

# **Rediscovering Europe: Political Challenges in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century EU**

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Poznań 2007

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Projekt współfinansowany ze środków budżetu państwa  
i środków Unii Europejskiej  
w ramach Europejskiego Funduszu Społecznego



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Adam Mickiewicz University,  
89 Umultowska Street, 61-614 Poznań, Poland, tel. (061) 829 01 06

**ISBN 978-83-60677-25-5**

Skład komputerowy – „MRS”  
60-408 Poznań, ul. P. Złotowa 23, tel. 061 843 09 39  
Druk i oprawa – „Wieland” Drukarnia Cyfrowa, Poznań

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## Europeanization of Trans-border Communities. The Polish-German Case<sup>1</sup>

### 1. Introduction

The Polish–German border used to be one of the most problematic in Europe.<sup>2</sup> 19<sup>th</sup> century hostility caused by the partitions of Poland was supplemented by post World War I territorial changes and then in 1945, when the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences established the Oder-Neisse frontier. These agreements were followed by the expulsion of the German population from the newly established Polish territories and the resettlement of Polish inhabitants from pre-war eastern provinces to the new Polish-German borderland. For fifty years, during the communist period, the new border was not only a political problem, but also a social one. First, border communities were physically isolated from each other. Second – because of their different origins – these communities lacked political, social, cultural and economic proximity. This resulted not only in a lack of mutual understanding, but also in the strengthening of stereotypes and prejudices among neighboring Poles and Germans. Third, the region they were inhabiting had been artificially divided, with the new border splitting coherent settlements and towns in two. Finally, coexistence under communist circumstances limited the possibilities of cross border civil society building, based on regional identification. The collapse of the Berlin Wall in Germany and the Round Table Agreement in Poland led to the difficult process of reconciliation and border normalization not only between Germany and Poland, but also between local border communities.<sup>3</sup> However, for many years this process was initiated and conducted at official level, while both Polish and German societies at large were excluded.

This paper's aim is to analyze cross-border civil society building processes in the Polish–German borderland. The main research question addressed here is whether these processes have already created in the Polish-German borderland a single cross-border regional community or simply two communities, one Polish and one German, that exist side by side. Two parallel processes might be observed there: internal democratization including civil society building, as well as cross border cooperation attempts aimed at the same. Both are catalyzed by European integration process and its consequences.

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<sup>1</sup> This paper presents fragments of a Border Communities research project. Wider presentation of its results will be available in 2008 in the printed version.

<sup>2</sup> H. Schulz, *Schwierige Nachbarschaft an Oder und Neiße – Trudne sąsiedztwo nad Odrą i Nysą*, [in:] *Granica-Grenze*, B. Breysach, A. Paszek, A. Tölle (eds.), Berlin 2003.

<sup>3</sup> A. Adamczyk, *Uwarunkowania i perspektywy pojednania polsko-niemieckiego po 1989 roku*, Poznań 1999.

The central theses of this paper are: first, that the most resilient and the fastest developing part of civil society on both sides of the border are non-governmental organizations (NGOs). The conditions under which these NGOs operate are different in both countries from financial, legal and organizational perspectives. This results in different patterns of societal participation in NGOs throughout Poland and Germany. These differences do not prevent NGOs from cross-border attempts at cooperation, neither does historical heritage.

Second, that cross-border cooperation of NGOs, as the most active part of both societies, is a consequence of the Europeanization of trans-border realities.<sup>4</sup> It is the Europeanization process that initiates, modifies and defines directions of trans-border community creation. NGOs are the torchbearers of this phenomenon.

Third, Europeanization of trans-border communities is most visible in the case of Polish-German border in border “divided cities.”<sup>5</sup> Due to their spatial nearness they work as “laboratories of European integration”<sup>6</sup> where specific phenomena – especially related to the integration process – are much more apparent.

This paper consists of theoretical considerations supported by empirical research in one of the ‘divided cities’ – Słubice-Frankfurt (Oder). The research was conducted in 2005 and 2006 and was divided into two parts. The first was quantitative and consisted of a questionnaire-based investigation. Non-governmental organizations from both Frankfurt (Oder) and Słubice (33 and 19 respectively – in practice most of the active organizations in both towns) were examined. All the data presented are statistically relevant. The second, qualitative, part of the empirical research aimed at explaining the results of statistical investigation through interviews with NGO representatives. Ten interviews in total were carried out.

