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Perpetual borders: German-Polish cross-border contacts in the Szczecin area

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To my family.

Abstract

Borderlands are often peripheral geographically, administratively, and economically. A particularly illustrative case is the Szczecin area at the border between Poland and Germany, where a large city on one side neighbours to a sparsely populated hinterland on the other. There is a number of similar cases throughout Europe, but studies on them point to a mixed level of linkages following the opening and removal of the physical border.

At the project's start there were few if any studies on the Szczecin area per se, which was here studied through various methods. On the one hand, different pre-EU enlargement plans and visions for the area's development were compared with practices and realities of recent years. This shows that earlier imaginations on the development potentials have not quite materialised, although some of them were probably too optimistic and ambitious from the beginning. Some of the area's potentials following EU-enlargement have been more successfully exploited than others, and disproportionately by actors coming from outside. On the other hand, cross-border contacts were studied in the discourses on and attitudes towards the other side among local and regional elites, and among local residents more generally. This revealed a polarised attitudinal landscape, not least when compared to country-wide opinion surveys in both Germany and Poland. This is in line with other studies showing that identities are particularly accentuated in border situations, where the Other is more frequently encountered.

These results support recent investigations pointing to a continued relevance of the border even after the physical barriers are removed. At the same time, another contribution of this work to border studies is that the time and contingency of the importance of identities and of the border needs more attention. In the Szczecin area, awareness of national identities and of the boundary appeared to be particularly high just after changes in the border's status occurred – i.e. in 1989–1991, and then around the years 2007–2010. But while its importance may be fluctuating over time, given the opportunities and resources the boundary provides it will always be maintained in some forms.

Keywords: cross-border regional development, Polish-German border, Szczecin, (national) identities, border attitudes, the Other

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Stockholm, March 2014

Contents

Preface

This doctoral dissertation is part of the output of the interdisciplinary research project 'The influence of political territorial hierarchies on local development and relations in cross-border areas: the role of Szczecin as a central place in relation to the divided Pomeranian hinterland' (nr. 3016801). The project ran from 2008 through 2013 and was financed by the Baltic Sea Foundation[1], based at the Centre for Baltic and East European Studies (CBEES)[2] at Södertörn University, Sweden. It was coordinated by one of my supervisors, Professor Thomas Lundén (Human geography), and by Professor Anders Mellbourn (Political science), both part-time. Another political scientist, Doctor Joachim von Wedel, was a post-doc in the project during 2009–2010. Apart of being a project member I myself have been enrolled in the PhD program of the Department of Human Geography at Stockholm University, Sweden. My supervisor at the Department was Professor Gunnel Forsberg.

A unique feature of our research team lay in the members' various backgrounds, which combined proved to have bi-disciplinary and multinational[3] characteristics. As always, this could at times pose a few challenges. Doctor von Wedel has been based in Berlin, implying that the rest of us could meet him in person just a few times per semester, either at CBEES or in our study area, conducting fieldwork together or participating in local professional events including conferences. Nevertheless, the long distances could of course occasionally imply smaller challenges to our common work. At the same time, Doctor von Wedel's presence in Berlin has been a great help for establishing contacts and organising practical matters in the study area.

Professor Lundén has studied borders since the early 1970s, with an emphasis on their impact on the individual's spatial behaviour and needs (1973, 2004). His particular interests include the relation between borders and language, ethnicity, religion (2011a), and education (2011b).

Professor Mellbourn has besides academia a background in journalism and foreign policy analysis. Thus his role in the team included contacts with media: he co-authored an article with Professor Lundén in a Swedish major daily (2008). Professor Mellbourn was also active during our interviews with local elites (see especially Paper III). Moreover, he co-authored the first academic contribution of the project (Paper I).

[1] The homepage of the Foundation is: http://ostersjostiftelsen.se/in-english
[2] The homepage of the Centre is: http://webappl.web.sh.se/p3/ext/content.nsf/aget?openagent&key=about_us_1301902860317
[3] Find more on this in Paper III as well as in sub-chapter 2.2.

Doctor von Wedel's written contributions within the project's framework include an article on the "re-medievalisation" of European borders on the example of our case (2010a), and one on the cross-border cooperation of religious communities in the area (2010b).

My own main interest has been cross-boundary relations in Central and Eastern Europe. After a historical period of mutual isolation in the 'short twentieth century'[4], what happens between these countries and peoples when physical borders are gradually opened?

[4] Hobsbawm (1994) used this notion to classify the period 1914-1989/91, which he saw as the disastrous failures of state communism, capitalism, and nationalism. I borrow it here as the same time-span also marks a historical period of closed borders, which from a longue durée perspective is fairly unusual.

1 Introduction

Conditions for cross-border flows have altered tremendously in the past two–three decades, since political borders – at least in parts of the world – are increasingly open. Liberalisation, deregulation, and transformation of what predominantly were Keynesian economic systems are some of the major contributing forces to this new-old state of affairs. Within the European Union (EU), the parallel processes of European integration are an important element of the easing of borders. Some of the milestones in this development have been the launching of support programs for institutionalised cooperation between local authorities at the borders of European Community Member States. The first so-called Euroregion was established already in 1958 in the Dutch-German borderland; since then, this and other forms of cross-border cooperation have developed throughout the continent (Perkmann 2003: 154), including the Interreg-programmes (Medeiros 2011) launched in 1989.

In the Central and East European context, permeable borders are a more recent phenomenon. Despite the rhetoric of socialist brotherhood (Zatlin 2007: 683), the states of the Eastern bloc kept their boundaries hermetically sealed in order to avoid any potential conflicts with their neighbouring countries (whose populations often included ethnic minorities of the titular nations of the surrounding entities[5]), and to strengthen cohesion within their own domains. It is thus an irony of history that the socialist regimes contributed at least as much to strengthen the national identities of their subjects as did non-socialist ones. As is often the case, the logic of nation- or community-building ideology implied the inclusion of some and the exclusion of others.

A series of historical events since the change of system in 1989 have then triggered a wide range of developments that came to transform the relations between these countries. At the same time, the specific development trajectories of Central and East Europe are more and more relativised (FSO 2009), for at least two reasons. One, these countries are increasingly treated within a European context. Second, deeper integration processes have begun relatively recently even in Western Europe[6], with the establishment of the Schengen Area of open borders being an important milestone in the early 1990s. Indeed, the growing scale of some of the border-transgressing developments that are the subject of this work – such as cross-border commuting and residential mobility (Paper IV), or trans-border spatial planning (Papers II, III, and partly I) – are relatively new in most of Europe. Thus studying the effects of such trends on citizens' identities and attitudes (Paper IV) began only more recently.

[5] The Hungarian-Romanian border is illustrative here, which according to Toca (2012) was one of Europe's most closed ones during this time.

[6] The exceptions here are perhaps the Benelux and the Nordic countries, which started deeper cooperation already from the mid-twentieth century on, including the freedom to travel etc.

This dissertation is a compilation thesis where a larger theoretical framework is supported by a number of smaller studies, united by their focus on the same geographic area, the German-Polish borderland around Szczecin. The individual studies (Papers I–IV) are preceded by a comprehensive summary, itself divided into six chapters. Following this short introductory chapter, chapter 2 presents the motivations, aims, methods, as well as the key concepts of the research project. Chapter 3 introduces Polish-German relations in general, and in the study area in particular. Chapter 4 presents three different but related conceptual approaches to the study of borders, supported by a number of empirical examples and observations from the study area and beyond. Chapter 5 briefly summarises and complements the individual papers. Finally, chapter 6 makes attempts at some general conclusions based on both this text and the papers.

2 The research project

2.1 Background and motivation

Our interest for the study area (Figure 1) was triggered by a number of developments that followed the EU's enlargement to include Poland (as well as other countries in East Central Europe). Hundreds of Poles from the border-near city of Szczecin started moving to cheaper or better housing just across the border in Germany, and commuting to their jobs and relatives in the Polish city. People in western Poland have increasingly been using the airports in Berlin, with Germans more and more frequently visiting shops, markets, hairdressers, taking advantage of wellness and cultural offers on the Polish side. At the same time, there was a knowledge vacuum on the effects of such developments in general, and in this geographic area in particular. A number of studies have already been conducted on the "divided cities" along the famous Oder-Neisse river border (Stokłosa 2003, Asher & Jańczak 2007), but the borderland around Szczecin, which is by far the largest city along the Polish-German border, appeared as understudied.

Figure 1. Two maps of the German-Polish borderland around Szczecin. The orange broken line marks the border between Germany and Poland, with the dotted purple lines indicating the borders of sub-state entities.

Source: DeLore World Basemap – ESRI (2013)

Source: DeLore World Basemap – ESRI (2012)

Interlinkages between two sides of a borderland are not necessarily taking place just because physical barriers are lifted: there must often be a motivation there for crossing an international boundary, an action that in most parts of the world remains concomitant with bureaucratic or socio-linguistic challenges. In our area, one such driving force that we observed at the start were the obvious asymmetries characterising the two sides of the boundary. On the Polish side we have a large city located right at the border, Szczecin, with over 400,000 inhabitants. At the same time, the German side is characterised by a very sparse population and high out-migration (Reichert-Schick 2010). Scott noted already in the nineties that this area is "a highly polarized cross-border region with the important Baltic port city of Szczecin and its sparsely populated hinterland" (1998: 612), but to the best of our knowledge the case has not been dealt with at greater length, certainly at the time of the project's start. From a theoretical perspective at least, such a situation would imply that when the physical barriers – the state border – are abandoned various rural–urban relations should develop, such as suburbanisation, commuting, and the use of recreational areas by city-residents. Such developments have been observed in similar cases across Europe, like Basel, Geneva, Lille, Luxembourg, Saarbrücken,

Strasbourg (Decoville & al. 2010), Trieste (Jagodic 2012), and Oradea (Toca 2012). Before Poland joined the Schengen Area, a lack of Szczecin's influence on its hinterland was noted by for instance Heinrichs (2006: 656). Yet increased links would also mean that private and public services such as schools and kindergartens that are being shut down on the German side could be maintained by an influx of new inhabitants from the large neighbouring city. This could in turn save local jobs and alleviate the emigration of local German inhabitants. Scott raised a warning finger by pointing out the severe economic situation in the area:

> [t]he postponement of infrastructural improvements … could have long-term detrimental impacts on most of the border region as it would effectively isolate large portions of northern Brandenburg, eastern Mecklenburg-Vorpommern (including the industrial centre of Schwedt), and the Polish voivodships of Szczecin and Gorzow from future east-west and north-south transportation flows. (Scott 1998: 615)

Accordingly, a number of commentators and decision-makers not least in Germany and Poland[7] have been expecting that the strong spatial asymmetries between the two sides of the Polish-German borderland near Szczecin could and should after the opening of the border trigger a dynamic cross-border development, leading to substantial interlinkages and to the gradual diminishing of various types of imbalances. Whether this is proving to be the case should be of interest not just to border studies and human geography but also to other fields such as regional studies, spatial planning, (trans)nationalism studies, international relations (IR), as well as European studies. More specifically, as the developments at stake are taking place in the context of an EU and Schengen enlargement, the experiences of this case should be of interest to other areas finding themselves in a similar situation in the present or in the future (e.g. Subotica at the Serbian-Hungarian border or Uzhhorod at the Ukrainian-Slovak border).

2.2 Aim and research questions

That the above expectations are being materialised is of course not at all obvious, for several reasons. One, as described in chapter 3, German-Polish relations have been far from free of controversies up until very recently, with some of these burdens lingering on. Second, even if the two nations manage to process the dark sides of their shared history, increased contacts will not automatically lead to an improvement of relations and thus to significantly increased contacts across the border: several studies point out that even when actors are engaged in cross-border cooperation, national structures can be sustained or even strengthened (see 4.2). Yet in some comparable cases (see 2.1, 4.2.3), significant synergies have been taking place.

Thus the overarching aim of the thesis is *to analyse how the opening of the physical border affects the two sides of the northern Polish-German borderland*. This is of course a rather general formulation, and the individual papers were guided by more specific goals and questions. Nevertheless, it reflects the underlying interest throughout the research project.

[7] See Paper II and sub-chapter 3.3 for references.

The main research question is: *In which respects has the gradual opening of the border been leading to Szczecin's emergence as a cross-border centre of the northern Polish-German borderland, as predicted or desired by a number of commentators?* This larger question was broken down to more specific questions that guided the individual papers, namely: How and why has the opening of the border affected both sides in terms of

- cross-border cooperation, spatial planning and regional development? (Papers I and II)
- discourses, decisions and actions of local and regional elites? (Paper III)
- attitudes of local German and Polish residents towards each other? (Paper IV)

A secondary research question is: Are the attitudes of Germans and Poles towards each other different at the border in the study area compared to the bi-national level at large?

2.3 Delimitations

Setting the time limit is of course rarely an easy task when we are dealing with societal processes that often articulate themselves in a time-span of at least several years. In Central and Eastern Europe, we are lucky to have an important milestone of 1989, the year when all the Soviet satellites of the region have begun opening their borders to the outside world, and ironically also towards each other. Between the EU and Poland, all barriers to trade shall have been eliminated already in the 1990s (Pásztor 2013: 67). Of course the country's entrance to the Union in May 2004 strengthened ties further and joining the Schengen Area in December 2007 made travelling and moving easier. Finally, Germany's lifting of temporary restrictions on labour from the new member states in May 2011 abolished the last formal barrier to full mobility between the two countries. Thus while the time limit is the period since the turn of events in 1989, the years since EU enlargement stand in the forefront of interest. This gave a time-span of a few years to see in which directions cross-border trends are developing.

The spatial delimitation is perhaps even more challenging. At least among (Anglo-Saxon) social scientists[8], there is today a general consensus that all demarcations in space – just as in time – are social constructions made to serve various purposes: in the case of scholars, at best mostly for the sake of "researchability". Meanwhile, the 'spatial turn' (Warf & Arias 2009, Döring & Thielmann 2008) has challenged earlier ideas of space and distance being fixed and stable. Seen from this perspective, the city of Szczecin for instance is apart from its physical location everywhere where it is made present or revoked: in cross-border networks ranging much further than its direct hinterland, like twinning projects and partner cities (Dorsch 2003); in cyberspace; and in the minds and memories of people who have some relation to the city such as former or occasional residents (e.g. expellees, dissidents, migrants) as well as other visitors (e.g. tourists, businesspeople, researchers). Nevertheless, what we found most interesting in the chosen study area is that a large city is located right at an international border but entirely in one state, and it is the consequences of this reality that constitutes the

[8] That this approach is not quite as established outside "Anglo-Saxon social sciences" and among practitioners can be evidenced by the concepts presented in sub-chapter 3.3 and Papers I, II, and III.

project's focus. Thus the maps in Figure 1 by and large depict the geographic area under scrutiny.

2.4 Methodology and data

For the common part of the project, the team's main method of collecting primary sources was conducting elite interviews with a wide range of actors on both sides of the border. This included local and regional public officials, policy-makers, academics, but also journalists, businesspersons, politicians, and others. These encounters took place during the years 2008–2010 and constitute the empirical basis of Paper III in particular, in which a wide range of methodological considerations on conducting elite interviews are discussed. Further, all our six common visits to the study area included making observations and writing field-notes, checked and revised by all participants directly upon return. A large number of media reports, especially newspaper articles from local, national and international sources have been used.

My own single main empirical contribution was a survey carried out with both Polish and German residents in the borderland[9]. This was guided by the methodological considerations of Brennan and Xu (2009) among others. I furthermore used and analysed secondary sources of various kinds, including academic as well as non-academic publications, reports and statistics from different governmental and non-governmental organisations (NGOs)[10].

To a certain extent this work deals with territorial cohesion, which is often studied through quantitative methods. While this research does involve quantitative elements (Paper IV), it is predominantly based on qualitative methods. This can be motivated by the fact that "[o]nly very limited data exist at regional level (NUTS 3) and that which exist mainly focuses on economic concerns. The environmental side is far less well represented and the situation is even worse in relation to social data" (Hamez 2005: 401). Thus scholars focusing on cross-border developments often rely on gathering their own material, as our research team did (I especially collected own data for Paper IV).

