same level. Migration balances have been negative almost since the beginning of the 90s of the 20th century in all the studied communes. The average migration balance in the commune of Ulhówek in 1996–2003 was -13.6‰ and it was the lowest value in the whole of Lublin province. The population moves mainly to larger cities of Lublin region, thus compensating for, typical of them, the suburban outflow, migrations to the largest cities in Poland and foreign migrations. Due to the clear selectiveness of migration processes, the whole border region is an area of significantly deformed age and sex structures of the population. According to the data of the National Census 2002, in all the rural communes of Hrubieszów District, where the population's ageing has the highest indices, the share of people aged over 60 was above 20%. In some of the communes, including the commune of Mircze, it reached up to 24%. The feminization coefficient in some border communes of the Hrubieszów District was not even 100 (e.g. in the commune of Ruda-Huta), as compared to 106 for Poland (Statistical Yearbook of Lublin Province...2004; www.stat.gov.pl). The natural decrease and selective outflow of the population lead to distinct economic and social consequences. Emigrating population is dominated by young, better-educated and more entrepreneurial people, which becomes a serious hindrance to the economic growth and development of border areas. As a result, the so far unfavourable economic relations and structures in the region not only remain on the same level but may also intensify.

Agriculture constitutes the most important part of the economy of the research area as well as of the whole Lublin Province. This is reflected in a large percentage of the population employed in the first sector, high crop production and a large share of arable land within land use structure. This is the consequence of not only suitable agro-climatic conditions but also of the peripheral location of the region, which does not facilitate the development of industry and other economic undertakings. Despite a marked increase in the number of people employed in

services, still over a half of the employed in the analysed communes obtain their income from farming. This results in a relatively low registered unemployment rate due to high unemployment hidden in agriculture. Registered unemployment affects mainly young people, especially those of a primary, lower-secondary or basic vocational background.

The importance of industry in the economy in the studied communes is only marginal. The only used mineral resources are construction materials like sand, gravel, clay and loam (L. Żelazny, Z. Strycharz 2001). The southern communes are situated in the zone of carbon resources of Lublin Coal Basin spreading from Parczew area up to Ukraine. However, coal is not mined here.

The issues of socio-economic development of border areas in bibliography

Bibliography concerning the socio-economic situation of Polish-Ukrainian border areas is very rich. It includes general works analysing large spatial units (provinces or their groups), in which the border area of Lublin region constitutes only a small part of the whole. Another group comprises detailed works devoted particularly to the regions situated along the border and usually to selected issues. Special attention should be paid to one of them, namely to a very broad elaboration “Strategia rozwoju społeczno-gospodarczego Polski Wschodniej do roku 2020” (*The Strategy of Socio-economic Development of Eastern Poland until 2020*) (2007). The authors of particular chapters diagnose the condition of social and economic development of Eastern Poland and predict changes in the spatial structure of this area until 2020. Another interesting paper is *Pogranicze Polsko-Ukraińskie (Polish-Ukrainian Border Area)* (B. Kawałko, A. Miszczuk 2005), which concentrates on the regions situated on both sides of the Polish-Ukrainian border.

Among works that are more detailed there are subsequent volumes of the series “Bug Euroregion”, which undertakes varied research problems (M. Bałtowski, 1994; J. Dębski, 1997; L. Dyczewski, 1997; P. Eberhardt, W. Gorzym-Wilkowski, A. Miszczuk, 1997; J. Kukiełka, 1997; A. Miszczuk, 1997; Z. Pastuszak, 1997). Recently the contemporary socio-economic situation in the eastern part of Lublin Province has been depicted in a number of works (G. Babiński, 1997; J. Bański, 2000a, 2000b; B. Górz, 2002).

However, the scale of the analysis regarding socio-economic problems described in the

majority of the above-mentioned elaborations does not allow for drawing conclusions concerning small spatial units – this gap is in a sense to be filled by the this paper.

The role and importance of the border

In bibliography there exist many different definitions of the term “border”, which reflects adopting various research perspectives. There are artificial, natural, cultural, administrative, political, state, economic, demographic, historic, ethnic, sea and land borders. Their mutual feature is the fact that, as a rule, they limit areas of a relatively high level of homogeneity, e.g. ethnic or economic ones.

In the spatial grasp, a border is usually associated with a barrier of a natural or artificial character. Natural borders are usually identified with the morphological ones, i.e. those established along natural lines or areas of natural origin, e.g. mountain ranges, rivers, seas, lakes, etc. This approach is not fully appropriate due to the fact that in many cases the border along a river joins rather than separates the areas situated on its both sides. Therefore, it does not fulfil its basic function resulting from the definition of the term “border” (Z. Rykiel, 2006). Consequently, such a border can be considered artificial because it separates the elements of the whole integral area in an artificial way. An example of this can be the Polish western border drawn along the Odra River, which divided a number of cities into two parts. For instance, before 1945, today’s Zgorzelec constituted the right-bank part of the city of Görlitz. The notion of “artificial borders” is mostly understood as borders not based on linear elements of the natural environment. However, all borders have been established by man only as a result of the widely understood “social agreement”. In the case of morphological borders, nature helps man draw the borderline. It is in a way imposed and does not require detailed demarcation. As for the other types of borders, they are more difficult to establish since this needs more complicated and detailed agreements.

Borders can also be considered an element limiting the spatial range of an area. It can be an administrative unit, a region (natural, historic, economic one, etc.) or a state. According to such an approach, it can be of a linear (the border of a state, province, district, etc.) or zone-like character (e.g. the frontier of cultural regions). The zone-like character of some borders results from the type of phenomena that appear in a given territory. For example, the civilization-

cultural frontier between Western and Eastern Europe is a specific zone (strip) situated somewhere along the eastern border of Poland. Also the borders of natural regions can be examples of non-linear borders.

Seen as a spatial barrier² to the flow of ideas, goods and population, the border can be divided into three basic categories: open borders, partly permeable and non-permeable ones. Permeable borders are not a real spatial impediment to flows. The best examples of that are the borders of administrative units or of historic-cultural regions in most countries³ (e.g. the borders of provinces). Another example can be the internal borders of the EU countries, which are becoming more and more open year by year (cf. W. Janicki, 2006). Partly permeable borders constitute a greater impediment to flows, which are controlled and often even steered. This also happens at the Polish – Ukrainian border, where all the flows are significantly limited. Non-permeable borders are fully developed spatial barriers hindering all types of flows or limiting them to the minimum. Such borders are, for instance, typical of conflicted countries (North and South Korea).

