
THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE BALTIC REGION

THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RUSSIAN-POLISH CROSS-BORDER REGION: THE ROLE OF THE KALININGRAD AGGLOMERATION AND THE TRI-CITY (GDANSK – GDYNIA – SOPOT)

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Until 1991 ties between entities located on either side of the Russian-Polish border were virtually non-existent. There were, however, favourable physical, geographical, economic, social, and ecological conditions for the development of a cross-border region. Since the early 1990s, cooperation between administrative units and municipalities, businesses, and non-governmental organisations has been developing on an institutional basis. Euroregions and cross-border cooperation programmes have become major contributors to cross-border region-building. On either side of the border, there are socio-economic nodes between which axes of cross-border interaction are emerging. The most powerful axis is the Tri-City (Gdansk-Gdynia-Sopot) — the Kaliningrad agglomeration. A systemic approach is used to analyse a variety of relationships, reflected in a map showing the diversity of geographical areas of cooperation. The University of Gdansk and the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University are playing an important role in the development of Russian-Polish relations. Although the intensity of cross-border ties has decreased in recent years amid tensions between Russia and the West, there is hope that bilateral socio-economic benefits will encourage the restoration and development of collaborations and the Russian-Polish cross-border region will continue to evolve.

Keywords: cross-border cooperation; cross-border region, Kaliningrad, Kaliningrad agglomeration, Tri-City, Gdansk, University of Gdansk, Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University

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Introduction

The emergence of cross-border regions is a process facilitated by the development of socio-economic and / or political ties between countries or regions of different countries. The interaction of countries encourages the formation of transnational regions — international regions of mega-and macro-levels. The interacting regions of different countries, depending on the hierarchical level of cooperation, form cross-border meso- or micro-regions. They can be complex [4, 5, 22, 23] or industry-specific (for example, tourism) [1, 6]. Euroregions are one of the most developed forms of coordinated cooperation [11, 23, 29].

Economic, political, cultural ties have long been connecting many neighboring regions of different countries and their peoples. Their emergence and development at a certain stage led to the formation of transnational and transboundary regions, within which we can identify some common features of economic activity, cultural life, as well as political unions and international economic systems.

The area around the Baltic Sea has traditionally been a zone of close cultural and economic cooperation. Here, trade and transportation across the Baltic started developing. Since then, good neighborly relations and many similarities between towns and settlements have always been present. The Iron Curtain between the capitalist and socialist bloc after the end of the World War II weakened these ties. After the demise of the USSR and the socialist camp, a new Baltic structure of international cooperation appeared on the European stage under the auspices of the Council of the Baltic Sea States. Countries located on the shores of the Baltic Sea created a dense network of numerous links, institutions and programs of international cooperation, self-government bodies and non-governmental organizations. Despite the nature and forms of early integration, these new international structures, organizations and unions strengthened ties between the entities that make up Baltic Europe.

The countries of the Western and Northern Baltic are economically developed, competitive and sustainable market economies having significant achievements in advanced technology sectors. In the countries of the Eastern and Southern Baltic a complex process of market transformation and changes in old structures and simultaneous integration into the global economy began only in the early 1990s. These countries have always been determined to bridge the existing gap, they also represent a closely located attractive investment and consumer market for the countries of the Western Baltic.

Baltic Europe in a general sense can be associated with stability and passivity the traits attributed to northern peoples. In reality, this region is currently the territory of the most dynamic economic, civilizational and geopolitical changes in Europe. Despite the peripheral location in relation to the traditional European center, rather unfavorable climatic conditions, low population density and large

external differences (especially between the western and eastern parts), the unified Baltic Europe looks most openly into the future, and is ahead of other parts of Europe in many respects.

Along with the active development of various forms of cooperation and the creation of new ties due to the political changes of the 1990s, border contacts began to intensify. Their role is very important, as they led to eliminating mutual barriers and various prejudices, creating formal and informal ties, especially between local communities. The common historical heritage is often supported by structural and functional similarity of territories establishing cooperation, gradual weakening of the impact of state borders, as well the revitalization of the economy of border regions. Cross-border contacts allow overcoming various barriers and economic restrictions, this also pertains to maritime borders.

