

B/ORDER IN MOTION: The German-Polish Border from the System Transformation until the Present-Day European Integration

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Abstract

The objective of this paper is to use the theoretical approach of B/ORDERS IN MOTION to analyze and understand the German-Polish border region from the period of systemic transformation to EU integration. The notions of durability, permeability and liminality serve perfectly as a conceptual prism to investigate this border region in motion. Following this concept, we can recognize three border regimes involving processes of demarcation (durability), overcoming (permeability) and creation of border zones (liminality) in the brief history of the German-Polish border.

From the False Start of EU-Integration to the Boundless Common Space

Transnational cooperation on the German-Polish border within the framework of the European Union (EU) is still in its initial development phase, due to both the relatively short-term existence of the current relationship between Poland and Germany and the systemic transformation that both regions have just lived through. Furthermore, although Poland joined the EU officially in 2004, full Polish membership did not start until May 1, 2011, when Poland finally received all the fundamental rights of the European community without restrictions. This “delay” in the legal agreement has negatively influenced the economy on the German-Polish border and cross-border cooperation. The strongest qualitative transformation of the German-Polish border at this stage, however, is that the border has disappeared.

In spite of this “delay,” German-Polish cross-border projects are conducted with a lot of enthusiasm and engagement. In contrast to the established western border regions, the sense of a new beginning is still felt in the East. Also, historically, the situation at the German-Polish border is very specific and different from most other border regions in the EU.¹ Not only were the border markers moved, once again, only 72 years ago, but the social order itself is relatively new and not yet stable.

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¹ Jochen Roose and Elżbieta Opiłowska, “Microcosm of European Integration: The German-Polish Border Regions in Transformation. Introduction,” in *Microcosm of European Integration: The German-Polish Border Regions in Transformation*, eds. Elżbieta Opiłowska and Jochen Roose (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 11.

In addition, the Polish-German border, as many other borders, is a product of conflictive historical moments.²

B/ORDERS IN MOTION

The approach B/ORDERS IN MOTION, developed at the European University Viadrina, is particularly suitable for research on the German-Polish border region, from its transformation to its current integration within the EU, because it allows for the simultaneous examination of changing borders and orders. B/ORDERS IN MOTION focuses on the processes of demarcating, transcending, overcoming and re-establishing borders, boundaries, frontiers and limits. Beyond the specific problem of political and legal borders within Europe, B/ORDERS IN MOTION seeks to promote empirical and theoretical research on the dynamics and practices of drawing and dissolving borders, constitutive of past and present societal and cultural formations. In so doing, it transcends the late modern understanding of merely overcoming borders while reconceptualizing them in light of the simultaneity of multiple border processes. In a world of different speeds, complex overlapping structures, fragmentations and pluralizations of temporal horizons, as well as new processes of differentiation and heterogeneities, the theme of B/ORDERS IN MOTION has advanced to become both an existential and societal challenge and a fundamental question of the social and cultural sciences. B/ORDERS IN MOTION addresses “border regimes” in spatial, temporal and social terms with regard to their demarcation (durability), their permeability and the creation of border zones (liminality).³

The invention of such approaches in border research did not, however, begin at Viadrina.⁴ The intensification of a concern with “orders” at the border was already noticeable at the turn of the twenty-first century.⁵ Interdisciplinary approaches have shown in particular the need for stronger theory building in border research.⁶ The intensified use of anthropological and sociological

² Tony Payan introduced a typology of borders with a set of variables, one of which is “historical baggage.” See Tony Payan, “Theory-Building in Border Studies: The View from North America,” *Eurasia Border Review* 5:1 (2014): 9.

³ The approach of “B/ORDERS IN MOTION” has been developed by scholars at the European University Viadrina in the course of a cluster of excellence application within the framework of the federal and state Initiative for Excellence. Wolfgang Schiffäuer, *Cluster of Excellence B/ORDERS IN MOTION: DFG-Nr.: EXC 1106 Initial Proposal* (Europa-Universität Frankfurt (Oder), 2011), 17–24. For more information see: <https://www.borders-in-motion.de/en/center-en> [Accessed November 10, 2017]

⁴ This topic has also been discussed in this journal. See Payan, “Theory-Building in Border Studies,” 1–18.

⁵ Gabriel Popescu, *Bordering and Ordering the Twenty-first Century: Understanding Borders* (Lanham, MD: Rowmann and Littlefield Publishers, 2012); Henk van Houtum, Olivier Kramsch and Wolfgang Zierhofer, eds. *B/Ordering Space* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate, 2005); Henk van Houtum and Ton van Naerssen, “Bordering, Ordering and Othering,” *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 18:1 (2003): 13–25; Matthias Albert, David Jacobson and Yosef Lapid, eds. *Identities, Borders and Orders: Rethinking International Relations Theory* (Minneapolis, University of Minnesota Press, 2001).

