

THE NORTHERN SECTOR OF THE ROMANIAN-UKRAINIAN BORDER. POLITICAL GEOGRAPHY PARTICULARITIES REGARDING THE WAYS AND MEANS OF BORDER-CROSS TRANSIT

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Abstract: The disestablishment of USSR in 1990, reallocated in the Romanian-Soviet border sector a new Romanian-Ukrainian sector (Ukraine becomes independent in 1990). The fall of the socialist system led to the opening of new border crossing points and implicitly to a growth in the number of border-cross. Gradually, the EU process of expansion towards the east, finished with the Romanian integration updated the weight of border effectives with major accent on military effectives (NATO external border), custom and especially the human flux control. Border-cross flux reduced considerably parallel with temporary closure of some border crossing points (pedestrian and railway). In the last years, because of the tightening laws, especially commercial ones, there has been a growth in organized crime, oriented on illegal smuggling of cigarettes and illegal international migration.

Key words: USSR, Ukraina, Romania, Borderland, Romanian-Ukrainian border, border flow, external border of EU and NATO

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INTRODUCTION

The Romanian-Ukrainian border is a consequence of the soviet territorial political system disestablishment in 1990 and acquisition of knowledge of the independence against USSR, of the new state, Ukraine. Inheriting the soviet patrimony, Ukraine also took the problems left by USSR at its borders with states from the central east European socialist territorial political system. We have to mention the fact that Ukraine existed also in USSR time as an independent state (from 1941), affiliated to UNO, but the main parts of its external politics attributions were delegated to the USSR. In this sense, we present the morphological and morphographical particularities of the terrestrial

and maritime sector and especially those referring to establishing the border line, mainly where the base is formed from hydrographical arteries (Ilieş et al., 2007). In 2001, because of some floods on Tisa River, especially in Crăciunesti village, for the first time it was determined the ill-fated consequences of the applied principles regarding the way in which the border line is traced on hydrographical artery. On this occasion and also regarding the situation on the Danube, Romania and Ukraine brought again into discussion the utility and efficiency of the principals that had been used until that date in those cases.

The actual border line between Romania and Ukraine is formed of two sectors: the North one, 440, 1 km long and the Danube-maritime one, 209, 3 km long (Stamate, 1997; Ilieş, 2003, 18). In time, from a "precise delimitation through landmarks, barriers, fences with barbwire" (Bodocan, 1997, 153) these "elementary spatial structures of linear shape" (Foucher, 1991), are brought out at the delimitation of Romanian and Ukrainian territorial politics through forms and modern means of surveillance and control of a border route materialized on a natural and complex support (Ilieş et al., 2012), made of rivers, mountain ridges, banks, depressions, hills etc (Figure 1).

BACKGROUND ANALYSIS

The spreading area under analysis matches the North sector of the current Romanian-Ukrainian border, 440.1 km long, complex under morphological aspect. According to specialized literature-*dyada*, includes several segments defined by morphology of the border line route (Foucher, 1991). The border line morphostructural diversity (Ilieş & Grama, 2010) is determined by the sequence from West to East of the following geographical elements and segments: Oaş Mountain, Tisa River and its meadow, Maramureş Mountains, Bucovina's hill, Suceava's plateau, Siret lane and Modavia's plateau (figure1).



Figure 1. Juxtaposed, morpho-functional and complex models of cross-border area according with functional connection of contiguous Romanian/Ukrainian borderland (Source: Ilies & Grama, 2010)

In a structural classification, the Romanian-Ukrainian border line capitalizes geographical attributes like: ridge lines, rivers, plateaus, banks (Kleinschmager,

1993), all of them distinguishable in the border line route landscape (Ilieș, 2003). The technical particularities derived from a detailed analysis of the border sectors on types of base are reflected in the paper entitled "Romanian state border", written by Grigore Stamate in 1997. From an administrative perspective, on both border sides, there are on a NUTS level 3 Transcarpathia, Ivano-Frankivsk and Chernovtsy regions in Ukraine and Satu Mare, Maramureș, Suceava and Botoșani counties on the Romanian side (Figure 2).

