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## **The Integration of European Union Borderlands: Polish Views on Cross-Border Mobility and Cooperation Across the Polish-German Border**

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To the Graduate Council:

I am submitting herewith a dissertation written by Michelle Janet Brym entitled "The Integration of European Union Borderlands: Polish Views on Cross-Border Mobility and Cooperation Across the Polish-German Border." I have examined the final electronic copy of this dissertation for form and content and recommend that it be accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy, with a major in Geography.

Dr. Lydia Pulsipher, Major Professor

We have read this dissertation and recommend its acceptance:

Dr. Thomas Bell, Dr. Anita Drever, Margaret Gripshover, Dr. David Tompkins

Accepted for the Council:

Carolyn R. Hodges

Vice Provost and Dean of the Graduate School

(Original signatures are on file with official student records.)

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Border Mobility and Cooperation Across the Polish-German Border

A Dissertation  
Presented for the  
Doctor of Philosophy  
Degree  
The University of Tennessee, Knoxville

Michelle Janet Brym  
August 2009

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## Abstract

The transformation of the Polish-German border from a carefully monitored border to an open border with no restrictions on the cross-border mobility of individuals was complete with Poland's full membership in the Schengen Agreement in the fall of 2007. Meanwhile, funding from the European Union since the early 1990s has been supporting the development of projects that require collaboration between Polish and German borderlanders. A chief mechanism for this has been the zoning of border regions into so-called *euro-regions*, zones of cross-border cooperation, that by financially supporting projects that require collaboration across the border encourage Polish and German organizations and towns in the border region to establish closer ties. In the summer and fall of 2007 during the final months of controls on the border, I interviewed Polish borderlanders living in the northwestern provinces of Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie to learn how successful these policies have been at reducing the divisive effect of the border between European member countries. Surveys and open-ended interviews were used to capture Polish borderlanders' opinions on the changes in their cross border mobility, to learn about their awareness of euro-regions and to explore how they identify with the region. The findings of this study are meant to contribute to a better understanding of the early stages of European Union integration in Central Europe.

Despite the delight borderlanders in my study expressed over the closing of custom checkpoints along the border, I found that linguistic and economic differences continue to influence individuals' decisions to cross the border and structure their interactions with German borderlanders. Although it has become relatively easy for



borderlanders' to cross the border, most participants only cross the border once a year. And although the majority of borderlanders' in my study held positive views on cooperating with German communities across the border their actions appear to be driven by the perceived economic benefits of cross-border cooperation and not a sense of belonging in an multicultural European society.

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## **1. Introduction**

Upon becoming a member of the European Union (EU) in 2004, Poland has been relocated from its de facto post-World War II position outside of Europe, back to its prior location as a member of Europe. The move was captured by two slogans supporting Poland's membership in the EU that hailed the event as 'Poland's return to Europe' or 'Europe's return to Poland.' While the boundaries of Poland have not physically moved since the end of World War II, nonetheless, geopolitical changes have shifted the country's location in relation to Europe. The creation of euro-regions (zones of cross-border cooperation that receive financial support from the EU for local projects) along the now interior EU border is encouraging cooperation between Polish and German borderlanders. Meanwhile preparations in the fall of 2007 for Poland to become a full member of the Schengen Agreement on December 22<sup>nd</sup> of 2007, an agreement that entitles all citizens of member countries the right to travel freely across member countries' borders without a visa or passport, was removing restrictions on mobility across the western border in Poland. The openness of Poland's western border and ability of citizens to travel freely between Poland and other Schengen member countries is a marker of the country's status as a modern European country. However in the mental maps of many Europeans the Polish-German border is an entrenched linguistic and cultural division marking the edge of Western Europe. The purpose of this dissertation is to understand if EU policies are reconfiguring the Polish-German border from a rigid borderline into a micro-region within the EU. The dissertation is based on the qualitative study of the experiences, perceptions and attitudes of Polish borderlanders who live in Poland's northwestern border region.

The transformations along the Polish-German border are reflective not only of political changes in Central Europe but also of modifications in attitudes toward the functions of borders between EU member countries. European nation-state borders have typically functioned as political dividers and binders of cultural unity—as the bases of national identity. Borders were important markers and defenders of these entities. But in an increasingly integrated Europe the meaning of borders is changing from that of dividers to sites of cooperation. Today these spaces between countries are becoming more interconnected as Europeans travel across nation-states borders in search of employment, education and investment opportunities. Borderlands were also once viewed by scholars as outliers far from the cultural centers, dangerous places where illicit activities were common (Anssi Paasi 2002, Langer, 1996). Today the EU through the creation of euro-regions, institutions that distribute financial funding for projects encouraging cross-border cooperation along European borders, is supporting regional cooperation in these once economically peripheral borderlands. The official EU discourse promotes euro-regions as laboratories for cultural integration, or ‘test beds for the construction of Europe’ where the beginnings of a new pan-European identity have been planted and the growth can be studied (Grix and Knowles, 2002).

The entrance of Poland into the Schengen Agreement in 2007 is the latest transformation of the Polish-German border. Polish borderlanders are familiar with the impermanence of borders because space in Central Europe has been allocated and reallocated to different political units many times over the last few centuries. This particular border, whose present day location was established at the end of World War II, during the Cold War, was an interior border of the Soviet sphere of influence, dividing East Germany and Poland. Historic antagonisms between Germans and Slavs based on years of strife and the most recent expulsion and repopulation



which accompanied the westward movement of this border between 1945 and 1950 were not effectively dealt with by the Soviet regime. In the early 1990s, four euro-regions were created along the Polish-German border to foster Poland's integration into the EU by providing financial support for projects which support the development of cooperative bilateral relations along the Polish and now unified German border. (In Chapter Three, two maps 3.8 and 3.9, show the territorial extent of the two northwestern euro-regions in which this study was conducted.) The creation of euro-regions is an attempt to turn the border from a line demarcating difference into a region in its own right, no longer on the periphery but a place of its own, with its own "centers" with each euro-region's headquarters located in a city near the border and characterized by newly emerging multiculturalism. Aware that a mutual respect for cultural differences is the basis for a transnational European identity and instrumental for future cross-border integration, the EU increased its funding for "soft projects," meaning cross-border projects designed to increase cultural awareness and understanding (Grix and Knowles, 2002).

By 2007, after four years as an internal European Union border, all custom check points were closed along the Polish-German border, reflecting Poland's status as a full member of the Schengen Agreement. The openness of the border and support for cross-border projects is creating new opportunities for those residing along these borderlands. But has change in how Polish borderlanders relate to their German neighbors also accompanied the new openness of the border and cooperation across the border? To see if euro-regions really are spaces that foster the development of a shared European identity, I collected information on the cross border mobility of Polish people living in the border provinces of Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuske (map 4.1). Surveys and interviews were used to learn how often and why Polish borderlanders traveled to Germany and Polish citizens' knowledge of euro-regions. In the interviews, I sought to capture

the changes over time in the experience of traversing the Polish-German border and the extent to which the new mobility had changed the types of interactions between German and Polish borderlanders, which in the 1970s had been predominately based on cross-border shopping. Do the mental maps borderlanders maintain of the region place the borderline within a euro-region composed of Polish and German communities or is the border a divider along which bridges are being built to transverse both the Oder River and the mental wall still separating Eastern and Western Europe? By analyzing how Polish borderlanders describe the border as well as how they identify with the region (the border cities of Szczecin and Ślubice), I sought to better understand the circumstances that bind Polish borderlanders with their German neighbors and the mental boundaries that continue to restrict interactions between the two groups.

### **1.1 Intended Contributions**

The future of European Union integration is highly debated not only as an economic and political body but also its role as a mechanism for promoting the cultural integration that it is hoped will accompany the increasing economic linkages binding the continent together. The location of the study along the Polish-German border, an interior border of the EU, will provide insights into the success of EU policies in the short term to bridge national borders. My findings on regional identity in Poland's western borderland contributes to the debates on European integration by providing a better understanding of the reasons why borderlanders in Central Europe cross nation-state borders and borderlanders' opinions towards the increasing cross-border cooperation with their neighbors.

An awareness of how borderlanders' cross-border mobility is influenced by the relationship between the openness of nation-state borders and the constraints of mental borders will contribute to a better understanding of the potential of EU policies to integrate ethnically divisive borderlands, historically divided by past animosities. To learn more about the influence of the border in individuals' daily lives, I explored three components of the borderlanders' experience. By first analyzing how frequently and for what purposes people move across the border will provide a better understanding of the habits of borderlanders. Secondly, knowledge of how aware residents are of living in a euro-region and how much credit they give these institutions for encouraging cooperation between Polish and German organizations will provide a better understanding of the EU's contributions to cross-cultural understanding. Finally, the discourse borderlanders employ to describe the border and interactions with their German neighbors will provide a better understanding of the social construction of these mental borders and the importance of mental divisions in a region with increasingly relaxed regulations on mobility across the physical border.

## **1.2 My Connection to the Research Topic**

A trip to Poland in the fall of 2002 sparked my interest in how preparations for full membership in the EU were changing both Polish society and the country's ties with its western neighbors. The main topic of discussion in the media and conversation at social gatherings in 2002 was Poland's future membership in the EU. Opinions were divided between those who felt Poland was sacrificing some of the country's newly acquired sovereignty from the USSR by joining the EU and those who saw EU membership as vital for the country's future economic

growth. The intense emotions invested in these debates intrigued me and I entered my Ph.D. studies intent on finding a project which would allow me to explore how EU membership was influencing Poland's interactions with fellow members of the EU (such as Germany) and the country's eastern neighbors (such as Ukraine), thereby changing Poland's relative location in Europe.

The historical conflict surrounding the modern location of the Polish-German border made the region a particularly intriguing place to further explore EU integration. Poland's western borderland territory became Polish at the end of the World War II partly as an Allied effort to weaken Germany, thus preventing future aggression toward its neighbors of the type that had begun the war. The rightful ownership of the territory, referred to by the German government as 'territory under Polish administration' and by the Polish government as 'newly recovered territory,' remained a point of contention until a peace treaty was signed between a unified Germany and Poland in 1991. The remembrance of the conflict still remains a point of contingency between the countries today.

My study allowed me to pursue my interest in European integration in two ways. First, I was able to study the effectiveness of EU institutions, such as euro-regions in encouraging cooperation along European country borders. I was also able to learn if the new opportunities for unrestricted movement across nation-state borders--one of the EU's basic rights on the freedom of movement-- have influenced how frequently borderlanders move across the border and how borderlanders identify with the region.

I was warned early on that studying the Polish-German border would be a difficult topic. The stereotype of the border region as a space to be avoided was perpetrated in both Poland and Germany. During my first trip to the border in 2005, the Polish borderguard appeared to be

puzzled as to what American tourists were doing along the Polish-German border. He encouraged me to visit somewhere more scenic such as *Mazury*, a northeastern region in Poland which, in his opinion, was a more Polish landscape. During my second trip to the border in 2006 as a participant in a course on cultural identities in border regions at the German University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder, I learned from the other graduate students (from Germany, the United States and Canada) participating in the border course of the puzzlement and discouragement from family and friends they experienced when they shared their plans to spend three weeks in the Polish-German border region. One American scholar of borders with whom I briefly discussed my proposed research along the Polish-German border discouraged me from pursuing a study in the region. In his opinion the goal for euro-regions of promoting cooperation across the border was inherently flawed because of his perception of Poles as incapable of ever cooperating with anyone. A German scholar in Berlin also encouraged me to do my research elsewhere and not in Lubuskie, an area he described to me as an empty void. Those in Poland who had survived World War II and descendents of those who had fought in the war in central Poland were also very dismissive of the potential for any balanced cooperation, between Polish and German borderlanders and were wary of German interest in the region. Misinformation about the situation along the border seemed to be rampant on both sides. One lifelong resident of the Polish border town of Ślubice shared with me her recollection of a conversation she had with her uncle in the early 1970s, who was planning a visit to Ślubice. The first thing he asked her was if the Germans shot at them daily. The warnings and overwhelmingly negative stereotypes about the border only intrigued me to explore further the region. Although I had quickly learned that national sensitivity about the border issue among Poles and Germans not living in the

borderland remained strong, I was curious to learn what the viewpoint was of people who actually lived near the border.

### **1.3 Organization of the Dissertation**

The dissertation is divided into seven chapters. This first chapter is followed by a literature review in Chapter Two that addresses the recent rise of interest in border studies and the new approaches to studying the cultural complexity found in border regions. The increasing mobility and integration within Europe is reflected in the new approaches academics have used in studying borderlands. EU policies such as the Schengen Agreement and European Bank funding for euro-regions are changing the function of EU interior borders from dividers to spaces of cooperation. The new interest in border studies is complicated by the differences in opinions about the role of euro-regions in encouraging cooperation across EU borderlands and the type of integration that is actually present in European borderlands. Regardless of differences in opinions about the type of integration found across these now open and cooperative borders in Europe, the study of borderlands can reveal much about how the EU policies of integration are transforming the lives of individuals.

In Chapter Three, *Changes in the Polish Western Borderland from 1945 to 2007*, I discuss the changes in policies between German and Polish national governments and their influence on both the cross-border mobility of individual borderlanders and the level of cooperation in the region. The Polish-German border is a particularly interesting place to study cross-border cooperation because of the long history of conflict between these two nations. The border, once a fortified division between Poland and East Germany, both then part of the Soviet

sphere of influence, is today the site of four euro-regions that encourage cooperation across the increasingly deregulated border.

Chapter Four, *Methodology*, explains the variety of qualitative methods I employed to collect information on the reasons Polish borderlanders cross the border and on their opinions regarding the increased cooperation in the region. My goal was to comprehend, from a borderlander's perspective, what life was like along the Polish-German border immediately following Poland's achievement in 2004 of full membership in the EU but prior to Poland's full membership in the Schengen Agreement (December 2007). I was interested in the frequency with which Polish borderlanders (hereafter referred to simply as borderlanders) traveled across the border, the types of cross-cultural exchanges they were aware of and the narratives they produced to describe the border and their association with their German neighbors. My research was focused on the border provinces of Lubuskie and Zachodniopomorskie, with the majority of my interviews conducted predominately in the town of Słubice (Lubuskie) and city of Szczecin (Zachodniopomorskie).

In Chapter Five, *The Opinions of Polish Borderlanders in Lubuskie on the Integration of the Polish-German Border*, I explore borderlanders' opinions on the types of cross-border networks and cultural exchanges engaged in by individuals living in the province of Lubuskie. Information I gathered from a survey of Polish borderlanders in Lubuskie along with the interviews I conducted are used to learn how the experience of crossing the Polish-German border has changed as well as borderlanders' opinions on cross-border cooperation and integration in the region. I also discuss the significance of the economic and linguistic differences, buttressing a mental border alluded to in several interviews. At the end of this chapter I focus on the changes in the Polish town of Słubice, which has taken advantage of the

town's proximity to Germany and EU funding by supporting the emergence of a shared regional consciousness between the citizens of the Polish town of Ślubice and the citizens of the German city of Frankfurt-Oder.

In Chapter Six, *The Presence of the Polish-German Border in the Lives of Polish University Students*, I summarize the results of group interviews with university students in Szczecin. In the interviews questions were focused on learning about the students' cross-border mobility, students' views of the presence of Germans in Szczecin and students' knowledge of the Pomerania Euro-Region of which Szczecin is a member. I had the students describe both Szczecin and the border to learn more about the awareness of the border in their daily lives. I conclude with the future scenarios students predict for the region if the present period of unrestricted mobility across the border is maintained.

The removal of restrictions on mobility across the border and new projects to encourage cooperation as well as new ways of conceptualizing the function of borders all contribute to the increase in the types of cross-border networks stretching across the Polish-German borderland. In Chapter Seven, *Integration along an Interior European Union Border*, I summarize the similarities and differences between borderlanders' perspectives on integration in Ślubice and Szczecin. After reviewing the remaining cultural and economic barriers to cooperation, present in both communities, I discuss future research questions to better understand the significance of these barriers to individuals' cross-border mobility. Suggestions are also made for the focus of future EU policies in order to further promote the integration of communities in the region.



## **2. Literature Review**

World maps portray an orderly division of states along clearly defined political lines. In reality, borderlands, the lands that underlie international boundaries and form the transition zones from one country to the other are unique places where cultural connectivity is strongly influenced by the national political relations between countries and by regional geopolitics. The new mobility and cooperation associated with European Union integration have decreased the role of borders as barriers to interaction between friendly countries. The physical boundaries of EU nation-states are now barely noticed as Europeans cross between countries with no customs controls. The mental borders Europeans carry with them as markers of unique cultural spheres may be harder to erase. Therefore many researchers are asking what collaboration across the increasingly cooperative Central European borderlands might reveal about the actual effectiveness of EU integration. One proposed idea is that the integration of European borderlands supported by EU institutions such as euro-regions- zones of cross-border collaboration- may support the thesis of a new Europe composed of regions. Supporters of the integration of EU borderlands argue cooperative borderlands are sites of multiculturalism where borderlanders will eventually develop a regional identity equal in importance with national identity. Meanwhile other scholars argue cooperation across borders is based on shared economic benefits similar to EU integration, hence collaboration between borderlanders has little to do with cultural integration.

My research on the mobility of Polish borderlanders living along the Polish-German border like much of the research on borders was informed by literature from a variety of fields, such as political geography, cultural geography, cultural anthropology and works on European

Union integration. I have divided this review of the literature on borderlands in four subsections that address first the ways in which border studies have changed in the last several decades. Then, I review attempts by geographers to construct a classification system for the progress of integration as borderlands transition to more open and cooperative places. I also discuss the limitations of such a system in understanding border dynamics. In the third subsection, I examine what has been discovered by other scholars regarding formal and informal construction of nationalism in borderlands. Also discussed are the diverse opinions on the emergence of regional identity in cooperative borderlands and the importance of the mental borders maintained by individuals despite the removal of physical constraints to crossing the borderline. In the fourth subsection, I expand on European Union (EU) policies that have been important steps in the process of integrating the interior borders of European member countries.

## **2.1 From Boundary Studies to Border Studies: New Approaches toward Studying Borderlands**

The popularity of border studies is reflected in the emergence of journals dedicated to the study of borderlands, the number of conferences on European borders, and the creation of European research institutes dedicated to the studies of borders. Two examples are the Centre for International Borders Research (CIBR) at Queen's University in Ireland and the Nijmegen Centre for Border Research in the Netherlands. These institutions cover a wide scope of border topics ranging from border security, immigration control, economic cooperation, environmental problems and cross cultural awareness. The growing international interest in research on borders has encouraged summer schools in Europe, during which students gather at various European

borders to experience directly the borderland. The popularity of border studies is not limited to European borders. The Earlham College study abroad program offers students the option of spending a semester at the US/Mexico border to study the complexities of living along international borders.

The new popularity of border studies and the new theoretical approaches applied to the study of borders reflects new realities which have changed relationships across country borders. Post World War I border studies concentrated on demarcating the boundaries of new European countries according to the Wilsonian principle of territorial self-determination (Herb, 1999). Early work on borders by political geographers in the 1960s, such as Julian Minghi and Victor Prescott, focused on what Henk Van Houtum calls boundary studies. Geographers during this time period were interested in describing the location of borders, how borders evolve and change over time, understanding disputes over borderlines, and the political consequences of large-scale movements across borders (Van Houtum, 2005b).

Today the field of boundaries and borders studies has shifted its focus to comprehending the social construction of borders. Academics studying European borders have become more interested in understanding the formation of identity along soft boundaries, borders which no longer restrict the cross-border movement of people. Border scholars today are primarily, concerned with how symbols, signs, representations, performances and stories are used to the define borders (Van Houtum, 2005a) that are no longer visible between EU member countries. Studies are designed, for example, to explore the continued importance of national identity and the representation of multiple national identities in EU border regions (Van Houtum, 2005a and Paasi, 2005b).

The changes in approaches to studying borders are a result of the political changes in Europe that have altered the function of borders. During the cold war European borders were heavily monitored and therefore more visible on the landscape. Borders functioned, for the most part, as frontiers controlling movement of people and goods between countries. Josef Langer (1996) argues that borders function as dividers. This dividing notion was radicalized by the establishment of the Post-WWII Iron Curtain. Rather than cooperating across the border (Iron Curtain), each region (country) was hooked up to its respective center, be it an economic center in the West or an administrative center in the East. Since the collapse of state control of the economy in Europe these traditionally peripheral border areas, have had the chance to cooperate with communities across the border, to take advantage of increased exchange of goods and services (Langer, 1996). The removal of restrictions on movement has made borders less visible but increased cross-border interactions have made the situation in borderlands more complex than in the past. Additionally, the new global cultural economy has created more leeway for people to move across political borders and social-cultural boundaries (Dürschmidt, 2002). In Europe today the trends of globalization, EU expansion and integration, the revival of the local identities and the growth of regionalism have all contributed to more open borders (Paasi, 2002), more complex borderlands and multiple approaches to studying nation-state boundaries.

## **2.2. Borderland Taxonomies**

Borderlands are conceptualized as unique spaces at the intersection of two or more cultures with shared characteristics that set them apart as unique places worthy of study. Border scholars such as Oscar Martinez (1994) have attempted to identify stages through which

borderlands move as they progress from alienated borderlands with limited cross-border interactions to interrelated borderlands tied together economically, politically and socially. Other border scholars have expanded on Martinez's categorization, developing more specific groupings that acknowledge a wider range of economic and political interactions along borderlands. An awareness of the history behind the creation of present day country borders, the present political attitude toward cooperation and the types of cross-border economic networks, all of which contribute to the creation of a unique cultural borderscape, have led border scholars to move away from categorizing borders but rather to provide lenses through which to study integration in cooperative borderlands.

### **2.2.1. Borderlands as Distinct Places**

Oscar Martinez defines international borderlands as zones of transition. Located as they are, far from the heartland, external influences on borderlanders and their institutions are stronger than is the case in the center of the country (Martinez, 1994). Martinez coined the term 'borderland milieu' to describe the three characteristics he claims make a borderland unique from the rest of the country. First, international borderlands are zones of transnational interactions. Open borders between cooperative countries will have more of these transnational cross-border activities than disputed borders. Governments may cooperate to solve environmental problems, respond to natural disasters, and work together to support economic growth. People living in borderlands also take advantage of two different economic and political systems to improve personal economic situations and to enrich cultural opportunities (Martinez, 1994).

The second characteristic of borderlands is that between cooperating countries they are frequently blended zones of cross-cultural communication. A unique relationship may develop between two or more ethnic groups. The Italian-Austrian border is an example of a borderland where cultures mix with one another to form a unique creole culture (Kaplan and Häkli, 2002). The U.S.-Mexican border is another such case. On the other hand, relationships between ethnic groups in borderlands are often influenced by disagreements between countries as in the case of the Peru-Ecuador border dispute, resolved in 1998, with the division of the once unified Jivaro ethnic group by the national borders. Ethnic groups, whose territories overlap international boundaries, like the Jivaro living across the Peru-Ecuador border and the Kurds whose territorial concentration is located in parts of Turkey, Iran, Iraq and Syria, may, as a result of state policies aimed at reinforcing borders, become divided despite a long history of cross-border interaction. In comparison, contested borderlands such as the Pakistan-Indian border, cultural interaction is tightly restricted across the heavily guarded border. Disputed borders are uneasy places where competing claims to territory are justified by historical claims and government policies justifying attachment to and the inherent right to control the land (Elton, 2005).

The third characteristic of borderlands is the separateness of the borderland from the country's heart (Martinez, 1994). Martinez argued that it is this separateness that makes borderlands unique from the rest of the country. Michael Baud and Willem Van Schendel (1997) categorized borderlands into three types of spaces based on distance from the border. The first is the border heartland, (note that the use of heartland here is quite different from the concept of cultural heartland mentioned above) dominated by its physical location relative to the border and number of cross-border social networks. Intermediate borderlands, areas on both sides where the

influence of the border is moderate or weak, fall in the second category. The third category, outer borderlands, defines regions on both sides which only under specific circumstances experience interethnic or transnational activities associated with the border. Cooperative borderlands are constantly expanding outward through increasing trans-ethnic and economic ties. Because of trans-ethnic ties between the Poles and Germans the influence of the border can be felt in a the city of Poznan in the outer borderland, 181 kilometers (112 miles) from the border, in the form of German investments, collaborations between German and Polish universities and the large number of German tourists. In small countries with open borders, such as Slovenia which has almost one hundred and fifty border crossings along its 1,000 kilometer-long international border, the entire country may qualify as a border region (Vladimr Klemenčič and Milan Bufon, 1994). Today, European borders, though still economically peripheral regions receive special funds from the EU development bank policies, to ameliorate the peripheral position by working together with communities across the border.

### **2.2.2 Categorizing the Evolution of Cross Border Cooperation and Integration**

In Oscar Martinez's taxonomy of borderland evolution he identifies five stages borderlands pass through as they progress from sites of conflict with limited or no cross-border activity to integrated regions with full collaboration between two or more countries. The linear evolution of borderlands from alienated, to coexistent, to interdependent to integrated regions is based on increasing transnational interactions, which once established support the evolution of more integrated cross-border and cross-cultural linkages. As the political relationship between the two countries becomes more cooperative, a more favorable climate for economic cooperation develops. Once the economies become more structurally bound to one another, each country

gives up part of its sovereignty for the sake of mutual progress. In the final stage, Martinez proposes that if economic development is similar on both sides of the border, nationalism will give way to a new international ideology supporting the economic and culturally integrated borderland (Martinez, 1994).

Julian Minghi (2007) created a more complex classification of eleven types of borderscapes; including categories such as superimposition and conversion, war and confrontation, transition from conflict to harmony, exclusion and competition. In this classification there is no inherent evolution from one category to the next. Borderscapes may fall into more than one category reflecting the complexity of the situation at borders. For instance a superimposed border may also be one that is transitioning from conflict to harmony reflecting the acceptance of the borderline by countries and borderlanders.

### **2.2.3 Alternative Approaches to Conceptualizing Borders**

To avoid inappropriate generalizations regarding the development of European borderlands David Kaplan and Jouni Häkli (2002) argue one must pay attention to the unique historical development of cross-border politics and cultural exchanges in each borderland. Equally important are the current economic and social conditions that influence the types of cross border cooperation that takes place at a particular border (Ibid). Differences between borderlands can be explained by the age of the boundary, the physical appearance of the border, the history of socio-economic development in the region and the flow of people across the border (Klemenčič and Bufon, 1994). For example, settlements may lie near major border crossing points and have a high volume of cross-border traffic, while other settlements along the same border may lie closer to the border but far from any roads that lead directly across the border,



thus limiting the ease of crossing. Also urban areas along the border may provide more incentives for crossing than rural areas along the same border.

The Poland-German border is one example of a borderland which does not follow the linear evolution toward integration set out by Oscar Martinez. Changes in government policies toward the mobility of their citizens and cooperation with their neighbors supported periods of cross-border cooperation followed by periods of stricter control with limitations on cross-border contacts. For example in the 1990s visa free travel became possible, following the ratification of a treaty between the German government and the Polish government accepting the permanence of the border at its present day location. Despite increasing cooperation between Polish and German borderguards the border became more difficult to cross in the late 1990s because of increased patrols and inspections at border checkpoints to crack down on illegal activity in the region. Chapter Three therefore describes the history of political relations along the Polish-German borderline which have influenced the openness of the border. This context is critical to understanding how borders such as the Polish-German border that were once divisive barriers become transnational zones of cross-border cooperation. An understanding of the conflict surrounding the establishment of the Polish-German border at various times in the past is important to understanding how cooperation along the Polish-German border today differs from cooperation across the same border when it divided Poland and East Germany.

Four lenses through which to study the increasing rate of integration in cooperative transborder sub-regions were identified by Xiangming Chen, a geographer who has studied the development of transnational spaces along borders of Pacific Rim countries. Chen observes, that the differences and similarities between borderlands around the world can be explained by the ways in which these four factors (geo-economic, political-institutional, socio-cultural, and

spatial-infrastructure) influence a particular area. The first lens -- the geo-economic -- examines economic cooperation by focusing on the integration of markets, regional economic specializations and trade and investment flow across the borderland. Through the political-institutional lens, one examines the local autonomy of the region, its governing ideology and border control policies. The socio-cultural lens looks for shared histories, a shared subculture, cross border kinship ties, migration circuits and regional identity. The final lens -- the spatial-infrastructure approach -- looks at the physical distance across borders, the length of the border, and types of cross-border transportation links (Chen, 2005). My research in the Polish-German border will take a socio-cultural approach as I focus primarily on how people move in the borderland, the types of cooperative interactions borderlanders engage in and the presence of a shared subculture or regional identity in the borderland. Current geo-economic and political-institutional connections will also be important for understanding restrictions on borderlanders' cross-border mobility along with how local economic incentives to cooperate have influenced the types of cross-border networks that have developed in the border region.

### **2.3. Role of Formal and Informal Structures on the Creation of Identity in Borderlands**

There has long been an interest in the influence of borders on identity formation of local residents.<sup>6</sup> Early scholars of borders, such as Fredrik Barth (1969), were interested in the unique identity people living in borderlands developed and how their identity differed from that of the rest of the country. He argued that unique-ness of identity developed because borderlanders defined themselves partly in opposition to the others living across the border (Barth 1969 in Kaplan and Häkli, 2002). Other scholars such as John Augelli focused on the influence of

relations between nation-states on the level of cooperation found among cross border communities. John Augelli's (1980) work on border regions focused on the effort states put into maintaining their borders by establishing formal institutions as a means of securing their distinct national identity. Because of this preoccupation with identity, he found that states contributed extra resources to disputed borderlands in order to insure a strong nationalistic presence (Augelli, 1980). The polonization of Poland's western borderland, a territory which prior to the end of World War II had been part of Germany, is an example of a state actively supporting the development of a strong nationalistic presence in a disputed borderland. Streets and towns were renamed after Polish historical figures such as the first Polish dynasty, *Piast* to communicate that there had been a continual bond between the time period when a Slavic settlement was believed to have been first present in the area and the post-World War II Polish state. (See Chapter Three for more discussion on the incorporation of former German territory into the Polish state at the end of the war.)

Because formal institutions are used by states to control the cultural spaces, that transcend borders, Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (2000) argue that borders are unique places where scholars can study relations between local border communities and states: for example negotiations between governments over the control of the volume of cross-border transfers of people and goods. Yet even though borders are redrawn by political powers, people maintain and create boundaries through daily activities often long after the removal of physical barriers. Therefore researchers of borderlands have focused on borderlanders' mental perceptions of borders as well as the cross-border social processes that bind individuals together and contribute toward the development of a regional identity. To better understand the development

of border-region identity or lack thereof, scholars of border studies have focused on studying the daily life in border communities. Vladimir Klemenčič and Milan Bufon (1994) acknowledge the importance of studying the variety of micro-transactions in border regions. Examples of such transactions are people crossing the border for supplies, basic services, work, recreation and education. Both the types and volume of cross border transactions reflect the mobility of the border population. From such studies one can develop a better understanding of why people cross borders and what political, economic or mental constraints limit cross border mobility. The combination of these two points leads to a better understanding of how influential borders are in borderlanders' daily lives.

By understanding the meaning and relevance of borders to borderlanders, one can understand people's identity with the space around them (Van Houtum, 2005a). Paasi's (2005a) work on borders has contributed to this trend by researching how boundaries are reproduced and negotiated in the everyday life practices of Finnish and Russian borderlanders. In his research he argued there is a need for more empirically grounded research that captures the everyday life practices in border regions. David Newman (2006) argues that it is by looking at the seemingly small effects the border has on people's daily lives that one can best understand the influence of borders. Both Newman and Paasi see the documentation of borderlanders' narratives as the best way to capture the diverse experiences and meanings through which individuals living in border regions create and recreate their own identity.

### 2.3.1 Cooperative Borderlands and Cultural Integration

In the book B/Ordering Space, Van Houtum (2005a) argues that in an interrelated cooperative borderland a new type of identity based on a distinct blending of two cultures will emerge. This regional identity will contend with borderlanders' national identities, but will not replacing nationalism. In transitional border zones people form multiple layers of identities, which they use in the different cultural situations they encounter daily (Van Houtum, 2005). Jörg Dürrschmidt and Ulf Matthiesen (2002) coined the term 'the local border discourse' to refer to the unique culture found in cooperative borderlands. Anthropologists Thomas Wilson and Hastings Donnan (2000) describe the borderland as a place where individuals are engaged in a continuous process of deterritorialization as local communities adapt to global changes that facilitate cross-border cooperation and transnationalism.

On the other hand, Anke Strüver (2004b), in her article "Everyone Creates One's Own Borders" disputes the idea that borders within the EU are being erased or reconfigured into multi-cultural zones. Her research explored representations of German and Dutch popular culture on both sides of the German-Dutch Border. She found that despite cross border cooperation and the disappearance of the border as a barrier to the movement of people or goods, people who live along the German-Dutch border still perceive the border to be a hurdle. They maintain cultural barriers and stereotypes which influence their interactions with those living on the other side of the border. Daphne Berdahl (1999) in her study of the former border between East Germany and West Germany came to a similar conclusion. She found that despite reunification, Germans living along the former border of Eastern Germany and Western

Germany continue to maintain a porous mental border to preserve the unique identities that developed during the years the country was divided.

## **2.4. European Union Integration, Transboundary Regionalism and the Transformation of Central European Borderlands**

In addition to supporting the integration of the economic and political systems of member countries, EU policies have also changed the functions of national borders. Today EU member countries are working to reduce the divisive influence of borders by removing constraints on the mobility of citizens within Europe and putting in place organizations and institutions that support political collaboration to solve problems, such as illegal immigration, which borders cannot contain. Euro-regions are institutions which facilitate cooperation across borders but also encourage the emergence of a shared regional identity in European borderlands. The success of euro-regions in creating trans-border communities in borderlands is debated by those who argue national identity remains a formative marker of identity in cooperative EU borderlands. The type of cooperation and regional identity found in euro-regions established along the Polish-German border will contribute a better understanding of the diffusion of European identity to what was once a highly disputed borderline in Eastern Europe.

### **2.4.1 The Changing Functions of European Borders**

The geographic expansion of the EU and the increasing integration of socio-economic policies among member countries have changed the function of national borders. Previously, nationalism and the principle of self-determination--the idea that a nation should have

sovereignty over all actions within its own territory--played an important role in the drawing of new borders, as for example following the end of World War I. The rise of the modern nation-state in Europe beginning in the late 19th and early 20th century had created this new entity with which Europeans self-identified in post feudal Europe. It has been argued that the nation-state and nationalism were the basis for the sociopolitical modernization of Europe with the formation of the Westphalian state system at the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 (Kamusella, 2007). The nation which Benedict Anderson described as ‘an imagined community’ with a shared history and common destiny was based on a linkage between the shared identity of a group of people and the territory they inhabited (B. Anderson, 1991).

According to the nation-state construct, the main function of international borders was to define the outer extent of the nation (Anderson, O’Dowd and Wilson, 2003). Traditionally, the fortification of European borders was important for the protection of a nation from invading armies. Prior to World War II, in Western Europe nation-states heavily invested in the fortification of their borders for security purposes. In France, the heavily fortified Maginot Line, which ran along the French-German border, was built with the goal of maintaining an unbreakable barrier against any future German attacks. Similarly the German border wall, the Siegfried Line created a formidable barrier between Germany, France, Luxembourg, Belgium and the Netherlands. The iron curtain was another formidable barrier that divided Western Europe and Eastern Europe, as communist countries sought to regulate the flow of people to the west. Today only a few relics of the Berlin Wall remain and even less of the Maginot Line or Siegfried Line (Jones, 2007). Although the importance of borders within Europe for defensive purposes has declined the other functions of state borders, as binders of power and resources as well as cultural containers, remain important. The state, concerned with the construction and

maintenance of national identities, continues rely on borders to divide and separate people of different nationalities (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson, 2003).

Today the increasing integration of the EU is devaluing the role of nation-state borders as important dividers between nation-states. Today borders are increasingly perceived as areas of transition and cooperation between EU member-states. The significant devaluation of the physical borders between European nation-states began with the single European Act of 1986 which created the European market and the Schengen Agreement. Popular slogans such as —Europe without Frontiers” promoted the new openness and integration of European countries (Aklan, 2002). The new cooperation between European countries has shifted many functions traditionally pursued only by nation-state governments, such as security enforcement, education, and monitory policies to EU administrative centers.

In 1992, the Treaty on the European Union, or the Maastricht treaty as it is more commonly known, established the EU as a supranational organization by institutionizing the European Parliament, European Commission and European Court of Justice. The treaty also set up a protocol for the creation of the euro as the common currency and a supranational citizenship. EU citizenship is constructed as an addition layer to national identity, not to replace nationalities but to unit all citizens of Europe. One of the benefits of European citizenship is the freedom of movement. Article eight of the Maastricht treaty, entitles all European citizens the freedom to move and reside freely within the territory of other the member states (Panebianco, 2004). The Schengen Agreement Application Convention in 1990 created a zone in which citizens of member countries can travel freely. The agreement required new cooperation between governments as they harmonized asylum policies, visa requirements for non EU citizens and laws on drugs and illegal trafficking. The function of border custom checkpoints was



replaced with Interpol, an international data information system which stores information on criminals, and allows police forces to share information between countries (M. Anderson, 2000).

When 10 more countries, including Poland, joined the Schengen Zone in 2007 the exterior, or Schengen, border of the EU moved east and south. One of the paradoxes of the enlargement of the Schengen Zone is that while the rights of member citizens to free movement between countries are made easier, non EU travelers are subject to random checks. In this way, limiting the freedom of movement to only EU citizens reinforces the benefits of EU citizenship. Thus as the interior borders of the EU become insignificant to the movement of people the exterior borders are becoming more formable barriers and increasing in importance as markers of the EU's territorial extent (Snyder, 2000).

#### **2.4.2 The New Regionalism and the Contemporary Function of Borders as Sites of Integration**

The possibilities of a 'borderless world' became a popular concept following the European Union expansion in 2004, to include 10 new member countries, six of which were Eastern European countries from behind the former iron curtain. Instead of conceptualizing European national borders as frontiers dividing countries, scholars began to refer to them as spaces that encourage the diffusion of goods, people and ideas between countries (O'Dowd, 2003 and Wilson and Donnan, 2000). Borders have received special attention as important places where the responses of companies, politicians and borderlanders to new European Union policies could measure feelings toward European integration (Kaplan and Häkli, 2002). The new cooperative borderlands are also places to study the development of "urban trans-boundary culture" (Dürschmidt and Matthiesen, 2002). Jorg Dürschmidt and Ulf Matthiesen identify the

Polish and German border cities of Guben-Gubin are an ideal laboratory for the development of an urban trans-boundary culture--an ideal place to test the emergence of new trans-border networks and new forms of barriers to interaction (Ibid).