⁶ The 8th Conference of the network “Tensions of Europe” on the subject of “Borders and Technology” (Sept 7–10, 2017 in Athens), where the researchers of the history of technology met researchers of border studies, is the

approaches, as well as media studies, has brought results in the form of new research centers and publications, such as the sociology of borders.⁷ As Tony Payan has pleaded in this very journal, border studies have started to adopt research methodology from neighboring disciplines.⁸ What is more, the current flood of refugees to Europe has resulted in a new array of migration research as it relates to border regimes and border controls.⁹ In sum, qualitative research methods of social studies and anthropology, such as observations and interviews, but also big data analysis, are being used with increased frequency.¹⁰

The complexity of demarcation (durability), permeability and the creation of border zones with complex overlapping structures (liminality) on the German-Polish border is more visible when historical, economic and judicial prerequisites for cross-border cooperation are compared to all border regions in Europe. Similar prerequisites in the Polish and (Eastern) German border regions after the transformation in the 1990s make cross-border cooperation there easier in some respects but hinder it in others. Therefore, the German-Polish border region can be viewed as a laboratory and microcosm of European integration.¹¹

Historical Preconditions – Demarcating and Overcoming Borders

The B/ORDERS IN MOTION concept is well suited for the description and analysis of the history of the German-Polish border. On the one hand, diverse border orders can be defined and their influence on the cross-border cooperation can be analyzed. On the other hand, all three manifestations of the process — demarcation (durability), overcoming (permeability), and the creation of border zones (liminality) — in the past seventy years of the German-Polish border history have become clearly visible.

The current German-Polish border region was created in 1945, when, according to the Potsdam Agreement in August 1945, the rivers Oder and Neisse became the new German-Polish border. German towns built on their banks, such as Küstrin, Frankfurt (Oder), Guben and Görlitz, were split, resulting in the establishment of new Polish cities: Kostrzyn, Słubice, Gubin and

most recent example. The debate on the material culture and border artifacts led to fruitful discussions, for instance, on border infrastructure.

⁷ Elżbieta Opiłowska, Zbigniew Kurcz and Jochen Roose, eds., *Advances in European Borderlands Studies* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2017); Monika Eigmüller and Georg Vobruba, eds., *Grenzsoziologie. Die politische Strukturierung des Raumes* (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2006). The Centre for Regional Borderlands Studies at the University of Wrocław (Poland) is one of the newest research centers occupied with this topic. Accessed September 20, 2017: <http://obrop.uni.wroc.pl>

⁸ Payan, “Theory-Building in Border Studies,” 3.

⁹ Huub Dijstelbloem and Albert Meijer, eds., *Migration and the New Technological Borders of Europe* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 2011).

¹⁰ Compare the program of the 8th Conference of the network “Tensions of Europe.” Accessed September 20, 2017: <http://8toe2017.phs.uoa.gr/>

¹¹ Katarzyna Stokłosa, “Border Regions as Laboratories of European Integration,” in *Microcosm of European Integration. The German-Polish Border Regions in Transformation*, eds. Elżbieta Opiłowska and Jochen Roose (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2015), 16–27.

Zgorzelec. Polish territory shifted to the West: Poland lost its Eastern parts (currently in the Ukraine, Belorussia and Lithuania), but it got former eastern regions of Germany.

Although only 72 years of existence (1945–2017) is not atypical for a border region in East Central Europe, it is rather rare in Western Europe, where most borders were established in the nineteenth century. Some borders, such as the one between Spain and Portugal, are over 500 years old. In contrast, short-lived borders are common in East Central Europe, where borders with less than 25 years of existence can still be found. For instance, because of the relatively recent fall of the Soviet Union, borders between the Baltic States and Russia are such an example.¹² Moreover, some East European regions are still “in motion” as the current Russian-Ukrainian war (started in March 2014), caused by the incorporation of Crimea into the Russian state and the Russian military intervention in the Donbass region, has shown.

Since the establishment of the Oder and Neisse as the state border between Poland and East Germany, development of trans-border relations has depended on central political decisions and the situation in the respective states. These political orders are responsible for three different border regimes that we can identify on the German-Polish border so far:

I. Durability

- Treaty of Zgorzelec (Görlitz) on June 6, 1950, and the recognition of the new border by the German Democratic Republic (GDR),
- Military character of the border, 1950–1956.

II. Permeability

- Loosening of border restrictions, 1956–1972,
- Open border, 1972–1980,
- Closed border from October 1980 to the transformation.