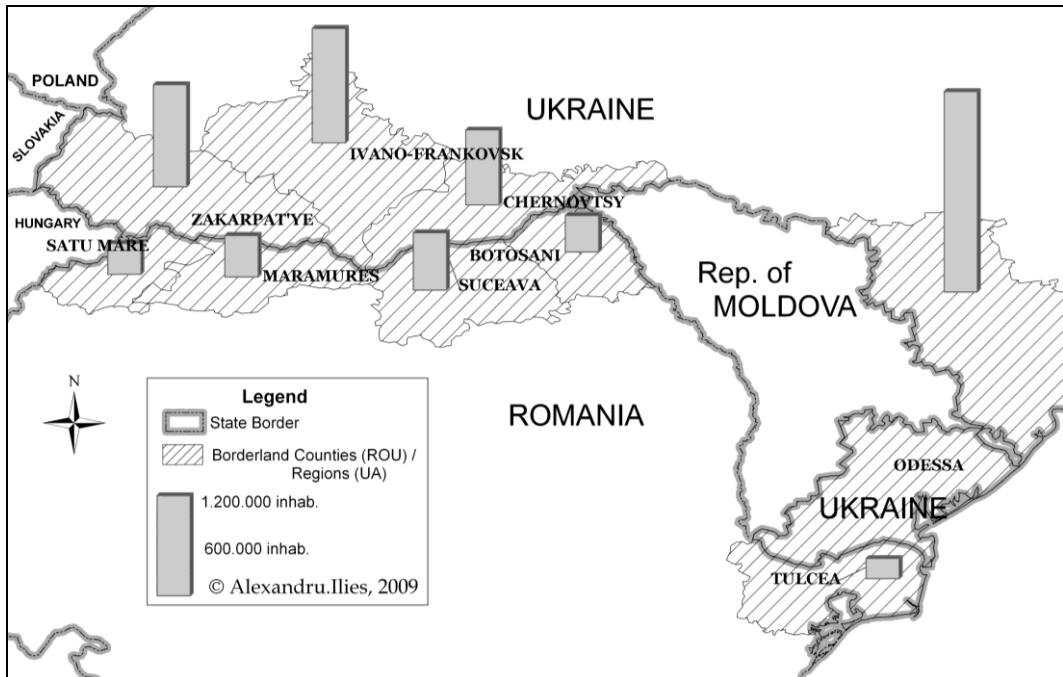


Figura 2. Romanian and Ukrainian borderland territorial-administrative division at level NUTS 3 or equivalent (Counties – Romania and Regions – Ukraina) and no of inhab in 2008 (Ilieș, 2003, 68)

(Data sources: Romanian and Ukrainian National Statistical Offices; www.insse.ro)

Tabel 1. Administrative-Territorial Units from Romanian and Ukrainian contiguous borderlands (Counties level)

(Data sources: sursa: National Statistical Office of Ukraine and Romania; www.insse.ro, 2009)

No	Regions/Counties	Surface (sqkm)	Population (no.)	Densities (inhab/sqkm)	Residence	No. inhab
			2008	2008		2008
1	Transcarpatia/Zakarpattia	12,800	1,258,300	98.3	Ujgorod	117,317
2	Ivano-Frankovsk	13,900	1,409,800	101.4	Ivano- Frankivsk	218,000
3	Cernăuți	8,100	922,800	113.9	Cernăuți	241,000
4	Odesa	33,300	2,469,000	74.1	Odesa	1,029,000
A	TOTAL Ukrainian Borderlands	68,100	6,059,900	89.0		
1	Satu Mare	4,418	365,535	82.7	Satu Mare	112,860
2	Maramures	6,304	511,828	81.2	Baia Mare	138,932
3	Suceava	8,553	706,407	82.6	Suceava	106,753
4	Botosani	4,986	451,199	90.5	Botosani	114,885
5	Tulcea	8,499	249,022	29.3	Tulcea	91,286
B	TOTAL Romanian Borderland	32,760	2,283,991	69.7		