## 2. Europeanization

Traditionally defined borders are first of all obstacles, sovereignty markers and supervising tools. They “(...) are a means of control involving the use of bounded geographical spaces (...). Territoriality ‘classifies, communicates and controls’ by drawing borders, assigning things to particular spaces, and regulating cross-border movements and access into and/or out of specified areas.”<sup>7</sup> As a result of European integration processes this meaning has been supplemented or even replaced by a new one, where bor-

<sup>4</sup> A. D. Asher, *A Paradise on the Oder? Ethnicity, Europeanization, and the EU referendum in a Polish-German border city*, “City and Society,” vol. 17, Issue 1.

<sup>5</sup> A. D. Asher, J. Jańczak, *Transnational Mythmaking in Post-Soviet Europe: Cold War and EU Monuments in a Polish – German ‘Divided City’*, [in:] *Art and Politics*, Kaunas 2007 (in print preparation).

<sup>6</sup> D. Jajesniak-Quast, H. Schulz, K. Stokłosa, *Twin Towns on the Border as Laboratories of European Integration*, F.I.T. Diskussionspapiere 04/2002; R. Zaiotti, *Bridging Common Sense: Pragmatic Metaphors And The Schengen Laboratory*, [in:] *Metaphors Of Globalization Mirrors, Magicians, and Mutinies*, M. Kornprobst, V. Pouliot, N. Shah, R. Zaiotti (eds.), Palgrave 2007.

<sup>7</sup> J. Anderson, L. O’Dowd, T. M. Wilson, *Why Study Borders Now?*, [in:] *New Borders for a changing Europe. Cross-border Cooperation and Governance*, J. Anderson, L. O’Dowd, T. M. Wilson (eds.), London–Portland 2003, pp. 6–7.

ders are no longer to delimit but above all to bridge states, communities, systems and individuals. This process, that was meant to lead to a “borderless world”<sup>8</sup> and a “Europe without frontiers,”<sup>9</sup> was initiated in the western part of the continent.<sup>10</sup> It was an outcome of the process of creating a single market and full implementation of free flow of capital, services, persons and goods,<sup>11</sup> leading to the 1984 Saarbrücken Agreement and achieved in the 1985 and 1990 Schengen Agreements. Borders and territoriality were no longer exclusive national competences,<sup>12</sup> also because of the new forms of international threats.<sup>13</sup>

This new border situation was confronted with the collapse of communism and the attempts at EU accession of Central and Eastern European states. Being unstable, affected by different economic and political problems and additionally – in some cases – historically conflicted, they created a big challenge for Old Europe.<sup>14</sup> From the point of view of borders and border communities, to enable the integration process and disappearance of limits in the longer perspective, similar solutions to the standard Western European ones had to be introduced on the borders of Central and Eastern European states. This meant opening the borders, facilitating the free flow of individuals and then creating links between the two previously isolated and alien communities to lead to a conflict-free coexistence, a community of interests and finally (potentially) to a new regional identity (or identities). This project was intended to follow the logic of the phenomenon of Europeanization based on a social constructivist approach.

According to social constructivism “norms may influence the behavior of political actors,”<sup>15</sup> so they may be crucial for the creation of patterns of behavior.<sup>16</sup> From that perspective, the European integration process is “the creation of common rules (...) or even beliefs (...) that influences the activity of different actors.”<sup>17</sup> Integration is then

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<sup>8</sup> J. A. Agnew, *A World That Knows No Boundaries? The Geopolitics of Globalization and the Myth of a Borderless World*, CIBR Working Papers in Border Studies, WP03-2.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid.

<sup>10</sup> The border softening process was also observable in Northern Europe. Nordic Passport Union was proposed in 1928 and for the second time implemented in 1957. Cf.: A. Patek, *Współpraca Państw Nordyckich w okresie międzywojennym*, Zeszyty Naukowe Uniwersytetu Jagiellońskiego MCLXXVII – 1995; J. Nowiak, *Współpraca Nordycka. Wzór dobrej polityki*, Poznań 2001.

<sup>11</sup> L. O’Dowd, *The Changing Significance of European Borders*, [in:] *New Borders for a changing Europe. Cross-border Cooperation and Governance*, J. Anderson, L. O’Dowd, T. M. Wilson (eds.), London–Portland 2003, p. 20.

<sup>12</sup> K. Hayward, *From Barriers to Bridges: The Europeanization of Ireland’s Borders*, CIBR Working Papers in Border Studies, CIBR/WP04-1, p. 6.

