

Borders are just an illusion – or not? Determining factors behind the motivation of crossing borders.

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Abstract

As part of my research project I deal with perspectives of cooperation on Czech-Austrian borders. The main concern is to what measure are people willing to cross a border and cooperate together not only physically but also psychologically. It is essential to identify factors that are decisive for their cooperative behaviour or vice versa. This article is concerned with a pilot study on 58 participants from the Czech part of the border and their mode of crossing borders. The data would indicate that flexibility to move to the other side is not as high as it has been encouraged by funding programmes and tourist initiatives. Further perspectives of cooperation are dealt with.

Introduction

Czech-Austrian borders are a problematic area as to their past and hopeful as to their future (Laussegger, Linke & Perzi, 2009). For the most of the 20th century, there were closed or semi-closed due to political reasons. There were incidents of dozens of deaths on the part of border guards and those who attempted to cross them during a period of so-called "Iron curtain." Inhabitants on both sides of the border were discouraged to cooperate with each other and as such were under constant attack of propaganda either Western one or Eastern one. However, due to special geographical terrain, it was impossible to close some areas altogether. This was the case of some parts of South Moravia borders region. There were some incidents of a successful escape from the Eastern to Western area of influence, but Communist propaganda tried to hide them. Hermetical closure of borders by using electrical fences was not successful at all. Most casualties were on the part of border guards who got entangled in the fences and died. The book *Halt! – Die Verschlussakten* from Karner (2013) counts 390 deaths of civilians and 648 deaths on the part of guardians. When the Eastern bloc collapsed so did the Iron curtain and hermetically closed borders. Cities and villages on both sides started formal cooperation. Also, when the Czech Republic became part of the European Union, multiple funding programs were utilised to build or repair infrastructure and to incite tourism on both sides of the border. There is also a "dark" side of cooperation on the border, and that is sexual tourism. Such trends were analysed by several researchers such as Kalchmair (2013).

Methods

Cooperation with the rehabilitation centre in Brandýs nad Labem (East Bohemia) was assured to recruit participants as a part of a broader research project entitled "*Motoric and cognitive abilities in the context of societal factors*". Originally, 108 participants signed for a quantitative research project. 58 finally engaged in the research. Eleven men and forty-seven women, aged 21-76. Most participants were part of the staff with a significant portion of patients undergoing rehabilitation treatment; however, their mobility was not affected. There was a strict research schedule: 1 hour devoted to one participant. Participants were to arrive in the quiet place – a rehabilitation office to assure their reactions were obtained in a relaxed

stress-free state. All of them personally signed off informed consent. Forms with complete information on the research had been handed out before the research activities started, so participants had enough time to consider their participation and to get familiarized with the aim and methods used. Participants underwent a battery of motoric, cognitive and personal tests along with the questionnaire on their activities across borders. Four nearby countries and the frequency of their visits were selected: Germany, Austria, Poland, Slovakia. The frequency of visits and the distance from borders was included. Also, the form and frequency of contact with somebody behind the border were investigated. Participants had a blank space to fill in with reasons for crossing borders or retaining contact with their neighbours on the other side. Being a part of larger research project, we have got at our disposal complete personality scan of the participant. Their tendency to be conservative or novelty seeking could be combined with the questionnaire on frequency of borders crossing. Other characteristics such as a social-demographic portrait of a participant could be taken into account as well. Factors such as income could play the vital role in the cross-border mobility or frequency of travelling. Family details as to a number of children or relatives could be analysed combined with the previous factors. Participants engaged in cognitive testing. It could be analysed if those with better cognitive abilities are more akin to travelling than those who are not so bright.

Results

Discussion

Acknowledgements

References

Laussegger, A., Linke, R., Perzl

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Kalchmair, G. (2013): Prostitution und kommerzieller sexueller Missbrauch
in Österreich, AV Akademikerverlag, 164 s.

Karner, G. (2013): Die Verschlussakten. Elsbethen,
Ecowin Verlag, 240 s.

Appendices

A sample of questionnaires