This situation determines a border cross asymmetric system in favor of the Ukrainian side with 34.800 square kilometers over 24.259 square kilometers on the Romanian side. On an inferior level, on the Romanian side there is direct contact with the administrative-territorial unities (NUTS/LAU2) like municipium, towns and villages. On the spreading area under analysis there are no less than 37 such units, among which stands out Sighetu Marmatiei, Vişeu de Sus, Borşa, Vicovu de Sus and Siret towns. A high number of towns and villages and an ethnical diversity on both sides of the border, created in time a “constant human pressure” for the growth in an official manner and means to a permissive border. From a permissive border space until the Second World War, especially in the Bucovina and Maramureş sectors (Ilieş & Wendt, 2014) it came to an airtight border line in the socialist system (only one auto border crossing point at Siret and a railway one at Vicşani). After the fall of the socialist system, both the dynamic of border crossing points and that of the number of travelers has experienced fluctuations set by the international politics circumstances.

TOOLS, METHODS AND METHODOLOGY

The usage of instruments, means and methods certified in specialized literature research focused especially on geography (Cocean, 2005; Petrea, 2005) and political geography (Foucher, 1991; Kleinschmager, 1993; Short, 1993; Glassner, 1995; Bodocan, 1997; Ilieş, 2004; Popa, 2006; Ilieş & Grama, 2010a; Ilieş et al. 2012), territorial planning (Cunha, 1998; Ianoş, 2000, Ilieş and all, 2011a; 2011b); and territorial order (Boar, 2005; Johnson et al., 2011) but also geopolitical and geostrategic (Wendt, 2003; Neğuţ et al., 2004) represent arguments in favor of a believable scientific approach on one side and social utility on the other side. From several studies based on borderline (Bodocan, 1997; Ilieş, 2003, 2004; Boar, 2005; Popa, 2006; Violante & Vitale, 2010; Ilieş et al., 2011; 2011a; 2012; Ilieş & Wendt, 2014), or on borderline domain and especially on the meaning of borderline systems and functions (Ilieş M et al., 2010), there are only a few research directions that operate with a big variety of instruments and analysis methods. Temporal sequences defines by political decisions, facts and realities sets apart from this study the stressed dynamic of penetrating points and modifications on a structural functional base of the Romanian-Ukrainian border. The usage of a credible and official data base, statistics processing and knowledge, but also linked with morphological and morphographical set represents the system of this scientific approach.

DISCUSSIONS AND RESULTS

In the 20th century, the current Romanian-Ukrainian border has undergone constant juridical, political, structural and morpho-functional transformations (Figure 3).

After the First World War, through the unification of Bucovina and Transylvania with Romania, the current route was included in Romania, on the Bucovina sector (Figure 3). Regarding the historical Maramureş, the situation was reversed, until 1920, the current route was a part of the historical Maramureş (part of Transylvania), and from this date on appeared for the first time as the borderline on the current route with Czechoslovakia (Ilieş & Wendt, 2014). A return to the previous situation took place after the Second Vienna Awards (1940-1944), when the north-western part of Transylvania, including Maramureş was incorporated into Hungary. After the Second World War,

Romania became neighbor with the USSR and for the first time the current route was shaped (segmentation of Maramureș and Bucovina). Thus, from 1948 to 1990, the current Romanian-Ukrainian border sector existed on a secondary level because Ukraine was part of USSR, and on the main level was the Romanian-Soviet sector (Figure 3). With the independence of Ukraine and Moldavian Republic in 1991 we can discuss about a Romanian-Ukrainian sector, 440.1 km long.