<sup>13</sup> J. Jańczak, *Counter-terrorism and borders in the European Union. Tendencies, strategies and reactions in border protection area on changing security threats in Europe*, [in:] *The Modern Terrorism and its Forms*, S. Wojciechowski (ed.), Poznań 2007, p. 268.

<sup>14</sup> J. Jańczak, *Wschodnia granica Unii Europejskiej – nowe funkcje granic w Europie Środkowej – Die Ostgrenze der Europäischen Union – neue Funktionen der Grenzen in Mitteleuropa*, [in:] *Granicz-Grenze*, B. Breysach, A. Paszek, A. Tölle (eds.), Berlin 2003.

<sup>15</sup> M. Wilga, *Integracja europejska w konstruktywizmie*, “Przegląd Politologiczny” 2001, nr 1–2, p. 45.

<sup>16</sup> J. T. Checkel, *Constructivist approaches to European integration*, ARENA Working Paper, no. 6, Oslo 2006.

<sup>17</sup> M. Wilga, *Integracja europejska w konstruktywizmie...*, p. 45.

equivalent with socialization. Actors internalize norms and as a result see their own interests in a new way<sup>18</sup>.

As proposed by Roberta Ladrecha, Europeanization is "(...) a process re-orienting the direction and shape of politics to the degree that EC political and economic dynamics became part of national politics and policy-making."<sup>19</sup> Johan P. Olsen sees it as "changes in external territorial boundaries."<sup>20</sup> Francois Bafoil and Timma Beichelta claim that Europeanization should be understood as a macroprocess that is not based on linear adaptation where norms and values are transferred from European to national level (as, say, in the misfit model<sup>21</sup>). In their opinion Europeanization "(...) affects all functional instances of the policy cycle. Not only the actors and institutions conform the EU level through social learning but also society and its individuals and their norms and values."<sup>22</sup>

According to Katy Hayward, Europeanized space (territory) is defined in the European Union by 'boundaries' not by 'borders.' Europeanization, then, means unifying people, not necessarily territories.<sup>23</sup> As the post World War II territorial changes on the Polish-German borderland made it a contested space, (European) unification without border changes is possible only by the cooperation of people, organizations and institutions under the conditions of still existing cultural, historical, economic, and other differences and the diminishing importance of state borders.

### 3. Polish-German border

As a result of World War II territorial changes, the Oder-Neisse line was drawn, regardless of local ethnic conditions, but, unlike other 'artificial' borders, in this case the ethnic reality was adjusted to the political and legal decisions. The German population (including the German minority from pre-war Poland) escaped or was expelled<sup>24</sup> and the new Polish territories, officially referred to as "Regained Territories,"<sup>25</sup> were settled with Poles coming from the Polish eastern borderland, which had been ceded to the Soviet Union. The boundary between the nations has since 1946 been the equivalent of

<sup>18</sup> J. T. Checkel, *Social Construction and Integration*, ARENA Working Paper, no. 14, Oslo 1998; P. Cichocki, *Spółeczny konstruktywizm a realna władza polityczna*, [in:] *Konstrukcja czy rekonstrukcja rzeczywistości? Dylematy społecznego zaangażowania*, M. Korczyński, P. Pluciński (eds.), Poznań 2006.

<sup>19</sup> R. Ladrech, *The Europeanization of Domestic Politics and Institutions: The Case of France*, "European Journal of Common Market Studies," no. 1, pp. 69–88.

<sup>20</sup> J. P. Olsen, *The Many Faces of Europeanization*, ARENA Working Papers, 01/2.

<sup>21</sup> T. Risse, M. Cowles, J. Caporaso, *Europeanization and Domestic Change. Introduction*, [in:] *Transforming Europe. Europeanization and Domestic Change*, M. Cowles, J. Caporaso, T. Risse (eds.), London 2001.

<sup>22</sup> F. Bafoil, T. Beichelta, *Dimensions of Europeanization*, [in:] *Européanisation. D'Ouest en Est*, F. Bafoil, T. Beichelta (eds.), Paris 2007, p. 8.

<sup>23</sup> K. Hayward, *From Barriers to...*

<sup>24</sup> *Schweige Nachbarn? 300 Jahre deutsch-polnische Nachbarschaft/Trudni sąsiedzi? 300 lat polsko-niemieckiego sąsiedztwa*, W. Michalka, R. Schmoock (eds.), Berlin 2007.

<sup>25</sup> P. Eberhardt, *Polska i jej granice. Z historii polskiej geografii politycznej*, Lublin 2004.

a boundary between states. The borderland population could then be described as “those who are members of the national majority in their states, and have no ethnic ties across the state’s borders.”<sup>26</sup> The German minority in Poland remained in the middle of the state, in the area of the old borderland. The Polish minority in Germany no longer existed because its areas of residence were now within the Polish state.