One way of investigating to what extent cross-border dynamics have been taking place in the study area is to compare the situation of the past few years with various earlier expectations from the 1990s. It is namely since 1989 that visions of exchange could openly be discussed under democratic conditions – i.e. involving not just top political officials but a large number of societal actors. Such ideas and visions are described in sub-chapter 3.3 as well as in Paper II. Another strategy I used (especially in this comprehensive summary and in Paper IV) was to keep an eye on developments in other comparable European border-cities such as Trieste, Bratislava, or Oradea. However, a full-fledged comparison is beyond the scope of this project as it was designed to be a case study.

[9] See Paper IV and the questionnaires in the Appendix.
[10] See especially Paper II and this comprehensive summary.

The theoretical approaches that inspired my work predominantly – but not exclusively[11] – come from the field of border studies (see sub-chapters 4.1 and 4.2). The combined results will then serve as a foundation for a final discussion including conclusions (chapter 6).

2.5 Self-positioning and reflexivity

In the 1990s an important debate emerged – especially among feminist geographers – on reflexivity. Haraway (1991) made the claim that all knowledge is situated, though she still believed that by thorough self-reflection researchers can gain more objective knowledges (Haraway 1991: 190–191). While stressing the importance of reflection, McDowell (1992) and McLafferty (1995) similarly held on to that in certain circumstances it is important to offer an assertive claim to truthful knowledge. Rose (1997) subsequently criticised the above approaches for not having left ideals of an objective science far enough behind. Instead, her intervention emphasised the many uncertainties in knowledge-production: "the questions are so presumptuous about the reflective, analytical power of the researcher, that I want to say that they should be simply unanswerable: we should not imagine we can answer them" (Rose 1997: 311). Rose then proposed "to produce nongeneralizing knowledges that can learn from other kinds of knowledges" (1997: 318). While these approaches constituted an important contribution, such sometimes over-cautious positions regarding the status of sciences and knowledge have more recently been criticised (Boghossian 2006). The problem is not only that they put heavy breaks on attempts at theory-building that by nature imply generalisations, but also that significant insights produced – whether with the ambition to empower certain marginalised groups, or "just" for the sake of analysis and problem-solving – run the risk of being downplayed to the degree of appearing as irrelevant. At the same time, this is not to say that reflexivity should not be exercised at all instances where claims to knowledge-production are made. As noted in the previous sub-chapter, one way of increasing reliability is to check one's results against other studies, preferably on the same geographic area or population but also on similar cases. This strategy has frequently been adopted throughout this work.

Since questions related to nationality and ethnicity form a crucial aspect of this project, it is only appropriate to reflect on these elements at greater length. Three out of the four members of the research team have got a neither German nor Polish background, which we nevertheless experienced to have contributed to an interesting outsider-perspective on the study area (Paper III). It is also true that while all of us speak German and one of us even comes from Germany, only one member – Dr. von Wedel – is fluent in Polish. This could bias the amount and nature of the data collected in the two languages.[12] This situation could only to a limited extent be counterbalanced by the few Polish language courses that I took. Then again, there are of course some secondary data available on the study area in English and Swedish that I used. Further, using English with our Polish informants generally worked out relatively well. But

[11] Especially the sources used in sub-chapter 4.3 present an attempt to enrich this work as well as border studies with influences not directly associated with the field.

[12] It should be noted here that several references quoted in the bibliography in German or English are originally Polish sources, directly or indirectly transmitted into one of the former two languages.

one cannot rule out that using the mother tongue of one group of informants and mostly a foreign language with another could create some difference in the level of proximity obtained.

Interestingly, our concern with the study area as a research team from Sweden could at a few occasions arise curiosity among interviewees and others. In some cases, explicit hints on the fact that the area has a Swedish history (in the 17th century) were articulated – as if to sense our reactions upon raising this aspect. At such occasions we would particularly stress that our interest lay in the much more recent dynamics of Polish-German relations. While we have not studied Swedish engagement in the area per se, our modest impression is in line with Bojar's (1996: 442) earlier observation that Swedish interest for these lands are rather limited. Still, the experiences described above illustrate the comparatively strong historical consciousness in Central European societies.

In her dissertation Swedish ethnologist Lindelöf (2006: 39–40) discusses her position in her research environment in Poland, reporting on questions about her language skills and social ties to the country by the locals, including academic colleagues. These questions hardly led her to feel less qualified for the research task; instead, she acknowledges to have produced a different study (*cf*. Rose 1997: 313). "The fieldwork was successful, even if it was difficult for instance to listen in eavesdrop on the bus or at the cashier or to read short notes on the pin-board of the student dormitory. Thus I focused more on the interview material", she writes (Lindelöf 2006: 39). While I can identify with Lindelöf's experiences, despite my limited skills in Polish I tried to use as many opportunities as possible to get into a conversation with locals on the Polish side of the study area as well (during the use of public transport, at the bar etc.), in English or Polish[13]. This means that my positionality as an outsider is perhaps even more complex than discussed in Paper III, even though the latter dealt with the whole research group. A number of factors could have served to alleviate my otherness in various situations, such as my background in Hungary, a society very comparable to the Polish (and formerly to the East German); my gender when I spoke to other men; my age upon contact with similarly aged people; or my background in large European cities when I talked with Szczeciners. All these conditions make my – as anyone's – position unique, but do not make the interpretative tools less valid or applicable (*cf*. Lindelöf 2006: 40).

Depending on the research questions posed, some of the positions also mentioned above appear as more important than others. Whether the fact that all members of the research team are male influences the results of our project to a significant extent seems somewhat doubtful, but can never be ruled out entirely. A majority of our interviewees – who were predominantly chosen for the position they are in – indeed happened to be men[14]. On the brighter side, my informants in the survey were very evenly balanced between women and men (Paper IV).

[13] While no direct references are made to these private conversations, they were largely in line with and perhaps even contributed to shaping the conclusions in this work.
[14] See some reasons for and reflections around this in Paper III.

2.6 Some key concepts

This sub-chapter does not aim at giving a full account of the concepts below, but at explaining how they are commonly used and how I chose to use them.

Generally speaking, the distinction between the terms 'border', 'boundary', and to a lesser extent 'frontier' appears to be increasingly blurred. This is evidenced when for instance comparing the entries in the fourth (Johnston & al. 2000) and the fifth (Gregory & al. 2009) edition of The Dictionary of Human Geography. An important element that is also a potential source of confusion is which concepts are or should be used to denote a more narrow understanding referring to physical lines of separation, versus a broader notion involving wider aspects of social differentiation. According to the fourth edition, "[t]he terms border and frontier … seem more 'matter of fact', referring to legal or official boundary lines and zonal areas, respectively. Boundaries involve perceptions by one or other parties of features that distinguish them from one another" (Johnston & al. 2000: 52). The entry notes that some writers are using these two concepts in exactly the opposite way, but that the first distinction "seems best to endorse" due to its prevalence (ibid). While I did my best to use these notions consistently according to this recommendation, a fully coherent application is obviously not possible because of quotations. Moreover, the above mentioned distinction is even less apparent in the fifth edition. While that version defines 'border' as a "form of boundary associated with the rise of the modern nation-state and the establishment of an inter-state geopolitical order" (Gregory & al. 2009: 52), thus signifying a narrower meaning, it goes on to stress the importance of social as well as state practices that produce and reinforce political borders. Yet the social dimension is perhaps also here more pronounced in the definition of 'boundary', described as a marker and maker of regulative authority, including the lines separating states as much as "racially, religiously, and/or sexually exclusive boundaries" (Gregory & al. 2009: 55).

'Frontier' then is similarly defined in the two editions as referring "either to the political division between two countries or to the settled and uninhabited parts of a country" (Johnston & al. 2000: 282, *cf*. Gregory & al. 2009: 264). While the first meaning obviously appears as synonymous with 'border' or political boundary, the second one also discusses the term's socio-historical importance for nation-building, not least in the American context. Whereas 'frontier' is less common with European border scholars writing in English (borderland is more common), I will later show that it has some relevance in my study area (see 4.1). By and large, however, this notion indeed has a more historical connotation, linked with the historic expansion of states like Russia or the USA. The confusion of the above terms can also be seen in the light of that most other European languages lack a distinction between them. Germanic languages other than English use the word *Grenze* or something very similar, which was in fact borrowed into German from the Polish word *granica* in the 13th century (Czarnecki 2000 cited by Lipczuk 2001). A German word similar to frontier is perhaps the equally historical term *Mark* (related to the English word 'march'), in my study area exemplified by such place names as Uckermark.

The terms ‘ethnicity’ and ‘nation’ are even more complicated, partly as they mean different things in different contexts. According to Gregory and others (2009: 214), “ethnicity is one of the most difficult concepts in the social sciences to define: researchers disagree on the meaning of the term; social groups differ in their expressions of ethnicity; and some theorists challenge the credibility of the concept in the first place”. But their description that “ethnicity is seen as both a way in which individuals define their personal identity and a type of social stratification that emerges when people form groups based on their real or perceived origins” (Gregory & al. 2009: 214) is fairly plausible. Not least Anglo-Saxon authors commonly use ‘nation’ and ‘state’ as synonyms, but in much of the world – including Central and Eastern Europe – the distinction between the two is significant, with the result that nationality and ethnicity do not necessarily overlap. I paid attention to this distinction wherever possible (i.e. not in quotes).

The term ‘nation-state’ does not feature in this work not just for the aforementioned reason, but also for its traditionally normative assumption. As Gregory and others (2009: 489) put it,

> The hyphen in nation-state has traditionally symbolized the articulation of nationalism with the development of the modern state… None of these articulations have ever been comprehensive and complete, and while most nation-states presume to govern all inhabitants as if they were a single nation, in practice they often also dominate and marginalize populations who speak minority languages, identify with minority ethnic communities and/or who live in borderlands.[15]

Although more debated in the 1980s and 1990s (Gregory & al. 2009: 631–632), the notion of ‘region’ is not too simple either. Today, most geographers probably agree that “regions are based on socially constructed generalizations about the world, that their delimitation and representation are artefactual but not purely fictions” (Gregory & al. 2009: 630). A definition that would suit my purposes well in this context is that of “an area or zone of indeterminate size on the surface of the Earth, whose diverse elements form a functional association” (ibid). Yet given that the term ‘area’ seems less loaded than ‘region’ – the former does not even have its own entry in The Dictionary of Human Geography (Gregory & al. 2009) – I tried to avoid using the latter in connection with my study area, which I tend to call exactly that, or simply the Szczecin area. The idea behind this was to abstain from those regionalist – and close to deterministic – discourses that see the two sides of the border as “naturally” belonging together[16].

[15] See also Flint & Taylor (2007).
[16] See more of this discussion including examples in Paper II.

3 The study area

Before dwelling deeper into the particular area under scrutiny, the bi-national relations more generally are briefly introduced.

3.1 Polish-German relations since World War II

3.1.1 The bi-national relations between 1945 and 1989

As poor as Germany's relations already were with its neighbouring countries due to the war, its ties with Central and Eastern Europe became even more strained due to the expulsion of most ethnic Germans from the region in the direct post-war years[17]. This is especially true for Poland, for at least three reasons. During the war, it was arguably here that the Third Reich committed the toughest atrocities. After the war, it was mostly to Poland that Germany lost a significant share (one third) of its pre-war territory. Last but not least, it was from Poland that the largest number of Germans were expelled – some five million according to Davies (2001: 4).

Despite finding themselves in the same political-economic bloc, the regimes of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and of the Polish People's Republic were from time to time launching propaganda campaigns against each other's countries, not least when they went through crises of public confidence and felt a need to emphasise the image of an enemy, or at least of an Other.

The physical traces of such policies can still be read in the landscape, not least in the form of numerous memorials, statues and monuments that were raised to commemorate events from the Second World War as long back in history as the clashes between Germanic and Slavic tribes in the tenth century (Asher & Jańczak 2007). Such sites of remembrance were not uncommonly located in the borderland (see e.g. Figure 2), sometimes even visible to those neighbours against whom they were targeted. The Battle of Cedynia/Zehden in the year 972 for instance was largely unknown in Poland before World War II, but was mystified and instrumentalised by post-war Polish propaganda to justify the Oder-Neisse boundary (which in 1945 made this formerly German town Poland's westernmost settlement), and rendered into a German-Polish battle to underline the doctrine of 'eternal German-Polish enmity' (Gerstenberg & Midalski 2008: 79–82). Several memorials were erected to that effect near Cedynia – located half way between Szczecin and Berlin –, including a fifteen-metre-tall

[17] For detailed accounts of the post-WWII expulsion of ethnic Germans from the whole of Central and Eastern Europe, see Rock & Wolff (2002) and Kossert (2008).

concrete statue of a Polish eagle on a sword that oversees the town and the Oder River from Czcibor's Mountain (Figure 2). After the change of system the propagandistic approach was discarded, but the battle retained some prominence and is included in modern Polish curricula (Gerstenberg & Midalski 2008: 82–83).

Figure 2. The Polish eagle on a sword at Cedynia, overseeing the Oder River Valley from a hilltop.

Source: author's photo, September 2013

The Polish-German (from 1949 East German) border itself remained contested after the war particularly in West Germany, with expellee organisations lobbying against its recognition. In the GDR the state borders could not be questioned publicly, but remained strongly controlled nevertheless. Yet in the early 1970s West and East Germany finally recognised each other and thereby their borders (Kamusella 2010), leading the GDR to open up for passport-free travel from the Polish People's Republic (see 3.2). However, with the strengthening of the Solidarity movement in Poland in the early 1980s, East Germany again closed the border. Thus apart of the détente period, the Cold War has seen a hermetically sealed boundary between Germans and Poles, leading to a very limited scale of contacts.

3.1.2 German-Polish relations since 1989

Generally speaking, bilateral relations have significantly improved since the turn of events in 1989. After its reunification Germany (re-)confirmed the recognition of its borders within a few months, and the two countries signed bilateral agreements already in 1990 committing themselves to work for good neighbourly relations (Kamusella 2010).

There was a shorter shaky period in the mid-2000s (Bender 2005), not least when Poland was ruled by leaders demonstrating considerable anti-foreign and not least anti-German sentiment. It was also during these years that Germany's then-Chancellor Gerhard Schröder agreed with Russia to build the Nord Stream gas pipeline, leading some Polish politicians to see parallels with the Molotov-Ribbentrop pact (Leonard & Popescu 2007: 4).

In the more recent past, however, inter-state relations have improved to become as good as perhaps never before. In the midst of the euro-crisis, the Polish Foreign Minister famously declared that he is now more worried about a passive than an active Germany (Trudell 2011). Such a statement needs also to be seen in the light of both countries being regarded to have pulled through the economic crisis in 2009–2010 better than most others in Europe. On the one hand, German interest in Poland and Eastern Europe should be little surprising: with 12% of German foreign exports landing there and production costs remaining low, most companies kept making profits in the region even at a time when the economies of those countries were in decline (Handelsblatt 2009). On the other hand, according to Newnham (2007) while Germany acted out of national interest when it was among the strongest supporters of Polish EU membership, the results were positive for both countries. One fourth of Poland's overall trade is now conducted with Germany, and 40% of those exports are later marketed through German brands (Gnauck 2014). Further, Poland is the largest net-receiver of EU funds at least in absolute numbers (ibid). At the same time the EU's Cohesion policy – i.e. resources to poorer regions – for instance are proving to be mutually beneficial, as companies from net-payer countries investing in the new Member States are also allocated money (Zawistowski 2011).