III. Liminality

- Opening of the border in 1990–1991, with the German-Polish Border Treaty of November 1990 and the Polish-German Treaty of Good Neighbourship and Friendly Cooperation from June 1991,
- New cooperation conditions and possibilities in border towns after Polish accession to the European Union on May 1, 2004,
- Polish entry to the Schengen Agreement in December 2007,
- Freedom of movement for workers since May 1, 2011.

Durability

The redrawing of borders and boundaries encompasses research that examines the forms and consequences of establishing borders as well as border regimes. The following questions are of relevance: “How are borders created? How are the relationships between the interior and exterior

¹² Helga Schultz, *Doppelstädte als Laboratorien der Integration*, in *Stadt – Grenze – Fluss. Europäische Doppelstädte*, ed. Helga Schultz (Berlin: Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, 2005), 13–25.

regulated? How are asymmetries installed and maintained? What are the consequences of new boundaries?”¹³

As a result of the Second World War, the durability of the new German-Polish border serving as a barrier seemed insurmountable. Initially, conditions for cross-border cooperation were difficult at the newly established German-Polish border because of the Cold War and militarized character of the border. Therefore, we can call this period of durability a “military order,” which maintained all the characteristics of an occupation zone, such as forced migration, a strong presence of the military, military occupation of the border region, shortage of goods as well as fear and uncertainty. Uncertainty about the future of this region was much hated among civilians. The forced displacement of German residents from the former eastern parts of Germany, now in Poland, began even before the Potsdam Agreement, in order to replace them with Polish residents, mostly from the military. Almost half of these Polish residents were displaced from former Polish regions in the East, which had to be ceded to the Soviet Union. Most people who created new Polish neighborhoods at the new Oder-Neisse border had not had any contact with ethnic Germans or Poles before. They did not speak their neighbors’ language and often enough there were problems with daily communication because not only ethnic Poles were among the deportees but also ethnic minorities, such as Lemkos or Ukrainians, who did not speak the Polish language.¹⁴ Moreover, because of traumatic experiences during World War II, all ethnic groups hated each other: Poles could not forget crimes committed by Nazi Germany, and Germans still remembered their forced displacement from former eastern German regions. Poles remembered pogroms conducted by Ukrainian bands and Ukrainians remembered those committed by Polish partisans.

The eastern region of Germany was the Soviet Occupation Zone until 1949, i.e., until the establishment of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and therefore the western banks of Oder and Neisse were under Soviet military administration. The Eastern banks were, in theory, under Polish administration since the summer of 1945, but the Soviet military still interfered with the economic and political order as well as with the border regime. In practice, until August 1946, the part of the Oder that constituted the border (approximately 530 kilometers) was in Soviet hands, and the Soviet occupying power used the river to transport coal and dismantled plants from the Soviet Occupation Zone. The port of Szczecin remained under its control until 1955 because of its strategic location at the mouth of Oder and because the borderline in the Szczecin zone was contested. The port of Wrocław also remained under Soviet control for a long time.¹⁵

¹³ Wolfgang Schiffauer, *Cluster of Excellence B/ORDERS IN MOTION: DFG-Nr.: EXC 1106 Initial Proposal*, 25.

¹⁴ Beata Halicka, *Polens Wilder Westen. Erzwungene Migration und die kulturelle Aneignung des Oderraumes 1945–48* (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2013); Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast and Katarzyna Stokłosa, *Geteilte Städte an Oder und Neisse. Frankfurt (Oder) – Słubice, Guben-Gubin und Görlitz-Zgorzelec 1945–1995* (Berlin: Arno Spitz, 2000).

¹⁵ Marek Zawadka, *Von einer vernachlässigten Provinz zu einer Grenzuine – die Oder als Verkehrsader im 20. Jahrhundert*, in *Oder-Odra. Blicke auf einen europäischen Strom*, eds. Karl Schlögel and Beata Halicka (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2007), 205–218.

In 1945, the rivers Oder and Neisse became border rivers: the borderline was in the center of the stream, and opposite banks belonged to different states, which made commercial use of the rivers difficult. In addition, the border was extremely well guarded and declared a military restricted area, especially in the 1940s and 1950s. In Gubin, the Polish side of the German city of Guben, for instance, about 40 percent of the residents were military. It was not only impossible to cross the river — local residents could not even take walks along the river bank.

In addition, the period from 1945 to 1972 dealt only with the most important aspects of community cooperation because of the closed border. Still, the fact that it was a border on a river, and that it split several pre-war cities, enforced an early process of overcoming border division (permeability). The river played an important role in that difficult integration process because it forced both sides to cooperate. In the first years after the war, the newly established Polish towns depended on help from their German counterparts because city centers and the main infrastructure of split towns remained on the western bank. Polish communities were suddenly disconnected from water, gas and electricity supply, and the necessity of securing these across the river forced both sides to cooperate.