The decline in the importance of borders as dividers between nation-states and increasing conceptualization of borderlands as multicultural places correlates with the increasing conception of Europe as no longer composed of nation-states but regions. Nail Alkan (2002) notes that the meaning of the slogan ‘Europe of Regions,’ is in part the rediscovery of the outlines of old states and nationalities that have been subsumed in the nation-state system Europe developed over the last hundred and fifty years. The new regionalism recognizes the continuing importance of the state but at the same time emphasizes the increasing political significance of subnational and non-state actors that bridge, or flow across the old political boundaries. The new regionalism addresses a variety of issues--environmental, illegal migration, drug trafficking-- which can not be effectively solved in the national framework (Scott, 2004). At the center of the new regionalism is the promotion of a border-transcending civil society which involves mutual learning and equal partnerships between communities on both sides of the border (Langlais, 1995). In Noralv Veggeland’s (2004) opinion new regional partnerships embody the potential to reunify historical and regional groups and remove enclaves caused by national boundaries (Ibid). Euro-regions (explained in detail in the next section) are another example of EU financial support for institutions which encourage cooperation across member countries borders and the development of regional partnerships.

### **2.4.3 Euro-Regions and their Support of Integration Across EU Borders**

Cross border cooperation across European borders has been aided by the creation of euro-regions, voluntary associations of organizations to enhance economic activities in borderlands. The primary goal is to help countries overcome past problems through new forms of political and economic cooperation (Minghi, 1994). The first euro-region was established in the 1950s along the German-French- Luxembourg border, the core of Western European economic integration. Since the 1980s the EU has used euro-regions to stimulate development in economically disadvantaged regions (Chen, 2005). Most recently the EU has used euro-regions to help integrate new member countries with their neighbors.

Euro-regions are designed to enhance the economic activities in borderlands while helping countries to overcome past problems through political and economic cooperation (Minghi, 1994). The official purpose of euro-regions is to promote a positive sense of common border regional identity based on economic-cooperation and good neighborliness (Scott, 1998). Financial support for cooperative bilateral relations comes from two sources within the European Development Bank: INTERREG (funding for EU member countries) and the PHARE CBC (funding for countries that have begun the membership negotiation process). Both provide financial support for projects requiring collaboration among border provinces.

The first two phases of PHARE CBC funding for the Polish-German border targeted ‘hard’ programs which supported projects directly related to improving the economic development in the borderland. These included large infrastructure programs designed to improve cross-border transportation between Poland and Germany, such as the building of new roads, bridges and border custom checkpoints. In the third phase of its funding the EU, aware

that a mutual respect for cultural differences is instrumental for future cross-border integration and the development of a common European identity, increased its funding for ‘soft projects.’ These cross-border projects included funding for language studies, soccer matches and student exchanges, all gatherings designed to increase cultural contact and understanding between neighbor countries (Grix and Knowles, 2002).

The Maas-Rhine Euro-Region in the Dutch, Belgian and German borderland has been described as a model for a bottom-up approach to trans-border cooperation. Local politicians in the region have successfully collaborated on economic and planning initiatives. Cultural and sporting events, such as language courses, rock concerts, and tennis competitions, are all gatherings intended to promote an intercultural dialogue between local inhabitants leading to a shared European identity and sense of place. The Maas-Rhine Euro-Region has been praised for its cross-border integration and branded as a pattern which should be implemented in the newest euro-regions along the borders of the latest countries to join the EU (Kepka and Murphy, 2002). Xiangming Chen sees the Maas-Rhine Euro-Region as the best fit with Oscar Martinez’s criteria for a fully integrated borderland (Chen, 2005).

Euro-regions, however, are not without their critics. Official European Union discourse uses terms such as trinational and trilingual to describe euro-regions positively as places that are linguistically and culturally diverse (Anderson, O’Dowd, and Wilson, 2003). Several scholars challenge the notion that euro-regions, as facilitators of coordinated cross-border exchange and integration, are making European borders unimportant. Instead, they argue that euro-regions may have successfully provided the financial framework for local infrastructural projects, but they have failed to create a cultural and communicative environment that supports the development of an interactive cross-border community (Dürschmidt, 2002 and Krätke, 1998).

Jorg Dürrschmidt and Ulf Matthiesen (2002) argue that citizens maintain mental borders despite the removal of restrictions, indicating the lack of a European consciousness among ordinary people. In their research in the German border community of Guben and the Polish border community of Gubin they found little evidence of a bottom-up Europeanization of everyday culture.

Anke Strüver (2005) also believes that national borders will remain significant factors in transnational communities. Strüver comments that while transnationalism describes borders as places which are now frequently crossed as individuals move beyond the confinements of nation-states, at the same time, nations remain as the crucial means by which people negotiate their identities (Strüver, 2005). Strüver further argues that the maintenance of the border is crucial to transnational identity just as the nation is the building block of nationalism. Therefore instead of anticipating an elimination of borders and nationalism, Strüver contends that cross-border integration will create a new layer of identity and not replace existing identities in borderlands. In Strüver's view an interrelated borderland would not be a borderless one.

Public opinion does not always support the EU integration. Some Europeans fear that EU integration will threaten national identity and cultural diversity. Many do not like the idea of state sovereignty being transformed to a centralized European decision-making process guided by a bureaucracy in Brussels. Ordinary Europeans have expressed a fear of a free and borderless transnational society and ambivalence about the promise of economic growth tied to EU membership. To many the EU project is perceived as promoted and driven by elites (Panebianco, 2004). A Polish joke I heard frequently while in Poland during the summer of 2005 (a year after Poland's entrance into the EU) reflects this disenchantment among some people with the EU as a top-down construction and Poland's membership in the EU as simply

the replacement of Russia's dominance in Polish affairs with Western Europe's intrusion in national affairs. The joke begins by asking, what has changed in Poland since the collapse of Communism? The response is nothing, once we took all our orders from Moscow, now we take orders from Brussels. Will such attitudes frame borderlanders' perceptions of the collaboration between Polish and German border communities?

Nail Alken (2002) argues that what happens at EU's external borders will reveal a lot about the current status and future prospects of the nation-state and the European Union. I would argue that similarly the situation along the EU's internal borders will also reveal much about the current status of EU integration and the future prospects for the emergence of an EU composed of regions that challenge the notion of nation-states as the basis of European identity. The Polish-German border provides an opportunity to examine current relations along a formerly contentious border between two nation-states where the cross-border mobility of borderlanders in the past has been determined by changes in relations between Central European countries. This border is particularly interesting because though the Polish-German border has not physically moved since the end of World War II, geopolitical changes in Europe have shifted the borders location in relation to Western Europe. The Polish-East German border was for the forty-four years before 1990, an interior and at times fortified border between Poland and East Germany within the Soviet sphere of influence. For the next fourteen years the Polish-German border marked the eastern exterior boundary of the EU. Since 2004, the borderline has become an inner border, this time within the European Union. Thus the type of integration found along the Polish-German border is a reflection of the ability of the EU in the short term to bridge economic divisions and cultural rifts between nation-states in a region use to change.

### **3. Changes in the Polish Western Borderland from 1945 to 2007**

The present day Polish-German border has been altered by the major events of the twentieth century, which include the rearrangement of nation-state borders following the end of the World War II, the rise and collapse of communist governments, the reunification of Germany and the eastward expansion and integration of the European Union. The types of social and economic interactions between Polish and German borderlanders in the last 60 years have been heavily influenced by the social transformations in Poland and Germany. The varying openness and cooperation at the Polish-East German border was influenced by the unstable situation between the East German and the Polish national governments and their citizens. Regardless of the freedom of movement experienced today along the Polish-German border, borderlanders may maintain mental borders in their mindsets toward their neighbors, ideas that vary based on their own personal family histories and attachment to the region. Therefore to better understand the present day mindset of Polish borderlanders toward their neighbors in this chapter, I will briefly explore the major political and social-economic changes in Germany and Poland that have influenced the life of borderlanders from the end of the World War II to the entrance of both countries into the European Union.

I have divided the history of the Polish-German border into four phases in this chapter. In the first phase I discuss the relocation of the Polish-German border from the reemergence of a Polish nation-state at the end of World War I to the present day location of Poland's borders. This section also includes a summary of the repopulation of the former German territory and the integration of this area into the Polish state. In the second phase I explore the at times unfriendly

relationships between the East German national government and the Polish national government which impacted the individual's freedom to travel across the border. The third phase covers a period of growth in cross border trade beginning in the 1990s between a now unified Germany, also a full member of the EU, and Poland an EU candidate country. The fourth phase is the creation of a 'soft' interior EU border. This process is aided by the establishment of euro-regions to support continued cooperation and economic development on both sides of the border and the preparations for the closing of custom points along the border in 2007.

### **3.1 The Establishment of the Post-World War II Polish-German Border**

The location of the Polish-German border, marked by the Odra and Nyssa River (except for a small portion in the North near the port city of *Szczecin*) is an outcome of decisions made between the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union following the end of World War II. The post-World War II movement of the Polish-German border was not the first time Polish borders have been moved. In fact the frontier between Poland and Germany had over the centuries been moved several times according to the rise and fall of the Polish empire and the geopolitical conflicts between Poland and its neighbors the Austrian, Russian, Swedish and Prussian empires (Buchowski, Edouard and Ziolkowski, 2001).

The (present) Polish-German border established at the end of World War II was intended by its creators to be an ethnographic border that created a clear separation between the two supposed very different ethnic groups, Poles and Germans. The movement of the Polish border along with the violence of the war broke traditional cross-cultural ties and minimized the cultural mixing previously found in the region. After the initial period of chaos caused by the forced



deportation of Germans and the repopulation of the territory by people from central Poland and people from the former Polish territory east of the Bug River, the border became a rigid barrier characterized by the hostility of post war Europe. Because of the repopulation of the region the new ethnographic border now separated two groups of people who previously had little contact with one another. Eventually, as the Soviet's influence over Poland and East Germany was assured and the population transfer was completed the border became less rigid and some level of cross-border mobility was restored. Although a peace treaty was signed between Poland and the GDR in 1950, the lack of an official peace treaty between a unified German and Poland until 1991, left the permanence of the new border between Poland and German unresolved for many years.

### **3.1.1 The Movement of the Polish-German Frontier from the World War I Border to the Post-World War II Border**

The Polish-German border reemerged on the political map of Europe in 1919 during the World War I peace talk in Versailles when Poland returned to the status of an independent nation-state (Figure 3.1). The pre-World War I western border of Poland was roughly equivalent with the ethnic-linguistic division between Germans and Poles and with Poland's pre-partition frontier. Poland was allowed to emerge as an independent nation-state in 1919 primarily because of the temporary military weakness of Germany and Russia. A new Polish constitution was established in March 1921 but the question over the borders of the country would not be settled quickly. The location of the Polish-German border would be a contiguous issue as both countries claimed ownership to East Prussia and Upper Silesia. Poland was unsuccessful in claiming territory in Southern East Prussia where the Polish-speaking Mazurians voted to remain

in Germany. In the southwest the violent Polish-German dispute over Upper Silesia would not be resolved until October 1921 when a plebiscite at the League of Nations divided the region between the two countries. Disputes over the location of the new eastern border of Poland would not be resolved until 1923 following war between Poland and the Soviet Union (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001).

The new borders of Poland did not last long and were soon redrawn following the implementation of the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact, an agreement drawn up in 1939, which included an secret annex that partitioned Poland (Figure 3.1) between a once again militarily strong Germany and the Soviet Union (Allen, 2003). The agreement was hurriedly executed as Germany invaded Poland from the west on September 1<sup>st</sup> 1939 with the Soviet Union invading on September 17<sup>th</sup> from the east a few days later (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). A friendship treaty was signed shortly afterward between Germany and the Soviet Union on the 28<sup>th</sup> of September 1939, dividing Poland's territory between the two (Allen, 2003). In the west, the German offensive moved the Polish territory 189,000 square kilometers (72 square miles) to the east. Polish citizens were expelled from the region and the process of Germanizing the territory began. In the east, meanwhile, Poland's eastern border was moved 200,500 square kilometers (77 square miles) to the west placing more than half of pre-war Poland under Soviet control (Rurarz, 1990).

Following Germany's attack on Russia in June 1941, the interests of the Allied powers and Poland converged with Russia's interests in the fight against the Nazis (Wiskemann, 1956). The Polish Question, which in the West referred to the future location of Poland's Western and



**Figure 3.1 Map of Poland in 1938**

Source: Gawryszewski, 2005.

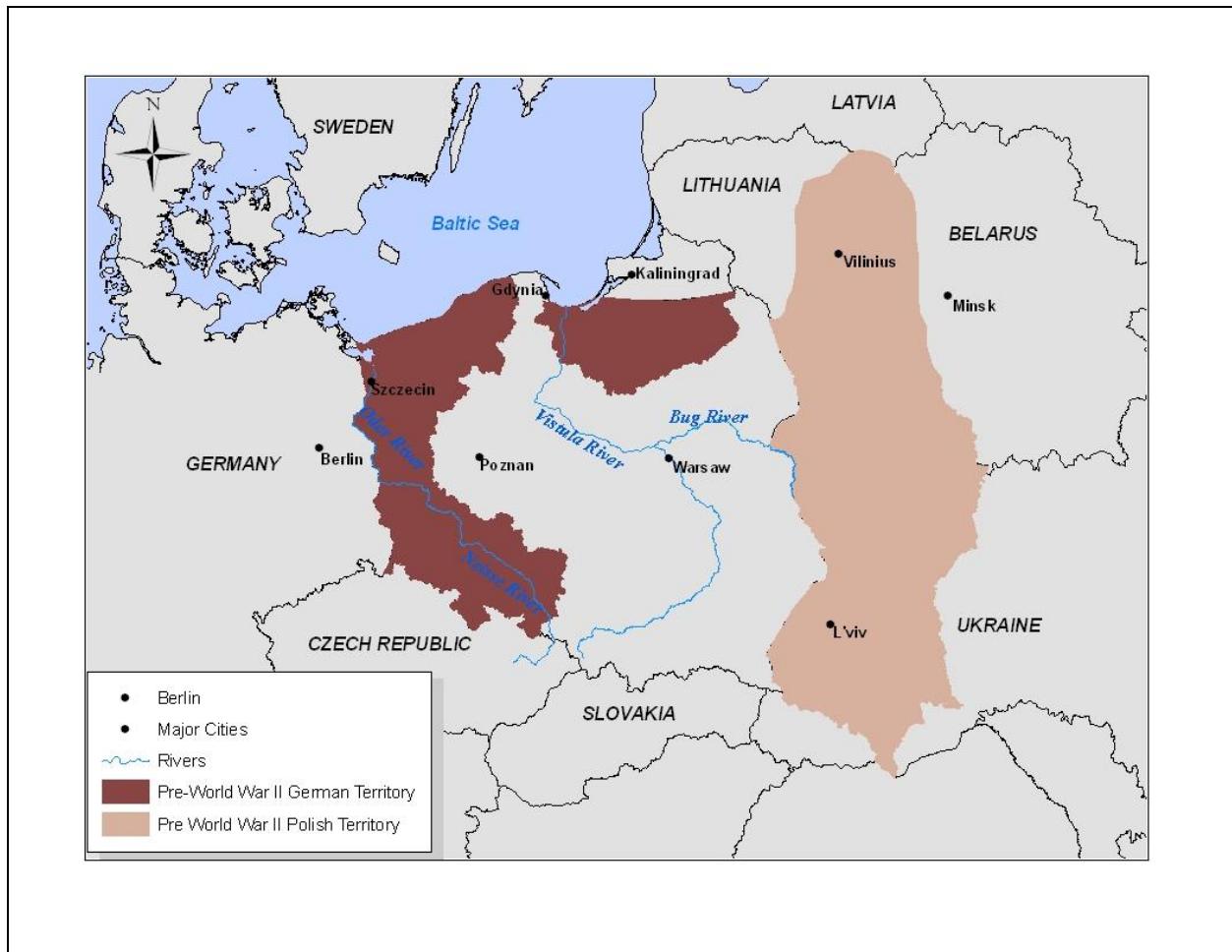
Eastern borders and the composition of Poland's new government, emerged as a point of contention between the allied leaders (Joseph Stalin, Winston Churchill and Franklin Roosevelt) regarding their respective visions of post war Central Europe. The topic of Poland's future borders was first raised in negotiations between the allied leaders at the Tehran Conference in December 1<sup>st</sup> 1943 (Rurarz, 1990). During this meeting, Stalin and Churchill laid the ground work for the location of Poland's future border. Polish representation at the conference was split between two groups. Stalin represented the interests of the \_Soviet puppet government based in the Eastern Polish city of Lublin. Meanwhile the Polish anti-Russian government, which was exiled in London, pressured Churchill to intervene on their behalf. Germany, now viewed as the common enemy, did not have a representative at the Peace talks. During the first round, Stalin agreed to accept the Cruzon Line as the eastern border of Poland if the Soviets received northern East Prussia (present day Kaliningrad). Churchill suggested that Poland would be compensated for the areas lost to the Soviet Union by receiving East Prussia and a western border on the Oder (Allen, 2003).

The future location of Poland's borders was further discussed at the Yalta Conference in February 11<sup>th</sup> 1945. The ambiguous and often vague language used in the Article VI declaration of the Yalta Conference approved the transfer of part of the Soviet Zone of Germany, territory which would become Western Poland, to administration by the Polish Soviet-friendly government based in Lublin, under the leadership of Boleslaw Bierut (Buhite, 1986). However, the final solution of the location of the border was left unresolved to be determined at the Peace Conference a few months later. By the time the Postdam Conference was held, from July 17<sup>th</sup> through August 2<sup>nd</sup> 1945, Soviet and Polish armies were already stationed on the Oder-Neisse line and the outward transfer of populations from the territory to the West and the repopulation

of region with populations from the East (which had begun in March of 1945) was already under way (Rurarz, 1990). The Postdam Conference approved the continued deportation of Germans from what the Polish officials would call the ‘Regained Western Territories’ implying the region had been returned to Poland after a lengthy German occupation and which the West Germans would refer to as the ‘Annexed Territory,’ meaning German territory under Polish administration. Figure 3.2 illustrates the present day location of the Polish-German border and Poland’s territorial change associated with the movement of the Polish-German border westward. The former German territories are shaded in red while the former Polish territories are shaded in gray.

### **3.1.2 Justifications for the New Polish-German Border**

The main justification for the westward movement of the Polish-German border was to weaken Germany. Germany’s loss of its pre-World War II eastern territory was justified in Polish minds as a move to weaken the economic and military power of German. The same desire to weaken Germany and prevent future aggression among European allied powers inspired the division of post war Germany into two countries (S. Anderson, 2001). At the Postdam conference in 1945, other reasons for Poland’s right to the disputed territory were presented to the delegates by Polish representative Stanisław Mikołajczyk, prime minister of the Polish government in exile. He advocated for the need to repatriate the 3 million plus Poles than living in the territory East of the Curzon Line, and for the resources to support Poland’s overcrowded pre-World War II rural population (Wiskemann, 1956). The western territory would also provide a shorter and more defensible border for Poland and the Soviet Union to defend against a



**Figure 3.2 The post-World War II territorial changes in Poland**

Source: Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001

possible future attack from Germany (Allen, 2003).

Polish claims to the region were also justified based on an historical Polish presence in the region. In the Polish town of Gorzów Wielkopolski, in the Western borderland, a gray column was installed with the following Polish phrases carved into its side: “we were here, we are here and we will be here” *“Byliśmy, Jesteśmy i Bedziemy.”* The historical presence of the medieval Piast Empire, the first Polish Empire which emerged in 966, on both sides of the Oder River was used to establish an ethnic claim to the territory.

German citizens did not accept Polish justifications for Germany’s loss of territory nor did German or Polish citizens trust the permanency of the location of the Polish-German border. Germany did not accept Poland’s historical argument for territorial claim to the region. Instead the early communist leaders of Eastern Germany, Friedrich Pieck and Walter Ulbricht recognized the new border as compensation for Hitler’s destruction of Poland. The historian, Sheldom Anderson, states East Germans conceptualized the eastern territorial loss as reparations the Germans had to pay to the Polish for the destruction Hitler caused in Poland, with the idea that this strategy would keep open the possibility of a return of these territories to Germany. The Poles living in the border region were also not convinced the territory would remain part of Poland. Many Poles believed Stalin had moved the border to the Oder-Neisse River to create perpetual animosity between Poland and Germany (S. Anderson, 2001). The Polish communist policy maintained the fears of the German retaking this region by force to ensure Poles remained convinced that their security interest lay in closer ties with Moscow (Sword, 1999).

### **3.1.3. The Expulsion of the Germans and the Repopulation of the Disputed Territory**

The movement of Poland westward was accompanied by the large-scale transfer of ethnic Germans to the West and the integration of the region with the rest of country. Poland was not the only country to exile Germans after the end of World War II. The leaders at the Postdam conference agreed to an orderly transfer of the remaining Germans from Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary (Rurarz 1990). Between 1945 and 1949, the majority of the Silesian, Pomeranian and East Prussian Germans were evicted from Poland's 'Newly Acquired Western Territories.' An exact figure for the number of Germans resettled during this time period is not known. Estimates range from 3.5 million people (according to Allen, 2003) to 2 million people (according to Anderson, 2001). Toward the end of the war as the Soviet Eastern front progressed westward many Germans fled or were evacuated (Ruraz, 1990). All the remaining individuals who admitted to German nationality were liable to be deported against their will. The transfer of ethnic Germans was at times carried out in unsanitary and overcrowded conditions (Sword, 1999) and these people were at times the target of vengeful acts of revenge for the brutal German occupation of Poland (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). While the displaced Germans were accommodated in the Soviet, British, American and French controlled zones of Germany (Judt, 2005) the acceptance of the Germans who were resettled in the west depended on where they settled. In rural areas of Western Germany such as Schleswig-Holstein or Niedersachsen many Germans encountered further rejection this time as Poles, 'Polacken' (Schönwälder, 1999).

These ethnic Germans forced to leave their homes and resettle in one of the two new German countries, The Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) or the Democratic Republic of Germany (DRG), would continue to be a strong political force advocating for the return of the



newly acquired Polish territories to Germany. In the postwar years, their calls for the return of former German territories or for reparations for their forced displacement hampered German politicians whenever they had to negotiate with Poland (S. Anderson, 2001). The differences in East Germany's and West Germany's policies towards the Polish-German border were reflected in how they treated the ethnically German people from the east who were resettled with the westward movement of the border. Those who resettled in Eastern Germany became known as *umsiedler*, the displaced, reflecting East Germany's official recognition of the new border as a punishment for German aggression during the war. The category *umsiedler* was dissolved in 1950 from East Germany's official census signifying an official acceptance by the government of the loss of territory as permanent. Meanwhile in West Germany where the border was not yet recognized as permanent the resettlers were known as *vertriebene*, expellees. They were allowed to organize their own political organizations which pursued their rights to return to their former homes (Ahonen, Corni, Kochanoswki, et al., 2008). Groups of Pomeranians, Prussians and Sudetens continued to pressure the West German government on the rights of these refugees to return to the disputed territories or receive compensation for their losses (Ahonen, Corni and Kochanowski, et al., 2008).

World War II not only changed the geographic location of Poland's borders, but also altered the ethnic structure of the Polish population, as Poland went from multi-ethnic to a more homogenous state. The Communist government maintained a policy of instilling among the Polish population the concept that ethnic and national homogeneity was desirable (Sword, 1999). By 1950 the minorities in Poland represented only 2 percent of the population in contrast to the post World War I country where minorities had made up nearly a third of the population of the

Polish state (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). The racist policies of the Nazi occupation had almost completely exterminated the Jewish minority and the pre-war Slavic minorities in Poland's former eastern territories were lost when the Polish eastern border moved westward. Most of the German population acquired by Poland along with the new territory in the west were either exiled from the region or pressured to assimilate to Polish ways (Sword, 1999).

The British and American representatives at the Yalta Conference were skeptical of Poland's ability to repopulate the Western Territory and bring the region back to the economic standard of living before World War II. The region had been devastated by the war, the livestock was badly damaged and land mines remained a threat to new settlers (Wiskemann, 1956). The American delegation in 1947 at a Council of Foreign Ministers meeting in Moscow, voiced their fears that Poland would not be able to rehabilitate the disputed territories. The population of Poland had been devastated by World War II with over 6 million dead and an estimated 8 million Poles scattered in Europe and America. In response the Polish government began a large-scale propaganda campaign, which presented the newly acquired territory as a utopia. Anyone who could claim any Polish ancestry was encouraged to resettle in Poland's western borderland. In the early 1950s the resettlers could be divided into four groups: the autochthons (in this case original German inhabitants), peasants from central and southern Poland, repatriates from the former eastern Polish territory, and Polish citizens who had been living outside of the country at the end of World War II (Zionkowski, 1964).

The German minority with extended roots in the territory, or autochthons (which the Poles considered to be of distant Polish heritage though partially assimilated by the Germans) were allowed to remain as long as they showed allegiance to the Polish state. Although most

Germans had left the region, either fleeing the Red Army or as part of the forced resettlement in the West, a German minority still remained in the territory. Estimates of the numbers who remained behind were disputed between the Polish government and the German government. In 1953 the West German government claimed 65,000 Germans remained in Poland (S. Anderson, 2001). The German minority who remained encompassed individuals of mixed German-Polish origins which because of a strong attachment to their farms were willing to remain in Poland as long as they could maintain the rights to their land (Sword, 1999). Others, who had Polish names but no knowledge of the Polish language, claimed Polish nationality to remain in their homes (Wiskemman, 1956).

The largest group of people resettled in the newly recovered territories was the approximately 2 million peasants from central and southern Poland (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). Fleeing a high rural unemployment rates and high birth rates many young adventurers and young families took advantage of the perceived new economic opportunities and available land in the West. By 1950 these peasant resettlers made up 49 percent of the population in the western lands. At times conflicts arose between the Poles from central and southern Poland who considered themselves 100 percent Polish and the autochthons who they regarded as Germans (Zionkowski, 1964).

The third demographic group in the newly resettled borderland was the approximately 1.5 million repatriates from the eastern Polish lands which had been ceded to the Soviet Union. Entire communities were moved from the former eastern territories to the newly acquired territory in the west. For instance the Polish population of Lwów (today the Ukrainian city of L'viv) was resettled in the former southern German city of Breslau that would become the Polish

city of Wrocław (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). Many from this group would continue to long for their old homes in the east and tried to preserve their old customs in their new homes. Yet the migrants from the eastern borderland prided themselves on their patriotism as many had moved in order to stay within the borders of Poland (Sword, 1999).

The fourth group, and the smallest, was the re-immigrants, Polish citizens returning from abroad. These included approximately 750,000 thousand miners or industrial workers who had been working as slave laborers in Germany and Polish prisoners returning from Germany (Lukowski and Zawadzki, 2001). Also included in this category were those Poles who had been fighting for the allied armies outside of Poland and others who had emigrated years earlier to work in the mines and factories in France, Germany and Yugoslavia (Zionkowski, 1964).

Despite the government's attempt to try to resettle people in pockets to minimize social conflict, disputes erupted between the new settlers and the Germans who had remained behind. Opinions towards the new territory were not uniform among the borderlanders. Some of the resettlers, dubbed *„pioneers“* by the Polish press, viewed the land as a new opportunity or as reparation from the Germans for the crimes they committed during the war. But for those from the *kresy*, the former Eastern borderland of Poland, the new lands were a form of further punishment after a forced exile (Szaruga, 1997). One East German delegation to Silesia reported that many Polish immigrants from the former eastern territories of Poland expressed a willingness to leave if they could return to their former homes in the East (S. Anderson, 2001). Overtime intermarriage and the state education system integrated many of the young, and most of those who remained in the region developed a sense of Polish national identity (Zionkowski, 1964). A Polish borderlander from Lubuskie, now living in Warsaw, in an interview with me

spoke of the patriotism of Polish borderlanders which she perceived as stronger than amongst Poles living in Warsaw, the capital of Poland. She believed their patriotism was tied to the construction of their identity as Poland's first line of defense against a possible German attack (Interview 39, July 2006).

The Office for the Ministry of Recovered Lands established in November of 1945 was responsible for the resettlement and assimilation of the border region with the rest of the country (Kulczycki, 2001). The office was headed by Władysław Gomułka, who used nationalist propaganda to incorporate the western border region (S. Anderson, 2001). The government invested heavily in rebuilding and polonizing (the emphasizing of Polish culture and language) the newly acquired territories (Buchowski, Conte, and Ziolkowski, 2001). These bureaucrats often discriminated against the autochthons who remained in Poland (Lubkowski and Zawadzki, 2002). Streets, towns and cities in the region were given Polish names, often those of Polish historical figures or of new communist heroes. The only movie theater in the Polish border town of Ślubice, housed in a pre-World War II building built when Ślubice was a German suburb of Frankfurt-Oder, was renamed Kino Piast, after the first King who united Poland in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Figure 3.3). German Protestant churches left vacant in the region were occupied by Catholic congregations who had settled in the homes left behind by Germans. The Polish poet Leszek Szaruga (1997) in an essay about his former childhood home in the borderland describes the term used by the new settlers, 'Post-German artifacts,' to refer to the objects left behind by the Germans forced to leave. In addition to old German buildings some German monuments and German cemeteries still remain in Lubuskie. A monument built in 1918 to honor German World War I soldiers also still remains in front



Figure 3.3 The theater, Kino Piast, in Słubice

of the new Municipal Council building in Kłodawa, although much of the German writing on the base of the monument is barely legible (Figure 3.4). The Office for the Ministry of Recovered Lands was dissolved in 1948 as the territories were considered formally integrated into the Polish state (S. Anderson, 2001).

East Germany officially acknowledge the permanence of the new German-Polish border in 1950 with the signing of the Treaty of Goerlitz signed in the German border town of Görlitz in July 1950 (S. Anderson, 2001). By 1955, the population resettlement in the former German territory now under Polish administration was largely completed and the assimilation of the disputed territory into the Polish state was well under way. West Germany, however, would not recognize the Polish-East German border until 1972 (Buhite, 1986) and the border issue would remain a point of disagreement in diplomatic relations between West Germany, Poland, the United States and the Soviet Union until the end of the Cold War (Allen, 2003) when a new treaty was signed between a unified Germany and Poland now independent of Soviet control.



Figure 3.4 A pre-World War II monument honoring German soldiers in front of the Municipal Council in Kłodawa

The permanence of the Polish-German border became once again a sensitive issue in the early 1990s during discussions of the reemergence of a unified Germany. Concerns were raised among many European countries, including Britain, France and Poland, that a unified Germany had negative implications for the future security and stability of Europe. The Polish fears of German reunification centered on concerns that the Polish-German border would be redrawn. Although another large-scale population transfer was not likely in 1990, many still feared the Polish-German border would be moved eastward to the location of the western border of Poland in 1938 and Poland's western territories would be returned to Germany without a return of the territories Poland had lost in the east to the Soviet Union (Rurarz, 1990). Also in the 1990s ethnic tensions in the German minority communities in Poland rose to the surface (Sword, 1999). Polish fears were somewhat relaxed when Germany's recognition of the Oder-Neisse line as the permanent border between Poland and Germany became one of the essential prerequisites for the countries unification. The relationship between Poland and unified Germany began to improve

after the signing of the German-Polish Treaties of November 1990 and June 1991, reaffirming that the Odra and Nyssa rivers would serve as the permanent boundary between the two countries (Burrsink, 2001).

#### **3.1.4 Acceptance of the Post-World War II Polish-German Border**

In the years immediately after the westward movement of the border Polish scholars focused on justifying the Polish presence in the territory while German scholars maintained German claims to the area. In recent years following a peace agreement ratifying the location of the border and the active role Germany took in promoting Poland's preparations to join the EU, Polish and German historians have attempted to produce a less nationalistic understanding of the history of the presence of German and Polish ethnic groups in Central Europe.

In the early post war years, both Polish and German research was concerned with producing evidence supporting their claims to the disputed territory. For example the Institute for Western Affairs, *Instytut Zachodni*, was established in Poznan in 1944 to deal with the problems of economic rehabilitation of the Western Territories. Similarly, the Mazurian Institute, *Instytut Mazurski*, was created to write a history of the Polish population in Olsztyn, the former East Prussia (Friedrich, 2000). Meanwhile, in Western Germany museums and institutes funded by the state were established to preserve the history of the German populations from the east. The memory of the German presence in the east was kept alive in schools which were requested to teach about the contributions of the German east to German culture and Western civilization (Ahonen, Corni and Kochanowski, et al., 2008). Both East German and Polish borderlanders were exposed to Communist propaganda which attempted to rewrite the history of



World War II. Long after 1989 East German school children were still being taught East German troops had fought alongside Russian troops to liberate their country from the West Germans (Judt, 2005). In the same way, school children in the Polish borderlands in the early 1950s had been taught that Western Poland had always been Polish, an extreme attempt by communist officials to rewrite the historical German presence in the region (S. Anderson, 2001).

Relations between Germany and Poland improved following the unification of Germany and the ratification of a treaty ensuring the permanence of the location of the Polish-German border. The agreement also guaranteed basic political and cultural rights to German and Polish minorities on both sides of the border and called for the improvement of relations between German minority groups and the Polish state in the Polish Western Borderland (S. Anderson, 2001). Scholarship on the Polish-German border in the 1990s was part of a new era of post-nationalist research, reflective of the new cooperation between Poland and Germany. The Institute for Western Affairs, *Instytut Zachodni*, in Poznan Poland, now produces research on the German past in the Polish western borderland and research focused on the current cooperation across the Polish-German border (*Instytut Zachodni, 2008* )

Despite a settlement on the question of the location of the border between Poland and Germany, the topic remains a delicate subject between the two countries, and tensions still occasionally rises to the surface over the border. The Berlin exhibition in 2006, which showed the hardships suffered by the Germans expelled as the German border moved westward, set off a new round of conflict between Polish and German governments. The Polish government perceived the exhibit and the German government's support of it as a case of Germans reconstructing themselves as the victims of World War II and attempting to minimize

the Nazi's role as aggressors who began the war by invading and occupying Poland. The Polish president, Lech Kaczynski canceled a scheduled visit to Germany in protest of the exhibit (BBC, 2006). Ordinary Polish and German citizens also remain sensitive to the chain of events that led to the establishment of the modern Polish-German border. Traveling in Berlin early in my graduate studies in 2005 as part of a summer academic program I observed a tense exchange between a German museum worker and two Polish students who became angered over a map in the museum showing Poland's Western territories as German land under Polish occupation. Chapter Four, my methodology section, includes additional examples of the sensitivity of this topic among Poles and Germans.

### **3.2 Mobility and Cooperation across the Polish-East German Border: 1949-1990**

The movement of the Polish-East German border westward divided territory that had formally been joined economically and culturally within the German empire. Additionally, the large-scale movement of people at the end of World War II broke the former cultural connections that had existed between Polish and German borderlands. The region was repopulated with Polish people who historically had little daily contact with Germans (Thaler, 1997). Cross-border trade would quickly develop between Eastern Germany and Poland, as both countries were part of the Soviet bloc and the now Polish coal fields in Silesia would be an important source of fuel for the rebuilding of East German industries. Polish and German border cities such as Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder, which had been cut in half by the border, would sign agreements in the 1970s to establish cooperative relations and rebuild infrastructure connections disrupted by the border line. However the new frontier now separated two nation-states with

different political interests, which at times would collapse the fragile formal and informal networks which developed across the Polish-East German border (S. Anderson, 2001).

### **3.2.1 Formal Contacts and Cooperation across the Polish-East-German Border**

The Polish-German border until 1990 was a national border between Poland and East Germany, both under the Soviet Union's sphere of influence. The border was officially referred to by both countries as the 'Border of Peace and Friendship.' In 1948 the satellite communist parties in Poland and East Germany together claimed to be bringing in a new era in Polish-German relations. The historian Sheldon Anderson (2001) in his book, A Cold War in the Soviet Bloc, described the idealistic relationship between the two countries who were supposed to share socialist values and have a common interest in resolving the conflict over the location of the border. The Marxist-Leninist theory of socialist internationalism was supposed to unit Polish and East German communist officials based on a shared worldview that rejects romantic nationalistic attachments to their lost territories. The East Germans would discard all nationalistic calls for the return of former German territories and the Polish would do the same to the territories annexed by the Soviet Union. Despite the official cooperation between the two countries they were unsuccessful in their efforts to establish reciprocal feelings along the new 'border of peace.' However through most of the late 1960s and 1970s the Polish-East German border was an open and cooperative borderland, at least officially. Municipalities on both sides of the border signed agreements to cooperate with one another. The Socialist Unity Party attempted to encourage cooperation between Polish and German borderguards in the 1970s to stop the smuggling of goods from Germany by Polish tourists in response to the shortage of goods in Poland. To increase cooperation East German guards were taught Polish and soccer

matches were arranged between East German and Polish borderguards (Zatlin, 2007).

Nonetheless, formal contacts, that had developed in the 1970s were broken during the 1980s and remained such until the fall of communism and the reunification of East Germany and West Germany (S. Anderson, 2001).

Although officially Polish and German communist leaders presented a unified front, ideological differences continued to thrive between the two. Polish party officials perceived East Germans as arrogant individuals who were always lecturing their neighbors on the proper ways of implementing communism. East Germans on the other hand viewed Polish leaders as incompetent and questioned their commitment to the principles of socialism. The German communist leaders clashed with the Polish communist leadership over their inability to implement large-scale collective farming and failure to wipe out Catholicism in the country side. Uprisings in Poland against communist leaders were viewed by East Germans as further evidence of the incompetence of Polish communists (S. Anderson, 2001).

Despite signing a peace treaty in 1951 guaranteeing the permanency of the Polish-East German border, conflicts over East Germany's close relationship with the Soviet Union and Poland's dialogue with Western Germany continued to cause distrust between the two countries. Poland wanted an agreement with the Western world ratifying the permanency of the Polish-East German border and therefore pursued a better relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), West Germany. The negotiations between Poland and West Germany beginning with the Warsaw treaty in 1970 and followed by the 1975 Helsinki summit conference, steadily increased trade between the two countries, non-official contacts and academic exchanges. East German

officials were not pleased with Polish officials who by passed them and negotiated directly with the Capitalist government of Western Germany (Ortmayer, 1978).

Among citizens pre-World War II prejudices remained strong on both sides of the border despite official endorsements of cooperation between Polish and GDR leaders. There was a lack of reconciliation after the war as hatred and distrust by Poles of Germans and German attitude toward Poles as incompetent, lazy and backwards continued to frame relations between the two. The Polish communist leaders complained that the GDR leaders were not doing enough to eliminate the opposition of East German citizens toward the Oder-Neisse border nor making enough of an effort to eradicate their negative attitude towards Poles. Meanwhile, the Polish communists exploited Polish peoples post-World War II hatred of Germans in order to attract adherents to the party. Despite ongoing official cultural exchanges and education exchanges, friendly relations between the two did not develop. Polish officials complained that German students did not try to learn Polish while in Poland. German officials meanwhile complained that Polish students studying in East Germany were anti-socialist and did not participate in group activities. The illegitimacy of East German and Polish communist governments among their own citizens further thwarted an honest reconciliation between the two sides. (S. Anderson, 2001)

### **3.2.2 Out-Migration From the Disputed Territories**

The out-migration of German minorities from Poland and the rights of German minorities in Poland was another point of discord between East German and Polish party officials. There were several waves of migration from Poland's western borderland to West Germany. Although

the Polish communist government frequently denied the existence of a German minority they periodically agreed to the release of large numbers of German minorities to Western Germany in hopes of securing an agreement ratifying the permanency of the Polish-East German border (Sword, 1999).