Similarly to the field of political economy a wide range of common actions and initiatives are taking place between Polish and German NGOs and civil society members. True, many of the exchange programs on different levels are supported by top-down organs such as EU- or national institutions, but interest in them appears to be fairly strong. A big share of the events announced on the largest German-language forum for actors interested in Eastern Europe, *Junge Osteuropa Experten*[18], deals with various aspects of Polish society and culture, or German-Polish bilateral relations. This wide range of events includes presentations of new publications, open lectures, cultural events, language courses, summer schools, various programs for multiplicators, and so on. The much improved bi-national relations over the past years are not least a result of the long-term efforts of a number of by now well-established initiatives such as the Foundation of Polish-German Cooperation, and civil society formations like the *Deutsch-Polnische Gesellschaft* that has local branches throughout Germany as well as in Warsaw. Some of the initiatives – such as the German-Polish Youth Office – particularly target young people; there even exist school-books on the history and relations of the two countries (e.g. Kneip & Mack 2007).

[18] The homepage of the forum is http://www.joe-list.de/. The mailing list has reached close to 12,000 members in February 2014 (JOE-Redaktion 2014).

Interdisciplinary research specifically on Poland is conducted in Germany at a number of universities, for instance in Frankfurt (Oder), Jena, and Halle, but also at hybrid institutions such as the *Deutsches Polen-Institut* in Darmstadt. The German Federal Agency for Civic Education (BPB) has a special folder devoted to the contemporary history of German-Polish relations[19]. In Poland, the two largest institutions devoted to studying Germany are the Institute for Western Affairs in Poznań and the Willy Brandt Center in Wrocław. There is at least one shared full educational program on the bilateral relations (offered by the universities of Regensburg and Łódź); but above all, the Viadrina European University (Fichter-Wolf & Knorr-Siedow 2009) is located on both sides of the Oder River, which constitutes the Polish-German border between Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice. There is a number of mixed schools on lower levels as well in both countries. Among those in the study area, the German-Polish secondary school in Löcknitz (Lundén 2011b: 85–86, cover page photo) deserves particular attention, although it is a regular German school but where the Polish pupils can take special courses in Polish language, history and social studies. The German pupils can choose Polish as a second foreign language, but less than half of them do so (Pergande 2011). Elsewhere, a similar school in Gartz had to close because of a lack of interest by the German parents (Lundén 2011b: 86).

The fact that such institutions of reconciliation are still deemed as necessary over 60 years after the war is interpreted by some as indicating that there is room left to improve relations (Heinrich 2010). It is indeed a long process: up until the 1980s, there was for instance no single university department for Polonistics in what was then the Federal Republic of Germany. Even today, the number of people studying Polish in Germany was estimated at around 50,000; a figure that can be compared with the approximately 2,400,000 German-learners in Poland (Telus 2013: 19). When it comes to Germany's other neighbours, the only comparable still existing institute to the best of my knowledge is the *Deutsch-Französisches Institut* (in Ludwigsburg). In fact, Germany's reconciliation with France has been seen as a role-model for its relations with Poland (Vette 2003: 115), and the three countries are even collaborating under the label 'Weimar Triangle' (Gardner Feldman 1999: 354).

These initiatives seem by and large to bear their fruits, at least on the national levels. Country-wide opinion surveys indicate a growing sympathy between Germans and Poles vis-á-vis each other (Kucharczyk & al. 2013, SDPZ 2011), coupled with a decreasing antipathy (Polen-Analysen 2011: 13). Even according to a less explicitly positive study the two nations are more and more indifferent to each other (Kolarska-Bobińska & Łada 2009), which in the historical backdrop can still be interpreted as a positive sign. However, as it will be shown later this is not necessarily representative of the local level at the border.

Interesting as Polish-German relations are on the bi-national level, the focus from here on will be on the conditions in the study area – i.e. the borderland around Szczecin. Borderlands, in

[19] The folder is (also) online and is available at http://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutsch-polnische-beziehungen/.

their role as "laboratories of European integration" (Grix & Knowles 2002: 155), deserve particular attention since they can theoretically benefit most from contacts with the other side.

3.2 The study area before 1989[20]

If the world goes down, I shall move to Mecklenburg, because there everything occurs 50 years later. [21]

Otto von Bismarck

Pomerania (in German *Pommern*, in Polish *Pomorze*) is the name of a historic region that stretched over what are today northwestern Poland (the West Pomeranian and Pomeranian voivodeships) and the eastern part of the German state Mecklenburg-Vorpommern[22]. These fertile lowlands have seen much struggle in history, mostly between Germanic and Slavic tribes and later between German and Polish troops. After some decades of Polish rule in the late tenth century, the area was German-dominated during much of the second millennium. In the decades around the fin-de-siècle its centre Stettin[23] functioned as Berlin's port city, while the island of Usedom (see in Figures 3 and 5) was a popular resort area among residents of the imperial capital, earning it the nickname "Berlin's bathtub" (Dienel & al. 2004).

In 1945 a large part of the territory was transferred to Poland (Figure 3), as a compensation for formerly Polish territories annexed by the USSR during the war. To avoid future conflicts and because they were charged with collective guilt for the war and its devastations, the vast majority of the German residents was resettled into Germany[24]. Their homes in turn were overtaken by Poles from central Poland or by Poles and Ukrainians from former Polish areas then freshly occupied by the Red Army (Piskorski 1999: 9). The Oder-Neisse line was defined as the new Polish-German borderline, with the cities of Stettin – from now on Szczecin – and Swinemünde – henceforth Świnoujście – also transferred to Poland (Aischmann 2008).

Figure 3. Since Pomerania's division in 1945, Szczecin (here Stettin, underlined) is located 12 km from the border on the Polish side.

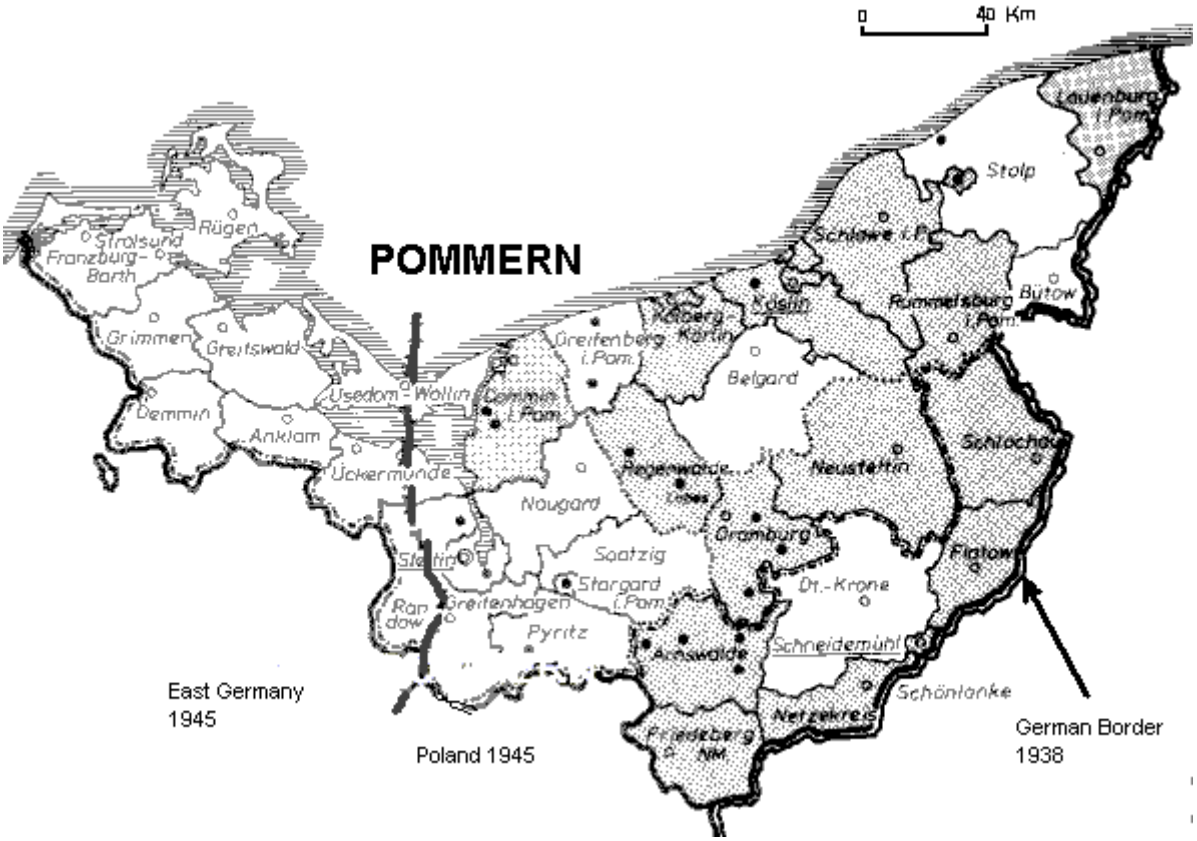
[20] This brief historical account has no other ambitions than to serve as a very basic background for readers unfamiliar with the area. For more detailed accounts on the region's history, please turn to the works referred to in this sub-chapter. Especially the anthology edited by Piskorski (1999) offers an account with neutral ambitions, with contributions from Polish and German experts alike.

[21] This famous statement shall have been made by Germany's first Chancellor and is mentioned in several places, for example by Gathmann (2007). The translation is mine.

[22] There are some differences in the German and Polish definition of the region, which have moreover altered in time. For a detailed explanation see Piskorski (1999: 5–9).

[23] I generally use the German place names in pre-1945 contexts (with the obvious exception of quotations), and elsewhere the Polish – and today single official – versions.

[24] For the regional context of the expulsions see Hackmann (1999).



Source: Kosbab (2009)

However, few investments were allocated to Szczecin and Poland's western borderlands by the central planners in Warsaw (Gruchman 1967, Dorsch 2003: 74), due to fears of a potential German return to the area. This created an atmosphere of temporariness and an image of the area as a terra incognita well into the post-war decades[25].

As mentioned in the previous sub-chapter, cross-border flows and contacts were minimised during the Cold War. There was indeed an exception to this in the 1970s, when the GDR and Poland opened the border to increase human contacts and even to raise mutual understanding (Zatlin 2007: 683). While millions of Poles and East Germans visited the other side, the measure is still seen as a failure as it exacerbated rather than diminished animosities,

> especially at department stores in border cities such as Frankfurt an der Oder, Dresden, and Pasewalk. Angry that millions of Poles were engaging in a kind of consumer tourism, traveling to the GDR in search of food and clothing that was difficult to find in their own country, many East Germans complained, as one man did, that the Poles "are buying everything out from under us". (Zatlin 2007: 684)

Thus it would appear as significant that such attitudes did not emerge in a capitalist economy, where "a comparable influx of tourists would most likely be welcomed as representing an increase in sales and therefore a stimulus to economic growth", resting on the idea that

[25] Illustrative here is a scene from a popular Polish movie from the late 1980s: playing at a railway station in central Poland, a man and a woman want to get as far away as possible and the latter suggests taking a train to Szczecin. (Bajon 1989)

"voluntary exchange is always mutually beneficial and therefore welfare-enhancing" (Zatlin 2007: 685). I therefore now turn to developments in the borderland after the change of system.

3.3 The study area since 1989: visions and realities

Cross-border movements received a boost in 1989–1990, but more deep-reaching transborder flows were hampered by at least two groups of reasons. On the one hand, at this time

> Polish-German citizen relations were at a comparatively low point, with disobliging opinions prevailing in the borderlands most of all. Largely due to insecurities over the border's finality, on the occasion of German unification, the Polish public felt much more apprehensive and fearful than any of Germany's western neighbours. Corresponding suspicions prevailed on the German side: when the border was opened for visa-free travel in 1991, the first Polish visitors to cross into the German border town Frankfurt (Oder) were greeted by stonethrowing right wing extremists. Hostility and distrust of the neighbour were deeply entrenched. (Mirwaldt 2005: 248)

On the other hand, "[t]he transformation process has led to a serious loss of jobs on both sides of the border" (Krätke 1996: 657). Despite or because of this situation, enthusiasm was large and expectations were running high among a number of actors regarding the prospects of integration. One particularly ambitious and ambiguous vision was the so-called 'Stolpe-Plan', named after the incumbent Prime Minister of the eastern German state of Brandenburg. For one observer, this

> was one of the first attempts to stake out the possibilities for trans-border cooperation with Poland, but unfortunately the whole thrust of the plan was perceived by the Polish side as being largely aimed at German interests. It included for instance the development of trading outlets on the German side (in order to increase Polish purchases), the reduction of intensive agricultural activity in the Polish regions, in favour of the building of "weekend" dwellings there - presumably for Germans - and the establishment of a German economic area in the port of Szczecin and on the Polish part of the island of Usedom. (Kennard 1996: 116)

While Kennard found it unfortunate that Poles were less enthusiastic about these ideas, a Polish scholar noted that with this plan,

> [t]he function of the Polish areas would be restricted to the supply of raw materials and cheap labour. The Euroregion, moreover, should protect the German market from a big influx of cheap labour from Poland… A more attractive option would be to create favourable conditions for German capital to be invested in enterprises in the Polish part of the Euroregion. In that way semi-manufactured articles could be produced in that Polish part, creating jobs for Polish labour. The semi-fabricates eventually would be completed in Germany. The creation of Pomerania Euroregion brings such opportunities, creating new hope for the citizens of the region and especially Szczecin. (Bojar 1996: 443)

The Euroregion Pomerania that Bojar talks about is a cooperation of a set of municipalities in north-eastern Germany, neighbouring north-western Poland, and southern Sweden. While this form of institutionalised cooperation has been a common feature along European borderlands in the past decades, illustrative of some initial fears particularly on the Polish side is that

> [i]n the case of Pomerania in the north, the Szczecin voivod, very much a centralist from Warsaw, succeeded in delaying the establishment of the trans-border organisation. Due to a fear of German influence in the (previously German) Szczecin area, he was very eager to include southern Sweden and the Danish island of Bornholm in this region. (Kennard 1996: 116)

In a similar vein, Bojar suggested including Scandinavian regions to "counterbalance the strong position of Germany" (1996: 444). Yet another spatial imagination was[26] the so-called 'Oder region':

> Planning among the Baltic countries produced a concept of spatial development and CBC through an Oder region - including the Berlin and Dresden areas of Germany and extending to Szczecin, Zielona Gora and Legnica in Poland (Van de Boel, 1994). This drew particular attention to the Pomeranian coastlands (especially Szczecin/Swinoujscie) attractive to German and Scandinavian investors, especially in the light of a possible Oder waterway linked with the European system. Through the Baltic arena Poland is also involved in cooperation with neighbouring countries as part of the 'Green Lungs of Europe' project - growing out of an initial 'Green Lungs of Poland' initiative – to coordinate activities in networks of national parks and other protected areas. (Turnock 2002: 24–25)

To a certain extent the description above reveals an inherent contradiction; namely whether the area should concentrate on developing its maritime industry (Paper II) or rather focus on its environmental potentials. This is a dilemma that I will return to.

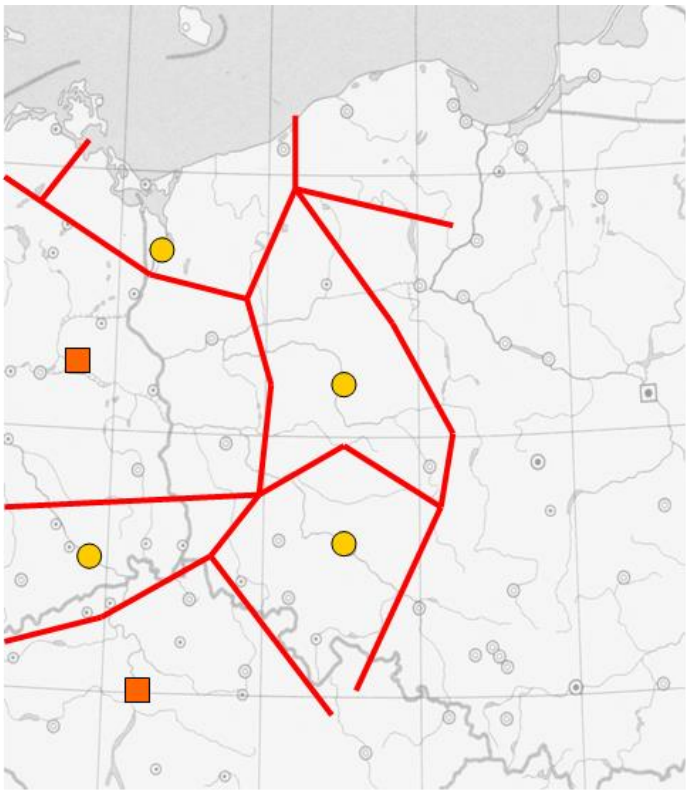
In spite of some such (initial) concerns a great variety of actors have been optimistic about the Szczecin-borderland's potentials, including Polish regional researchers (*cf.* Krätke 1996: 653, Guz-Vetter 2002, Ciok 2009); city-officials in Szczecin (Dorsch 2003: 74) and Berlin (Senate of Berlin 2003); as well as German scholars (Burkhardt 1995), policy consultants (Maack & al. 2005), and artists[27]. Particularly illustrative of the ambitious visions is a conceptual image of a Polish academic that is clearly inspired by a central place thinking (Figure 4)[28].