The river obliged both sides to make cooperation possible at the highest state-level. In 1951, an agreement was signed between the Polish People's Republic and the GDR on help in case of need for disaster control, including cooperation on waste water systems and the maintenance of waterworks on the Oder and Neisse.

Commercial ship traffic stopped after World War II, but this was another area where the river forced collaboration. Joint river transport of coal to the newly built Eisenhüttenkombinat started in 1954, and was the first cooperation initiative. The reason for that was that Polish coal from Upper Silesia, used to produce coke for blast furnaces in Magdeburg, needed to be brought to the German-Polish border via the Gliwice Canal and the Oder. Afterwards, Polish coal was transported to Magdeburg via the Oder-Spree Canal, the River Havel and the Elbe-Havel Canal, and then on the same route, coke from Magdeburg returned to Eisenhüttenstadt.¹⁶

Permeability

The permeability and impermeability of borders encompasses research on questions relating to the openness of borders. The repeated official and political manifestations of friendship between both nations and the solidity of the border influenced cross-border cooperation, but only to a limited extent. It was not until the introduction of visa-free border traffic in 1972 that the hard line of politics on both sides was softened. Open border policies influenced noticeably broader communal cooperation in the German-Polish border zone.

Therefore, the main interim conclusion is that cross-border cooperation started with the open border period of 1972, which was similar to the current developments in border towns and

¹⁶ Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, *Stahlgiganten in der sozialistischen Transformation. Nowa Huta in Krakau, EKO in Eisenhüttenstadt und Kunčice in Ostrava* (Wiesbaden: Harrassowitz Verlag, 2010), 92.

Euroregions. In the context of both periods, the following questions arise. How did/does their fine-tuning work? Which individuals, objects and pieces of information crossed/cross the border, and which did/do not? How were/are decisions made about selecting individuals, objects and pieces of information that were/are or were/are not allowed to cross the border? How was/is the border policed in practice, and, in turn, how did/do the attempts to regulate the border movement produce different forms of infiltration?¹⁷ Let me give a few examples.

The city bridge between Frankfurt (Oder) and Ślubice is used as the carrier of transnational infrastructure. In the 1960s, the German side supplied the Polish sister city with natural gas through pipes under the bridge. Since March 2015, a long-distance heating supply, again under the bridge, has connected the two cities. During the winter, excess long-distance heating from Frankfurt is used in Poland. In the summer, the thermal power station in Frankfurt shuts down and the water is warmed with the reversed heating coming now from Ślubice, through the pipes under the bridge. This is a special project of cross-border cooperation because, in contrast to many other transnational activities,¹⁸ it is a result of cooperation on the municipal level, financed solely by the two municipalities, i.e., without any EU-funds.¹⁹

Another best practice example of transnational infrastructure in the German-Polish border region based on local resources is the bus connection between Frankfurt (Oder) and Ślubice, which has been in operation since 2012. Another cross-border issue, the water supply, has not been resolved since the 1970s. Only the standards for environmental protection have changed after 1990. In consequence, the Guben-Gubin cooperative, for instance, has found a progressive solution in the form of a joint waste water treatment plant on the Polish side. In this case, Frankfurt (Oder) and Ślubice are a bad example of the lack of cooperation because they built two separate treatment plants.

Shopping tourism and border markets in Polish twin towns are not examples of a post-transformation phenomenon. In services and commerce, for example, differences in prices play as big a role now as they did in the open border period of the 1970s. Already then, street markets and bazaars were set up in Ślubice, Gubin and Zgorzelec, responding to the demand of German customers. They were mainly filled with groceries (vegetables, fruit, dairy, poultry, and sweets), but East German customers were also interested in wickerwork articles and textiles, similar to the current demand. In the 1970s, German customers were buying “westernized” goods, i.e., imitations of brand products, such as jeans or records with western music.²⁰ Interestingly, even at that time, prices were dictated by the seller, commonly leading to bargaining, and both currencies were equally accepted (i.e., Polish złoty and GDR mark), as they are now (Polish złoty and euro).

¹⁷ Wolfgang Schiffauer, *Cluster of Excellence B/ORDERS IN MOTION: DFG-Nr.: EXC 1106 Initial Proposal*, 25–26.

¹⁸ See the article by Martin Klatt in this volume.

¹⁹ Accessed September 20, 2017: https://www.stadtwerke-ffo.de/fileadmin/user_upload/BilderText/Das-Projekt-im-Ueberblick.pdf

²⁰ Mark Keck-Szajbel, “Shop around the Bloc: Trader Tourism and its Discontents on the East German-Polish Border,” in *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe*, eds. Paulina Bren and Mary Neuburger (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012).

