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Transnationalism and multilocalism. Case studies from the Tornio river valley and Mari El

“Make sure to bring your identity card, since checks are being carried out at the moment at the border.” This is what my local friends advised me when I travelled to Haparanda in the winter of 2016 for an event. In the autumn of 2015, about 30,000 refugees had come to Finland via Sweden; it was called a refugee crisis, and there, at an internal EU-border, checks were being carried out (Ruotsala 2019, 24). I had crossed this border between Finland and Sweden numerous times in the twin city of Tornio-Haparanda for decades before I started doing research there and I had never had my identity checked. Nor did it happen then either, in February 2016, even though I crossed the border several times on that visit.

Thank you for the invitation to speak at this congress, which has already been postponed twice. In the summer of 2020, however, it was organised as a webinar and I gave a presentation on the very cause of the postponement of the congress, the Covid-19 pandemic, and its impact in the Tornio river valley, where the state border has been invisible for decades, until the coronavirus made it reappear. That presentation is the basis of my article published last year in the *Hungarian Studies Yearbook*. (Ruotsala 2021, 147–162.)

In this presentation, on the basis of my own research I will open up the concepts of transnationalism¹ and multilocalism, which are recognised in many Finno-Ugric communities, as well as here in Central Europe. For

¹ Although ‘transnationalism’ is a term often applied to the topic under consideration in this article, a more precise rendering of the Finnish term *ylirajaisuus* would be ‘cross-borderism’. This reflects more accurately the focus of my study, which is on borders and their effects on life, whether they be local, provincial, national or international. This should be borne in mind whenever the word ‘transnationalism’ occurs, which, nonetheless, I retain in the English presentation given its usage elsewhere and its greater manageability than ‘cross-borderism’. See e.g. Martikainen et al. 2006, 24; Nissinen 2016, 68.

border residents, borders are a mundane affair, yet also an important one, and one that is moreover subject to changes.

Ethnic diversity and the varying faces of immigration and multiculturalism are reflected in many ways in ethnological research. Borders and border areas have always fascinated ethnologists, and changes taking place around the world emphasise the timeliness and importance of research into borders and border areas; perspectives on their study have moreover themselves been the target of change (Snellman 2017, 108–109). For us in Finland, Karelia has been the object of devoted research *par excellence* (see, for example, Hakamies 2005; Lähteenmäki 2010; Häyrynen 2006), while the Tornio river valley between Finland and Sweden has been studied, for example, by geographers (see, for example, Paasi & Prokkola 2010; Häkli 2009) and linguists (Vaattovaara 2010). Similar border areas across Europe have been studied by scholars in many other disciplines in addition to ethnologists (see, for example, Lozovik 2009; Becker 2007; Löfgren 2008; Eisch 1996).

Borders do not last for ever, even when boundary markers are physically carved in stone. Geopolitically, a border is presented as an abstract line that contains little information about the areas or histories it divides. It expresses only an absolute division of space that denies the gradual differences formed through history, the continuums, the overlaps that are concrete for residents that experience the border day in, day out. The border may have been drawn close to one's own home, across fields or even through the yard. For example, after the peace of 1809 in the Tornio river valley, the fields of some farms remained on the other side of the border, or the village church and cemetery remained in the neighbouring state. Today, borders have become increasingly complex and intricate. (Häyrynen 2006, 1.) Borders are conceived as dynamic processes, as social and constructed institutions and as symbols. Borders are tools for the management of social space and part of the process by which places and their identities are produced. According to Doreen Massey (2003, 73–74), borders are the result of the drawing up of social boundaries, and they cut through other relationships that make up the social space. They determine the movements of both capital and people. Borders arrange social space and drawing them up is an exercise of power.

Borders not only separate, but also, from the perspective of this presentation, unite; they are crossed and they can be used in many ways for different purposes. Local people as well as organisations, firms and other businesses use them. Borders are used in politics, both local and national, where examples may be found close at hand. But perhaps these phenomena have been referred to under different terms in the past, and words such as transnationalism or multilocalism have not long been in use. Things have, anyway, always worked in the way indicated in the terms used in the title. The examples I use here come from my recent ethnographic field research. At the start, I mentioned the twin city of Tornio-Haparanda, where I have studied the transnationalism of everyday life and identity construction. Haparanda is a Swedish city and Tornio is Finnish. The cities have grown together, but there is an international border between them. This is why they are referred to as a twin city. The cities along with their organisations have “helped” this shared growth in various ways (Häkli 2009, 213–214).

