Anthropology of Borders and Frontiers

The Case of the Polish-German Borderland (1945-1980)

Agata Ładykowska and Paweł Ładykowski

Introduction

In this paper we illustrate social processes, practices, and views that historically preceded the most recent formation of Polish-German borderland. With the enlargement of the European Union, scholarly attention has turned to new configurations of political community and economic cooperation at and across its borders. The claim has been made that there is an increasing need to reconceptualize the meanings and functions of state and national borders and frontiers (e.g. Wilson/Donnan 2005). However, in so doing, we believe that an exploration of the history of those regions that experience political reconfigurations is essential as well, as it helps clarify the ambiguous relationship between the concepts of "frontiers" and "borders" as analytical categories. At the end of World War II, the new international arrangement meant that the former East Prussian regions of Silesia, Lubuskie, Pomerania, Warmia and Masuria were subsumed under the Polish state. This entailed the forced expulsion of the large populations of Germans living in those areas. The territory became inhabited by Polish settlers arriving in waves that included mainly those who had been living in the so-called eastern borderland of the Second Republic of Poland, which was lost by Poland as a result of the Yalta agreement. In this paper, we demonstrate how the politically demarcated borderline, which formally separated Poland and the German Democratic Republic after 1945 quite sharply, was in fact relatively porous. It was gradually appropriated by incoming inhabitants from the eastern border region, who, under special state regulations that changed over time, worked

out the conditions and, indeed, even the area of their settlement, and thus negotiated the border "from below." We provide the account of how those Poles who were forced westward experienced their migration and later narrated those experiences, and how the emigration experience shaped emigrants' perception of geography as expressed in their attitudes about their new places of residence. Also, we demonstrate how in the three periods between the end of World War II and 1947, the 1960s, and between the 1st of January, 1972 and the 20th of October, 1980 the borderline was in fact permeable and created a situation conducive to intercultural contact beyond state control .

The Current Setting: The Polish-German Borderland Near Szczecin

In what follows, this contribution inquires into the history of a new "borderland" that emerged near Szczecin. This area that is not an historical "border region."[1] After Poland joined the EU in 2004, and especially after Poland's ratification of the Schengen Treaty in December 2007, there has been greater economic, social, and cultural interaction involving movements of goods and jobs and permanent cross-border resettlement. The opening of the German labor market for Poles in April, 2011 and the depressed condition of the real estate market on the German side of the border have created new incentives for Polish settlement in Germany, and, consequently, for the ethnic recomposition of the borderland region. In particular, three east German border counties – Uecker-Randow[2], Ostvorpommern, and Uckermark – have become an attractive destination for

1 | This section is based on Pawel Ładykowski's project. The fieldwork was conducted jointly by Paweł Ładykowski (Polish Academy of Science), and Łukasz Kaczmarek (Department of Ethnology and Cultural Anthropology at the University of Szczecin) within the project entitled "The Resurgence of the German-Polish Borderland," launched in 2008. Some of the conclusions included here are also described in Ładykowski (2011).

2 | Recently, in September 2011, due to administrative reforms, the county was merged into the Vorpommern-Greifswald district and ceased to exist as an independent administrative unit.

Poles looking for new housing.[3] This mobility has been accompanied by the emergence of a trans-border market characterized by the principles of border economies: for unemployed Germans, it has become less complicated and demanding to search for legal jobs in Poland in construction, services, local branches of EU institutions. And for the better-off in Germany, Poland offers specialized services at a relatively low price, e.g. private medical care (in vitro fertilization, dental surgery etc.). Imbalances in price and perceived quality have stimulated economic and cultural exchange and new developments on the real estate market, in education, in medical care, in services, and in many other areas.[4]

Since 2004 at least, the act of crossing the Polish-German border has been increasingly perceived as a "private" matter, not very different from crossing an internal administrative border (Wedel 2009). Although the

3 | In the year 2003, 2,140 Poles were legally registered residents of the federal state (*Bundesland*) of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. By 2007, there number had grown to 3,637 and to 4,500 in 2011 (Segeš Frelak and Kriszan 2012: 38). The Uecker-Randow district has the highest population of Poles, with 1,258 registered Polish citizens in 2010 (ibid.). In 2009, 83 % of the migrant Polish population lived in the two towns of this district, namely Löknitz and Penkun. In Löknitz 10 % of the population (242 persons in 2008) is of Polish origin (Barthel 2010). The trend these numbers show is significant when seen against the backdrop of population decline in eastern Germany. For example, the district of Uecker-Randow had 96,043 inhabitants in 1990; 85,086 in 2000, 77,152 in 2005, and 72,137 in 2010 (Statistisches Amt Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, 2010; Segeš Frelak/Kriszan 2012: 37). In 2009, Poles formed 12-17 percent of the local population in the settlements of Grambow, Ramin, and Nadrensee. The latter statistical data were accessed in 2009 from the website of the district authorities, www.lkuer.de, before the district was merged into the Vorpommern-Greifswald district. The site is currently unavailable. Interestingly, the website of the Uckermark district (www.uckermark.de) lacks current statistical data that feature the inhabitants nationality, which might be interpreted as an expression of the new policy adopted in response to NPD activity in the region (personal communication with one of the commune's officers).

4 | This fact has attracted the attention of the regional authorities and led them to develop high levels of cross-border cooperation. For instance, there are considerable attempts to establish political institutions of supra-local importance, such as the Polnisch-Deutsche Geselllschaft "Pomeraniak e. V.".

border is still visible in political space, it is gradually losing relevance for everyday life.[5] The greater Szczecin area has a strong potential to become a fixed transnational space where political, cultural and social identities not only coexist but also fuse. With these facts in mind, in this contribution we inquire into the cultural mechanisms driving the development of a borderland. In so doing, we explore the historical particularities of the Polish-German border region after its creation in 1945.

The following section summarizes the social-cultural anthropology discussion on borders and frontiers as background knowledge for approaching narratives and practices of social, political, economic, and cultural interaction.