The first large-scale post-war migration from Poland to Germany was facilitated by the 1953 Federal Law on Expellees that strengthened the presence of German minorities in Poland by granting German citizenship to anyone of ethnic German origin whose own or whose parents' place of residence in May of 1945 had been in the former territories controlled by the Germans in the East. As a result of this new policy anyone who had lived in the newly acquired territories in Poland could claim German citizenship (Schönwälder, 1999). Between 1955-1957 following an agreement between the German and Polish Red Cross organizations, some 248,626 people left Poland for West Germany and West Berlin on the bases of reuniting with family members in Germany (Sword, 1999). The Warsaw Agreement of 1970, signed between West Germany and Poland, allowed further reunification between German families who had been resettled in Western Germany after the war with members who had remained in Poland. These agreements further increased the displeasure of the GDR toward the Polish government (S. Anderson, 2001).

During the late 1970s and 1980s, the social upheavals caused by the deterioration of Poland's economic situation as the policies of Wojciech Jaruzelski's regime became more oppressive, created another large wave of people migrating to Germany from the Polish borderlands. Keith Sword (1999) argues that the number of people migrating to Western Germany was much greater than any reasonable estimate of the German minority present in Poland in 1980. The disparities in the count between the number of ethnic Germans migrating

from Poland to Western Germany and the number of ethnic Germans living in Poland led to claims that many of the migrants were economic opportunists hoping for a better life in West Germany (Ibid). The original open-door policy towards ethnic Germans in the early fifties helped to fill the labor shortage caused by West Germany's economic growth but by the 1990s the large-scale migration from Poland to Germany had become overwhelming (Schönwälder, 1999). Tougher policies in the 1990s such as a requirement to provide documents proving citizenship slowed the flow of out migration from the border region to West Germany (Kolinsky, 2004).

### **3.2.4 Cross-Border Mobility of Polish and German Borderlanders**

The Polish-East German border was a carefully guarded border, and except for a brief period between 1972 and 1980, most Polish and German citizens were unable to cross. A visa, at times very difficult to acquire, was necessary to cross, thus limiting non-official contacts between Polish and German borderlanders. In the early years, 1948-1953, Polish officials limited the travel of Germans to Poland. In the following years, the GDR tightened the border by requiring a visa which took up to five months to receive if Polish citizens were granted permission to travel to Germany, at all. The difficulties experience by Poles hoping to acquire visas was illustrated by the complaints among Polish officials' that it was easier to get a visa to West Germany than East Germany. The West German borderguards were perceived as much more friendly and subjected border crossers to less harassment than the East German border guards (S. Anderson, 2001) illustrating the tense relationship between East Germans and Poles.

By 1972 visa free travel was allowed across the Polish-East German border. The minor relaxation of restrictions on economic activities in the early 1970s allowed people to have

foreign currency in their personal possession and exchange goods. These new limited economic freedoms and cross-border mobility created an opportunity for people to trade across the Polish-German border. Informal contacts thrived during this time as borderlanders traveled across the border as tourists, to work in factories or look for odd jobs which would earn them some extra income. Ironically, as personal contacts rose formal contacts began to break down. The rezoning of political territory in Poland during this time into smaller political units made previous cross-border agreements between local communities void. By the late 1970s cross-border trade was being minimized by political changes in Poland, which placed new customs restrictions on the amount of foreign currency one could hold and the amount of goods people could bring across the border (Ciok, 2004).

Although cross-border marriages were not uncommon during this time period, interactions between East German borderlanders and Polish borderlanders and large numbers of East Germans and Poles took advantage of the opportunity to travel across the border, interactions were not always friendly (Zatlin, 2007). Germans complained of Polish border crossers buying up the limited consumer goods in East German stores because of a lack in Poland of similar products (S. Anderson, 2001). Tensions were further perpetuated by the greater freedom Poles had to travel across the border than East Germans during the 1970s (Ciok, 2004).

The Polish-German border was closed again in 1980-1981, as an East German response to the social unrest in Poland, caused by the Polish *Solidarnosc* movement, a civil society uprising against the Polish communist government. The East Germans did not want the ideas of *Solidarnosc* to spread west (Burrsink, 2001). As the freedom of movement was denied to borderlanders informal cross-border networks were once again stifled (Ciok, 2004).



### 3.3 The Dynamic Growth of Cross-Border Trade during the Post-Communist Transition

Between 1989 and 1990 the Polish-German borderland experienced rapid political and economic changes as both countries transitioned away from the socialist economic model. By July 1<sup>st</sup> 1990 the political unification and the currency unification agreements had been signed between the GDR and FRG and both ceased to exist as East Germany was absorbed into a unified Germany. The Eastern German economy, which had supported the strongest standard of living among all socialist countries rapidly transitioned from a centrally planned market to the West German social democratic model (Haendcke-Hoppe-Arndt, Keren and Notzold, 1992). Meanwhile Poland rapidly reconfigured its economy following the American-style free-market model and pursued closer ties with Western Europe. In 1989 Poland's economy was at the forefront of progress in the transition towards a market economy among the post-socialist countries. The popular civil uprising which brought *Solidarnosc* to power in 1989, gave the government widespread public support for the implementation of institutional and structural market-oriented transformation of the economy (Kolodko, 1992).

The new economic freedoms and cross-border mobility beginning in 1989 supported the growth of cross-border trade with the appearance of market places run by town municipals, *targowiska*, and flea markets, *bazaars*, which sprang up in any open space, along Poland's eastern and western borders as well as major Polish cities. In April 1991, the elimination of a visa requirement for Polish citizens to travel for up to three months to Germany resulted in an increase in border crossings between Poland and Germany from 7.2 million in 1991 to more than 70 million in 1993 (Matthiesen and Bürkner, 2001). During the years 1990-1994 an intensive period of cross border trade sprang up across the Polish-German border. People from as far

away as Warsaw traveled to Berlin to buy and sell goods. The cross-border trade transformed the Polish borderlands from areas of economic decline and high out-migration into areas of economic growth- all without government help or subsidies. The Polish geographer, Tadeusz Strjackwicz, used the term ‘\_bazaar economy’ to describe the dependency on cross-border trade for all three Polish provinces along the German border. In some towns transborder trade became a means of support for more than half of the population, reducing the high unemployment rates during the transition in Poland (Stryjakiewicz, 1998). At first, because eastern Germany was a bit more prosperous than western Poland cross-border trade in the borderland was characterized by German shoppers seeking bargains in Poland and the profits of the transborder trade were predominately collected by Polish borderlanders. For almost all of 1990s the profits from the bazaars in the borderland evened out Poland’s official trade deficit; but by 2000 profits from petty trade along the border were more evenly distributed between Germans and Polish borderlanders (Węclawowicz, Degórski, et al. 2006).

Several Polish border towns continue to take advantage of their location to a border cross check point and the high unemployment and economic hardships in Eastern Germany to provide goods and services to Germans looking for bargains. In 2000, most of the Germans crossing to Poland were on foot to the Polish cities of Świnoujście (5, 4 million) Gubin and Słubice (Ciok, 2004). The border town of Słubice, located across the river from the German city of Frankfurt-Oder and along the major axis of transportation from Berlin to Moscow, soon became a central market for petty trade (Figure 3.5). Today in Słubice many types of services are provided to lure German costumers to Poland for bargains, in beauty salons, at the bazaar, and in grocery stores, and other small shops.



Figure 3.5 Map of border communities

Further north the rural Polish border town of Osinów Dolny with a population of 193 residents had over 120 hairdressers working in over 30 salons operating in the region. The town gained fame in 2007 for the unbalanced number of hairdressers verses residents. German customers were coming for Polish haircuts not only from the communities across the border but also from the town of Schwedt 52 kilometers (32 miles) away and Berlin 50 kilometers (31 miles) away (Łazarewicz, 2006). The streets of Swinoujscie are also lined with dentist offices, tanning salons, hair salons and pharmacies, advertising their services in both German and Polish. The photo (Figure 3.6) captures the congestion at the border crossing checkpoint between the Polish city of Świnoujście and the German city of Ahlbeck, on a Saturday morning in July of 2007. In the corner of the photo ones sees farmers selling fresh fruits from their cars as close as they can get to the border crossing checkpoint. The photo (Figure 3.7) displays the German stores on the other side of the border checkpoint.

### **3.3.1 German and Polish Cooperation to Control Illegal Activates Along the Polish-German Border**

By the 2000s, the now open border quickly developed a reputation as difficult to cross, this time because of traffic jams. Long lines and at times extensive and unpleasant searches were imposed by officials stepping up efforts to regulate criminal activities. The limited number of border crossings and lack of infrastructure to accommodate the large number of people crossing further added to the congestion at the border (Ciok, 2004).

In response to the rise of crime in the region, Polish and German officials signed several bilateral agreements in the early 1990s to cooperate on the control of illegal activities found in the border region; such as prostitution, illegal trafficking of people, drugs and stealing. The



Figure 3.6 Saturday morning border crossers from Świnoujście to Ahlbeck



Figure 3.7 Stores in Germany at the crossing between Ahlbeck and Świnoujście

word *Juma*, Yuma, became popularized as a slang word in Poland to describe goods stolen from abroad-- mainly merchandize from German stores or German luxury cars stolen and transported to Poland. Young people adopted the word from the American Western film, *3:10 to Yuma*, popular among the youth in Poland, to describe the phenomena. The connection comes from the fact that the train that traveled daily from Wrocław to Berlin left at 3:10 (Interview 33, July 2007). In the Polish borderland the use of the verb *zajumować*, 'to occupy,' also became slang for the verb 'to steal.' Jacek Kurzepa (1997) argues the use of the slang word for stealing illustrates the social acceptance of stealing in Germany as a lesser evil than stealing in Poland among those involved in *Yuma*; who were mainly school children and youth between the ages of 13-25.

Several agreements were signed in the early 1990s between Poland and Germany as the national governments engaged in a new era of cooperation. In 1991, Polish and German officials signed a bilateral agreement to coordinate efforts to fight organized crime. Another agreement was signed in 1993 to deal with illegal immigration across the border in which Poland agreed to the return of illegal immigrants who entered Germany through Poland. Meanwhile Germany agreed to contribute funding to help Poland house asylum seekers in an effort to stop the smuggling of people from the east to Germany through Poland. In April 1995 another agreement was signed for the cooperation of police forces to solve transborder investigations (Freudenstein, 2000).

In 2000-2002 there was a temporary 22 percent drop in the number of people crossing the border and a 26 percent decrease in cars crossing the border (Central Statistic Office, 2008). The drop in people crossing the border was partly because of borderguards' efforts to tighten the

security along the border in preparation for Poland to join the EU in 2004. In a group interview with German borderguards in Frankfurt Oder in 2006, great pride was expressed by them in for reputation the Polish-German border had acquired as a hard border to smuggle across. The main types of illegal activities attempted according to the borderguards were the trafficking of people mainly from the former Soviet Union Republics, the passing of stolen passports and the smuggling of cars, cosmetics and automobile parts out of Germany (Interview 27, July 2006). Short articles would often be published in newspapers in Lubuskie and Poznan detailing the most recent success of borderguards in controlling these illicit activities, such as the story describing the success of Polish borderguards in stopping a woman from smuggling two small boys into Germany (Dziennik, 2007).

### **3.4 The Making of a Soft European Union Border**

Today the border between Poland and a unified Germany is a cooperative interior border of the European Union with no physical barriers to the movement of people. The region has been transformed by the establishment of euro-regions and preparations for Poland to join the Schengen Agreement. The history of conflict between Germany and Poland that reaches into the 19<sup>th</sup> Century and beyond makes the idea of an open border and increasing cooperation between cities and towns across the Polish-German border a hot button issue for both German and Polish nationalists. Hence, for European Union bureaucrats' integration along the Polish-German border remains a publicly sensitive and challenging project on both sides of the border. In this section I begin by describing the early cooperation in the 1990s which supported the emergence of four euro-regions along the Polish-German border. Special attention is given to the two euro-

regions in my study, Pro Europa Viadrina and Pomerania Euro-Region. This is followed by a description of the situation at the border in 2007 a few months prior to Poland's official full membership in the Schengen Accord and the elimination of all custom checks at the border.

#### **3.4.1 Euro-Regions: A New Phase in the Construction of Cooperative Networks across the Polish-German Border**

The Polish-German border has been open to visa free travel for seventeen years, 1990-2007, the longest consecutive period of uninterrupted cross-border mobility since the establishment of the border in 1945. In the early 1990s the volume of cross border trade and bazaars along the border was the results of local initiatives taking advantage of new economic freedoms (Kramsch, 2002). In response to the growth of cross-border trade, agreements were signed between German and Polish municipalities to regulate these cross-border operations. In 1990 and 1991 treaties were signed to promote good neighborliness and friendly cooperation across the border. These early agreements paved the way for the establishment of joint Polish and German commissions such as the Polish-German Commission for International Cross-Border Cooperation, *Polsko-Niemieckiej Komisji Międzynarodowej do Spraw Współpracy Przygranicznej*, and the Commission for Matters of Cross-Border Cooperation and Regional Cooperation, *Komitet do Spraw Współpracy Przygranicznej i Komitet do Spraw Współpracy Regionalnej* (Ciok, 2004). In the late 1990s, local governments in Polish border regions gained more independence to negotiate directly with their German neighbors following the incorporation of European inter-territorial cooperation legislation into the Polish constitution. Generally speaking the decentralization of power in Poland has made possible more



opportunities for collaboration between Polish and German border communities that no longer have to wait for approval from their prospective national governments (Kaczmarek, 2006).

Polish and German officials were able to take advantage of cross-border networks remaining from previous cooperative agreements between borderland municipalities and towns that had been established in the 1970s, but disrupted in the 1980s. Areas that already had a history of cooperation benefited from the preexisting political will and were able to quickly set up euro-regions that made them eligible for EU funding for cross-border regional development projects. Poland has established euro-regions along each of the countries' international borders. Towards the end of 1994 Polish and German borderlanders set up a committee to regulate and monitor the implementation of funds from the EU PHARE for programs which require cooperation across the Polish-German border (Ciok, 2004). The first euro-region established along the Polish-German border was the Nysa Euro-Region (formed in 1991) which includes Polish, Czech and German border communities (Harasimiuk and Rodzoś, 2004). My research was conducted in the two northern-most euro-regions along the Polish-German border, Pro Europa Viadrina and Pomerania.

#### **3.4.2 The Purpose and Structure of two Northern Polish-German Euro-Regions: Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region and the Pomerania Euro-Region**

Both in Poland and Germany, the Polish-German borderland has been perceived as a peripheral region. Euro-regions are designed to transform borderlands from peripheral areas of economic stagnation into growth poles by investing in cross-border economic cooperation and infrastructure (Thaler, 1997). In Chapter Two there is a discussion of the creation of the concept of euro-regions and their application in Western Europe. Polish western cities and provinces,

who are voluntary members of one of the four euro-regions along the Polish-German border, receive financial support for projects which require cross border collaboration with German eastern borderlands. To receive funding both Polish and German associations have to develop proposals for joint projects with their counterparts across the border. Examples of projects funded include student exchanges, joint training venues for young athletics, and even a kindergarten in Frankfurt-Oder where Polish and German children learn together (Pro Europa Viadrina, 2007).

As mentioned in Chapter Two, euro-regions are voluntary associations of nonbinding organizations. Yet euro-regions are conceptualized by some as the beginnings of cross border governance (Popescu, 2008). Because members of euro-regions are not directly elected by the people the governing process has been criticized for a lack of democracy (Strüver, 2005). The organizational structure is almost the same for each of the euro-regions along the Polish-German border, with variations in the number of members for each position based on the number of countries that are members of a particular euro-region. For instance the organizational structure of the Pomerania Euro-Region is similar to that of the Pro Europa Euro-Region with the exception that for each division, seats are reserved in addition to Polish and German representatives but also for representatives from Sweden. At the top of the hierarchical structure of euro-regions is the council, which in the Pro Europa Euro-Region consists of ten representatives from Germany and Poland. The members of the council elect the six members of the Presidium, three from each country. The Presidium then defines the directions of euro-region activities by representing the euro-region, executing the council's resolutions and supervising the work groups and the secretariat (Ciok, 2004).

### 3.4.3 The Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region

The Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region consists of several *gmina*, the smallest administrative district in Poland, which are part of the province of Lubuskie and Gorzów on the Polish side and the two German provinces of Märkisch-Oderland and Oder-Spree and Frankfurt-Oder. Figure 3.8 illustrates the approximate territorial extent of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region. The Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region was the third to be established along the Polish-German border on the 21<sup>st</sup> of December 1993 and is the smallest of the four on the Polish-German border. Despite the majority of the territory falling on the Polish side, the German side is more populated despite a lower population growth rate and higher out-migration, than in Poland (Ciok, 2004).

The original mission of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region was to support the development of relations based on good neighborliness, increase the standard of living of people on both sides of the border, and promote cross border cooperation between businesses (Ciok, 2004). Since then the main purpose of the euro-region has expanded to include the development of a regional identity and European mindset among residents on both sides of the border. Short term goals include the development of joint cross border infrastructure, the promotion of tourism as a development strategy, encouragement of the establishment of environmental protection zones across the border, and the continued encouragement for the growth of small and medium size business (Pro Europa Viadrina, 2008).

The German city of Frankfurt-Oder, where the office of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region is headquartered, has also signed many cooperation agreements with the Polish town of Ślubice. In 1945, Ślubice, once a suburb of Frankfurt-Oder became part of Poland. Today



**Figure 3.8 Map of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region**

Source: Pro Europa Viadrina, 2007

Ślubice is one of three Polish border communities, which had prior to World War II been suburbs of German cities on other side of the Oder River. These communities have officially reestablished connections with German cities across the Oder River by establishing themselves as European Twin Cities. Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder had signed agreements in 1975, such as a partnership agreement maintaining freedom of movement between the cities which lasted until 1980. However, in the 1990s the cooperation had to be rebuilt due to the instability that beset Poland and Germany with the dissolution of the Soviet Union. In 2004, the program of joint development and cooperation between Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder was established in connection with Poland's official entrance into the European Union. The reopening of the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder in 1991 and the 1998 opening of a university Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice has created expectations for further cooperation in an educational environment between Frankfurt-Oder and Ślubice (Documents, 2007).

#### **3.4.4 The Pomerania Euro-Region**

The Pomerania Euro-Region (Figure 3.9) covers the most territory of all euro-regions along the Polish-German border though it is not as heavily populated as the others (Ciok, 2004). The euro-region includes 4 counties and 2 cities from the German province of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern and two counties from the German province of Brandenburg, 33 municipalities from the Swedish region of Skane and 54 municipalities from the Polish province of Zachodniopomorskie (Euroregionu Pomerania, 2007). Most of the population on the Polish side is concentrated in the city of Szczecin, the seventh largest city in Poland. The city is an important as a hub of transportation in Europe; it includes a port on the Baltic Sea and an international airport (Ciok, 2004).

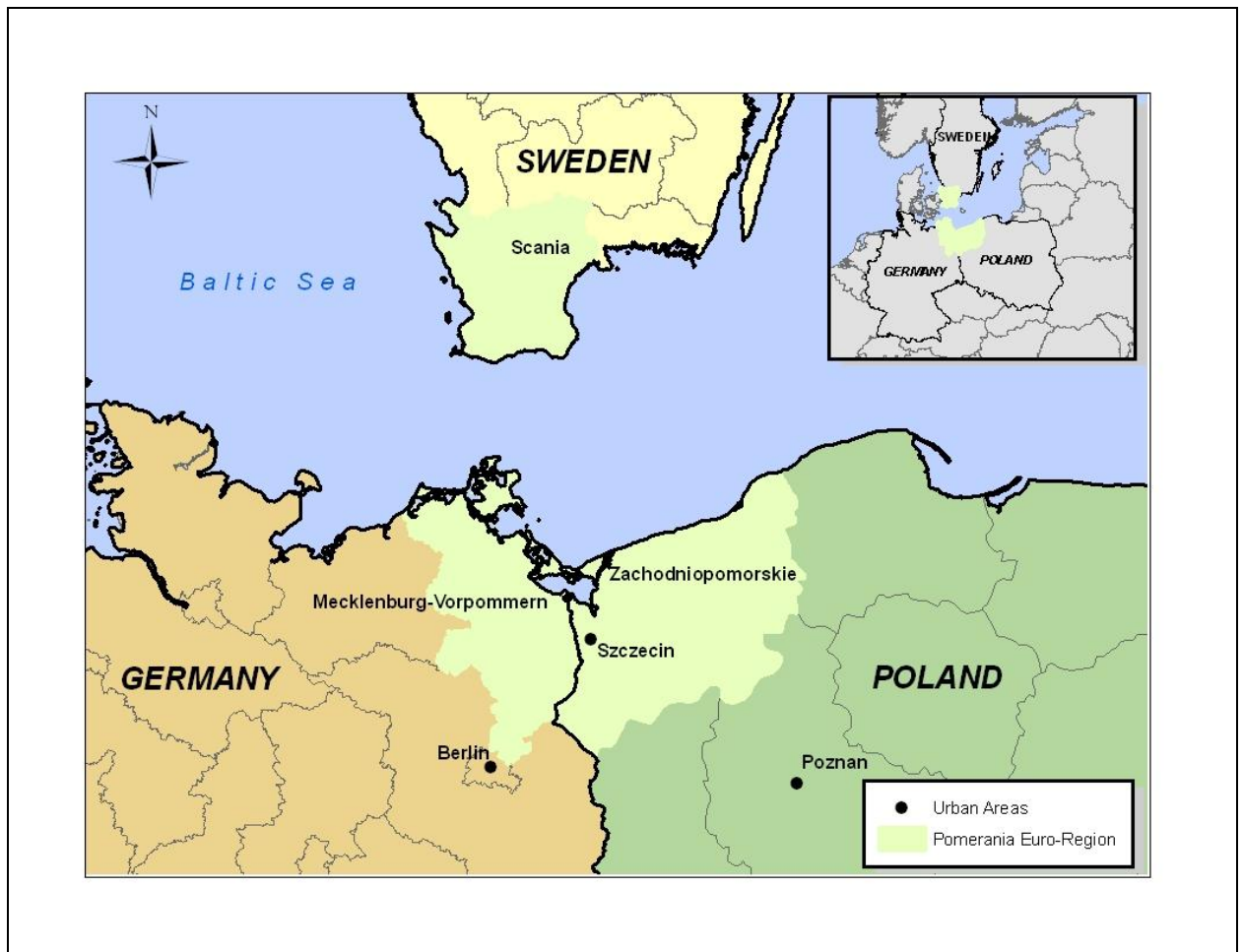


Figure 3.9 Map of the Pomerania Euro-Region

Source: Ciok, 2004

The Pomerania Euro-Region grew out of a German proposal in 1991 to create the Odra Region as a joint Polish-German bilateral region. Pomerania is a historical name for the northern Baltic region that had been part of Germany prior to World War II (Friedrich, 2000). Today the region is divided between the Polish province of Zachodniopomorskie and the German province of Mecklenburg-Vorpommern. Officials in Szczecin presented an alternative proposal to create a quadrilateral structure that would also include Sweden and Denmark. The official documents establishing the Pomerania Euro-Region between Germany and Poland was signed in 1995, with Sweden joining in 1998. The Dutch did not join preferring to cooperate only on issues of fishing and tourism (Euroregionu Pomerania, 2007).

The main purpose of the Pomerania Euro-Region is to create economic cooperation to improve the standard of living for residents in the area. To improve cooperation the euro-region is focused on increasing the number of border crossing points and improving the infrastructure connecting the two countries. The region also focuses on promoting cooperation to solve ecological problems by improving the state of natural parks and expanding farming and forestry in the region. There are also efforts to create more cooperation in the social sphere through education exchanges, sport exchanges and improvements in the coordination of responses to natural disasters (Ciok, 2004).

#### **3.4.5 Preparations for the Elimination of Border Custom Checkpoints along the Polish-German Border**

The closing of all official border checkpoints on December 21<sup>st</sup> 2007 was the final action in the transformation of the Polish-German border into a symbolic border, that is, a border without any visible control on the movement of people and goods. The process began with

Poland's entrance into the EU in 2004. Shortly afterwards Poland began negotiations to become a member of the Schengen Agreement, which would take three years to complete. The Schengen agreement signed in 1985 between Germany France, Belgium, Holland and Luxemburg created a zone in which people and goods could move freely across member country's borders. In December of 2007, Schengenland, the combined territory of nation-states who are part of the agreement, expanded to include Poland, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Slovenia. The negotiation process was a difficult one. Originally border custom points along the Polish-German border were to be removed in 2006, but delays were caused by negative public opinion in the older member countries, mostly reflecting their fears of increased crime from the East. Poland had to implement several policies to tighten its eastern border with its three non-EU member neighbors. Starting in 2003 visas were required for people from Kaliningrad (an exclave of Russia), Ukraine and Belorussia traveling to Poland. Over 6 million zloty, roughly 2 million dollars, were invested in building infrastructure along the Schengen border, educating Polish borderguards and connecting Poland to the Schengen data system. The information system known as the Schengen Information System, SIS, provides data about wanted criminals from all over Europe for crimes such as thefts, weapon violations and the falsification of documents and banknotes. The SIS system enables law enforcement to cooperate with one another to monitor the movement of people across borders (Pawlicki, 2007).

As the Polish government proved it could seal its eastern border, regulating immigration and smuggling from east to west, efforts were made to change the reputation of the Polish-German border from an unfriendly frontier to a welcoming border between EU-member countries. Several policies were implemented to encourage joint cooperation between Polish and German borderguards. Between 2006 and 2007 German and Polish borderguards instituted a



policy of one stop controls, during which cars stopped just once at the border checkpoint where both a German and Polish borderguards checked their documents (Figure 3.10). The one-stop check was designed to shorten lines, speed up traffic and make the border between more friendly. However German borderguards expressed concern that though the new policy did decrease the tense atmosphere at the border, it also forced guards to give up thorough searches (Interview 27, July 2006). At most checkpoints German and Polish border guards shared a single booth, seated next to one another so they could better share information. The borderguards were all offered the opportunity to take English, Polish and German language course to further improve communication and cooperation between the two. Despite the improvements in cooperation between borderguards, prior to December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007, border crossers could still expect to wait in long lines at the border custom checkpoints (Figure 3.11).

#### **3.4.6 Polish Media Coverage of the Elimination of Custom Controls on the Polish-German Border**

As December 22 of 2007, the day on which all checkpoints along the Polish-German border were scheduled to cease operations, approached several articles appeared in the Polish newspapers on the topic with titles such as *My w Bezgranicznej Europie* [*We in a Borderless Europe*] and *Wyjedziemy bez Kontroli* [*We will Leave without Control*]. In the article, *We in a Borderless Europe*, author Jacek Pawlicki reflects on border crossing experiences in the 1980s and 1990s. Similar to the older generation of Polish borderlanders I interviewed, the author recalls a time when you could not leave Poland without special permission and crossing a border entailed difficulties associated primarily with a high level of corruption amongst borderguards. In his recollections of his first trip to Finland he recalls his grandmother sewing ten dollars into



Figure 3.10 One-stop check at the Polish-German border in July 2006



Figure 3.11 Long lines at the Polish-German Border crossing at Świecko on the Highway E-30 in July 2006 (Figure 3.5)

his coat so no one would steal it at the border. Several interviewees told me similar stories of the anxiety over confiscation of goods by borderguards made worse by the limitations on the amount of goods (shoes, deodorant, handkerchief and so forth) one could bring into Poland during this time period.

Another theme Jacek Pawlicki discussed in the article is the generation gap between himself and his son, who was born in the 1990s, and has only known a relatively open Polish-German border. This was also a theme that emerged from my interviews with university students in Szczecin (discussed in Chapter Six). He believed the removal of borders had much less significance for the youth of the country, than for the older generation who had spent most of their lives under the restrictive communist regime.

Another article, *Abecadło Schengenlandii [Rudiments of Schengen Land]* written by Wojciech Orliński reminds readers that though citizens of Schengenland are able to cross the border without any controls, this does not mean all border controls have disappeared. He writes that only the rules of crossing the border are changing and that the border will not stop existing. New technologies will allow borderguards to continue to remotely monitor movements across the border. Readers are reminded that the custom booths will not be physically removed but will simply stand empty along the border. Border controls can return should a national security risk appear for any country. Most likely the checkpoints will be temporarily reopened during the Euro 2012 soccer championships to be jointly hosted by Poland and Ukraine in order to prevent hoodlums with past criminal offences from attending matches (Orliński, 2007).

All three articles describe the increased cooperation between police in Poland and Germany to fight illegal activities across the border. Surveillance will remain tight on both sides of the border as the custom checkpoints have been exchanged for new technology that allows

borderguards to continue to monitor activities along the border. Polish police can now travel several dozen kilometers into Germany in ‘hotpursuit’ of a suspect and vice versa. For instance, if a car is stolen in Germany, Polish police are alerted of the theft immediately (Pawlicki, 2007). The system had early success during test runs in December of 2007, when the German police caught a Polish businessman wanted for corruption in Poland after running a computer check on his plate number (Wprost, 2007). Though borderguards will no longer check individuals documents as they cross the border, spot checks can occur at any time in any public space. To aid the Polish borderguards in this process they have been provided with 40 ‘Schengenbuses’ used by German borderguards that come equipped with appliances to check the documents of any suspicious individuals encountered in the region in the SIS database (Prazcyk, 2007).

### **3.5 Future Cooperation and Identity in the Polish-German Borderland**

The formation of euro-regions along the once highly contested Polish-German border has established the framework for future cooperation between the EU members. Meanwhile preparations for Poland to join the Schengen Agreement in 2007 were transforming the border into a friendly and cooperative space. The increase of economic interaction across the border since the 1990s is well documented by the high volume of cross-border trade and investment (Kratke, 1998 and Stryjakiewicz, 1998). Recognizing that economic cooperation cannot thrive in an environment where residents are mistrustful and suspicious of each other, euro-regions have provided funding for projects if they add the encouragement of cross-cultural appreciation and the founding of a European identity to their mission of economic development. Despite the current increasing ease of cross-border mobility and incentives for Polish and German communities to cooperate several studies have found that cognitive or mental borders continue to

restrict the movement of residents across the Polish-German border (Stürver, 2005, Thaler, 1997, and Meinhof and Galasinski, 2002).

My own research in the border provinces of Lubuskie and Pomerania explores how, five years after Poland's entrance into the EU and on the eve of Poland's full entrance into the Schengen Zone, Polish borderlanders view their cross-border mobility and cooperation with their German neighbors. Have euro-regions been successful in encouraging integration across the Polish-German border, the same border across which the Soviet Union had been unsuccessful in establishing a sense of brotherhood between the two countries? Do differences in economic inequalities and stereotypes continue to frame interactions between the two groups? Or do Polish borderlanders relate to a European identity, based on economic liberalization, the freedom of movement, and a growing sense of community across the border? Will the Polish-German border one day become a culturally and economically integrated borderland?

## **4. Methodology**

Cultural change has been identified by a number of scholars as an important indicator of the social and economic transformations that have occurred in Central European borderlands (Donnan Hastings and Thomas Wilson 1999). To understand the degree to which increased cross-border collaboration supported by EU policies has resulted in actual integration and related cultural changes a holistic understanding of how the border influences the daily lives of individuals is necessary (Van Houtum 2005a and Kramsch 2002). As discussed in the literature review (Chapter Two), border scholars such as Henrik Van Houtum (2005a) David Newman (2006), Donnan Hastings and Thomas Wilson (1999) and Anssi Paasi (2005a) have all stressed the need for more qualitative studies to document the social meanings of boundaries and their functions in the daily lives of border residents.

Therefore to learn how life is changing for Polish borderlanders in my research I employed a variety of qualitative methods to capture both the changes in borderlanders' cross-border mobility and borderlanders' perspectives on cooperation across the border. Quantitative data was used to learn about the changes in the cross-border mobility of borderlanders and the economic situation in the region, although no analysis of this data was preformed. From the information I collected in interviews I sought to better understand how social boundaries are maintained (or not) as borderguards lessened their careful monitoring of all movement across the physical border. Here I begin by presenting my main research questions and then I give a detailed explanation of the main methods I used during the four years (2004-2007) that I

collected data on the experiences of Polish borderlanders in the two northwestern Polish border provinces: Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie.

#### **4.1 Research Question**

As discussed in Chapter Three, the situation along the Polish-German borderline has fluctuated from periods when the border functioned as a formable barrier and an object of extreme contention to interludes when cross-border cooperation and mobility among borderlanders was possible. A new era of cooperation began across the Polish-German border in the 1990s as a unified Germany forged new relations with a Polish government seeking stronger ties with the European Union. Following Poland's acceptance into the European Union in 2004, the Polish-German border became an interior border of the EU. By 2005 preparations for the Polish-German border to become a 'soft border,' following Poland's eventual full membership in the Schengen Agreement in December 2007 were visible in the form of shorter lines at checkpoints and increased cooperation between Polish and German borderguards. These changes have created a more relaxed atmosphere at border checkpoints. The creation of euro-regions and the financial support for cross-border projects supported by the European Union were marked by equally visible signage in Polish towns along the border.

These obvious changes in the landscape raised a number of questions in my mind. Has the new mobility and political cooperation along the Polish-German border led to new contacts and networks between Polish and German borderlanders? Have EU policies of integration met with any early successes in reducing the divisive roles that the physical and mental borders have so long maintained between Poland and German borderlanders? Are German and Polish

borderlanders beginning to share a collective European identity that challenges long-held negative stereotypes and the distrust that typically have buttressed mental barriers to cross-border cooperation? To answer these questions, I used surveys, semi-structured interviews, photo-triggers and group interviews in order to understand how the presence of the border influences the lives of people in the region.

The main purpose of my research is to understand how life is changing along the Polish western borderland following the accession of Poland to full membership into the EU in 2004. To understand the experience of living along the border in this new era, my questions were shaped to explore three components of the borderlanders' experience: mobility, cross-cultural exchange and an emerging sense of place.

**A. Mobility:** By learning about the changes in the cross-border mobility of borderlanders, I hoped to understand the significance of preparations for the removal of border checkpoints and the construction of an open border. How has the experience of crossing the border changed since the border become an interior border of the EU? Do borderlanders cross the border more frequently? Are there changes in the reasons given by Polish borderlanders for crossing the border? I also asked Polish borderlanders to discuss their perceptions of why Germans traveled to this region in Poland in order to understand their attitudes toward German visitors in the area.

**B. Cross-cultural exchange:** The most obvious exchanges between Polish and German people in the borderland are based on cross-border shopping. But in addition to economic exchanges do Polish borderlanders also engage in social interactions with their German neighbors? EU funding for soft-projects was designed to encourage socio-cultural exchanges as an additional layer of trust building and networking within the two euro-regions covered in my study. Have these projects been successful at all in creating more opportunities for Polish and



German borderlanders to interact with one another? To answer these questions I sought to learn how aware Polish borderlanders are of being part of an euro-region and how aware they are of the programs funded by them. Do Polish borderlanders think euro-regions have contributed to an increase in collaboration between Polish and German residents in the region or are they critical of the extent to which euro-regions have, or have not, contributed to improving the standard of living in the border region? Can Anke Strüver's (2004b) criticism that most borderlanders don't even know they live in a German-Dutch euro-region be applied to the euro-regions on the Polish-German border?

***C. Emerging sense of place:*** I was interested in learning if the openness along the border and EU financial support for collaboration across the border have altered the mental border that separates Poles and Germans. By identifying the types of words borderlanders use to describe the Polish-German border and how they explain the function of the border, either as a divider of nation-states or a unifier, I hoped to understand the importance the border held in the regional identity construction of individuals. Does the idea of a collective regional identity, or the conceptualization of the borderland as a micro-region based on a shared past or a joint future, emerge from their descriptions of what makes the region in which they live distinct from other parts of Poland?

## **4.2 Location of the Study**

The majority of my interviews were with residents of Ślubice and students studying at the university in Szczecin. Ślubice is a Polish town in the province of Lubuskie with a population of approximately 17,000, separated from the German city of Frankfurt-Oder by the Oder River

(Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2008). Szczecin is the seventh largest city in Poland and located 13 kilometers (8 miles) from the nearest border crossing in the province of Zachodniopomorskie, with a population of approximately 420,000 (Central Statistical Office of Poland, 2008). Four interviews were also conducted in the community of Kłodawa, with a population of 6,839 (World Gazetteer, 2007), approximately 51 kilometers (31 miles) from the nearest border crossing at the city of Kostrzyn nad Odrą. Another three interviews were done in the city of Poznan, with a population of 557,972 (World Gazetteer, 2007), approximately 183 kilometers or (114 miles) from the border crossing at Słubice. Figure 4.1 illustrates the locations of all my interviews in western Poland. In addition the map also shows the location of Seelow, the German partner city of Kłodawa.

By interviewing Polish borderlanders in different urban and rural settings in the border heartland, I hoped to understand how factors such as the proximity to border crossing checkpoints and the services available on both sides of the border (for example an airport or new shopping mall) influenced the level of cross-border mobility. Meanwhile interviews I conducted in Poznan (181 kilometers or 112 miles from the border crossing at Słubice) allowed me to get a glimpse into the viewpoint of those living in the outer region of the borderland.

### **4.3. Preliminary Research in the Western Borderland of Poland**

These questions and a general interest in the Polish-German borderland evolved from my initial curiosity in studying the cultural changes within Polish society that were occurring as the economy transitioned from a command economy to a free market system. I sought out a project that would allow me to combine my interests in the social transformation of Polish society with



Figure: 4.1. Cities and towns mentioned in the study area

my curiosity about the effectiveness of strategies promoting EU cultural integration and the authenticity of European identity endorsements. My first trip to the Polish-German border was in the summer of 2005 when I took a brief bike ride along the border beginning at the German city of Forst (figure 4.1) and ending 83 kilometers (51 miles) north in the German city of Frankfurt- Oder. The bike trail, running along the Polish-German border mainly on the German side but with short intervals on the Polish side, was funded by the Pro European Viadrina Euro-Region. The paved trail is an example of infrastructure investment by the EU in the region in the hopes of luring tourists to the Polish-German borderland. On the Polish side in the vicinity of the border there were shops and flea markets with German signs advertising a variety of goods for sale (Figure 4.2). Vendors selling products targeting Germans was made evident by the German language signs advertising the products for sale. Later I would learn vendors catering to a German clientele were found in the entire Polish borderland and not just along the border. For example, on E-30, the main route to Poznan from Berlin, one passes many road side stalls selling garden accessories such as gnomes, a product not popularly found in Polish gardens, so obviously the vendors are targeting German tourists on their way to Poznan (Figure 4.3).