Due to the resettlement there was no former tradition of contact, i.e. no family or social links. Additionally, it was unlikely they could be established. Until 1950 the GDR and until 1970 the FRG did not recognize the new border. However, the border remained closed until 1971.<sup>27</sup> Its delayed opening was related to Polish fears of being flooded with revisionist oriented Germans. In the case of West Germany territorial claims were vivid even after the border treaty. The border was closed again in 1980 as a result of revolutionary anticommunist attitudes in Poland and their potentially dangerous influence on the GDR. As a result despite the official rhetoric of ‘borders of friendship’ and ‘peace loving’ neighbors, the Polish-German borderland was an area of uncertainty and temporality where the population was kept apart and had no chance to engage in contact, which had an effect on mutual cognition and acceptance.

The German population on the western bank of the Oder had no tradition of borderland coexistence with the Poles. The border used to be several hundred kilometers eastwards. The Polish settlers had this experience but it was the experience of the Polish-Ukrainian, Belorussian and Lithuanian neighborhood. The Poles, who had experienced Polish-German coexistence, were now living in the central parts of Poland.

Additionally, the period of real Communism was characterized by the predominance of the paradigm of ethnic and religious homogeneity in both Poland and Germany. Double or dispersed identity was not recognized. That was the result of historical heritage and fears of separatism and isolationism.

In the Cold War period the Polish-German borderland and relations between the two countries were presented as everlasting German hostility, i.e. “Drang nach Osten (longing for the East),” an aggression that started with the Polish baptism and Teutonic Order state establishment in Eastern Prussia and ended with Poland’s partition at the end of the eighteenth century, Second World War aggression and finally West Germany’s policy of territorial revisionism.<sup>28</sup> The Poles had to fight against constant German pressure and the 1945 border shift westwards was no more than the return of ancient Polish territories. Fifty years of anti-German socialization also justified the alliance with the ‘friendly’ Soviet Union, which in practice was the only guarantor of the new, imposed western borders. This was embodied in the educational system.

As a result of the collapse of communism and the European integration process in Central Europe, the concept of the ‘borderland’ reappeared in Polish social sciences at the beginning of the 1990s.<sup>29</sup> After border change and population replacement in 1945

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<sup>26</sup> H. Donnan, T. M. Wilson, *Identity and Culture at Europe’s Frontiers*, [in:] *Who are the Europeans Now?*, E. Moxon-Browne (ed.), Ashgate, Aldershot 2004, p. 14.

<sup>27</sup> C. Trosiak, *Pogranicze polsko-niemieckie po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Poznań 1999.

<sup>28</sup> K. Zernack, *Niemcy-Polska: z dziejów trudnego dialogu historiograficznego*, Poznań 2006.

<sup>29</sup> K. Kociubiński, *Transfrontier Co-operation in Polish-German Borderland*, “Yearbook of Polish Foreign Policy” 2000.

the idea of the 'border' was emphasized. 'Borderland,' on the other hand, was reminiscent of the problem of Polish-German interwar relations,<sup>30</sup> which were characterized by territorial conflict as well as minority problems.<sup>31</sup> The reappearance of the concept of the borderland facilitated the possibility of trans-border cooperation.<sup>32</sup>

#### 4. Borders and borderlands – perspectives for cooperation

A borderland is often defined as an area between centers, as an area 'in-between,' in which both centers' influence overlap. Centers are well defined, homogenous and closed, whereas borderlands are only outlined, heterogeneous and open. Additionally, individuals are confronted with 'others' and can compare similarities but primarily differences.<sup>33</sup> On the other hand, a border area might not contain any elements of borderland which are defined in that way. This is possible in the case of closed borders between states in conflict. Alienation, isolation and lack of mutual connections, as well as a lack of will for such contacts, may, alongside attempts to confirm the center's rights to a specific territory, create quite the opposite process. The border area will have to be 'center like' by confirming its state affiliation and center orientation, where the foreign neighboring area neither influences the one under analysis nor is influenced by it. The main thesis of this article is that the Polish-German border area is in the process of moving from the second model to the first one, i.e. from 'by each other' to 'with each other' which follows the logic of the Europeanization of borders.