My second example is from Russia, from Mari El and its rural village of Uncho, where I have conducted field work several times, first in the early 2000s and lastly in the summer of 2019. Uncho is right on the border between the Republics of Mari and Tatarstan, and this situation has had a significant impact in Uncho for the livelihood of the villagers, as my field work from the 2000s showed. It was my intention to go there for field work again, but first it was blocked by Covid-19 and now it has been prevented by Russia’s immoral attack on Ukraine, which has had major impacts on the academic world more widely.

Transnationalism

But what is meant by transnationalism? In the early 1990s, there was talk of a transnational turn, especially in research into ethnicity and immigration. Transnationalism offered a tool to see and understand better the particular features found in earlier theories that focused on assimilation. In humanities and social science research, this put in the spotlight precisely the everyday existence that migrants or people living at the border lived. (Schiller, Basch & Blanc-Szanton 1992; Martikainen et al. 2006, 23–24; Häkkinen 2020, 33.) In ethnology and other subjects exploring the national

paradigm, it has signified a new perspective on previous local and national research. It has also often involved criticism of methodological nationalism. (Vertovec 2009, 3; Martikainen et al. 2006, 24.)

One significant change in the transnationalist approach is that it does not necessarily take the nation-state or ethnic group as a natural, self-evident subject of research (Brudbaker 2013; 17, 42–45; Häkkinen 2020, 33). In studies of this kind employing methodological nationalism, the nation-state perspective has been emphasised. Hence, transnationalism challenges methodological nationalism and ethnicism, i.e. key concepts such as Finnish, Swedish, Mari, Udmurt or even multicultural and Finno-Ugric. Instead of the geographical and cultural, attention needs to be paid here to an ambivalent field, viewed in ways different from hitherto, where these phenomena, previously seen as national, are now seen as broader and more ambivalent. This must also be accompanied by the exercise of power and ownership; whose culture is it, and what voices are heard? For example, in the birth and spread of the *Kalevala*, publicised as the Finnish national epic, transnationalism is now seen as an important factor. (Grönstrand et al. 2016.)

In short, then, transnationalism refers to movement, activity and sociocultural existence across borders – national, linguistic, cultural, symbolic, institutional and geographical. Completely new areas, spaces and cultures are created here as these existing borders are stretched and crossed for a variety of reasons (Nissilä 2016, 68). In addition, the cross-border perspective raises questions about how the multicultural traditions of migrants from elsewhere and their descendants' structure or possibly shape the image and cultural life more broadly of their current country of residence. This comes to the fore in both of my research topics as well as in many other studies. For example, in her study of three-generation transnational families, Hanneleena Hieta has investigated the role of grandparents living in another country through travel, goods sent and virtual space in Finland (Hieta 2017, 57–59).

There is no unified transnational theory, but it can be understood as an approach by which to examine the phenomenon (Faist et al. 2013, 9–10; Nissilä 2016, 68). It is used, for example, to emphasise cross-border social, cultural, political and economic connections, ties, events and behaviours (see e.g. Vertovec 2009, 3–9). These connections must be long-

term or regular, as no short-term trips, let alone tourist visits, count towards transnationalism.

Although transnational studies have shifted the perspective away from nation-states and ethnic groups, many scholars, such as Peter Kivistö (2001), have pointed out that nation-states and locality play an important role in regulating mobility and immigration. The role of states in both enabling and restricting migration and cross-border mobility became clear during the past – or continuing – pandemic in the Tornio river valley (Ruotsala 2021, 155–157).

In addition to transnationalism, many recent studies on migration have used the term *translocal*, with a particular focus on socio-spatial dimensions and localisation. It places more emphasis on connections between places, where crossing a border is not essential, but rather the movement of people between two places. Thus, in accordance with the prevailing binary way of thinking, migrants do not want to be seen only as moving towards the community they have entered or into their own homeland. For example, research has been conducted into family connections between Finland and Estonia or between Finland and Russia, such as child–parent care connections across borders. It is noteworthy in both this *translocalism* and *transnationalism* that action and communication, it is suggested, can be simultaneous and in both directions (Assmuth, Hakkarainen, Lulle & Siim 2018, 3–33; Siim 2021, 165–167).