Working on the other side of the border is also not a new phenomenon. Delayed opening of the German job market in 2011 can be compared with opening of the GDR job market in 1966. Since GDR law did not forbid the employment of Polish workers in the GDR, Poles worked in GDR factories from 1965 to the end of 1990, and some of them even until the end of 1991. Both the employment of Polish commuters since the mid-1960s and worker contracting since the beginning of the 1970s remained constant in the GDR's labor policy. Even after the introduction of martial law in Poland on December 13, 1981, and the concomitant closing of the border, commuters continued to cross daily in order to get to their workplace. In the 1980s, the number of Polish commuters and contract workers in the GDR increased. In 1972, almost 7,000 contract workers and 4,000 commuters from Poland worked on the western side of the Oder-Neisse border. In 1982, the number of contract workers reached almost 9,000 people. Polish commuters, mostly women, were employed in 82 factories in the GDR border districts, for instance, in the Semiconductor Factory in Frankfurt (Oder), Chemical Combine Guben or "Kondensatorenwerk" Görlitz, and the job was a part of a daily cross-border routine.²¹ These cross-border commuters in border towns intensified cross-border cultural, social and economic relations.

The hypothesis that managing borders has become a central problem of governmentality in situations with overlapping structures is the starting point of a permeable border. The organization and management of global flows as well as the management of interfaces – coordination, harmonization and mediation of subspheres – has become the decisive challenge of the present. Informal contacts, including shopping, tourism, and working on the other side of the border, should not be underestimated in cases of cross-border cooperation. Daily and private contacts were and still are important factors. These includes mixed marriages, which rose in number especially during the open border period in the 1970s. The opening of the border in the 1990s made this number increase further, to more than 6,000 marriages per year in Germany alone.²² This group of people was, one component of cross-border cooperation similar to immigrants today.

Liminality

The dynamics of the third border regime bring together analyses of borders as liminalities in social, spatial and temporal respects, i.e. analyses of borders in which border zones constitute themselves as 'third spaces.' "Intermediate spaces and grey areas are the key to gaining knowledge about the problem of borders, because they are where transitions from one order to another are prepared, effectuated and overcome. In these spaces, the functions of borders as orientation and

²¹ Rita Röhr, *Die Beschäftigung polnischer Arbeitskräfte in der DDR 1966–1990*, in *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte* 42/2002, 211–236; Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, "'Proletarische Internationalität' ohne Gleichheit. Ausländische Arbeitskräfte in ausgewählten sozialistischen Großbetrieben" in *Ankunft – Alltag – Ausreise. Migration und interkulturelle Begegnung in der DDR-Gesellschaft*, eds. Christian Th. Müller and Patrice G. Poutrus (Köln, Weimar, Wien: Böhlau Verlag, 2005), 267–294.

²² Karolina Joanna Korth, *Interkulturelle Ehen. Deutsch-polnische Ehen im ihren sozialen Umfeld* (Master's thesis, Hamburg University, 2006), 48.

control points are suspended in whole or in part. That is why they are spaces in which the potential for innovation creates the possibility of new spaces, anomie and loss of meaning. The study of intermediate spaces, grey areas, phases of transition and margins is suitable like no other for making the production of order and meaning through borders visible, in that it simultaneously provides orientation and discipline.”²³

In 2004, Poland celebrated entry to the European Union, and the long and difficult “return to Europe”, after successful transformation in the 1990s, seemed complete. In reality, however, the year 2004 did not yet mean full membership. Neither were border checkpoints abandoned right away, nor was there full freedom of movement for workers. Three more years passed before the last symbolic border stamps were inked on passports at the border control point on the Oder Bridge between Frankfurt (Oder) and Ślubice on December 21, 2007. Still, not all barriers were abandoned that night. The last gates were removed on May 1, 2011, when Germany and Austria opened their job markets after a seven-year transition period. Therefore, full Polish membership of the EU actually started in 2011, when Poland could finally enjoy the fundamental freedoms of the community without any restrictions. This “delay” influenced the economy on the German-Polish border because full permeability of the border started only six years earlier. Moreover, the border between Germany and Poland disappeared for the first time in the history of the two nations. This was the most important event that structurally changed the border and allowed agents to begin reworking its structure from a border to the common German-Polish zone.

The micro-study of the German-Polish border in the time of transformation shows the long process behind the formation of the “third space” – the common border region. This space has been slowly taking the form of a European, borderless region with its typical elements, such as Poles and Germans settling on the opposite side, high commuter flow and joint local management. The Lutheran formula “Handel und Wandel,” daily trade and commerce, describes well the liminality of the German-Polish region at that time. The EU itself foresaw and supports these phenomena with the four basic freedoms of the internal market: the free movement of persons, capital, goods, and services.

