

Borders or peripheries: pre- and post-neopositivism vs the language of sociology

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Abstract

A number of concepts related to borders and peripheries function in sociology and human geography. Even though those used in sociology are derivative of geographical terminology, Polish sociologists are reluctant to admit or even realise this fact, giving preference to common language. The main difference between sociology and human geography in the application of this terminology is that geography is basically interested in objects while sociology deals with states of processes. The analysis of the types of sociological narration, conducted in a wider context of paradigms, indicated that four main ideal types of the narration can be identified in Polish sociology, i.e. naturalist, pseudo-humanist, humanist and neo-positivist. The types of narration are assumed to form a group-creating factor and one underlying the development of social enclaves and exclaves in the scientific community. The analysis indicated that the discussion on social enclaves and exclaves, as part of more extensive categories of peripheries and borders, is important for the analysis of the structure of the scientific, including sociologist, community while the analysis of the language of sociology, including the main types of sociological narration, is important to define the scientific status of sociology. From this point of view, the main difference between the mainstreams of Polish sociology and human geography is that the former is in a pre-neopositivist stage while the latter represents post-neopositivism. This fact defines the limit to, or 'borders of', sociological thought.

Key words: **border, periphery, enclave, exclave, narration, neopositivism.**

1. Borders and peripheries in sociology and human geography

The concepts of border and periphery were analysed within both sociology and human geography. Sociological analyses were, however, derivative of geographical, even though sociologists have rarely exposed this fact or have even been rarely aware of it. This developmental dependence is rather old and seems related to the Chicago school of social ecology. There are, however, obvious differences, not only objective but also methodological, between sociology and human geography. The differences are inherent in notions, categories, and methodologies. The fact that geography is, in the context under consideration, basically interested in objects while sociology is interested in states of those objects and relations between them, seems a sufficient explanation of the differences. To be sure, objects are also interesting for sociology, more, however, nominally than intrinsically, the category of *border* being a good example of this fact. Human geography is thus interested in peripheries, boundaries, borders, borderlands, limits, frontiers, spatial barriers, enclaves, and exclaves, while sociology is more involved in analyses of peripheral, border, trans-border, trans-cultural, frontier, and enclave relations. These very notions and concepts are discussed in this paper on the example of Polish sociological and human geographical literature.

Methodologically, the difference between the two disciplines is inherent in the dominant language of narration, in which their relation to neopositivism seems essential. In this context, pre- and post-neopositivist modes of practising sociology and geography, respectively, are related to the languages of their narrations and set different types of sociological, if not geographical, texts on borders or peripheries of science. Unavoidably therefore, arguments presented in this article are provocative in places, the fact that was intended to promote discussion.

2. Geography of objects

The notion of *periphery* can be considered within human geography in three conceptual contexts, i.e. those of location, domination, and its dialectic with the core. In the first context, the location far from a centre or centres is characteristic of peripheries. This implies that the notion of periphery is based on the distance decay function, in which indices of wealth and/or development level decrease with the

distance from the centre. In the context of domination, periphery is considered as an antonym of the core. The core-periphery relations are, at least explicitly, related to neither indices of wealth nor development level but simply those of domination and subordination (Wallerstein 1974). The subordination to and domination by the core is therefore the nature of the periphery (Rykiel 2006). In the context of dialectic, in turn, periphery is considered, even more explicitly than in the former contexts, as a notion inseparable from that of the core. The latter is a core because it dominates peripheries while peripheries are what they are because they are dominated by the core (Taylor, Flint, 2000).