In my own research, I have also used the concept of *multilocalism*, as I do not observe the subjects of my research as immigrants (or emigrants), but have wished to emphasise how people use the network formed by a multiplicity of places in their daily lives. These places may be located on the other side of an international border or they may be places situated between the city and the countryside, for example. Johanna Rolshoven (2008) sees *multilocalism*, which she has investigated deeply, as a broader cultural system of movement, traffic and direction. Attention is paid to everyday life and its routines. My question is how everyday organisation works between two or more places in living, working, leisure activities or social relationships (Rolshoven 2007, 189; Ruotsala 2011, 197–198; Siim 2021, 165–166).

Next, I will look at *transnationalism* (cross-border life) and *multilocalism* in two Finno-Ugric settlements, the Mari republic and the Tornio

river valley. These examples are presented each in a slightly different way, reflecting the nature of my field work. Following Georg E. Marcus (1986, 165–170), my field work might be characterised as multi-site field work, as the field consists of a network of many localities; the field as it were containing several fields.

In the Tornio river valley, transnationalism is clearly visible at three different levels: firstly, at the level of states or cities, secondly, in the life of various organisations, and thirdly, in the daily life of regional workers on both sides of the border (Martikainen et al. 2006, 24). In Mari El, I only look at the cross-border aspects of local residents' lives, as the subject of research was the village of Uncho and its inhabitants. I follow the interests of Laura Huttunen, for example, who has suggested, on the basis of her own research, how a cross-border living space is formed; in this, I make use of Henry Lefebvre's contribution to construct a lived space (Lefebvre 1992, 41–42; Huttunen 2006, 55–56). According to Michel Certeau (1996, 94), space is seen as lived through behavioural actions. Various places may be significant for interviewees in different ways.

Transnationalism in the Mari Republic

Transnationalism and multilocalism networks and contacts became apparent in the field work in Uncho as early as the early 2000s. The villagers gave examples of how their own personal history or that of family members was already linked with many places in different parts of the vast country in Soviet times. They went to work where it was ordered, and vacations could be spent in the warmer places of the then Soviet Union. Social relationships and family contacts are still significant today, but now they can also be managed through social media applications. (Volodya)²

The village of Uncho (in the Republic of Mari) and Kazan (the capital of Tatarstan) both belong to Russia, but the border between the republics runs a few kilometres from Uncho. The proximity of Tatarstan and

² There are no archive signatures in the fieldwork notes or interviews yet, but they are archived in The Archives of History, Culture and Arts Studies, Collections of Ethnology, TYKL. Interviewees are referenced under pseudonyms.

Kazan was evident in the lives of the villagers in many ways. The journey to Kazan is also faster than to Yoshkar-Ola, the capital of Mari, in terms of both time and distance. For practical reasons alone, Kazan is important in many ways, and because of its close location, it is an important city for work and study for many Maris. There are multi-level educational institutions there, from colleges to universities. The transport connections are also better than to Yoshkar-Ola. (Ruotsala 2009a, 65; Lehtinen 2009, 37.)

My field work indicates that the people of Uncho prefer to go to Kazan rather than to the rest of the Mari republic to study (Ruotsala 2009a, 65).³ Relatives or acquaintances already living in the city can assist in getting an apartment or it is possible to start off by living with them. A job can be found more easily here in a growing city than in the increasingly depopulated Mari countryside or Yoshkar-Ola. There are no language difficulties, as Russian is the language of school and the city. The language shift from Mari to Russian was clearly visible in a rural village like Uncho in the summer of 2019 (Ruotsala & Kalašnikova 2020, 259).