The false start in EU-integration was devastating to the process of growing together at the border region because more Polish citizens moved to Germany instead. Since 2000, the number of residents with Polish citizenship doubled to the west of the Oder and Neisse. For a long time, immigration to Germany was dominated by former countries of recruitment from the Mediterranean, such as Turkey and Italy. It has, however, strongly diversified in past ten years. People with Turkic background remained the biggest group, but people with a Polish background took the second place. In 2013, Polish citizens were also the most numerous immigrant group from the EU-states in Germany (609,855 people).

Polish citizens have been increasingly important not only as settlers but also as employees and founders of new businesses in Germany since then. They are the biggest foreign group from all

²³ Wolfgang Schiffauer, *Cluster of Excellence B/ORDERS IN MOTION: DFG-Nr.: EXC 1106 Initial Proposal*, 26. “Third Space” refers to a body of theory that was seminally conceptualized by Edward W. Soja, *Thirdspace: Journeys to Los Angeles and Other Real-and-Imagined Places* (Cambridge, Mass.: Blackwell, 1996).

EU member states employed in Germany now, including both those subject to social security contributions and those with small-scale employment (without benefits). Statistics show that, since the introduction of full freedom of movement for workers, there has been a higher increase in the number of Polish employees than in the number of new Polish immigrants. This is especially clear when we analyze the number of employees with Polish citizenship in Brandenburg, the German federal state located on the German-Polish border. The number of employed Polish citizens alone is about 12,000 in Brandenburg in 2013. In January 2011, only about 5,000 Polish employees were registered in Brandenburg. The situation is similar among the self-employed, where the number of persons with a Polish background rapidly increased. The share of Polish citizens for all registrations of trade from foreign individual businesses in the federal state of Brandenburg grew from four percent in 2003 to 37 percent in 2013.²⁴

Apart from the increased numbers of Polish employees and self-employed who moved their residence to Germany, the mobility of the workforce between Poland and Germany, in terms of cross-border commuters is noteworthy. In Germany, the number of Polish cross-border commuters subject to social insurance grew from almost 5,600 people in mid-2010 to almost 21,600 people in mid-2014. The number of commuters from Poland grew at that time by about 287 percent, which is mostly a direct consequence of the freedom of movement for workers (2011/2014 +222.5 percent or +14,943 people). In comparison to Polish workers with residence and work in Germany, cross-border commuters play a much smaller role in the German job market, but they play an important role in the border region. Despite the clear increase of cross-border commuters from Poland, their share in the total number of employees was only 0.1 percent in 2014. There were, however, significant regional differences. In eastern federal states, the share of Polish commuters was higher, about 0.2 percent, whereas Brandenburg alone had the highest share at 0.5 percent. Comparison between the number of local Polish employees and Polish commuters is again significant in the new federal states (formerly East Germany). A quarter of Polish employees commute between their home in Poland and workplace in Germany. Brandenburg has the highest number in the whole federation – 37.3 percent, followed by Saxonia – 35.5 percent. There is a clear indication that the new federal states at the German-Polish border are especially attractive. Communities on the German side are often saved from “extinction” by Polish settlers. In Löcknitz, a small community in Mecklenburg-Vorpommern, the infrastructure, from preschool and school up to health care would not be sustainable had it not been for Polish immigrants who filled empty houses and apartments because of a very strong out-migration of the German population after reunification. About 10 percent of the total population of

²⁴ Christina Elschner and Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, “Grenzüberschreitende Arbeit: Bestandsaufnahme nach den ersten Jahren Arbeitnehmerfreizügigkeit zwischen Polen und Deutschland. Auswirkungen auf Steuer und Sozialversicherung” in *Unternehmensbesteuerung in Ostmitteleuropa: Bestandsaufnahme, Entwicklungen und praktische Fragen nach 10 Jahren EU-Osterweiterung*, eds. Christina Elschner, Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast and Stephan Kudert (Berlin: epubli, 2015), 121–138; Annedore Bergfeld and Robert Nadler, *Mobilität und Arbeitsmarktverflechtungen in der EURES-TriRegio-Region* (Leipzig: Leibniz-Institut für Länderkunde, 2014).

Löcknitz is already of Polish origin.²⁵ This shows clearly that proximity to the border is a deciding factor for mobile employees, in contrast to Polish resident employees who live and work in Germany. In the Löcknitz case, proximity to the Polish town Szczecin is important because many Polish citizens work in Szczecin but live in Löcknitz.²⁶

The relative growth of employment subject to social security contributions, in comparison to small-scale employment (without benefits) for Polish workers, is due to the freedom of movement for workers since May 1, 2011, and is another important phenomenon of social order. While 66 percent of the employed were subject to social security contributions in 2010, the share rose to 78 percent in 2014. This development significantly exceeded immigration numbers, which grew only 14 percent between 2011 to 2014. This share also increased significantly at the regional level since the opening of the job market in 2011. In Brandenburg, the share grew from 34.2 percent in 2010 to 64.7 percent. In contrast, the share of the exclusively small-scale employed (without benefits) decreased in Brandenburg from 65.8 percent to 33.3 percent.²⁷