The notion of *boundary* was understood rather extensively and imprecisely in classical geography. In the contemporary political geography it is, however, assumed that boundary is a political, linear, and formal object (Rykiel 2006). This is to say there are no other boundaries than political (Rykiel 1990), other terms, discussed further on, should thus be used for the description of natural and social phenomena. The linearity of the boundary results from the fact that it is legally defined, within the Polish lingual tradition, however, also from the fact that boundary (*granica*) has the same etymology as ridge (*granie*). The formality of the boundary results, in turn, from the fact that it is a political and legal object. Every boundary is therefore formal, even though the degree of its formalisation, and thus also control, is an empirical question. From this point of view boundaries can be divided in strongly and weakly formalised, and referred to as hard and soft boundaries, or, more generally, their gradual formalisation can be indicated. In this context, a division in antecedent and subsequent boundaries are worth reminding (Hartshorne 1933), i.e., respectively, prior and secondary to the given forms of spatial organisation (Rykiel 1990); since, however, the subsequent boundaries may transform in antecedent boundaries, but not vice versa, they would be more adequately referred to as the earlier and later boundaries, respectively.

In the contemporary world, *border*, understood as a narrow and, implicitly, unpopulated land near the line dividing two states or countries, can hardly exist without boundary, in earlier ages, however, borders rather than boundaries existed. The border is a zoned object, and this characteristic applies even more explicitly to *borderland* as a wide land near the boundary, originally thinly populated and usually

Limit is a non-formalised zone of joining phenomena or decaying of a phenomenon (Rykiel 1991). It is a natural or cultural object – in contrast to boundary as a political object. The differentiation of the two results from the fact that there are no (linear) boundaries in nature, the fact observed as many as a hundred years ago in geography (Semple 1911), while they are very rare in culture where (zoned) limits are common.

While borders and borderlands are located along boundaries, *frontiers* exist instead of boundaries. In English terminology, frontier is related to the front; the frontier is thus what is in front of us, which should be reached, discovered, conquered, settled, and subordinated (Koter 1997). In Polish lingual tradition, frontier (*kresy*) has common etymology with end (*kres*) and boundlessness (*bezkres*). Generally, frontier applies to a sub-ecumene, located between ecumene and anecumene, and refers to ineffective state territory and state area. The latter means an area to which culture, or even permanent settlement, did not reach, the state has thus nobody to govern; the former, in turn, means an area for which the central government is too weak and/or distant to perform its effective control, the state control is thus merely nominal (Rykiel 2000) and thus, or rather because of that, represented merely by the military power.

Spatial barrier is a notion and an object that differs from boundary by formalisation and origin. While formalisation is characteristic of the boundary, a limited permeability for interrelationships is characteristic of the spatial barrier. Any obstacle in physical space, which reduces, and sometimes deforms or changes the direction of, interrelationships is a spatial barrier (Rykiel 1988a). Spatial barriers can be divided in hard and soft, i.e. hardly and easily permeable, generally, however, their permeability is gradable (Rykiel 1991). The barriers can be of natural or anthropogenic origin. The former have a physical form, and the latter mostly symbolic, sometimes reinforced by physical objects.

The relations between spatial barriers and boundaries are asymmetrical. While any boundary is a spatial barrier for some type of interaction, most spatial barriers are not boundaries. Moreover, the degree of the formalisation of the boundary is basically unrelated unequivocally with its permeability as a spatial barrier. A highly

formalised, i.e. guarded and controlled, boundary may be, for some reasons, trespassed intensively, while a non-formalised, i.e. uncontrolled, spatial barrier may be hardly permeable for a given type of interaction not only because it follows a firm physical obstacle, e.g. a mountain range, but even a cultural, e.g. lingual, limit (Mackay 1958).