For example, Elizaveta, who was born in Uncho, said at the beginning of her interview:

Many people from Uncho are studying in Yoshkar-Ola and Kazan. If young people have a good education, they will move on. They go to study and find their own way in life, not coming back to the village ... because there is no work in the village. Not everyone wants to go to work on a collective farm. Many from the villages also visit the big cities to fill their pockets. The reason is work and money. (Elizaveta)

Many of the villagers I interviewed had their own children or relatives who had moved to Kazan. An example is the son of Nadya, whom I interviewed at Uncho in 2019, Stanislav. He is about 25 years old, attended primary school in the village and then went on to continue his studies in Kazan, where his uncle already lived. Later, he found both a job and a wife in Kazan, but Uncho was an important place for him because

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of his mother and grandfather living there, as well as for the food available there. While working in the field, it was interesting to follow Stanislav's wedding preparations, as he often called his mother about the choice of wedding costume or other wedding celebration arrangements (Nadya).

Kazan is also a purchasing place for the villagers, as the field work highlighted; for example, how a cake for a girl's wedding was bought from there. Kazan was also important because party clothes were bought there. The city also offers good choices for clothing and electronics purchases, among other things.

In addition to being a place to shop, Kazan acted as an important outlet market for villagers in the early 2000s, who were then living on a relatively self-sufficient food economy (Aaltonen 2022, 88–90). Milk, potatoes, berries or honey left over from their own consumption were sold to Kazan with its million-plus inhabitants. Cattle were kept in almost every house at the time and a Kazan milk truck came to pick up surplus milk a couple of times a week. The market for the local cooperative, the collective farm Peredovik, was also found both in Kazan and further afield, such as Siberia, where a lot of potatoes were sold. (Ruotsala 2009a, 64–67.) In the summer of 2019, when asked about milk production, I was told that keeping cows was not profitable and many private families had given up livestock farming. It was easier to buy dairy products from the shops, it was explained to me.

Uncho is a popular holiday or weekend place to visit for many who have moved to Kazan or elsewhere. They came to rest, help relatives, take care of the vegetable garden or pick berries. Taking part in the memorial service in *Semyk*⁴ and the flower festival, *Peledesh Payrem* [Flower Festival], also brought folk to the village, as there are also Mari villages on the Tatarstan side whose residents want to celebrate the Mari *Peledesh Payrem* on the Mari side of the border. In Tatarstan, the corresponding feast was *Sabantui*, which the Mari there did not recognise as their own. Kinship was emphatically important to them.

Grandchildren living elsewhere spent their summers in the village. In the courtyards of the houses, smaller summer houses were built for

⁴ Mari *Semyk* is associated with ancestor worship and it is one of the most popular holidays of the Mari people. See Molotova 2017, 446.

summer guests, or the houses were emptied and filled with holiday-makers. For example, Arslan, who lives in Kazan, came with his family to build a sauna at weekends. Uncho also signifies an important food supplement for his family, as he brought strawberries, tomatoes, cucumbers, berries and potatoes, for example, from his former home (Ruotsala 2009a, 59; notes 2019).

The importance of Kazan was also emphasised for many in the fact that those living in the village were registered in Kazan. For example, Georgiy was registered in Kazan at his son's place, so he could take advantage of the city's medical services. For example, he had been operated on at a hospital in Kazan, and he went there to see a doctor several times during 2019 (notes 2019).

There are fewer and fewer jobs to be found in the village, and the villagers's places of employment are often located in Moscow, St Petersburg or the Siberian oil and gas fields, which the villagers call "the North". Following the example of her cousins, Nadya, whom I mentioned above, went to work there because her work in the village came to an end. Being employed in Siberia meant two months at work and then two months off in Uncho. Marina (33 years old), who worked in Yambor (located in Siberia), said that she went to the north for work only for the sake of money, because, according to her, "Life is here [in Uncho]. ... I am Mari, my soul is Mari". The well-earned income of those employed in Siberia is also visible externally in the village, as the earnings are used to build new houses or repair and equip old ones (Marina; notes 2019).

Transnational life may also be restricted. Tatarstan is Muslim while in the Republic of Mari, especially Uncho, vernacular folk belief is recognised. We were able to observe the consecration rituals of the "Vyd Ava" [Water Mother] in June 2002. This ceremony was held at a spring, *Abakir pamash*, a few kilometres on the Tatarstan side. According to the Uncho people, the Muslim Tatars do not like the fact that the Mari come to the water consecration ritual on their side, so two Muslims had been buried in the area a few years earlier (Ruotsala 2009a, 65, 68).

