

# **New Frontiers and Identity**

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# Frederic Turner and the Frontier Theory



- } *Turner understood the frontier as a boundary of continent exploration that was constantly moving due to territorial expansion*
- } *He believed that this very border and its features had become backbone factors of civilizational singularity of the country, embodiment of the egalitarian myth, sociocultural archetype of American national mentality*

# From Agrarian to Technological Frontier

- } *The very emergence of new opportunities in the society, overcoming new limits, search for solutions to new challenges are considered as a continuing frontier by the Americans*
- } *To a certain extent, the theory grew out of its initial disciplinary limits due to conceptualization of the “social space” notion by G. Simmel and P. Bourdieu*
- } *Social frontier is not necessarily connected with extreme natural conditions: it is a border, a line of choice, mainly a lifestyle choice*
- } *Frontier is far from being limited to the meaning of territorial locus, it is a landscape phenomenon, “a process and result of social construction of reality, hence its representation is directly related to mental sphere”*



# Russian Frontiers

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- } Border expresses static, it is fixed, and more often than not demarcated. Frontier is dynamic, it is an area of particular social conditions and leads to the formation of a new community*
  - } The most important structural element of the frontier is a state of unstable equilibrium.*
  - } Russian frontiers – Siberian, Caucasian, Low Volga, Arctic*
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# The Stages of Frontier Identity Formation

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- } *The first stage (conventionally we call it nostalgic) - the transfer and transformation of socialization rules adopted in the "old" society. " Often an exaggerated sense of "special parts of a whole. The phenomenon of "return", which becomes a major cause of depression due to discomfort and unsettled life aggravated by high expectations*
- } *The second stage (adaptation) includes powerful tools and mechanisms of transgression. Borrowing many rules, not normative for the home culture*
- } *The third stage : frontier area becomes a part of the overall social and political space, and the frontier moves forward. Many of the difficulties of self-identification remain in the past, the special identity is becoming a key element of the common identity of the developed territory (Americans, Siberians, Kamchadals, Virgin landers and etc.)*



# Frontier Identity

- } *Frontier identity* - a special kind of spatial identity, of the zone of dynamic, movable boundary. A gradual convergence of old, "mother" identification signs and new, connected with adaptation to the unknown space and intercultural communication with its inhabitants. The result may be the formation of a new social community with its own identity
- } *Frontier personality type*: syncretic vision of reality, intolerance of strict regulation and organization of life, openness to innovation.
- } *Frontier society*: spontaneous social organization, the emergence of new social institutions, commitment to the population of its territory, self-identification with the "true" nation, the establishment of local laws, participation in various social associations, etc.
- } As the experience of Frontier studies (US, Canada, Australia and New Zealand, Siberia, the Caucasus, and others.) Frontier identity becomes the backbone of the national (the Aussie idea in Australia) or regional (Siberian regionalism) identity.



# The Case of Dersu Uzala

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# The Frontier Criteria: from Old to New Frontiers

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- } *Flexibility of borders*
- } *Abundance of resources*
- } *Specific features of governing system*
- } *"Administrative lawlessness" and arbitrariness*
- } *Cultural transgressions*
- } *Mythologization of practices and heroes*
  
- } The mentioned complex is an appropriate analytical tool to study frontiers of different kinds





# The Arctic Frontier

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- } The Arctic frontier is an attractive zone in the Russian labor market, it is an urban and dynamic macro-region, a kind of "North Eldorado"*
  - } The high turnover of population migration in the Arctic region is increasing from year to year*
  - } Immigrants bring with them their "main" urban culture, new social norms and technologies, while traditional northern ethnic groups are forced to adapt to changing external conditions in urgent regime*
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# The Network Frontier

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- } *M. Castells distinguishes “frontier” nature Internet and its shifting to the West*
- } *The network frontier is defined as a mobile space border of contact and mutual interpenetration between the network society social/cultural practices and those of previous times*



# Migration (civilization?) Frontier

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} *Uncontrolled migration processes faced by the European community in the past two years, might give a new impetus to modern interpretations of the frontier theory, both in its socio-cultural and in its original, "geographical" senses*



# Hybridity Rules



# The Heuristic Potential of the Frontier Concept

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- } Modern political processes, the growth of non-linearity and uncertainty actualize the frontier discourse in political studies*
- } The "frontier": from a metaphor to an analytical model*
- } Frontier "grows" new, previously non-existent identities. For a long time values, moods, attitudes and view of the world developed by population of the former frontier zones may be different from the common*
- } The frontier mythology in the contemporary socio-political environment becomes a powerful tool in political communication and mobilization*