Figure 4. Theoretical fields of interaction of the major cities along the German-Polish borderland as according to a Wrocław-based scholar.

[26] I use the past tense here as it is unclear whether this initiative is still in operation (no recent traces of it can be found online).

[27] In this context, the most interesting example is probably the project Nowa Amerika. Founded as recently as 2010, this fictive space aims to provoke the conventional geopolitical image of the German-Polish borderland as a divided territory, envisioning it instead as a federation made up of the four constitutive states of Szczettinstan, Terra Incognita, Lebuser Ziemia, and Schlonsk. Nowa Amerika has its own flag, currency, a citizenship open to all, and uses a hybrid language of Polish and German. Its capital is Słubfurt, a combination of two town names – Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice – on both sides of the German-Polish border. Unlike 'real' entities such as states or the Euroregion Pomerania, the borders of Nowa Amerika are explicitly fluid (Kurzwelly 2014). While a fascinating artistic project, the level of awareness around it can perhaps be illustrated by the fact that it had altogether 723 followers on Facebook in early March 2014.

[28] The model is discussed but not reproduced in Paper I.



Source: Ciok (2009: 150)

Similar spatial development visions (*Leitbilder*) can be found in Germany, not least in policy documents (Lang 2012). However, scholars like Lang

> find it problematic to categorize space on the basis of structural distances. This is, in particular, problematic as there is no transparent discussion about the relevance and selection of indicators as well as thresholds. For example, it remains unclear how and by whom distances are defined within which centres are seen as accessible. Moreover, the de facto accessibility of functions and services is often unrelated to geographical distance anyway. (2012: 1750)

While the different endowments of the two sides of the border can make a closer cooperation a bigger challenge, they are also potentially more fruitful to avoid the peripheral status within each of the national entities. One idea behind this project was that it is precisely differences and the diverging endowments of the two sides of the border that would motivate particularly intensive cross-border movements, as in other cases (Paasi & Prokkola 2008, Rogova 2009: 34). This can be compared with the notion that it is 'contrast spaces' that attract each other, such as a large city and a natural environment (Dienel & al. 2004). Since moving eastwards from Szczecin is made difficult by not just the Oder River but also Dąbie Lake (Figure 1), the question is whether the city can develop towards the sparsely populated green space across the German border.

However, even after the political changes and the gradual opening of the border Szczecin has not belonged to Poland's – let alone Europe's – centres of development (Dorsch 2003: 74). It clearly continues to be a laggard in comparison with similar-sized cities in the western parts of the country such as Poznań, Wrocław or Gdańsk, which have been experiencing strong

economic growth over the past years. Szczecin usually underperforms in employment rates (Polen-Analysen 2011: 9), income comparisons (wB 2010), liveability surveys (wB 2009) and other aspects of urban competitiveness such as infrastructure, human and social capital, or culture and image (Adekoya 2011). This is also true of the surrounding region: in December 2003 for instance, West Pomerania was only the ninth biggest FDI-attractor among Poland's sixteen voivodeships (Maack & al. 2005: 15). The GDP of the region was gradually slipping below the Polish national average between 2000 and 2010 (Polen-Analysen 2013: 10). In a similar vein, West Pomerania's unemployment rates were constantly higher than in Poland at large between 2005 and 2011, while its number of students in higher education was lower in the latter year (ibid: 9). For a long time the Szczecin area has seen too few investments (see in 3.2), not least into housing, which is consequently fairly expensive while of mixed quality. An interesting aftereffect of this is that Szczecin tenants as well as investors started to look for real-estates across the border (Paper IV). Yet in economic terms at least the Polish side has a limited attraction for Germans especially from the direct neighbourhood, among whom few are potential (major) investors or employees, due to limited financial opportunities, low wages and language difficulties.

The German side can even more explicitly be described as an economic depression region, with the north-eastern counties (*Kreise*) of the federation suffering of rather severe structural weaknesses (Maack & al. 2005: 127–176, Reichert-Schick 2010). This impoverished corner of Germany is characterised by a rural-agricultural landscape (Reichert-Schick 2010: 157); unemployment rates of 17–23% (ibid: 161); emigration rates of up to 50% since reunification, with an over-representation of the young and skilled (ibid: 157); and a high degree of political extremism – the far right has a stable representation in both regional and municipal authorities (see in Paper IV). The area's structural weaknesses[29] are only to some extent counterbalanced by the comparatively still important federal system of wealth redistribution, the long-term welfare-creating potential of which has anyway been questioned (Wüllenweber 2002). More recently, it has even been suggested that the area's depopulation – which is anyway difficult to stop – should be used as a chance, for instance for the environment (Chr. Westphal cited by Wiegand 2011). In a similar vein, the gradually emptying eastern states are deemed to have a key role in Germany's Energy transition, for windmills, biomass-based energy, etc. (Bajczuk 2013).

When it comes to human-to-human contacts, until very recently the boundary at stake could be characterised as one of the sharpest dividing lines in Europe regarding ethnicity, language, and religion. This could be interpreted in a way that there are few push or pull factors for the two sides to engage in cross-border contacts. Unlike in much of Central and Eastern Europe, up until recently there were hardly any kin or ethnic ties across the border. Moreover, the far right is deeply rooted especially on the German side and, unlike elsewhere in Germany, local sentiments are here mostly targeted against the directly neighbouring country – i.e. Poland[30]. My results (see Paper IV) are comparable to Krajewski's (2011), according to which 21% of

[29] Paper I deals in greater detail with the structural characteristics of both sides.
[30] In western Germany and in Berlin, the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD) and other xenophobic actors usually point out immigrants from Turkey and Muslim countries as the Other.

Germans in the former Uecker-Randow district find it “bad” or “very bad” that more Polish citizens live in the area since Poland joined the EU. Further, 18.4% in the same group have the opinion that German-Polish relations worsened during the same period (ibid).

Since Germany lifted its transitory restrictions on labour from the new EU Member States including Poland in May 2011 flows are reported to be increasing, even though no large-scale influx of labour has so far been observed at least in the border areas: the number of Poles on the German side was recently estimated at 10,000 (MOZ 2013). More illustratively, the three German states along the Polish border, with their combined population of over 8 million, have just as many Polish citizens as Hamburg alone (ibid) – a city of 1.8 million inhabitants. The size of Berlin’s Polish community is proportionate to Hamburg’s (ibid).

What then is so specific about borderlands? This is a question we turn to in the next chapter.

4 Borders

In this chapter, three different angles will be presented towards the problem of boundaries. Rather than being competing approaches I tend to see them as complementary. While I hardly claim to cover all perspectives of border studies here, the approaches presented have certainly been among the most influential ones in the field and in my work.

4.1 The classic approach: the border as a barrier

Border studies, or limology[31], have until recently largely concerned themselves with physical borders and their effects (Lundén 1973, Süli-Zakar 1991). Borders have been observed to impact upon such a wide range of areas as population development, identity, and everyday life (Forsberg & al. 2006); legal-administrative structures (Paper I, Soós & Fejes 2009); spatial planning and regional policy (Papers II and III); migration and livelihood (van Houtum 2010); dwelling and commuting (Gielis 2009, Paper IV); shopping and consumption (see 4.2.2) and so on.

4.1.1. The border's effects on functional integration

A phenomenon characteristic of border areas – especially international, but to a lesser extent also sub-national – is their relative marginal position vis-á-vis the centre within a hierarchical territorial system. This is especially true in an economic, but in some cases also socio-political sense. There are many examples of lagging borderlands, with some European examples being the western and eastern (Balogh forthc.) extremes of Poland, northern Scandinavia (Dubois 2013), eastern Slovakia, or the northeast of Hungary. What these areas have in common is a relatively low level of socio-economic integration into their respective national systems and especially into their direct neighbourhood across the border. Capitals and key centres of economic and political activity are rarely concentrated in a state's territorial periphery[32], and where they are, this is either an adaptation to important natural conditions (such as proximity to natural resources) or a legacy of historical border shifts (e.g. Copenhagen, Berlin, Vienna, Budapest).

Major public investments are rarely made at the border, as these are meant to benefit mostly those taxpayers from whose money they are realised. True, with the rise of private actors and

[31] This term is derived from Latin's *limes*, meaning border (Kolossov 2006: 15), but is much less often used than the denomination 'border studies'.

[32] The term periphery can of course not just refer to borderlands but to economically lagging regions in general, irrespectively of their physical location within a system (Flint & Taylor 2007, *cf.* Lang 2012). At the same time, borderlands are often peripheries in both senses (see e.g. Soós & Fejes 2009).

a common European economic space a project's funding can be more diverse, but EU sources are still tiny (between one and two percent of the national budgets of the Member States). As a kind of counterbalancing measure, EU programs such as Interreg are targeting exactly those territories that territorial states less often do – i.e. borderlands.

When states do make substantial investments in their territorial peripheries, this is often a strategic choice to strengthen their legitimacy in what can be regions of multiple orientations or loyalties. As Lundén (2004: 85) noticed, "[e]stablishments in border areas are often subsidised by government money with the intention of supporting its weak economy"; however, "[t]he effect of this can be that the enterprise becomes dependent on the core area of the country without any utilisation of the advantages connected with boundary location" (ibid). Illustrative here is the recent wave of relocating public institutions in Sweden from the capital to the country's peripheral regions (such as Gotland and Norrland). Such investments are crucial on the local level for creating jobs, but at the same time they serve to strengthen the dependence, links, and loyalties of these regions to the Swedish state. The Russian state is much more explicitly paying a special attention to its peripheries[33]. A few decades earlier, in the Pamirs "[t]he Soviet system showed an absolute commitment to supply this geopolitically important region in order to maintain the population's loyalty" (Kraudzun 2012: 188). When Belgium and the German Customs Union were being established in the 1830s, the Dutch province Limburg considered joining one of those new entities, in order not to lose the economic hinterland of its collieries (Ehlers 2007: 63). During this period, the Dutch Queen personally paid a successful visit to the province in order to strengthen the local population's loyalty to the Netherlands. The traditionally paternalistic attitude of the centre vis-á-vis the periphery is nicely captured in two fragments of a mid-nineteenth century Chinese poem[34]:

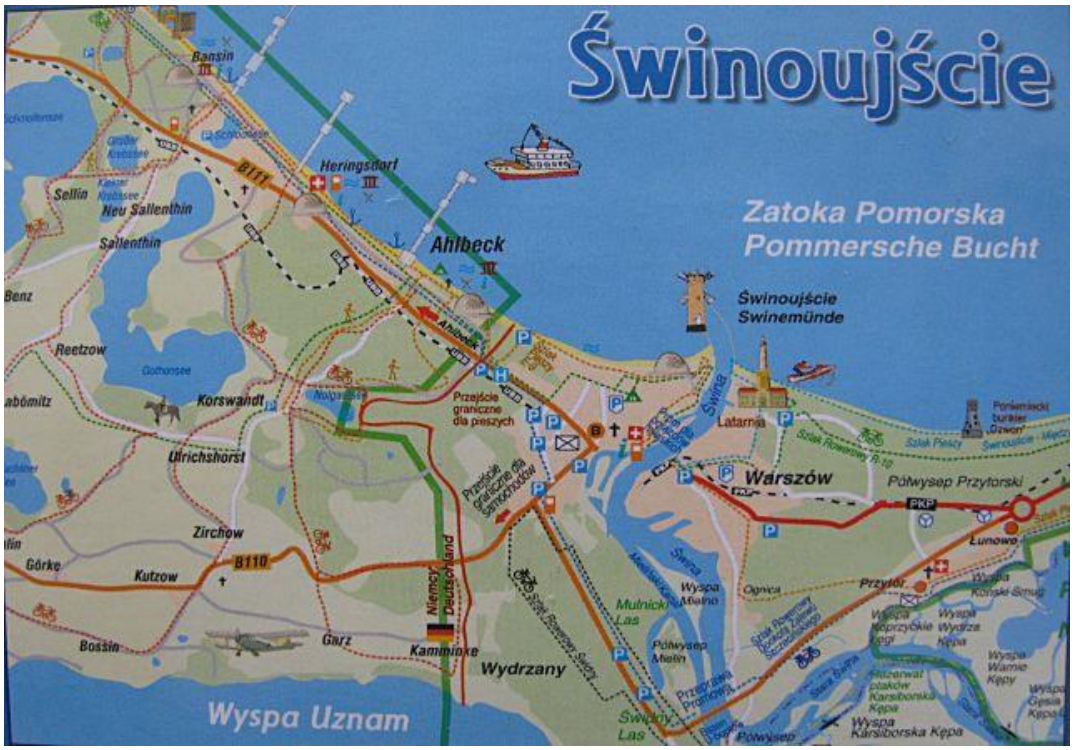
The capital is established near Zhong Mountain;
The palaces and thresholds are brilliant and shining;
The forests and gardens are fragrant and flourishing;
Epidendrums and cassia complement each other in beauty.
…
The uncivilized and border people offer tribute,
And all the barbarians are submissive.
No matter how vast the territory,
All will be eventually under our rule.

Hong Xiuquan

In Germany, the large post-reunification transfers from west to east that mostly went into gentrification projects more than long-term job-creating activities have been criticised to strengthen centre-periphery relations (Wüllenweber 2002, BPB 2013). In Poland, upon his visit to border town Świnoujście (Figure 5) former Polish premier Kaczyński reaffirmed his commitment to build a tunnel between the city and the rest of the country (PAP 2007).

[33] Russian leaders are commonly reassuring their commitments to the federation's contested peripheries, such as the Kuril Islands (Barry 2010), the Kaliningrad province (Wolffsen & Sergounin 2004: 36), or northern Caucasia (Ludwig 2011).
[34] The whole English version of the poem is cited by Castells (2004: 5).

Figure 5. The central parts of Świnoujście are located on the island of Uznam/Usedom, itself divided by the Polish-German border (dark green line). Possibly related to the conflict around the shipping channel, this Polish postcard indicates the maritime border somewhat questionably.



Source: author's photo, July 2009

In some cases, key investments with unattractive concomitant attributes such as pollution or noise are made on the fringes of the state. According to Lundén (2004: 86),

> "[w]ith a more malevolent interpretation, this type of location can be interpreted as a will to reduce domestic effects of environmentally dangerous pollution. This type of arguments have been used against the nuclear plant of Barsebäck in Sweden close to Copenhagen, and Cattenom in Lorraine (Lotharingia), France close to Germany and Luxembourg."