Anthropology of Borders and Frontiers

The anthropology of borders typically entails the study of the cultural, territorial, and social dimensions of those borders. Boundaries are symbols through which localities, states, and nations define themselves: they delineate at once territorial limits and socio-cultural spaces (Berdahl 1999: 3). As borderlines that simultaneously separate and join different entities, borders are ambivalent, as discussed in the classic works by Arnold van Gennep (1909), Victor Turner (1967; 1969), or Mary Douglas (1966). By the same token, borderlands as the spaces-in-between characterized by a cultural overlap are liminal spaces. They are simultaneously dangerous sites and sites of creative cultural production open to cultural play and experimentation as well as domination and control (Donnan 2001: 1290).

The relevant research on borders in anthropological literature concentrates on two complementary trends and see borders both as social and symbolic and as territorial and political. The first trend in anthropological theory owes much to Frederik Barth (1992 [1969]), who draws attention to social boundaries between ethnic groups. He points out that cultural differences persist despite inter-ethnic contact and that social relations are organized and maintained across such boundaries. The symbolic construction of community and cultural boundaries is stressed in works of

5 | The border is obviously marked by the linguistic barrier, but these too are tending to fade as free language courses are offered. Moreover, courses in the respective neighbor's language are part of school curricula in both Germany and Poland.

Anthony Cohen (1985; 1986). In his view, boundaries are symbolic entities constructed by people in their interactions with others, from whom they wish symbolically to distinguish themselves. By marking out one's social identity, boundaries symbolically demarcate one's sense of similarity and difference.

The second line of inquiry presents borders as territorial and political entities and implies a fruitful conceptual link between borders, state, and society. State borders mark the limits of sovereignty and of state control over citizens and subjects. Anthropological border studies were pioneered at the University of Manchester in the 1960s. The "school" that emerged in Manchester produced several works dealing with borders, each influenced by Max Gluckman who was Departmental Chair at that time (Donnan 2001: 1291). However, they did not take up the issue of national state borders, and the value of localized studies for understanding how cultural landscapes are superimposed across social and political divides was not recognized until 1974, when *The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley* by John W. Cole and Eric R. Wolf appeared. This became the cornerstone work for subsequent anthropological research on national and international borders. Cole and Wolf found it interesting that in South Tyrol, the cultural frontier continued to manifest itself as important in everyday life long after the politically defined state borders had shifted. In this focus, they shared Barth's view of social boundaries. The major contribution of this study, however, was in demonstrating the usefulness of including both local and supra-local influences in research on this process. The work has informed many subsequent border studies in the way it focused on how social relations, defined in part by the state, transcend the territorial limits of the state and transform the structure of the state at home and its relations with its neighbors (Donnan 2001: 1292).

A more recent approach to national borders focuses on the states of the European Union and asks question of how culture inhibits and enhances cross-border cooperation in the context of various state and supranational initiatives undertaken in order to transform the economic, political, and social structures of people's everyday lives (for an overview see Wilson and Donnan 2005). Such an approach is best suited for the study of state-society relations. Instead of being fixed and static, state-society relations are currently seen as dynamic, processual, and permeable (Hann/Dunn 1996). What happens along the border can support or undermine national government policies, and borders are good locations for studying

the features of state-society relations in general (Wilson/Donnan 2005). The enlargement of the European Union is bringing about fundamental changes in the nature of European states and of their relationships with each other. These recent changes call for field studies of the current borders and borderlands designed so as to contribute to the advancement of anthropological theory.

The changes discussed above are very relevant to our present case. However, we argue that focusing only on current developments would block the opportunity to place the emerging Polish-German borderland within a broader historical perspective that would enable us to better grasp cultural patterns and meanings that are framing current events. The social effects of the recent dismantling of the border regime separating Poland and Germany must be seen in relation to the effects of the border's construction: forced expulsions of previous German inhabitants of the lands merged into Poland resulting in incoming waves of Polish settlers who inhabited an area emptied of people. In our further analysis, we employ the theoretical distinction between the notions of a "border" and "frontier." In order to make this distinction visible both on the theoretical and ethnographic level, it is important to situate the concepts within the frame of existing anthropological analysis.

For example, social anthropologist Michał Buchowski reflects (in Polish) on the meanings of terms employed in English such as:

> [...] *limit, border, boundary, frontier.* Typically *boundary* should be a line, while the *border* [is] the zone around this line [...]. We may further distinguish between a border line, a border, and a borderland. The first category, *border line* (*linia graniczna)*, would be the equivalent of [...] *boundary,* and as such would be a line designated in space that is in fact invisible but is made tangible by natural signs and symbols that give it a political significance. The notion of *border* (*granica*) would indicate the zone around the boundary. It spreads over the area in which the presence of a demarcation line has a direct impact on daily economic, social, and cultural relations of the residents living in the border areas. *Borderland* (*pogranicze*) would mean an area that is wider than border area, and would include the long-term phenomena characteristic for such zones, as for instance bilingualism, intermingling, or interpenetration of cultures (in this case understood as ethnic or national cultures), or assimilation of customs (Buchowski 2004: 9).

Indeed, there is a variety of typologies of what we call frontiers and borders.[6] These chiefly articulate a relationship between state and local community. For example, Anthony Giddens (1987: 49) distinguishes between "frontiers" and "borders" borrowing from political geography, where the term "frontier" "means either a specific type of division between two or more states, or a division between settled and uninhabited areas of a single state." "Frontier" in his analysis refers to an area on the peripheral regions of a state in which the political authority of the centre is diffuse or thinly spread. Frontiers exist where a state is expanding outwards into territory previously either having no inhabitants or populated by tribal communities. Also, frontiers describe areas within one state inhabited sparsely, for example due to "the general inhospitality of the terrain" (Ibid: 50)). A "border," on the other hand, would be a known and geographically drawn line separating and joining two or more states. Borders are clearly delineated limits of a state's sovereignty, although their nature can be fluid as they are located on the edges of the modern state, often the sea (cf. Roszko 2011). Borders, in contrast to frontiers, make the presence of the state clearly manifest through military posts, border guards, and customs checkpoints.