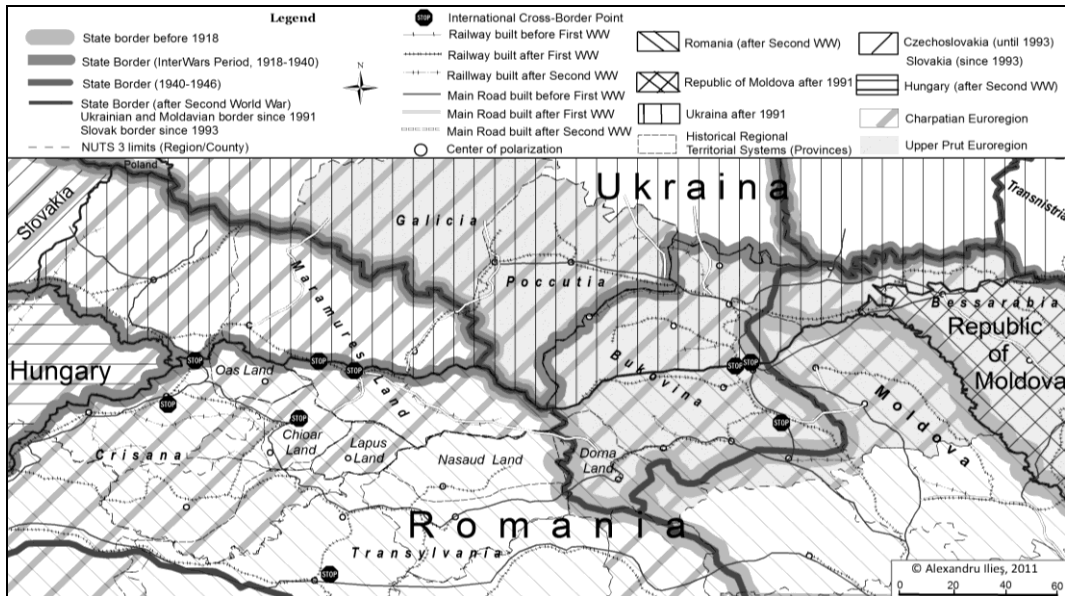


Figure 3. Borders, historical regions, euroregions and political territorial systems during the last Century (1916-2014) in the area of actual (2014)

Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (Ilieș & Wendt, 2014, 297)

(Data sources: Rey et al., 2002, p. 17; Ilieș, 2007; Ștefănescu et al., 2007a, p. 115-116; Ștefănescu et al., 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29; Hajdu, 2009, p. 23)

The border permeability

The Communist period was characterized by closure and reduced contact between the two border spaces. From the four main functions prevails the military and that of human flux control (Ilieș, 2004). With the section of the two territorial regional systems (Maramureș and Bucovina) from the USSR border line, we assist to an almost total blockage of human border cross flux. For the entire communist period were opened five border crossing points, where from only two opened to persons transit: road at Siret and railway at Vicșani (fig. 4). The other three served for the transit of goods. Border crossing point Halmeu assured the mining products transit, from Romania to USSR, especially from the mining areas in the west of the country (example Băița, Bihor, Ștei). Due to their long line (fig. 4) the other two border crossing points, Valea Vișeuului and Câmpulung la Tisa, both in Maramureș, insured exclusively the transit of Soviet merchandise trains from the superior Tisa River to the inferior Tisa River. This situation was due to the fact that in the soviet sector, on the right side of Tisa River, included between the two localities, because of the landscape conditions, instable hillside and subsidence, USSR had built this transit line on the Romanian side (left side of Tisa River; Figure 5).

Table 2. Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border points in 2014 (from East to West)
(Data sources: www.politiadefrontiera.ro, 2014)

no	Country	Cross-border point	Type of traffic	type
1	Romania/Ucraina	Siret/Stârcea	Internațional	Auto
2		Vicșani/Bahrinivka	Internațional	Railway
3		Climăuți/Bila Krynitsa	Local	Auto
4		Vicovu de Sus/Krasniolsk	Local	Auto
5		Ulma/Rusca	Local	Auto
6		Izvoarele Sucevei/Șipot	Local	Auto
7		Valea Vișeuului/Dilove	Local (temporary closed)	Railway
8		Sighetu-Marmației/Solotvino	Internațional	Auto / Railway
9		Câmpulung la Tisa/Teresva	Local (temporary closed)	Railway, pedestrian
10		Tarna Mare/Chyza	Local (temporary closed)	Pedestrian
11		Halmeu/Diakovo	Internațional	Auto / Railway
65		Racovăț/Herta	Local	Auto