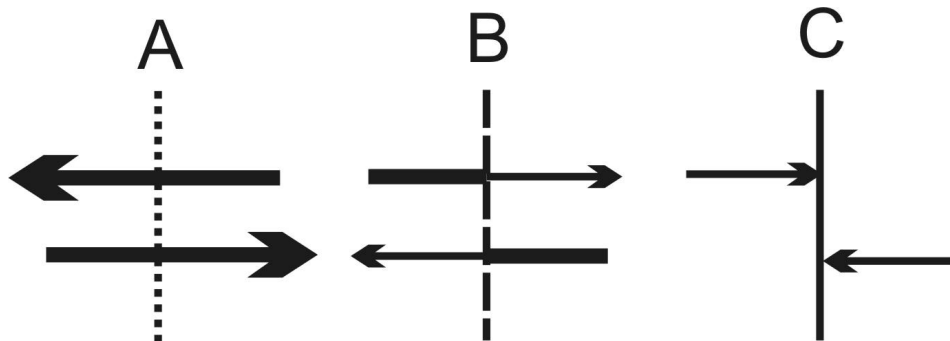


Figure 2. Types of borders by the level of their permeability; A – open, B – partly permeable, C – non-permeable
Source: own elaboration.

The border can be treated as a source of locational advantages stimulating local development. This happens particularly in the vicinity of border checkpoints constituting the so-called “linking points” around which trade, services, cultural life and interpersonal contacts are concentrated. The growth of trade, customs duty fees, cheap services, handling of transit traffic may successfully facilitate the development of border areas, as happens in centres

² Z. Rykiel (1986) suggests a division of spatial barriers into formal and informal ones. Formal barriers are political ones whereas informal barriers are natural and cultural ones.

located near Polish-German border checkpoints. On the Polish side, trade, hotel and other services expanded.

Regardless of the level of permeability of the state frontier, it, however, limits the mobility of the workforce and capital (E. M. Hoover, 1948). A. Loesch (1961) claims the border decreases the range of the influence of market centres situated far from the state border. There are a few reasons for that. These comprise high transport costs, high transaction costs (customs duties, permits, etc.) and investors' reluctance towards developing larger investments (investment risk).

Specificity of border areas

A characteristic feature of border areas is their geographic location on the edges of a particular unit. Such areas are usually distant from the capital city and the most important metropolitan areas, and thus not so well accessible. From the economic and social perspectives, areas situated along borders (state, administrative ones) show features of economic peripheries, i.e. the regions of economic stagnation, poor infrastructure provision, low investment levels and population loss. As for the concepts of the core and periphery, they are in contradiction to the areas of a very high progress potential, where the most competitive enterprises of production and services are located.

It is commonly believed that eastern border regions in Poland indicate features typical of geographic and economic peripheries. Their specificity is dominated by negative conditions for economic development, among which the most essential ones comprise: economic mono-functionality (farming economy), insufficient infrastructure provision, lack of larger economic investments, low living standards, unfavourable demographic processes, low professional qualifications of population, limited transportation accessibility. Advantageous factors facilitating development include unpolluted environment, historically conditioned multiculturalism and potential possibilities of the development of border trade and services.

The development of border areas largely depends on their locational competitiveness, thus on the possibility of obtaining new economic investments. Among hard factors of locational competitiveness, technical infrastructure plays the most important role. This refers mainly to

³ In totalitarian countries there are situations when population flow limitations among primary administrative units

the transportation network and communications (K. Falkowski, 2006). As a rule, areas situated along state borders are relatively poorly equipped with these elements, which decreases their competitiveness. Also in terms of soft locational factors, qualitative in character (human potential, innovativeness, activity of leaders), border areas come off badly as compared to other areas.

Border crossings and transportation infrastructure

In the contemporary world, well-developed technical infrastructure is seen as a factor indispensable for economic growth. Thanks to it, economic activity is started, run and dynamised, and living standards of the population in a given area improve. The investment attractiveness of a given area depends largely on the equipment with particular elements of technical infrastructure.

In the analysed area there is only one border checkpoint: Dorohusk (road and railway one) and one pedestrian border crossing Uśmierz-Waręż (simplified pedestrian border movement for the citizens of Poland and Ukraine inhabiting the border areas). Due to the functional character of the pedestrian border crossing, it will be omitted in the further analysis. The study of border checkpoints in whole Lublin Province shows that the average distance between checkpoints along the border with Ukraine is about 40 km. This value is three times as high as the one of Poland's western border – the average distance between checkpoints there amounts to about 14 km. For this reason the permeability of the Polish-Ukrainian border should be evaluated as low.

The border crossing at Dorohusk is located about 600 metres away from the border river Bug at the state road No. 12 (E373), which is part of Berlin-Warsaw-Kiev road connection. Until 1990 it was used as a road pedestrian border crossing of simplified border movement. By virtue of 31st August 1990 agreements, the crossing was given the status of a checkpoint for passenger and goods traffic for the citizens of Poland and the USSR. In 1992 the Dorohusk-Jagodzín border crossing was opened to international passenger and goods traffic. State road No. 12 from Lublin to the border checkpoint in Dorohusk is going to be rebuilt to meet the required parameters of an expressway, which will considerably raise its importance and its

are introduced; in the past this happened e.g. in the USSR.

influence onto the region's development.

Apart from the road border checkpoint, in Dorohusk there is also a railway border crossing situated at Warsaw-Kiev route 7. The railway is a fully electrified double-track. Until 1989 the railway border checkpoint was used mostly for goods exchange between Poland and the USSR. Currently, passengers and goods trains are checked at customs clearance here. The railway needs thorough modernization of both its tracks and infrastructure, which is due to start after 2014. Such a remote perspective, growing competitiveness of road transport and a rising number of cars and lorries will soon undoubtedly lead to a decline in the significance of railway transport.

Transborder cooperation

Enterprises undertaken together by the population of areas situated on both sides of the border are the essence of any transborder cooperation. The principal aim of such initiatives is to establish and develop friendly relations between the inhabitants of the neighbouring countries. This is realized by various agreements signed by different tiers of government and between administrative units, different organizations and institutions. Another parallel form of cooperation is direct contacts between neighbouring communities and individuals, which may take the form of economic agreements or so-called free cooperation (B. Kawalko, 2006; M. Proniewski, M. Proniewski, 2006).

Border area cooperation takes place at different levels. In the economic sphere it comprises industrial and trade initiatives, economic consulting and mediation as well as area promotion. In the field of infrastructure, cooperation mainly concerns the improvement in the condition of transport network, communal infrastructure, border crossings and small border movement. In terms of the natural environment, joint activities are aimed at decreasing damage to natural environment and preserving it. As for social aspects, various media enterprises, joint educational, sports and cultural events are held in the borderland. Borderland communes are also involved in children and youth exchange programmes (M. Proniewski, M. Proniewski, 2006).