Cooperation initiatives on the borders of European countries are developing at three levels: local, regional and state. Euroregions, as well as other structures of cross-border cooperation (associations, unions, partnerships) have formed on the borders of the EU member states. Joint infrastructure, cultural, educational and environmental programs are brought into line with the concept of spatial development of these territories.

The agglomeration of the Tri-City (on the west coast) and the Kaliningrad agglomeration (on the east coast) are located on the opposite sides of the Gulf of Gdansk. The Gdansk and related Kaliningrad / Vistula bays, as well as the adjacent land, are separated by the state border between the Russian Federation and the Republic of Poland. For more than fifty years, both centers have not maintained almost any contacts (except for separate exchanges of delegations and creative groups), despite the fact that they are only 130 kilometers from each other.

The new geopolitical situation that arose at the end of the 20th century, European integration processes, geographical proximity, coastal location, relatively good communication infrastructure, the development of border crossings, both land and sea, were forerunners pointing to the special opportunities for the development of cross-border cooperation between the northeast voivodeships of the Republic of Poland (Pomeranian and Warmian-Masurian) and the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation. A positive factor is also the long-term, fruitful development of contacts between Poland and Russia at the government level. Since 1991, after the signing of the first agreements, cooperation has been developing both at the official level and also in a broader sense — between individual gminas and cities, enterprises and non-governmental organizations.

The purpose of the article is to show the objectivity, features and prospects of the Polish-Russian cross-border region development.

To do this, the authors set the following tasks:

— To assess the factors that contribute to and hinder the development of multilateral cooperation of the border regions of Poland and Russia;

- To consider the achieved level of interaction along the Polish-Russian border;
- To establish the nature of the ties between the Tri-City and the Kaliningrad agglomeration as the nuclei of the transboundary region;
- To identify and evaluate trends in the development of mutual relations.

Research methodology

The study chooses a systematic approach to its object (the Polish-Russian cross-border region) and the subject (economic, political, cultural, tourist and other ties within the region that determine its functioning and development as a territorial socio-economic system). Types of cross-border ties and factors contributing to or hindering the formation of the Polish-Russian cross-border mesoregion, as well as microregions in its composition, are identified and analyzed. The authors have carried out a historical and geographical analysis of the development of Polish-Russian relations in the period after the collapse of the USSR. Similarly, the institutional factors affecting the development of mutual relations in various fields of activity are characterized.

Analytically, the study is backed up by official statistics, scientific publications on a selected topic, materials from international research projects and applied research (primarily projects implemented as part of the Baltic Sea and Poland-Lithuania-Russia cross-border cooperation programs). The issues considered in the article were discussed by the author at numerous international conferences on international cooperation in the Baltic macroregion and directly along the Polish-Russian border.

Institutional Framework for Collaboration

Bilateral cooperation between the Kaliningrad region and the voivodships of Poland since the 1990s has relied on two levels of international legislation:

- Intergovernmental agreements defining cooperation between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation¹.
- Intergovernmental agreements regarding cooperation between the border regions of neighboring countries. These include the Intergovernmental Agreement on Cooperation between the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation

¹ The agreement between the Government of the Republic of Poland and the Government of the Russian Federation on cross-border cooperation (Warsaw, October 2, 1992) // Garant. URL: <http://base.garant.ru/2564565/> (access date: 15.06.2019).

Agreement between the Republic of Poland and the Russian Federation on friendly and good-neighborly cooperation (Moscow, May 22, 1992 (enforced on May 8, 1993) // Garant. URL: <http://base.garant.ru/2540869/> (access date: 12.07.2019).

