

Summary

Territorial identity in Poland at the regional level is an ambiguous social phenomenon. Attachment to the voivodship is shared by identification with a cultural region of relict borders or non-formalized territory, delimited under individual criteria. Institutionalization of the administrative region as a result of territorial reorganization may cause emergence identification of the given community attributed to the newly created entity, while preserving emotional ties with former spatial units.

This dissertation concerns the impact of administrative borders on the modification of territorial identity based upon the case of Podlasie. The study considered changes in the course of north-eastern Poland's borders of administrative regions from the First Republic to the present time. The main emphasis was placed on the factor of administrative reorganization of 1999 and related changes in territorial structure at regional level. While delimiting the present Podlaskie Voivodship, only the northern fragment of the historical region (1566-1795) was included. Regarding its toponymy, discussed voivodship belongs to the most inconsistent spatial units with borders of historical regions in Poland.

The overarching objective of this dissertation was to determine the impact of administrative division on the modification of social territorial identity and perception of the cultural borderland region of north-eastern Poland with the example of Podlasie.

The research procedure consisted of three parts: theoretical, empirical, and analytical. The first one involved reviewing the subject literature and formulating research objectives and hypotheses (**Chapters 1 and 2**). Empirical phase of the study consisted of the compilation of existing data and classification of the study area. At this stage, cartographic materials were reviewed in order to identify spatial ranges of settlement processes and administrative affiliations of the study area, which resulted in the formation of contemporary cultural borderland region of Podlasie (**Chapter 3**). The method of content analysis was employed to identify spatial and semantic perception of Podlasie in the literature (for the years 1887-2020). Data query was conducted to determine manifestations of Podlasie regional identity in the study area between 1983 and 2013 (**Chapter 4**). Empirical part culminated in conducting a social survey (in 2017-2018), which involved a survey questionnaire sent to 71 communes located in Podlaskie (31), Lubelskie (18), Mazowieckie (18) and Warmińsko-mazurskie (4) Voivodships. The research sample consisted of 9537 respondents and the return rate amounted to 50.2%.

In the analytical part of inquiry, cartographic method of research and presentation as well as statistical methods of correlation and regression were adopted in order to recognize the spatial structure of survey findings. For the purpose of determining spatial factors (including the effect of a given administrative border on identification with Podlasie) and socio-demographic variables affecting contemporary territorial identity, obtained data were tested for statistical significance (**Chapter 5**).

Chapter 6. consists of the verification of research hypotheses and final conclusions, which synthesize the results. The study confirmed the process of extinction of identity attributed to Podlasie in the areas historically connected with this region, which at present do not belong to the Podlaskie Voivodship established in 1999. On the other hand, population of the Suwalszczyzna, Łomża and Kurpie sub-regions strongly identify themselves with Podlasie, despite the lack of historical and cultural connections to this region. The average values of synthetic indicators of Podlasie territorial identity and self-identification are currently higher among the communities of the above mentioned areas, compared to the communities living in the historical region of Podlasie - eastern counties of Mazowieckie and northern counties of Lubelskie Voivodships.

The recent reorganization of territorial division in Poland (1999) has significantly contributed to perceiving Podlasie as an administrative region, i.e. Podlaskie Voivodship, by both its inhabitants and communities of neighboring areas. Statistical analysis proved that the main factors modifying the degree of identification with Podlasie are occupation, religion and nationality. Ties with the region are strongest among farmers and the Orthodox community and/or the self-declaring non-Polish nationality (and self-identifying as *locals*). The research revealed that attachment to Podlasie tends to increase with the age of population. However, the factor of age is less important in constructing identity attributed to Podlasie and perception of its spatial range than contemporary regional affiliation established after 1999. Based upon conducted research, one cannot refer to Podlasie in the context of a cultural region existing inside historical or contemporary borders. In the social consciousness among the inhabitants of the so-called historical Podlasie common regional distinctive attributes have been preserved merely in a residual form. Subsequent administrative reorganizations contributed to a clear differentiation of communities living on both sides of the Bug River. However, it is difficult to state whether Podlasie had ever been a cultural construct with a clear distinctiveness within the borders of the first voivodship (1566-1795), which was in fact an administrative region.

Along with subsequent evolutionary stages of Podlasie of diverse borders and geographical location, we are witnessing a "wandering" region and a cultural identity that "follows" it - with a certain time lag. Prior to the formation of ties with the newly formed region, attachment to the previously formalized territory is being gradually extinguished. As a result, the community may identify itself for generations with more than one region (the so-called *hybrid identity*). This occurs with the relatively stable territorial rooting and settlement continuity of north-eastern Poland's community. The naming assigned to the territory is responsible for the process of region's "wandering" in the social consciousness. Toponym, together with borders and community living inside them, is a key pillar for building regional identity. Thus, the name of the region is an essential territorial symbol stemming from its institutionalization.