

ICT ENABLED CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE

In the present study we try to draft the frameworks for interpretation of cross-border governance and to define the potential role of ICT solutions in developing functioning governance models. For the sake of a better understanding we have divided our study into four chapters which define successively the notions of 'governance', 'border', 'cross-border governance'; the final one focuses on the effects ICT solutions can have on cross-border governance.

Our starting-point is the presumption that space is a social product, consequently borders can be considered as results of conventions and not administrative or physical barriers. Since space is a social product it is determined culturally by the community / society and is defined by a particular discourse, during the last 4 centuries by nation states and nationalisms.

Nowadays, national discourse on space is gradually losing its self-evidence and new forms of institutionalised cross-border cooperation are emerging. This evolution will change not only the traditional terminology of space but also the way of governing things. The progress of info-communication technology resulted in the birth of virtual space, virtual identity. The world of spaces has given place for the world of flows. In this situation cross-border governance opens new perspectives for cooperation.

In our study we try to give a short overview on the issue of cross-border governance, on its theoretical background, its opportunities and limitations. The term 'cross-border' will be used in its stricter sense referring to direct cooperation across state borders.

For better understanding, we have divided our study into four chapters enlarging gradually the field of investigations started by the definition of 'governance'.

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1. GOVERNANCE

Governance is an innovation of modernity. As in his famous lecture given at Collège de France (titled *Governmentality*) Michel Foucault points out, in the Middle Ages the Prince was in a transcendent relationship with his subjects: “there is no fundamental, essential, natural and juridical connection between the Prince and his principality”¹. The Prince acquired his power over the territory and the population living there through occupation, he-

¹ FOUCAULT, M., 'Governmentality'. In *Security, Territory, Population: Lectures at the College de France 1977-78*. Palgrave-MacMillan, 2007, 126-145.

redity or accession but there was no immanent togetherness between the population and him. Consequently, the Prince's main aim was to maintain his power over the territory considered as an external mark of his sovereignty and to secure his relationship with it.

According to Foucault's theory the big change was made during the 16th and 17th centuries when new ideology of *government* evolved. The difference between medieval and modern approach is marked by Foucault by the smush 'governmentality'. The unified word contains the idea that the heart of the new approach is not the maintenance of a given territory but a mentality oriented toward *governing things* which are "men in their relationships, bonds, and complex involvements with things like wealth, resources, means of subsistence, and, of course, the territory with its borders, qualities, climate, dryness, fertility, and so on. 'Things' are men in their relationships with things like customs, habits, ways of acting and thinking. Finally, they are men in their relationships with things like accidents, misfortunes, famine, epidemics, and death."²

Govern-mentality means a way of thinking the *Leitmotiv* of which is the improvement of living conditions of the population, amelioration of the health care system, enhancing the level of education, strengthening the capacity of work of the people and expanding average life expectancy within the country. It is very similar to the fact named nowadays as "welfare state".

During this process Kingship (principauté) was replaced by the Nation State with its own reality, own rationality and internal rules. How did this process take place?

It is evident that when concentrating on realms *immanent with population* (to govern) instead of maintaining superficial power over a given territory (to reign), the nature and the behaviour of the Sovereign will perform a drastic change. This change can be described through the presentation of the change of the nature of sovereignty.

When investigating living conditions in the USA in the 1830s, Alexis de Tocqueville foremost identified the process of the development of equality of living conditions. "Aristocracy had made a chain of all the members of the community, from the peasant to the king, democracy breaks that chain and severs link of it."³

Two centuries later, Charles Taylor describes the same phenomenon by the following wording: "We have moved from a hierarchical order of personalized links to an impersonal egalitarian one, from a vertical world of mediated access to horizontal, direct-access societies."⁴ Previously existing mediating powers (one can call them as 'local autonomies') have disappeared, the individuum is confronting with impersonal State.

In parallel with the disappearance of hierarchy from the society the way of exertion of power is changing, too. Sovereignty becomes immanent with the people, the government is functioning by the mandate given by the people.

It is disputed whether nationalism is a product of modernity or it is the return of an atavistic tribal phenomenon. According to the interpretation of Ernest Gellner (and earlier Lord

John Acton), nationalism cannot be separated from the development of the modern principle of sovereignty of people and the social contract theory.

In this new system sovereignty is not connected to a (not-permanent) personality but to a certain, more or less permanent unity of territory (see Bodin) or a political body (Rousseau) creating rules for itself. In parallel, loyalty of the subjects is not connected to a royal family or a local autonomy but to the nation as a whole composed by people similar to them.