I returned to the region a year later in the summer of 2006 as a participant in a summer program entitled, *Border Cultures*, at the German university in Frankfurt-Oder. During this summer I gained considerable first hand experience crossing the border daily to attend classes held at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder and then returning to the student dorms in Słubice, Poland--an experience similar to that of the Polish students who study at the University in Viadrina and live in Słubice. Although I was able to do some preliminary research during this time the bulk of my field research was conducted in the summer and fall of 2007.



Figure 4.2. Bazaar along the Polish Border, near the German town of Forst



Figure 4.3. Gnomes and other garden displays for sale in the Polish borderland

From my own observations over the past three years beginning in the summer of 2005, I noted changes in the situation at the border customs checkpoints, as I repeatedly crossed the Polish-German border. During my early border crossing experiences in 2005, and again in 2006, a little extra wait time was always required as the guards double checked my rarely seen American passport. During the last time I crossed from Frankfurt-Oder to Słubice (two weeks prior to the December 2007 inauguration of the Schengen agreement) the borderguard barely gave a second glance to my passport or the identification cards German and Polish citizens had to show to cross the border. By the summer of 2007 the new openness along the border could easily be observed by the steady flow of people crossing the border and the use of German and Polish in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder. However, learning how Polish borderlanders felt about their German neighbors and the extent to which Polish borderlanders engaged in cross-border experiences would require direct contact with the residents through the use of surveys and interviews.

The Polish-German border can be a sensitive topic in both countries. When I passed out surveys, many potential responders declined to participate, once they learned of the topic. Though most politely declined, one passenger stopped the student assisting me with surveys before he could even finish his introduction. Upon hearing the topic was on the Polish-German border he angrily asked in Polish if we spoke German and told us he would not fill out my survey until we learned to speak German. Most likely this elderly man was of mixed German Polish heritage, frustrated by the past treatment by the Polish state of ethnic German minorities and was not eager to participate in the study. This encounter illustrated the sensitivity of the topic particularly among the elderly. Many individuals that agreed to participate were very curious to learn why an American would be interested in the level of mobility and types of

cooperation across the Polish-German border. My position as a young female American graduate student influenced both how I was perceived by potential responders and how I interpreted the interviews.

#### **4.4 Inventory of Qualitative Methods Used in Data Collection**

This study focuses on the perception of changes in the Polish borderland from the Polish viewpoint. Though I spoke with German students studying in Poland, Germans working at the Collegium Polonicum in Słubice and German scholars studying changes along the Polish-German border in Frankfurt-Oder, I only acquired a general understanding of German views of the Polish borderland. The opinions of German borderlanders per se—those living in border towns identified by Poles as popular destinations in Germany (such as Schwedt) or partner cities of Polish border towns (such as the German town of Seelow partnered with the Polish town of Kłodawa) would have enriched the findings of this study. Polish newspapers, such as the *Gazeta Wyborcza*, reports on the Polish-German border discussed in Chapter Five frequently focused on the fears among German borderlanders of an open border with their Polish neighbors. Interviews with German borderlanders would have been telling if the authors had indeed captured the mindset of Germans living in the region. The view of German borderlanders on the recent changes in cross-border mobility and their feelings toward integration with their Polish neighbors would also have provided a deeper understanding of the integration (or lack thereof) between Poles and Germans.

Studies have been done in which German and Polish borderlanders living in Polish-German border communities such as Guben-Gubin (a former German city which was split into

two towns following the westward movement of the Polish-German border) that interviewed individuals on both sides of the border. Ulrike Meinhof and Dariusz Galasiński (2002) interviewed cross-generational Polish and German families as part of their research on identity formation, supported by the British ESRC part of the European Commission's Fifth Framework Programme. By focusing only on Polish borderlanders' experiences I have left the other half of the story untold. To keep my project manageable (since I was working as a solo researcher) and complete the study within a limited time frame I chose to concentrate on the experiences and views of Polish borderlanders. My limited German language skills when compared to my Polish language skills would not have allowed me to garner nuances and subtlety of meaning from oral interviews in German because I would have had to rely on a translator's interpretations. Nor would I have been able to understand the verbal comments by individuals taking the survey as I was able to do with Polish participants. In Poland I was able to make some additional contacts on my own without having to rely on a gatekeeper, something I would not have been able to do in Germany. Therefore, this study provides a more in-depth understanding of the Polish experience at the border instead of a more general summary of both Polish and Germany opinions of integration in the region.

In an attempt to capture a wide variety of opinions on how life is changing for Polish borderlanders I used three types of qualitative methods; surveys, group interviews and semi-structured interviews. The university students in Poznan played an important role in helping me to collect data in Ślubice. Below I discuss each method that was used to gather data, explaining why the particular method was chosen, the location in which the method was used and any significant complications experienced while implementing the specific method of data collection.



#### 4.4.1 Surveys

The survey entitled, the *Experiences Crossing the Polish-German Border*, was designed to acquire a better understanding of borderlanders' cross-border mobility and their opinions toward cooperation between German and Polish borderlanders. Questions were designed to address the changes in the border crossing experience since Poland joined the EU in 2004, public awareness of euro-regions and public attitudes toward future cross border cooperation. An English translation of the survey is included in appendices. A total of 130 surveys were completed in the summer and fall of 2007. The surveys were done with a random sample of passengers on public trains in the border region. The remaining surveys were distributed in the town of Ślubice to a random sample of residents on the streets and in the park as well as participants in semi-structured interviews at the University Collegium Polonicum. Table 1 provides a summary of the gender of participants, the percentage of participants who live in the border region and the percentage of surveys collected at each location. Table 2 summaries the ages of the participants and the number of years they have been living in the border region.

**Table 1 Profile of survey respondents**

<b>Gender:</b>	<b>Female</b>	<b>Male</b>
	52%	48%
<b>Live in the border region:</b>	<b>Yes</b>	<b>No</b>
	82%	18%
<b>Survey location::</b>	<b>Train</b>	<b>Ślubice</b>
	67%	34%

<b>Table 2 Profile of survey respondents continued</b>					
<b>Years living in the border region:</b>	<b>1-10</b>	<b>11-20</b>	<b>21-30</b>	<b>31-50</b>	<b>Since birth</b>
1-10 years	16%	11%	16%	17%	40%
<b>AGE:</b>	<b>18-25</b>	<b>26-35</b>	<b>36-40</b>	<b>41-50</b>	<b>51-70</b>
18-25	46%	26%	13%	6%	9%

The majority of the surveys, 67 percent, were completed by passengers traveling on Polish trains from Poznan to Słubice (west to east) and from Szczecin to Poznan (north to south) during the summer of 2007. The train was an ideal location for obtaining the opinions of a diverse group of participants. Those who filled out the surveys worked in a variety of occupations, which included professional services (such as physical therapist, economist and sales clerk) educational services, retail trade as well as those who were now retired. The majority of the respondents, 82 percent, were residents of a Polish western border province. Of those living in the border region, 43 percent have lived in the region since birth and 33 percent have lived in the area for over twenty years. 72% of the participants were between the ages of 25 and 35. One downfall of surveying people on trains is that I eliminated a sector of the population, the wealthier frequent border crossers particularly business people, who are more likely to cross in private cars than by train. But the train survey did include several people who might not have normally participated in a survey because of time constraints.

The second location where the survey was administered was the Polish border town of Słubice. Surveys were first taken here during the summer of 2007, with the assistance of a Polish student at the University of Viadrina. In December 2007 with the aid of university students at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, surveys were again collected in Słubice. People encountered within 5 km of the border were surveyed as well as workers in the local flea markets. A few participants who we stopped in the park in Słubice, agreed to answer the surveys

only if the questions were read out loud to them. These surveys, turned out to be especially informative because the participants added additional information beyond what the questions asked for as they engaged with me in a conversation about Słubice, the border and Germany.

#### **4.4.2 Group Interviews**

In Szczecin I was invited to speak and collect interviews in three first-year anthropology classes at the university. Each group interview began with a short personal introduction, followed by a power point presentation. The questions used for the group interviews are included in the appendices. The students were first asked to draw on paper a mental map of the places they frequent in the region. They were then asked a series of questions about their border crossing experiences such as: Why did they think Poles and Germans crossed the Polish-German border? What was their knowledge of euro-regions? Could they anticipate what the future held for the border region? After each question was presented they were asked to write down their answers. A few minutes later they were encouraged to share what they had written down. Several students eagerly participated in these discussions from which emerged a variety of view points about the future of Szczecin and the border region. The students proved to be very eager to share their knowledge and opinions about Szczecin, the border and Polish-German relations. Chapter Six summarizes the main themes from the responses given by the students.

A total of 90 students participated in the group interviews, approximately 50 females and 40 males, between the ages of 19 and 23. At the end of the discussion each student turned in a mental map they had drawn of the region and their written responses to the questions.

#### **4.4.3 Semi-Structured Interviews**

I spent the bulk of my time at the Polish border town of Słubice, because of the partnership between the University Collegium Polonicum located in Słubice and the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan where I had the assistance of the anthropology department. In Słubice, I interviewed twelve people employed in various positions at the university, some of whom were life long residents of Słubice. Interviewees were selected based on the snow-ball method. The interviews began with photo-triggers, meaning I showed participants a collection of photos of signs and buildings representative of daily life in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder. These images included the bridge connecting the two communities, the border customs checkpoint, a historical monument to the Russian soldiers who had fought in World War II, shops in Słubice and the bazaar. Selected images from these interviews are incorporated into Chapter Five and appear along with a discussion of participants responses to the photos.

Ulrike Meinhof, Heidi Armbruster and Craig Rollo (2002) employed a similar method in their research on the significance of national borders on people's identity construction in the Polish-German border town of Gubin-Guben. To better understand how people shift in their identification of self and others the authors used photographic triggers as a way to limit the influence of the interviewer in the informants' self narratives. Because identity is complex and multi-layered and also often self-contradictory, Ulrike Meinhof and Armbruster Rollo found that this method allowed people to express mixed emotions associated with European identity which could not have been expressed in the check boxes of a survey (Meinhof, Armbruster and Rollo, 2002).

Semi-structured interviews without photo-triggers were conducted with a selected group of informants. I conducted semi-structured interviews with one of the organizers of the Polish-German Academy and the owner of an art gallery in Słubice, both organizations listed on the Słubfurt webpage and self-advertised as encouraging cooperation at some level between residents of Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder. Słubfurt is an NGO organization that sponsors a variety of programs between residents of Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder (Słubfurt, 2008).

Semi-structured interviews were also conducted in Kłodawa, with 4 representatives of the local government. Kłodawa is a *gmina*, the smallest form of territorial administration in Poland, and part of the *Lubuskie* province, the largest administrative entity below the national government in Poland. The government of Kłodawa has been working with their German counterparts in the town of Seelow to encourage economic growth based on joint development projects, predominately tourism. I also interviewed the public relations director in Słubice, academics working in Słubice and a former employee of the Pro-Europa Viadrina Euro-Region. In addition, I conversed with academics involved in German-Polish studies at the University of Poznan and the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder.

#### **4.4.4 The Utilization of Poznan University Students as Research Aids**

During discussions with Polish anthropology professor, Michal Buchowski, the idea emerged that I should teach a course on borders, using my students as research assistants. The course, taught during the fall of 2007 at the Adam Mickiewicz University, consisted of 14 students, six of whom were Polish university students, and the rest were Erasmus Students (part of the EU initiated university student exchange program) from Hungary and Turkey. After some study of

the topic and training, these students accompanied me to Ślubice for a day-long session of field work. At the end of the semester they turned in a final paper that included the results of their field research findings, commentary about class discussions and their own personal ideas on not only the current types of integration taking place along the Polish-German border but also their views on the future of assimilation in the region. The research findings and opinions of these students are included in Chapter Five.

#### **4.4.5 Secondary Sources**

The official entrance of Poland into the Schengen Zone on December 22 of 2007 was a very popular event and there were plenty of Polish newspapers and magazine articles on the topic. The media was a good source for opinion pieces on national identity versus European Union identity and for stories about Polish-German relations. In addition, local news sources provided useful information on the history of the region and current local cross-border projects receiving EU funding. I found keeping up to date on local events while I was in Poland was indispensable for understanding the specific concerns unique to the region. Ancillary data I compiled beyond the survey and interview results, such as newspaper articles I had saved and pamphlets I collected while traveling in the region, provided me with a mixture of additional information.

## 4.5 Writing up My Results

A combination of several qualitative methods was necessary for a comprehensive vision of life along the Polish-German border. Different methods worked better in specific situations. For instance at times people were willing to do surveys but were not interested in being interviewed. In other cases people gladly participated in a 45 minute interview but were not interested in filling out a survey. Each method also had its draw backs. Like other qualitative researchers, I found the interviews particularly useful for getting participants to share not always how the world really is but the ways they believe it ought to be (Shurmer-Smith, 2002). Throughout the interviewing process I collected a fair amount of experiences which reinforced this understanding of information one receives in interviews. For example in an informal discussion on the differences between Poles and Germans following an interview, a Polish resident of Poznan told me that no one in Western Poland ever crossed the street until they have been given the proper traffic signal. She claimed that unlike in the Eastern parts of Poland, in Poznan people would wait for the green light even if there was no traffic. She believed that this behavior showed that Poles in Poznan were similar to Germans in their obedience of the law. The next day as I waited at the cross walk for the light to turn green I watched as those on the sidewalk around me began to cross after checking to make sure no cars were approaching, despite not having the green sign for the go ahead. This example highlights one situation in which my informant's perceptions were misleading. Therefore whenever possible I relied on secondary sources to help contextualize topics discussed and information given in the interviews. The combination of surveys and interviews was very useful. Surveys helped me to identify patterns in the frequency and purpose of crossing the border, and the types of cross-border

projects found along the Polish-German border. The interviews meanwhile allowed me to better understand changes in the experience of crossing the border, reasons why people did or did not cross the border and individuals' opinions on cross border cooperation.

As I looked for themes and patterns in all of my research data, what immediately stuck out was the diversity of opinions on the present situation in the Polish western borderland. Often two people living in the same region had very different levels of knowledge about the cooperation across the Polish-German border and very different view points as to the intensity of integration in the future. My interpretations of the information I collected was informed by personal observations and the informal conversations I had with residents of Poznan and elsewhere in Poland. Back in Knoxville I continued to follow political events and read responses to articles on Polish media websites, which furthered my understanding of the different viewpoints in Poland toward German-Polish relations.

While trying to capture the different viewpoints of individuals interviewed in my study, I faced the crisis of representation-- as all scholars of culture do including cultural geographers-- in my attempts to accurately reflect what I had learned from those who had cooperated in my study. Katy Bennett (2002) and Pamela Shurmer-Smith (2002) describe the challenges of depicting a place in such a manner that some essential truth is not missing in the representation. In the next two chapters I describe the Polish borderlanders' experiences based on my interpretations of the information participating borderlanders living in the Polish northwestern border provinces of Zachodniopomorskie and Lubuskie shared with me.



## **5. The Opinions of Polish Borderlanders in Lubuskie on the Integration of the Polish-German Border**

The removal of custom checks along the Polish-German border, an interior border of the European Union, is a visible outcome of the cooperative relationship between the two EU member states. The new freedom of mobility across the border is an important component of EU membership and as of the summer of 2007 had made the experience of crossing the Polish-German border much more pleasant. This was so primarily because the final preparations were being put in place for Poland's full membership in the Schengen Agreement when all custom checkpoints along the border would close. In the first section of this chapter, entitled *Changes in the Cross-Border Mobility of Polish Borderlanders*, I have combined the information I gathered from these interviews with borderlanders in Lubuskie with the responses from my surveys to discuss the significance of an open border for Polish borderlanders. I begin by first reviewing stories interviewees recollected about the changes they have observed in their experiences crossing the Polish-German border. Their experiences reflect the transformation of the border from a carefully monitored exterior EU border to an open and friendlier intra EU border

In the next section, *Economic and Linguistic Divisions*, I further explore the remaining mental borders buffered by economic differences and linguistic divisions that borderlanders most cross. Economic inequalities were an early concern for both Polish and German officials during the negotiations over the terms of Poland's membership into the EU and continue to shape relations across the Polish-German border. In addition the preservation of linguistic diversity and the importance of facilitating communication across cultures is a challenge faced not only in European borderlands but a struggle for the entire EU bureaucratic system.

Euro-regions, since the 1990s, have been important in financing cooperation across the increasingly porous borders of European countries. In the third section, *Borderlanders Opinions of Integration and Cooperation along the Polish-German Border*, I discuss Polish borderlanders' descriptions of the cross-border networks between Polish and German borderlanders. My aim in this section is not to create an extensive list of the types of cross-border cooperation projects found in the Pro-Europa Viadrina Region, but to focus on borderlanders' awareness of euro-regions and their opinions of the benefits to local residents from the projects they finance.

In the final section of this chapter, *Polish Opinions on the Cooperation between Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder*, I focus specifically on public opinion in the Polish border town of Słubice towards cooperation with the German city of Frankfurt-Oder. I conclude this chapter with my interpretation of the potential for an emerging regional consciousness in which citizens of the Polish town of Słubice identify equally with both the German city of Frankfurt-Oder and Słubice.

### **5.1. Changes in the Cross-Border Mobility of Polish Borderlanders**

One of the four freedoms guaranteed to all European Union citizens is the freedom of movement between EU member countries (Fligstein, 2008). For the occasional young traveler who first crossed the Polish-German border after Poland became a member of the EU in 2004, the new mobility across the border may not seem such a monumental achievement. But for the older generation, which remembers crossing in the late 1980s and early 1990s and for those who cross monthly as well as for those with family across the border, the removal of custom

checkpoints along Poland's western border is a very welcome change and a drastic improvement in their lives. To put the significance of this new mobility into perspective one interviewee stressed to me that until the 1990s, Polish citizens were not free to travel outside of the country without permission from the Polish government. He explained, —The border (Polish-German) use to be the end of the world for us,” (Interview 19, October 2007). *Gazeta Wyborcza*, a Polish newspaper, a week before the official date for the closing of the border customs checkpoints on December 21<sup>st</sup> 2007, ran a story, entitled *We in a Borderless Europe (My w Bezgranicznej Europie)*, hailing the significance of Poland's full membership into the Schengen Zone. The author Jacek Pawlicki (2007) welcomes the end of custom checks at the Polish-German border as a confirmation of Poland's new position within the EU. In his opinion, only the adoption of the euro remains before Poland is fully integrated into the EU. In the following subsection I answer the following three questions pertaining to the new cross-border mobility of Polish borderlanders. How have the changes in the experience of crossing the border changed the way borderlanders view the border? Has the new ease of crossing the border influenced the frequency with which borderlanders cross the border? Lastly, has there been a change in the reasons why borderlanders travel to Germany?

### **5.1.1 Changes in the Experience of Crossing the Polish-German Border**

The descriptions borderlanders gave of the changes in their experiences crossing the border, emphasized the shorter lines, reduced wait time and increased cooperation between Polish and German borderguards. When asked to share memories of their first border crossing experience, participants who had first crossed the border in the 1980s or 1990s, recalled stressful

situations full of anxiety. Sixty-three percent of those surveyed traveled across the Polish-German border for the first time during these two decades (Figure 5.1). Long lines and extensive searches by unfriendly border guards was how Polish citizens remembered the experience of crossing the border during this time period.

Because the livelihoods of so many people depended on the cross-border trade which sprang up in the early 1990s, several participants shared with me stories they had heard or their own memories of unique methods developed to covertly transport items past the borderguards. At that time the guards were enforcing the strict limitations on the amount of goods that Polish citizens returning from Germany could bring back into Poland. They did so by carefully searching Polish travelers. The threat of the border searches encouraged a comradeship among passengers in order to facilitate getting past the borderguards. One informant recalled an experience he had as a passenger on his way to Berlin. —A man entered the train compartment and asked everyone to take a few of his sunglasses into their bags. After the borderguards had

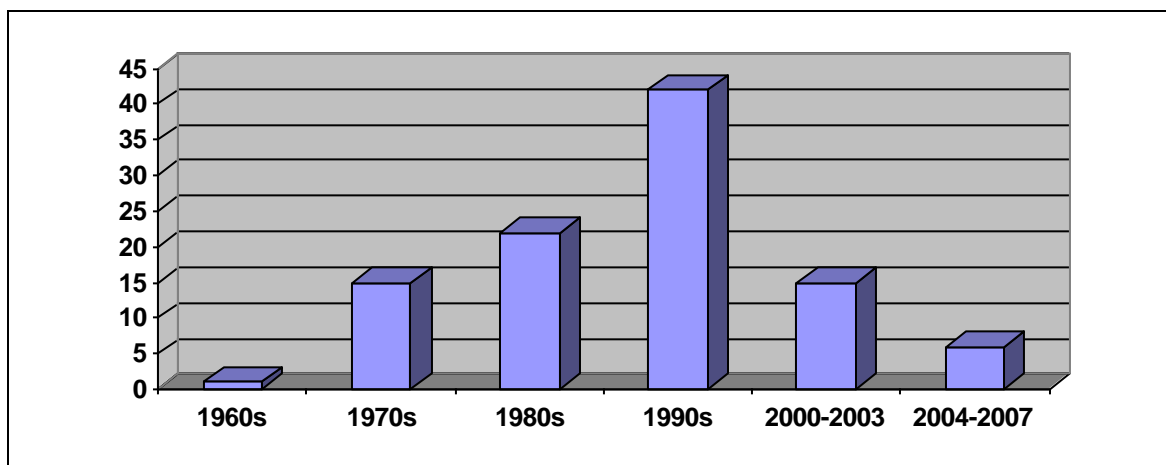


Figure 5.1 Survey item: The year individuals first crossed the Polish-German Border

checked their compartment, everyone returned the sunglasses to the man who then traveled on to Berlin, where he would sell his product at a bazaar” (Interview 6, July 2007). One woman in her late thirties recollected a particularly anxious crossing for her, during which she feared the borderguards would discover the new pair of shoes she was wearing. To try and hide her new purchase in Berlin she had dirtied her new shoes in the hopes of disguising them as old shoes (Interview 21, September 2007).

By the year 2000, the border crossing experience between Poland and Germany had changed drastically. The change was summed up by the comments of one participant, who crossed the border for the first time in 2000 with her parents. She recounted the disbelief her father expressed over the ease of crossing the border, —He just could not believe that all he had to show was his passport and that no one searched him,” (Interview 22, July 2007). A long time resident of Gorzow described to me how cross-border trade decreased once Poland became a full member of the EU in 2004 while there was an increase in the cooperation between Polish and German borderguards. The result was a reduction in the crime rate along the border and an easing of the act of crossing the Polish-German border. Today he no longer has to wait in long lines, be subjected to a personal search by borderguards, answer questions about the amount of money he is carrying with him or even show a passport to enter Germany (Interview 15, July 2007).

Interviewees, who had been students at Collegium Polonicum, during the first few years after the university opened, recalled the transformation of Slubice from the days when they first came to study to the present [the fall of 2007]. The town in the early 1990s had a reputation as the site of illegal activity. One former student recalled —I would pass more prostitutes in a single

day on my way across the border to class in Frankfurt-Oder [in the early 2000s] than I ever remembered seeing assembled in any of the much larger cities in Poland” (Interview 11, July, 2007). Today the town’s reputation has improved and on an average weekday the border crossing is populated by students rushing to class as well as by German and Polish shoppers. Polish students who attend both the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder and Collegium Polonicum in Słubice cross the border at least once a day for classes and social events. One former student who came to Słubice to study at the University in Frankfurt-Oder from another town in Lubuskie, Zielona Góra in 2001, summed up the changes in her border crossing-experiences in the following statement. —At first I ~~was~~ very excited about the idea of crossing the border so frequently, but after a while it became very normal” (Interview 11, 2007). Another former student recalled how the situation improved for Polish students once they were issued special passes to speed up the time-consuming and boring process of waiting in line. The town’s people at first did not appreciate the special treatment received by the students. However, once Poland became a full member of the EU, the lines at the border custom points began to speed up and crossing the border daily became less of a problem for all (Interview 10, 2007).

When I asked participants to describe the current experience of crossing the Polish-German border in the fall of 2007 several of them replied by asking, —~~What~~ border?” (Interview 14, 16, 17, July 2007). But not everyone believed the border had entirely ceased to exist, as is demonstrated by the two participants who eagerly shared stories about what they felt was recent unjust searches of their belongings by Polish and German borderguards (Interview 4, 5, July 2007). A third participant expressed concern, that the elimination of border customs would increase drug trafficking and smuggling along the border (Interview 9, 2007). Most participants

however felt the scheduled removal of checkpoints would have a positive effect, predicting the changes would result in a friendlier atmosphere at the border checkpoints and the reduction of searches and long lines. Of the people surveyed 75 percent believed all controls on the border should be removed. Several interviewees excitedly pointed out to me that the border between the two countries would cease to exist before the year 2008. As one lifelong resident of Słubice explained to me —“Poland is to enter the Schengen Zone, which means we will no longer have any lines” (Interview 12, July 2007). After a moment of silence she continued with the following statement, —“well if no major changes happen before then the border should in December (2007) cease to exist.”

The mental border however was not expected to disappear as quickly. A resident of Kłodawa after initially talking excitedly about a future with no physical borders-- borders that would no longer be visible because custom checkpoints would be removed--admitted the mental and language border would not be erased as quickly (Interview 17, July 2007). A resident of Słubice in her early thirties argued that though it was no longer so easy to see the border in Słubice, the presence of the border would remain in the mindsets of residents for a much longer time period because of the unhealed resentments from the atrocities of World War II. She claimed that it will be at least thirty to fifty years before people will even begin to stop seeing the divisions because both nations still remember the war (Interview 10, July 2007).

### **5.1.2 The Frequency with which Borderlanders Cross the Polish-German Border**

The new ease of crossing the Polish-German border appears to have encouraged Polish borderlanders to cross more frequently since Poland became a member of the EU in 2004.

According to my survey results 53 percent claimed to be crossing the border more frequently since 2004. Forty-seven percent of those surveyed believed Poles in general traveled more frequently to Germany then prior to 2004, the year Poland officially entered the EU. Only 7 percent did not believe there had been any change in the frequency with which Poles crossed the border. Yet the majority of respondents were not themselves frequent border crossers (Figure 5.2). Forty-two percent of the survey respondents claimed to cross the Polish-German border a few times a year. Participants from Słubice, however, tended to cross more frequently than those respondents surveyed on the train. The presence of a border crossing point, proximity of stores on both sides within a mile of the border, and the cooperation between the Polish University in Słubice and the German University in Frankfurt-Oder probably explains why people living in Słubice might cross more frequently than those from other places in the province of Lubuskie.

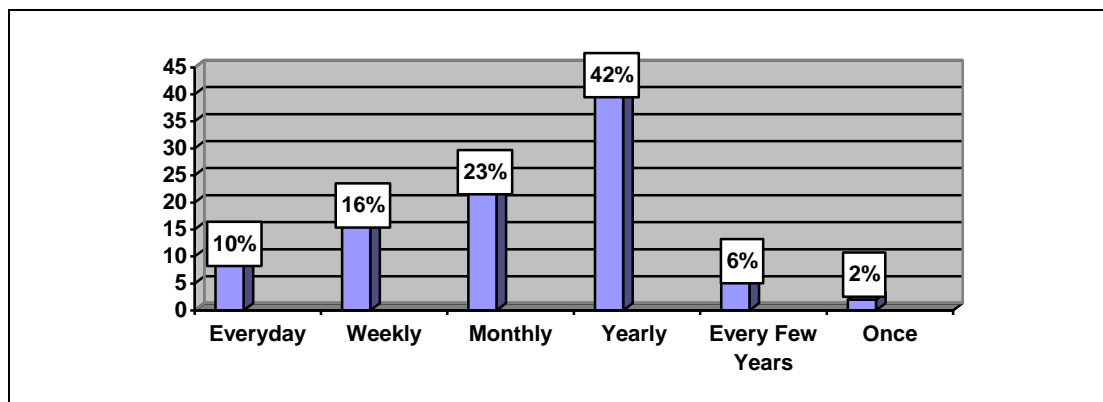


Figure 5.2 Survey item: Frequency with which respondents cross the Polish-German Border

\*The percentage of responses to each of the survey questions were rounded up, therefore the total does not equal one hundred percent.



All of those who I interviewed in the town of Ślubice, with the exception of one middle aged mother, believed that they would not cross more or less frequently because of the removal of checkpoints. “I can already cross without any difficulties,” (Interview 13, July 2007) was a common response by citizens of Ślubice. However 53 percent of those surveyed, which included people from all over the province of Lubuskie, responded that they would cross more frequently following the removal of custom checkpoints along the border. The reason for a predicted increase in traffic across the border of families was explained by one female interviewee working at the Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice. She believed she would cross more often once the border checkpoints were gone because as she explained, “I have a child and it is hard to cross or travel if I have to wait in a long line. So once the border custom checks are eliminated I will probably cross much more often” (Interview 11, July 2007). The differences in the predicted increase in the regularity with which borderlanders will travel across the border between responses collected in the surveys and those collected in interviews can be explained by differences in proximity to the border. Respondents from other areas in the borderland, but further removed from the border than Ślubice, have not habitually crossed frequently to Germany because the possibility of a long wait at the border served as a deterrent that made crossing the border an occasional trip. Meanwhile the young adults I interviewed in Ślubice had been students at the border universities and were used to crossing the border often for study, recreational or work purposes. Older lifelong residents of Ślubice likewise claimed to already cross whenever they needed without too much of a hassle and saw no reason to increase their trips in the future.

### 5.1.3 Reasons for Crossing the Border

The removal of custom points along the Polish-German border has eliminated the wait time once associated with crossing the border, but has there been a change in the incentives which lure Poles to Germany? To go shopping remained the most common reason given for Poles to travel to Germany. Of those surveyed 57 percent chose shopping as the main reason for crossing the border. Today Polish borderlanders' travel to Germany to buy electronic goods, jewelry and other luxury products, that can be purchased at lower prices than in Poland. Meanwhile Germans travel to the Polish side to take advantage of cheaper prices for food and services (hair cuts, dental care) and longer hours of operation.

Although the main reason for crossing the border still remains shopping, the experience of shopping in Germany has changed drastically for Polish borderlanders. While several years ago a Polish shopper would have been followed closely in German stores and not allowed to buy too much of a specific product, today Germany stores use promotional gifts to lure Poles shoppers (Interview 15, July 2007). Two lifelong residents of Słubice brought up in an interview their astonishment at the number of promotions offered to entice Polish shoppers to visit stores in Frankfurt-Oder, while joking about the limitations in the past on the amount of detergent that could be bought in Germany and carried back to Poland (Interview 12 and 13, July 2007). The promotions are reportedly a response to a reversal of the cross-border situation. Whereas, once there were more stores in Frankfurt-Oder than Słubice, now the situation has been reversed and today German stores must compete with numerous shops in Słubice for both Polish and German shoppers.

Other reasons given by respondents for why Polish citizens cross the border, listed in order of frequency, were tourism, to visit friends and family living in Germany, to work, and to participate in educational exchange programs or conferences (Figure 5.3). Crossing the border in search of work in Germany was the fourth most frequently given reason for crossing the border. The main jobs listed by respondents were occupations such as construction work, farm work, care givers for the elderly and young and factory work. Interestingly, more people responded to the question about how they had found employment in Germany than admitted to working in Germany, which may be explained by the fact that for a time many Poles worked briefly in the informal German economy while visiting relatives or friends.

The importance of family networks for employment was reconfirmed by the survey with 70 percent of those who had once been employed in Germany, finding their employment through

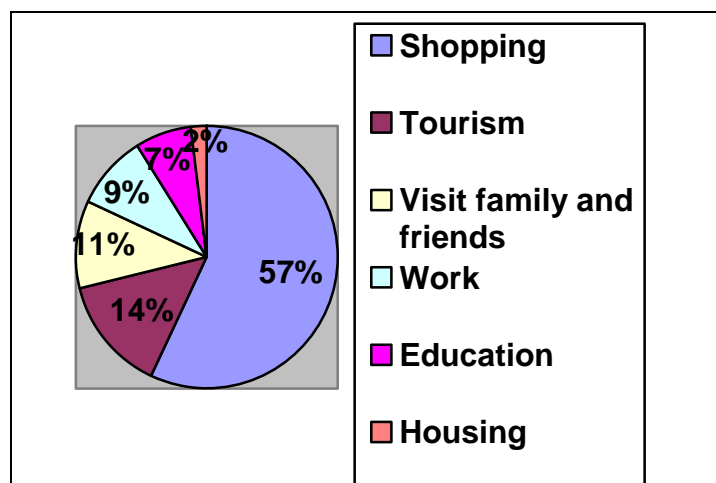


Figure 5.3 Survey item: The main reasons why Polish borderlanders cross the Polish-German Border

\*The percentage of responses to each of the survey questions were rounded up, therefore the total does not equal one hundred percent.

family and friends living in Germany. One student in Słubice claimed that one of the perks for many Polish students associated with studying at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder was that the year of study in Berlin provided them with the opportunity to work in Germany (Interview 32, July 2006).

Though many Polish borderlanders had in the past worked in Germany several interviewees told me that at the time of the survey fewer Polish people were traveling to Germany in search of work because of the limitations placed on the number of Polish citizens who can get German work permits. Until 2011, Polish citizens can not work legally in Germany for more than three months unless they have a work visa showing they have been hired by a German company. The policy is a response by the German government to the fears of Polish workers flooding the German labor market following the entrance of Poland into the EU. The date for Polish citizens to work in Germany without visas is subject to changes similar to the delays in the official closing of checkpoints along the Polish-German border. Instead of crossing the border to Germany, borderlanders, similar to people from other parts of Poland, were traveling to the United Kingdom following the opening of that country's labor market to Polish workers. The perks of working in England rather than Germany are not only the better pay (the pound in 2007 was stronger than the euro) but also all the social benefits of working legally. One Polish student studying for the past five years at the University of Viadrina and Collegium Polonicum complained of the difficulties of getting a job in Germany. Rather frustrated the student declared that by the time the German government allows Polish people to work legally in Germany in white collar jobs, there will no longer be any interest from the Polish side in those jobs (Interview 14, July 2007). A public relations representative of the Collegium Polonicum

confirmed the difficulties Polish students studying at the University of Viadrina had in finding jobs in Germany. Only a small minority of the brightest students could hope to be employed in Germany after graduating. Most would seek jobs in larger Polish cities working for German companies (Interview 11, July 2007).

## **5.2. Economic and Linguistic Divisions**

With the scheduled removal of the custom points along the border, borderguards will no longer be visible barriers to the flow of people across the Polish-German border. Since so many of my interviewees were quick to point out the remaining mental barrier between Polish and German borderlanders, I was curious to know just what they saw as the operative factors maintaining this mental separation. Economic inequalities can be an especially divisive factor in a region where a border divides markedly unequal standards of living. Oscar Martinez (1994) argued that for an interrelated border to emerge the standard of living must be relatively equal on both sides of the border.

Both Polish and German borderlanders were concerned about the impact of an open border between two countries of unequal economic standing. Polish borderlanders feared that the Germans who are generally economically better off than Poles would overwhelm Polish landowners with offers they could not refuse, thus driving up Polish land values and making it difficult for Poles to own land in their own country. Russians and Kaliningraders had similar concerns which lead to the official suspension of German land purchases in Kaliningrad in 1990, a territory which today is part of Russia but had been part of Germany prior to the end of World War II (Browning and Joenniemi, 2008). Meanwhile the Germans feared that Polish workers

would flock across the border pushing down wages in the German labor market. The temporary solution was a compromise that applied a ten year limit on German's buying Polish property and on the number of Poles working in Germany. Both concerns contribute to a "low trust environment"—a term used by Jörg Dürrschmidt and Ulf Matthiesen (2002) to describe the distrust that Polish and German citizens feel for one another and for their governments. This "low trust environment" serves as a major block to the development of social integration in the borderland.

Language is yet another factor that may reinforce the mental barrier to integration. Ulf Matthiesen and Hans Bürkner (2001) describe the Polish-German border as one of the most divisive language barriers in Europe. Nationalism, linked to the sociopolitical modernization of Europe in the nineteenth century was based on language and equated language with nationality (Kamusella, 2007) hence language became the chief marker of national identity, a marker almost always carrying highly emotional baggage. The language barrier maintains a clear cultural division between two very different nations. Even today, German students studying Polish in Poznan describe the Polish language as very exotic for Germans, a level of exoticism one German student claimed most Germans believed was comparable with the Chinese language (Interview 22, December 2007). The economic disparities and linguistic differences identified as obstacles to cooperation by the Polish borderlanders were then reinforced by historical animosities held by each group. I will discuss the economic inequalities and the linguistic barrier between Poles and Germans and the potential for overcoming them below.

### 5.2.1 The Economic Division

Early in my research I came across a website endorsing a new partnership between the Polish border town of Słubice and the Mexican border city of Tijuana. The motivation for local officials in Słubice in 1997 to establish a partnership with the city of Tijuana, a continent away, was to learn from the Mexicans how to maintain one's own culture along a border shared with a much more economically powerful neighbor (Lewinski and Laufer, 2008). For years the standard of living along the Polish-German border has been markedly higher on the German side. The opening of the Polish-German border saw a rise in the number of stores along the Polish side of the border precisely because small scale Polish entrepreneurs hoped to benefit economically from the German shoppers attracted across the border by lower prices. In 2007 the currency exchange rate was approximately 4 zloty to 1 euro, which made the stores along the border profitable for Polish vendors and German shoppers. On the Polish side of the border, agriculture has become less important and services comprise the largest sector of the economy. Many of those providing services along the border are dependent on German customers. Meanwhile, the German border communities lost service employees as the result of large out-migrations of service workers to Western Germany. During this same period the population on the Polish side has increased in the cities of Szczecin and Słubice (Węclawowicz, Degórski, al., 2006).

Along with the new mobility across the border tensions between Polish and German borderlanders have also surfaced. On the German side of the border, high unemployment rates fed negative stereotypes of Germans held by Poles, which then led to a rise in tensions between the two groups. Interviewees shared a few stories regarding the rise in crimes targeting

foreigners-- Poles and other outsiders-- in rural areas of East Germany suffering from high unemployment (Interview 9 and 15, July 2007). One interviewee described relations between Polish and German borderlanders as worse between the younger generations than among the older generations. He observed that Germans born shortly after the war had a feeling of guilt which influenced everyday interactions between German and Polish borderlanders. Meanwhile, the younger generation of Germans who are experiencing difficulties finding jobs, viewed their counterparts on the Polish side of the border as competition (Interview 15, July 2007). For their part, Polish borderlanders perceive Germans as wealthier, a mindset that influences the approach to cross-border interactions of Poles. The extreme outcome of such a mindset during the early years of the open border was the high number of German cars stolen by young Polish males involved in *Juma*, (discussed in Chapter Three). These crimes were rationalized by some in Poland as simply redressing long-held grievances, related to economic inequalities and atrocities committed during the German occupation of Poland during World War II.