Enclave and *exclave* are terms and categories related to a territorial discontinuity but also to the location of boundaries. The terms designate a territorial inclusiveness and exclusiveness, respectively. The *exclave* is a more general term. This results from the fact that not every exclusion must be an inclusion. The notions of *enclave* and *exclave* apply to many territorial units. If states are analysed as examples, it must be stated that an *exclave* is a country's area, which is excluded from the jurisdiction of the respective state; an *enclave*, on the contrary, is one part of the state territory, which is discontinuous with the mainland territory of the state (Rykiel 2006). Three types of relations between enclaves and exclaves as empirical objects may be identified, i.e. (1) exclaves that are also enclaves, (2) exclaves that are not enclaves, and (3) enclaves that are not exclaves. Campione d'Italia, as an Italy's enclave in Swiss canton of Ticino, and an *exclave* in the territory of Switzerland, is an example of the case (1); San Marino, as an *exclave* in the territory of Italy, is an example of the case (2); the Kaliningrad oblast, as a Russia's semi-enclave (i.e. one with an access to the sea), is an example of the case (3).

Enclaves and exclaves are implicitly recognised as peripheral patterns in the contemporary socio-territorial systems. Interface and marginal peripheries are distinguished in literature (Eisenstadt, Rokkan, 1973; Rokkan, Urwin, 1983). The former are internal, and the latter are external peripheries (Flora et al., 1999), the terms that seem more appropriate in this context.

3. Sociology of states of processes

In sociology, the notion of *peripherality* is related to those of marginalisation (Szarfenberg 2006), domination, and deprivation.

The term *boundary*, used interchangeably with, even more frequent, that of *border*, is applied to in sociology very loosely and extensively, the fact certainly related to the inspiration of the classical nineteenth-century geography or even common parlance. 'Ethnic boundaries' and 'symbolic boundaries', which are subjects

Borders or peripheries: pre- and post-neopositivism vs the language of sociology of frequent sociological and anthropological analyses (Barth 2004, Lipiński 2011), are borders in strict neopositivist geographical terminology while 'boundaries constructed in social consciousness' are simply limits in those terms.

The 'ethnic boundaries' are being divided in contact and trespassing boundaries (Chlebowczyk 1975)¹. From the logical point of view, however, the term 'contact boundaries' seems a pleonasm, the 'trespassing boundaries' being an oxymoron. Apart from this fact, it was argued the 'contact boundaries' are narrow spatial barriers between ethnoses divided by considerable social distances, the 'trespassing boundaries' being wide limits between ethnoses divided by slight social distances. Besides, the two terms apply to ideal types, which could hardly be related to any empirical types.

It results from the above arguments that the language is treated in this context as a barrier and a base of social distances. The barriers and distances may but do not need be reflected in physical space, even though they are certainly reflected in social space. The contextually identified languages of oppression, e.g. Afrikaans under the apartheid and German under the Nazi occupation, are special, although non-spatial, barriers.

Interestingly and importantly, the referring to the 'boundary' in sociology is inconsistent with the fact that *liminality* is an accepted notion, derived originally from social anthropology (van Gennep 2006, Turner 2006). The notion, referring implicitly to that of *limit* rather than *boundary*, applies to 'analyses of situations, phenomena, processes, and objects, including social groups, of which ambivalence and impossibility of unequivocal >location< in the system of classification referring to a given socio-cultural space is characteristic' (Kapralski 2011: 237). 'Liminal groups are situated simultaneously within and outside the given society, belonging to it in one sense and being outside its limits in another sense. They have no unequivocally defined position in society and they function – often as mediators – between its established components, being in contact with and separation to them

¹ The fact that J. Chlebowczyk is a historian does not preclude the fact that his 'contact boundaries' and 'trespassing boundaries' are willingly accepted by sociologists while no sociologists' critique of those concepts is known to the present author.

simultaneously' (Kapralski 2011: 237). Modernisation involves, however, a transition from liminality to marginalisation, i.e. from being between to being outside (Kapralski 2011: 239).

The notion of 'transborderness', i.e. trans-border relations, cannot be abstracted from that of border or even boundary, the fact which is commonly ignored within, at least Polish, sociology, even though the term 'border' is understood as a limit or spatial barrier (Rykiel 2010b). In this context, the social production of border and/or borderland is analysed (Golka 1999), as well as aspects of naturalness of boundaries and borders, romanticising of the nature of borderlands, and the role of borders in high, folk, and mass cultures. In this way, the border is recognised a *place*, and this results in analyses of inclusion and exclusion, homeliness and strangeness, and domination and subordination. Sometimes a doubt, however, appears whether or not the analyses in question apply to a border culture or border cultures, the border in culture, or borders of cultures.