Jerzy Nikitorowicz, similarly to other attempts,<sup>34</sup> defines and describes borderland using four perspectives: geographical, cultural, interactive and personal. The geographical meaning of borderland may be described as a territory of coexistence between two groups and maybe of two types: contactive or transitional. Contactive means in practice their isolation, transitional is much a wider and more gentle change, where one of them is gradually replaced by the second.<sup>35</sup> Cultural borderland could be considered as a set of habits and rules that define the coexistence of different groups in territorial borderland. An established set of values and a resulting local identity is a mixture of two identities and cultures coming from the centers and might lead to biculturalism.<sup>36</sup> Interactional borderland can be reduced to interpersonal communication processes and leads from

<sup>30</sup> U. H. Meinhof, D. Galasiński, *Reconfiguring East-West identities: cross-generational discourses in German and Polish border communities*, "Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies" 2002, vol. 28, no. 1.

<sup>31</sup> C. Trościak, *Pogranicze polsko-niemieckie...*, pp. 22, 27.

<sup>32</sup> K. Dascher, *The Cross-Border Region of Frankfurt (Oder)-Stubice: An Economic Perspective*, OECD Report, May 2003.

<sup>33</sup> J. Nikitrowicz, *Pogranicze, tożsamość, edukacja międzykulturowa*, Trans Humana, Białystok 1995, p. 11.

<sup>34</sup> S. Ossowski, *Zagadnienie więzi regionalnej i więzi narodowej na Śląsku Opolskim*, Warszawa 1967, p. 280; J. Chlebówczyk, *O prawie do bytu małych i młodych narodów*, [in:] *Kwestia narodowa i procesy narodotwórcze we wschodniej Europie Środkowej w dobie kapitalizmu (od schyłku XVIII do początków XX w.)*, Warszawa-Kraków 1983.

<sup>35</sup> C. Trościak, *Pogranicze polsko-niemieckie po drugiej wojnie światowej*, Poznań 1999.

<sup>36</sup> J. Nikitrowicz, *Pogranicze, tożsamość, edukacja...*, p. 12.

stereotypes and prejudices to mutual understanding and respect as well as the recognition of the similar needs and aims of both groups. Not only differences are visible but also community.<sup>37</sup> Finally the personal aspect of borderland is related to the state of consciousness whereby individuals extend their own territorially well-settled mental pattern, which is defined by the center, and gain the possibility of a comparative approach. Living in geographical borderland does not automatically imply living in a cultural, interactional or personal borderland,<sup>38</sup> especially if it is of the contactive type. As a result, two groups might live side by side but not with each other. That, added to closed borders and an official border isolation policy in the past, may be the reasons for the lack of real dialog and trans-border social ties, indifference and, finally, center orientation as well as hostility.

The Polish-German case objectively exists as a geographical component of the border in the form of a contactive borderland, cooperation and community building, which may be regarded from cultural, interactive and personal perspectives. In every case leading actors as well as the advancement of cooperation should be analyzed.

Table 1

Cooperation perspectives in the Polish-German borderland

	<b>Cultural</b>	<b>Interactive</b>	<b>Personal</b>
Leading actors	public institutions	non-governmental organizations	individuals
Cooperation advancement	high	medium	low

**Source:** Author's concept.

Habits and laws are determined in the Polish-German borderland primarily by public sector institutions. Local governments, different agencies, agendas and public services and so on, have been cooperating relatively intensely since 1989 according to the top – bottom pattern. They have created the most visible rules and procedures in the borderland. They are also strongly influenced by the local borderland identity. It does not mean sharing any sense of a regional identity which is different from Polish or German identity, or any sense of belonging to a regional, ethnic or national group. It is rather a pragmatic way of mutual use of a geographical location as a negotiating argument in front of national and European authorities and institutions. Both present the centers with their own peripheral borderland uniqueness, they are ‘gates,’ ‘bridges,’ ‘cooperation and reconciliation pioneers,’ etc. As Robert Parkin says, recognition of this special status is the basis for effective benefit from being different to other provinces and cities, etc.<sup>39</sup>

Nevertheless, individuals are the main actors in the personal aspect of borderland. In this case the level of interaction is relatively limited. The possibility of changing mental patterns is somewhat restricted, due to the superficial character of interpersonal con-

<sup>37</sup> Ibid., p. 13.

<sup>38</sup> Ibid., p. 15.

<sup>39</sup> R. Parkin, *Regional Identities and Alliances in an Integrating Europe: A Challenge to the Nation State?*, University of Oxford, Oxford 1999, p. 5.

tacts. Poles and Germans interact mainly in the commercial context as customers or goods and services suppliers. Other contacts are very rare, with the exception of academic circles. As a result individuals usually have no social contacts and do not act in social contexts. The comparative perspective does not usually include mental patterns.