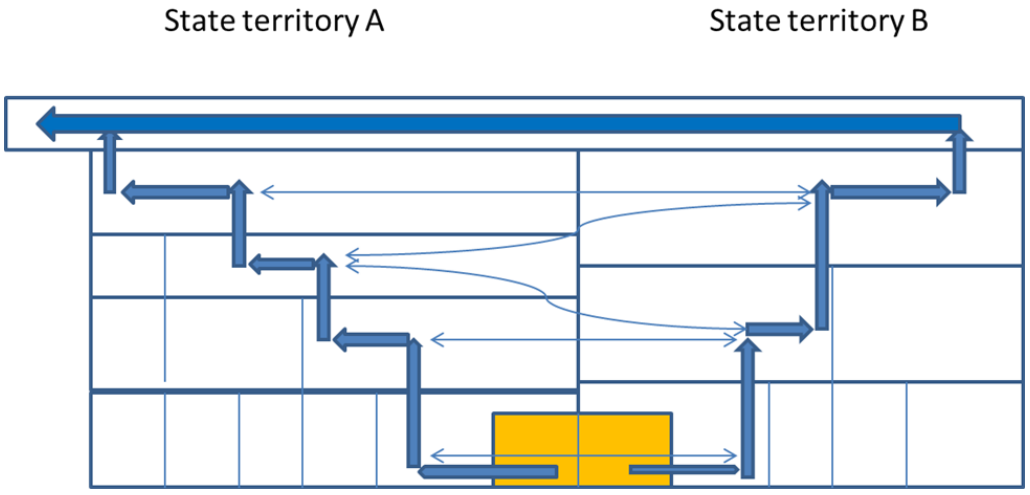
In a similar vein, the closure of the Swedish nuclear plant in Barsebäck in 2005 followed protests by Denmark (Storm 2010: 11). It may be no coincidence that most of the permanent repositories for nuclear waste in Switzerland were proposed to be built directly at its border to Germany (Rauner 2010). Moreover, they were first planned to be placed in the central part of the country, but as the cantonal referendum there voted against the decision-making was lifted to the federal level, where the border locations were proposed (ibid). Elsewhere, Austrian plans to construct an incinerator just seven kilometres away from the Hungarian border town Szentgotthárd were only abandoned after seven years of protests (Nyugat.hu 2012). In Poland, the initially proposed location of the country's first-ever nuclear power plant was right at the German border (at Gryfino), and was only reconsidered after German concerns (Larouche PAC 2011). On the other hand, the new Russian-German gas pipeline Nord Stream – which circumvents the Baltic states and Poland – ends up near Greifswald (Figure 1), just about fifty kilometres from the Polish border. This has angered Poland, which proposed to Germany to dig the pipeline under the Baltic seabed due to fears that the shipping channel off the coast of

Świnoujście (Figure 5) will be hindered from hosting larger vessels in the future (Gnauck 2010). It is in the light of this background that the recently finished construction of an LNG-terminal at Świnoujście for Qatari imports (see in Paper II) can be seen.

A relative neglect of borderlands was observed on the part of private actors as well. Van Houtum (1998) studied enterprises in the border areas of the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium, a densely populated region where language and cultural regions do not coincide with the state boundary, and where customs and state regulations do not strongly differ. Still, almost all these companies were strongly directed towards the domestic market (ibid). Lundén explains such behaviour with that "states with a liberal economy but regulated foreign trade surrounded by the same type of states tend to disfavour locations at the boundary" (2004: 84).

Lundén has offered a model to explain the border dilemma (Figure 6). This shows that most administrative-territorial systems are hierarchical, with political units on lower levels (e.g. municipalities) often being subordinated to those at higher levels (e.g. the state). Any local issue – such as a natural disaster or the need of an infrastructural investment – that the local administration lacks competences or resources to solve thus has to move higher and higher up the hierarchy, with the risk of being de-prioritised. When a problem arises in a territorial periphery it is often even more remote for decision-makers in the regional or the national capital, which is even more the case should the issue go beyond the borders of the territory under their responsibility. There is yet another twist when – as is often the case – the competences of the administrative units on the two sides of the border do not match, like between Germany and Poland (Paper I).[35] This was a problem for instance when establishing the above mentioned European University Viadrina, although as that and other examples here show, such obstacles can be overcome if there are enough will and means there (Fichter-Wolf & Knorr-Siedow 2009).

Figure 6. Hierarchical asymmetry: the political treatment of a local trans-boundary problem from the local (bottom) to the European Union (top).



Source: Lundén (2009: 135**)**

[35] For Lundén's own explanation of his original model see Lundén (1973: 188–191); for the developed version that is represented here see Lundén (2009: 135–136).

Recent deregulation and rescaling of the state (Brenner 2004) may to a certain level alleviate this problem of the 'territorial trap' whereby the state functions as the primary 'container' of society (Agnew 1994), and facilitate Szczecin's development towards a regional cross-border centre as is the case with some other European cities (see 2.4 and 4.2.3). Such a direction is to some extent evidenced by increased cross-border movements in a few areas. The largest phenomenon is arguably that of cross-border residential mobility between Szczecin and the villages on the German side (Paper IV). Apart of some additional border-shopping, another group of new cross-border flows is not within the borderland, but between Szczecin and Berlin. This especially concerns the latter's importance as a transport hub for Szczecin, which despite having its own international airport is linked with Berlin through direct minibus-connections, scheduled nearly every hour by several companies (Figure 7). That such a new cross-border thinking has a long way to get established beyond some alert locals can be illustrated by the travel choice of the participants of an international conference in Szczecin, which our research team attended in November 2010. In order to visit the event, most participants arrived to Szczecin through Warsaw rather than via Berlin: "Since the conference is taking place in a Polish city, we have to travel through Warsaw" – they thought.

Figure 7. Over the past years, people in Szczecin have increasingly been using Berlin's airports (here Tegel) in addition to the closer but smaller one at Goleniów.

Source: author's photo, July 2009

Hence, cross-border flows are still below their potentials. In its attempt to make journeys to Poland more attractive, the transport association of Berlin-Brandenburg offers train tickets to Szczecin for ten euros (Höck 2011) – i.e. well below the average price of a comparable trip within Germany. Still, the connection appeared to be relatively unexploited during the number

of occasions that our research team used it. Clearly, then, cross-border contacts do not just depend on the physical structures at hand. Thus I was increasingly turning towards alternative approaches attempting to explain border behaviour.

4.1.2 The border's impact on identities

It was mentioned in the beginning of this sub-chapter that borders also have an impact on identities. These tend to be more accentuated in a border situation, with at least two quite different scenarios (Balogh 2010)[36]. The border of a country can be a site where displays of nationalism are intensified to consolidate the territorial state; alternatively, or simultaneously, borderlands can be zones of cultural overlap where the national identity and loyalties of the people often become blurred (Johnston & al. 2000: 50)[37].

The German-Polish borderland is rather illustrative of accentuated attitudes and identities. My case study (Paper IV) showed a stronger polarisation especially among local German attitudes towards the Poles than is reported in country-wide opinion surveys (see 3.1.2). This may have historical-geographical roots. East Prussia, for centuries an eastern 'outpost of Germandom', was also rather conservative and patriotic (*cf.* Egremont 2011). In the interwar period, the then still German Province of Pomerania found itself in a similar situation. Following World War II most Germans were relocated from both of these provinces (see 3.2) not least to what is today's northeastern Germany. To a limited extent this culture lingers on, especially among expellee organisations (*cf.* Kossert 2008).[38] At the same time some nostalgia towards the GDR-times is still present (see in Paper IV), but we should not forget that relations between East Germans and Poles were far from frictionless (see 3.1.1 and 3.2).

Similar attitudes can be traced on the Polish side of the border. According to a scholar I talked with in Szczecin (Dutkowski 2009), the identities of the local population along the German border (especially in the Lubusz Voivodeship) are rather polarised, characterised by either nationalistic or a kind of "(post-)socialist" attitude. Both can to some extent be explained by the experiences of the post-war population resettlements. On the one hand, some of the local borderlanders still fought for the "new" border themselves, and many descend from such persons. These "pioneers" moved to the borderland to strengthen its legitimacy (see 3.2). On the other hand, many of the new inhabitants also became loyal towards the new socialist regime[39], which – given its commitment during its entire existence to maintain its borders – they saw as the guarantor of their new homeland.

It is also important that after 1989, many actors active in the borderland came from western Germany. In the 1990s, the Minister of Economy of Brandenburg complained that his state's industry "was being increasingly directed from outside the region" (i.e. by firms from western

[36] Please consult this article for examples.
[37] For references to various case studies to each of these scenarios, please consult this entry.
[38] The whole situation with the border shifts, accentuated identities and expellees is very comparable to Trieste and the Julian lands. See e.g. Bialasiewicz & Minca (2010).
[39] This development is very comparable to the Czechoslovak situation in the former German lands; see e.g. von Arburg (2009).

Germany) and that his ministry "can scarcely be said to have any regional responsibility on its own soil" (Krätke 1996: 659). Such statements reflect the apathy that emerged when the borderland's structural weaknesses became even more apparent after Germany's reunification and the introduction of a market economy in the eastern states. More recent examples include the main head behind the earlier mentioned Nowa Amerika – an artistic project of German-Polish reconciliation –, who is similarly from western Germany, as is a real-estate agent in Świnoujście whom our research team interviewed. The list goes on with second-home owners coming from Hamburg and Berlin, as well as from central Poland and other countries (see in Paper IV). It is of course hardly negative that people from outside invigorate our poor and sparsely populated study area – finding out whether and how that happens was the aim of our project. The point is to show that external actors have a disproportional share in that process. Yet another illustration of this observation is the geographical origin of the participants of a summer university on the German-Polish-Czech border that I attended in September 2013. Very few people took part in this fully open event from the universities in the borderlands (there are several) that we studied. In spite of a predominance of German participants, there was no-one from eastern Germany. Similarly, the Polish participants came from central Poland, and the Czech ones from Prague. Of course this situation reflects centre-periphery relations in these countries more generally, but it is noteworthy that these are characteristic even in situations where there are good and subsidised opportunities of active participation.

4.2 From 'the border as a barrier' to 'the border as a resource'

Border studies experienced a renaissance in the 1990s and interest has only increased ever since. Whereas the field was some time ago criticised for being atheoretical, considerable attempts at conceptualisations have been made over the past years (Anderson 2001, Newman 2003, Brunet-Jailly 2005, Rumford 2006, Konrad & Nicol 2011). Other scholars are more critical of the plausibility of a general border theory (Paasi 2009: 222, Pásztor 2013), not so much because each border is complex and unique but

> rather because of the complexity of borders and bordering. Borders manifest themselves in innumerable ways in daily lives and state-related practices and in institutions such as language, culture, myths, heritage, politics, legislation and economy. These practices condense in the contested idea of citizenship that brings together state, power, control, social responsibilities and possibilities. This implies that borders can be theorized reasonably only as part of wider production and reproduction of territoriality/territory, state power, and agency. (Paasi 2011: 62)

Comprehensive accounts of developments in border studies have been provided elsewhere (Kolossov 2006, Scott 2008, Paasi 2009, Diener & Hagen 2009, Liikanen 2010), but a brief general overview is necessary here. So why has there been an upsurge in border studies over the past two decades? According to O'Dowd (2002: 29–30),

> [t]he period between 1950 and the late 1980s marked the high point of stable, sharply demarcated borders… Borders here effectively functioned as barriers behind which relatively inclusive welfare states were created. Since then, the globalization of economies, the evolution of European

> integration, the revolution in mass communications and information technology, the spread of regionalization in Europe and the fragmentation induced by the end of the Cold War has reconfigured state borders and changed their functions.

On a metatheoretical level, the field can be said to have been emerging as *a counter-narrative to notions of a borderless world* that have been advanced as part of globalisation theory and some postmodern ideas (Newman and Paasi 1998: 198–200, Newman 2006). Some believed that economic globalisation will lead to a borderless, post-national world (Ohmae 1995, Strange 1996, Appadurai 2003), while others emphasised the historical contingency of the state (Hobden 1999: 267–268). Some then focused on the emergence of cosmopolitanism (Cheah & Robinson 1998, Vertovec & Cohen 2002, Beck 2002) and other ideas challenging the territorial state.

Yet few are today clinging to the 'end of history' thesis declaring a definite victory of liberal democracies that Fukuyama (1992) optimistically projected after the end of the Cold War. Some even suggest that we are experiencing the 'end of the end of history' (Gat 2007), in light of the resurgence of power rivalry and (semi)authoritarianism. The dominant ontological position in border studies is well-described by Gielis (2009: 603):

> contemporary border scholars … endorse the importance of difference in present-day life. One might say that they have the … ontological position in the globalisation debate … that (national) differences are still important in this globalisation era… By doing so, they position themselves against scholars who claim that we live in a cosmopolitan world where differences and (b)orders (should) disappear (Beck 2006). People who move to another country are not borderless people who live beyond the (b)orders of nations, in a liquid world (Bauman 2000). Rather they are people who live in-between the current and the former country of residence and, by doing so, continuously experience the difference between here and there.

The single most important contribution of recent border studies is arguably that it has moved the discussion from a *disappearance* to a *transformation* of borders. This entails at least three key aspects. One, borders have not withered away in the winds of globalisation as suggested by some writers mentioned above[40]. On the one hand, a largely unrestricted mobility remains a feature of the Schengen countries, with most other borders of the world remaining closed or semi-permeable. Perhaps most dramatically, even since the fall of the Berlin Wall, new and similar walls have been built along at least three different borders of the world (Jones 2012). But even in regions where physical borders have become open, they tend to survive in memories and narratives (Newman 2006: 152), of which not least the local borderlanders are reminded by monuments (Asher & Jańczak 2007, Lundén 2011a), souvenirs[41] (Figure 8), arts (Amilhat-Szary 2012), or theater performances (Prokkola 2008). Borders are represented by ways of popular culture such as films (Nava 2006, Holm 2011) and television series (Sík 1993–2001). Historical experiences – like (attempts at) desertion across previously strictly controlled demarcation lines such as the former Iron Curtain (Sallai 2012) – can today be "re-experienced" in performances of border theme parks, such as at the one near Bildein, Austria

[40] See more of this discussion in Paper IV.
[41] One of the best examples is Berlin, where one can even buy a small piece of the former wall to take home.

(Nyugat.hu 2011). Elsewhere, such events are commemorated and discussed at memorial sites – for example near Geisa, Germany (PAF 2013). On the Polish side of the study area, the Battle of Cedynia mentioned in sub-chapter 3.1.1 is still annually re-enacted on the original spot as a spectacle by amateur actors (ZPKWZ 2014).

Figure 8. A seemingly "innocent" piece of souvenir, this kitchen magnet reminds and reinforces our understanding of where Szczecin belongs: despite its location in the northwestern extreme of Poland right at the German border, the city is here solely associated with the entire territory of the Polish state.

Source: author's photo, January 2010

Second, borders have expanded or 'thickened' to be present not just at the edges of territories but in all other kinds of spaces, due to advancements in technology (so-called 'smart borders', surveillance, etc.) and other changes. This element has a large literature on its own but is one that I, in order to keep the focus, chose not to intervene in here.

The third but far from less important aspect deals with a significant change in our perception of borders, and is one that I will devote more space to. As we saw in the previous sub-chapter, early studies mostly looked at the border as a barrier to mobility, information etc. (Reynolds & McNulty 1968, Lundén 1973). In the 1990s, the dominant idea was that of a "cessation of borders" (Noelle-Neumann & Herdegen 1990: 284, Süli-Zakar 1991) or at least "overcoming borders" (Ratti 1993, van Houtum 2000, Schultz 2001), and such notions are still present in policy discourses (Brown 2003, AFM 2007), not least in Germany but also in Poland (Auswärtiges Amt 2010, Land Brandenburg 2008)[42].

[42] The related discourses of the "growing together of Europe" (Buske 2000, BVBS n.a.), or even of the "unification of Europe" (Senate of Berlin 2003: 2, Ischinger & al. 2011, Thum 2013) are similarly strong in Germany.

More recently, an important shift has been taking place in our understanding of borders, with a growing number of studies emphasising not just their role as dividing lines but also as resources. According to O'Dowd (2002: 14) for instance, "[a]ll borders serve simultaneously as barriers, bridges, resources and symbols of identity even if some dimensions appear more salient than others depending on the issue or context". This resonates with the discussion that "[b]oundaries not only separate groups and communities from each other but also mediate contacts between them" (Newman & Paasi 1998: 194). In its dividing *and* linking role (Soós & Fejes 2009: 19), the border is "both a barrier and a place of contact" (Prokkola 2008: 657).