Transborder cooperation is undertaken in the areas situated along the state border. These regions have similar natural features, common history and cultural heritage. In such areas,

thanks to common activities, the negative dividing function of the border weakens, differences between the standards of socio-economic development disappear. Simultaneously, there arise favourable conditions for further homogenous development of areas in the neighbouring countries. In this context, it can be stated that Poland's eastern border regions boast advantageous conditions facilitating transborder cooperation.

More efficient transborder cooperation depends on a number of external factors and factual socio-economic potential in border areas. The former group comprises formal legal conditions resulting from Poland's and Ukraine's current geopolitical situation, their foreign policies, signed international agreements and functioning of internal state and self-government authorities in both countries. An event which has had the greatest influence on the international cooperation on the eastern border areas was Poland's entry into the EU (May 1st, 2004), followed by the entry into the Schengen Zone (December 22nd, 2007). Polish membership in the EU meant the acceptance of therein-binding activity directions, also in terms of transborder cooperation. The priorities of such activities are depicted in the following EU documents: the Lisbon Strategy, the EU Integration Policy and New Financial Perspective 2007–2013 (*Wspólna polsko-ukraińska...*, 2005).

Poland's eastern border became an external EU border. Therefore, Ukrainian citizens need to obtain visas when entering the EU. The visa obligation imposed certain formal limitations on the so far free transborder exchange and caused periodical decline in the flow of people and goods. However, in the long run, transborder population flows did not decrease substantially. The proportions between the number of Ukrainian and Polish citizens crossing the eastern border equalized. This results from the growth in Poles' share and activity in terms of traveling and undertaking economic transborder initiatives (A. Miszczuk, 2006).

Another group of conditions that should be viewed as barriers to the development of transborder cooperation in the studied area comprises local factors arising from the specificity of the state border. Until 1991 Poland's eastern border did not favour international contacts. It was a very hermetic border of low permeability. This caused a number of consequences for contemporary transborder initiatives. Among those, the most important ones are the following: substantial weakening or even disappearance of earlier economic bonds and interpersonal contacts, economic poverty, poor transportation accessibility and a small number of border

crossings (B. Kawałko, 2006; A. Miszczuk, 2006).

After the disintegration of the Soviet Union in 1991, the eastern border of Poland changed its character and became more open to the population and investment flow. Thanks to the revival of family and neighbour relations, informal contacts are developing on both sides of the border. This creates the foundations for further growth in various forms of transborder cooperation.

Low economic potential in the borderland is a barrier which cannot be eliminated within a short period of time. The peripheral location and underinvestment of these areas of yet the communist times is contemporarily reflected in a small number of economic entities, definitely insufficient number of border crossings and badly developed transportation network. It is worth observing that these problems concern areas situated on both sides of the border as in both neighbouring countries border areas have distinct features typical of peripheral location.

Besides limitations of transborder contacts resulting from the poor accessibility of checkpoints, additional difficulties are connected with the way customs clearance works. Its efficiency is very unsatisfactory, which is reflected by frequent lorry queues waiting for customs clearance. The causes of it lie in low capacity of customs terminals and a lack of any activities leading to the improvement of the situation, especially on the Ukrainian part. Another reason is lack of agreement concerning joint customs control and a high level of corruption among Ukrainian customs officers (A.Miszczuk, 2006). Hence, there arises the necessity of double custom clearance on both sides of the border.

The main institutionalized form of cooperation in the analysed area is the Transborder Association of "Bug" Euroregion. It was established in September 1995 in the Polish-Ukrainian borderland and in 1998 Belarusian borderland became part of it as well. Administratively, the Euroregion consists of three administrative units: Lublin Province in Poland, Brest Oblast in Belarus, Volyn Oblast in Ukraine and two districts from Lviv Oblast. The principal objective of the Euroregion is to run trilateral cooperation in border areas. According to those involved in the Euroregion's activity, this cooperation should focus mostly on "... spatial management, transportation, goods shipment, communications, education, health care, culture, sport and tourism, preservation and improvement of the natural environment, elimination of threats and the effects of natural disasters, development of contacts among the

borderland population, cooperation between institutions and economic entities” (Związek..., 2008, transl. by the author).

Apart from the Euroregion, a common form of self-governmental cooperation in border areas is agreements between the authorities of districts, communes and cities neighbouring each other on both sides of the border. This kind of agreement concerns issues being within the competence of units signing them, i.e. culture, education, sport, health care and economic activity.

The influence of the border on the development of a commune in the opinion of its inhabitants

At the turn of 2007/2008 the inhabitants of six analysed communes were surveyed about the contemporary socio-economic situation of the borderline area. In total, there were conducted 608 surveys. The questionnaire was run in cooperation with primary and lower-secondary schools, which resulted from technical reasons – the pace of receiving feedback and credibility of the obtained responses were to be guaranteed by cooperation with the head teachers of the above mentioned schools. As a result, the majority of respondents were parents of the schools' students. Therefore, the most numerous representation was people aged 36–45 (43.9% of the surveyed). Relatively large groups of the surveyed consisted of people aged 26–35 (24.7%) and 46–55 (20.1%), whereas the remaining age groups (up to 25 and above 55) were not represented so numerously. Almost 2/3 of respondents were women (66.1%), which also probably results from the fact that the questionnaire was conducted through schools.

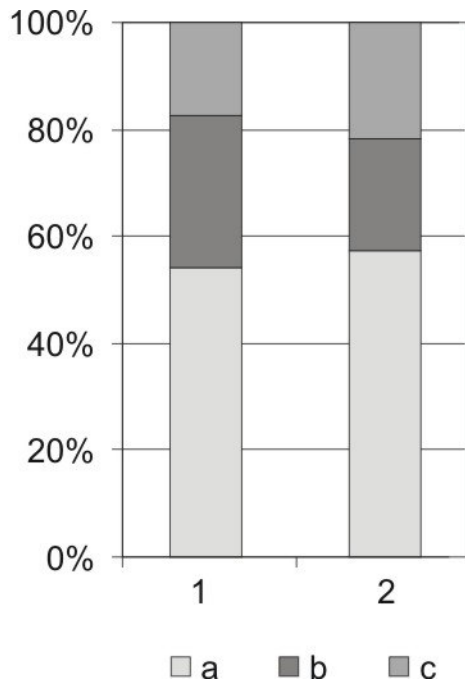
Among the questioned, most respondents were people of a secondary school background (38.3%). There was a relatively large number of people with basic vocational education. However, it must be observed that as many as 20.1% of the surveyed had an academic background, which in relation to the average in rural areas (about 5%) is a very high value. It should be noted that the questionnaire was carried out in the centres of communes with relatively large numbers of well-educated people, which in turn is reflected in the types of jobs they did. Although the largest group was made up of farmers (34.9% of the surveyed) with lowest level of education, the group of hired workers with a relatively good background was almost as numerous (28.9%).