The subject of compensation to Germans who had lost land after World War II was raised by one interviewee in Kłodawa as a potential source of future conflict between Polish and German borderlanders, if it were not addressed by the Polish government and the EU in a responsible manner. Land exchanges done by word of mouth after the war has created a situation where Germans who were expelled have maintained titles to land on the Polish side-land that for years has been occupied by Polish citizens (Interview 15, July 2007). The Polish-German Peace Treaty of 1991 provided some measure of security that the region would remain part of Poland. However, Polish borderlanders prior to Poland's entrance into the EU continued to fear that wealthier Germans would reclaim this part of Poland by buying back Polish territory,



once a part of Germany. The provision that made it illegal for a non-Polish citizen to buy land in Poland until 2014 was implemented to address this fear.

Germans were buying retirement homes in the Polish borderland where they had spent their early childhood, but Dutch retirees were also settling in the area surrounding the city of Gorzów Wielkopolski. The official whom I interviewed in Kłodawa perceived German investments in Poland's western borderland as positive investments in the future development of the territory (Interview 15, July 2007). And the investment and migration was not a one way flow as Polish citizens were also building homes in Germany. In the German border town of Löcknitz, citizens from the Polish town of Szczecin are increasingly building homes. Attracted by the cheaper cost of land in Germany, they have chosen to live in Löcknitz and commute the 30 miles back across the border to work in Szczecin. According to an article in the International Herald Tribune over 200 Poles had moved across the border where depopulation due to migration to western Germany is common (Gehmlich, 2008).

As mentioned earlier the responses to my survey indicate that fewer Poles are now seeking work in Germany. Only 9 percent of the respondents admitted traveling to Germany in search of work in 2007. A Polish academic interviewee from the border region of Gorzow shared with me a story that illustrates a reversal in the perceived flocking of Polish workers to East Germany. His cousin, who was building a home in Gorzów had hired German construction workers from a nearby town across the border (Interview 19, October 2007), in the German province of Mecklenburg, a region suffering from the highest unemployment rates in Germany (Sontheimer, 2008). In the summer of 2007 there was a shortage of Polish construction workers because many had immigrated to the United Kingdom for the chance to earn pounds. The high

demand fueled by new construction along the western Polish border, attracted German builders to the Polish side (Interview 19, October 2007) a surprising development in a region where normally the flow of workers was in the opposite direction. One interviewee described to me the gradual change in the economic standing of Polish borderlanders in the following manner, —five years ago Germany was stereotypically envisioned as a rich country where everyone wanted to travel to find work. This is slowly changing” (Interview 7, July 2007).

Despite the profits some Polish borderlanders had made from cross-border trade the proximity to the border and large number of German shoppers had made the cost of living higher in the borderland for the average Polish citizen. The restaurants and shops in Słubice a few feet from the border checkpoint were identified by one Polish student as “German space” (Interview 32, July 2006) because the meals in these restaurants were priced out of the range of Polish students. Several borderlanders pointed out that food prices and housing costs are higher in Słubice than in Zielona Góra or even Poznań a much larger city two hours away by train because of the large number of Germans who frequented the region (Interview 5, 11 and 32, July 2007). Polish students studying in Germany at the University of Viadrina did receive some advantages, such as discounted train tickets to travel to Berlin and this did encourage many to visit the city. But the financial advantages were temporary, underlining yet again the financial disparities between German and Polish students. After graduating one former student of the University of Viadrina, now employed at Collegium Polonicum and no longer able to receive discounted tickets claimed to travel only rarely to Berlin because of the higher costs.

The complex situation in the region where many Polish borderlanders are still attracted by the economic opportunities to Germany, but are unable to overcome the mental boundary

between the two countries is reflected in the following participants' statements. One interviewee, a lifelong resident of Ślubice described herself as a frequent border crosser, mostly on trips to visit her daughter who lives in Frankfurt-Oder. In the 1970s she also had worked in a factory in Frankfurt-Oder. The women described her time in Germany favorably as did her daughter who was seated on the park bench next to her mother. Both claimed the standard of living was much better in Frankfurt-Oder than Ślubice. Yet they both argued that the two communities should remain separate entities, cooperating with one another but remaining culturally separated. They believed a division between Polish and German borderlanders would always remain expressed in the following comment made by the older women, —Germans and Polish people don't mix and never will" (Interview 37, December 2007).

### **5.2.2 The Language Barrier**

Language can be an enormous barrier to communication leading to misunderstandings and preventing cooperation. Yet along the Polish-German border the language barrier has not been unyielding. As one government official in Kłodawa told me language is not a barrier to cooperation because as he explained, —not many words are needed to communicate" (Interview 17, July 2007). Pamphlets produced by the Pro Viadrina Euro-Region provide translations for basic interactions such as the polite words to use in conversation and the key words to facilitate a business conversation among Germans and Polish borderlanders. Classes are provided for borderguards to learn Polish, German and English so they can improve communication with each other and with travelers crossing the border. (Interview 27, July 2007).

Today the language of choice when communicating across the border depends on who is involved in the conversation. Officials and business people rely on both English and German to communicate, while Polish is used less often. The younger generation of Polish officials and students were more likely to use English while the older generation was more likely to use German. Meanwhile, government officials with whom I spoke, in Kłodawa and employees of Collegium Polonicum in Ślubice admitted communicating most often in English or German when interacting with their German counterparts. Another much younger, elected official in Kłodawa also admitted that to communicate with his German counterparts he most often relied on English (Interview 17, June 2007). And, although most of the Polish employees at Collegium Polonicum speak German, one librarian who had moved to Ślubice for the position, said she communicates in English when she needs to speak with her German counterparts at the University of Viadrina (Interview 10, July 2007). English is viewed as a neutral language for communication with Germans, since both sides were using a second language. The use of English allowed Poles to overcome historical animosities towards interacting with Germans by avoiding the use of German, which for some remains associated with the harsh German occupation of Poland during World War II and yet older attempts at cultural dominance by the Germans (Interview 9 and 17, July 2007).

Whereas the language barrier at times hinders cross-border cooperation, it appears that policies to encourage multilingualism and the availability of translators are bolstering efforts to create a multilingual borderland. EU standards regarding the communication between countries using different languages calls for all documents to be translated into the languages of all participating member nations. Along the Polish-German border every document such as project

reports, information pamphlets and tourism brochures are published in German and Polish and sometimes in English as well. The websites for the euro-regions along the Polish-German border are maintained in Polish, German and with a bit less information available, in English. (For example the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region website <http://www.euroregion-viadrina.pl/index.php> can be viewed in all three languages.) Organizations receiving funding from the Pro Viadrina Euro-Region for projects raising cultural awareness between Germans and Polish borderlanders publish advertisements in both languages and have a translator present for the event (Interview 17, July 2007 and Interview 24, December 2007). The owner of the art gallery in Słubice affirmed that she always has a translator present at workshops for Polish and German students (Interview 20, December 2007). The organizer of the monthly lectures at the German-Polish Senior Academy, alternately presented in German and Polish, described the eagerness of older Germans and Polish borderlanders to communicate with each other, making translators in high demand at these events (Interview 24, December 2007).

### **5.2.3 Importance of the German Language in the Polish Borderland**

German was the dominate language used in interactions between German customers and Polish shop owners, vendors and hairdressers in Słubice. Store fronts trying to attract German customers from across the border all had signs advertising the types of goods or services being sold in both German and Polish and the prices in euros and złoty (Figure 5.4 and 5.5). German customers were able to communicate in German when shopping, getting their hair done or



Figure 5.4 Sign advertising, in Polish and German, products sold at the pet store in Ślubice



Figure 5.5 Advertisements on the store window in Ślubice, in Polish and German

Source: Karina Gasiorowska, 2007.

seeking other services in Poland. A few vendors at the bazaar complained that German shoppers in Poland assume Polish people will speak German, but conversely they also expect Polish people who come to Germany to speak German there as well (Interview 30, December 2007). Nonetheless, I did observe a few German students attempting to speak at least some Polish when in Słubice.

While the use of the German language on buildings and signs was clearly a marketing strategy which drew German consumers across the border, German reciprocation was less evident. In the summer of 2006 in a Frankfurt-Oder grocery store I observed the Polish word *zapraszamy* (welcome) on the store wall—a small effort to attract Polish shoppers, but much less of an effort than is made in Poland to appeal to German shoppers. As mentioned earlier several life long residents of Słubice noted recent improvements in the ways Polish consumers were treated in Frankfurt-Oder. And in the future, as Polish citizens continue to improve their economic standing, the use of the Polish language may become more visible in Frankfurt-Oder. From my own observations over the three years I traveled through the area, I have definitely seen an increase in Polish signage in Frankfurt-Oder. A greeting in a grocery store, a map of the region along the Oder River in both languages, a marketing firm advertising in Polish and German (Figure 5.6) as well as a store for baby supplies with advertisements posted on the window in Polish were all examples of the usage of the Polish language in Frankfurt-Oder.

From the surveys it was clear that learning German was important for many borderlanders and 83 percent of the survey participants believed learning German was important for economic success. When asked to rank how important, 35 percent selected “very important” and another 35 percent selected “important” (Figure 5.7).



Figure 5.6 Sign in Frankfurt-Oder advertising marketing services in German and Polish for individuals and businesses in the region

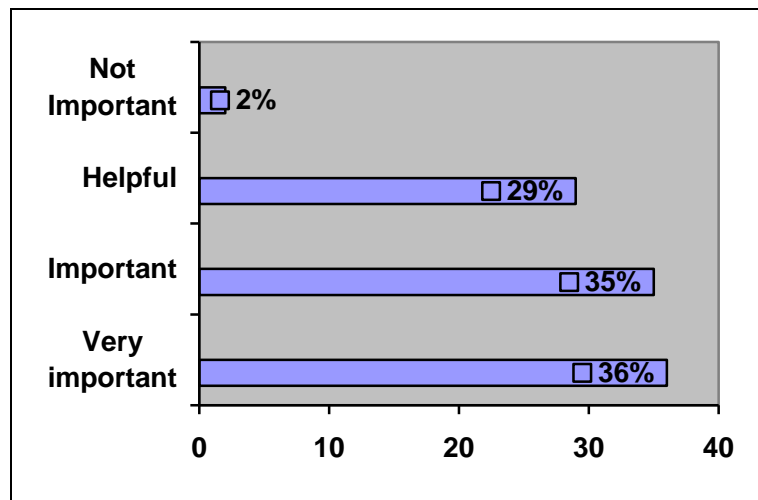


Figure 5.7 Survey item: How important is knowledge of German for economic success in the Polish Borderland?

\*The percentage of responses to each of the survey questions were rounded up, therefore the total does not equal one hundred percent



One interviewee who is a parent described to me the importance she placed on her child attending the German-Polish kindergarten in Frankfurt-Oder--a school so popular that it has a waiting list. The young mother explained that she had chosen to put her young son on the list despite the fact that others had warned her against sending children to the kindergarten because the Polish and German children do not interact with each other. —The children segregate themselves and the instruction is in German except for the Polish song the kindergartners learn. But I still want my child to get a German education. I think he will be more successful economically if he learns German and English” (Interview 11, July 2007). The mother hoped her child would continue his education in Frankfurt-Oder, by which time plans to build a joint German-Polish elementary school, might be completed.

Not everyone in Słubice believed learning German was more important than English. Some of the University students in Szczecin believed more opportunities were available for those who learned English than German. One interviewee supported her preference for English with a story about a friend struggling in the job market. —My friend was trying to find a job with a German language degree but everyone wanted someone who speaks English too” (Interview 13, July 2007). Another interviewee working at Collegium Polonicum thought that today in Poland there are more employment opportunities available for those with English language skills than German language skills,” (Interview 7, July 2007).

Many European universities require students today to learn English, in addition to other languages (Reid, 2004), part of a trend making English the *lingua franca* of Europe. The University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder offers courses in German and English as well as Polish. Collegium Polonicum also provides courses in English, Polish and German. So both universities

offer the opportunity to learn their neighbor's language as well as English. During a group tour of the University of Viadrina an employee of the administration office at the University complained that despite all the opportunities to learn Polish—the new language labs, and the proximity to native Polish speakers,— many German students failed to learn Polish. He claimed only a bare minority of German students really learned Polish (Interview 25, July 2006). The borderlanders seemed to agree that Polish was a language much more difficult for Germans to learn than was German for Poles to learn. Despite the greater economic advantage to Poles who learn German and English, some Germans do choose to invest in learning Polish. In fact, a Polish student attending the German University in Frankfurt-Oder for the summer expressed her frustration that she was unable to find anyone to help her practice her German because so many wanted to practice their Polish. “I have not made many German friends, but when I do they all speak Polish quite well, so we speak in Polish or English” (Interview 22, July 2007).

While learning German remains important in the province of Lubuskie, it is becoming increasingly common for borderlanders to communicate with their neighbors in English or even at times in Polish. This may be evidence of a slowly emerging multicultural community in the borderland.

### **5.3. Borderlanders' Opinions of Integration and Cooperation Across the Polish-German Border**

Cooperation across the Polish-German border takes many different forms including, but not limited too, local elected officials and bureaucrats collaborating on development projects,

borderguards working together to monitor smuggling and illicit activities, universities collaborating in the education of the youth and the production of knowledge, and cross-border networks based on informal family networks. Euro-regions and local organizations promote further integration along the border by financially supporting projects that contribute to development on both sides of the border, thus challenging the economic and mental barriers to cooperation between borderlanders. In this section I discuss public attitudes toward cross-border cooperation between local officials, borderguards and organizations as well as the predictions by borderlanders on the future of integration along the Polish-German border. The residents' knowledge of euro-regions and their opinions toward the contributions of projects funded by these institutions toward cross-border cooperation is discussed in order to understand borderlanders support for regional integration.

### **5.3.1 Borderlanders' Views of the Changes in the Levels of Cooperation along the Polish-German Border**

Local officials and business men have long complained that the physical border between Poland and Germany disrupts economic growth for the entire region. Once Poland officially became a member of the EU in 2004, policies were implemented to overcome the reputation of the border as a formidable barrier and to earn the region a new status as a friendly border. Did Polish borderlanders feel there had indeed been an improvement in cooperation between Polish and German borderlanders? How much cooperation did Polish borderlanders believe there should be across the Polish-German border?

When questioned about how interactions between Polish and German borderguards had changed since Poland joined the EU in 2004, 79 percent believed there had been an improvement

in cooperation between Polish and German borderguards. There was overwhelming support for this development, with 84 percent of participants agreeing Polish and German borderguards should cooperate with one another. The cooperation between the borderguards and their contributions to making the border crossing experience more pleasant were mentioned by several interviewees. One interviewee in Słubice described the amiable atmosphere at the border in 2007. —They (Polish and German borderguards) often joke with each other and appear to cooperate well with one another (Interview 8, July 2007). Borderlanders also believed borderguards had developed more trust in the judgments of their counterparts. Another participant recalled a situation in which a German borderguard carefully examined a passport and passed it along to his Polish counterpart who trusting the judgment of the German guard, simply glanced at the passport before allowing the individual to pass (Interview 5, July 2007). Only 2 percent of the participants in the survey believed cooperation between the Polish and German borderguards had worsened since Poland joined the EU.

The increased cooperation experienced between Polish and German borderguards, however, did not appear to apply to other Polish-German organizations. Only 32 percent of those surveyed believed that there had actually been an increase in cooperation between Polish and German borderlanders in sporting events, clubs, community projects, news media and other organizations since Poland became an official member of the EU in 2004. The response may reflect a slow down in the implementation of new cross-border projects since Poland's official entrance into the EU. One Polish student studying at the University of Viadrina and Collegium Polonicum believed people had lost interest in attending German-Polish festivals. He argued that in his experience the number of parties between Polish and German students and the amount of

residents of Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder participating in cross-cultural events were decreasing since 2004, despite an increase in advertisements of such events on both sides of the border (Interview 14, July 2007).

Perspectives of the improvement in the cooperation between the German and Polish governments were also low with only 32 percent of respondents believing cooperation had improved since Poland's entrance into the EU. I failed in the question to specify between local and national government cooperation. One participant from Kłodawa explained to me how he believed that while the cooperation between Polish and German national governments was not good, people living in the border region would continue to cooperate across the border. He blamed the media for focusing on bad relations between Germans and Poles in its coverage of the region instead of enhancing cross-border cooperation by covering more positive stories of successful collaboration (Interview 15, July 2007). In support of his claim days before the scheduled removal of custom points along the Polish-German border the Polish newspaper *Gazeta Wyborcza* ran an article titled, *German Police Fear Poland in the Schengen*, (*Niemiecka Policja Boi się Polski w Schengen*.) This article reported on an anti-Polish and anti-European protest by German borderguards in Frankfurt-Oder a few weeks prior to the removal of custom points along the border (Bart, 2007). Meanwhile in the local newspaper *Gazeta Lubuska*, coverage of the same event in an article entitled, *Ślubice [and] Frankfurt Oder, Protest Tied to German Police*, (*Ślubice, Frankfurt nad Odrą, Protest Związkowców z Niemieckiej Policji*) focused on the borderguards' fears of job losses or forced relocations to explain why German borderguards were claiming that Poland, was not yet prepared to join the Schengen Agreement (Gazeta Lubuskie, 2007).

Participants in the survey were asked to predict the types of cooperation and mobility they believed should be found along the border in 2010 by choosing from a scale between 1 (I strongly agree) to 5 (I strongly disagree) to answer five questions. Among the questions were inquiries about their opinions on the relationship between the future of the Polish-German border integration and the entire country's integration westward. More specifically, they were asked if they felt it should be easier to cross the Polish-German border than the Polish-Ukraine border. Since Poland's entrance into the EU, restrictions on the mobility across the Polish-German border have been relaxed while controls along Poland's eastern borders with Ukraine, Belarus and (Kaliningrad) Russia have been increased, temporarily slowing cross-border trade in eastern Poland. As the Polish-German border gradually becomes more open Poland's eastern border with Ukraine and Belarusian has slowly been reinforced with increased patrols by borderguards and the recent instatement of visas to enter Poland. Citizens from these countries will have to buy visas costing between 35 to 60 euros to enter Poland (Prazcyk, 2007). Despite the fact that under the Soviet regime Poland and Ukraine had strong cross-border ties and shared many cultural and linguistic similarities making basic communication between the two easier than between Germans and Poles, this border will now be more difficult to cross.

In response to the question; Should it be easier to cross the Polish-German border than the Polish/Ukraine Border?, eighty-one percent agreed with this statement, only 7 percent disagreed and 12 percent declined to comment. Similarly, when asked if cooperation should be greater across the Polish-German border than the Polish-Ukraine border 85 percent completely agreed, 9 percent did not agree with this statement and 6 percent had no opinion (Figure 5.8).

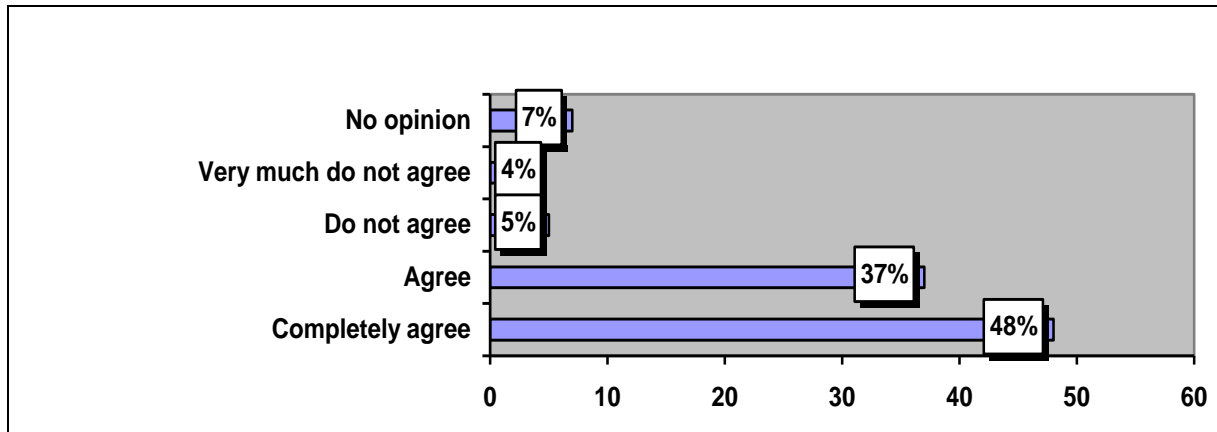


Figure 5.8 Survey item: Should cooperation be greater across the Polish-German Border than the Polish-Ukraine Border?

\*The percentage of responses to each of the survey questions were rounded up, therefore the total does not equal one hundred percent

One respondent in Slubice to whom the survey questions were being read, responded keenly that mobility and cooperation should be much greater along the Polish-German border than the Polish-Ukrainian border. He added that at the moment it is much more important that Poland looks west concentrating on entering the European Union and improving relations with Germany. Only later when the position of Poland in the EU has been assured should the country worry about improving their relationships with the countries to the east. Smiling and waving his hands he added that the Polish-Ukraine border is very far away, we have to worry about improving the situation here (in Slubice) first before we can worry about them (Interview 23, December 2007). His comment exemplified a similar mindset of officials in the borderland that the short term goals of communities in the borderland should be concerned with reestablishing Poland's position in the EU by improving ties with Germany

### **5.3.2 Borderlanders' Knowledge of Contributions of Euro-Regions to Regional Development**

Economic inequalities are divisive factors and as discussed earlier in this chapter they help to maintain a division between Polish and German borderlanders which at times can lead to social tensions that generate theft and violent crimes. Supporters of the concept of euro-regions claim they help to build cross-border networks that benefit both Polish and German borderlanders, providing incentives for cooperation rather than cutthroat competition. The following is an explanation given to me by a former employee of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region on the role euro-regions play in creating cooperative associations between Polish and German borderlanders. He argued the relationships between Polish service workers (in his example hairdressers) and their German clients who develop informal bottom up contacts may be fraught with tensions. A hairdresser in Ślubice, who is trying to make as much as possible from the German clients, may charge them more than the Polish clients. Meanwhile the German customer who comes to Ślubice in search of bargain-rate services and goods is seeking to pay as little as possible. The result may be negative feelings and disdain on both sides (Interview 19, October 2007).

The removal of custom checkpoints along the border and the eventual adoption of the Euro in Poland will cause job losses among those who have thrived from the cross-border trade and currency disparities that could lead to negative opinions of EU integration. In November of 2007 taxi drivers (Figure 5.9), until now happy with the amount of money they had been able to earn transporting German shoppers to the bazaar, once they reached the Polish side, were preparing to retire or seek other employment, since once custom points were removed the





Figure 5.9 Taxi drivers in Ślubice waiting for customers to cross the border

Source: Karina Gasiórowska, 2007.

Germans would no longer cross the border by foot to avoid the long lines and then take a taxi to shopping centers (Interview 26, December 2007). The former employee of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region claimed euro-regions are providing the incentives to move individuals from these competitive exchanges to more sustainable cooperative development projects that will contribute to improvements in the standard of living on both sides of the border. (Interview 19, October 2007). Euro-region funds are designed to encourage continued cooperation and collaboration between borderlanders so that mutual benefits accrue to organizations in Polish and German towns and encourage further cooperation. To receive money a Polish individual or organization and a German individual or organization must together submit a project proposal to the local euro-region office.

According to the citizens involved, grants are distributed to those proposals which clearly show how the money will be used to equally benefit both Polish and German border

communities (Interview 19, October 2007). Information on the major projects that have received funding from the Pro-Europa Viadrina Euro-Region and the necessary forms to apply for funding from the euro-region can be accessed on the official website, *Stowarzyszenie Gmin Polskich Euroregionu "Pro Europa Viadrina"* (<http://euroregion-viadrina.pl/bip/index.php?page=dokumenty-statutowe>).

Interviewees mentioned several ways in which funding from the Pro Viadrina Euro-Region was being used in Lubuskie. A town official in Kłodawa described the recent success of a grant written with the German partner town of Seelow, which resulted in new fire trucks for both towns (Interview 18, July 2007). The life long resident of Słubice and owner of the town gallery who was receiving funding for her gallery from the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region based on the success of her grant writing credited the financial benefits euro-regions provided for the increased cooperation across the border. In addition to her funding from the euro-region she also was relying on several other sources of funding to support her gallery, such as the Foundation for Polish and German Cooperation and the Foundation for German-Polish Youth (Interview 20, December 2007). Another way euro-regions support cooperation is by funding social events where Polish and German business people and elected officials can interact and establish contacts for future projects. An official in Kłodawa agreed EU funding had encouraged his town to cooperate with the German town of Seelow. He added, however, that over time EU financial support would no longer be needed to maintain regional cooperation. His position was that, "once Germans realized Poles did not want to take anything from them and that a cooperative relationship had reciprocal benefits for both, the cooperative relationship would continue and even grow without EU funding," (Interview 15, July 2007).

The benefit of membership in the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Regions and Euro Twin City Project for the town of Ślubice is quite obvious to a new visitor to the region. Immediately upon crossing the bridge into Poland from Frankfurt-Oder one is greeted by EU flags flying in the miniature central square and a large signpost marking the Pro-Europa Viadrina Euro-Region. Signs are posted on the new student dorms, the new Collegium Polonicum building and Ślubice's railroad station acknowledging the contributions of EU funding for the university and infrastructure development projects. EU funded projects are so well marked that some of the more cynical participants complained more EU funds should be directed towards projects that create jobs than signs (Interview 12 and 13, July 2007). These comments reflect a frequent criticism of the large EU bureaucracy by citizens of other member countries mentioned by Panebianco (2004) in her research on European identity among Italians.

Everyone I interviewed in Ślubice had heard of the term euro-region before which was not surprising since most of the participants in my interviews were employed at the university in Ślubice or in an occupation involving interactions with Germans. When asked to define a euro-region, most had a good understanding. The most common response was —funding projects which encourage some kind of cooperation between Polish and Germans along the border” (Interview 7, July 2007). Participants either recalled reading articles in the paper about projects or events funded by the euro-region (Interview 2 and 8, July 2007) or knew someone who was involved in some type of cultural cross-border project. The most frequently mentioned project was the German-Polish kindergarten and the completion of the new university in Ślubice, Collegium Polonicum.

The survey results supported what I found in my interviews, which is that a majority were familiar with the term euro-region but beyond that they had limited knowledge of the workings of the institution. A majority of people, 62 percent, claimed to have heard the term euro-region before, while 38 percent had not. However when asked to provide more information such as the name of the euro-regions along the Polish-German border or to define the term euro-region, only a minority could accurately answer these questions. Seventy percent were not able to recall even one name of the four euro-regions along the Polish-German border. Fifty-nine percent were unable to define the term euro-region. Of the 38 percent who were able to correctly define the term, 19 percent associated the term euro-region with cross-border cooperation and 14 percent related the term with cooperation and regional development projects. Only 9 percent of those surveyed linked the term specifically with support for cross-border cooperation and development projects that receive financial support from the EU (Figure 5.10). Of the lifelong borderlanders

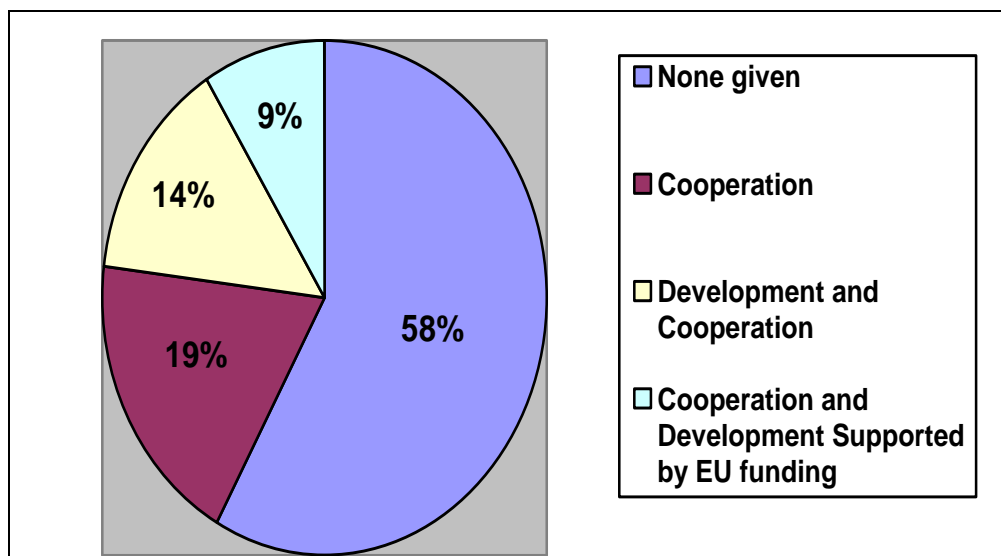


Figure 5.10 Survey item: Borderlanders' definitions of Euro-Regions

with whom I spoke, those not directly benefiting from euro-regions were more cynical about what euro-regions actually did. One participant responded with a cynical tone of voice to my question about what a euro-region was in the following manner, —Eurøregion—that means people work together, but I am not aware of what they actually do,” (Interview 11, July 2007). Lack of knowledge of how euro-regions function is more the result of a lack of interest among ordinary citizens in the bureaucracy of the EU, than a lack of transparency, as is illustrated in the following quote from a young lady in Ślubice. —Yes I have heard of euro-regions. Something was in the paper the other day about a function supported by the euro-region. But it doesn’t interest me, so I didn’t read the article” (Interview 8, July 2007). Another participant argued the money contributed to Ślubice from euro-regions was a political act with out any purpose for ordinary citizens. She argued the money went to cultural projects that were not really helping people, as opposed to projects which she would have preferred that created jobs (Interview 4, July 2007).

#### **5.4. Polish Opinions of the Cooperation between Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder**

Ślubice’s location along the Polish-German border, the presence of a busy customs checkpoint within the urban area and the involvement by local leaders in cross-border collaboration, made it an ideal place to study the opinions of Polish citizens about the increasing cooperation between the Polish and German borderlands. Ślubice, formerly Dammvorstadt a suburb of Frankfurt-Oder until 1946, was part of the territory transferred to Polish administration following the signing of the Oder-Neisse Peace Agreement (Garand, 2002). Ślubice is one of three euro-cities found along the German-Polish border. Prior to 1945, Ślubice and Frankfurt-

Oder together with two other euro-cities, Guben-Gubin and Görlitz-Zgorzelec (map 3.5) were administratively unified German cities. Today they are creating a new identity as they develop new roles as euro-cities, sites of economic and legislative cooperation bound together by EU funding.

The town of Słubice located on a major axis of transportation Highway A2 and E 30 connecting Berlin, Poznan and Warsaw (map 3.5) became a well know attraction among Poles and Germans as a center of trade in the early 1990s. Phrases such as the ‘Polish El Paso,’ ‘The Republic of Słubice’ and ‘the Gate to Europe,’ were coined by the Polish media to describe the town (Lisiecki, 2000). The transformation of the town into a regional growth pole in the early 1990s was not without its problems. The border guards struggled to control illegal activity such as smuggling, prostitution and undocumented immigration to Germany from places east of Poland (Interview 27, July 2006). Both Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder struggled with high unemployment, unruly youths and divisions between Polish and Germans. Public policy decision making has played an active role in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder initiating cross-border activities and cooperation aimed at alleviating the problems suffered by both sides (Lisiecki, 2000). The decision to reopen the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder and to build a new university in Słubice further facilitated cooperation between the two cities by creating an environment where Polish and German students can acquire a common education.

The bulk of information discussed in this section was gathered through the use of photo triggers (discussed in Chapter Four) at the beginning of semi-structured interviews with residents of Słubice. The purpose was to encourage participants to discuss an image representative of life in Słubice without imposing the researcher’s own viewpoints. Therefore participants were

encouraged to talk about what they believed was significant concerning the photo. The images I used included the bridge connecting Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder, historical monuments on both sides of the border, shops in Ślubice with German signage, the bazaar in Ślubice and the universities on both sides of the border. Each of these images were used to promote a discussion of interviewees attitudes toward the removal of restrictions on crossing the physical border and ideas on what the future of cross-border cooperation between Polish and German citizens within the EU was likely to be.

#### **5.4.1 The Bridge as an Integrating Feature for Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder**

Custom checkpoints are the landscape feature that dominates the mental image of the border, most likely because they reinforce the presence and authority of political boundaries (Migdal, 2004). The 4 lane road and pedestrian bridge crossing the Oder River links the German city of Frankfurt-Oder with the Polish town of Ślubice. The bridge was coined the ‘\_Friendship Bridge,’ during the cooperation in 1970s between Eastern Germany and Poland (Allen, 2003) in the 1990s the bridge became known as ‘\_the Bridge between Western and Eastern Europe’ (Lisiecki, 2000). In 2000 the bridge was rebuilt with EU funding and expanded into a four lane bridge with a single large customs building shared by Polish and German borderguards. The larger facility was necessary to accommodate the high volume of cars crossing the border daily. Only the arch from the former ‘\_Friendship Bridge’ between Eastern Germany and Poland remained (Interview 14, July 2007). The bridge was a popular symbol found on publications of organizations promoting cooperation between Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder, such as the Ślubfurt website as it was in July of 2006 and the Ślubice information pamphlet I received from the city of Ślubice in December of 2007. The image of the bridge was used metaphorically in material

promoting Ślubice to symbolize the cultural bridges residents of the town were building in cooperation with their German neighbors. The bridge itself was the center of celebrations between the two communities marking Poland's official entrance into the European Union in 2004 (Interview 14, July 2007) and again celebrating the official entrance of Poland into the Schengen Agreement in 2007.

When shown an image of the bridge (Figures 5.11 and 5.12) local residents, expressing a sense of identification with the bridge, referred to it as —our bridge” (Interview 8, July 2007). The bridge was described not only as a symbol of division; —marking the road home” (Interview 3, July 2007) but also of cooperation, —a bridge between the two cities” (Interview 5, July 2007). One participant explained that she connects Ślubice with the image of bridges (Interview 11, July 2007). Many participants also connected the bridge with long lines (Interview 1, 2, 3, 5, 10, 12, 13, 2007) which, as of December 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007 following the elimination of custom checks at the border, are no longer part of the border crossing experience.

Well aware of the importance of language for erasing mental borders, an employee of the Ślubice town government discussed with me the need to come up with new words to talk about the border so not to focus on the divisive functions but rather on the unifying task of the border as a meeting place of two different cultures (Interview 29, December 2007). Employees at Collegium Polonicum were also constructing new expressions to describe the increasing connections joining the two communities. The expression —we are going to Frankfurt,” as opposed to saying —we are going to Germany,” (Interview 10, July 2007) was meant to downplay the experience of crossing a national border and to express the closeness they felt to Frankfurt-Oder.





Figure 5.11 The Bridge Connecting Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder



Figure 5.12 View from Słubice looking into Frankfurt-Oder

#### **5.4.2 The Presence of the Past in the Polish Borderland**

Despite all the trappings of cooperation and exchange, the mental border between Polish and German borderlanders is buttressed by historical distrust and economic disparities. Several scholars of recent Polish-German cooperation remarked that for true cooperation to develop between Poland and Germany these two barriers must be overcome (Asher 2005, Durrschmidt and Matthiesen 2002, Stryjakiewicz 1998, Krätke 1998). In order to better understand how the influence of history was affecting relations between the residents of Slubice and their German neighbors just three years after Poland joined the EU and just four months before the removal of border checkpoints, I incorporated into my interviews two images of historical monuments in Slubice and Frankfurt-Oder (Figure 5.13 and 5.14). On both sides of the border one can find monuments that remain as reminders of the regions shared communist past, built during the period when both East Germany and Poland were a part of the Soviet sphere of influence. A Polish anthropologist I interviewed claimed communist era monuments are generally ignored by much of the population in Poland (Interview 21, October 2007) and the citizens of Slubice were no exception.

The first photo I showed participants was of the peace bell, a gift from the Russians to celebrate the official friendship between East Germany and Poland (Interview 25, July 2006). A few of the participants who had been students at the University of Viadrina, recognized the peace bell and could locate it in Frankfurt-Oder along the river bank, but at a distance away from the restored riverfront (Interview 6, 11, July 2007). One former student at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder now working at Collegium Polonicum had some knowledge of the bell based on a history class she had taken at the University of Viadrina. She however believed most people



Figure 5.13 The Peace Bell in Frankfurt-Oder



Figure 5.14 A statue in honor of World War II Soviet soldiers in Slubice

living in Słubice would not know what the bell symbolizes (Interview 11, July 2007). And she was correct, as no else whom I interviewed was able to share more information about the history of the bell, why it had been built, or its purpose. All the other participants, including two life long residents of Słubice, had no knowledge of the bells presence in the region (Interview 5, 8, 12, 13, July 2007).

The second photo shown during my interviews was a statue dedicated to Russian soldiers who the Soviet Union claimed liberated the region from the Nazis. This image prompted a bitmore discussion than the peace bell, as people were more familiar with the monument. The statue located in the center of a large open square was a meeting place and a gathering point for celebrations such as the *Święto Miasto* (the City Holiday) that celebrates the anniversary of Słubice (Interview 3, July 2007). The monument appeared to be largely neglected with the writing no longer legible on the plaque. One participant reinforced my initial observation with the following comment, —~~may~~ maybe one day the statue will be torn down but today it is ignored. There are lots of similar statues all over the country,” (Interview 7, July 2007). The statue located on *Ulica Bohaterski* (Heroes Street) in the center of Słubice prompted one participant to tell me about the remains in the region of Polish army bunkers used by a unit stationed in Słubice during the 1950s and 1960s (Interview 14, July 2007). Another resident who lived near the statute discussed plans for its removal and renovation in the square (Interview 11, July 2007).

The statue was not completely forgotten by all as I was told people do still leave flowers occasionally at the base of the statue on holidays (Interview 5 and 6, July 2007). For one participant the statue reminded her of the destruction caused by World War II, which she claimed both countries still remember making it difficult for people to view the border as anything but a

division between Polish and German citizens (Interview 10, July 2007). Another participant commented that “the statue is part of our history,” and should not be forgotten. In her statement she illustrates the influence that memories of the war still have for the younger generation (Interview 7, July 2007).

#### **5.4.3 Ślubice as a Market for German Shoppers**

The roads Ślubice Street, *Subicer Straße* in German and *Ślubice Ulica* in Polish, both lead to the bridge that connects the two communities. On the Polish side of border, the road is better known by the popular name of *Zigarette Strauß*, German for Cigarette Street, because of the large number of cigarette stores in Ślubice frequented by German clientele. Because place names are one way in which people attach meanings to locations, the use of the term in both cities reflects the shared meaning assigned to Ślubice Street, as a space for German shoppers. German students frequently described Ślubice as a big shopping market for Germans, where one can buy cheap cigarettes and alcohol. In addition one can find numerous hair salons, pharmacies, money exchange counters, restaurants, and grocery stores, all with German and Polish signage in the windows. The sign on the windows of a shop in Figure 5.15 located on the bank of the Oder River in Ślubice advertises pharmacies and beauty salons in Poland. In Figure 5.16 two farmers have set up an informal fruit stand on the edge of the bridge leading to Frankfurt-Oder in order to be the first to have contact with German shoppers. In 2001, Ślubice had among the highest number of buildings for services and trade per one thousand residents in the country (Bronowska, 2003).