4.2.1 The border as a resource for bureaucracies and multinational companies

The border has been noted to be a resource for a large variety of actors in society, some of which are very powerful:

> transnational investors … use borders to take advantage of better investment conditions such as government subsidies, lax environmental regulations, cheap labour or a surplus of trained workers. While transnational corporations may be keen to diminish the barrier role of borders in one sphere, they may favour consolidating it in another sphere. Media multinationals, for example, do not wish borders to be a barrier to the transnational ownership of television stations and newspapers, but, on the other hand, their sales benefit from serving and even protecting national markets. Maximizing their control in segmented, 'national' markets may mean utilizing, and even defending, ethnic, linguistic and national borders. Thus, they oppose transnational or supranational forms of regulation while benefiting from insulated national markets. [Further, borders] necessarily demarcate state bureaucracies, voluntary sectors and professional organizations which retain a vested interest in maintaining a territorial monopoly. (O'Dowd 2002: 25–26)

Consequently, and due to the rise of new technological tools that help to demarcate territory such as GPS, states and other political entities are investing large amounts of resources into guarding and (re)defining lands and waters they claim[43]. The resolution of such conflicts often involves resource-intensive legal and professional expertise, provided by for instance the International Boundaries Research Unit (IBRU) in Durham.

It has more recently been emphasised that even the neo-liberal state has a vested interest in "efficiently" guarding its borders, in order to selectively keep out "undesired" subjects and welcome those who can contribute to the national economy (Prokkola 2012). Relatedly, nations are increasingly commercialised and branded as products to promote investments, tourism, etc. (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011).

If one is to summarise the most important reasons for why territorial state borders are most likely to stay with us, they are probably captured in this sub-section. While we are witnessing a slow trend towards increased international – but more recently again also national – regulation, the logic of competition implies that capital needs different political entities to

[43] A U.S. Department of State webpage links to documents examining coastal states' maritime claims and/or boundaries, assessing their consistency with international law: http://www.state.gov/e/oes/ocns/opa/c16065.htm

play off against each other. Relatedly, Belina (2013) recently showed that even the crises of capitalism are portrayed by elites as crises of the nation.

4.2.2 The border as a resource in the livelihoods of local borderlanders

A wide range of various actors at the border make their livelihood from its presence, through legal, illegal, and semi-legal activities. Among the last two, smuggling has probably received most scholarly attention (Sidaway 2002: 153–155, Prokkola 2008, Rogova 2009: 34–36, Wagner & Łukowski 2010, Bruns & Miggelbrink 2012). Interestingly, the illegal or semi-legal nature of cross-border petty trade is (perceived to be) relative, not just by local citizens but to a certain degree even by bureaucracies[44]. On the one hand, informal economic activities are tolerated by some local administrations since they alleviate social pressures (Wagner & Łukowski 2010). On the other hand "[p]ublic opinion does not always condemn (small-scale) smuggling, as it is not understood as an offence against individuals and personal property…" (Prokkola 2008: 661). This is probably less the case with other forms of (organised) crime crossing borders such as drug trade, trafficking (of humans, arms etc.), money laundering, contract killing, and kidnapping (Cornell & Swanström 2006).

But borders offer many legal opportunities for the little guy as well, the most directly visible of which implying the sales of goods and services to cross-border travellers, including those who come to the border (because of the same exchange rate and tariff differentials that drive smuggling) to shop, to purchase or consume something that is cheaper "on the other side" (Sidaway 2002: 154). Lundén (2004: 92) observed that

> [a]long the boundaries of the states of Europe, and in many other states in the world, there is a special 'cultural landscape' of supply points for cross-boundary purchases. The types of sought-after goods and services differ from boundary to boundary, of course, but there is still much in common. Supply points are located as close to the boundary as possible, along the main highways. Shops often have an 'occasional' look; advertisements are large and aggressive. The goods are often liquor, [tobacco,] certain types of food, sometimes electronics. The language of the neighbouring state is used, and its currency is of course accepted. Beyond the 'pure' boundary products there is also a supply of all sorts of low quality products from stalls and kiosks and of course fast food, drinks and candy.

While such activities usually require an at least partially open border (Paasi & Prokkola 2008: 19, Rogova 2009: 34, Laine 2012: 69), even one of the most strongly controlled borderlands in the world – between North and South Korea (Kim 2012) – hosts at least a special economic zone for cross-border labour and some opportunities for shopping. The Polish-German borderland has been particularly famous for border bazaars (O'Dowd 2002: 25). According to a local academic (Dutkowski 2009), despite West Pomerania's status as a peripheral part of Poland many people have been benefitting from the border location by maintaining small-scale, legal or illegal economic activities across the border (*cf.* Ładykowska & Ładykowski 2013).

[44] And here I avoid the discussion on (local) elites themselves being involved in illegal cross-border trade.

Borderlands and even the borders themselves can be tourist attractions, with their relicts, monuments, natural parks, welcome centres, gambling, and so on (Timothy 1995). These in turn can attract hotels, bars, cafés, shops, restaurants, and currency changers (Sidaway 2002: 154). Perhaps as a sort of "catastrophe tourism", the Berlin Wall was and its few remnants – and all the museums and other attractions around it – still are among the most important sights that tourists are visiting. Other examples include the former Demilitarised Zone (DMZ) in Vietnam, or the still existing one between North and South Korea (Kim 2012).

Thus borders can of course not just constitute a resource in Europe – where they are more permeable – but also in Africa (Feyissa & Höhne 2010, Doevenspeck 2011: 138–140), Asia (van Schendel 2001: 409–412, Kraudzun 2012), and elsewhere. Some of the opportunities offered by it might even be more important in parts of those regions, given the dire socio-economic circumstances in which many local borderlanders find themselves. At the same time – just as most theories – also the narrative of 'the border as a resource' has its shortcomings, with several studies emphasising that it is often only a few people benefitting (Kraudzun 2012, Müller 2013: 197, Rogova 2009: 40). In his study on the Pamirs, Kraudzun (2012: 189) noted that "only traders well-equipped with resources and connections as well as the border officials can use the border as a resource. The majority of the population has to pay the higher prices…" Last but not least, the advantages of the border are often (perceived to be) larger on one or the other side (Hayward 2006: 2, Paasi & Prokkola 2008: 27)[45].

In sum, then, the border acquires a meaning that differs from its original function: it becomes the most important resource for local economies that had previously been disadvantaged by being located at the territorial periphery (Wagner & Łukowski 2010). Thus rather than erasing it, smuggling and trade across the border re-inscribe liminality and regulation as a local resource (Sidaway 2002: 153).

But while these various (small-scale) cross-border economic activities are crucial for the livelihood of local borderlanders (Müller 2013, Rogova 2009: 34, Prokkola 2008: 670), they are undergoing significant decline as a result of the "integration" and "harmonisation" of European space (Sidaway 2002: 153–154). Some even go as far as to suggest that "cross-border integration (e.g. in the form of regional 'homogenisation') could coincide with decreasing cross-border mobility" (Spierings & van der Velde 2008: 497). Along the Spanish-Portuguese border for instance, an entire industry of passage has been suffering from the building of a bridge and access roads that bypass the border-towns (Sidaway 2002: 154–155, de Fátima Amante 2013: 38). This can be compared with our study area, where the benefits of a new motorway connecting Szczecin and Hamburg have been questioned for the settlements lying in-between (Kirbach 2006).

[45] See more references in Paper IV.

4.2.3 The border as a resource for cross-border cooperation

Partly as a compensation for border regions adversely affected by the Single Market, the European Commission took serious efforts to support various institutionalised forms of cross-border cooperation (O'Dowd 2002: 21). These include euroregions (Perkmann 2003), i.e. collaboration of adjacent territories on different sides of a border; or town-twinning projects (Eskelinen & Kotilainen 2005), whereby also more remote settlements can cooperate. Illustrative of the (initial) strong belief in the impact of institutionalised cross-border cooperation is a Council of Europe report from the early 1990s, arguing that it would reduce the territorial states' monopoly of control in border regions by constituting "the first step towards political union", and even representing "the cornerstone of the future European political community" (Mestre 1992: 14). However, a number of studies (Eskelinen & Kotilainen 2005: 40, Scott & Matzeit 2006, Paasi & Prokkola 2008: 21–23, Joenniemi & Sergunin 2012: 39, de Fátima Amante 2013: 37–38) have shown that rather than "uniting politically", the actors involved in these formations are turning their (alleged) disadvantage into an advantage by using their border location as a resource, not least by attracting EU funds for their undertakings.

At the same time, the presence of a border can offer opportunities beyond the more pragmatic elements of fundraising. Sohn and others (2009: 922) have shown that for European border cities such as Basel and Geneva,

> "the presence of a national border offers an opportunity to invent original forms of governance, to increase the autonomy of the local authorities by different types of cooperation which transcend the institutional and territorial divides, and to promote the international character of the metropolitan centre. In a context of global competition, these features represent an undeniable benefit."

Thus the idea that "the border unites" or at least interconnects rather than divides is more and more present among practitioners (Hubenko 2011: 2, EstLatRus 2013, Renate 2013, Kokovai 2013). Some of the cross-border cooperation projects co-financed by the EU even run under the slogan "united by borders" (EstLatRus 2013).

In our study area, the Euroregion Pomerania appears to be the most important organisation dealing with institutionalised cross-border cooperation. While supporting a large number of projects and encounters, the Euroregion's unusually large territory[46] perhaps hinders engaging some of the included communities in meaningful exchange. It is arguably the development of Szczecin and its direct German hinterland that is the crucial issue in this region. However, a border-transgressing spatial planning of this increasingly cross-border agglomeration does not yet exist, for legal and other reasons (Tölle 2013). The same goes for the Oradea Metropolitan Area (OMA 2013) at the Hungarian border in Romania. In both cases, institutionalised cooperation has been established between the urban municipality and the surrounding local authorities, but not with the ones across the state border.

[46] The Euroregion Pomerania stretches all the way from Båstad (Sweden) in the north to the outskirts of Berlin in the south, and from Stralsund in the west to Koszalin in the east. Most euroregions – including all the other three along the German-Polish border – have a smaller territory and are thus more concentrated around the border. For a short discussion on why Pomerania turned out to be so large, please return to sub-chapter 3.3.

4.2.4 The border as a resource for the maintenance of the Other

Finally and partly controversially, in its function as a dividing line separating more or less homogenous ethno-linguistic and cultural groups, the border is a resource for those eager to sustain these differences. These actors are not necessarily just bureaucracies, big firms, and nationalists, regionalists or local patriots, but can compose large segments of the population. Doevenspeck (2011: 140) for instance noted the wide "range of accounts of the border, from being a desired barrier against the demonized 'other' and a means of exclusion" besides its conception as a resource. In Laine's study (2012: 69), "[t]he respondents see the border as a resource for interaction and regional development, yet its barrier function is also valued". This is very comparable to the results of my survey (Paper IV), which showed that not just far-right voters can embrace the border[47]. The most obvious examples of proponents of (re)installing borders can probably be found in newly independent countries (re)gaining independence, for instance among the ethnic majority populations in the Baltic states.

Some reasons for this change of perspective from 'the border as a barrier' to the 'border as a resource' have been named in this sub-chapter, but there are more. It comes perhaps from the realisation that borders are here to stay (not so much their exact drawing or function but rather their mere existence) even in a "globalised" world. As Eskelinen and Kotilainen (2005: 40) note in a case study from the Finnish-Russian borderland, "[a]gainst the backdrop of history, it could be regarded as a genuinely significant achievement if Imatra and Svetogorsk would get their administrative cooperation running, and they could attract new investments into the region".

But the search for conceptualisations on why borders exist beyond the logic of power over territory (Sack 1986: 21–34, Lundén 1997, Anderson 2001: 19, Paasi 2009) should not stop there. In the last section of this chapter, therefore, we shall see how border studies and the even larger literature on the Other have more recently started to mutually enrich each other in order to approach a deeper understanding on the creation and maintenance of differences.

4.3 Boundaries, nations, and Others

In many ways boundaries are one of the most fundamental elements of social reality. While a number of thinkers from Montaigne (1572–74/1958) through Vygotsky (Miller 2002: 372–418) to various postmodernists noted the fluidity of the boundary between the Self and the Other, an essential characteristic of the individual remains the drive to distinguish her/himself from others (Freud 1922/1989: 3). Without the Other, there is no Self (*cf.* Gregory & al. 2009: 515)[48]. At the same time, as the individual is social in nature (Simmel 1908/2009: 409) and dependent on others (de Swaan 2003: 9–11) s/he also has a need to be part of a community, group or network.

[47] My results in turn are very comparable to Brym's (2009), who studied the Polish side of the same area.
[48] For further references on this issue, including G.W.F. Hegel and Jacques Lacan, please consult this entry.

For the sake of analysis it is important that "[t]he contrast between individual psychology and social or group psychology, which at first glance may seem to be full of significance, loses a great deal of its sharpness when it is examined more closely" (Freud 1922/1989: 3). Freud's "psycho-analysis shows that almost every intimate emotional relation between two people which lasts for some time – marriage, friendship, the relations between parents and children – contains a sediment of feelings of aversion and hostility…" (1922/1989: 41–42). Hence, such dynamics in the relationship are as valid for groups as for individuals.

The size of a group can of course range from a gathering of three individuals to a community of millions; some can theoretically include the whole of mankind, for instance in the form of a global awareness or a community of "world citizens". Yet also groups identify themselves in relation to other groups: 'us' cannot exist without 'them'. Moreover, and perhaps somewhat paradoxically, even a global or cosmopolitan identity can be exclusive – for instance by not accepting the less like-minded.

However, groups are rarely stable and fixed: on the contrary, they are in a more or less constant state of flux, regarding both their members and the ideas and goals connecting them. Kin, ethnicity, religion, caste, profession, class, gender, race[49], and nationality are some of the dominant identity markers that have worked to define groups of individuals throughout history. Among these, nationality has arguably been the most significant in the past two or so centuries, at least in Western cultures. It has in fact been such a prevalent form of social organisation that its dominance has rarely been questioned, at least among the wider public.

As globalisation theory, new regionalism and other theories stressed in the 1990s, the national may have been loosening somewhat. Yet like borders (as we saw in the previous sub-chapter), national identities are surprisingly stable in our current age (Castells 2004: 32) – even if this is less true of their content than their mere existence. In the past two decades we have even been witnessing a revival of nationalism in large parts of the world, interpreted by some as exactly a reaction to globalisation (Kaldor 2004, Castells 2004: 33). Somewhat paradoxically then, accelerating global flows of goods, persons and images appear to go together with determined efforts towards closure, emphasis on cultural difference and fixing of identities (Meyer & Geschiere 1999). As with borders (see 4.2), images of national characteristics and stereotypes are maintained in popular culture and literature[50], country travel guides (Jaworski & al. 2011), jokes and anecdotes[51], as well as other communications designed to make us sense of space and belonging. Differences between nations and countries are even exaggerated in nation-branding campaigns (Volcic & Andrejevic 2011) and tourist promotions, to satisfy our thirst for the Other and the exotic that we occasionally long after (Löfgren 1990). Further, spatial belongings are (re-)constituted by our dependence on and use of institutions and authorities,

[49] The term 'race' is of course highly problematic in a European context but is commonly used in North America (see e.g. St Louis 2005), where it has a different connotation and is sometimes used interchangeably with 'ethnicity' (Johnston & al. 2009: 215).
[50] One example is the pocket series Xenophobe's guides; see http://www.xenophobes.com/.
[51] For some Polish and German examples see http://www.polishharmony.de/Witze-ueber-Polen-und-Deutsche.

many of which remain nationally organised (see sub-chapter 4.2.1). They are also legitimised by geographical and national metanarratives about the origins, presence, and (desired) future of the community at stake (Bassin 2012). Moreover, spatial belongings are reproduced by a number of conscious and semi-conscious mundane practices, such as the use of flags and currencies (Billig 1995). National flags are particularly often waved at the border (Paper IV), and different currencies exchanged. Restaurants elsewhere named after localities, regions, or given some phantasy names become symbols and transmitters of 'the national culture' at the border (Figure 9).