Traktat między Rzeczpospolitą Polską a Federacją Rosyjską o przyjaznej i dobrosąsiedzkiej współpracy z dnia 22 maja 1992 roku // ISAP. <http://prawo.sejm.gov.pl/isap.nsf/DocDetails.xsp?id=WDU19930610291> (access date: 25.05.2019).

and the northeastern Voivodeships of the Republic of Poland, signed on May 22, 1992². An International Council has been set up to ensure its implementation. It consists of Russian and Polish national units formed on an equal footing. In Poland it is called the “Polish-Russian Council for Cooperation between the Regions of the Republic of Poland and the Kaliningrad Region” while in Russia it is the “Russian-Polish Council for Cooperation between the Kaliningrad Region of the Russian Federation and the Regions of the Republic of Poland”. The Council includes 11 commissions that cover all areas of cooperation. Both countries pay great attention to this agreement. On the Russian side, the authorized person for the implementation of the Agreement and the organization of the Council’s work is the Governor of the Kaliningrad Region, and on the Polish side, the same responsibility lies on the First Deputy Minister of the Interior of the Republic of Poland. Meetings have been held since 1994 (Svetlogorsk, Kaliningrad region), alternately in Russia and Poland, the last one took place in 2016 in Gdansk, Kaliningrad is being agreed to be the host in 2019³.

— Intergovernmental acts relating to multilateral international cooperation between countries, including relations between the EU and Russia, the countries of the Baltic region. At the interstate level, the Council of the Baltic Sea States has been formed.

— Multilateral cooperation agreements at the inter-municipal level. Euroregions — associations of municipalities, in particular, are regulated by such acts. Russian and Polish entities are jointly represented in the Euroregions Baltika, Neman, Lyna-Lava, and Shesupe.

— Agreements signed directly by separate administrative-territorial units (Kaliningrad region and Polish voivodships), municipalities, institutions and companies. Thus, at the end of 1991, an agreement was signed between the Kaliningrad region and the Olsztyn Voivodeship, and in 1992 — with the Elblag, Suwalki and Gdańsk Voivodeships. Under this agreement, interaction was supposed to cover the fields of economics, trade, agriculture, banking, maritime transport, international communications, environmental protection, culture, science, sports and tourism.

An important role in partnerships with the Kaliningrad region is played by the voivodships formed in 1999 as a result of the new administrative division of Poland: Pomeranian and Warmian-Masurian. The interest in cooperating with

² The agreement between the Government of the Russian Federation and the Government of the Republic of Poland “On cooperation of the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and the northeastern voivodships of the Republic of Poland” dated 22.05.1992 // Consultant Plus. URL: http://www.consultant.ru/document/cons_doc_LAW_124416/ (access date: 12.06.2019).

³ The Russian-Polish Cooperation Council of the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation and regions of the Republic of Poland. URL: <https://id.gov39.ru/agency/activities/tips/russia-poland.php> (access date: 12.06.2019).

the exclave is evidenced by the agreements signed by the Kaliningrad Region with local governments of the Warmian-Masurian Voivodeship (2001) and the Pomeranian Voivodeship (2002). The agreement on cooperation of the Pomeranian Voivodeship focuses on the development of partnerships in local self-government, including the experience and information exchange, regional and local legislation governing the basics of economic activity, including trade and tourism, investment, and free economic zones mechanisms. The agreement also included the joint organization of visits, training for employees of local governments and mutual assistance in building a civil society.

In an agreement between the Pomeranian Voivodeship and the Administration of the Kaliningrad Region, the parties agreed on cooperation with the aim of establishing and developing economic and socio-cultural contacts, as well as creating the necessary conditions to support cooperation at the level of cities, districts, counties, communes, economic entities, organizations and institutions. The main areas of partnership included economy, in particular industry, agriculture, transport, as well as spatial planning and environmental protection, healthcare and social assistance, culture, art, education and science, sports, tourism and the further development of civil society. It was also decided to exchange information related to the development of border infrastructure, public utilities, the prevention of natural disasters, and the elimination of their consequences.

The Consulate General of the Republic of Poland was opened in Kaliningrad in 1993, and in 1994 its activities were expanded to include the Trade and Economic Department. The Consulate General of the Russian Federation has long existed in Gdansk⁴. Since 1993, mutual visits, conferences, and exhibitions began in Kaliningrad and Gdansk, Elblag, Olsztyn, and Suwalki.