Transnationalism has a long history in the twin city of Tornio-Haparanda

Now to my second example, the Finnish–Swedish border, where transnationalism can be viewed on three different levels, as I mentioned earlier. Sweden lost the Finnish War in 1809 and Finland became part of imperial Russia. The border between Sweden and Finland had to be defined, marking the boundary between Sweden and Russia. After the peace negotiations, the border ran along the Muonio and Tornio rivers, with the exception that Suensaari, where the city of Tornio was located, came to Finland, i.e. to Russia of the time.

The border was drawn in the middle of an area where the same language was spoken, livelihoods had the same basis, and the religious milieu was also the same, namely, defined by Laestadianism, a religious revival movement within the Lutheran church. The new border came in the middle of the Finnish-speaking area. It split families, houses, farms and villages, parishes and resource areas. Still to this day, kinship knows no border, and relatives and friends live on both sides of the border. The lands of a family could remain in the territory of another state, and in many cases the churches and cemeteries remained entirely on the other side of the border. In this way, those who became residents of another country for years used churches and cemeteries belonging to another state, as the establishment of new congregations and the construction of churches and cemeteries took years. On the Swedish side, just opposite Tornio, Haparanda was established for trade and traffic, which later grew from a small village to the present town of more than 9,000 inhabitants. Tornio now has a population of about 22,000.

Customs control was avoided in many ways and in the last century, for example, smuggling was important, and even like an industry, during both the First and Second World Wars and up until the 1960s. During the First World War, the border attracted a variety of migrants – political events such as the war and Finland's independence saw to this. Tornio-Haparanda was at the forefront of world politics, since it was possible there to exchange prisoners in the First World War between the Eastern and Western fronts, as Sweden was a neutral state. At that time, soldiers, spies,

journalists, traders, smugglers and stars of the entertainment business met in the galleries of the Haparanda hotel.

Smuggling is even said to have raised Finnish Lapland to its feet faster than the rest of Finland after the devastation of the Second World War. After all, Sweden was not involved in the war, and most of Lapland's residents fled over to Sweden when the German army, which had previously been collaborating with the Finns, destroyed Lapland, using scorched-earth tactics as they withdrew to northern Norway. The following spring, the inhabitants returned. (E.g. Ruotsala 2009b, 30–35.)

These cities have gradually grown together, a process helped by the cross-border co-operation between them, as in many matters the cities have joined forces and resources. The name Tornio-Haparanda twin city has been used in the advertising and branding of cities. Since the 1960s cooperation has increased, e.g. the joint waste-water treatment plant (1972), landfill (2002) and joint procurement of fire and rescue services. In 1987, the co-operative organisation *Provincia Bothniensis* was set up to expand, deepen and develop co-operation. Many city councils and officials have been co-operating for a long time, especially on the cultural and tourism side. Similarly, joint meetings are held regularly in many areas of concern. (Nousiainen 201, 433–437.)

There is considerable back-and-forth movement in co-operation between cities, which the pandemic in 2020–2022 exacerbated. One politician, who has long been involved in this cross-border co-operation, also thinks that the situation is symbolically deplorable:

“Throughout my political life, I have worked to remove the border between Tornio and Haparanda. Once upon a time, we were at the cutting edge of Europe's cross-border co-operation. Today the border was closed, a necessary act, say those in charge in Helsinki. But they have never lived here. Now we are sundered in twain!” (Ruotsala 2021, 154.)

After the countries joined the EU in 1996, co-operation intensified further. For example, the Victoria Square connecting the cities was built partly with EU funding. Not all the buildings planned for the market are yet ready on the Swedish side. A symbolic *Krannikatu* (“Neighbours' Lane”) was built to connect the cities in 2005. Working together saves resources

but requires work, as collaboration has not always been understood in Helsinki, Stockholm or Brussels. Laws and regulations have had to be shuffled under the carpet slightly; for example, on the Swedish side there is a Finnish Post Office mailbox, and a Swedish mailbox was in front of the Tornio post office. The letters dropped in these have to be franked so the mail from Haparanda to Finland did not have to travel all over Sweden via Stockholm and from there to Helsinki and back again, perhaps right to Tornio. And similarly in Sweden. This was done completely without permission from higher authorities.