The gap between the cultural aspect of the borderland, which functions well institutionally, and the limited influence of personal perspective on individuals is filled by non-governmental organizations, which are visible as an interactive component. They seem to be the only subjects able to successfully implement the cooperation of public institutions and to engage individuals to participate in non-commercial Polish-German interaction. Polish and German NGOs, which concern themselves with different problematic areas, are able to talk and collaborate in order to set out and achieve common goals. Common goal setting only occurs within institutions supporting the cultural dimension in the borderland and is missing in the case of individuals when analyzing the personal aspect.

### 5. Non-Governmental Organizations in Poland and Germany

Non-governmental<sup>40</sup> organizations in the Polish-German<sup>41</sup> borderland in practice consist of two categories: trans-border organizations and specifically national organizations. The first intend to operate both in Poland and Germany by uniting Poles and Germans around common issues. The second act irrespective of the fact that the border exists but on the other hand often try to gain advantage from the fact the border is closed.

There are very few initiatives operating on both sides of the river. Those which have existed are organized according to one of the patterns: they are registered in one of the countries but in practice were established by groups of individuals from Poland and Germany. Additionally, they operate in practice in both states. The second possibility is the registration of two separate organizations with the same name: Polish in Poland, where the members are mainly Polish citizens, and German in Germany, where the members are mainly German citizens. In practice they operate as one organization. Double affiliation multiplies potential sources of financial support, as well as solves the problem of a partner organization from the second country, which is required by many institutional donors. In practice those organizations in the case of Słubice/Frankfurt (Oder) are related to the universities and academic circles and operate in the area of culture and common historical heritage.

The problem of trans-border civil society building is related first of all to specifically national initiatives for two reasons: first of all they are usually local initiatives reflecting local needs, even if they are local branches of German, Polish or even world-wide organizations. They express problems that are relevant to the local communities, but which are disregarded or not actively being solved by local authorities. Secondly, they consist of local inhabitants, in contrast to the trans-border organizations (consisting mainly of students who usually came to both towns from other provinces).

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<sup>40</sup> J. Leś, *Organizacje pozarządowe w Europie Środkowej i Wschodniej*, Toruń 1999.

<sup>41</sup> M. Kurzwelly, *NGOs w Niemczech*, [in:] *NGO Słubfurt project*, collective publication, Słubice 2005.

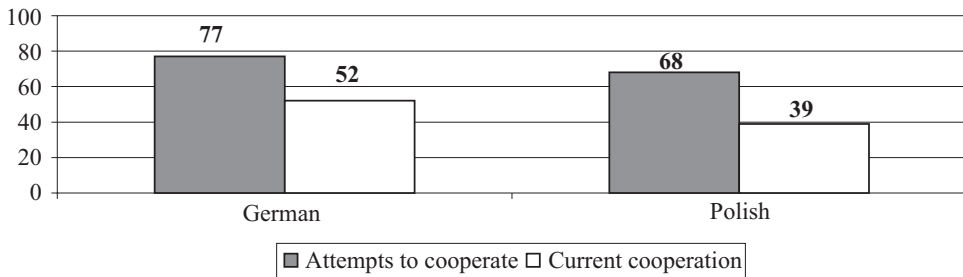
The mobility of the population on both sides of the river is relatively low. The majority of the cities' inhabitants have close family links to the area.

NGOs are usually formed to solve specific problems which have been noticed by one of the two communities and are internally oriented. As a result their fields of interest quite often double. This creates the situation in which the foreign partner is available in part of the city located on the other side of the border.

### 6. Empirical findings

The vast majority (77% of examined German NGOs and 68% of the Polish ones) of organizations in the divided city declared that they have tried to cooperate with their partner from the other side of the river, in the case of 52% of organizations from Frankfurt (Oder) and 39% from Słubice this resulted in ongoing cooperation (Graph 1). This shows that in – for many years isolated – communities everyday cooperation aiming at solving the most current problems is a fact in the case of non-governmental organizations.