The distinction articulated above by Giddens has not always been obvious. For example, Wendl and Rösler (1999: 3) provide insights into the genesis of these concepts by tracing etymologies of the notions of "border" and "frontier":

> Both terms "frontier" and "border" are respectively of Latin and Frankish ancestry and convey a different range of implicit meanings. Both found their way into English through Middle French, and both are finally rooted in the perceptual experiences of the human body [...]. The frontier (Latin *frons* or forehead) is always "in front of" the subject. It denotes a flat, horizontal view from an absolute, anthropocentric body-based standpoint [...]. The border, on the other hand, derives from the Frankish "bord," literally the two wooden sides of a ship, or the fringes of textiles (German "borte, French "bordure"). It denotes a bird's-eye view, with the observer not bodily involved, but rather looking down at the outline of objects on the ground. In today's English, to some extent, both terms are used interchange-

6 | For a detailed overview see Wendl and Rösler 1999; for the classical study of frontier society see Frederick Jackson Turner (1994 [1893]), and for a comparative frontier history see Lamar and Thompson (1981).

ably [...]. It seems however, that the notion of "frontiers" is more elaborated, popularly as well as scientifically, in the American than in the British imagination. The reason for this [...] comes from the American expansionist experience of moving west. While in British English the term "frontier" also refers to remote backwoods regions [...] that differ significantly from areas of metropolitan refinement, it is used in American-English speech and thought without these negative attributions. Here, it rather has come to mean pioneerism, dynamism and advancement.

This semantic shift appears for the first time in the classical study of frontier society by Frederick Jackson Turner (1994 [1893]). The image used in his study was that of an anonymous force that swept like a slow tidal wave from east to west across North America, bringing with it smaller waves. First pioneers then settler communities (cf. Wendl/Rösler 1999: 3-4). In African historiography, "frontier" came to be used for description of European penetration into southern Africa. A refined definition of Thompson and Lamar (1981:7, quoted in Wendl/Rösler 1999: 4-5), states that a "frontier" is a "zone of interpenetration between two previously distinct societies," and this is the way it has been used often in the description of hybrid cultures in postcolonial studies.[7]

In our analysis, we wish to explore the problematic representation of space embodied in the Turnerian image of the moving frontier and in the Giddensian sense of a remote, uninhabited peripherality into which a state is expanding. The new territories joined to Poland were emptied of people but not of buildings, factories and infrastructure. This made the new links forged between place and identity especially problematic (cf. Gupta/Ferguson 1992). The new settlers slowly appropriated the new territories: the advancing frontier was reterritorializing the emptied land. In the next sections we demonstrate the impact this had on their percep-

7 | This reductionist view of "frontiers" as "colonial intrusions" was challenged and further differentiated by Igor Kopytoff (1987). His cyclical model encompasses "external" frontiers that arise when metropolitan cultures expand and extend political hegemony (like colonial tidal waves), and "internal" frontiers found in the less populated fringes between two or more organized societies, where intruding settlers create new societies on their own; smaller groups split-off from their cities move into the interstitial zones where they continue to intermingle with other similar groups in an institutional vacuum until they grow to form a new city. This process may continue in a number of cycles (Wendl/Rösler 1999: 5).

tion of the new space and on the social process of constructing it as "their place." Also, we investigate the modalities of cultural interpenetration over time of the two previously expulsed communities that inhabited the lands divided by the border.

After the War: Moving into the "Wild West"

The Potsdam Conference of 1945 gave the Polish state control of Silesia, Lubusie, Pomerania, Warmia, and Masuria. The meridional line of two rivers, Lusatian Neisse and the Oder defined the new western Polish borderline. The decision to shift the Polish-German border decided the fate of millions of Poles and Germans who were forced to resettle from the east to the west. The territories previously inhabited by over 8 million Germans became inhabited by 4 million Poles (Eberhardt 2010).[8] Most Polish emi-

8 | The drama of forced expulsions is a sensitive issue in Polish-German relationships: there is an enormous literature tackling the topic from the perspective of political history. We do not wish to engage in this discussion. Our aim is to highlight the scale of relocations and the problem that a region that was built for about 8 million people was emptied and inhabited by a new population of approximately half that size. According to the census carried out in 1939, the territories that later became part of Poland under the Potsdam agreements had been inhabited by 8,885,400 German citizens at that time (Eberhardt 2010:127). This number gives a sense of how densely this region was inhabited under normal conditions. Clearly, the number of people living in these areas was constantly changing during the final months of the war. Some approximations go as high as 12,339,400 Germans living in 1944 (Nitschke 2000: 232-233, quoted in Eberhardt 2010: 128). All these numbers should be treated with caution (they use different criteria to determine ethnicity, for example), however, they are indicative of the scale of relocations. Estimates of the number of Germans who left forcibly or willingly from 1944 to 1950 varies between between 8 and 11 million ((Eberhardt 2010: 187, 191), as noted in the Polish and the German sources respectively. In the three year period between 1945 and 1948, a total exchange of population occurred in the lands adjoined to Poland (Ibid.: 209). Cautious estimates are that in 1945-47 about 4 million people settled and started a new life (Ibid.: 208). The waves of newcomers in 1948-9 were significantly smaller, and from 1950 onward the process of stabilization started. The census carried out in 1950 confirmed that the lands

grants were from the so-called eastern borderland of the Second Republic (*kresy wschodnie*). Those Germans living to the east of the newly demarcated border were similarly forced to move west. The newly acquired territories in the west, the Polish "Western Lands" (*Ziemie Zachodnie*), were called in Polish propaganda the "Recovered Territories" (*Ziemie Odzyskane*), which alluded to the historical presence of the first Polish state in the reign of the Piast dynasty in the 10th century. This rhetorical formula was meant to legitimize both the presence of the Polish state in formerly German territories after the war and the forced resettlements.