The surveyed are generally satisfied with the fact of living in a borderline commune. When

asked “*Are you satisfied with living in this commune?*” 53.8% answered “yes” whereas only 22.4% said “no”. The remaining respondents held no opinion about it. There were slightly more dissatisfied men than women.

It was found that there is only a slight difference between analysed areas regarding the level of satisfaction with the place of living, with more positive opinions held by the inhabitants from peripheral areas, surprisingly. In two communes situated near the border crossing in Dorohusk the percentage of people satisfied with their place of living was 52.7%, whereas among the population inhabiting four peripheral communes it was 54.3%. To a certain extent, this may be explained by the cotemporary bad experiences of commune inhabitants connected with the existence of the checkpoint and transborder movement. As a representative of local commune authorities said, the proximity of the border, besides its advantages, has also a number of drawbacks. These mainly comprise long queues of lorries, which makes transportation along the commune’s main road very difficult. This results in numerous car crashes and dangerous accidents. Busy roads and long queues at border crossings increase environmental pollution in the areas situated not only along the checkpoint access road but also in Dorohusk, which is visited by drivers. Moreover, such a situation leads to increased crime rate and pathological incidents like disturbances and rows caused by people under the influence of alcohol, street fights and thefts.

The influence of the borderline location on the economic situation is in both groups of communes evaluated almost identically. In the region of Dorohusk it is estimated as favourable by 37.8% of the surveyed and in the peripheral area by 37.3%. Respectively, 16.9% and 9.6% of the questioned think of it as negative. A large group of inhabitants, 45.1%, believes that the borderline location of a commune has no influence on its economic situation.



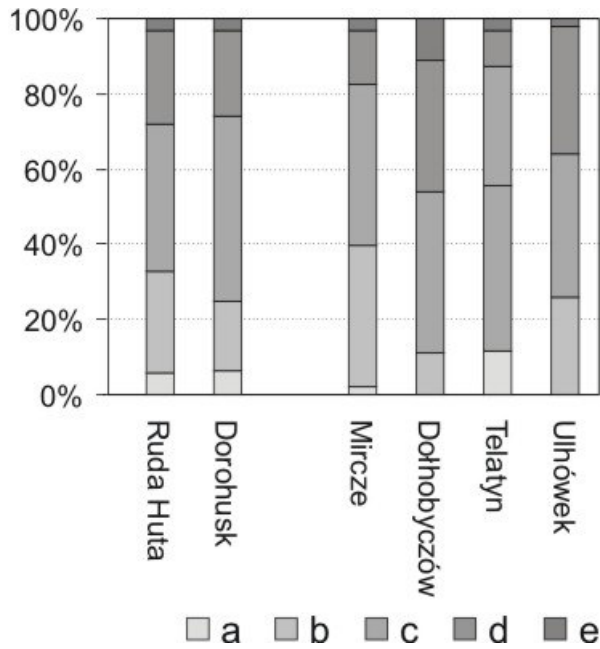
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1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)
 a – yes, b – no, c – no opinion

Figure 3. Structure of responses to the question: “Are you satisfied with living in this commune?”

Source: own elaboration.

By providing answers to the second question, respondents evaluated their commune in terms of its technical infrastructure provision, access to transportation, health care, education shops and services. Infrastructure (waterworks system, gas pipeline, sewage system) was assessed least favourably. Almost 30% respondents consider it good or very good and over one fourth (26%) bad or very bad. It should be noted that the assessment of technical infrastructure in the commune of Dołhobyczów was extremely low (see figure 4). The remaining elements were evaluated much more positively, with the significantly highest estimates of access to education. As many as 66.8% evaluate it as good or very good and only 7.2% as bad or very bad. The clearest differences between both areas were those regarding accessibility of transportation, which is an understandable regularity – as many as 31.8% good or very good estimates in the region of Dorohusk and only 8.6% in the other area (see figure 5).

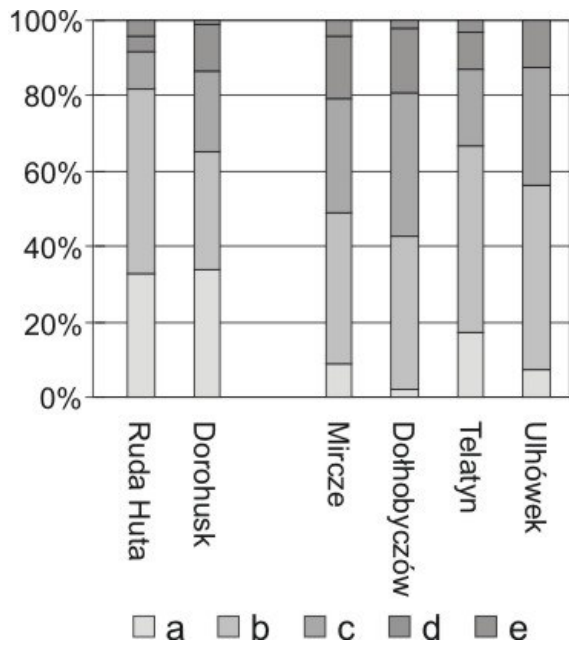


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A – very good, b – good, c – appropriate, d – bad, e – very bad

Figure 4. Structure of responses to the question “Evaluate your commune’s provision of technical infrastructure”

Source: own elaboration.



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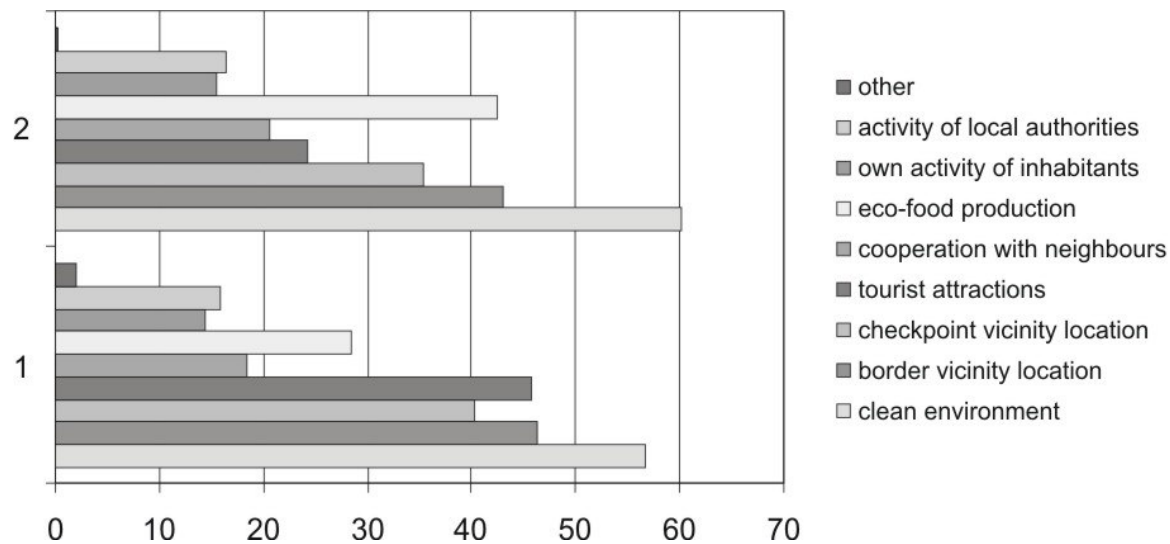
A – very good, b – good, c – appropriate, d – bad, e – very bad