Figure 9. "German Cuisine" and "Restaurant Poland" on each side of the border-crossing Linken/ Lubieszyn.

Source: author's photos, July 2011

Last but far from least, national identities survive in everyday mundane discourses and communication (Newman 2006). Illustratively, in Sweden for instance other countries are often "blamed" for extreme weather conditions through the use of such terms as 'Russian cold', 'German warmth' or 'England rain'; explained by people's willingness to associate certain types of weather with a specific place, while reinforcing pre-existing feelings for the country at stake (di.se 2013). In the German-Polish borderland, othering discourses remain among local residents (Galasińska & Galasiński 2003, Paper IV) and regional elites (Best 2007, Paper III) alike.

Even without going back to ancient classics, one can find abundant inspiration in works from the past two centuries or so that deal with the creation and maintenance of the Other. Among literary classics, the famous grandiose dramas of *Faust* (Goethe 1808/1992) and *The Tragedy of Man* (Madách 1861/2000) raise questions on whether mankind is able to create a long-standing peaceful society, a (near-)utopian coexistence of all.[52] Whereas Georg Simmel's (1908/2009) and Alfred Schuetz's (1944) works on 'the stranger' show clear parallels to the literature on the Other, the term 'stranger' has an arguably different and perhaps more negative connotation than the Other. While the former feels more remote, the latter is more

[52] While there is a long-established consensus among social scientists that inter-group conflicts are caused by the construction of an 'us' vs. 'them' dichotomy, a remarkable recent study on macaques by social psychologists showed that such biases may be rooted in phylogenetically ancient mechanisms (Mahajan & al. 2011). Of course questions do and should remain regarding studies comparing human with non-human behaviour.

ambivalent; the Other is not necessarily a stranger, let alone an enemy. Instead, the Other(s) may be very well known to 'us' but we may nevertheless not be willing or able to identify with it/her/him/them. Illustrative here are examples of ethnic groups that have been living together – or perhaps rather side by side – for centuries without having become one group, such as Baltic peoples and ethnic Russians in the Baltics, or some ethnic Hungarians in the neighbouring countries of Hungary[53]. Jews until 1948, Armenians until 1991, or Kurds until our days are only some in the plethora of identities that may not have survived without their centuries-long maintenance of cultural-ethnic boundaries. The big post-colonial wave of discussion on the creation of the Other was activated by Lévi-Strauss's book *Sad Tropics* (1961) and perhaps even more by Said's opus *Orientalism* (1978), in which they describe and criticise the exoticisation of non-European cultures by Western travelers and thinkers that reaches far back in history.

An influential perspective on processes of othering was offered by Freud, who noticed that

> it is precisely communities with adjoining territories, and related to each other in other ways as well, who are engaged in constant feuds and ridiculing each other – like the Spaniards and Portuguese, for instance, the North Germans and South Germans, the English and Scotch, and so on. (Freud 1930/ 1989: 72)

Freud termed this phenomenon 'the narcissism of minor differences', which he saw as "a convenient and relatively harmless satisfaction of the inclination to aggression, by means of which cohesion between the members of the community is made easier" (Freud 1922/1989: 72). The concept has been influential in explaining ethnic (Blok 1998) and social (St Louis 2005) conflict and differentiation ever since. A good number of ethno-national examples can be named from Europe alone: thus the Germans, Austrians, and Swiss (Rack 2012); the Serbs, Croats, and Bosnians (Blok 1998: 42–44, Kolstø 2007: 168); the Scandinavians (Dahlerup 2013); the Czechs and Slovaks; or perhaps the Russians, Belarusians and Ukrainians can all be regarded as very close. While Kolstø (2007: 167–169) correctly reminds us that this is an outsider's viewpoint and the minor differences may be perceived as large by the respective peoples themselves, the references above all show that the emphasis on the minor differences between them can be attributed to exactly their smallness. Jacoby (2011) has even suggested that we are nowadays witnessing increased tensions and ethno-social differentiation exactly because the differences between groups are decreasing universally. As Girard (1979: 51) put it, "[i]t is not the differences but the loss of them that gives rise to violence and chaos". While it may be wrong or at least too early to talk of Germans and Poles having become so similar that they now need to emphasise their minor differences, there are some signs of such a trend in the Szczecin-borderland at least in terms of material wealth and opportunities. In a private conversation, an academic with origins on the German side of the border related the growth of negative attitudes by local Germans towards the Poles (see Paper IV) to their own minority complexes vis-á-vis the rest of Germany, where their region is mostly known for its structural weaknesses (see 3.3). This creates a local approach something along the line of "we may have problems, but we are still better than the Poles".

[53] Of course there is always a certain degree of overlap, hybridisation, and even assimilation, but by and large the group identities mentioned have been fairly stable (not as much their meaning as their mere existence).

At the same time, the Other or even the stranger can also be seen as an enrichment (Vogt & al. 2010). In his study on the Congolese-Rwandan borderland, Doevenspeck (2011: 140) noted that "accounts of the border as a resource, as an opportunity for recreation and as something normal and inevitable, show that the mutual exchange embedded in everyday border practices at the local level has the potential to contribute to a deconstruction of the official versions of otherness." In a similar vein, Joenniemi and Sergunin (2012: 47) noticed that in Northern Europe "[t]he ensuing encounters with previous otherness seem gradually to be on their way of being turned into a resource".[54]

While processes of othering have hardly disappeared in the Szczecin-borderland, their actual target has indeed shifted. Whereas "anti-neighbourness" may have been mainstream a few decades ago on both sides, attitudes and politics are today more polarised especially on the German but also on the Polish side (see in Paper IV). Thus for people with liberal or leftist sympathies for instance the local far right is clearly more of an Other than are like-minded Poles, and vice-versa. Nevertheless, these domestic polarisations have far from fully replaced the predominance of national identities as the main basis of identification (*cf*. Brym 2009), and can themselves be seen as constituting new-old types of boundaries.

[54] For a further discussion on the link between bordering and othering, see Paper IV and especially van Houtum (2010: 959–960).

5 The papers in brief

In this chapter, a short outline of each of the four papers that make up the rest of this thesis is provided.

5.1 Paper I

Lundén, T., Mellbourn, A., von Wedel, J. & Balogh, P. 2009, "Szczecin: A cross-border center of conflict and cooperation" in *Conflict and cooperation in divided cities*, ed. J. Jańczak, Logos Verlag, Berlin, pp. 109–121.

The first and co-authored paper analysed the conditions for cross-border contacts in the study area, including areas of cooperation as well as conflicting interests. The bulk of the primary data is made up by seven (at the time) freshly conducted elite interviews, complemented by secondary sources such as earlier studies on the area as well as newspaper articles. My part focused especially on transport infrastructure that is or is planned to cross the border. Our common conclusion was that relations between people on the two sides are generally good, but not very intensive. On the institutional side, some structural challenges that have been working against a closer cooperation include asymmetries in the administrative-hierarchical structures between Poland and Germany, implying that competences are different on the same administrative-territorial level in the two countries.

5.2 Paper II

Balogh, P. forthc., "Changing patterns of city-hinterland relations in Central and East European borderlands: Szczecin on the verge of Poland and Germany" in *Governance in Transition*, eds. A. Ryder & J. Buček, Springer.

Accepted in August 2011; last announced date of publication: September 2014.
See: http://www.springer.com/earth+sciences+and+geography/geology/book/978-94-007-5502-4
The version presented here is a modified version of the accepted paper.

The second paper attempted to test whether two theoretical approaches, the central place theory and the rescaling-theory, can be helpful tools in explaining cross-border developments in the study area. The latter were followed through news articles, observations from the field, and various communications with local actors (mostly interviews). In conclusion it could be said that while both conceptual frameworks were found to have some relevance, none of them seems sufficient to explain the local conditions.

The paper also includes a small content analysis of a number of official strategy documents. While these were produced by various actors on both sides of the border, they all touched upon the city of Szczecin's present and future geopolitical and geo-economic orientations. The analysis found that it is not uncommon by actors and experts to explicitly use history and geography as a discursive tool to legitimise their policies, at times even if these diverge. Thus emphasising different elements of the city's past experiences could serve in both promoting increased cross-border contacts as well as raising an awareness of an over-optimism thereof. It is clear that overemphasising the city's past and contemporary geographic locations bears some risks of seeing this cross-border development in deterministic terms.

5.3 Paper III

Balogh, P. 2013, "The Outsider Advantage. Interviewing Planners and Other Elites in the Polish-German Borderland", *Journal of Settlements and Spatial Planning*, vol. 4, no. 1, pp. 101–108.

The third paper is based on the 38 elite interviews our team conducted; their content but also the experience of having conducted them in another country. As conducting interviews with elites is increasingly common, an important debate emerged around the researcher's position as an insider/outsider also in a geographic sense. Three standpoints have been distinguished. Initially, some emphasised the advantages of the insider in eliciting interesting and sometimes even sensitive information from informants. More recently, several scholars suggested that this position is never stable but shifting between in- and outsider. Our experiences are more in line with those who demonstrated the advantages of being an outsider. Coming from outside the study area may be particularly helpful when interviewing elites on sensitive issues such as contacts in a borderland with a troubled history. Our interviews revealed three patterns. First, blaming the other side for a lack of success with cross-border cooperation is not unusual on both sides. Second, de-emphasising the importance of cooperation is more common on the Polish side, but also occurred on the German side. Finally, a discourse of 're-establishing the historically coherent region' is clearly present on the German side, but lacks almost entirely on the Polish side. It is doubtful whether we would have been able to elicit such attitudes from both studied groups had we come from either of them.

As always, the last point can be challenged to some extent. A few factors could indeed have moderated our outsiderness, such as being similarly dressed (in suits) as the interviewees or possibly being received by them as elites. We have also undertaken a number of trips to the study area, even if these usually lasted for about three days in total. The encounter with the respondents was simply too short (usually about one hour in total) to have developed into a closer relationship, as has been reported in other cases (Lindelöf 2006: 41). More importantly, meeting outsiders – geographically and professionally – means that interviewees have little to lose from being straight and open about their experiences. Unlike the German journalist who reported on the local interviewees being nerved by yet another visitor (Pergande 2011), we truly felt welcome by them and were never really turned down a meeting.

5.4 Paper IV

Balogh, P. 2013, "Sleeping abroad but working at home: Cross-border residential mobility between transnationalism and (re)bordering", *Geografiska Annaler: Series B, Human Geography*, vol. 95, no. 2, pp. 189–204.

The fourth paper deals with a phenomenon emerging in several borderlands mostly in Europe. Cross-border residential mobility (CBRM) is in my study area mostly driven by Szczeciners who move to localities in the northeast of Germany but largely commute back to their native city on a daily basis, for work and social life. This phenomenon has been treated by scholars as another example of transnationalism. The bulk of my empirical study consisted of a survey in Vorpommern with Polish and German residents alike, with an option for the respondents to comment freely as they wished. This and the fieldwork revealed that rather than overcoming the border and leading to new kinds of post-national identities as a number of transnationalists have suggested, CBRM in many ways reinforces national structures as it rests on exploiting the differences and advantages of different countries. Additionally, cross-border residents are in Vorpommern – but also elsewhere – met with mixed feelings by the native community, whose (re-)demarcation of the border by alternative means (such as national symbols and flags but even anti-neighbour utterances) is more illustrative of ordering, (re-)bordering, and othering than processes of hybridisation and transnationality.

6 Concluding discussion

Those who make a practice of comparing human actions are never so perplexed as when they try to see them as a whole and in the same light; for they commonly contradict each other so strangely that it seems impossible that they have come from the same shop.

Montaigne (1572–74/1958: 239)

While some important cross-border developments have been taking shape in the Szczecin area of the German-Polish borderland over the past years, social and economic life remain strongly influenced by the presence of the state border.

Whereas a few border-transgressing processes were triggered by the partial opening of the border in 1989–1990, the enlargement of the EU in 2004 and of the Schengen Area in 2007 were clearly milestones in this development, carrying a number of opportunities for these largely peripheral regions. Some of those opportunities have been more successfully exploited than others. It may not be too surprising that the German-Polish borderland has not come very close to earlier, rather over-ambitious visions such as the 'Stolpe-Plan', the 'Oder region', or suggestions of a number of regions crisscrossing the border, centred around the larger cities or 'central places' (Ciok 2009, see also in Papers I and II). Taking into account Szczecin's large size one cannot so far talk of a particularly dynamic cross-border agglomeration in a current European comparison either. With its connections to the direct German hinterland remaining scarce, the city is rather unlikely to become the next booming cross-border metropolis á la Bratislava – let alone Basel, Geneva, or Luxembourg. Yet with growing transportation and commercial links to Berlin and its airports, it is more comparable with Oradea, a city that has been developing connections to Budapest and its airport as well as some movements with its direct hinterland on the Hungarian side of the border, like cross-border residential mobility. When it comes to Szczecin's direct hinterland on the German side of the border, the most important development is similarly the cross-border residential mobility of approximately three thousand Poles (Paper IV); but as I tried to show, deeper integration effects of that process are questionable. For the rest, most elements in the borderland largely remain under national – or local but not transborder – structures, including metropolitan governance (Tölle 2013, Lang 2012) and public transport. I also pointed out that some of the area's potentials are disproportionally taken advantage of or even driven by actors coming from outside, including economic opportunities, second home ownership, and cultural-educational exchange.

The developments above – and their partial lack – can on the one hand be explained by the study area's structural weaknesses, such as its socio-economic and demographic challenges. Indeed, a scenario is emerging of a borderland left for the environment and for recreational functions. This can be compared with von Wedel's (2010a) suggestion of a re-medievalised

border, characterised by marsh and swamp. That would probably matter little for German-Polish contacts, which are increasingly concentrated in large cities rather than in the direct borderland. But such a scenario raises questions of social and economic sustainability not just in border but also peripheral areas more generally.

I pointed out that while German-Polish relations on the bi-national level have significantly improved, various historical and contemporary experiences have served to create specific borderland attitudes and identities that are rather accentuated in the area (Paper IV). Whereas encounters with the Other are seen as an enrichment in certain places and contexts (Vogt & al. 2010), the emerging picture in the study area is a rather polarised one, especially on the German side where the Other is now frequently encountered and well-present. But the continued significance of the boundary can also be related to the insight whereby borders are now widely seen as resources to be exploited rather than barriers to be overcome; by firms, bureaucracies (O'Dowd 2002, Scott & Matzeit 2006), and citizens (Sidaway 2002, Laine 2012) alike. Thus while institutions like the Euroregion Pomerania may be working for cross-border integration as well as regional or hybrid identities, their legitimacy is based exactly on the presence of the border. As in many borderlands where the physical barriers are at least partly removed (see in Paper IV), most citizens in the Szczecin area are crossing more and more often, but to experience and to take advantage of the differences of both sides (in prices, quality etc.) rather than to overcome them. The results are thus in line with other studies that point to a continued relevance of boundaries even when the physical barriers are gone and flows are increasing (Newman 2006, Paasi & Prokkola 2008, de Fátima Amante 2013). They also support Brym's (2009) findings from the Polish side of the same area. The conclusions are also in line with analyses of globalisation that describe it as a seemingly paradoxical and simultaneous mixture of opening and closure[55] (Meyer & Geschiere 1999). Such processes can also be explained by the logic of competition so accentuated under the conditions of global capitalism (O'Dowd 2002: 25–26, Prokkola 2012, Belina 2013) as well as the apparent psychological (Freud 1922/1989) and social (de Swaan 2003) need of group belonging by the individual.