The Bazaar in Ślubice well known through out Poland and Germany during the 1990s remains a major source of revenue for the town of Ślubice. Money was diverted by the town's



Figure 5.15 The first visible advertisements upon crossing the Border into Słubice



Figure 5.16 Venders selling fruit on the bridge leading to Frankfurt-Oder

Source: Karina Gasiórowska, 2007.

government from a project designed to remodel *Bohaterski Plac* (Heroes Square) to instead rebuilding the bazaar after an accidental fire burned it down in 2006 (Interview 11, July 2007). The website of the Polish radio station, Radio Zet, ran an ad for several months in the fall of 2007 asking for donations to help rebuild the bazaar. Figure 5.17 shows the temporary infrastructure sheltering the vendors with the remains of the former bazaar in the background.

The vendors working in the bazaar in Słubice were predominately Polish but also present were sellers from Bulgaria and Vietnam. The goods they sold were from Poland, China, Turkey and Germany (Interview 30, December 2007). Only one interviewee in Słubice admitted shopping at the bazaar (Interview 8, July 2007). Instead I was frequently told only Germans shop in the bazaar (Interview 6 and 10, July 2007). The reasons Polish citizens gave for not shopping at the bazaar were that the goods were too expensive and not of very high quality. One resident of Słubice complained about the high cost of the cheap goods at the bazaar in Słubice. —Goods should be cheap in a bazaar but I can buy things cheaper elsewhere in Słubice than at the



Figure 5.17 The Temporary Bazaar in Słubice

bazaar.” (Interview, 5, July 2007). Another interviewee expressed puzzlement as to why Germans would come to buy such goods in Słubice. —“I am not sure why Germans travel from Berlin to buy things here when they have so many better things in Germany” (Interview 7, July 2007).

In fact the long term sustainability of the bazaar is questionable. Today the bazaar must also compete with bazaars on the German side of the border and along other border crossing points in Poland such as along the Świnoujście-Ahlbeck border checkpoint illustrated by images in Chapter Three. The vendors in Słubice complained about the competition from bazaars opening up on the German side (Interview 30, December 2007). They believed Słubice was no longer the attractive place for trade it once was. One vendor commented that —“when Poland implements the Euro currency it will be even less attractive” (Interview 30, December 2007). Taxi drivers who line up along the entrance into Poland to transport German shoppers to the bazaar were also not optimistic about their future employment. One taxi driver claimed to have made enough in a few months of work in the early 1990s to build a house in Poland (Interview 26, December 2007). Today, due to the drastic decrease in profitability from the 1990s, the taxi drivers were preparing to retire once custom check points were eliminated in December 2007. . Many borderlanders who had earned money when the cross border trade first began to thrive invested their profits in stores they opened in Słubice (Interview 26, December 2007). While workers at the bazaar and taxi drivers were doubtful of the future, one business man from Warsaw who had recently opened a sunglass shop close to the border had a more positive outlook towards Słubice’s economic future (Interview 31, December 2007).



Many citizens complained that the officials were more interested in attracting German shoppers than providing amenities for local residents. Participants who did not own or work for a service business in Słubice often complained that the main orientation of the town government was to attract German consumers which they did by investing money in building new stores for German shoppers, meanwhile failing to invest in infrastructure for the relaxation and enjoyment of local citizens. To support their argument participants pointed out the differences between Słubice's waterfront (a dirt path with a few benches) and the well developed waterfront on the German side (paved with benches art work and restaurants) (Interview 12, 13, 22 July 2007). A life long resident of Słubice joked, —I don't need another big supermarket, but on the plus side there are lots options for getting my hair done” (Interview 13, July 2007). Residents complained of a lack of cultural events illustrated by the recent termination of the only movie theater in Słubice. Residents now have a choice of watching foreign films with German subtitles in Frankfurt-Oder or traveling to another Polish town (Interviews 6, 4 and 13, July 2007).

#### **5.4.4 Education as an Integrating Force**

James Scott (1998), who has studied transboundary cooperation along the German-Polish border, concluded that for any real cooperation to develop new networks based on trust must be encouraged. The Academy for Polish and German Seniors, a joint collaboration between Collegium Polonicum in Słubice and The University of Viadrina in Frankfurt, is a good example of cross-border network building and the creation of a safe environment where the Polish and German World War II generation can dismantle historical prejudices toward one another. The idea for the academy, which consists mostly of a monthly meeting of German and Polish Senior Citizens, came from an organization of retired Polish and German professors. The purpose of

the organization, as described to me during an interview with one of the organizers, was —~~at~~ create a space where German and Polish people can interact, learning both about the mentality of their neighbors, and how they might be connected with each other” (Interview 24, December 2007). The lectures, held the same time for the last eight years, with the meeting place alternating between the two cities, are advertised in the local newspaper on both sides of the border. Another goal of the academy is to facilitate joint cooperation in understanding the history of the region by having the Germans teach the history of the region before the end of World War II, while the Polish participants educate participants on the current situation in the area. The lectures, given in both Polish and German, now extend beyond regional history covering a wide variety of topics such as cultural celebrations and national customs.

The most important aspect of these meetings however is the creation of a space for Germans and Polish citizens to come together and socialize. The organizer expressed to me that he felt the older generation, both Polish and German, had an obligation to show the younger students how they should behave toward one another. Networks they establish at these meetings begin as equal opportunity exchanges; Germans seeking information about where to buy something in Poland, and Polish citizens looking for similar advice on shopping or jobs in Germany. By creating an environment of friendship and trust, overtime these networks will support more cooperation across the border. Yet, throughout the discussion of how equal and cooperative interactions between Poles and Germans might be encouraged no explicit mention was made of shedding nationalist identities or adopting a new shared European identity in the region.

The most visible outcome of the new cooperation between Poland and Germany is the new University in Poland, Collegium Polonicum (Figure 5.18). The university was built with funding from the EU and Germany, in 1994, just three years after the European University of Viadrina was opened in Frankfurt-Oder (Figure 5.19). Strategically, located only fifty meters from the German University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder. Former students of the University of Viadrina now employed at Collegium Polonicum, with whom I spoke all came to Słubice to learn German, believing the proximity to Germany would provide them with more opportunities to use the language. Former students who had attended both universities identified equally with the image of the University of Viadrina as with the photo of Collegium Polonicum (Interview 3, 6, 11, July 2007). One former student who had mastered the German language expressed feeling equally comfortable on both sides and because she could afford the higher prices had chosen to live in Frankfurt-Oder (Interview 11, July 2007). Another former student recalled her excitement of studying at the University of Viadrina, “a real European University,” (Interview 7, July 2007).

The interaction between Polish and German students is not yet what the university founders had hoped for. Most Polish students if they speak German attend both the University of Viadrina and Collegium Polonicum, but very few German students attend Collegium Polonicum (Interview 11, July 2007). One former Polish student described coming to Słubice for the perceived opportunity to improve her German but found few opportunities to speak with Germans outside of class other than in shops and while taking care of other daily necessities (Interview 7, July 2007). Many described a social environment where the German students from the border crossing, the modern building is a place of collaboration between German and



Figure 5.18 The new Collegium Polonicum building in Ślubice



Figure 5.19 The main building of the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder

Polish professors and students from Słubice, as well as from the Adam Mickiewicz tended to stick together and vice versa. As one student explained —~~he~~ Polish students have parties in the student dorms in Słubice and German students have their discos in Frankfurt-Oder University in (Interview 10, July 2007). To encourage more interaction, the universities have implemented programs such as dorm exchanges—Polish and German students swap dorm rooms across the border. The program seeks to entice German students to take advantage of cheaper dorm prices and opportunities to learn Polish that come with staying in the Polish dorms for a semester (Interview 25, July 2006).

The most common explanation in my interviews for the lack of meaningful interaction between Polish and Germans students was the economic inequality and the historical distrust. For example many of the shops in Germany are too expensive for Polish students (Interview 32, July 2006 and Interview 11, July 2007), meanwhile the German students come to Poland looking for discounts on alcohol and cigarettes (Interview 32 and 38, July 2006). Stereotypes based on historical animosities were the second barrier to interaction. A lifelong resident of Słubice claimed Polish students who came from other regions of Poland brought with them negative stereotypes of Germans, particularly if their family suffered brutality during the war. These students were not always eager to interact socially with German students. She believed these attitudes change after the Polish students from the interior spend some time on the border (Interview 20, December 2007). However prejudices on both sides of the border appear to limit interactions as one student who had spent three months at the border region described feeling —~~more~~ more familiar on the Polish side, because Germans have prejudices toward us (Poles), therefore I do not always feel comfortable on the German side” (Interview 14, July 2007).

Others credited Collegium Polonicum with bringing new life to Słubice and increasing the cooperation between Polish and German borderlanders by creating new cross-cultural activities such as concerts and conferences which brought foreigners to the region (Interview 20, December 2007). Another resident of Słubice described how Słubice has become more open to foreigners since his arrival in 1995. He claimed because of the presence of Collegium Polonicum local people are now used to hearing German, English and French being spoken on the street (Interview 6, July 2007).

#### **5.4.5 The Potential Development of Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder as a Binational Urban Area**

Representatives of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region on August 2006 approved a plan, Viadrina 2007, outlining action for the future development of the region (Pro Europa Viadrina 2007). The stated goals for the coming year included plans for economic growth based on the development of tourism, joint infrastructure improvements and the promotion of an enterprise spirit for small and medium sized businesses. In addition to economic growth the plan includes support for the development of a regional identity and —European thinking” (Pro Europa Viadrina 2007). Today the town visibly supports EU membership by flying EU flags and posting signage identifying the multiple towns with which Słubice has established partnerships and specifying Słubice’s identity as a euro-city, partnered with Frankfurt-Oder (Figure 5.20). The cooperation between Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder—for which the town of Słubice has won several awards prominently displayed in the glass case in the new town hall building—is likely to continue to grow in the immediate future. The building in Figure 5.21 showcases the towns and cities with which Słubice has established a partnership.



Figure 5.20 Sign welcoming travels to Ślubice and identifying towns with which it has established partnerships



Figure 5.21 A building illustrating the coat of arms of Ślubice's and its partner cities in Germany, Mexico and the United States

When I asked what distinguishes Słubice from other towns in Poland, the most frequent answers were that everyone is from somewhere else, followed by Słubice's close location to the German border. Because of the location Polish residents claimed people had put historical animosities behind them and begun to cooperate with German neighbors, much sooner than in other regions. The citizens of Słubice described themselves as more tolerant than other parts of Poland as one component that sets the whole region apart from the rest of the country. In an attempt to understand the extent of the connections between citizens of Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder, at the end of my interviews I asked participants if it is better to describe Słubice as a town by the border or a town on the border. That is to say, did they feel that the level of cross-border ties and cultural exchange between Germans in Frankfurt-Oder and the Polish citizens of Słubice were creating a hybrid culture, in which case the proper term would be *on the border*? Or was Słubice a town *by the border* where Polish people interacted with their German neighbors for economic reasons but remained culturally distinct? The responses I received were mixed, reflecting the diversity of opinions in Słubice. Participants involved with projects funded by the EU, employees at the university in Słubice, members of the town government and hairdressers dependent on German clientele for their business all responded it was a town on the border.

The project of Słubfurt was pointed out by two interviewees as an example of the creation of a shared space between Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder forming a new city *on the border*. Słubfurt, a project developed by Michael Kurzwelny a German artist, is an attempt to create a common sense of place between the residents of Frankfurt-Oder and Słubice (Garand, 2002). The Słubfurt website describes the place as —at the border of two countries that do not exist” (Słubfurt, 2008). The Słubfurt project published a listing of NGOs from Słubice and Frankfurt-



Oder that were cooperating with one another as examples of the fading importance of the border. These included organizations involved in sporting activities, art exchanges as well as help for the unemployed and homeless on both sides of the border. Michel Garand, a researcher at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder, attempted to physically identify the spatial extent of Ślubfurt by collecting mental maps in which participants drew activities they engaged in on both sides of the border. There was some local awareness of the project as the plan to build a mural marking the spatial extent of Ślubfurt was mentioned by both a hairdresser and student in Ślubice with whom I spoke.

The presence of binational cities along cooperative EU borders is an idea explored in the special issues of *GeoJournal* 2001 by the Nijmegen Center for Border Research. In that journal Nicole Ehlers, Jan Buursink and Frans Boekema (2001) discussed the integration of the German and French cities of Kerkrade and Herzogenrath in the 1990s, as a marketing strategy to attract new business to the region. Though the authors concluded that binational cities in Europe remain *imagined cities*, they supported the idea that the future evolution of cooperation in European borderlands could lead to the development of binationality, which could be a solution to border-bound problems such as high unemployment due to the isolation from the country's core economic centers and environmental problems that spill across the human-made border (Ehlers, Buursink and Boekema 2001).

During my final meeting with the students at the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań—those who had traveled with me to Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder and conducted mini surveys there—we discussed the results of their surveys. They were asked if based on their readings of Nicole Ehlers, Jan Buursink and Frans Boekema, their observations in Ślubice and the interviews

they conducted with borderlanders, if they believed Ślubice and Frankfurt-Oder could be defined as a binational city.

The students concluded that despite Ślubice's cooperation with Frankfurt-Oder, the existence of Ślubfurt and joint education opportunities across the border, the area is not an example of a binational city. The reasons they gave to support their argument was the predominant usage of German on both sides as a form of communication. Signs in Ślubice were in German and Polish but in Frankfurt-Oder very few signs in Polish were to be found. The second reason was the economic disparity between German and Polish borderlanders. One student strongly identified with the comments of vendors at the bazaar who described themselves as overwhelmed by the Germans who are in a better economic position. They expressed a lack of interest in anything other than an economic exchange that would benefit them. As the student stated, —Polish people want Germans to come leave money and go back,” (Interview 35, December 2007). The student also expressed the belief that Germans treat Polish people as second class citizens and stated that a binational cooperative future for the town was only possible if they achieved a needed —change in the mentality of western neighbors,” (Interview 35, December 2007) referring to the Germans.

The Polish students all supported the possibility of a binational city on the Polish-German border as one of many possible future scenarios of membership in the European Union. The students agreed with Nicole Ehlers (2001) that the utopian idea of a binational city, though not a true reflection of reality, is better than being stuck in the past and were able to identify signs of integration across the border. As an example of cultural integration one student pointed out the use of bikes among Polish students in Ślubice. She identified the use of bikes in Ślubice as a

German cultural influence arguing Polish university students elsewhere in the country rarely used bikes.

The presence of ethnic groups living on both sides of the border is another possible element of a binational city. Several Polish students do live in Frankfurt-Oder and a few Germans work at the University in Słubice. Because of the depopulation in recent years in Frankfurt-Oder many apartment buildings are left vacant. The presence of a university in the city of Frankfurt-Oder has not helped to repopulate the town as many students after their first year, as well as professors, choose to live in Berlin and commute an hour by train (Interview 26, July 2006). Meanwhile as I learned from my interviews of long-term residents in Słubice, the housing in Słubice is becoming more expensive because there are not enough flats available due to the higher cost of land and the abundance of empty flats in Frankfurt-Oder is slowly encouraging some Polish citizens to live across the border. But for now, many Polish residents of Słubice cannot afford the higher priced housing in Frankfurt-Oder (Interview 11, 2007). Once again economic inequalities continue to reinforce the increasingly porous border.

Van Houtum (2005a) argued the meaning and relevance of borders is linked to people's identity with the space around them. In transitional zones people form multiple layers of identities, which they use in the different cultural situations they encounter daily. The Polish and German Senior Academy and the collaboration between the two universities are examples of local projects building cross-border networks based on personal ties. The Polish students attending classes at both the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder and Collegium Polonicum in Słubice who chose to cross mental borders as well as the physical border between the two cities are the best example of multi-layering of identity in the region. In an interview, a German

Professor teaching at the University of Viadrina, described the border region to me as an ideal place for German students of Polish descent or mixed heritage to thrive (Interview 36, July 2006). The presence of relationships and marriages between students which crossed ethnic lines was not uncommon (Interview 20, December, 2007). Although it does not yet exist, the collaboration between German and Polish universities, the work of Słubfurt NGOs and cooperation between local officials may in the future support the creation of a binational environment along the Polish-German border.

### **5.5. Conclusion**

The preparations that paved the way for Poland's membership into the EU have improved cooperation along the Polish-German border making the experience of crossing the border a much more trivial event. Borderlanders in Lubuskie were pleased with the open border and believed the border between Germany and Poland should be easy to cross, though most borderlanders who responded to my survey were not frequent crossers. Forty-seven percent of the respondents crossed the border only a few times a year, and 22 percent of the respondents crossed a few times a month. The students studying in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder who crossed daily to attend classes were the exception. The main reason for traveling to Germany continues to be shopping, which accounted for a majority of the volume of interactions between German and Polish borderlanders. A smaller number of people were crossing as participants on educational trips and a few Polish borderlanders lived in Frankfurt-Oder and worked in Słubice, both behaviors associated with the type of networks found in an integrated borderland. The inability of Polish borderlanders to legally work in white collar jobs in Germany continues to

limit potential cross-border networks which may in the future develop following a change in the legislation.

Economic inequalities continue to influence relations between communities on both sides of the border. Though Polish borderlanders continue to rely on German bargain shoppers and travel to Germany to earn higher wages, increasingly shops in the German borderland are seeking to attract Polish shoppers and Germans are working semi-skilled jobs in Poland. Overcoming the linguistic barrier requires Polish borderlanders to learn German or English as most communication between Polish and Germans borderlanders continues to be in those languages. Despite the growing use of English in the region, learning German was still considered important by 68 percent of those surveyed for economic success in the borderland. The greater economic incentives for Poles to learn German or English than for Germans to learn Polish is associated with the potential for multilingual Poles to find employment in a German firm with higher wages or the opportunity to work abroad. However one can find increasingly more examples of Germans learning Polish in Słubice and the use of Polish in Frankfurt-Oder.

The establishment of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region provided financial support for cross-border projects such as the creation of a university in Słubice that cooperates with the University in Frankfurt-Oder, which has stimulated new cross-cultural exchanges. Although a majority of respondents (62 percent) were familiar with the term euro-region, far fewer were able to name a euro-region along the Polish-German border or define the term. The respondents from the survey had a positive attitude towards cooperation between Polish and German borderguards, with 84 percent believing Polish and German borderguards should cooperate with one another. The majority of borderlanders also looked favorably upon cooperation between German and

Polish officials. However only 32 percent of the respondents believed there had actually been an increase in cooperation between Polish-German borderlanders.

The aim of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region, as mentioned earlier, is to promote not only cross-border cooperation but also a regional identity based on a shared European mindset. Based on the information residents of Słubice shared with me I concluded that a binational community is not yet present between Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder despite signs of increasing integration between the two communities. To many the bridge joining Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder was a symbol of unification, but residents of Słubice also described the bridge as the road home from Germany, indicating that they still thought of the two countries as quite separate. The complicated history in the region continues to support a divisive mental border. The peace bell as a symbol of East German and Polish cooperation was unknown to the residents of Słubice with whom I spoke, meanwhile the image of the Russian soldier reminded residents of the war and history of antagonisms between Poles and Germans.

Much of the interaction between Germans and Poles in Słubice was based on the perceived economic gains that come from trade. Shopping, continues to be the number one reason for crossing the border. Many interviewees did identify with the images of the bazaar and beauty salons with Polish and German signage in the windows as trademarks of Słubice and were supportive of the jobs created by German tourists. Yet lifelong residents criticized the town's focus on attracting German shoppers rather than investing in the development of cultural or recreational amenities for local residents. Those who directly benefited from cross-border projects financed by the EU had a more favorable attitude toward cross-border cooperation, than those who did not.

University based cooperation was the most successful example of an organization building cross-border ties in the region. The former students I interviewed identified positively with the images of both universities. The cooperation between Collegium Polonicum in Słubice and the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder encourages the assimilation of students within an academic environment in an effort to develop trust networks. Yet despite the efforts to integrate them both Polish and German university students continue in the short-term to segregate themselves based on linguistic and economic differences. The Polish and German Senior Academy, housed in the brand new Collegium Polonicum building, is another example of a successful local project building cross border networks and encouraging emotional ties among long-term Polish and German residents of the region. Once again the aim of this project is to build cross-cultural understanding not to develop a hybrid culture.

Even though residents of Słubice did support the description of Słubice as a town '*on the border*,' language and economic inequalities continue to divide residents of both communities. Europe is steeped in history which is not easily forgotten therefore it is not surprising that although participants eagerly look forward to the non stop trips across the border from Słubice to Berlin they all agreed a mental border would continue to divide Polish and German borderlanders for some time. A multi-cultural environment has not yet emerged in the Polish-German borderland. Individuals move freely across the border but continue to interact differently in the shared spaces between the two communities based on economic differences, linguistic divisions and stereotypes.

## **6. Presence of the Polish-German Border in the Lives of Polish University Students**

Europe's youth are much more mobile than were their parents and they are growing up in an unprecedented era of European integration. European popular culture, new opportunities to work abroad and education programs such as Socrates (an European Union education program encouraging university students to study abroad within Europe) are all encouraging a more mobile and cosmopolitan European youth that some argue is binding the continent together (Reid, 2004). Because the majority of the students I interviewed in Szczecin were born after 1983, they would only have experienced the Polish-German border as an open border. Any knowledge the students had of the Polish-East German border during the communist era they would have gathered from lessons in school or from the stories of older relatives. Learning how the university students in Szczecin relate to their German neighbors differently than the older adults I interviewed in Słubice, allowed me to see if a stronger European identity (as opposed to national identity) was developing among the younger generation living along the Polish-German borderland.

Szczecin, a northern Polish city along the Oder River, is the largest urban area in the region and the seventh largest city in Poland. The city, located approximately 13 kilometers (eight miles) from the Polish-German border, has a rich multicultural and multinational past similar to much of the western borderland in Poland. For most of its history the city, formally known as Stettin, had been part of Germany. Though there were Slavic settlements in this region during the 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> century, by the 12<sup>th</sup> century, the city had a predominantly German population. Despite a brief period under Danish rule (1184-1227) and Swedish rule (1630-



1720), by 1721 Stettin was again a German city (Bialecki, 1992). Following the end of World War II, in July 1945, the city was placed under the authority of the Polish state and for the last 60 years the city has been known as Szczecin, a Polish city. Unlike Słubice, whose population is much smaller than the nearest German city of Frankfurt-Oder, Szczecin is the largest city in the Pomerania Euro-Region, (which includes the Polish province of *Zachodniopomorskie*, the German province of Mecklenburg and the Swedish province of Scania (*Skane*) (Figure 4.5). Szczecin is a port city with the Oder River connecting the city to the Baltic Sea. The nearby German towns and cities across the border, with the exception of Berlin (approximately 95 miles away) are all populated more sparsely. Therefore the relationship between Szczecin and the German communities across the border is much different from the relationship between the smaller town of Slubice and the larger German city of Frankfurt-Oder.

The results discussed in this chapter are based on three group interviews I conducted at the University of Szczecin in October of 2007. The participants were mostly first year anthropology students, 90 percent of whom were between the ages of 19 and 23 years old and lifelong residents of Szczecin. A few of the students were living in nearby towns outside of Szczecin including Goleniów, Nowograd and Kołbaskowo. I designed these interviews with students in Szczecin to get a glimpse into the importance of the border in their daily lives. The students were first asked to draw mental maps, to illustrate their familiarity with the region. Next they were asked a series of questions about their border crossing experiences as well as the presence of the border in their lives. After each question was presented they were given a few minutes to write down their responses before engaging in a class discussion, from which emerged different visions of integration along the Polish-German border.

Each section in this chapter summarizes one of the main themes found in the students' responses to questions about their border crossing experiences. In the first section I discuss students' mental maps of the region. In the second section I summarize students' recollections of their experiences crossing the border and their perspectives on the changes at the border checkpoints. In the third section I describe students' beliefs on why German borderlanders travel to Szczecin and why Polish borderlanders travel to Germany. In the fourth section I explain the students' awareness of Szczecin's membership in the Pomerania Euro-Region. In the fifth and sixth section I elaborate on students' descriptions of both the city of Szczecin and the Polish-German border along with their predictions for the future integration of the region. Together this information allowed me to understand the presence of the border in the students' daily lives, their identification with the region and the potential for a hybrid cultural to emerge in the borderland.

### **6.1 Students Mental Map's of the Region**

The purpose of asking students at the beginning of the group interview to draw a map of the region (locating important landmarks, the places they frequented regularly and the nearby cities that have strong ties with Szczecin) was, first of all, to see what kind of connections the students maintained with Germany. Anssi Paasi (2005) in his study of Swedish elementary school children's mental map of the Swedish-Finnish border had students locate cities in the border region. He found that the majority of Swedish students were unable to name any Finnish urban areas across the border. Therefore from the study Anssi Paasi concluded that because of the students' limited contact across the border they had little knowledge of what was on the other side and their mental map of the region ended abruptly at the Swedish border.

In my study only two students out of ninety drew the Polish-German border on their maps of the region without being asked to do so. Upon being asked to include the border on their maps most correctly placed the border west of Szczecin. However, since the students had originally not included the border on the maps, even though they had been asked to locate the major landmarks in the city and the places they frequented regularly, I concluded the border did not have a significant influence on the every day life of the students.

Next the students were asked to locate important urban areas near Szczecin on their maps of the region. Berlin was the German city that appeared most frequently on their maps as 67 percent listed this city as an important German city near Szczecin. The students were then asked to list other important German cities near Szczecin. After Berlin the students listed the following three cities most frequently; Schwedt (52 kilometers (32 miles away)) Pasewalk (42 kilometers (26 miles)) and Angermünde (79 kilometers (49 miles)). The map in Figure 6.1 illustrates the German cities students identified along with the hometowns of the Polish students not living in Szczecin. Although it is clear that the students' mental maps of the region did extend across the border, not all students included German cities on their map. Twelve percent of the students did not include any German cities either because they were unable to do so or because they did not feel any German cities in the region were important to Szczecin.

## **6.2 Students' Perspectives on the Changes in the Border Crossing Experience**

After completing the mapping exercise the students were next asked to explain how they believe the experience of crossing the Polish-German border has changed in recent years. The

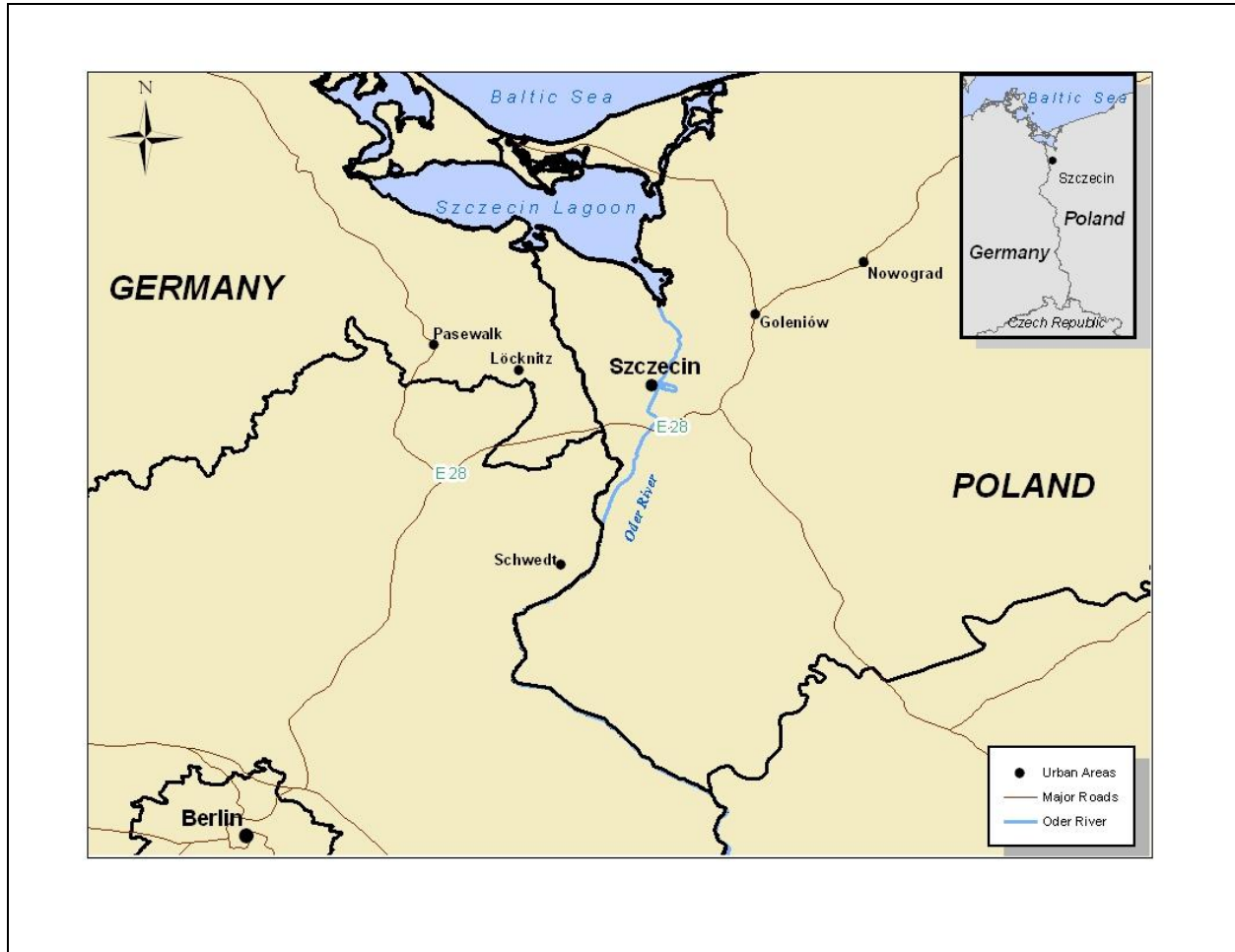


Figure 6.1 Map of the places students included in their mental maps of the region

question was not one all the students could answer. Despite the investment by the EU in improving the roads that cross the border and a resultant increase in cross-border traffic, of the 90 students who participated in the group interviews, 15 percent had never crossed the Polish/German border. One of these students summed it up in the following manner “I never had any need to cross the border” (Student 1, October 2007). The majority of students were not frequent border crossers. Fifty-three percent of the students responded that they crossed the border once every couple of years, to reach the airport in Berlin (a transit point on the way to a third country), to go on a family vacation or to visit with relatives living in Germany. A minority, 26 percent, crossed the Polish-German border once a year. The most frequent crossers, 6 percent of the students, crossed once or twice a month (Figure 6.2).

The first border crossing-experience of the 85 percent of the students who had crossed the border was either as participants in formal summer student exchanges between German and Polish youths in the late 1990s and early 2000s or as vacationers on trips with their parents to

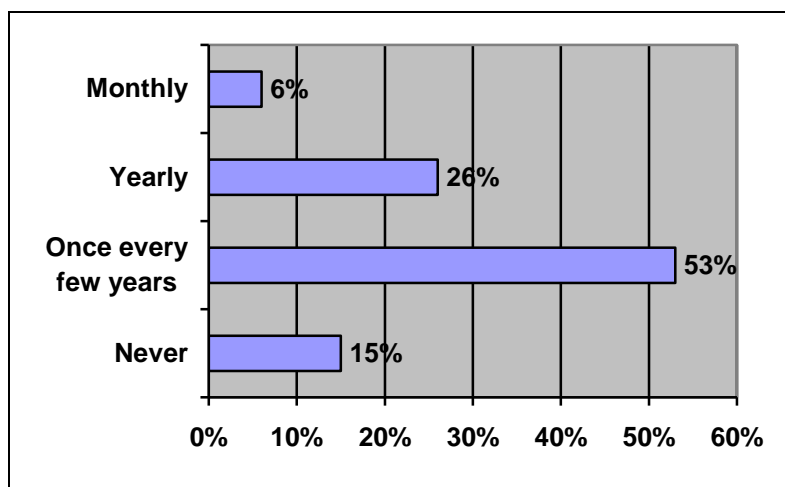


Figure 6.2 The frequency with which Polish Students travel to Germany

visit family in Germany. The most common description of the border given by students who had crossed the border for the first time at a young age with family and again recently encapsulated the new ease of crossing between the two countries. The students emphasized that long lines and searches were a thing of the past, similar to the descriptions of the changes in the border crossing experiences shared with me by participants in Słubice. Many students commented on the ease of only having to show identity cards, eliminating the need to have passports. One student described the changes in the following manner, —the first time I crossed the border was in the 1980s and then again in the early 1990s, [both times] there was a long line at the border, they checked us all carefully, now this does not happen” (Student 76, October 2007). The border control was described by the students as ~~more~~ “more comfortable” (Student 77, October 2007), ~~much~~ “much faster” (Student 78, October 2007) and —without problems” (Student 79, October 2007).

While most of the students who crossed in recent years in their statements described a very relaxed problem-free crossing, students who had crossed in the early 1990s remembered their early crossings of the border as an emotional experience. —The first time I crossed the border I was fourteen years old. We were traveling on vacation. It was a very emotional crossing and very serious” (Student 45, October 2007). Another student recalled how —they checked all our passports and we waited a long time” (Student 46, October 2007). Yet another student summed up how the situation along the border differed depending on traffic and the time of year during when one crossed the border. —You have various experiences. The time I crossed from Schwedt two years ago after shopping they searched our car. But the last time [no date given] it was fine” (Student 47, October 2007). Holidays are an especially busy time when Polish and German travelers cross the border to spend the holiday with family. Despite the

recent friendlier atmosphere than in the past, until December 2007 one could still count on long lines at the border custom checkpoints (Student 56, 2007).

The year 2004 seems to have been a turning point in which the experience of crossing the border became much more pleasant. For the students who crossed the Polish-German border for the first time after 2004 the act of physically crossing the borderline became an insignificant experience. Students who crossed for the first time in 2004 described little change from their first to their most recent trip through border customs formalities. These students described the border as a porous barrier that was relatively easy to cross. One student summed up his experience cross the border a few months after Poland officially joined the EU as a “symbolic crossing.” The process of clearing customs at the border for him had been more of a gesture as he had no feeling that he was crossing a major divide (Student 8, October 2007). Another student also claimed his last crossing as a tourist had no personal meaning to him as he had crossed without any problems (Student 9, October 2007).

### **6.3. Students’ Explanations for Taking Cross-Border Trips**

The reasons Polish students gave for Germans to travel across the border to Szczecin was based predominantly on their contacts with German shoppers and tourists in Szczecin (Figure 6.3). Shopping was by far the most common response to the question of why students thought Germans travel across the border to Szczecin. In Szczecin the main destination for German shoppers according to the students was Galaxy, a new enclosed mall built a few years ago. The students explained that Germans come to buy cigarettes, alcohol, clothing, food and household goods. Students also noted the recent phenomenon of Germans traveling to Poland to take

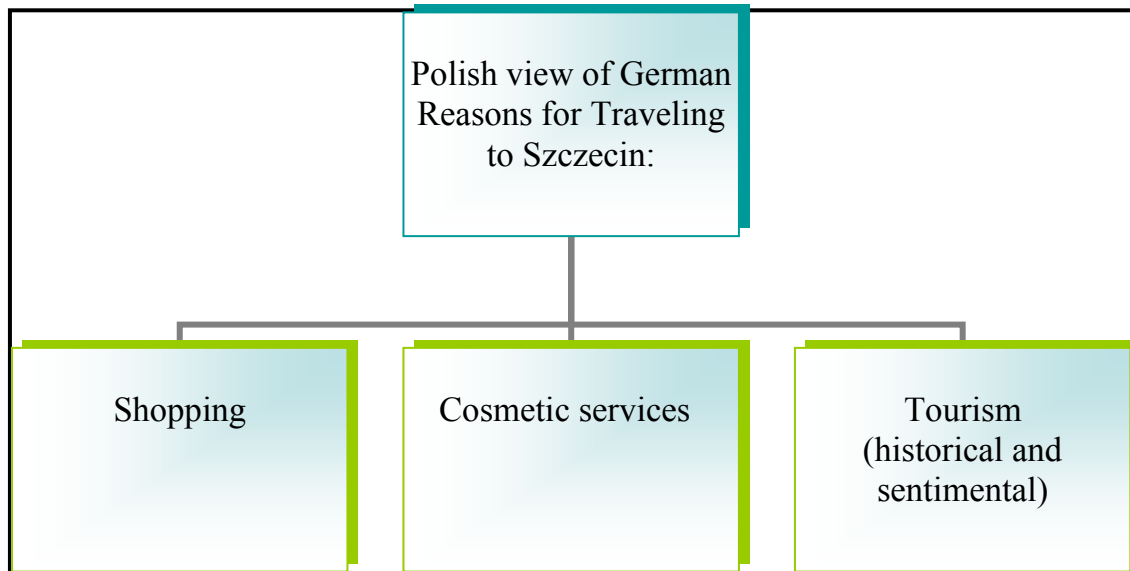


Figure 6.3 Polish students' perspectives of why Germans Travel to Szczecin

advantage of cheaper services, such as dentistry, hairdressing, plastic surgery, and even driver's license exams---all much cheaper in Poland.

Tourism was the second most frequently listed explanation for German travel to Szczecin. The nearby Polish border resort town of Świnoujście, 107 kilometers (66 miles) north of Szczecin on the Baltic Sea, was mentioned by the students as a particularly popular destination for German tourists. The town also had an informal flea market and several signs in German near the town center advertise dentistry and hairdressing services. Germans come to Szczecin on vacation to relax and enjoy the less expensive restaurants and bars. The Germans are also drawn to Szczecin by historical landmarks, such as the largest cemetery in Europe and the pre-World War II monuments that reflect the history of the once German port city. In addition to historical site tourism many students described older Germans as participating in sentimental or emotional tourism. As one student explained, —older people come as tourists,



because of their memory of the city as once part of Germany” (Student 44, October 2007). The students were also aware that an elderly minority German population has returned to retire in Szczecin, their childhood home. As one student put it Germans return to live in Szczecin because —they have a sentimental attachment to the city” (Student 12, October 2007).

Although many Polish people have made money off of German tourists, shoppers and retirees, the residual fear of their economically dominant German neighbors was reflected in another student’s statement. —The Germans come to us to buy things because it is cheaper over here than over there. And besides this, the whole time they believe Szczecin should still be theirs” (Student 52, October 2007). Another student during the class discussion complained that Germans felt too comfortable in Szczecin. From her observation of the behavior of Germans in the city they did not try to speak any Polish while in Poland but expected to be understood in German. The student complained that —they appear so comfortable and confident not like they feel as though they are in a foreign country” (Interview 34, October 2007).