One of the elements of cooperation with the Kaliningrad region was the Representative Office of the Kaliningrad Region in Poland, which functioned in Gdansk in 1992–2007. Its activity, as noted by D.A. Mironyuk and K. Zhengota, was aimed at supporting local relations (in contrast to the Consulate, which performs a state mission and solves foreign policy tasks) [7]. In mid-2019, the Kaliningrad region was said to be reopening a representative office in Gdansk⁵.

On the whole, we can assume that at present there is a sufficient institutional background for the development of mutual relations, which may result in building-up a cross-border Russian-Polish region.

⁴ July 11, 2017 Gdansk hosted a reception on the 300th anniversary of the Consulate General of the Russian Federation in Gdansk. URL: <https://gdansk.mid.ru/istoria-general-nogokonsul-stva> (access date: 06.15.2019).

⁵ Promotions on barges: 5 questions about electronic visas to the Kaliningrad region // New Kaliningrad. June 27, 2019. URL: <https://www.newkaliningrad.ru/news/politics/23520614-promo-na-barkakh-5-voprosov-ob-elektronnykh-vizakh-v-kaliningradskuyu-oblast.html> (access date: 25.07.2019).

Spatial nodes and geographical axes of the formation of the cross-border Russian-Polish region

In our study, we rely on the provisions of the emerging theory of transboundary regional formation, which is based on the study of the emergence and development of relations between the border territories of neighboring countries. Their composition, structure and development factors, stakeholders and territorial levels of functioning began to be studied in detail at the end of the 20th — beginning of the 21st centuries, when globalization processes began to stimulate cross-border regionalization [3, 5, 13, 16, 17, 19, 27, 30].

The main factor in the formation of cross-border regions is economic relations: foreign trade, foreign investment and cooperation of enterprises. Unfortunately, in 2015- 2016 the volumes of all three of these ties types decreased, although in 2017—2018 in mutual trade, a certain increase was again observed. Polish entrepreneurs are interested in the Kaliningrad (and consequently Russian) market, and Russian ones are interested in the Polish market. This is manifested in the active participation of both parties in international (both multilateral and bilateral) conferences held in Russia and Poland, especially in Kaliningrad, Svetlogorsk, Tri-City and Olsztyn.

The bordering Russian and Polish regions are actively participating in joint projects of cross-border cooperation programs. The Baltic Sea Cross-Border Cooperation Program is currently operating and projects that will be implemented by Poland-Russia program for the period of 2014—2020 are being identified, they are focused on the issues of historical heritage, promoting economic development (including innovative economy), environment, transport and tourism. The program budget is 62.3 million euros, which makes it an important tool for the development of Russian-Polish relations⁶.

An important role is played by cross-border population movement — shopping trips, educational and health tourism. Such activity was at its peak under the Agreement on Local Border Movement, the territory of which covered almost the entire emerging cross-border region [14, 24]. A new positive factor is the introduction of electronic tourist visas in the Kaliningrad region from July 1, 2019. Visas are issued for 30 days, during which it is allowed to stay in the region up to 8 days⁷.

Large-scale cities of the border territories of Russia and Poland are the cross-border nodes that form both production and social ties. The large-

⁶ Cross-border cooperation program Poland — Russia 2014—2020. URL: <https://www.plru.eu/ru/pages/11> (access date: 05.04.2019).

⁷ A free e-visa to Kaliningrad: URL: <https://www.kurier.lt/v-kaliningrad-po-besplatnoj-elektronnoj-vize/> (access date: 25.07.2019). The first holders of electronic visas arrived in Kaliningrad // Russian newspaper, 04.07.2019. URL: <https://rg.ru/2019/07/04/reg-szfo/pervyj-obladatel-elektronnoj-vizy-priehal-v-kaliningrad-skuiu-oblast.html> (access date: 25.07.2019).

est of them are Kaliningrad, Tri-City, Olsztyn and Elblag (Fig. 1). Their interaction most strongly affects the development of the cross-border Russian-Polish region (mesoscale region, mesoregion). Cities with checkpoints across the Russian-Polish border are also of high importance. They are the growth nodes of less powerful axes around which transboundary microregions are formed. Dotted lines in the map indicate promising axes, which are likely to develop in the future.