Figure 5. Structure of responses to the question “Evaluate your commune in terms of accessibility of transportation” by communes

Source: own elaboration.

The influence of borderland location onto the economic situation of communes is in both groups evaluated almost identically. In Dorohusk area 37.8% of the interviewees pointed to advantages of such location, while in the other area the share amounted to 37.3%. Disadvantages of such location are noticed by 16.9% and 9.6% of interviewees, respectively. A large share of inhabitants (45.1%) believes there is no influence of borderland location onto the economic situation of communes.

The inhabitants of the whole research area see the chances of development mainly in clean environment attractive for tourists. In the case of both studied regions, they also point to communes' borderline location as another factor facilitating their development. Interestingly enough, the percentage difference between these areas in this respect is quite small – only 3.3% percentage points. Those living in proximity of a border crossing see such chances in the tourist values of their place of living as well as its closeness to the checkpoint. The population of the peripheral area places their hopes on the production of ecological food and closeness to the border checkpoint which is located quite a distance away from where they live. However, at the same time, only every fifth respondent sees development opportunities for their commune in cooperation with their neighbours from over the border. In this respect, the differences between the surveyed areas are very low (2.2 percentage points; see figure 6).



1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)

A – very good, b – good, c – appropriate, d – bad, e – very bad

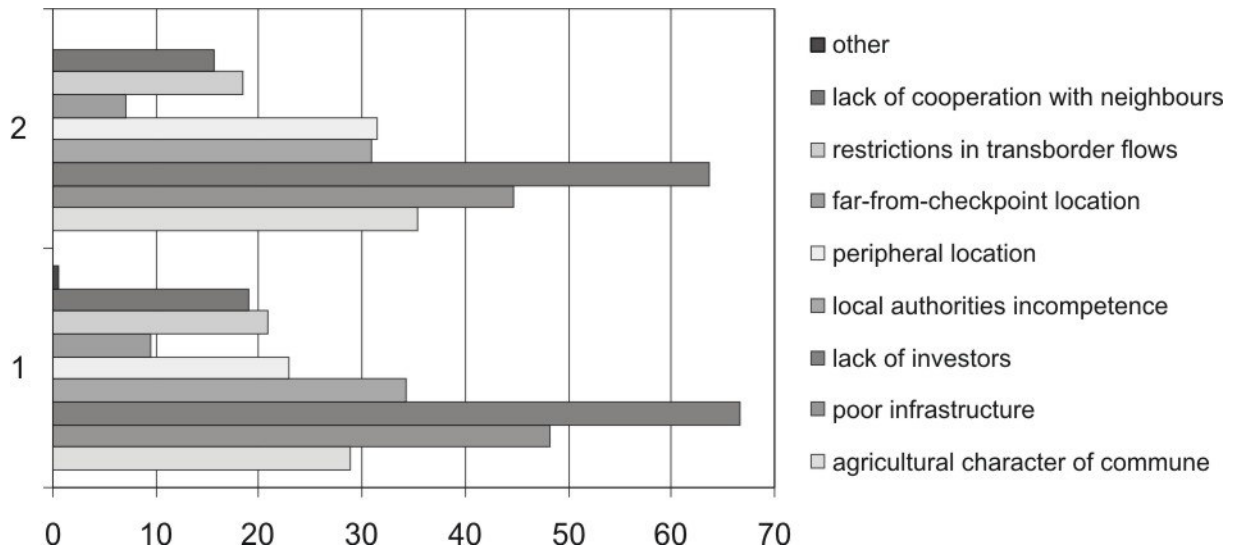
Figure 6. Development chances of communes according to their inhabitants

Source: own elaboration.

It is noticeable that the importance of the inhabitants' and local authorities' activity is evaluated as insignificant and low. It can be generally concluded that population in borderland communes sees development opportunities for their communes mainly in external factors which are not dependent on them. They treat their own and their leaders' activity as less important. However, there can be observed a certain discrepancy. For example, in the commune of Telatyn over 31% respondents believe that the chances for their commune's prosperity lie in the activity of its inhabitants whereas in the neighbouring commune of Dołhobyczów only 5% of the questioned present a similar point of view. This probably to a large extent results from population's stagnation and the feeling of hopelessness and inability to have an influence on what is happening around them, which has accompanied them since the times of communism. Such views are deeply rooted especially among the inhabitants of post-state farm areas in the southern part of the border area. Very often, such passive attitude is the effect of little activity of local authorities who do not want or cannot encourage their inhabitants to undertake individual initiatives.

According to their inhabitants, among the development barriers of border regions the most important one is a lack of investors (see figure 7). The fact is confirmed by over 70% of the

surveyed in the communes of Ruda-Huta, Dołhobyczów and Ulhówek. A slightly smaller percentage of such responses was obtained in the remaining units. Only in the commune of Telatyn it was considerably lower than average (64.6%) and was 42.2%. However, it should be noted that due to very good soils, the economy of this commune was based almost exclusively on agriculture. Such a direction of development is still commonly propagated and no industrial plants are expected to be established there.



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A – very good, b – good, c – appropriate, d – bad, e – very bad

Figure 7. Barriers of development of communes according to their inhabitants

Source: own elaboration.

The second most important problem of border communes is the low level of social and technical infrastructure provision, which was stressed by 45.9% of the surveyed. However, the percentage discrepancy was quite big: in the commune of Dołhobyczów as many as 58.3% and in the commune of Telatyn only 34.3%.