There were some basic similarities in the reasons given by the students to explain why residents of Szczecin traveled across the border to Germany and why Germans were believed to be traveling to Szczecin; which were once again shopping and tourism (Figure 6.4). The dominant reasons given for why citizens of Szczecin travel to Germany was to go shopping, to engage in retail trade and tourism.

Despite the availability of more diverse high quality products and goods in Szczecin than Słubice, shopping was still a main reason for Polish borderlanders to travel to Germany. Once again higher end goods such as electronics and cars were available for a lower price in Germany. One example given by a student was Poles traveling to the German town of Schwedt, approximately 52 kilometers (32 miles) away, to buy cars (Student 70, October 2007).

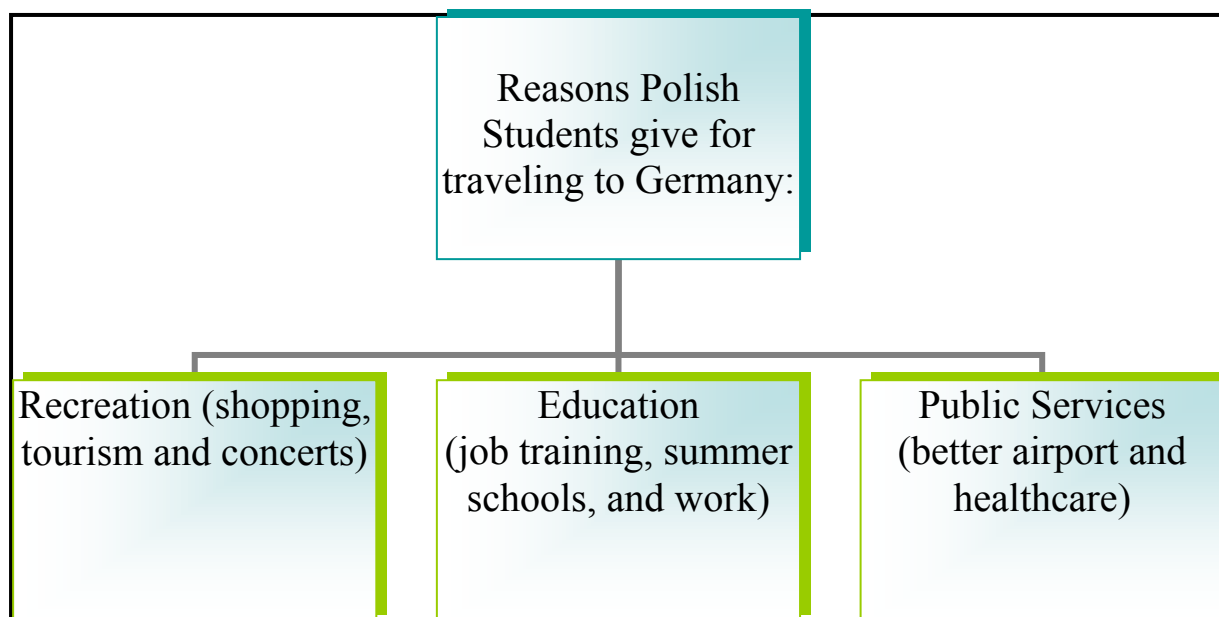


Figure 6.4 Reasons given by Polish students for traveling to Germany

One student described the beginning of a change in this trend, —once Polish people went to Germany mainly to go shopping but today they go more frequently as tourists” (Student 78, October 2007). According to the students, tourism in Germany involved visiting museums, family and friends and attending concerts. The students saw Berlin as a hotspot for young people because of the concentration of clubs and concerts. As one student explained the draw to Berlin was that —there are more clubs in Berlin and more concerts than in Szczecin” (Student 15, October 2007).

Despite the improvements in material standing of a select group of Polish youth who now travel to Germany for recreational purposes, 30 percent of the students listed work as a major reason for going to Germany. Employment in Germany often took the form of working as vendors in a flea market, construction work or care of the elderly. Students also listed

educational--job training and summer schools-- as a reason for crossing the border to Germany either for themselves or for relatives.

Other reasons given for why Poles traveled across the border was to take advantage of the better transportation infrastructure and health care system in Germany, which was believed to make life easier than in Poland. One student while summing up the similarities and differences between Polish and German reasons for crossing the border in the following statement underscored how borderlanders' on both sides cross for practical reasons taking advantage of less expensive services on either side of the border. —~~Po~~ish people travel to Germany to go shopping and visit family and to go to the airport and to work. It's the same on the other side [Germans cross to Poland] for shopping and to visit family, but definitely not to use the airport" (Student 53, October 2007). Szczecin has a small airport, but flights are much more expensive with limited destinations in comparison to the international airport in Berlin. Therefore Poles willingly travel an hour across the border to the Berlin airport instead of the three hours to the larger airport in the Polish city of Poznan. More significantly this statement reflects the borderlanders' awareness of the better transportation infrastructure in Germany, which for Polish travelers means less expensive trips.

One student with her comment —~~w~~omen go to German to give birth to children because [in Germany] there is better medical care" (Student 80, October 2007) raised a more controversial reason as to why Polish women travel to Germany. The proximity to the border and the failure of Poland's health care system had according to this student pushed some Polish women to try and take advantage of a better health care system in Germany. In the summer of 2007 Poland's health care system was reaching a crisis as nurses and doctors participated in an extensive strike in protest against low wages and insufficient supplies in hospitals. According to

the student a women very late in her pregnancy goes to Germany ostensibly on a shopping trip but with the actual expectation of giving birth in a German hospital. Other females who live in Poland take advantage of the health care services they receive from their husbands who are legally employed in Germany (Student 80, October 2007).

The final comment by the students for going to Germany was ~~to~~ make one's self a better life in a better country," (Student 46, October 2007) reiterating a viewpoint I also heard in Słubice from older residents, that life in Germany, a notably wealthier country, was much easier than in western Poland. This viewpoint drives Polish migration as individuals seek better opportunities in Western Europe.

#### **6.4. The Students' Knowledge of the Pomerania Euro-Region**

Upon being asked to name a euro-region, 42 percent of the students correctly recollected the name of the euro-region of which Szczecin is a member, Pomerania Euro-Region. They were less successful in the second task, defining the term euro-region, as only 20 percent of the students correctly described the purpose of the institution as promoting cooperation between German and Polish organizations in the border region. Therefore, I concluded that although students had heard the term euro-region before, the majority had a shallow knowledge of the purpose of euro-regions and their contributions to the development of cooperation with their German neighbors in Szczecin.

The students identified several different types of projects in which Polish communities were collaborating with German communities. When asked to name a project which received at

least partial funding from the euro-region, 36 percent of the students were able to do so. Figure 6.5 illustrates the location of the Polish and German communities mentioned by the students because of their involvement in some form of exchange with Polish borderlanders. These cross-border collaborations included educational exchanges, sporting events, partnerships between communities, festivals celebrating these partnerships and collaboration in support of environmental conservation. One example given by the students was the partnerships between the Polish town of Łobez (outside of Szczecin) and the German town of Affing (in southern Germany). Students also mentioned festivals between German and Polish communities such as the festival between the town of Rostock (in eastern Germany) and the Polish city of Szczecin. Another student mentioned euro-region support for the environmental cooperation between the German park of *Naturpark Insel Usedom* and the nearby Polish park of *Wolińskiego Parku* north of Szczecin.

However the cooperation mentioned by the students was not exclusive to the border region. For instance students described educational exchanges between German and Polish students, including elementary students, high school students and university exchange programs and conferences. Yet many of the educational exchanges and partnerships mentioned by the students included cooperation between Polish communities in the province of Zachodniopomorskie and communities in northern and western Germany. Examples given by the students included the School Zóecknitz, a school exchange between Szczecin students and the Western German city of Osnabrück and the exchange of young athletics such as the one between the Polish team Pogoń Szczecin and the German team Fr Schwedt.



Figure 6.5 Map of communities identified by the students as participating in Polish-German exchanges

A few students also listed the German towns with which their Polish hometowns collaborated. Again these collaborations were not limited to eastern German communities for instance the Polish town of Nowogard was identified as having formed a partnership with both the West German town of Heide and the Eastern German town of Pasewalk. The example of cooperation between Polish and German communities given by the students led me to conclude that in Zachodniopomorskie Polish communities were cooperating not only with communities across the border but all over Germany. This is a situation similar to the village of Kłodawa, where interviewees told me about partnerships established with communities through out German and other EU countries as well (Interview 16, July 2006).

### **6.5 Students' Descriptions of Szczecin**

Poland is a country with a varied topography consisting of the southern mountains, central plains and the Baltic coastline. Culturally the regions also vary with subtle differences in linguistics and cuisine. I was interested in analyzing the students' descriptions of life along the border but also I wanted to learn if the students had a regional identity that distinguished them from the rest of the country. So I requested that the students share with me what they believed made Szczecin different from other Polish cities. I hoped their responses would provide me with a basic description of the components from which they drew their regional identity.

To initiate such a conversation with the students I asked them to describe Szczecin in a few words. The students responded by describing the current economic situation in Szczecin (divided between those who had an optimistic outlook on the city and those with a more pessimistic attitude) and the cultural attractions that made the city a popular tourist destination.

Not surprisingly several students positively described Szczecin as a very cultural place with a lot of cultural activities, like art galleries, festivals and concerts, which bring tourists to the city. The city's location near three countries (Germany, Sweden, and Denmark) and history as a German city were credited with giving the region a rich architectural heritage (Student 84, October 2007).

Interestingly the students associated the city's location at the border of three countries and the cooperation with Germans as important for the city's future development. The predominant complaint from the students was that Szczecin's potential as a major port city was not being taken advantage of and instead of developing the city was being neglected (Student 26, October 2007). In the following statement one student summed up what many of his classmates had written. —People always complain, but the city is developing. The city is in a good location to develop in the future but unfortunately city residents have a pessimistic view of the city” (Student 19, October 2007). The negative opinions outsiders held of Szczecin was mentioned by another student who hoped that with time the city would have a more positive image nationally and internationally. —Szczecin has a good location and it should take advantage of it so Polish people correlate only positive things with the city” (Student 28, October 2007). Meanwhile the more positive responses focused on Szczecin's untapped potential, as a port city located on a major axis of transportation and trade between Poland, Germany and Sweden with a large educated population, due to the multiple universities found in the city. This sentiment is reflected in the following student's comment, —the city is developing by cooperating directly with Germans” (Student 62, October 2007).

Szczecin's proximity to the border, the present day and past German cultural influences in the city as well as the cultural diversity because of the presence of people from different regions in



eastern Poland were the most common responses given by the students to explain what makes Szczecin located in Zachodniopomorskie, the northwestern province of Poland, unique from other regions in the country. Figure 6.6 summarizes the students' descriptions of what distinguishes Szczecin from other Polish cities. There were students who felt they were unable to answer the question because they did not believe that Szczecin was in any way distinctive from other Polish cities.

The nearness to the German border made Szczecin for some students more European and liberal than other parts of Poland. As one student wrote, —Szczecin is near the German border, thus the city is a member of Europe” (Student 77, October 2007). Another student had a similar mental map of Europe with an east west division running along the Polish-German border, identified Szczecin —as near Western Europe” (Student 88, October 2007). To these students Szczecin was more European than cities in eastern Poland precisely because it lies in the west and is more influenced by German culture. The city's present-day proximity to the border and present-day German influence were credited by these students for making the city more liberal than other places in Poland. One student wrote that, —because of the city's proximity to Germany, the city is a window to the world and a center of culture” (Student 35, October 2007). The student went on to add that the city is more tolerant and open to foreigners because of the mixing of Polish and German culture. Another student believed that the presence of a significant foreign population in the city contributed to the local diversity. Although he had never crossed the Polish-German border, this student believed that because Szczecin is a city where you meet lots of foreigners, mainly Germans, a strong German influence is felt in the city (Student 4, October 2007). Another student, a frequent border crosser, described Szczecin as being culturally closer to Germany than Poland because of the city's cultural ties with Berlin (Student

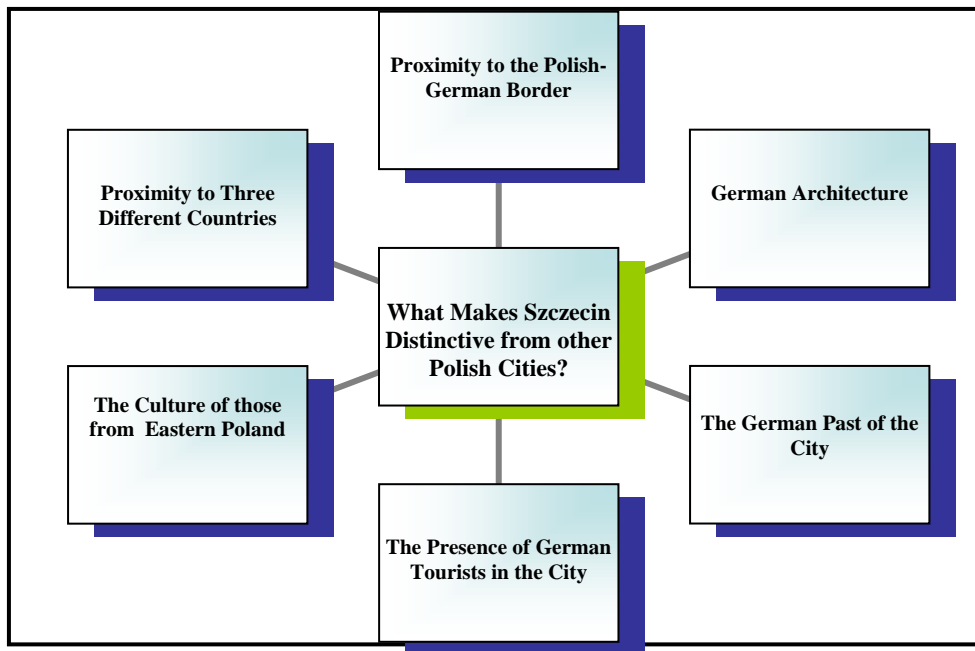


Figure 6.6 The elements students identified as components of Szczecin's identity

28, October 2007). To this student the border was not a barrier preventing residents of Szczecin from taking advantage of their proximity to Germany as Szczecin is physical closer to Berlin (150 kilometers (93 miles) than it is to other large Polish cities such as Poznan which is 255 kilometers (158 miles) away.

The students in their responses acknowledged the German history of the city and credited historical Germanic influences for making Szczecin culturally rich and unique from other parts of Poland. One student explained that Szczecin —has a lot of history because it once was a German city” (Student 45, October 2007). Students also included the stereotypical description of Szczecin as a German city by Polish people from other regions of Poland. One student not originally from the city wrote, —Szczecin is special because of the German history, it is a German city” (Student 62, October 2007). Another student referring to the German architecture of

Szczecin wrote, —he city reminds me of Germany in the way that it is laid out” (Student 88, October 2007).

The cultural mixing of different ethnicities in the region was identified by the students‘ as an additional element that makes Szczecin distinctive from other Polish cities. The students described the cultural mixing of people, a result of both the repopulation following the westward movement of the Polish border and the German influence, as contributing to the cities uniqueness. As one student explained, —themmigration of people to Szczecin makes it unique. The people here are all from various areas of Poland and they brought different cultures with them when they resettled in Szczecin. But it is also a city with a lot of influence remaining from the Germans who once lived here” (Student 32, October 2007).

The above characteristics used by students to distinguish Szczecin from other Polish cities—the proximity to the Polish-German border, the present day influence of the regions German past and the cultural richness derived from the mixing of various past and present cultural influences --contradicted those students who did not believe there is anything different or unique about Szczecin. Upon being presented the question a group of students reacted in a manner I interpreted as defensive, perhaps because they interpreted the question as a challenge to Szczecin’s identity as a Polish city. Comments such as, —Szczecin is no different than other parts of Poland” (Student 6, October 2007) and —I don’t believe the city is special or different from the rest of Poland” (Student 83, October 2007) were used by students to emphasize their opinions that Szczecin was a Polish city and not in anyway different from other regions of Poland. Another student began by emphasizing that Szczecin is in no way unique from other parts of Poland but ended by acknowledging an element that made the city unique. —Szczecin is a city in a Polish province, with a true Polish culture that is a little bit different from other Polish cities.

Szczecin is not special or unique well maybe only that it is close to the border and everything begins here first” (Student 67, October 2007).

## **6.6 The Students’ Descriptions of the Polish-German Border**

After discussing the foundations of Szczecin’s identity, the students were asked a very open ended question: —How would you describe the Polish-German border?” The responses were mixed between those who chose to describe the physical appearance of the border and those who choose to discuss the metaphoric components of the border. The main themes which emerged from this discuss was the function of the border as a divider and how the new situation at the now modern EU border was diminishing this traditional role.

Students who chose to describe the border physically described it as a congested place with long lines and a lengthy custom clearance process to cross the border, reflective of the situation during their last trip to the border. The bazaar economy still found along the border was also mentioned as a distinct feature of the border (Student 41, October 2007). Other students focused on the changes along the border, which have taken place since Poland began preparations to join the Schengen Agreement in 2004. One student mentioned the constant repair to the bridge over the Oder River, which separates the two countries (Student 18, October 2007), using EU funding for the improvements to cross-border transportation infrastructure connecting border communities together.

The students’ descriptions of the border either focused on the divisive functions of the border or the characteristics they associated with a modern EU border. The diagram (Figure 6.7) lists characteristics students identified as underscoring the role of the border

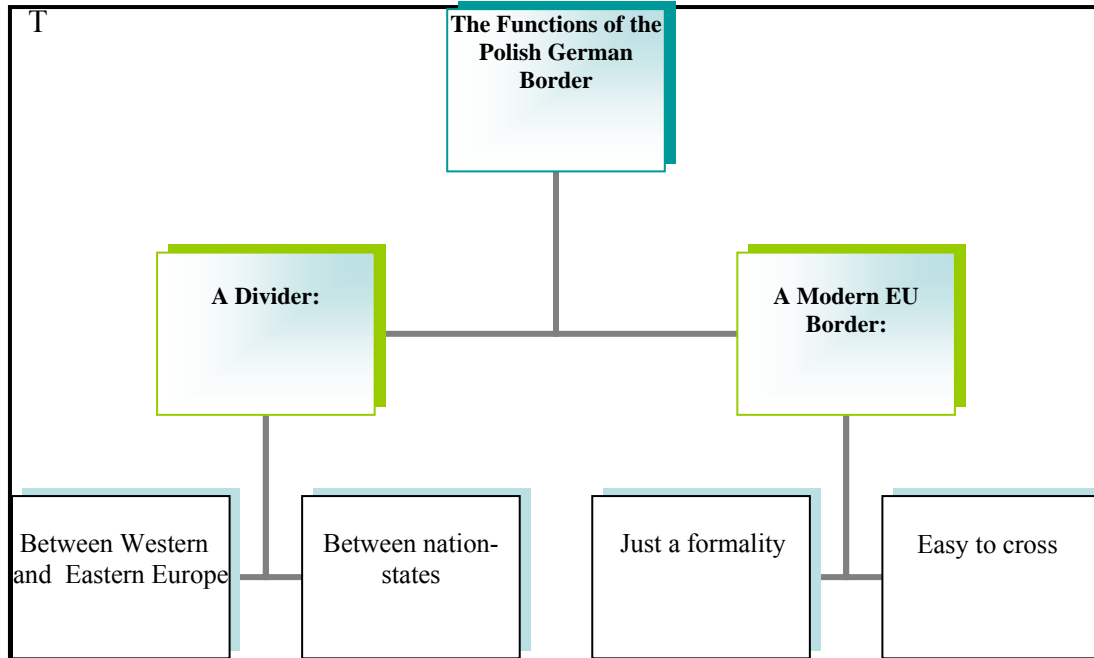


Figure 6-7. Descriptions given by the students<sup>6</sup> of the Polish-German border

as either a divider or a modern porous EU border. However in some instances the students believed a modern border still functions as a divider.

The students who chose to describe the divisive functions of borders identified the border not only as a divider of nation-states, Poland and Germany, but also as a frontier between Western and Eastern Europe. These students described the border as the “~~gat~~to Europe and the world” (Student 88, October 2007) and “~~the~~ road to Western Europe” (Student 77, October 2007). One student focused on the economic divisions as the main factor making the border so visible because of the different economic standards of living across the border. The student wrote that “~~as~~ soon as you cross the border you know you are in another country because of the architecture and infrastructure” (Student 62, October 2007).

Those students who described the border as a divider were themselves divided between those who perceived the divisions as a result of a natural border which separates Poles and Germans and those who saw the division as a political construction that is slowly fading. The student who commented on the economic differences across the border also noted how economic improvements on the Polish side of the border were slowly making the border invisible. “They fixed the buildings and the differences across the border are starting to become more equal” (Student 62, October 2007). In this student’s opinion the cross-border differences would be minimized in time. The following quotes are from students who saw the dividing function of borders as natural. —The border is something that has always been and should always be” (Student 41, October 2007), —the border is something which divides two countries and should continue to do so” (Student 22, October 2007) and —the border is easy to cross and a good division” (Student 6, October 2007). Though one student did allude to the human construction of borders, writing that —long time ago there was no border,” he went on to argue that the —presence of the physical Polish-German border will never cease to exist” (Student 11, October 2007).

Although these students believed the Polish-German border will continue to function as a divider of two countries, they did not believe the border should function as a barrier to cross-border interactions. For these students the nation remains the crucial means for negotiating their identities but they are able to cross the border and go beyond the confinements of the nation-state. One student explained that, —the border divides and distinguishes between two different nations but it is always easier to cross” (Student 82, October 2008). Another student believed the border was a permeable divider which separates cultures but at the same time allows cross-

border cooperation writing that, ~~the~~ border divides but the border is also a place of cooperation” (Student 26, October 2007).

The students all referred positively to the increasing openness of the border and were well aware the new mobility was a result of Poland’s membership in the EU and soon to be full membership in the Schengen Zone as the following students comments show. —The border is open because we are part of the EU” (Student 27, October 2007). —The border won’t exist too much longer because we are about to join the Schengen” (Student 38, October 2007). One student described the border as no ~~different~~ from other borders” (Student 62, October 2007).

The students described the new openness of the border as a sign of the modernization of the region. One student described the border as a modern border that separates two countries” (Student 62, October 2007). By using the term modern the student is also emphasizing that today the mobility across the Polish-German border is similar to that of the post-modern borders of Western European countries. The border is no longer an impossible barrier for average citizens as it was under the communist system nor is it a difficult border to cross with long lines at border checkpoints like those still found along the borders between Schengen and non Schengen member countries, such as the Polish-Ukrainian Border. Yet the border is still an important division between two countries.

Other students perceived the border as just a formality, to which people paid little heed in their daily lives. This attitude was encapsulated in the following comments: ~~the~~ border is something which is just a formality that people ignore in their daily lives” (Student 50, October 2007), ~~the~~ border is just a formal line on the map” (Student 31, October 2007), ~~he~~ border is open, you can cross the border without any problems and the border is not noticed” (Student 52,

October 2007). In the most optimistic students' opinions the border had already ceased to exist, as asserted by one student —“today the border does not exist” (Student 39, October 2007).

As a follow up to the request for a description of the Polish-German border, students were asked to predict what the border will look like in ten years. The most common response was that in ten years the border ‘will not exist’ or from the slightly more pessimistic students the border ‘should not exist.’ Though all the students once again agreed the border should remain easy to cross, future scenarios varied between students who were of the opinion the border will remain as a formality across an open and cooperative border region, those who felt the border would remain as an important mental division between the two nation-states and those who predicted over time a hybrid regional identity would emerge in the borderland (Figure 6.8).

The student who described the economic differences as a factor dividing the region predicted a reduction in the disparities in the standard of living between Polish and Germans would be followed by the beginning of a new function for the border as a unifier bringing Szczecin and German cities closer together (Student 62, October 2007). A few students went a step further and described the function of the border as already a force integrating communities in the region with the following comments. —“The border integrates parts of Szczecin with Germany. And you see parts of Poland and Germany on both sides of the border” (Student 31, October 2007). Another student also supported the border as a site of integration with the following comment, —“the Polish-German border is becoming less prominent and it is bringing our cities closer together” (Student 85, October 2007). These students' descriptions of the integration along the Polish-German border were similar to the slogans which Liam O'Dowd (2003) has described as being used by euro-regions to depict the Polish-German border as a site of integration between Polish and German borderlanders.



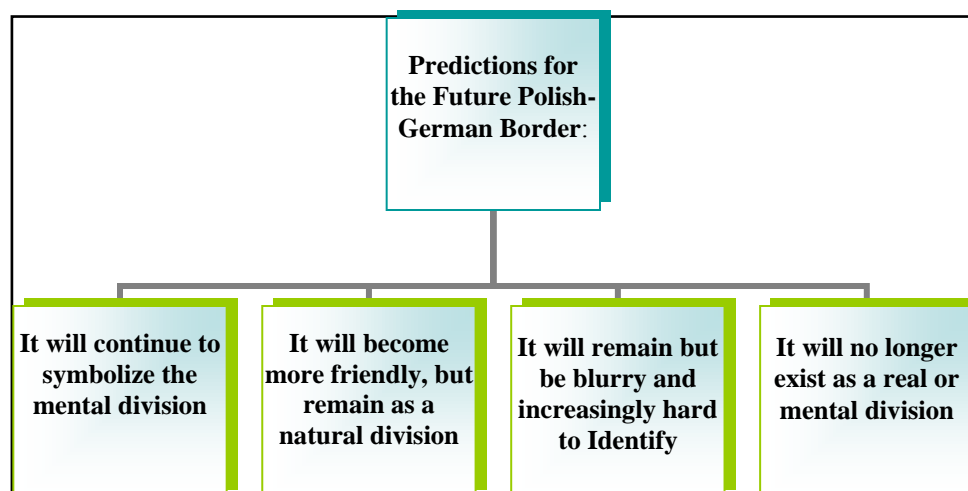


Figure 6.8 The students' predictions for the future of the Polish-German Border in ten years

The first prediction for the future of the border by the students is the borderline will remain in place as a formality, but will be open and easy to cross. This argument was supported by comments such as, “the border should be barely perceptible and you should have no problem crossing the border” (Student 14, October 2007), “the border should be friendly” (Student 7, October 2007), “the border should be easy to cross and should not make life more difficult for those who cross it often” (Student 78, October 2007) and “the border will be a normal line on the map but in reality the border will be blurred” (Student 12, October 2007). The idea that there should be no control on the border was shared even by those who rarely crossed the border. As one student explained, “the border should be a formality; even though I have not been there in a long time because I only crossed once in elementary school on a field trip to Berlin” (Student 15, October 2007). One student, however, believed that though the border should remain the way it is, open and easy to cross, but it should still be monitored by German and Polish guards.

A second group of students believed a formal borderline supporting the territorial division of European nation-states would remain both on the map and in the minds of

borderlanders. As one student explained —“the border will remain in the experiences of people and remain as a mental barrier between people” (Student 28, October 2007). The students indicated that a cultural barrier would remain between Poles and Germans, —“the border will no longer exist but it will continue to divide territories [Germany and Poland] because of the lack of understanding” [between the two nations] (Student 49, October 2007).

Those who believed culturally the border region consisting of eastern Germany and western Poland would become one, referred to the past when the border had not been a barrier to support the idea of a shared regional identity or the formation of the borderland as a micro-region. They described a shared history and the presence of German cultural influences on both sides of the border. As one student wrote, —“the border should be just a formality because a lot of Polish people work in Germany as a result of the open border and the history of the city” (Student 44, October 2007). The student is referring to the time period in the 1970s when many Polish citizens worked across the border in Germany. In addition, prior to World War II, Polish citizens also lived and worked in Szczecin, at the time it was the German city of Stettin (Bialecki, 1992).

Not all the students had predictions on the future integration of the Polish-German border as a few were completely indifferent to the border. Those who had never crossed the border and felt the border had absolutely no influence on their lives responded that the border was natural and should remain in place. A student who has never crossed the border wrote, —“the border is natural and it is hard to say what it should be like because I have never been at the border” (Student 36, October 2007).

## **6.7 Conclusion: The Possibility of the Northern Polish Borderland Becoming Part of a Micro- Region within Europe**

The physical borderline did not influence the students' lives in a significant way as is illustrated by the fact that only two students out of 90 chose to include the border in their mental map of Szczecin. In addition the students were not frequent border crossers as the majority (53 percent) crossed the border only once every few years, despite living so close to the border. Yet, the proximity of Szczecin to the border did make the city unique particularly because of the past and present German cultural influences in the city.

The experience of crossing the border was already an insignificant event to the students who crossed more frequently. The language barrier was a bit more difficult to overcome. Regardless of the ease now associated with crossing the Polish-German border until December of 2007, the border remained a formidable barrier as is illustrated by one participant, who shared an accidental encounter with borderguards. Driving with friends they accidentally took a wrong turn and found themselves on a road leading to the border. Unable to turn around they drove up to the border checkpoint. They tried to explain to the borderguard they were lost and did not want to travel to Germany but simply wanted to turn around and return to Poland. The Polish students who spoke little German tried to communicate with the borderguards who spoke no Polish. The situation was further complicated because one of the students did not have an identification card with him. Upon the appearance of Polish borderguards who confirmed the students were not trying to smuggle their friend who lacked an identification card across the border, the students were allowed to turn around and return home (Interview 34a, October 2007). Today such an incident would not occur because borderguards no longer enforce the checkpoints

at the border. However the language barrier which caused so much confusion between the students and the borderguards still remains. The students had different opinions about how best to overcome the linguistic gap. For example in one class the students overwhelmingly agreed that it was very necessary for them to learn the German language because of their proximity to Germany and the large number of Germans who traveled to Szczecin. In the next class a majority of the students argued English was the language they used when communicating with Germans and they did not believe it was important for them to learn German.

The students' knowledge of the features of euro-regions was mediocre at best. Less than half could name the euro-region of which Szczecin was a member. Those who were able to name a project funded by the Pomerania Euro-Region identified endeavors with the purpose of encouraging cross-cultural understanding such as the educational exchanges between German and Polish students and sporting competitions as well as festivals between German and Polish towns. These experiences encouraged the development of cultural awareness between Germans and Poles at a young age. However the contacts mentioned were not limited to interactions with communities directly across the border from Szczecin. Students identified more exchanges between Polish communities in northwestern Poland (their home region) and communities in western, northern and southern Germany than with communities in northeastern Germany, just across the border. This could be the result of communities in Poland seeking to establish closer ties with communities located in more economically prosperous parts of Germany rather than the German province of Mecklenburg just across the border.

The main purpose for Polish and German borderlanders to travel across the as identified by the students were not activities that appear to be building integrative networks. Shopping was

the main reason students gave for Poles and Germans to cross the border. Recreational opportunities and the chance to earn Euros were the main incentives for Polish students to cross the border. The students also identified as factors that tended to pull Poles across the border the better standard of living in Germany based on the cheaper cost of houses, superior transportation infrastructure and access to a better public health care system. The students were very aware of the emotional connection to Szczecin felt by many older German tourists. Yet many of the students held negative stereotypes of German tourists as coming to Szczecin only for bargains, and having no regard for Polish culture.

Although many students described the function of the borderline as a natural divider between two nation-states a few identified the border as a site of integration. To explore further students' opinions on the potential for the emergence of a hybrid space in the region, as a final question summing up the group discussion, the students were asked a theoretical question, in respect to the relationship between Szczecin and the border. Did they feel Szczecin was *a city on the border*? That is to say did they feel that the level of cross-border ties and cultural exchange between Germans and the Polish citizens of Szczecin were creating a hybrid culture in Szczecin? Or was Szczecin *a city by the border* where Polish people interacted with German neighbors for economic reasons but remained culturally distinct? The majority of the students 89 percent replied Szczecin is a city by the border. As one student explained, —Szczecin is a city by the border not on the border. I don't feel any connection with Germans. You can work with them but not integrate them into our lives” (Interview 34b, October 2007). A vocal minority of students, 11 percent, argued the opposite, that Szczecin was a city on the border because of the cultural influence and number of Polish people working in Germany. One student loudly

declared, —“The border is only a formality, the cultures are the same and Szczecin is a city on the border” (Interview 34c, October 2007).

The conceptualization of the Polish northern borderland as part of a micro-region which includes eastern Germany had diffused into the mindset of those students who identified Szczecin with a mix of Polish and German heritage. These students tended to describe Szczecin as a more tolerant city, open to foreigners and with strong cultural links to Berlin making the city more liberal than other parts of Poland. Most students did not however identify with the idea of living in a micro-region. The border was described by these students as a natural divider of two cultures based on irreconcilable differences in mentality. And the students who had never crossed the border expressed no interest in traveling to Germany in the future.

Though all the students were pleased with the new cross-border mobility and the freedom to travel opinions varied over the level of cultural integration that should occur in the region. The majority opinion of the students was that though cooperation with Germans was important for Szczecin’s economic growth, their national identity as a Polish city was in no way challenged by the fading of the physical Polish-German border because a cultural border and mental border would always remain in place. The future scenarios for the borderline put forward by the students created an image of an open border with strong economic links with Germans. Yet though the borderline is not physically present in the lives of borderlanders and is predicted by many of the students to be soon invisible, from the interviews it appears that the border will remain as an important divider in the students’ mental imagery of the region for some time to come.

## **7. Integration along an Interior European Union Border**

In recent years, for many borderlanders who frequently travel to Germany, the act of crossing the Polish-German border has already become an insignificant event. The removal of custom checkpoints is the latest transformation in a series of changes in the region that began with the relocation of the Polish-German border to the Oder-Neisse River at the end of World War II. Two EU policies that support the establishment of euro-regions along countries borders and the expansion of the Schengen Agreement are transforming the region into a cooperative borderland. The purpose of my dissertation was to understand how Poland's full membership in the EU was changing life for ordinary Polish citizens living in the northwestern borderland based on the three components of the borderlanders' experience; mobility, awareness of cross-border exchanges and regional identity. More specifically had the ease of physically crossing the border led to an increase in cross-border mobility? Did borderlanders have a favorable opinion of cross-border collaboration in the region? And was an emerging sense of a shared regional identity between Polish and German borderlanders present in ordinary Polish borderlanders' mindsets?

The Polish-German border a full member of the Schengen Agreement is located firmly within the EU, yet the borderline remains on the edge of Europe in the mental maps of many participants in this study. The placement of the Polish-German border in borderlanders' mental maps can tell us much about EU integration as it is viewed by ordinary citizens in Central Europe. The understanding of both the borderlanders' experience and their mental maps of Europe can be significant for crafting more effective EU and regional policies. This study provides a general understanding of the Polish experience of living in the northwestern

borderland, from which emerge more specific questions about EU integration. For instance, despite the new ease of crossing why is there still a lack of mobility by ordinary Europeans across country borders? What are the long term implications of Central Europeans associating the EU primarily with job creation for further political and cultural integration? My findings also support further exploration of minority communities found on either side of the Polish-German border to better determine if a micro-region might in the future emerge in the interior EU borderland.

### **7.1 Evolution of Cooperation across the Polish-German Border**

The Polish-German border has not followed Oscar Martinez's proposed linear evolution of the transition of borderlands from an alienated and peripheral border zones (guarded borders with few cross-border interactions lying at the outer peripheries of countries) to cooperative and eventually interrelated spaces that are tied together by economic and cultural cooperation and that take on an actual regional character of their own. Instead the openness of the Polish-German borderland has fluctuated in response to changes in the countries' national policies toward each other and to internal policies that placed restrictions on the mobility of their citizens. For a brief time period, during the first few years of the present day border location, it was a closed and alienated border. Germans forcefully displaced from the region fought for the right to return. Meanwhile the newcomers remained in a state of detachment from the region, unsure about the permanence of their new homes along the disputed borderline. Temporarily, in the 1970s, the region was part of an officially cooperative borderland between the former East Germany and Poland. At the time both countries were part of the Soviet sphere of influence. Cross-border



trade was present during this time period, but because the permanency of the border remained an unanswered question, reciprocal relations failed to emerge between borderlanders. The openness of the border did not last long as these cross-border networks were disrupted by the closing of the border in 1980 (Ciok, 2004).

Another drastic regional transition occurred in the 1990s as East Germany ceased to exist as such and both spaces--now eastern Germany and Poland--transitioned to capitalist economies and cross-border trade once again flourished across the border. Following the reunification of East Germany and Western Germany the border between German and Poland became the external border of the EU. Germany and Poland (at the time a candidate for membership in the EU) began once again to pursue cooperative networks as the region became an increasingly integrated borderland. The eastward expansion of the EU in 2004 shifted the exterior border of the EU to the east of Poland and the Polish-German border went from an external EU border to an internal EU border. Poland's membership in the EU was celebrated with fireworks and the promises of a new era of cooperation along the border now geographically within the EU. However restrictions still remained on cross-border mobility until Poland's official entrance into the Schengen Agreement in 2007, which was celebrated with a similar fanfare.

The darker side of unrestricted trade such as prostitution and the rise in human trafficking in the border region during the early years of the post-communist transition led to predictions that a relationship would emerge along the Polish-German borderland similar to that found along the Mexican-United States border. Germans feared an open border would allow an uncontrollable stream of Polish and Eastern European workers to flood their markets, similar to the stream of immigrants who attempt to cross the United States-Mexican border, illegally.

Meanwhile Polish borderlanders feared the economic and cultural dominance of the Germans would overpower Polish influence in the region. One Polish student from the southern region of Śląsk, bordering the Czech Republic and Germany, shared his opinion during class in Poznań that people in the region feared that Polish culture would be overpowered by the Germans. These fears rose to the surface prior to Poland's accession to the EU and again prior to Poland's full membership in the Schengen Agreement (Interview 35, December 2007).

In the end, neither the feared German economic dominance or cultural dominance nor a replication of the situation along the United States-Mexican border has emerged in the region. Instead in the Polish western border provinces individuals have acquired significant economic gains by appealing to German consumers in search of bargains on goods (such as cigarettes, food and gas) and services (such as dental care and hair care). The proximity to the German market attracts high-end retail businesses to the region, such as the businessman from Warsaw who came to open an up-scale sunglasses store in Słubice. German businesses have also been important investors in the automobile and machinery and engineering sector in the Kostrzyn-Słubice Special Economic Zone. Germany however is not the only investor in this region, as other countries-- including France, Sweden, Holland, England, Japan, Russia and India-- are also investing in this region of Poland (Polish Information and Foreign Investment Agency, 2009).

The widely held belief among Poles that everything is better in Germany, (higher wages, better health care and availability of higher quality goods) is slowly fading. The strengthening of the Polish currency, the *złoty* in 2007 as Poland began preparations to join the euro has made the prices in Eastern Germany closer to those in Poland. Increasingly, Poles from Szczecin are also buying property in German towns across the border because of the lower cost of land, a reversal

of the feared German acquisition of Polish land. The students I surveyed made me aware of this new trend in which former residents of Szczecin are building homes and applying for apartments in the eastern German city of Löcknitz, 19 kilometers (12 miles kilometers) from Szczecin (Figure 6.1). Lothar Meistring, the town mayor of Löcknitz, located in one of the poorest districts of Germany which leads the country in unemployment and depopulation, credits the former citizens of Szczecin with reviving the economy in his locality (Sontheimer, 2008).