Yet this contribution does not only point out that the works of border scholars have been more adequate than of those who claimed to observe the rise of a 'borderless world' (Ohmae 1995, Strange 1996, Hobden 1999, Appadurai 2003) in analysing conditions in my study area. The contingency of the importance of boundaries and national identities is an equally important finding. Thus local German-Polish relations experienced two low-points in the past 25 years; the first in 1989–1991 (*cf.* Mirwaldt 2005), and the second in 2005–2009. Both these periods coincide with major changes and also fears (whether perceived or real) related to the gradual opening of the border in 1989, 2004, and 2007. It is therefore not impossible, though far from obvious, that the border's importance will overall decrease in the longer run. As we have seen empirical evidence is mixed here and further studies need to follow. It is most likely that the

[55] Russia is a particularly good example of a country that throughout its history has shifted between periods of opening and closure. Somewhat similarly, Europe has also oscillated between integration and fragmentation and there are growing signs that following a relatively long period of increasing cooperation, its countries are again turning inwards (*cf.* Lange & Bijman 2012, Swartz 2012).

significance and meaning of boundaries will be fluctuating over time, as they have been in the past. Either way, I believe that future border studies will need to take aspects of temporality and situatedness more into account when making general statements regarding a resurgence of borders[56], irrespectively of how accurately such analyses reflect the situation in our current times.

The logo of the German-Polish secondary school (cover page photo) can be seen to represent the relationship between the two nations: it can be likened to the construction of a bridge, the outcome of which yet remaining open (Pergande 2011). At least the building has begun. True, even once the bridge is completed new and old barriers can be (re-)raised in the forms of tolls, limitations on crossing (which also depends on the capacity of the bridge), or other controlling mechanisms. Even once all forms of physical, political, or financial hindrances are removed, cultural (e.g. mental boundaries), socio-economic, and demographic (e.g. a declining or aging population) challenges can remain, as is the case in the Szczecin area.

The dilemma is that while the world is a rich place thanks to its diversity, in order for that diversity to flourish boundaries are necessary. Then again, diversity can only be experienced by crossing – and not erasing – boundaries. When we travel to another country or place, we tend to pay more attention to the differences than to the similarities. We may or may not like those differences, but we still make the trip to experience them (*cf.* Löfgren 1990). Thus the question is not anymore whether differences – perceived or real – are there to stay. It is how we handle them.

[56] Among the few examples, Newman noted that boundaries become particularly important when "the physical borders have been 'removed', or 'opened', and are non-visible. It is at this point where we often delude ourselves into believing that we are living in a borderless world when, in effect, some of our more mundane daily life practices and activities demonstrate the continued impact of the bordering process on societal norms" (2006: 152). In ethnic studies, Brubaker (1996) for instance has been more critical of a constant importance of national and ethnic identities, emphasising that it is contingent on certain situations and contexts while nearly irrelevant in others.

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Sammanfattning (Swedish summary)

Gränsområden är ofta perifera såväl geografiskt-administrativt som ekonomiskt. Ett särskilt illustrativt fall är området runt Szczecin mellan Polen och Tyskland där en storstad på ena sidan gränsar till ett glesbefolkat omland på den andra. Det finns ett antal liknande fall i Europa (Nijmegen, Strasbourg, Basel, Genève, Trieste osv), men studier av dem visar en varierande grad av sammanlänkningar efter de fysiska barriärernas bortfall. Inte minst vid forskningsprojektets början fanns det få studier av just Szczecinområdet. Det övergripande syftet för detta arbete är därmed att analysera hur den fysiska gränsens öppnande påverkar det tysk-polska gränsområdet kring staden Szczecin. De mer specifika frågeställningarna är: Hur och varför har gränsens öppning påverkat de båda sidorna vad gäller

- gränsöverskridande samarbete, rumslig planering samt regional utveckling?
- lokala och regionala beslutsfattares diskurser, åtgärder och ageranden?
- tyska och polska lokalinvånares attityder gentemot varandra och gentemot gränsen?

En sekundär frågeställning är om inställningen bland tyskar och polacker gentemot varandra längs gränsen i studieområdet skiljer sig från inställningen i de två länderna i stort. Arbetet är en sammanläggningsavhandling där dessa teman har undersökts genom diverse metoder i olika studier. ’Kappan’ försöker svara på de ovan nämnda frågorna genom att

- presentera utvecklingen i studieområdet, historiskt men med fokus från 1989,
- presentera de teoretiska verktygen, och
- baka ihop resultaten från de självständiga studierna med ytterligare empiriskt bevis.

Jag har haft nytta av olika men i hög utsträckning relaterade teoretiska perspektiv som alla bidrar till att förklara de empiriska resultaten från studieområdet. Den klassiska gränsskolan härstammar från funktionalistiska tankar och ser gränsen framför allt som ett hinder som kan överskridas i och med en ökad genomtränglighet av fysiska barriärer. I Szczecinområdets fall kunde framför allt Berlins ökade dragningskraft observeras, med allt vanligare flygplats- och shoppingturer (se Papper I). Dessutom har tre–fyra tusen Szczecinbor flyttat över gränsen till tyska byar och småstäder för dagspendling (se Papper IV). Även tyskar korsar gränsen allt oftare, men sällan för mer än att tanka, småhandla eller köpa olika enklare tjänster exempelvis inom skönhets- respektive hälsoindustrin. Således kan man bara i begränsad utsträckning tala om en regional integration av gränsområdets två sidor såsom vid exempelvis Basel, Genève, Bratislava eller Öresund, där även arbetsmarknaden är alltmer sammanvävd. Gränseffekten förblir relativt stark och relationen kan snarare jämföras med den rumänska staden Oradeas kontakter med dess ungerska närområde samt Budapest. I Szczecinområdet har en del av regionens nyvunna potential genom gränsens öppning utnyttjats mer framgångsrikt än andra, och dessutom oproportionerligt av utifrån kommande aktörer inte minst från västra Tyskland.

I papper II och i ’kappan’ har diverse planer och visioner kring regionens utveckling jämförts från tiden före EU:s utvidgning med de senaste årens praxis och verkligheter. Det har visat sig att tidigare föreställningar kring områdets potential inte riktigt förverkligats, men också att flera av visionerna varit för ambitiösa och dubbeltydiga från början. Det har funnits, och i viss mån fortfarande finns, en naiv och närapå deterministisk föreställning att de två sidorna av gränsen ska integreras på grund av den historiska enhetligheten (före 1945).

Papper III har studerat de gränsöverskridande kontakterna genom lokala och regionala eliters diskurser och narrativ gentemot den andra sidan. 38 intervjuer har genomförts med lokala och regionala beslutsfattare, akademiker, journalister, affärsfolk, samhällsplanerare, samt en skolledare. Resultaten ligger mestadels i linje med de officiella diskurserna och slutsatserna som nämns ovan. Detta papper samt ’kappan’ diskuterar även mitt och forskningsgruppens positionalitet: generellt har vi upplevt att utifrån-perspektivet varit en fördel som gjort intervjupersonerna mer öppna i sina berättelser.

Papper IV redogör för lokalinvånares attityder genom en surveyundersökning som 102 respondenter deltagit i. Denna studie har avslöjat ett polariserat attitydlandskap, inte minst i jämförelse med landstäckande opinionsundersökningar i såväl Tyskland som Polen. Detta stödjer tidigare studier som visat att känslor av tillhörighet kan vara särskilt accentuerade i gränslägen, där mer kontakt med den Andre förekommer. Den gränsöverskridande boende-rörlighet som omnämns ovan har av flera forskare tolkats som en form av transnationell mobilitet, men uppfattningen av de som ser en sådan utveckling som ett försvinnande eller en hybridisering av gränsen bör revideras: det förblir nämligen oklart om den leder till en integrationseffekt mellan den gamla och den nya lokalbefolkningen.

Som senare skolbildningar inom gränsforskningen har visat tenderar människor att utnyttja skillnader över gränsen snarare än att försöka övervinna dem, vilket gäller såväl ekonomiska fördelar – till exempel skillnader i priser och skatter – som kulturellt utbud och mångfald. Detta gäller inte minst när den Andres närvaro ses som en berikning snarare än något som ska införlämmas. Dilemmat är alltså att gränser behövs för att upprätthålla mångfald, samtidigt som de behöver överskridas för att skillnader ska kunna upplevas. Denna balansgång kan ibland vara svår att hålla men är värd att eftersträva.

Resultaten här ligger generellt i linje med färsk forskning som visat på en fortsatt relevans av gränser även efter de fysiska barriärernas försvinnande. Ett annat bidrag till gränsstudierna är samtidigt att tiden för identiters och gränsens relevans är tillfällig, något som skulle behöva uppmärksammas mer i framtida forskning. I Szczecinområdet förekom (nationella) identiteter och markeringen av gränsen som särskilt viktiga just i tider som följt gränsens öppning, dvs under åren 1989–1990 samt 2007–2010. Även om betydelsen av gränsen förändras över tid kommer den att alltid existera i någon form, inte minst på grund av alla möjligheter som den erbjuder som resurs.

Nyckelord: gränsöverskridande regional utveckling, tysk-polska gränsen, Szczecin (Stettin), (nationella) identiteter, gränsattityder, den Andre

Appendix

Questionnaire to Polish residents in Vorpommern (July 2011)

Any one person of age in the household may fill in the form, but should do it by her- or himself alone. Please underline the option that best fits your answer. Wherever reasonable, you may underline more than one option.

1. What is your sex? Woman Man

2. How old are you? 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

3. Do you live in: a single family house? a row house? an apartment?

4. When did you move to this part of Germany? Before 1 May 2004
Between 1 May 2004 and 20 December 2007
Between 21 December 2007 and 30 April 2011
After 30 April 2011

5. Where did you live before? In Szczecin.
In Szczecin's vicinity (within 40-50 km).
Elsewhere in Poland.
In which voivodship? ……..
Elsewhere in Germany.
In which state (*Land*)?.....
In another country.
In which one?…….

6. Where do you currently work? In Poland.
In Germany.
In both countries.
I currently do not work in either of these countries.

7. Why did you move to this part of Germany?
I found cheaper/better housing (or land) than in Szczecin.
I like certain aspects of life in Germany.
I want to learn German. /I want my kids to learn German/I want my kids to go to a kindergarten or school in Germany.
For other reasons. For instance:……

8. Before moving here, have you considered any other place?
No, I have not.
Yes, in the Szczecin-area.
Yes, elsewhere in Poland.
Yes, elsewhere in Germany.
Yes, in another country.
Which one? ……

9. Are you generally satisfied with your choice to have moved here?
Yes, very Overall, yes So-so Rather not

10. Approximately how often do you travel to Szczecin or to the Polish side of the borderland?

Every day/almost every day
Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Once or twice a year/almost never

10.1. To other places in Poland?

Once or twice a week
Once or twice a month
Once or twice a year/almost never

11. If you travel to Szczecin, what means of transportation do you usually use?

Mostly car | Mostly public transport | Varying

12. If you are crossing the border to Poland, do you think about that you are crossing a border?

Yes, always | yes, often | Occasionally | Rarely | Almost never

12.1. Do you think about it:
More and more often | Less and less often

13. Generally speaking, how would you rate contemporary relations between…

13.1. …Poles and Germans in general?
Very good | Good | Varying | Bad | Very bad | I don't know

The relations are: improving. progressing varyingly. worsening.

13.2. …Poles and Germans in your town?
Very good | Good | Varying | Bad | Very bad | I don't know

The relations are: improving. progressing varyingly. worsening.

14. What is your perception of the Polish-German border?

It is an obstacle and it is good if as many mobility barriers as possible are removed.
One should consider the possible effects of dismantling barriers for each specific case.
It is a necessary line of division to preserve the national peculiarities of both countries.

15. What do you think about cross-border cooperation (in the form of cultural and educational exchange, a common labour market etc) between Vorpommern and Zachodniopomorze?

It is a positive feature and should be encouraged even more.
Its current intensity is just satisfactory.
It is already encouraged more than necessary.

16. How would you rate your own knowledge of the German language?

Fluent | Good | Intermediate | Beginner's level

16.1. In case you did not tick fluent, do you plan to make any improvements?

Yes | Maybe/I don't know | Probably not

17. Do you plan to stay in this part of Germany in the coming 5-10 years?

Yes, definitely | Probably yes | Maybe | Rather not

17.1. If you have ticked ‘Maybe’ or ‘Rather not’, do you have any plans to move to:
Szczecin or to its vicinity?
elsewhere in Poland?
elsewhere in Germany?
to a third country? Which one?

18. If you have any other personal comments, please write them here:

In order to receive a small thank-you gift, please mark your choice and indicate and address to which it can be sent.

I would like to have a: small chocolate
Stockholm-kitchen magnet
magnetic bookmark

sent to the following address:

Thank you very much for your participation!

Questionnaire to German residents in Vorpommern (July 2011)

Any one person of age in your household may fill in the questionnaire, but should do it by her- or himself alone. Please underline the option that best fits your answer. Wherever reasonable, you may underline more than one option.

1. What is your sex? Woman Man

2. How old are you? 18-29 30-39 40-49 50-59 60+

3. Do you live in: a single family house? a row-house? an apartment?

4. Have you ever been to Poland?
   Yes, but just right across the border, in Stettin (Szczecin) or its vicinity.
   Yes, even further inside Poland.
   No, never.

In case you ticked "No, never", please continue from question nr. 5.

4.1. Approximately how many times have you been to…
   4.1.1 …Stettin (Szczecin) or the Polish side of the border in the last 20-22 yrs?
      Once or twice a week
      Once or twice a month
      Once or twice a year
      Once or twice altogether

   4.1.2 …Stettin (Szczecin) or the Polish side of the border in the last 6-7 years?
      Once or twice a week
      Once or twice a month
      Once or twice a year
      Once or twice altogether

   4.1.3 …to other places in Poland?
      Once or twice a month
      Once or twice a year
      Once or twice altogether

4.2. What were your reasons for going to Stettin (Szczecin) or to the Polish side of the border?

   Shopping Healthcare Wellness Historic tourism

   Visiting friends/relatives Other reasons. Example:

4.2.1. If you have been elsewhere in Poland, what was your main reason for going there?

   Holidays/wellness Healthcare/wellness Visiting friends/relatives

   Other reasons. For example:

4.3. If you are travelling to Poland more than once or twice a year, what is your primary choice of transportation?
   Mostly car Varying Mostly public transport

4.4. When crossing the border to Poland, do you think about that in that moment?

   Always Often Occasionally Rarely Almost never

4.4.1. Do you think about it: More and more often? Less and less often?

5. If you have never been to Poland, do you plan to ever go there?

Yes, at some point. Maybe/I don't know. Rather not.

6. Overall, how would you rate the current relations between…

6.1 …Germans and Poles in general?

Very good	Good	Varying	Bad	Very bad	I don't know
They are:	improving.	stagnating/unevenly developing.			worsening.

6.2 …Germans and Poles in your town?

Very good	Good	Varying	Bad	Very bad	I don't know
They are:	improving.	stagnating/unevenly developing.			worsening.

7. How do you perceive of the Polish-German border?

It is an obstacle and it is good if as many mobility barriers as possible are removed.
One should consider the possible effects of dismantling barriers for each specific case.
It is a necessary line of division to preserve the national peculiarities of both countries.

8. What do you think about cross-border cooperation (in the form of cultural and educational exchange, a common labour market etc) between Vorpommern and Zachodniopomorze?

It is a positive feature and should be encouraged even more.
Its current intensity is just satisfactory.
It is already encouraged more than necessary.

9. Do you know any Polish?

No, I do not. I know a little Polish. I get by. I know Polish well.

10. Do you plan to stay in Uecker-Randow in the coming 5-10 years?

Yes, definitely Rather yes Maybe Rather not

10.1. If you ticked "Maybe" or "Rather not", do you have any plans to move elsewhere? If yes, where?

Somewhere else in Germany.
Somewhere else in Europe/in the world. Where?

11. If you have any other comments, please write them here below.

To retrieve your small thank-you gift, please underline your choice and specify an address to which it can be sent.

I would like to have a: small chocolate
Stockholm-kitchen magnet
magnetic bookmark

sent to the following address:

Thank you very much for your participation!

(The original versions of the questionnaires – in Polish and German, respectively – can be requested from the author.)