The doubt leads to a question if the 'transborderness' may be abstracted from territoriality. The rather obvious negative answer to this question results from a number of issues sociology deal with successfully. The symbolic privatisation of public spaces is the first issue. The overcoming the, loosely understood, symbolic and mental 'boundaries' (i.e. limits), and creation of communities is the second issue. Assimilation is the third issue, although a question arises to what culture the assimilation applies and on which level of the territorial organisation it works. The relation between marginalisation and peripheralisation is the fourth issue, which includes the processes of rivalry, cooperation, and common overcoming the phenomena.

'Transculturality' is the de facto containment of the term 'transborderness' (Rykiel 2010b). In this context, a logic of strangeness included in the friend-enemy dichotomy appears and, more extensively, the measurement of the strangeness by a semantic differential. The 'transculturality' is also a base of a typology of symbolic spaces. In this context, spaces of invasion and succession, domination, confrontation (Dąbrowski 2008), memory (Benedyktowicz 1989), exclusion (Gough et al., 2006), closure (Solarska 2006), rivalry (Szydłowska 2010), resistance (Gandhi 2008), hope (Solak 2002), integration, and many others can be distinguished.

'Frontierness' is an important sociological category. An observation that frontier is a cultural space (Uliasz 1997) and a workshop of political para-nationalism is the departure point of analyses of 'frontierness'. It is from these that the frontier ethos and myth-creation stem, which result from the fact that intruders are positively valorised as the dominant ethno-class (Kwaśniewski 1997). The frontier appears then as a meta-space of adventure (Kolbuszewski 1996); in this context, the frontier is romanticised as an element of high, folk, and mass culture, westerns being one example of the latest.

'Enclaveness' designates inclusion. As, however, many relatively new terms within sociology, it is misidentified – in this case with 'exclaveness', i.e. exclusion (cf. Gołdyka, Machaj, 2007, 2009). Inclusion and exclusion apply to a collectivity, place, and time, and embrace three dichotomies: we – they, here – there, and now – then. The fact, however, is that the notion of exclave, and thus also exclaveness, has not yet been adapted in the mainstream sociological literature and thus not submitted to scientific critique.

4. Sociology vs human geography: borders or peripheries?

The pointed to above conceptual, objective, and methodological differences between sociology and human geography can be reduced here to its relation to neopositivism, and termed by prefixes *post-* and *pre-*. The contemporary human geography may thus be identified as being on the post-neopositivist stage, which implies a bygone fascination with formalism and the acceptance of the canon of terminological preciseness and a discipline of argumentation. The contemporary sociology, especially the mainstream Polish sociology, seems, on the contrary, on the pre-neopositivist stage (Rykiel 2011), in which the terminological preciseness and a discipline of argumentation are not essential. The opinion of a Polish leading sociologist that 'common people are amateur sociologists' (Sztompka 2005: 331) may be taken as an argument for such a classification whereas an opinion that common people are amateur geographers are hard to imagine among Polish human geographers.

Certainly not merely in the discussed here context of the periphery and border, sociology enters hesitantly the relatively new ground by exploring

knowledge discovered a long time ago outside the discipline, ignoring the achievements of geography intentionally, and often limiting itself to common knowledge (Rykiel 2010a). This is accompanied by a philologisation of the narration that often takes a form of pseudo-humanist journalism (Rykiel 2009). It is thus worth noting in this context that laws of sociology need not be ones of the functioning of society but appear as merely ones of sociology. If so, an important question arises whether or not sociology is really an applicatory discipline, as consecutive generations of university students are taught.