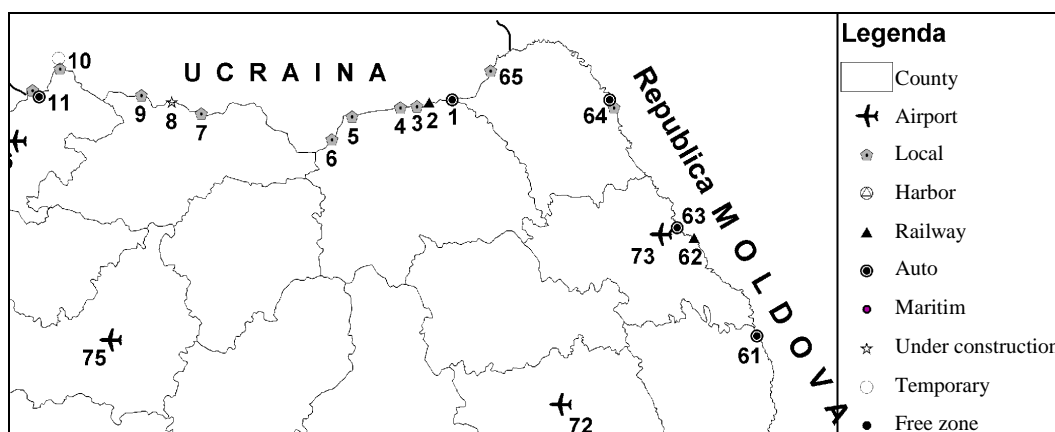


Figure 4. Romanian-Ukrainian cross-border points in 2014

(Data sources: www.politiadefrontiera.ro) (in the table 2 are number of points from figure)

In this situation they used international law, the agreements between the states and of course the "soviet authority over the satellite states from socialist system". In this way, merchandise trains transit the Romanian territory, some without stopping right, with checks only in the two border crossing points mentioned above. This was the only case in which Romania delegated the right to use its territory to the soviet state for the before mentioned railway sector (approximately 60 km long).

Consequently, on the 440.1 km long (actual correspondent sector) there were only two border crossing points designated to people's transit, geographically close to each other and characterized through asymmetric pattern. Practically, on 300 km distance there was no border crossing point with international regime (Figure 4).

The post-communist period has as its starting point the independence of Ukraine in 1990 and the beginning of a new stage regarding the opening of new border crossing points that should ensure the Romanian-Ukrainian interconnection of border systems. Thus, it came to a border crossing area with "two border crossing areas specific inconsistencies of socialist system" (Boar, 1999; Boar, 2000; Ilieș, 2003, 46; Boar, 2005; Ilieș et al., 2012) to a convergent internal relations one, materialized through a considerable growth in small (local) and international border crossing points number.

Regarding the international border crossing points number, according to our analysis, in 1990, it starts from the two existing ones in Bucovina sector (Siret and Vicșani). The main favorable elements of the first part of this period (1990-1994) were: the raise in volume small border cross connected with the "lack" of some products on a particular "border hillside and price differences"; lack of visa obligation and reduplication in border crossing points number, that in 2003 reached 12.

Thus, morphologically shifted, we attend from a border cross area similar to a hilly peak with border on the highest lines with diverging slopes, to a redrawing of a valley with converging slopes border line and merchandise and people fluxes towards interior (Figure 4). Border crossing points number rose to two in Satu Mare County (Halmeu and Tarna Mare), three in Maramureș County (Valea Vișeuului, Câmpulung la Tisa and Sighetu Marmației) and no less than six in Suceava County (along the two previous ones, there are also 4 small traffic new ones: Climăuți, Izvoarele Sucevei, Ulma, Vicovu de Sus) and one (Racovăț) in Botoșani County.

After a period of "relatively calm and normal evolution", taking into consideration the expansion of the integration process background towards the east of the ex socialist countries into NATO and EU, and the political decisions difficult to understand by the local population (case of localities near border line), after 2000 appeared the first signs of reevaluation of Romanian-Ukrainian border functions. In parallel, due to some natural disasters a few railway portions, including bridges, in Maramureș area, the "ex-soviet" railway that insured the border cross transit, especially Câmpulung la Tisa were affected. Although, the construction of the new wooden "historical bridge", Sighetu Marmației-Slatina/Solotvino route (Figure 6), started in 1999, officially opened to the public in 2007.