Thus, job markets have slowly grown together and many people have been commuting weekly or daily across the border. In this context, similar to the period of open borders in the 1970s, the opening of new crossing points is very important in order to develop border zones with complex overlapping structures (liminality) of people, work, goods, assets and services. Construction of bridges after 1990 – which exceeds community competence and must be planned at the higher state level – is one of the most important issues. Before World War II, approximately 100 bridges crossed the Oder and Neisse rivers, most of which were destroyed towards the end of war. Admittedly, there are 30 bridges across the Oder and Neisse open to car traffic, rail or bikes and pedestrians since 2014. But there are still ten bridges, some of them massive constructions, which stand unused on the riverside. The retired 200-meter long railway bridge close to Neurüdnitz in Oderbruch is the most impressive example. The Neisse Bridge at the Saxon Bad Muskau cannot be used either. At the same time, new bridge projects across the Oder, such as those at Schwedt, Eisenhüttenstadt and Bad Freienwalde in Brandenburg or across the Neisse in Hoyerswerda and Löbau in Saxonia are still under discussion.

Since customs-free conditions came in to force, the trade volume between Germany and Poland has grown enormously too. German exports to Poland more than doubled after Poland entered the EU in 2004 (2004: 18.78 billion euros, 2013: 42.29 billion euros), and Germany became the most important trading partner for Poland. In 2014, about 26 percent of Polish exports went to Germany. At the same time, Poland became the 8th ranked country in German's export statistics.²⁸

²⁵ Agnieszka Łada and Justyna Segeš-Frelak, *Analyse: Die neue polnische Migration nach Deutschland aus lokaler Perspektive*. Accessed November 20, 2017: <http://www.bpb.de/internationales/europa/polen/138746/analyse?p=all>

²⁶ Agnieszka Łada and Justyna Segeš-Frelak, eds. *Znikająca granica. Nowa polska migracja do Niemiec – perspektywa lokalna* (Warszawa: Instytut Spraw Publicznych, 2012).

²⁷ Elschner and Jajeśniak-Quast, "Grenzüberschreitende Arbeit," 121–138.

²⁸ Bohdan Wyżynkiewicz, *Współpraca gospodarcza Polska-Niemcy* (Warszawa: Instytut Badań nad Gospodarką Rynkową we współpracy z fundacją Konrada Adenauera w Polsce, 2014); Dagmara Jajeśniak-Quast, "Polnische Wirtschaft und German Mittelstand - Antworten auf die Krise," in *Niemcy, Szwajcaria, Austria na arenie*

The cooperation based on job-sharing between German and Polish companies in border regions increased significantly too. Good cross-border routes are a decisive factor in the improvement of utilizing of regional potential and strengthening the competitiveness of the border region. Shipping companies from that region complain that despite the cessation of customs control at the border (after Polish entry to the EU), there are still too few border crossing-points for the fast growing cross-border traffic. The highway bridge and German-Polish border crossing-point in Świecko is the second most frequently used border crossing in Germany, after the German-Dutch border crossing-point in Straelen. In 2013, almost 3 million trucks (HGVs) crossed the border in Świecko alone.

After German reunification and the transformation in Poland and East Germany, and especially after Polish entry into the EU, the development prognosis for border regions was optimistic. Domestic and foreign companies were expected to be lured by a convenient location on international transport axes, by advantages of a border location on the “East-West Axis,” by differences in prices of goods and services, as well as by differences in workforce costs, raw materials and energy. In addition, both sides of the border created special economic zones and industrial parks.²⁹ Despite all that, the hopes for mass investments in the border region have not been fulfilled.

Due to the delayed integration of Poland into the EU, all plans have been insufficiently synchronized. The late opening of the German job market for Polish workers is the second reason for that. The similarly weak conditions of the economies on both sides of the border is the third and decisive factor. Business contacts between Germany and Poland show that economic integration exists predominantly between old federal states or Berlin and the Polish metropolitan regions. Ninety-four percent of German companies with subsidiaries and branches in Poland have their head offices in old federal states and only six percent in new federal states (mostly in Berlin). Surveys show clearly that German-Polish economic integration is based mainly on connections between companies from economically strong West German metropolitan regions and economic centers in Poland which, with the exception of Szczecin, lay outside western Polish border regions. This fact indicates that German-Polish border regions have been “left out” of the development of inter-regional interlocking relationships between Germany and Poland. Therefore, the importance of spatial proximity in development of cross-border business relations between Germany and Poland must be relativized. It is not the mobility in a job market that is the main issue in the German-Polish border region, but the creation and maintenance of new jobs.³⁰

międzynarodowej. Polityka – kultura– gospodarka, eds. Ernest Kuczyński and Michał Tomczyk (Łódź: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Łódzkiego, 2014), 22–34.