Constant migration, a lack of permanence, the lack of stable state control or provision of basic services, a widespread sense of insecurity experienced by newcomers – including the uncertainty about the eventuality of another global conflict – all this contributed to the settlers' permanent sense of temporariness (cf. Polski 2005: 20). Their migrating was a process requiring many years and became such a special feature of their lifestyle that it strongly determined their perception of space, i.e. their attitude toward their new place of residence. Polish immigrants' diaries and official archival government documentation of the period clearly show that the Western Territories were perceived as a dangerous area, subjected to colonization by people uncertain of their future. They considered their new residences in the former German villages, towns, and cities only as the one stop on an endless journey. Often, the situation forced them to share a house or an apartment with Germans who had not yet managed to repatriate to Germany.[9] All these experiences during the first several years

discussed were populated by 5.6 million people or about 3 million fewer than in 1939 (Ibid.: 213). The number rose to 7.8 million in 1960 and to 10 million in 2010 (ibid.). These figures, of course, include those born after the 1950s.

9 | Regarding the situation in 1945, the Report on the Western Lands from 15.05. to 15.06.1945 (the AAN, the Government Delegate to the RP, 202/III/36, k. 151-210, Part E – k. 205-210) stated that in the belt between the West and the Silesia voivodeship the population consisted of 30 % Poles and 70 % Germans, in the belt from the Baltic to the Poznań voivodeship the population consisted of 20 % of Poles and 80 % Germans and in the Silesian belt the population consisted of 15 % Poles and 85 % Germans. In various cities on the basis of rough data : in Szczecin 40,000 Germans and 1,500 Poles; in Gorzów (Landsberg) 20,000 Germans and 3,000 Poles; in Skwierzyn (Schwerin) 2,000 Germans and 1,500 Poles; in Legnica, 10,000 Germans and 2,000 Poles; in Wrocław 25,000 Germans and 1,800

after the war strongly influenced the attitudes of newly settled residents. A temporary state was the ordinary state of life, and this left a strong imprint on the Polish settlers and the first generations born in the lands adjoined to Poland.

This constant movement was accompanied by the lack of clear idea of the exact location of the border delineating the new acquisitions. This was well captured by two journalists from Cracow, Maciej Malicki and Tadeusz Żychiewicz, who went on a tour of the Western Lands in 1957. It resulted in three articles written in a form of a diary published by the newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny*. Malicki and Żychiewicz's (1957) described their disorientation regarding the area they were required to portray, the Western Territories. Asked to write material from the "Zgorzelec – Szczecin line" that would provide an account on the situation "as close to the border as possible" they wrote:

> Our assumption is that we need a material from the "Zgorzelec – Szczecin line, as near the border as possible," but the assumption is also that this area will provide us with conclusions that can be generalized to the whole Western Territories. Therefore, we cannot travel [from Cracow] to Zgorzelec with our eyes closed. From the west it is clear, the state border demarcates the boundary. But from the east? For instance, today no one would think of classifying Gliwice, Bytom, or Zabrze as part of the Western Lands. Similarly, for an average Pole, Wrocław and Szczecin represent some kind of special enclave, of "equal importance and rank" to the other voivodeship cities. However Opole, Jelenia Góra, Koszalin are [...] somewhat different. There is one idea of the Western Lands adjacent to our former Polish border and another idea among those situated by the Oder River (ibid.).

Since it was not clear for the Cracovian intellectuals where the Western Territories begin, it would not have been clear for the average Polish citizen either. This certain lack of familiarity with the new territorial acquisitions and toponymy in the social imagination, observed twelve years after the war, went on to last for decades. The process of gradual integration of all the lands into a coherent body became part of the experience of several generations of settlers. The Western Lands area was perceived as quite different than the rest of the Polish state. The recollections of the settlers

---

Poles; in Świebodzin 2,000 Germans and 800 Poles; in Gryfino 1,500 Germans and 400 Poles; in Zagórze 1,800 Germans and 600 Poles (Pietrowicz 2005: 125).

contain accounts of a shocking confrontation with completely different aesthetics, the cities' skylines, the churches, completely different infrastructure, as well as a different principle of administrative jurisdiction. The newcomers noted the ubiquitous ex-German factories and ex-German cemeteries, contributing to the overwhelming feeling of "not being at home" (see e.g. Polski 2005: 21).

The inhabitants of the Western Territories were in constant motion as millions of people continuously sought for new places to settle. A sense of uprootedness and a devastation of the goods entrusted to these individuals were the consequence; many made a living by "looting." Polish administrators could not fully control these phenomena, and in popular diction the term "Regained Land" quickly gave way to "The Wild West." This expression denoted both individual freedom and impunity to law as experienced there. Sparsely populated territories in the west suffered from demographic collapse, which in turn prevented the normal inclusion in the economic system of the country unifying after the turmoil of war. The proverbial "wild(er)ness" reflected the nature of the new relationship between identity and place, as well as the emotions evoked among people migrating there. "The Wild West" was a place where "civilization," understood as government and the rule of law, was established only against the resistance of the inhabitants. The main factors that hindered the establishment of an orderly government in the area directly after 1945 were constant population movement, which involved also movement first to the Western Territories and then to central Poland; "looting" (*szaber*); the large numbers of Germans still residing in the area; and the way the new Polish-German border was drawn, which later would have significant repercussions.