One example was the century-old Tornio provincial museum, which was renovated in 2014 and can be called the first cross-border museum in Europe, as it became a joint museum for the entire Tornio river valley, co-managed and funded by the neighbouring towns of Tornio and Haparanda. Museum visits are on the school programme in both cities. The museum is bilingual, or actually trilingual: Finnish, Swedish and Meänkieli, which is a local variation of Finnish in Tornio river valley. In the displays, the Tornio river valley is presented as a shared feature of both nations.

Schooling has been important from a cross-border perspective. The agreement on free cross-border schooling was decided at elementary school level in 1978 and has been extended up to upper secondary school. The cities' joint language school has been operating since 1989. The same number of students is admitted from both countries and the school operates according to the Finnish model, but on Swedish soil. Bilingualism is an asset and the principle of this school, which, hopefully, will continue to be the case in the future.

The possibility of using the Finnish language attracts some Finnish-speaking residents to Haparanda. In these circumstances, they can also take advantage of the services of their former homeland behind the border. Many of them also have a summer cottage in Finland and it increases the attractiveness. Conversely, those living in Tornio often have a summer cottage in Sweden.

After the border was drawn in the midst of the Finnish-speaking following the events of 1809, Finnish continued to be widely spoken in Haparanda well into the twentieth century, although the construction of the railway and Swedish state policy, such as the school system, were

significant factors in swedenising the area. The Finnish language was preserved in mixed marriages when the spouse came from Finland, and Laestadianism was important. The importance of mixed marriages in kinship and social relations has been considerable.

Since the 1950s and 1960s, workforce migration from Finland to Sweden has been strong. In recent years, the Finnish-speaking population has also grown because of the retirement of Finnish speakers from southern Sweden to Haparanda, thanks to its proximity to Finland and Finnish-language services. Still, the official position of the Finnish language in Haparanda has not been strong in the twenty-first century, even though there have been many Finnish speakers. “I don’t speak Finnish, but my subordinates can” was the response when I interviewed staff from the social and health services in Haparanda.

There are also cross-border activities at the intermediate level; various organisations and associations such as sports clubs and societies operate on both sides of the border and have members from both states. Exercises and games operate in two languages, as do meetings. People can pursue hobbies and attend association events across the border, and citizenship has not been an obstacle here.

Collaboration and transnationalism at the city and intermediate levels affect how transnationalism works at the micro-level in the everyday lives of the inhabitants of the area. The border can still be said to define economic, social and cultural relations in the Tornio valley, since it is visible in people’s daily lives and in part as a kind of everyday nationalism. These ‘border folk’ live at the border and develop their knowledge and skills to make use of both sides of the nation-state border, locally and regionally (Löfgren 2008) and have learned to use the territory in different ways; they may be commuters, students, pupils, employees, pensioners, shoppers, cultural consumers, tennis players, and so on.

People have lived transnational lives, although this designation has not been used before. The territorial dimension has always been present at the border, but how it has been used has depended on states and their political systems. People living at the border have special knowledge and skills to know where and what to buy, acquire or do. (See e.g. Lunden & Zalamans 2002; 34–36, 40.)

Everyday transnationalism is a reality for many, as work and residence or school may be on the other side of the border, and likewise relatives and friends. It can also be seen in everyday small things, such as a Finnish newspaper being delivered on the Swedish side or prescriptions being taken to pharmacies in both countries. Transnationalism is also evident in interior design, clothing, leisure and food culture. Hobbies and going shopping on the other side of the border have been quite natural for a long time. Similarly, shopping tourism has long been familiar in this area, although today prices are no longer have so much influence on shopping; it is rather the choice on offer and the foods people are used to.

The Tornio river valley is a single economic area divided by a national border. The recent pandemic did not take this into account, as neither governments nor policy-makers understood that this was a single economic area. Although the border between Finland and Sweden marks a change in time and currency, it has always been possible to cross these borders. Today, in the age of credit and debit cards, there is no longer a need for multiple currencies and purses, as in the past, when, before the time of the EU, exchange rates could change the direction of shopping tourism even overnight (Ruotsala 2011, 215–217).