5. Enclaves and exclaves in the scientific community: a case of sociological narrations

5.1. General remarks

The scientific community forms a relatively isolated social world, which may be thus analysed in terms of enclaves (Chmielewska-Banaszak 2007) and exclaves, even though sociologists do not cope with the latter category. For the functioning of normal science the notion of paradigm is essential, understood as a set of social norms (Harvey 1973) generally accepted in a given discipline in a given time (Johnston 1978). These norms include concepts, categories, methods, and procedures (Kuhn 1962) but also the language of science, including types of narration (Rykiel 1988b).

If the scientific community may be analysed in terms of social enclaves and exclaves, the same applies to the sociological community. Norms applying to this community may thus be analysed on the example of the language used, especially the types of sociological narration, which may be recognised as both the base and a symptom of group-creating ties.

The firm in Polish sociology but not necessarily agreeable conviction that two non-overlapping, opposite, and exhaustive modes of practising sociology exist, i.e. positivist and humanistic, is a departure point to identify somewhat more numerous main types of sociological narration and thus paradigms of sociology. These are: naturalist, pseudo-humanistic, humanistic, and neopositivist (Rykiel 2008). They should be understood in terms of the Weberian ideal types. Following the presented above assumptions, it may be presumed that the types of narration are related to social groups of scientists, which – considered on the background of more

extensive universe – may be analysed in terms of social enclaves and exclaves, and thus, implicitly, also core and periphery.

A detailed documentation of the types of the sociological narration would require an extensive empirical analysis, which cannot be presented here for a few reasons, courtesy to the adherents of pseudo-humanist narration being more important than the space limitation. Moreover, such an analysis would result in the identification of empirical types while ideal types, or generalisations, are the subject of this article. As a result, a detailed analysis of sociological texts, or even their exemplification, was relinquished herein. This is, however, not to say that no essential justification was applied. Rather contrary, further arguments are based on the present author's participatory observation of Polish sociological community.

5.2. Naturalist narration

Naturalism is understood here in methodological rather than sociological meaning of the term, i.e. as an antonym of humanism. The naturalist narration, which refers to the first positivism of Auguste Comte, employs organicist categories or at least metaphors, as well as a heavy, archaic style, including such grammatical forms. The fact that adherents of this style refer to A. Comte says more about themselves than the present author's opinion about naturalism of the first positivism. The users of this style form a social exclave now, excluding or, at the best, hardly tolerated by the world sociological mainstream, and thus rarely admitted to leading sociological journals. They form an exclave of the excluded who use the extinct or extinguishing language.

5.3. Pseudo-humanistic narration

The pseudo-humanistic narration, which was ironically labelled 'youmanistic' (*chómanistyczna* – Rykiel 2007), is a reaction for the unaccepted characteristics of the former type of narration. It is based on the assumption that literature is more important than science in sociological scientific literature. It, however, ignores the fact that literary talent is necessary to achieve this goal, and the talent is far from being common in the community of mass scientists. As a result, the adherents of this type

Borders or peripheries: pre- and post-neopositivism vs the language of sociology of narration apply irreflexive automatism (Sztompka 2005) in using a journalist, common, or spoken language in their texts. Their declarative humanism is a pretext to misidentify the scientific with common-sense knowledge (the differences between the two pointed to by T. Hołówka, 1986), to feel free in writing nonsense and ignore a discipline of argumentation, combined with a lack of clarity in narration, misidentified with erudition. Certainly this type of narration can easily be assessed as tactless not only to the sociological community but also to a wider readership.