The Oder and Neisse Border Line in 1945-1949: A Matter of Negotiation

The radically different expectations of each nation made the process of forming a new Polish-German border difficult and caused many misunderstandings. While the German side still hoped that the unfavourable loss of the lands East of the Oder River and Lusatian Neisse would be reversed (Kochanowski 2008: 31f.), the Poles demanded that the line be moved even farther to the West (Ibid.: 35), arguing that not only Szczecin

but also the island of Rügen are necessary for national defence purposes (Ibid.: 34). Even after the Potsdam conference ended, the Polish Foreign Ministry tried to negotiate a new demarcation of the border line so that the Szczecin Lagoon as a whole would came into Polish possession, demanding that the whole of the Oder River "must be in the hands of one state, Poland, with all three delta beds" (Ibid.: 36). Poland also endeavoured to articulate its expectations to global public opinion in the directives received by Polish delegation at the mid-November 1946 session of the UN in New York; Poland argued that "[n]ot leaving the Oder River in one hand [...] will spark constant disputes and border conflicts in Europe" (Ibid.: 38). It was contended that an effective military defence of the Oder–Neisse line could be only provided by the expansion of Polish territory beyond the area of Świnoujscie, Szczecin, Frankfurt, Görlitz, and Gubin. Poland argued that such an attempt would contribute to the re-unification of the divided cities, this time within the Republic of Poland. Pragmatic and economic arguments were presented: industry and the most important components of urban infrastructure remained on the German side under the Potsdam agreement, which should be rectified (Ibid.: 38f.). The Polish political goal of uniting both sides of the Oder remained a sensitive issue in relations with the USSR and East Germany long thereafter.

However, despite Polish demands, the border was finally set at the Lusatian Neisse and Oder.[10] Ironically, despite the fact that the border was set on waterways and thus sharply divided the two nations, it became –contrary to the probable intentions of its creators – a space of German-Polish relations. Polish concerns that the suburbs of cities remaining in Poland on the east bank of the Oder and Lusatian Neisse (like Guben, Frankfurt, Görlitz) would be cut off from necessary infrastructure – proved to be warranted. These less urbanized and poorer eastern parts of Polish cities almost lost their practical viability almost altogether. To remedy this problem, people began spontaneously establishing relationships with residents on the other side of the river. The interest turned out to be mutual, as part of the urban infrastructure essential for city functions on the German side was in fact located in Poland.

10 | Excluding the area of Szczecin, Szczecin Lagoon, and the Western outskirts of Świnoujscie on the Usedom island.

The atmosphere of suspense and uncertainty accompanied the people on both sides of the border river.[11] Despite devastation, unemployment, housing shortages, and a terrible supply situation, a significant proportion of expatriated persons wished to remain as close as possible to the new border, believing – as reported in February 1946 from Guben – that "one fine day they will cross the Neisse again" (Ibid.: 31). By the end of 1947, however, German expatriates had gradually begun to lose hope for return. In Guben, in January 1948, rumours spread that the Poles would take over the railway station; this caused many German families to leave the border region (Ibid.: 34).

Overcrowding and unemployment on the German side of the river was as permanent as underpopulation and chronic lack of manpower on the Polish side.[12] Running the industries located on the eastern side of the Oder required qualified and skilled workers able to competently manage and operate the infrastructure. Power plants, sewage treatment plants, drinking water supply pumps, and other equipment similarly required the skills of specialists. These were possessed only among the German

11 | The expatriates were considered a serious problem for the Soviet Occupation Zone (SBZ) and later the German Democratic Republic. In the years 1949-1950 in the SBZ/GDR area there were about 4.5 million expellees while in the much larger Western Germany there were just under 8 million. The concept of "expellees" also implied that these people were had been wronged and might hope to return to their homes. Thus, in official diction, expellees were deliberately renamed the "displaced" and later also "new citizens" (*Neubürger*), to shatter any hope for a return to the former eastern territories of Germany. This, however, did not resolve the problem of integrating this group in their new places of residence. The final decision to resettle exiles in the young GDR was cemented by actions like signing the border treaty in Görlitz in 1950, the land reform granting new property to many expellees, and the pacification of the uprising of 17 June 1953, during which the issue of revision of the eastern border of Germany also had been raised (Urban 2009: 43).

12 | As already mentioned, the population of borderland districts on the Polish side for many years constituted only a fraction of what it had been, and this had a direct impact on infrastructure maintenance in the cities. For example, "about 3,500 people lived in Gubin in December 1945, 4,940 in March 1948, and just over 5,000 in August 1949 (one fifth of the city's capacity)" (Kochanowski 2008: 42-3).

population, either those still living in Poland or commuters from the other side of the border.[13] The restoration of normal life in the cities across the river became the main concern of the people, all the more that the border turned out to be penetrable. Although it was accoutred with signs of the new Polish authority, in itself it did not present an impassable barrier. It could be crossed without major problems. Germans seeking any kind of job benefited from this fact.[14] The consequence of overcrowding on the German side was a rapid growth of unemployment and the gradual impoverishment of the already afflicted German refugees, even raising the spectre of starvation. The main factor that contributed to the exchange of jobs and manpower, then, was asymmetry in the demographic situation, infrastructure, and food supply. The latter was significantly better on the Polish side. Shortage of workers on the Polish side and the relatively stable food supply were pulling factors for Germans. Many Germans, however, were still migrating to the west, which caused the Polish authorities to undertake an initial attempt of issuing administrative regulations in order to prevent professionals needed to maintain industry from leaving.[15]

Historical materials confirm that this was an important moment that initiated a new type of cooperation within border areas based on constant motion. The border had to be crossed on a daily basis, sometimes a few times a day so that both communities could function normally. The itinerant model of functioning in close proximity to the border necessitated the establishment of numerous inter-ethnic interactions. It should not be forgotten that this border line was different from what had been known and represented previously in the imagery of the common Polish-German heritage; the post-war reality was radically different. The entire situation was

13 | In early June 1945, it was officially proposed that qualified German workers settle in Zgorzelec (Kochanowski 2008f.).

14 | For example, as late as 1947, "half of the total number of over 1,000 of miners in the coal mine Turow would come from Germany every day" (Kochanowski 2008: 43).