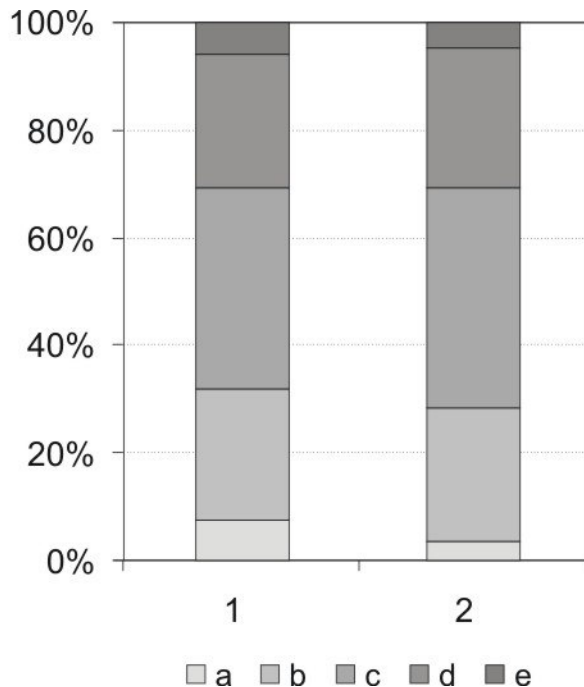
A lack of new investments results in maintaining the region’s mono-functional character and agricultural economy. On average, every third respondent stated that the agricultural character of the region is a factor that hinders its development. A similar percentage of people (32.1% on average) pointed to the incompetence of local authorities. The greatest number of the dissatisfied was in the commune of Dorohusk (55.4%) and the smallest in the communes of

Ruda-Huta (13%) and Mircze (14.7%).

The development of border regions is also hampered by their peripheral location, which was noticed by a lower percentage of respondents from the checkpoint area (22.9%) than from peripheral areas (31.4%). This difference confirms that research areas were selected properly. Approximately, every fifth respondent viewed limitations of border movement and every sixth – a lack of cooperation with the neighbours from over the border – as a progress impediment.

The development of communes in both of the analysed areas over the last 15 years was estimated in a similar way. 29.6% respondents gave very good and good marks, 39.8% – appropriate and 30.8% – bad and very bad (see figure 8). However, the results differ surprisingly depending on a particular commune. The smallest number of the satisfied was observed in the commune of Dołhobyczów, where as many as 53.4% of the surveyed gave negative answers whereas in the neighbouring commune of Mircze there were only 8.8% of such responses. Again, the situation in the commune of Dołhobyczów varies a great deal from the average in the other units. A lack of investments, economic backwardness and the poor level of infrastructure in the commune were also enumerated by the office workers of the therein Commune Council. It was emphasized that the existence of the border without a checkpoint causes a feeling of marginalization and isolation among inhabitants.

Commune development evaluation differed depending on the educational background of respondents, however, the discrepancy was quite small. Generally, those who were worse educated held more favourable opinions of contemporary changes. Among people with primary and basic vocational education, 41% estimated them positively and every fifth respondent saw them as bad or very bad. Among people with a secondary and academic background 37% assessed them as good and 24% as bad.



(UWAGA do osoby składającej tekst: sugeruję dać legendę z prawej lub lewej strony ryciny zamiast pod nią)

1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)

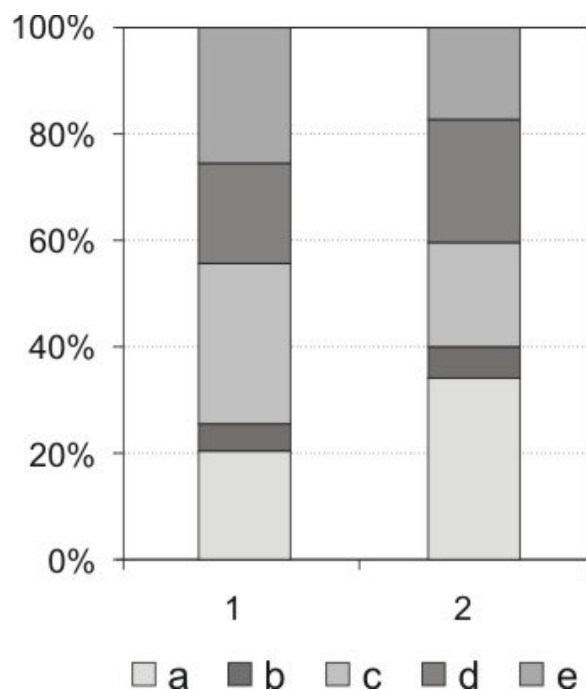
A – very good, b – good, c – appropriate, d – bad, e – very bad

Figure 8. Structure of responses to the question “How do you assess your commune’s development over the last 15 years?”

Source: own elaboration.

When asked about the future development of communes, their inhabitants clearly diversify their functional structure and see their progress prospects in various branches of economy (see figure 9). They believe forestry will not be of great significance in this respect due to the low level of afforestation in the studied communes. In the peripheral regions great importance is attached to agriculture (65.1%), which should be considered a proper evaluation of real development perspectives for the region, all the more, farming has a long tradition and great natural conditions for development. Another alternative is the growth of trade and services (44.2%) and the third one – tourism and recreation (37.6%). This clearly contrasts with communes situated near border checkpoints, where farming is of far smaller significance (37.3%). Here future belongs mainly to the development of tourism (55.7%) and industry

(47.3%).



(UWAGA do osoby składającej tekst: sugeruję dać legendę z prawej lub lewej strony ryciny zamiast pod nią)

1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)

a – agriculture, b – forestry, c – tourism and agriculture, d – trade and services, e – industry

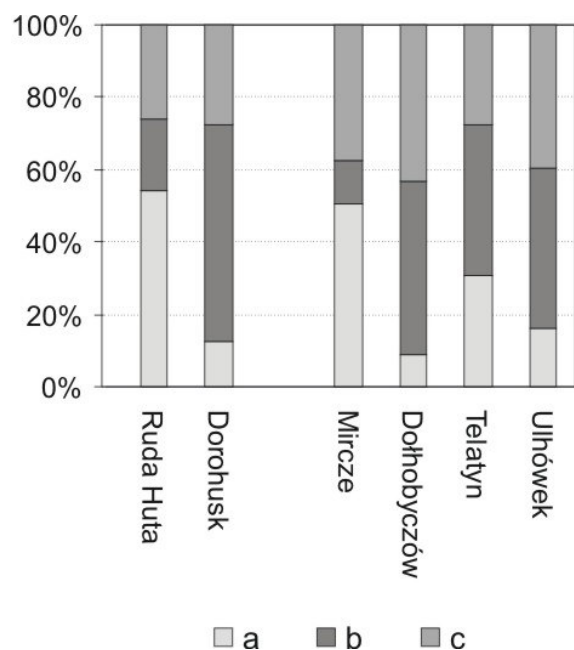
Figure 9. Structure of responses to the question “Which direction should your commune develop in?”

Source: own elaboration.