To the characteristics of the pseudo-humanistic type of narration the following may be included: ignorance in phraseology and syntax, very many pleonasm, contaminations, superlatives, inessential qualifiers, colloquialisms, infantilisms, nonsense terms, hyper-proper forms, barbarisms or lingual calques, and logically invalid classifications (Rykiel 2009). The supposed humanism is responsible for the exposing the authors' own persons at the cost of facts by persistent use of the first person singular or even plural. Frequent referring to common knowledge and terms reduces the scientific literature to newspaper paragraphs, ignoring not only the precision of the argumentation but even the canons of the mother tongue, i.e. coined phraseology, syntax, word-formation, and spelling. These might result from the conviction that sociologists are only somewhat professionalised common people, since 'common people are amateur sociologists' (Sztompka 2005: 331), even though, importantly, the cited assertion is descriptive rather than normative.

The representatives of the pseudo-humanistic style form a social exclave, hardly tolerated by the world mainstream sociology. On the other hand, however, as a result of their size, they form not only a social group but also an interest group or enclave, publishing their works, unaccepted in the world science, regionally and locally.

5.4. Humanistic narration

The humanistic narration is the successful implementation of the unfulfilled declarations of the protagonists of the former narration. It is worth noting that the 'humanistic' is understood here in accordance with its meaning accepted in humanistic geography rather than sociology.

The phenomenological assumptions of the humanistic narration allow to indicate there are no contradiction between the preciseness of terminology, reasoning, and statements, on the one hand, and the beauty of a metaphor, on the other. The humanistic narration, of which a lightness of style and surprising by its accurateness of observations, explanations, and generalisations is characteristic, charms by the easiness of deparment over and above the borders of many humanistic disciplines. This narration is a style of erudites who can be scientists, essayists, publicists, reporters, writers, poets, authors of short stories for children, texts of songs and composers of their music, who easily move in different sorts of literature and not only know that each of them is subordinated to different rules but also are able to advance each of them to the level of literary art. The representatives of this type of narration form an intellectual elite, being an enclave in the universe of commonalty.

5.5. Neopositivist narration

Of the neopositivist narration, a precision of the argumentation and reasoning is characteristic, supported by a good command of mathematical-statistical implementation of quantitative sociology, which not only is not reduced to the organicism of the first positivism but strays from it considerably. Considering itself, with a slight air of megalomania, as a quintessence of the scientific style, the representatives of this type of narration use an careful and precise language with hardly any synonyms. Driving at an objectification of the description, analysis, and interpretations of phenomena, they avoid the first person singular for impersonal forms or passive voice. A separation of scientific from common-sense knowledge, logical thinking, as well as precise expression of thought and formulation of sentences is deeply internalised and thus easily externalised. The users of this type of narration form a social group or enclave, which is distinguished on the background of mediocrity, indifference, and lingual sloppiness.

6. Conclusions

The reflections about the types of narration in sociology is important not only because the language identifies the limit to and extent of the whole human cognition (Herder 1960: 15) but also because it is a group-creative factor, and thus also enclave- and exclave-creative, as well as an important element of the identification of interest groups. A careless and imprecise language results in a very same image of the world under recognition. What is expected in liberal society are enclaves of competence in the form of selective educational and scientific structures on the background of the universe of mediocrity, and it is the market that is responsible for the selection (Borowicz 2007). On the other hand, exclaves of exclusion and marginalisation appear, represented by groups and institutions implementing compensation functions by providing fictions of the chances of scientific success while being de facto blind-end paths of scientific and general humanistic competences. The main types of sociological narrations are one part of this general pattern.

As was indicated above, the discussion on social enclaves and exclaves, as part of a more extensive context of peripherisation, is essential for the analysis of the structure of the scientific community, including sociologists. The analysis of the language of sociology, including the main types of sociological narration, is, in turn, essential for the identification of the scientific status of sociology. The point is that if sociology is a science, clear rules of reasoning, logical formulation of theses and results as well as possibly precise and unequivocal terminology should apply. Otherwise sociology, using fabulous style of narration, would appear one part of journalism, else not very refined. This fact defines the limit to, or 'borders of', sociological thought, notwithstanding the fact whether or not sociologists have ever been engaged in analysing the relations of their own discipline to neopositivism.

7. References

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