15 | Of particular importance here was a decision "to keep or turn back, where it is possible, the number of circa 250 German experts necessary for the functioning of industrial plants." The Germans, however, were afraid to dwell on the Polish side, which at the beginning of July 1945, forced the Polish authorities of Zgorzelec to assist groups of workers on their daily commute over the border bridge to the plant (Kochanowski 2008: 42).

laden with strong mutual resentment, prejudice, and fear. As it turned out, however, this did not constitute a sufficiently strong barrier to socialization. On both sides, the communities were formed by exiles. The Polish exiles understand Germans who had to leave, as they too had been forced to leave and had nowhere else to go (Ibid.: 14). The period between 1945-49 is the first moment of establishing Polish-German cross-border relationships, both formal and informal, even though they were maintained out of convenience, not out of love.

In 1949 the German Democratic Republic was founded and encompassed the former Soviet Occupation Zone. The signing of border treaty with the GDR resulted the "dismantling" of this spontaneous borderland.

1950-1972: "Bridges of Friendship" and the Closing of the Border

From the 1950s the border was closed and the border rivers became natural barriers, constituting a "border wall" in the collective imagination. On the occasion of the state or party celebrations the contact was "artificially" restored. Because there was no agreement on local cross-border traffic, delegations of the local party, youth, or union organizations were forced to meet in the middle of the border bridges (Kochanowski 2008: 48).

The absence of the circulation and exchange of goods and services, as in the years 1945-1948/50, led to the collapse of the socio-economic infrastructure on the Polish side of the border. The image of overwhelming emptiness of these lands, contrasting with the problems of overcrowding in the central parts of the country was thoroughly documented[16] in the newspaper *Tygodnik Powszechny* in 1957. The authors, Malicki and Żychiewicz (1957), note that on the German side, the space had been systematically renewed so as to quickly rebuild or cover up the consequences of the war, whereas on the Polish side, there was no desire, no concept, and no motivation to take similar action. The post-war space of the Wild

16 | Here is how the Cracow reporters traversing the Western Lands in 1957 presented the situation: "Where there is work there is no housing. And where there is housing there is no work." [...].We have seen on the way a lot of empty, unoccupied houses. And we remember a hopeless crowd in the Cracow employment office" (Malicki and Żychiewicz 1957).

West still remained void. The state of constant instability and uncertainty regarding the future accompanied all the Polish newcomers to these lands from after the war until the mid-1970s, despite the state propaganda of the success of the unification of all the authentic "Polish Piast dynasty" lands within the People's Republic of Poland and a friendship with the new western neighbour, the GDR. This image was epitomized in the "bridges of friendship" across the border river, mentioned above. However, the image of friendship drawn in the official discourse was confronted by the reality disclosed in Malicki and Żychiewicz's reports. In their words:

> Zgorzelec became famous for practicing Polish-German friendship [...].The central object in Zgorzelec [...] is this famous bridge over the Lusatian Neisse, honored so many times with the visits of all sorts of personages, from prime ministers to cyclists of the "Peace Race." The sight of the bridge completely surprised us. From the main street a very short, steep descent to the left and [...] that's it. We leave the car behind the corner and approach the border. Funny to admit – despite our identity cards and full legitimacy, we feel a little uncomfortable. "Taboo-ish" respect for the border zone, for years so carefully instilled, apparently has left its imprint. A WOP [Border Defence Army] soldier on duty stops us by raising his hand. We present him with our letter of identity and ask for permission to walk to the other side. When called, the second guard appears, a sergeant. He rigorously examines our documents, and then moves away to seek information in headquarters on the telephone before giving us the answer. We look at the opposite bank of the river. We see on the horizon a green city park, a wide panorama along the banks, the majestic cathedral dominates the city [...].Is the bridge sometimes used for unofficial purposes, such as tourism or family visits? No. Is it allowed to take pictures? No, of course, not. The sentinel puts us off with monosyllables to answer out questions. The German guard moves away from his end of the bridge and slowly, mechanically approaches us. At one third of the distance he returns, and just as slowly he recedes. The middle part of the bridge, here the "no man's land," is violated by a human foot only on the occasion of the official celebrations. What are Polish-German relations today? This question is in front of us, when we look at the border (Malicki/Żychiewicz 1957).

1972-1980: Navigating between Polish and Eastern German Planned Economies

In 1972, local border traffic on the basis of an ID card (i.e., visa-free and passport-free) was restored for the citizens of both neighboring republics. As a result, from 1972 to 1979 over 100 million citizens of the People's Republic of Poland and Eastern Germany engaged in tourist exchange. Most trips were undertaken in the border regions and towns of the neighboring country on short-term stays (Osękowski 2009: 148). For the first time since 1950, former German residents of these lands could meet Polish settlers and begin to establish a dialogue.[17] The possibility of private and purely personal relationships was, however, fraught with tensions and resentment.[18]

17 | As Opiłowska (2009: 167) writes, the opening of the border was a great opportunity for the borderland, as it opened up the possibility of direct contacts and breaking barriers. Also at this time the residents of the German borderland decided to make visits to their places of origin. Striking was that in all those years the residents of the Western Lands had apparently not settled them. Opiłowska's German respondents "highlighted that the Poles living in their homes were asking them each time with fear in their voice if they wanted to return. The houses were mostly unkempt, dirty, and – what surprised them most – unchanged for many years. Germans could find there not only the same furniture, but also cups standing in the same cupboard or reference books on the same shelves" (ibid.). The contacts, after initial uncertainty with regard to the motives of the Germans' visit, became friendly. The German respondents highlight Polish hospitality, often accompanied with excessive alcohol consumption (ibid.).