Fig. 1. Development axis of the cross-border Polish-Russian region

Kaliningrad agglomeration and Tri-City as socio-economic nodes that grow the main axis of the Russian-Polish cross-border region

The main socio-economic nodes of the emerging Russian-Polish cross-border region are Tri-City (Polish Trójmiasto) in Poland and the Kaliningrad agglomeration in Russia. Relations between them form its main socio-economic axis.

The development of the urban agglomeration of Tri-City is determined by two indicators that speak of its development: a geographical indicator, which is specified by the coastal position, and a historical indicator of the independent development of the three large cities that make up the core of the agglomeration: Gdansk — the historical, central city of Pomerania, Gdynia — a young city established in 1926 as a port base and a rival to Gdansk, which has dominated since German times, as well as Sopot, a small town founded in the late nineteenth — early twentieth centuries. After World War II, very close ties arose between the Tri-City located on the Gulf of Gdansk, resulting in the agglomeration called Tró-

miasto (Tri-City), which expanded as the Baltic coast was developing, absorbing neighboring cities. In a broader sense, Elbląg, a direct neighbor of Kaliningrad, also belongs to this agglomeration area.

The geographical location of Kaliningrad is unique both from a historical, economic and geopolitical point of view. This former part of East Prussia, owned by Russia, is separated from the main part of the state by 600 km. In addition, the region is located relatively close to the highly developed regions of Western Europe. The collapse of the USSR made the region, until 1991 completely isolated from the West, to open up and establish contacts with its neighbors. But, at the same time, after Lithuania left the USSR, the region became Soviet, and after the collapse of the USSR, it became a Russian exclave in the Baltic. However, its land neighbors, Poland and Lithuania, are members of NATO and the EU (Poland joined NATO in 1999, Lithuania in 2004, and then in 2004 both countries became EU members).

The Kaliningrad agglomeration is determined by geographical, historical and geopolitical factors, which are very different, however, from those that characterize Tri-City. The main city of the region is Kaliningrad concentrates almost half of the population and two thirds of the industrial potential of the region. Kaliningrad is a historic city located above the Pregel close to its confluence with the Kaliningrad / Vistula Bay. The Kaliningrad agglomeration covers almost the entire western part of the region, where there are also small coastal towns and villages located near the sea bays. On the Baltic coast in Svetlogorsk, Zelenogradsk, Pionersky, Ladushkin and Yantarny (amber extraction and processing center), resort and tourist facilities are developed. Svetly, located on the shores of the bay, is a fairly large industrial and transport center. Baltiysk is a naval base and maritime port. Checkpoints across the Russian-Polish border are located in Bagrationovsk and Mamonovo. Guryevsk is an industrial satellite, a suburb of Kaliningrad.

Kaliningrad and Tri-City are now mainly connected through tourist and social (cultural, educational, scientific) ties, though they maintain certain contacts of regional and municipal authorities. Joint research and practical conferences are held to discuss issues of cooperation. Thanks to the partnership between Gdansk and Kaliningrad within the framework of the Euroregion Baltic program it became easier to establish not only interpersonal contacts, but to bring youth closer together. The cooperating parties became more aware of the history and modern life of the neighbors, which contributed to the reduction of historical prejudices, influenced positively the living conditions of people in these areas. Such interaction also had an impact on the planning of work aimed at achieving sustainable economic development, cooperation in the field of public utilities, environmental protection in the border areas, creating favorable conditions for cooperation in healthcare, social welfare and the fight against crime.

There are prerequisites for the development of economic relations, industrial (in the field of shipbuilding and ship repair, oil production and refining, construction materials production, etc.), agricultural cooperation, coordination of sea, rail, and air transport. Here, international sectoral and intersectoral clusters can arise. Moreover, the bipolar socio-economic and resettlement system “Tri-City — Kaliningrad” is about to develop [8].

Gdansk and Kaliningrad have cooperated for many years and continue to cooperate in the framework of many initiatives and Baltic programs, such as the Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation (BSSSC), the Union of Baltic Sea Cities, VASAB 2010, the Association of Baltic Ports (BPO), the Baltic Association of Regional Development Institutions (BARDI), the Interrreg program, etc.