Starting with 2004, through the integration of Romania in the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO), the Romanian-Ukrainian border became an external NATO one, and the majority of military functions became again (similar with the socialist period) an important, even dominant one. It can be noticed the fact that beginning with Romania's clear position, starting with the moment of the European integration (fact established in 2007), "the border role became a filter of human and merchandise flux, framing itself in the communitarian-marginal typology" (Ilieș, 2004, 52). Romania's integration in EU in 2007 determined the reappearance of the visa system for Ukrainians on their way to Romania (EU) simultaneously with a growth in illegal smuggling of merchandises (especially cigarettes and fuel).

Border check on the Ukrainian sector in 2014, is insured by Territorial Inspectorate with headquarter in Sighetu Marmatiei, having authority over 4 border counties (Satu Mare-partially, Maramureș, Suceava and Botoșani-partially), each of them organized under the shape of Border Police Territorial Departments. At the same time, at border cross level, the custom function is ensured by the specific authorities that perform their duties over the four border counties. We have to mention that the custom border unlike the military or political one that is linear, this one is "determined by the state's laws or bilateral conventions where is transited or stored a big quantity of merchandise and where the custom check is performed and taxed accordingly" (www.dgv.ro, 2003).

In 2003, the Romanian-Ukrainian border was under Border Police General Inspectorate and Customs Department subordination and had 12 border

crossing points (Ilieş, 2003; www.politiadefrontiera.ro). Of all, 3 were for international transit (Siret, Vicşani in the East, Halmeu in the West), and the rest for the small transit and access for the population living near the border. Gradually, due to technical problems, the two railway crossing points from the "soviet end line on the Romanian territory", Maramureş Land, Valea Vişeuului and Câmpulung la Tisa closed in 2007. So, in 2014, through the reopening of international transit over the historical bridge on Tisa River between Sighetu Marmatei and Solotvino/Slatina, the number of international border crossing points reached 4.



Figure 5. Double railway in Maramureş area (normal-European and large-Ukrainian ex-soviet) (Photo: A. Ilieş)

The historical Maramureş case. Before the First World War, Maramureş area was unitary and it had never required the creation of a border-crossing, especially on Tisa River, crossed at that time by no less than 8 bridges over a 60 km distance. In 1920, as a consequence of world's crisis, the historical Maramureş was sectioned for the first time in its history by a political border whose route followed the Tisa River and the heights of Maramureş Mountains, toward East-West (Boar, 2005; Ilieş et al., 2007; Ilieş D.C., 2008; Ilieş and Grama, 2010b; Ilieş and Wendt, 2014; Figure 6).

In the Interbellum period, the South part of Maramureş (1/3) becomes part of Romania and the north part (2/3) went Czechoslovakia. Thus, there was a political border, whose history raises a lot of questions in the present, the 8 bridges assured the same transit possibilities without strict rules and there was also the mountain area possibility. One of this bridges connected Sighetu Marmatei town to Slatina/Solotvino, that was in fact "a Northern neighborhood over the Tisa River". After the Second World War, when Romania's new neighbor became USSR, the 8 bridges were gradually destroyed, the last ones in 1968, when the Warsaw Pact troops invaded Czechoslovakia (Figure 6).

Of all remained a metallic ruin, representing a half of a bridge in the Teceu Mic and Teceu Mare area (Figure 7). In parallel, USSR, built a wide railway between Câmpulung la Tisa and Valea Vişeuului, transiting Romania that functioned in a strict regime until 1990 (Figure 5). The fall of the socialist system along with the Ukraine's independence led to the opening of new border crossing points, among them there is the "historical" one in Sighetu Marmatei/Slatina. Its construction lasted over 10 years and was opened for international transit,

small vehicles and pedestrians in 2007 (Figure 7). At the opening were also present the two presidents of that time: Traian Băsescu (Romania) and Viktor Iușcenko (Ukraine). This border crossing point became the most transited of all in the Maramureș area, proved by the statistics. The bridge has a sentimental value and it is a historical symbol between the two parts of the historical Maramureș. Since 2007 the two railway border crossing points in Câmpulung la Tisa/Teresva and Valea Vișeuului/Dilove have been closed. At the moment there is a new project for the construction of a mixed road/railway bridge between Sighetu Marmăției/Biserica Albă.