18 | In addition to Opiłowska's account, Osękowski writes that not only Poles were afraid of the previous inhabitants. He writes that also the Germans who travelled to the villages where their family homes and apartments had been were very bitter about what they saw. During these so-called sentimental journeys, they "visited the cemeteries where they buried their loved ones. What they saw, in most of them caused sorrow and bitterness. Their former homes were generally unkempt and largely devastated, and the cemeteries overgrown with bushes and weeds. This situation negatively affected the relationship between the Poles and Germans, and fostered new prejudices. During the mid-70s, the Polish authorities had decided to liquidate German cemeteries, which caused even greater resent-

The tourist border traffic of Germans engaging in what was referred to as "sentimental journeys" and Poles desiring to see the neighboring country very quickly turned into a project of purely economic nature, responding to demands created by specific shortages in local markets. The situation began to resemble that of the immediate post-war years: niche markets in the supply of goods and services were identified and resulted in a growing grassroots cross-border import and export. The socialist state obviously kept control over the systemic regulation of employment but failed to control the local cross-border trade and movement of goods. While travelling, the people were able to see and estimate the scale of the existing imbalances in the supply of goods. Through purchases people were complementing the deficiencies in the domestic market, but in so doing they were also introducing the new goods onto the market. The state did not have any control over the distribution and price of these goods. Since in the planned economy system, the quantity of goods in the market is supposedly shaped not by demand but rather by the calculation of technocrats, this meant that "tourist traffic" was clearly damaging neighboring markets. "Tourist traffic" exposed the failure of the socialist planned economy and showed the true extent of the consumption needs of the two neighboring communities.[19] This "shopping tourism" became then a kind of a manifestation of the market characterized by a relatively free play of supply and demand. The market mechanisms developed "spontaneously, and the price difference between the two outlets (the famous *przebitka*, an extra profit from selling the goods) was one of the main motives for crossing the border" (Mazurek 2010: 108-9).

The first and main beneficiaries of these new developments became the communities located closest to the border areas. This contributed to an increase in the attractiveness of the border and borderland towns and villages. There was an influx of highly qualified workers. Cultural life, the economy, housing, and above all tourism flourished (Osękowski 2009: 148f.). As Mazurek (2010: 109) concludes, the border regions witnessed not only an increase in exchange of goods; it saw also an interpenetration of consumption models.

---

ment among the outraged former citizens of the so-called recovered territories" (Osękowski 2009: 150).

19 | It is worth noting that in the years 1972-1974 about 900 business units started collaborating in the borderland (Osękowski 2009: 156).

Another corollary of these practices was a conflict of values, which manifested itself on several levels. First, a distribution conflict emerged, i.e. the conflict over the value attributed to goods on the markets, and this was directly attributed to the fact that the distribution of goods (always limited) was strictly regulated by the state. If we assume that borderland is not only a category of space but rather also a place of where cultural models and value systems confront each other, the question arises of how cross-border distribution conflicts were different from local distribution conflicts. As Mazurek notices, Poles and Germans derived different meanings from the experience of shortage. An experience of shortage was a consequence of the constant problem of competition for access to goods. The spontaneous "free market" emerging across the border, implied intervening in the planned economies of the two regions and deepening the shortages. This caused the conflict over distribution of *limited* supplies, which in turn resulted in increase of xenophobic attitudes (Mazurek 2010: 116-7). The avalanche of Poles penetrating the East German market brought an unanticipated effect of increased hostility between the neighbors.

Conclusion

We have briefly outlined some of the historical features of the Polish-German relations in the new border region. The specific characteristic of this border was that the people inhabiting the area on both sides had no experience of neighborhood with each other. There was a language barrier, there were no mixed marriages, and it seemed that the state project to designate a border line in order to separate and repel was successful. Moreover, people living on both sides of the border were displaced persons and shared the traumatic experience of expulsion from their homeland. We have tried to show that, despite these obstacles, neighborly relations were in fact established in different periods. Not always friendly, however, they contributed to making the border a space of transition rather than a barrier space.

We have attempted to show how the territorial expansion of a state was performed by settlers forming a specific, "tidal" frontier. The dynamics of a frontier of the pioneers advancing into the newly acquired lands had direct impact on the way the space was imagined. The newcomers had lived in constant uncertainty and fear that they might lose their new

acquisitions. This, however, did not prevent them from negotiating the border and transcending post-war animosities in an attempt to establish a stable life in the divided cities in 1945-48. Only after this period, in 1950-72, when the border became closed completely, did the "frontier" became a "border" in Giddens' sense of the word. It divided two states understood as discrete, bounded, and completely sovereign entities. We have shown how in the later period, 1972-80, both states' economies, understood as discrete and bounded systems planned by their respective centers, were experiencing local intrusions in cross-border trade allowing for the (unplanned) circulation of goods between the two systems. These interpenetrations of different kinds have created a groundwork conducive to intercultural contact beyond the perimeters of the political control of the state. How these developments defined the qualities of the border and how they contributed to the current state of affairs is the topic of ongoing research.

References

Barth, Frederik (Ed.) (1992 [1969]): Ethnic Groups and Boundaries: The Social Organization of Culture Difference, Illinois: Waveland Press Inc.

Barthel Franziska (2010): "Auswirkungen der Immigration polnischer Bürger auf den Landkreis Uecker-Randow am Beispiel von Löcknitz: im Fokus: Wohnungsmarkt, Siedlungsentwicklung sowie Bildungs- und Erziehungseinrichtungen", in: Schriftenreihe der Hochschule Neubrandenburg.

Berdahl, Daphne (1999): Where the World Ended: Re-Unification and Identity in the German Borderland, Berkeley: UC Press.

Buchowski, Mihał (2004): "Granica a uprawianie antropologii – uwagi wstępne", in: Janusz Kamocki/Kwaśniewicz Władisław/Spis, Anna (eds.), Polska-Niemcy. Pogranicze kulturowe i etniczne, Wrocław-Poznań: Wydawnictwo Poznańskie.

Cohen, Anthony P. (1985), The Symbolic Construction of Community, London: Tavistock.

Cohen, Anthony P. (Ed.) (1986): Symbolising Boundaries: Identity and Diversity in British Cultures, Manchester: Manchester UP.

Cole, J.W./Wolf, E. R. 1999 [1974]: The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley, Berkeley: UC Press.