²⁹ Stefan Krätke and Renate Borst, *Die deutsch-polnischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen als Chance für die Region Berlin- Brandenburg. Perspektiven eines regionalen Kompetenzzentrums für Ost-West-Kooperation im Rahmen der EU-Osterweiterung* (Berlin: Otto Brenner Stiftung, 2004).

³⁰ Hermann Ribhegge, “Rahmenbedingungen für den grenzüberschreitenden Arbeitsmarkt in der deutsch-polnischen und sächsisch-tschechischen Grenzregion,” in *Arbeitsplatzbezogene Entwicklungen in der deutsch-polnischen und sächsisch-tschechischen Grenzregion. Ein Bericht zur Vorbereitung von EURES-T-Partnerschaften an der deutsch-polnischen und sächsisch-tschechischen Grenze*, ed. Kooperationsstelle Wissenschaft und Arbeitswelt (KOWA) (Frankfurt (Oder), 2006).

Conclusion

The theoretical approach of B/ORDERS IN MOTION is well suited to analyze and understand the German-Polish border region, from the period of systemic transformation to EU integration. Notions of durability, permeability and liminality serve perfectly as a conceptual prism to investigate this border region in motion. Following this concept, we can recognize three border regimes involving the processes of demarcation (durability), overcoming (permeability) and creation of border zones (liminality) in the brief history of the German-Polish border.

As a result of the Second World War, the durability of the new German-Polish border as a barrier seemed insurmountable. At first, conditions for trans-border cooperation were difficult at the newly established German-Polish border because of the Cold War and the militarized character of the border. We can call this period of border durability the “military order”, including characteristics typical of wartime, such as forced migration, the strong presence of the military, occupation of the border region, shortage of goods as well as fear, uncertainty and hatred among civilians.

The opening of the border in 1972 began a new – rather unusual for socialist times – “liberal order” in the history of the German-Polish border. The introduction of visa and passport free border traffic created rather progressive conditions for the permeability of the border. Considering especially the period of the 1970s, we can argue that there has been little difference between pre-transformation and current permeable border periods, as far as cooperation across the border is concerned. Despite the differences in decision paths and quality of results, the areas of permeability remain the same: transnational infrastructure, shopping tourism, working on the other side of the border, cross-border commuters and mixed marriages.

The third phase of liminality in the German-Polish border slowly takes on the form typical of a “European order,” with its four basic freedoms of the EU internal market. After a false start in EU integration because of the seven-year transition period, the German-Polish border region has enjoyed the full free movement of persons, goods, capital, and services for six years now. Dynamic developments in all areas of cross-border cooperation are clearly visible. Many citizens and local actors of the border region have taken advantage of the new freedoms found in this “European Order” and use the intermediate spaces, different levels of decision making, and, last but not least, EU-funds for cross-border cooperation in economic, social, cultural and political issues. It is important to mention here that the failures of some projects in infrastructure or economy are usually not caused by the local government, but are rather more systematic in nature. The most important qualitative effect of the German-Polish border transformation at this stage, however, is that the border has, in fact, disappeared. Following the B/ORDERS IN MOTION concept, we can agree with the importance of change in the structure of the border itself which results in the creation of common border zones.

Split towns and regions on the German-Polish border depend on each other. There are hardly any differences in the need for cooperation in the post-war period and modern times. Currently, existential problems of the post-war years are solved. Also, a period of transformation and change in the economic system seems to be over. Still, however, border towns and regions using peripheral location to their advantage can hold on only if they concentrate on the partner on the other side of the

riverbank. Unfortunately, the potential for cross-border cooperation fails the most when general and municipal economic issues arise, such as a common job market, establishing of businesses, commercial use of the river, environmental protection, disaster control, and tourism. Today, as economic relations between Germany and Poland develop dynamically, the German-Polish border region should profit more from this development. Many qualified Polish workers have been lost because of the delayed opening of the German job market (other western European states absorbing them). At the same time, it is clear that regions close to the border can profit from immigration on both sides.

Although tourism has been a similarly growing sector of the economies in both states, the German-Polish border region remains generally unknown as a tourist destination, despite the fact that a cross-border eco-tourism, making use of the extensive natural landscapes, could successfully compete with other European regions.

Finally, there is, of course, a conflict of interest in every cross-border cooperation scheme if both sides of the riverbank fail to act as one region, truly engage in common interests and avoid complicated transfer adjustments. This cross-border *Ehesplitting* should have worked especially well in the border region after the EU-integration. But the transformation from a German-Polish region to a common European region is yet to come.