How everyday transnationalism works for the area's populace became apparent when the Covid-19 pandemic struck. "This time feels strange. Before, the border 'wasn't there', but there it is now. It's no longer a time when you can go and fetch some sweets from Haparanda, as it was just a week ago like any normal day." This quotation from a forty-year-old mother is just one example of how there is no border for these people; they make use of shops and other services on both sides of the border. The border was not even noticed in everyday life, but now things were different, as one of my interviewees, who had long been working in Tornio but had been living in Haparanda, related:

"Although we're two different countries, you didn't notice the border in everyday life before, until now, when it's closed. It feels sad when you can't visit your little sister or do business on the Finnish side. It feels sad and strange." (Ruotsala 2021, 153–154.)

The place of work or study may be on the other side of the border. More people work across the border in Tornio (in Finland), than people living in Finland work in Haparanda. The wage level is higher in Finland, but the difference between the euro and the krona may alleviate this. People are drawn to Haparanda by cheaper plots of land and apartments, as well as better access to housing. Free childcare and better social services are also an attraction to move to Sweden. National legislation does not always keep pace with change, as social benefits in the event of unemployment or the birth of a child do not always work flexibly. Also, the issues of a frontier worker, i.e. a worker in their country of non-residence, are no longer as well recognised in tax offices or social security institutions of the municipalities as before, as states concentrate these services in larger cities.

Because there are a lot of mixed marriages and cross-border work movement in the area, both childcare and parental help are a significant part of this cross-border activity. This was particularly evident during the pandemic, when it was only permitted to cross the border for specific reasons. Parental assistance, visits and temporary grandparent childcare suffered as a result. There were also problems for those children who lived on alternate weeks with a parent living on the other side of the border.

Conclusion

People have lived a transnational life, although it has not always been so named. The regional dimension has always been present at the border. How it is used has depended on states and their political systems. From a multi-disciplinary perspective, the border is both a tool for organising social space and part of the process for constructing and creating places and identities. Experiences and descriptions of the border form identity narratives (Massey 2008, 29–31).

Multilocalism, as well as the continuum and networks of places and mobility, may in turn lead to the emergence of new kinds of place identities and communal roles that are in a liminal state relative to traditional ways of conceptualising people's relationship to places. Multilocal people do not think about their identity, as being either/or: they can have an identity as both/and as well. This has come to the fore especially in the twin city of

Tornio-Haparanda, where negotiations of identity form one of the circumstances focused on as a theme in my fieldwork. This was harder to establish in the case of the Mari material.

As areas shared a common history, language and culture in the Tornio river valley, everyday co-operation across the border gained momentum, as the border has been open except in wartime. The inhabitants of the area have never really thought of the border as a border, but considered it as an administrative artefact. Everyday life has been lived as if the border did not exist. The recent pandemic once again foregrounded the border, and matters of cross-border everyday life were paused for a couple of years. Now we are thinking about how to heal the wounds of the pandemic.

Before the pandemic, there were about 40,000 border crossings a day in Tornio. During the coronavirus period, they decreased significantly, so that in the summer of 2020 there were about 15,000 to 20,000 crossings a day. In May 2022, border traffic has almost normalised, with data from customs showing that there are about 14–15 million people crossing the border annually in Tornio (i.e. approaching 40,000 a day). The Tornio border crossing point is the second busiest in Finland after Helsinki-Vantaa Airport (See Finnish customs).

I have also looked here at multilocalism stretching over the national border. The border continues to strongly define the economic, social and cultural relations between the people of Tornio-Haparanda – and indeed of the entire Tornio river valley. It is visible in people's everyday lives and can be seen as a form of everyday nationalism (see Billig 1995). As an example of multilocality over the generations, Tornio-Haparanda, as I have presented it, supports the views of the geographer Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola (2008) that younger people's experiences and stories about the border and cross-border activities are part of everyday routines, while the attitudes of older generations are affected by their experiences of war and times of reconstruction, and of years of work in the south. The everyday life of border residents is cross-border and multilocal. At the same time, it is also polyphonic and multi-nuanced, and emotional ties play an important role in that. The importance of emotions was also highlighted in the Mari interviews. It is good that today, sensory ethnology, and through it the importance of emotions, is also becoming important in research.

(Translation: Docent Clive Tolley)

Sources

Fieldwork material:

The Archives of History, Culture and Arts Studies, Collections of Ethnology, TYKL. There are no archive signatures in the fieldwork notes or interviews yet, but they are archived in TYKL. Interviewees are referenced under pseudonyms.

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