Donnan, Hastings (2001): "Anthropology of borders", in: Neil J. Smelser/Paul Baltes (eds.), International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences, vol 2, Amsterdam: Elsevier. pp. 1290-1293

Douglas, Mary (1966): Purity and danger, London: Routledge & Kegan Paul.

Eberhardt, Piotr (2010): Migracje polityczne na ziemiach polskich (1939-1950), Poznań: Instytut Zachodni.

Gennep, Aranold van, (1981 [1909]): Les rites de passage. Paris: Picard.

Giddens, Anthony (1987): The Nation-State and Violence, Berkeley: UC Press.

Górny, Konrad/Marczyk, Mirosław (2009): "Lubomierz – czy można odzyskać miasto niechciane?", in: Konrad Górny/Mirosław Marczyk (eds.), Antropologiczne badania zmiany kulturowej. Społeczno-kulturowe aspekty transformacji systemowej w Polsce, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Bigi.

Gupta, Akhil/Ferguson James (1992): "Beyond "Culture": Space, Identity, and the Politics of Difference, in: Cultural Anthropology 7 (1), pp. 6-23.

Hann, Chris/Dunn, Elizabeth (eds.) (1996): Civil Society: Challenging Western Models, London: Routledge.

Kochanowski, Jerzy (2008): Zanim powstała NRD. Polska wobec radzieckiej strefy okupacyjnej Niemiec 1945-1949, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe.

Kopytoff, Igor (1987): The African Frontier. The Reproduction of traditional African Societies. Bloomington: Indiana UP.

Kopytoff, Igor (1999): "The Internal African Frontier: Cultural Conservatism and Ethnic Innovation", in: Michael Rösler/Tobias Wendl (eds.), Frontiers and Borderlands: Anthropological Perspectives, Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lang, pp. 31-44.

Lamar, Howard/Thompson, Leonard (eds.) (1981): The Frontier in History. North America and South Africa Compared. New Haven: Yale UP.

Ładykowski, Paweł (2011): "The Emerging Polish-German Borderland: The Past and the Present", in: Baltic Journal of European Studies 1 (2), pp. 167-191.

Malicki, Maciej/Żychiewicz, Tadeusz (1957), "Kraków – Zgorzelec – Szczecin. (Dziennik Podróży).", Tygodnik Powszechny, No. 23 (http://tygodnik.onet.pl/1547,1438590,dzial.html.)

Mazurek, Małgorzata (2010): Społeczeństwo kolejki. O doświadczeniach niedoboru 1945-1989. Warszawa: Wydawnictwo Trio.

Osękowski, Czesław (2009): "Sstosunki i pogranicze Polski z Niemiecką Republiką Demokratyczną latach siedemdziesiątych", in: Kerski, Basil/Andrzej Kotula/Krysztof Ruchniewicz/Kazimierz Wóycicki (eds.), Przyjaźń nakazana? Stosunki między NRD i Polską w latach 1949-1990, Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe.

Opiłowska, Elżbieta (2009): "Stosunki między Polską a NRD w pamięci mieszkańców pogranicza", in: Kerski/Kotula/Ruchniewicz/Wóycicki (eds.), Przyjaźń nakazana?.

Pietrowicz, Aleksandra (2005): "Ziemia Odzyskana nie-obiecana (Sytuacja na Pomorzu Zachodnim w świetle raportu Sekcji Zachodniej Delegatury Rządu RP na Kraj)", in: Biuletyn IPN, No. 9-10.

Polak, Barbara (2005: "Polski Dziki Zachód. Ze Stanisławem Jankowskim. Czesławem Osękowskim i Włodzimierzem Sulelą rozmawia Barbara Polak", in: Biuletyn IPN, No. 9-10.

Roszko, Edyta (2011): Spirited Dialogues: Contestations over the Religious Landscape in Central Vietnam's Littoral Society, dissertation, Halle (Saale): Max-Planck Institute for Social Anthropology

Segeš Frelak, Justyna/Kriszan, Agnes (2012): "Charakterystyka pogranicza polsko-niemieckiego i społeczności loklanych objętych badaniem", in: Agnieszka Lady/Justyna Segeš Frelak (eds.), Znikająca granica. Nowa polska migracja do Niemiec – perspektywa lokalna, Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, pp. 33-50.

Turner, Frederick Jackson (1994 [1893]): The Significance of the Frontier in American History and Other Essays. New Haven/London: Yale UP.

Turner, Victor (1967): The Forest of Symbols. Aspects of Ndebu Ritual, Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP.

Turner, Victor (1969): The Ritual Process. Structure and Anti-Structure, New York: Aldine.

Urban, Rudolf (2009), Życie i dzieło Güntera Särchena dla pojednania niemiecko-polskiego,Wrocław: Oficyna Wydawnicza Atut – Wrocławskie Wydawnictwo Oświatowe.

Wedel, Joachim von (2009): "Sytuacja na granicy polsko-niemieckiej jako symptom stanu projektu 'państwo narodowe'", in: Jarosław Jańczak/Magdalena Musiał-Karg, M. (eds.), Pogranicze Polsko-Niemieckie po 2004 Roku: Nowa Jakość Sąsiedztwa?, Toruń: Adam Marszałek.

Wendl, Tobias/Rösler, Michael (1999): "Introduction: Frontiers and borderlands. The rise and relevance of an anthropological research genre", in: Rösler/Wendl (eds.), Frontiers and Borderlands.

Wilson, Thomas. M./Donnan, Hstings (1998): "Nation, state and identity at international borders", in: Thomas M. Wilson/Hasting Donnan (eds.), Border Identities: Nation and State at International Frontiers, Cambridge: Cambridge UP.

Wilson, Thomas M./Donnan, Hastings (2005), "Territory, identity and the places-in-between: Culture and power in European borderlands", in: Thomas M. Wilson/Hastings Donnan (eds.), Culture and Power at the Edges of the State: national Support and Subversion in European Border Regions, Münster: Lit.