The way of wielding of power proper to nationalism is the bureaucratic nation state: the ideal and practical realisation of immanence. Consequently, governance is a product of modernity, and it cannot be separated from the model of nation state.

2. BORDER

When the book titled *La production de l'espace* of French historian Henri Lefebvre came up in France it had no big impact on scientific discourse. But in 1991 when it was published in English, the book gave munition to the geographers defending the relativist / relationist theory of space and became known world-wide.

In his work Lefebvre states that the space is a social product. He distinguishes three forms of this production. At the first level, perception in the mind creates space composing the pictures of things and objects around us in one totality (*espace perçu*). At the second, representations of space are made by human beings (e.g. a country is not a nature-given reality, in this case things and objects are interpreted in the way a new concept of space is made: *espace conçu*). Finally, these representations become the spatial representation of time (*espace vécu*). The last form means that the space produced by us influence our daily lives (or identity). If the space is a product of society, the narratives on the space can be changed according to the changes arisen within the society.

From our point of view, Lefebvre's theory of space has two implications. Firstly, he thinks that each regime produces a particular form of spatiality. Society creates borders inside and outside of the community. Social behaviour, traditions, and cultural identity are summarised in different discourses ruled by different socio-cultural and political structures. When the political regime or the deep social structure changes (quickly or slowly) the discourse on space is changing, too.

The past centuries in the Western world have been defined by the discourse of nation state which gradually produced its representations: official language, national currency, democratic parliament, national provisions and state borders. Since 1945 the number of nation states has almost tripled and the process is still continuing. Mill's thesis on the coincidence of the borders of the state and the nation spread over the world has been producing new narratives on the space following the modern European model.⁵

2 Ibid.

3 TOCQUEVILLE, A. de, Democracy in America. Adlard and Saunders, 2003

4 TAYLOR, Ch., A Secular Age. Harvard University Press, 2007 <http://www.scribd.com/doc/16205621/A-SECULAR-AGE>

5 "... it is in general a necessary condition of free institutions, that the boundaries of governments should coincide in the main with those of nationalities". MILL, J. S., Considerations on representative government. Routledge and Keagan Paul, 1977

The second implication of Lefebvre's theory is that politics has the capacity to influence the discourse on the space defining so common identity (*espace vécu*) of the community. This capacity is represented by the laws, rules, the normativity created by nation state in our case. Border is a sign of normativity. Those crossing the borders offense the borderline, breach normativity in a sense.

Contemporary scholars of borderlands studies consider state borders as products and not givens by nature. "A line is geometry, a border is interpretation" – states Henk van Houtum⁶. David Newman describes the process of border production in a very similar way to that of Lefebvre's theory on space: "Borders are created by those who have the power to *keep out* those people and influences which are perceived, at any point in time, as being undesirable or detrimental to the home territory or group. [...] Once created, borders become transformed into reality, a default situation which impacts upon daily life patterns and social mores, determine the parameters of exclusion and inclusion, and creates the categories through which social and spatial compartmentalization is perpetuated."⁷

John Agnew calls this phenomenon as the 'territorial trap': state is a container of social relations; state determines the notions of 'internal' and 'external' and exerts its total power over everything which belongs to former one. At the same time the world ends on the other side of the border: inside there is order, outside chaos.

Territorial games have always had zero-sum: the narratives on space and borders rivalling against each other have no win-win solution within the framework of nation state paradigm. Conflict is encoded in the discourse of nation state: "If expressed in territorial terms (as in national border conflicts), the fact that territory (unlike other 'goods' such as democracy or development) has a finite and fixed total directly encourages 'zero-sum' thinking, where gains for one side are typically seen as losses for the other, and vice-versa."⁸

3. CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE

From the point of view of the reflections above, cross-border cooperation is something abnormal, something which is against normativity and can be interpreted as injury, violence against the official discourse. Cross-border governance is even worse since borders are the most transparent signs of nation state that governance is belonging to. Governance is something which seems to be inseparable from nation state model and it can be identified by list-

ing the ministries of a democratic state: all functions performed (*ministered*) by the ministries form the frame of the notion of governance.

However, all that we can see now in the world demonstrate that there are no longer problems which can be solved at national level. Not only fields like foreign affairs or national security presuppose external relations: controlling of big contagious diseases; environment protection; criminal investigation; or even the development of education and health care system are considered as inter-*national* issues.

The European Union's main objective is to develop Single Market and to create a secure and peaceful continent. In this process borders are considered as obstacles. In the history of European integration a tendency of homogenization can be identified: more and more issues and competences are removed from national to Brussels' level. The EU institutions pull topics that belonged previously to the self-definition of the nation states: national currency, national legislation, the control over border crossing. At the same time issues managed by national ministries before (governance) become common matters of the European community (cross-border governance).