One of the forms of such contacts both in the past and at present is the academic ties established between the University of Gdansk and the Immanuel Kant Baltic Federal University in Kaliningrad. The first cooperation agreement between the two universities was signed back in the USSR in 1990. On December 16, 2003, in Gdansk, the rectors of the two universities signed another agreement. University cooperation includes the implementation of joint projects, research activities, joint conferences, seminars and other academic events, the expansion of cooperation between the two universities in educational activities and in the field of culture, the exchange of scientific and teaching staff. Research results are published in joint scientific journals. Joint conferences and seminars held by universities, in which representatives of local and regional authorities located on both sides of the border take part, resulted in new models and forms of cooperation between marine and land networks around the Gulf of Gdansk. An important result of the joint work is a number of articles and a series of publications issued by both parties on the challenges of Russian-Polish cooperation [2, 7, 9, 12, 15, 18, 20, 21, 25, 26, 28]. University cooperation is expanding through an increasing number of institutes and departments interested in developing scientific and educational interaction. Universities and innovation research institutes are building up their networking opportunities [10]. The results of joint research and the potential areas for further cooperation identified by scientists are an important step towards the successful development of very difficult Polish-Russian relations and building strong ties between the European Union and Russia.

Conclusion

Cross-border cooperation corresponds to the integration processes characteristic of the era of globalization and the formation of cross-border regions, which are especially characteristic of Europe. It contributes to the eliminating of borders between individual states and facilitates economic exchange, affects the emergence of closer interpersonal, social and political contacts. Thus, there is a rapprochement between states and regions separated by a state border.

The formation of the Russian-Polish cross-border region is facilitated by the absence of physical-geographical barriers, for instance, mountains or deserts on the border between the countries, a high population density and good economic development of the territory, an extensive transport network, the interest of both parties in cross-border cooperation in various socio-economic areas and solutions to environmental issues. Subjective foreign policy problems that arise contrary to objectively existing factors for the development of cooperation negatively affect such development. The authors hope that such barriers will be removed over time, and the process of cross-border regionalization on the Russian-Polish border will accelerate.

A special role in the formation of the cross-border region in the southeast of the Baltic is played by the Polish Tri-City and Kaliningrad with the agglomeration formed around it. Their coastal location on both sides of the Gulf of Gdansk naturally favors both cross-border nodes for the development of mutual contacts and cross-border cooperation. Though political conditions are not always favorable, the cases of interaction between cities and universities described in the article can serve a good prerequisite of progress.

Further positive changes in mutual relations on the coast of the Gulf of Gdansk are possible provided that good-neighborly relations between the European Union and Russia are developed and political tensions are eliminated. This also depends on whether Kaliningrad and Tri-City can take advantage of the favorable situation in Baltic Europe and geographical benefits: the proximity of a neighbor, the common Kaliningrad / Vistula Bay, the common Baltic / Vistula Spit, the Lynu / Lava River and the Masurian Canal, border forests, geographical interconnection of voivodeships of North-Eastern Poland with the Kaliningrad region of the Russian Federation. There are many problems that could potentially be solved in cross-border cooperation for the promotion of both parties. In addition to cooperation between urban agglomerations and universities, this may refer to further partnerships between cultural institutions, research institutes, the protection and re-evaluation of cultural heritage, the protection and rational development of the environment, the development and prosperity of tourism, youth contacts, self-government initiatives, cooperation between non-governmental organizations, etc.

The cross-border location of the Russian-Polish border region, in particular its agglomeration cores, Tri-City and Kaliningrad, is a huge advantage for the Baltic and European international cooperation in this area. The interaction of the Tri-City and the Kaliningrad agglomeration, two parts of the cross-border Russian-Polish region as a whole, is of great international importance and has a great impact on the system of balance and security in Europe. The development of this international territorial system also contributes to the sustainable development of a network of cities located in the southern Baltic. The willingness of both sides to support inter-regional cooperation can be an important step towards deepening integration processes in the Baltic.

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