Also contrary to the fear of an increased flow of Polish labor to Germany, in the Polish border province of Gorzow Wielkopolski (Figure 4.1) some Poles have been hiring German construction workers to build homes because of a lack of Polish construction workers. The changes in the patterns of job demand and increasing cost of land in parts of the borderland maybe the start of a reversal in patterns between the provinces in northwestern Poland and the provinces in northeastern Germany. The situation in the northeastern region along the border may indicate the region is prepared for further integration, with the Polish government removing restrictions on German's ability to buy property in Poland and the German government removing restrictions on Polish citizens' ability to work in Germany. It is important to note that the findings of this study relates to the northeastern region of the Polish-German border and may not be representative of the situation in the southeastern border region that includes more economically prosperous regions of Germany.

## **7.2 Changes in the Experience of Living in the Polish Borderland**

The significance of the current situation along the border is best understood in relation to the history of mobility and cooperation in the region during a previous period when the border

marked the territorial extent of the former East Germany and Poland. A new era of cooperation began with preparations for Poland to join the EU. In this section I discuss the implications the policies of European integration have had on the lives of borderlanders. These policies include membership in the Schengen Agreement which has made crossing the border easier, the presence of euro-regions that are financing cross-border collaboration, as well as the influence the concept of European Citizenship has had on regional identity formation.

### **7.2.1 Borderlanders' Cross-Border Mobility**

The participants in the study viewed the new openness of the border as one of the positive benefits of EU membership. In an interview in Kłodawa, a long time resident described the new ease of crossing the border as the most important change in the region. He marveled at the quickness with which one could now cross the border and recommended that more bridges be built to connect more communities across the Oder River. (Interview 17, July 2006). All the participants in my study shared the opinion that the new openness of the border was a positive development and that the border should always remain easy to cross for both Polish and German borderlanders, despite the fact that the majority of participants in this study did not frequently cross the border. The majority of respondents in the survey, (42 percent), crossed the border once a year, while the majority of students in Szczecin, (57 percent), crossed the border only once every few years. The most frequent crossers were the students attending the university in both Frankfurt-Oder and Słubice who crossed daily. However, 53 percent of the survey respondents did predict that once custom border checkpoints were closed in December of 2007 they were more likely to cross more frequently. The elimination of long lines and an extensive wait time at border custom checkpoints and the building of more bridges connecting the two

countries will reduce the physical barrier between the two countries. Yet, as one participant pointed out, the remaining economic inequalities between the two countries will continue to limit travel to Germany for some individuals.

The reasons why the majority of Polish participants in this study crossed the border and the frequency with which they traveled across the border does not reflect cross-border activities found in a truly integrated borderland. Shopping was the number one reason given to me for excursions to Germany from both the students in Szczecin and the respondents to the survey. Shopping and historical tourism were also the main reason why Polish borderlanders believed Germans were traveling to Poland. Cross-border shopping along with tourism, the second most common reason given for crossing the border, requires only a short stay across the border and do not contribute toward meaningful cross-cultural integration or the development of an attachment to communities across the border. Nor is cross-border shopping a new phenomenon. During the 1970s and 1990s shopping was also the main reason for individuals to cross the border (Ciok, 2004). However some borderlanders who participated in my surveys are also traveling to Germany for business conventions, conferences or to participate in education exchanges all of which contribute toward building more cooperative networks and raising cultural awareness so in the future integration may be more significant.

### **7.2.2 The Awareness among Borderlanders of Cross-Cultural Exchanges**

Projects financed by euro-zones encouraging cross-border cooperation along the Polish-German border are attempting to transform the borderline from a line demarcating difference between two nation-states to a newly emerging multicultural space with a unique local identity.

The membership of the province of Lubuskie in the Pro-Europa Viadrina Euro-Region is very visible on the landscape in the form of EU flags, and signs on buildings and statues. The European Commission supports the use of symbols such as the European flag to stimulate feelings of belonging to the same community (Panebianco, 2004). But, how aware are ordinary Polish borderlanders of the projects funded by euro-regions and how much credit do they give euro-regions for the cooperation between Polish and German students, business people, officials and communities in the region?

In this study participants did acknowledge euro-regions contributed to strengthening local cooperation by providing financial incentives for cross-border projects in which Polish officials and Polish organizations collaborated with German borderlanders. The willingness of local officials to cooperate with their counterparts across the border was based on an awareness of the benefits of cooperating with other EU member countries and the perception that cooperation with the German borderlanders was a crucial premise for the region's future development. As one official in Kłodawa explained to me, —To compete in the global economy today, it is critical for Polish towns in the border region, such as Kłodawa, to cooperate with their German neighbors. The officials in the borderland understood that today, —you can not hold on to the past or isolate yourself; therefore we must work with towns in Germany because they are the closest to us” (Interview 17, July 2007). A former employee of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region also praised the financial incentives of euro-regions for encouraging more people to seek out opportunities to cooperate across the border, which he recognized as vital for the future development in the area (Interview 19, July 2006). In Ślubice many of the residents with whom I spoke also praised the local government for cooperating with Frankfurt-Oder and taking

advantage of EU funding to provide fresh cultural engagements between Polish and German borderlanders and new economic opportunities in Słubice, such as the establishment of a university in Słubice and support for local businesses and entrepreneurs.

In Szczecin students also believed the future economic development of their city would depend on the willingness of elected leaders to cooperate with Germans. The students connected the future economic growth of the city with the ability to successfully cooperate with their German neighbors. One of the complaints of the students was that the city's government has not taken advantage of opportunities created by the location of the city on a major axis of transportation between Poland, Germany and Sweden to promote development. The German past was viewed as an asset that made the city a popular tourist attraction for Germans and an import source of revenue for residents.

Despite an acknowledgment of the economic benefits of cooperating with their German neighbors, the knowledge of euro-regions and their contributions to regional development appears to be concentrated mainly among those living in the borderland who are involved in governmental activities or organizations with strong cross-border networks. Although most of the survey respondents, 62 percent claimed to have heard of the term euro-region before, only 30 percent were able to name a euro-region found along the Polish-German border. In Słubice, everyone I interviewed could name the euro-region of which Słubice was a member, Pro Europa Viadrina. Yet most people on the street in Słubice had little knowledge of what projects euro-regions funded, not because of a lack of transparency by euro-regions but more likely due to an absence of interest on the part of the borderlanders interviewed.

The majority of students in Szczecin were not as aware of the city's membership in a euro-region despite being aware of the potential benefits to the city a cooperative relationship with their German neighbors would bring them. Less than half of the students, 42 percent, were able to name the Pomerania Euro-Region, of which their city was a member. Even fewer were able to describe projects funded by the euro-region. The students did manage to list a variety of examples of Polish-German interactions based on education exchanges, (several of the students' first border crossing experiences had been on school trips to Germany), sporting events as well as festivals between their hometowns and a community in Germany. The examples given by the students of cooperation between Polish communities in Zachodniopomorskie were not however, limited to the eastern German border region but instead involved all of Germany.

Educational exchanges between the Polish and German youth appear to be an important step in dismantling negative stereotypes by encouraging students to spend time across the border. Once again collaboration in an educational setting both for the students studying at the university in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder as well as the Senior Academy for Polish and German long term residents of the region, was important for improving cultural understanding and building networks between Polish and German borderlanders. It is important to note that other organizations such as the Polish-German youth organization have also been providing financial support for cultural exchanges between Polish and German youths, such as the exchange of young artists in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder

Respondents to the survey were extremely supportive of cooperation at the border, with 84 percent of the respondents agreeing German and Polish borderguards should cooperate. However, only 32 percent believed that after Poland joined the EU in 2004 there had actually



been an increase in cooperation in other areas such as sporting events and community projects. Those not benefiting directly from German consumers were more cynical about just how much cooperation had been generated by euro-regions and the benefits of these projects toward enriching the level of well being of residents in the area. Borderlanders<sup>6</sup> in Słubice wanted to see more projects supported by euro-regions that led to job creation in addition to cultural events. The support of educational youth exchanges and sporting teams through which Polish and German children train together should also be continued as a way of establishing positive relationships between young borderlanders. However, future EU funding for projects that address unemployment on both sides of the border might provide more assistance to borderlanders, help create more cooperation in the region and produce a more positive image of euro-regions.

### **7.3 The Diffusion of European Identity and the Potential for a Shared Regional Identity to Unit the Polish-German Borderland**

Among the purposes of my research was to explore the implications of increasing economic cooperation and unrestricted mobility across the Polish-German border on the formation of a regional identity. The majority of Polish borderlanders in Szczecin and Słubice are aware of the increasing political cooperation between Polish and German border officials as well as the presence of euro-regions and the role of all this in constructing a more friendly border. The unrestricted mobility, shared educational experiences and festivals between border communities provides borderlanders with new incentives to travel across the border. There are certain commonalities, such as topography, a history of displacement and the transition form

communist societies that bind German and Polish borderlanders together, that could be the bases of a regional identity. The current collaboration between German and Polish communities and the future adoption of the euro in Poland are sure to further unite the region. Students in Szczecin, who supported the idea of the area as a micro-region, described their city as a place where one could find parts of Poland and parts of Germany and the border as a unifier bringing Polish and German communities closer.

As mentioned earlier, although, the topography is similar, both the Polish borderlanders and the German students studying in Poznan who frequently cross the border identified the change in the quality of roads immediately upon entering Poland as a sign of the remaining economic differences between the two countries. However one student in Szczecin referred to the road improvements in Poland as a sign of integration in the region, arguing that in time with the completion of infrastructural improvements (financed by EU funds) it would be hard to tell the difference between the Polish and German side of the border.

The first version of my survey included an open ended question requesting participants to write down their identity. A few students, who took the survey during the train ride from Poznan to Berlin, responded that they were European. For the majority however the question seemed to generate confusion. Many commented that the question was pointless because in their view what else, other than Polish, could people living in this region be? The strong identification of participants with a Polish national identity was not surprising. The movement of Poland's borders created a mono-ethnic post-World War II Poland, with a 90 percent Polish population by leaving behind the Ukraine minority that had once been part of Poland, and by expelling Germans from the region. The now almost homogenous population and the strengthening of

nationalistic feelings by the war, replaced the pre-war multicultural Polish society (Davis, 1999). The leaders of post-World War II Poland pursued a “mononational” model, hoping to prevent future ethnic problems and conflicts by proposing that being Polish and a citizen of Poland were synonymous. The illusion that Poland was an ethnically unified country, specifically in the territories of Silesia and West Pomerania, was used to justify the population movements and border changes that reconfigured Poland into a uniform state (Matykowski, 2006).

The relationships between Polish borderlanders and their German neighbors improved following the signing of an agreement ratifying the permanence of the border and the Poland’s compliance with EU treaties protecting minority rights. Now with the increasing mobility of Polish and German borderlanders attitudes toward foreigners are changing at least in the border region, if not in the entire country. Students in Szczecin identified the city as being by the border and as notable because of a more open and tolerant view of foreigners there, including the minority German communities living in the region. The same opinion of the border region as more tolerant than other regions in Poland was also present in interviews with residents of Ślubice. A long-term resident of Ślubice, explained to me the negative stereotypes toward Germans harbored by Polish students who arrived at the border to study, as being largely the result of family experiences from World War II. Ślubice was constructed by the interviewee as a place where these negative stereotypes could be overcome with time and direct contact between Germans and Polish students.

During my interviews, to encourage a discussion on the potential for the emergence of a cross-border regional identity as an additional layer of identity attached to a national identity, borderlanders were asked, in both Ślubice and Szczecin, if it is better to describe their respective

locations in a metaphoric sense as *by the border* or *on the border*. The difference in terminology was to distinguish between cross-border cooperation simply for economic advantage and cooperation that might lead to cultural integration. Upon being asked this question most people responded immediately. They either believed as the hairdresser in Słubice that the town is *on the border*, not only because of the high level of economic exchanges between Germans and Polish citizens but also because of the presence of cultural exchanges and collaboration on development projects, which she illustrated by referencing the NGO organization known as Słubfurt. On the other hand vendors in the bazaar in Słubice, interviewed by students from the Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań, firmly responded that Słubice is a town *by the border*. A place where, —We [Polish borderlanders] must protect our national identity from foreigners” (Interview 30, December 2007). The vendor’s comments collected by the Polish students reflected a strong sense of nationalism as they described themselves as more Polish because of their daily interactions with Germans, which they felt reinforced the differences between themselves and their neighbors. At the bazaar students reported that vendors claimed to be able to identify Germans based on their appearance, yet ironically, the group of Polish students and one Hungarian who were speaking English were initially identified by the vendors as Germans.

The majority of students (89 percent) in Szczecin argued they live in a city *by the border*. As one student explained you can work with Germans, benefiting from the economic cooperation or working together to solve shared environmental concerns, but Polish citizens do not integrate Germans into their personal lives (Interview 34, November 2007). The proximity to the border and the lingering fears of the German Association of Expellees demanding repayments or a return of the property they lost at the end of World War II may explain the students’ need to

defend the Polishness of Szczecin. After identifying Szczecin as a city *by the border*, students felt the need to emphasize that —Szczecin was a Polish city” (Interview 34, November 2007). They were very clear that Szczecin despite the past history as a German city today was without any doubt culturally part of Poland. However a vocal minority, 11 percent of the students, who traveled more frequently than other students across the border argued Szczecin is a city *on the border*. These students based their conclusion on the German cultural influence present in Szczecin, the large number of German tourists and the large number of Poles who work in Germany today or have done so in the past.

In Słubice more borderlanders than in Szczecin described their communities as part of a micro-region located *on the border*, which may be explained by differences in location and size of these communities. In Słubice the proximity to Frankfurt-Oder across the river, and a past as a unified German city along with the presence of two universities in the area provided more opportunities for cooperation. The result of this cooperation was much more visible in the town of Słubice with a much smaller population than in the city of Szczecin. The students in Szczecin only slightly further from the border but with no German communities located close to the border on the German side were less aware of cross-border cooperation and their city’s membership in a euro-region.

Despite the German influence in the Polish borderland and the cooperation between Polish and German provinces the conceptualization of the Polish northwestern borderland as part of a micro region in which regional identity is shared among German and Polish borderlanders is still a radical idea among most of the borderlanders that participated in my research. For them, the border was an ideal location to engage with another culture or improve one’s economic

situation while still being able to return to one's own way of life-- not the description one would expect of an emerging multicultural space. For instance, the organizer of the Polish-German Senior Academy believed the main reason for such high attendance by Polish and German borderlanders at lectures sponsored by the organization was not to broaden their horizons but the hope of making cross-border contacts that would secure a profitable exchange of goods. For Polish and German students studying across the border the experience is seen primarily as a chance to explore a foreign culture next door with the opportunity to return home in just a few hours at most. The decision to study in Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder for many Polish students was based on the perceived opportunity to participate in a cross cultural experience, without straying far outside of one's comfort zone. As one former student summed up, —one has the opportunity to learn German and interact with Germans but still live in Poland” (Interview 11, July 2007). The same reason was given by German students I met in Poznan, who chose to study in the city because of the opportunity to be abroad, but still relatively close to home (Interview 28, December 2007).

#### **7.4. Remaining Linguistic and Economic Divisions**

Europe's interior borders are more interactive today, in part as the result of European funding for cross-border collaboration projects and European treaties such as the Schengen Agreement, which have made mobility between member countries easier. Yet these borders are still international borders and as such they remain very important not only to national governments (Newman, 2006) but also to borderlanders. Jörg Durrschmidt and Ulf Matthiesen (2002) argue that along with the emergence of new opportunities for trans-border networks,

borderlanders continue to create new forms of barriers to interaction. Henk Van Houtum (2005a) was also of the opinion that people maintain and create boundaries through daily activities, often long after the removal of physical barriers. The Polish borderlanders in my study were not an exception. Cultural differences and economic inequalities work together to maintain mental borders despite the removal of physical constraints to mobility across the Polish-German border. In interviews Polish borderlanders praised the new ease of crossing through border checkpoints. The border was described as nonexistent—barely noticed on their trips to Germany. Yet these same interviewees mentioned cultural and economic differences, which continue to separate Poles and Germans.

Restrictions on mobility posed by the language barrier were described by employees at the university who are not fluent in Germany and are more limited in their activities in Germany. They are more comfortable traveling to other cities in Poland to catch a movie rather than traveling across the border to the nearby theater in Frankfurt-Oder. The choice to travel further was based on the decision to view a film in Polish or English with Polish subtitles as opposed to the options available in Frankfurt-Oder where they would be viewing a film in German or English with German subtitles. While language remains a barrier for some Polish borderlanders, those who are fluent in German, such as an employee in Collegium Polonicum who had studied at the University of Viadrina in Frankfurt-Oder, claim to feel equally comfortable on both sides of the border.

In my study, opinions were divided over how best to overcome the language barrier. In the survey 70 percent of the respondents believed learning German was either very important or important for economic success. Many Polish students came to Słubice for the opportunity to

learn or practice German, perceived as a language that offers more opportunities for better paid jobs to be found either in Germany or with a Germany company in Poland. The students living in Szczecin were divided between those who believed it was important to learn German and those who felt that they should not have to learn German but that English should be used as the lingua franca between Poles and Germans. In Słubice several people also mentioned their preference for using English when communicating with Germans because English was perceived as a neutral language which established an equal relationship between speakers since they were both using a second language.

In the meantime economic inequalities also continue to serve as dividers framing interactions between Polish and German students as well as Polish vendors and German consumers who interact differently within a shared space. The Polish students studying at the border tended to spend more of their time in Poland where the food and housing was cheaper. German students meanwhile traveled to Słubice for cigarettes and cheaper alcohol. The town was described by the German students studying at Frankfurt-Oder and residents of Słubice as a big grocery store for Germans.

The function of regional economic differences as a barrier to the development of integration and cohesion across border regions is not unique to the Polish-German border. Brid Quinn (2004) also found in his research in Ireland that social and economic disparities continued to divide Europeans despite increased cooperation across borders despite a growth in the identity and recognition of European regions. Petri Virtanen (2004) in his study of euro-regions on the Polish-German border and Finish-Russian border also found that regional economic inequalities continue to frame relations between borderlanders.



### **7.5 The Place of the Polish-German Border within the Europe Union: Suggestions for future research and possible policy implications**

Anke Strüver (2004b) argues that a borderless Europe is not emerging as a result of the increased economic and political cooperation between EU countries. Instead borders continue to remain important in defining the territorial extent of nation-states and swaying the mobility of individuals. Geographer John Agnew (2007) argues that such borders are crucial to the formation of what he calls banal nationalism, because they symbolically show where country A begins and country B ends. By showing their national identity cards, citizens reinforce their national identities therefore the act of crossing a national border actually serves to reinforce the existence of two nation-states. However as of December 2007 the borderline, which use to be clearly marked by the long lines at the border customs points, is no longer clearly visible as the exterior point of one country's territorial control. And the act of crossing the Polish-German border by Polish or German citizens, no longer requires presenting any documents verifying one's national identity. Yet I would argue that the border continues to remains crucial to the formation of banal nationalism even among frequent border crossers. European citizenship as conceptualized by the Treaty of Maastricht is a multiple citizenship which combines national identities with a supranational European identity. European citizenship entitles citizens of European nations additional rights; including the right to move and reside freely in the territory of member states. Yet for the majority of Europeans the national identity continues to prevail when asked to make a choice between European and national citizenship (Panebianco, 2004). Therefore despite open nation-state borders and the freedom of mobility guaranteed to all EU

citizens, the persistent significance of national identity means that borders continue to be important as markers of nations.

The removal of custom points along the Polish-German border was for many a sign of the modernization of Poland and a symbol of the country's new membership in the European Union. The new opportunities to travel freely within the borders of the Schengen Zone and the perceived economic gains of joining a euro-region were all pull factors supporting Polish citizens' decision to vote in 2004 for Poland to join the EU. The removal of borders was conceptualized by one of the Polish students studying in Poznan who participated in the fieldtrip to Słubice, as an opportunity for Poland to become part of a freshly reestablished European society. Not only because of the opportunities for Polish people to travel abroad to any of the Schengen Member countries where they come in contact with different ethnic groups, but also because of the influx of newcomers both from the West and the East into Poland. The student believed the new mobility of people between formerly Eastern Europe and Western Europe is slowly transforming the once almost homogenous Polish society. The student argued the new mobility of Polish citizens and the influx of outsiders traveling to Poland will slowly force the country to change and become more open like Western Europe. (Interview 35, December 2007).

The old political map of Europe still influences the Polish borderlanders' mental maps placing Poland outside of Europe. The proximity of Szczecin and Słubice to Germany for several Polish borderlanders made the area more European than other parts of Poland. The students in Szczecin also believed the city was the 'gateway to Europe' because of its location (Interview 34, November 2007). In Słubice one interviewee shared her past excitement as a student first attending the University of Viadrina in Germany, which because of the universities'

location in Germany, was in her opinion a true European University (Interview 7, July 2007). Students in Szczecin also described the Polish-German border as a divide between Western and Eastern Europe. Several students in Szczecin who described the function of the Polish-German border as a divider of two separate nation-states believed the border should continue to separate two countries in the future. These borderlanders' statements bring to mind Edward Moxon-Browne (2004) questioning of the possibility that the EU will be able to create a European political identity that transcends the old east-west divide of Europe, something that has obviously not yet happened in the Polish-German border region.

On the other hand, among one group of borderlanders the conceptualization of the function of the Polish-German border appears to be changing to reflect the new approach among researchers studying European borders (discussed in Chapter Two), who no longer view borders as dividers but instead are exploring the function of borders as unifiers of European nation-states. In Słubice many of those interviewed worked at the Polish university, which collaborated with the German university in Frankfurt-Oder, and were required to frequently cross the border, chose words that minimized the divisive element of the border. For instance they chose to refer to trips across the border as visits to Frankfurt-Oder, (not Germany), in order, to underpin the border as a space unifying the two communities of Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder. A few students in Szczecin chose to also describe the border as a unifier, crediting the new roads and bridges with bringing Szczecin closer to the German cities across the border.

The relative lack of cross-border mobility by Polish participants in this study- because of higher costs in Germany or an indifference to German culture- is not unique to this border region. Martin Van der Velde and Henk Van Houtum (2004) argue the lack of mobility across

open EU borders is associated with the lack of development of a borderless labor market that would harmonize national labor markets and improve the transparency of labor rules across borders. The restrictions on opportunities to work in Germany for Polish borderlanders have recently discouraged many borderlanders from seeking work in Germany. Instead they travel to England where as members of the EU they have the same rights (depending on qualifications) to be employed legally in the same occupations as British citizens. The difficulty for Polish borderlanders to find legal white-collar employment in German as discussed in Chapter Five was a complaint of one student at the University of Viadrina. The student frustrated by the laws that prevented him from applying his German education in Germany argued that by the time Germans allowed Polish citizens to work in Germany they would no longer have any interest in doing so (Interview 14, July 2006). Stefania Panebianco (2004) argues that Europeans continue to think of EU integration as primarily a way to face the challenges of the global economy and therefore they judge the success of EU integration on how well it has helped them to find better paying jobs. The reasons given by Polish participants in this study for cooperating with Germans and the students' frustrations with the limitations on cross-border employment opportunities, support Stefania Panebianco's interpretation of citizens' perceptions of EU integration. Therefore euro-regions should focus on supporting more projects that take a joint approach to generating jobs or dealing with unemployment on both sides of the border. Streamlining employment policies would increase the mobility of the labor market thereby increasing mobility across borders and integration in border regions. If such policies are able to create more equal opportunities they may be successful in reducing the economic barrier.

The students in Szczecin who had never crossed the border explained their lack of cross-border mobility on the fact that they saw no reason to travel to Germany. Martin Van der Velde and Henk Van Houtum (2004) have also identified indifference to the other side of the border as another reason to explain the low level of mobility across European borders. In Słubice one participant shared with me her belief that those who wanted to cooperate with Germans were doing so and those who did not would not no matter what type of projects euro-regions funded (Interview 20, December 2007). The completion of a similar study on the cross-border mobility of Polish borderlanders living in the Polish-Czech border region (also within the EU) would provide an interesting comparison from which to analyze how much influence the ability to communicate, economic disparities and indifference each have in borderlanders' decisions not to travel across the border.

The importance of including German opinions on the changes in the border region was illustrated by the comment of one Polish student during a class discussion in Poznan who argued that for a binational community to emerge along the Polish-German border, 'Germans must first accept Polish people as their equals' (Interview 35, December 2007). His response illustrated the obvious that German borderlanders must also express an interest in participating in collaborative projects and share a sense of identity with their Polish neighbors for a true interrelated region to exist. Research on the German side of the border is crucial to understanding German-Polish relations in the region. Although in this study when possible I did include opinions of Germans whom I met in Poland and Frankfurt-Oder because of the reasons discussed in Chapter Four this study did not collect the opinions of those Germans who live in the region but choose not to travel across the border. German borderlanders' cross border mobility, similar to the Polish

borderlanders in this study, is also restricted by mental borders and negative views toward cooperating with Poland. Andrew Asher in his writing on the cooperation in Frankfurt-Oder and Słubice includes the comments of a German student in Frankfurt-Oder who chose to live in Słubice. The student felt ostracized by Polish residents in Słubice meanwhile he was also excluded by Germans for choosing to live across the border (Asher, 2005). Therefore research which contributes to an understanding of the areas in which Germans eagerly cooperate with Polish borderlanders and the types of mental barriers they maintain would further help to build a constructive dialogue between Polish and German borderlanders in the region.

Time is sure to be a key factor in the mental reorientation of the Polish-German border as an European Space. Euro-regions play an active role not just locally but also as part of a large-scale process in Europe (Virtanen, 2004, p 132). The cooperation of Polish communities such as Kłodawa with German communities and the examples given by the students in Szczecin of Polish communities cooperating with communities from all of Germany can be understood as a local response to globalization aided by the economic incentives offered by the EU. Yet euro-regions are just one example of the process of European integration. A study that focuses on the opinions of those who have chosen to live as a minority on the other side of the border would further explore another example of European integration, the local application of EU citizenships which provides individuals with the right to reside in the territory of any member country. In Chapter Five, I concluded that Słubice and Frankfurt-Oder can not yet truly be identified as a binational European community. However the presence in the region of Polish citizens who have chosen to live in Frankfurt-Oder, and Germans who have chosen to live in Szczecin, a trend of which participants in this study made me aware, is an indication of growing integration in the

region. A study focused on Germans who have returned to retire in Szczecin or Polish borderlanders living in Mecklenburg would provide valuable insights into the significance of this component of European citizenship on the development of hybrid regions along open European borders.

## **7.6 Conclusion**

The control of borders in Central Europe is a relatively new phenomenon. Although border lines in Europe date from the 1659, their popularity did not begin to grow until the French revolution. The Prussians established borderguards in 1741 and border control shortly afterward. The Russians did not require passports to cross the border until before World War I and visas were not introduced until after World War II (Rykiel, 2006). Today the process of securing frontiers between nation-states within the borders of the EU is being reversed, though there is a continuation in the process of monitoring the movement of non EU citizens through covert technologies. However the development of cooperation and integration across EU borderlands is not a linear process. The new cooperative relations which have developed have built on past cooperation but also had to deal with animosities from unresolved past conflicts. Although the Polish-German border is an example of how EU physical borders are being dismantled as European countries return to an era of unrestricted travel in Europe, as mentioned in Chapter Three, the custom border checkpoints still remain on the landscape (Figure 7.1). They remain not only as a reminder of the location of the physical border but also in case the need arises to once again carefully monitor the movement of people between Poland and Germany. The Euro





flow of people across the border, the continued exchanges between school children and border communities and the integration of labor markets will create a new mindset in the next generation of borderlanders. At the present time if the situation along the Polish-German border is reflective of other European borderlands than the EU remains a region where borders, though easy to cross and not clearly visible on the landscape, remain important in maintaining national differences between Europeans.

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## **APPENDICES**

## Appendix A. Survey: Experiences Crossing the Polish-German Border

1. How frequently do you travel to Germany? ☐ daily ☐ a few times a week ☐ once a week  
☐ a few time a month ☐ once a month ☐ a few times a year ☐ once a year ☐ once before

2. If you cross often, what city (cities) or town(s) is/are your most frequent destination?  
\_\_\_\_\_

3a. What is the most frequent purpose for your trips to Germany? Please check the purpose of your trip. You may choose more than one. ☐ permanent work ☐ look for employment ☐ shopping ☐ visiting family or relatives ☐ education ☐ festival or concert ☐ vacation  
☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

3b. For what reason do you most often cross the border? \_\_\_\_\_

3c. If you shop across the border what types of good do you purchase?  
☐ Durable goods ☐ car purchase ☐ services ☐ everyday use goods ☐ technology equipment ☐ jewelry ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

4a. If you travel to work in Germany: What type of employment are you engaged in?  
☐ construction ☐ working on a farm ☐ cleaning ☐ child or adult care ☐ nursing ☐ work in a factory ☐ retail ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

4b. If in the past you have worked in Germany, what type of work did you do?  
☐ construction ☐ working on a farm ☐ cleaning ☐ child or adult care ☐ nursing ☐ work in a factory ☐ retail ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

4c. Where in Germany did you work or are you working? \_\_\_\_\_

4d. When did you last work in Germany? \_\_\_\_\_

5a. How did you find out about the type of employment you have, have had, or are hoping to acquire?

☐ family or friends working in Germany ☐ internet ☐ agency ☐ newspaper, television or radio  
☐ Other (please write how) \_\_\_\_\_

5b. If you had the choice to work in Poland or another country where would you work?  
\_\_\_\_\_

5c. Which of the following are important in your consideration to work in another EU country?  
☐ better pay ☐ unit with family ☐ more opportunities for self-improvement ☐ proximity to home ☐ adventure ☐ opportunity to earn extra income ☐ other \_\_\_\_\_

**6a.** Do you believe it is important for people living near the German border to learn German to be economically successful? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**6b.** How important is knowledge of the German language for success: ☐ Very important ☐ somewhat important ☐ may help a little bit ☐ not important

**7.** In approximately which year did you first cross the Polish-German border? ☐ 60s ☐ 70s ☐ 80s ☐ 90s ☐ 2000 ☐ 2004 ☐ 2005 ☐ 2006 ☐ 2007

**8.** How has the experience of crossing the Polish-German border changed since Poland's entrance into the EU in 2004?

	Less than before	Same as before	More than before	Not sure
Time it takes to cross the border	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Surveillance of border crossings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperation between Polish/German borderguards	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Trips you make across the border	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**9.** What is your perception of changes along the border since Poland joined the EU in 2004.

	Less than before	Same as before	More than before	Not sure
Cross-border shopping	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Polish traveling to Germany	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
German tourists in Poland	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperation between German-Polish governments	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Cooperation between German-Polish organizations <input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**10.** In your opinion, what should the Polish/German border look like in 2010.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly disagree	Not sure
No barriers to people and goods crossing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Checks only on through traffic	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Minimal Checks on everyone crossing	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More heavily guarded to stop illegal activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
More cross-border cooperation then between the Polish/Ukraine Border	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No changes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**11a.** ☐ Male ☐ Female **11b.** How old are you? ☐ 18-21 ☐ 22-25 ☐ 26-30 ☐ 31-35 ☐ 36-40 ☐ 41-50 ☐ 51-60 ☐ 61-70 ☐ 71-79 ☐ 80-89 ☐ 90-100

**12a.** Where are you from? \_\_\_\_\_ **12b.** What city do you currently live in? \_\_\_\_\_

**12c.** If you live in either Zachodniopomorskiem, Lubuskiem, or Doląnskiem, how long have you lived there? \_\_\_\_\_

**13a.** Are you a Polish citizen? ☐ Yes ☐ No **13b.** If not what is your citizenship? \_\_\_\_\_

**13c.** Do you have dual citizenship? ☐ Yes ☐ No

**14a.** Have you heard the term euro-region before? ☐Yes ☐No If so can you define it?

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**14b.** Can you list any of the 4 euro-regions along the Polish/German border?

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**14c.** Can you describe a project funded by a euro-region? \_\_\_\_\_

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## **Appendix B. Questions from the Group Interview in Szczecin**

**October 22, 2007**

### Slide 1: Mental Map

- 1) Where do you live, play, work, study, spend your free time?
- 2) Where is the best known place in Szczecin?
- 3) Locate 4 or 5 nearby cities you have visited before
- 3) Locate 4 important cities near Szczecin
- 4) Can you name and locate any cities across the border?

### Slide 2: The Experience of Crossing a Border

- 1) Do you remember your first experience crossing the Polish/German border? When was it? What was it like?
- 2) When was the last time you crossed the border? How has your experience changed?

### Slide 3: Cross Border Activities

- 1) Why do people from Szczecin travel to Germany?
- 2) Why do Germans come to Szczecin?

### Slide 4: Euro-Regions

- 1) What is a euro-region? What euro-region is Szczecin part of?
- 2) Can you give an example of a Polish-German project in Szczecin?

### Slide 5: Characteristics of the Border Region

- 1) In 3 or 5 words describe Szczecin
- 2) In 3 or 5 words describe the Border
- 3) What should the situation be like at the Polish-German Border in ten years?
- 4) What makes Szczecin unique from the rest of Poland?



**Polish Version**  
**Pytanie dla zespół Studentów w Szczecina**  
**22 Pazdzernik 2007**

Części 1: Mapa Orientacji

Proszę o zaznaczenie:

- 1) Gdzie państwo mieszkają, bawią się, pracują, studiują, spędzają czas wolny
- 2) Najbardziej znane miejsce w Szczecinie
- 3) Wskaż od 3 do 5 pobliskich miast, które odwiedziłeś(aś)
- 4) Wskaż 4 ważne miasta blisko Szczecina
- 5) Możesz nazwać i wskazać jakieś miasto za granicą?

Części 2: Doświadczenia z Przekraczania Granicy

- 1) Czy Pani/Pan pamięta swoje pierwsze doświadczenia z przekraczania polsko/niemieckiej granicy? Kiedy to było?
- 2) Kiedy ostatni raz państwo przekraczali granicę? Jakimi mieli Państwo z tym doświadczenia?

Części 3: Działalność Przy Granicy

- 1) Dlaczego Polacy jeżdżą do Niemiec?
- 2) Dlaczego Niemcy przejeżdżają do Szczecina?

Części 4: Euroregiony

- 1) Co to są euroregiony? Którego euroregionu członkiem jest Szczecin?
- 2) Może Pani/Pan dać przykład jakiegoś wspólnego projektu między Szczecinem i miastem Niemieckim?

Części 5: Charakterystyka Pogranicza

- 1) Proszę przedstawić w kilku słowach miasto Szczecin.
- 2) Proszę przedstawić w kilku słowach granice.
- 3) Jak powinna polskio-niemiecka granica wyglądać za 10 lat?
- 4) Co sprawia, że Szczecin jest tak wyjątkowy w odróżnieniu od reszty Polski?

## Appendix C. List of Interviews

Information about the interviewees who participated in the study is listed below with the corresponding numbers used to reference their contributions in the dissertation. The gender, approximant age, occupation are identified along with the date and the location where the interview took place.

- 1) Female, mid 30s, anthropology instructor in Szczecin, September 20<sup>th</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 2) Male, mid 30s, participant in group interview (which included 2-5) of employees in CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 3) Female, mid 30s, employees of CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 4) Female, mid 50s, employees of CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 5) Female, mid 50s, employees of CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 6) Male, mid 20s-30s, working in the public administration department at CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 7) Female, mid 20s, former Viadrina student working in the marketing department at CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 8) Female, early 30s, librarian at CP, July 25<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 9) Male, mid 50s, anthropology professor at Poznan and CP, July 18<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 10) Female, early 20s, secretary at CP, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 11) Female, early 30s, public relations workers at CP, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 12) Female, mid 50s secretary at CP, lifelong resident of Słubice, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 13) Female, mid 30s secretary at CP, lifelong resident of Słubice, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 14) Male, mid 20s, student at the University of Viadrina and CP, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 15) Male, mid 50s elected representative of Kłodowa, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2007 Kłodowa
- 16) Two female secretaries, mid 50s, in Kłodowa town hall, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, Kłodowa
- 17) Male, planner for Kłodowa, mid 30s, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, Kłodowa
- 18) Female, elected representative, mid 50s, July 9<sup>th</sup> 2007, Kłodowa
- 19) Male, mid 30s, academic and former employee of the Pro Europa Viadrina Euro-Region, October 13<sup>th</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 20) Female owner of an art gallery in Słubice, mid 30s, December 13<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 21) Female anthropology professor at the Adam Mickiewicz University, late 30s, November 13, 2007, Poznan
- 22) Female student from Warsaw studying at the University of Viadrina for the summer, July 19<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 23) Male taxi driver, late 50s, participant in survey, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 24) Male, early 60s, organizer of the Polish-German Senior Academy, December 13<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 25) Information collected during a guided tour with a German administration worker in Frankfurt Oder, July 10<sup>th</sup> 2006, Frankfurt-Oder
- 26) Information Poznan students in group 1 shared based on their interviews with taxi driver in Słubice, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 27) Group interview with German borderguards in Frankfurt-Oder, part of the Border Culture Summer Study at the University of Viadrina, July 13<sup>th</sup> 2006, Frankfurt-Oder

- 28) Male German student, early 20s, studying at the Adam Mickiewicz University, Poznan, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 29) Interview with media director of the town of Słubice, December 14<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 30) Information Poznan students in group 2 shared based on their interviews with vendors in the Bazaar in Słubice, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 31) Male, late 30s, owner of a store in Słubice, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 32) Male, late 20s, student studying at CP and Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznan, July 8<sup>th</sup> 2006, Słubice.
- 33) Male, mid 30s, formerly involved in cross-border trade between Poznan and Berlin in the 1990s, July, 24<sup>th</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 34) Comments made by students during the group interviews in Szczecin, October 22<sup>nd</sup> 2007, Szczecin
- 35) Information collected during final class discuss with students from the Adam Mickiewicz University of their experiences in Słubice, December 6<sup>th</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 36) Male, German professor at University of Viadrina July 13<sup>th</sup> 2006, Frankfurt-Oder
- 37) Female, late 50s lifelong resident of Słubice participant in the survey, December 4<sup>th</sup> 2007, Słubice
- 38) Female, mid 20s, German student studying at the Adam Mickiewicz University, December 2<sup>nd</sup> 2007, Poznan
- 39) Female, mid 30s, Polish teacher in Warsaw, July 14<sup>th</sup>, 2006.

## **Vita**

Michelle Brym was raised in Mansfield, Ohio and graduated from Madison Comprehensive High School. She earned her B.A in Diplomacy and Foreign Affairs with a minor in Latin American Studies and M.A. in Geography from Miami University in Oxford Ohio. With the completion of this dissertation she has earned a PhD in Geography from the University of Tennessee.