Maybe the most innovative and most exciting forms of multi-level governance are produced by local stakeholders in borderlands. Institutionalised cross-border cooperation challenges the traditional narratives on space and border, it overturns conventional topics and discourses and casts doubts on the evidence of the former model of governance managed by nation states, exceptionally.

4. ICT ENABLED CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE

By heightening cross-border cooperation to normative level (the level of ruled cooperation where also the statistical regions are within a state), the normativity of the border has lost its sense. From on now cross-border cooperation and its tools have the same normality and normativity like nation state borders.

ICT can play a decisive role in creating this new normativity in two senses: as a tool of information provision and as a tool of integrated service provision (new form of governance). This role is underpinned by the modification of terminology of spatial studies produced by the birth of virtual space. As a result of the progress in ICT our life-world is fragmented by different perceptions on space producing proliferation of local identities. But locality here does not necessarily mean a geographic locality anymore: within human society (considered as a kind of quasi-space) new identities are developing which can geographically be discontinued (just think about fan clubs of a football team or ad-hoc groups set up in very short time on social sites, etc.). What we see now it is the multitude of "local" narratives instead of comprehensive metanarratives where the identity of Self is fluctuating among different space-structures produced by themselves or other people. National narrative, national discourse has lost its exclusiveness: today's people use different narratives, different identities, different definitions successively or simultaneously.

6 HOUTUM, H. v., Borders of Comfort: Spatial Economic Bordering Processes in the European Union. In ANDERSON, J. – O'DOWD, L. – WILSON, T.M. (ed.): New Borders for a Changing Europe. Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2003, 37-58.

7 NEWMAN, D., Contemporary research agendas in border studies: An Overview. In DORIS, W.-W. (ed.), The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies. Ashgate, 2011, 33-47.

8 ANDERSON, J. – O'DOWD, L. – WILSON, T.M.: Why Study Borders Now? In ANDERSON, J. – O'DOWD, L. – WILSON, T.M. (ed.): New Borders for a Changing Europe. Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance. Routledge Taylor and Francis Group, 2003, 1-12.

This is the reason why scholars of human geography use terms such as liquid modernity⁹, fluidity¹⁰, mobile identity¹¹, de-territorialisation¹² when describing today's processes where the *world of spaces* give its role to the *world of flows*.

In this sense, traditional definitions like centre and periphery change their meanings. Freedom and competitiveness are in close relationship with digital literacy, including information literacy and Internet or hyper-literacy as well.

All the above mentioned processes can gradually re-define the term and the content of governance as well.

At the same time, while there are a few territories where ICT solutions are used in cross-border relations serving the development of cross-border governance structures and EGTC¹³ as a legal framework is given for managing those structures we cannot speak about cross-border governance in the sense of administration. It is a matter of fact that more and more public services provided previously exclusively by national level institutions are available at international or community level but administrative competences are strongly bound to nation states.

How ICT could help make those services available for neighbours?

Well, ICT creates a new dimension of space (virtual or cyber space) which better matches new (fluid) forms of identity than traditional geographic spaces do. A big advantage of virtual space is its independence from physical space.

Second Life models make it possible to create so-called synthetic spaces where virtual representation of the Self (virtual identity or avatar) manages (administers) its own affairs¹⁴ [11., 16.] As info-communication functions by using artificial languages the difficulties produced by cultural variety of Europe can be managed, too. Daily life will enforce the opening of state borders for new forms of cross-border governance. It might happen in the near future...

9 BAUMAN, Z., *Liquid modernity*. Blackwell, 2000

10 Houtum, *ibid.*

11 PAASI, A., *A Border Theory: An Unattainable Dream or a Realistic Aim for Border Scholars?* In DORIS, W-W. (ed.), *The Ashgate Research Companion to Border Studies*. Ashgate, 2011, 11-31.

12 DIENER, A. C. – HAGEN, J., *Borders. A Very Short Introduction*. Oxford University Press, 2012

13 *European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation*.

14 TÓZSA, I., *A közigazgatás jövőképe*. In JENEY, L. – HIDEG É. – TÓZSA I. (szerk.), *Jövőföldrajz. A hazai gazdasági fejlődés területi és települési aspektusai a jelenbe és a jövőben*, Budapesti Corvinus Egyetem Gazdaságföldrajz és Jövő kutatás tanszék, 2014, 155-178. and NEMESLAKI, A.: *Vállalati internetstratégia*, Akadémiai Kiadó, 2012