The suggestions to direct the development of communes towards tourism and recreation do not seem to be appropriate as they appear to be just wishful thinking. It is quite unlikely that in peripheral areas tourism will be of the same importance as farming. It will just play a complementary role to agriculture. Many people from large cities in central and eastern Poland more and more often buy recreational lots in these areas. Therefore, the communes’ tourist-recreational function may have good perspectives for future development.

Interestingly enough, the expected importance of services and trade is greater in peripheral areas than in those situated along the important transportation route and near the checkpoint. It seems that the inhabitants of Dorohusk area put too much emphasis on industry which so far has been quite neglected.

The surveyed population of both studied areas estimated the activity of self-governments in a similar way. However, a large group, i.e. as many as 30% held no opinion about it. It is probably the most socially passive group lacking knowledge about the activity of local self-governments. The percentage of positive and negative answers is similar (respectively 27% and 33.6%), however, when seen from the perspective of particular communes there arise clear differences (see figure 10). For example in the commune of Dorohusk only every tenth respondent evaluated the activity of the self-government positively while as many as 47.5% disapproved of it. In the neighbouring commune of Ruda-Huta 52% are satisfied and only 19% evaluate this kind of activity negatively.



(UWAGA do osoby składającej tekst: sugeruję dać legendę z prawej lub lewej strony ryciny zamiast pod nią)

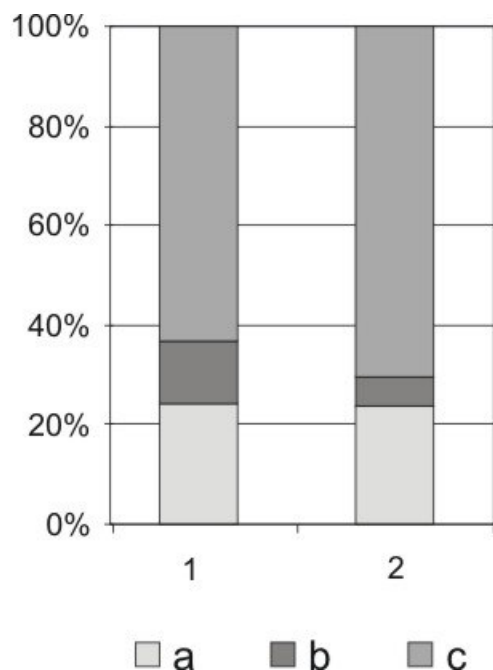
a – yes, b – no, c – no opinion

Figure 10. Structure of responses to the question “Are you satisfied with the activity of local authorities?”

Source: own elaboration.

Borderland population remains mostly indifferent to their neighbours living over the border (see figure 11). Generally, such an attitude is represented by over 67% respondents in border communes. Positive attitude is declared by 23.7% of respondents, with only a slight spatial distribution, while a negative attitude is characteristic of only 7.7%. A particularly high

percentage of people critical of their eastern neighbours is found in the commune of Dorohusk – as many as 18.8%. This probably results mainly from the above-mentioned negative experiences of the local population connected with the functioning of the border crossing. All the described problematic situations that Ukrainian visitors participate in evoke negative emotions among the inhabitants of the commune and affect their relations with eastern neighbours.



(UWAGA do osoby składającej tekst: sugeruję dać legendę z prawej lub lewej strony ryciny zamiast pod nią)

1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)

a – I like them, I would like to cooperate with them, b – I do not like them and I would not like to cooperate with them, c – I feel indifferent towards them, I have no opinion about them.

Figure 11. Structure of responses to the question “What is your attitude towards your neighbours living on the other side of the border?”

Source: own elaboration.

A half of respondents give a positive evaluation of the cooperation between local authorities and those from over the border, and the distribution of responses is almost identical in the case of both research areas.

Essential information supplementing the so far analysed relations can be found in responses

to another question. It regards the evaluation of changes in the situation of particular job groups and changes of living standards. The largest group of the surveyed (about 48%) believes the situation of farmers did not change. At the same time, a large percentage of respondents pointed to improvement (about 27%) and to worsening in the economic situation of farmers (30%). The distribution of responses concerning hired workers is quite similar. Differences between both research areas were insignificant.

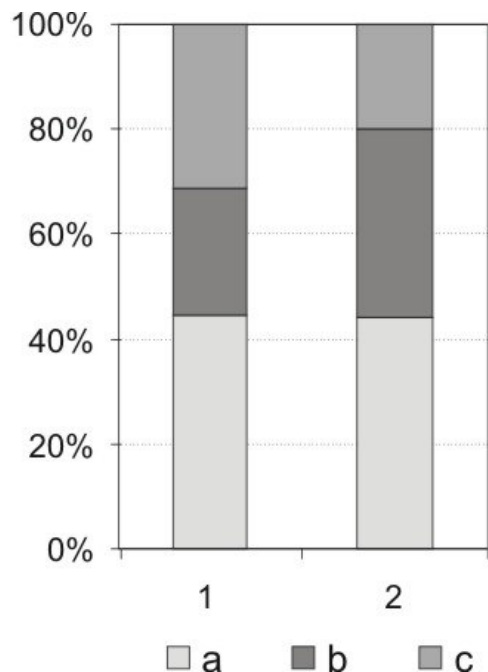
The changes in the economic situation of the owners of private enterprises were assessed much more positively. A similar share of respondents saw improvement or a lack of changes (41.6% and 44.7% respectively). On the other hand, significantly fewer people evaluated the changes in the entrepreneurs' economic situation negatively. However, the share of such answers among entrepreneurs themselves was noticeably larger (over 20%).

23.4% of the surveyed claim the average living standard of the population from border areas improved. 27.3% respondents claim that it declined. Differences between both research areas were quite small, however, at the level of communes they were clearly visible. Again, the commune of Dołhobyczów has an exceptionally high percentage of negative estimates (42.7%), with only 16.5% of positive opinions, whereas in the communes of Ruda-Huta, Mircze and Telatyn the percentage of positive responses was between 29-32% and negative ones between 16-17%. The differentiation of responses by gender and level of education was insignificant.

The surveyed confirmed the phenomenon of progressive social stratification and growing differences between living standards. About 38% respondents in both research areas claim that differences between living standards rose and 15.6% observed their decline. What seems interesting, response differentiation is again considerably greater within both analysed areas (at the level of communes) than between them.

In the case of both research areas, about 43% respondents confirmed that investments co-financed by the EU can be seen in their communes. The percentage of negative responses was 23.9% near the border checkpoint and as many as 34.6% in the peripheral area (see figure 12). To a certain extent, this may be caused by a lack of proper information or social interest, nevertheless, to an extent it reflects communes' status quo. Interviews with the representatives of local authorities indicate that recent years have shown more intensive and effective attempts

to obtain EU funds for investments. The few attempts made before as a rule ended in failure.