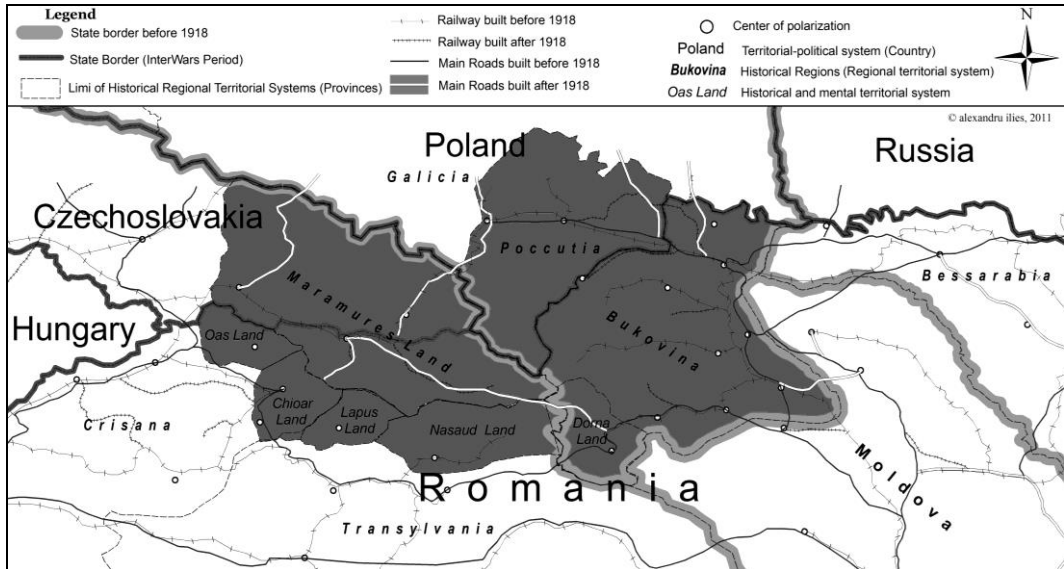


Figure 6. Borders, historical regions and political territorial systems before and after First World War in the area of actual (2014) Romanian-Ukrainian border and borderlands (Data sources: Ștefănescu et al., 2007a, p. 115-116; Ștefănescu et al., 2007b, 119-120; Smolyoi, 2007, p. 22; Kocsis, 2007, p. 29, Ilieș and Wendt, 2014)



Figure 7. Wooden historical bridge between Sighetu-Marmăției (Romania) and Solotvino (Ukraine) – left; The rest of *historical iron bridge* between Teacev (Ukraine) and Teceu Mic (Romania) – right (Photo: A. Ilieș)

CONCLUSIONS

Through the geographical position of the border line between Romanian and Ukrainian that determines the route, it results a morphological (Ilieș, 2014)

variety of the border system included in some Euroregions (Ilieș, 2003). The mountain area lacks in localities and implicitly in population and this fact determined under the "colonization of border" two distinct sectors: a Maramureș-Oaș one in the west and the Bucovina one to the east. Between these, there is a third part of the mountain border sector, which is unpopulated. The two extreme sectors have undergone a contrasting development, according to means and methods of international and small transit. This is an obvious fact according to the dynamics of person's transit, their purpose, the majority being concentrated on the trade of goods. Thus, in 2014, the northern sector of the Romanian-Ukrainian border fulfills a triple role: state border, EU external border and NATO external border, being one of the most complex political central and east European areas. Nowadays, one of the most stringent problems of this sector is the smuggling of cigarettes (determined by the difference in price and quality between the two countries).

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Submitted:
November 28, 2014

Revised:
April 2, 2014

Accepted:
May 1, 2014

Published online:
May 1, 2014