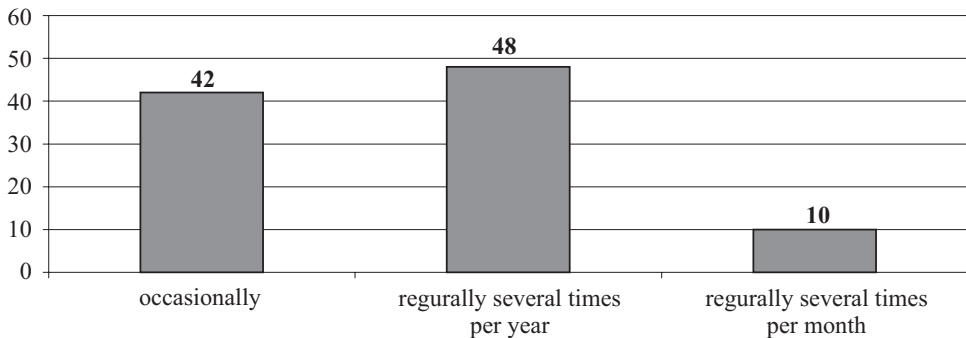
Graph 1. NGO cooperation Słubice – Frankfurt (Oder) (%)



Source: Own research.

When analyzing the quality of cooperation (Graph 2) most of the NGOs collaborate on a regular basis, usually several times per year. About 10% do so several times per month.

Graph 2. Cooperation frequency (%)

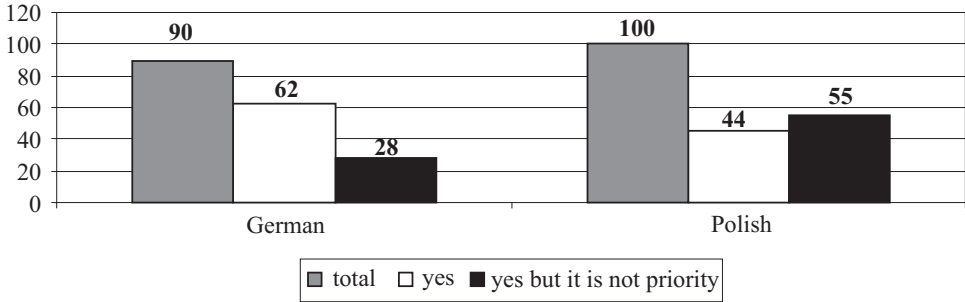


Source: Own research.

month. This seems to show that this process is not of declaratory character but rather involves real efforts to achieve common (trans-border) aims.

In the case of organizations that do not cooperate with a partner from the other side of the border, almost all (90%) in the German case and all (100%!) in the Polish one (Graph 3) declare a willingness to collaborate. Additionally, for most of the former it is a priority of their organizational activity, as well as for almost all of the latter. This means that all organizations in Stubice and almost all in Frankfurt (Oder) cooperate or want to cooperate with a German or Polish partner organization respectively. As the organizations were very different with regard to the field of activeness, resources, size, etc., the most probable explanation for this fact are norms and values. Trans-border cooperation has become one of the most vivid elements of both communities' directions of development. Cooperation brings pragmatic benefits, but is first of all a value in itself. Organizations want to cooperate because trans-border openness, trans-border interests and the trans-border region became, to some extent, a fact. It is no longer state centers that determine the orientation of local citizens but the neighboring communities.

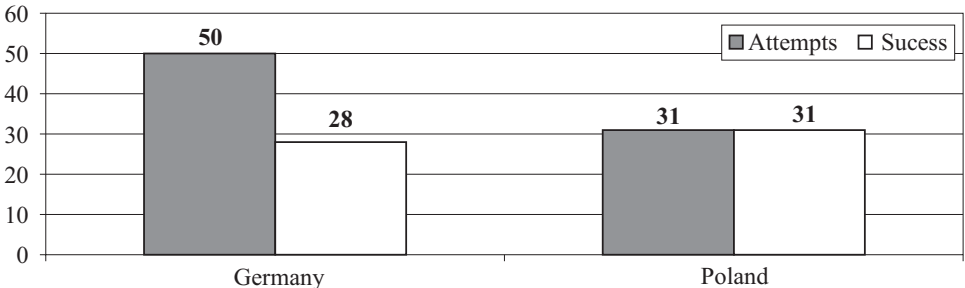
Graph 3. Will to cooperate in the case of a lack of cooperation (%)



Source: Own research.