(UWAGA do osoby składającej tekst: sugeruję dać legendę z prawej lub lewej strony ryciny zamiast pod nią)

1 – checkpoint vicinity area (communes of Ruda-Huta and Dorohusk), 2 – peripheral area (communes of Mircze, Dołhobyczów, Telatyn and Ulhówek)

a – yes, b – no, c – cannot say

Figure 12. Structure of responses to the question: "Can you see investments subsidized by the EU in your commune?"

Source: own elaboration.

The influence of the border on the development of a commune according to local authorities

Apart from the questionnaire conducted among the inhabitants of selected communes, the research comprised interviews with representatives of local administration and self-government. The aim of the interviews was mainly to obtain information about how local authorities perceive the influence of borderland location on the development of communes and about how they assess cooperation with neighbours from Ukraine.

According to self-government representatives, the studied communes are mainly of an agricultural character. Therefore, it is difficult to expect any significant changes in this respect.

Nevertheless, it is hoped that communes' tourist function will gradually increase. It is going to be based on agro-tourist and other services as well as commercial economic activity in the areas where agriculture faces difficulties connected with less favourable natural conditions. Some communes intend to develop their dwelling functions of two kinds. The so called second houses belonging to the inhabitants from Warsaw, but also from Lublin and Chełm are springing up in attractive tourist areas such as the valley of the Bug River. Their number will certainly rise due to a large interest of people from outside the region in these areas. In other communes the authorities see the chances for development in the growth of the so called "bedroom function" of their communes for nearby larger cities. Those are, however, rather distant plans.

The border location favours the prospective development of a commune only if it is situated near a border checkpoint. In all other cases such closeness to the border is a barrier hindering proper development of nearby communes. On the other hand, the proximity of the border may also be an asset to all the communes as it facilitates project preparation together with a foreign partner within the framework of transborder cooperation. It is often emphasized that a lack of proper regulations and border movement difficulties are perceived as hindrances to transborder cooperation.

In the opinion of the representatives of local authorities, Poland's entry into the Schengen Zone hindered the commercial and services activity in border communes. Although "big business" could face new conditions effectively and functioned quite well, "small business" was seriously affected by this process, the small border movement also declined substantially. Therefore, an important step to make is to simplify the procedures of obtaining visas for neighbours from over the border and to introduce proper regulations concerning economic cooperation. It is the state authorities that are to be blamed for this situation.

Most analysed communes are interested in establishing new border crossings. The local border movement could lead to the economic revival especially of trade and services. This would create job opportunities at the very checkpoints although, as it appears, in reality they do not generate as many new job positions as expected. Usually, directly at the border crossing there are from just a few to up to twenty employees.

Border communes cooperate with their neighbours from over the border. However, this

cooperation is limited to cultural events, sports competitions and visits. This does not bring in any measurable income to communes. All that partly results from the fact that local authorities on the other side of the frontier are not interested in establishing and maintaining cooperation.

All communes observe a very unfavourable demographic situation with constant natural decrease, ageing of the population, the outflow of young people to large cities and abroad. These processes lead to the further peripherization of border communes, they also limit increase possibilities of non-agricultural economic functions.

The activity of Bug Euroregion, or rather its lack, came in for very strong criticism. The local self-government sees no sense in the existence of a Euroregion whose activity is limited to actions existing almost solely on paper. The blame for this is put mainly on provincial authorities. The only noticeable form of Euroregion's activity is the distribution of financial means for minor infrastructural investments.

So far, communes very seldom participated in projects financed from external sources. It is the fault of local authorities which either did not apply for such funds or prepared and justified submitted applications and projects in an improper way. Nevertheless, following Poland's entry into the EU, there has been an increase in the interest of authorities and the very inhabitants in obtaining extra funds for investments. Individuals, especially farmers, want to use these means to expand and modernize their farms. Communes, in turn, try to use the funds mainly to create or modernize road, waterworks and sewage infrastructure or to renovate educational or cultural centres.

The technical and social infrastructure provision varies depending on a particular commune. Most respondents stress that over the recent years there has been observed an improvement in the communes' provision of technical infrastructure. Most households are fitted with waterworks, therefore, new investments concern mainly sewage systems. Respondents pointed also to the bad quality of road surfaces and as a consequence to transportation difficulties. In terms of schools and health care, the situation of social infrastructure provision is much worse. The natural decrease and migratory outflow of the population lead to a decline in the number of schoolchildren. This makes communes close down schools or combine classes. On the other hand, most schools are very well equipped, particularly with computer hardware. Unfortunately, a large majority of communes have difficult access to basic medical services,

which are concentrated in big cities or centres of communes.

Conclusions

The analysis of the questionnaire survey and interviews indicates that the based on bibliography thesis about the border constituting a spatial barrier to the development of peripheral areas finds confirmation in the studied area. The feeling of peripherization among borderland population is quite strong although they place their village or town location as low as fifth among eight development hindrances included in the questionnaire.

The hypothesis that there is a significant difference in the assessment of the socio-economic growth of border areas situated in the direct closeness or within a large distance of border crossings found no unequivocal confirmation in the research. The population from border crossing area assesses transportation accessibility of their communes much more favourably than the inhabitants of peripheral regions, there also appear differences concerning the estimation of availability of education, trade and services. The population of both contrasted areas evaluate technical infrastructure in a similar way, and consider it low. The availability of health care is assessed better in peripheral areas. In most other cases, the differences between both studied areas are surprisingly insignificant. A little over 1/3 of the surveyed in both areas see an advantageous influence of border location onto the economic situation of communes. Yet, in both cases, the most numerous groups are those that believe border location has no impact on communes' situation. Nevertheless, it is in this very location that the inhabitants of both research areas see the possibility for further development. However, they do not expect any cooperation with the neighbours from the other side of the border. They rather look forward to the development based on the use of their region's natural values – unpolluted environment could favour the growth of tourism and ecological farming and industry could develop in the vicinity of border crossing.

However, the most interesting conclusions can be drawn on the basis of a comparative analysis regarding questionnaire results at the level of communes. In many cases the response diversity is much greater within a particular research area than between the two studied areas. The most noticeable differences occur between communes in terms of their assessment of development opportunities resulting from the activity of particular communes' population,

competences of local authorities, general economic development of communes, infrastructure level and living standards. Communes with estimates higher than average are usually Ruda-Huta, Mircze and sometimes also Telatyn. In the communes of Ulhówek and Dorohusk the estimates were, as a rule, a little lower while in the commune of Dołhobyczów definitely the lowest. Therefore, it can be concluded that according to the inhabitants, it is not the distance from a border crossing and an important transportation route that condition the socio-economic growth of their communes, but other factors.

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