On the other hand – following Parkin’s argument – special border status as well as trans-border cooperation bring gains for participating actors. Many of the interviewed organizations declared that they applied for financial support for joint initiatives or even obtained this support (Graph 4). Support usually being an instrument of the Euro-

Graph 4. External financial support for joint projects (%)

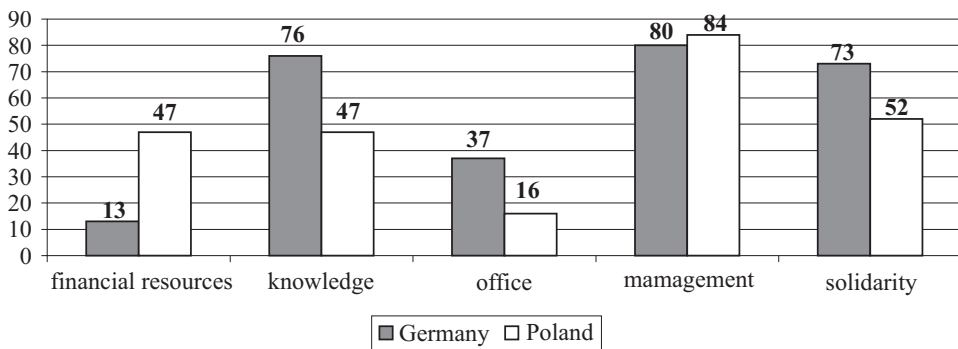


Source: Own research.

pean Union to encourage trans-border cooperation and the creation of trans-border communities. On the other hand, not all organizations became involved in that sort of activity, which means that financial gains are not the main reason for cooperation.

This is also visible when comparing what the organizations expect from the cooperation. It is not financial support that dominates (Graph 5). Management skills, solidarity and knowledge are the most commonly declared ones. So, even if collaboration were a matter of pragmatism it is not first of all about the money. The high level of support for solidarity as an expectation of cooperation demonstrates that values and a feeling of (trans-border) community is relatively strong.

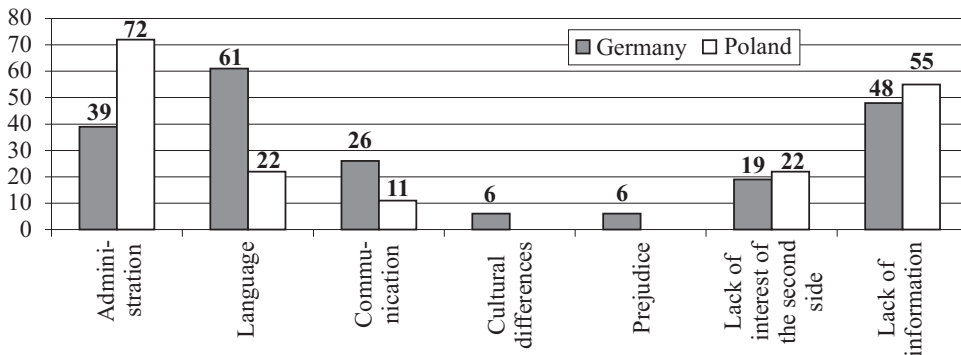
Graph 5. Demands from cooperation (%)



Source: Own research.

Does this mean, then, that in the field of NGO activity one could describe a regional community rather than a community of regions? The answers to the question (Graph 6) about the main problems in cooperation reveal some explanations. Apart from administrative and organizational problems, language difference as well as a lack of information on developments on the other side of the river limit collaboration possibilities. What is also interesting is that ‘difficult history’ was not chosen at all, meaning history was not considered an obstacle in the eyes of NGOs.

Graph 6. Main problems in cooperation (%)



Source: Own research.

## 7. Conclusion

The Europeanization of trans-border communities seems to be visible when analyzing the most advanced sector of cooperation in the divided city of Słubice and Frankfurt (Oder) – non-governmental organizations. Empirical findings show that isolation, characteristic of the cold war period and strengthened by the border shift as well as population replacement, has adapted to the new situation. European integration together with – following the Beichelt-Bafois model – global influences adjusted the border cooperation between two border communities to European patterns despite observable asymmetries.<sup>42</sup>

The trans-border community in Słubice-Frankfurt (Oder) seems to be in the process of creation. It is located between a community of regions and a regional community. NGOs are the frontrunners of this process, combining the effectiveness of public institutions and involvement of individuals. Their activities follow the Europeanization model and social constructivist logic. As shown in empirical part, European values of coexistence and cooperation have been internalized and are reflected in the beliefs and activities of NGOs. Common problem solving is a value in itself that pushes them to act together. It also has been redefining interests and their perception, where trans-border cooperation is aimed to be beneficial and fruitful for all participants.

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<sup>42</sup> W. Holly, J. Nevkapil, I. Scherm, P. Tišerová, *Unequal neighbours: coping with asymmetries*, “Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies” 2003, vol. 29, no. 5.