

THE IDENTITY OF THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN BORDERLAND IN THE CONTEXT OF THE EUROPEAN ASPIRATIONS

The outcome of the negotiations between the Ukrainian authorities and the European Union, meanders of President Yanukovich's policies and actions, the Ukrainian society torn apart between its European and pro-Russian aspirations are another good illustration of the situation well familiar not only to close observers of political processes in this part of Europe. Already the Orange revolution, as a result of which Viktor Yushchenko came to power in 2005, demonstrated the lack of social and national unity in Ukraine. This lack of unity is much deeper than in any other state in this part of Europe. As we know, Viktor Yanukovich's attempt to come to power was accompanied not only by electoral fraud, but also by an attempt to poison Viktor Yushchenko in order to eliminate him – not just in the political sense – from the presidential race.

The withdrawal of the Ukrainian authorities from signing the Association agreement with the EU does not just demonstrate their fears of economic repressions from the Russian side. A symbolic connection as well as business relations with Russia also play a significant role here, which is especially true for the inhabitants of eastern Ukraine. That region used to be part of the former Russian empire and was deeply dependent on Russia for several centuries until the declaration of independence of Ukraine. Even the term *Malorosy* (Small Russians) used in the tsarist Russia in reference to Ukrainians unambiguously demonstrates that the ethnic or national separateness of Ukrainians was never recognised. They were treated as a regional group, close to Russians in linguistic terms and lacking any cultural uniqueness or separate identity.

When the signing of the document that was supposed to crown many months of negotiations on the EU association was cancelled in Vilnius in November 2013, the Ukrainian society reacted immediately. This reaction once again demonstrated the divisions and the lack of social unity in Ukraine. Just as during the Orange revolution, crowds of people from western and central Ukraine gathered together in the centre of Kyiv in order to protest against the policy of the government and the president and to support the pro-western and pro-European political course of the state as well as the signing of the association agreement with the EU. There were rumours that the Party of Regions – the political base of the incumbent president – would also bring 50 thousand miners from the eastern part of the country to demonstrate support for the integration with Russia. The map of supporters and critics of Yanukovich's actions to a large extent reflects the political map of the last presidential elections of 2010. Population of western Ukraine has been the most critical of the decisions of the government and parliament, dominated by the presidential party, as well as of president Yanukovich himself. This region was never (or very briefly) part of the Russian empire or under cultural and political supremacy of Russia. Admittedly residents of this part of contemporary Ukraine never before had their own state either – for several centuries it was part of the Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth and later of Austro-Hungarian Empire. But the conditions for the development of the national movement were better there and the Ukrainian culture enjoyed more autonomy. Without passing judgements on whether subordination to Vienna was better than to Moscow, it appears that the former one was more favourable for the Ukrainian culture or at least did not cross out the opportunities for the formation of a separate Ukrainian national identity. One more aspect is worth our attention: in the west of the country, especially in the former Galicia, the role of the Greek Catholic Church, strongly associated with Ukrainian national identity, has been essential; whereas the east of the country is almost exclusively Orthodox, under the Moscow Patriarchate.

In this article we do not present a broader analysis of this issue and its geography, but focus exclusively on the Polish-Ukrainian borderland area and the processes and phenomena observable here for a dozen years

or so. The present text is based on the results of our research conducted in villages on both sides of the border. Our work has not been completed yet, however it is already possible to make some conclusions. Our observations as well as opinions of our interviewees with regard to the distant and not so distant past and their attitudes towards Poland, their immediate neighbour, and Russia help us to understand the events in Kyiv, Lviv and other cities in the western part of Ukraine taking place in reaction towards the Ukrainian authorities' policy on European integration.

The nature of a border is to divide: be it space, territory, states, societies, cultures, identities, etc. At the core of this division there lies the rule of belonging. Somebody (something) is either “one of us” or “the other”. This is how, in a simplified way, new state borders are formed and local societies and communities living at borderlands function. Therefore the intention of our research of ethno-cultural processes in the present-day borderland is not to establish ethnic boundaries, but rather to analyse current relations between states, societies, cultures, local communities, and people living on both sides of the border demarcated after the World War II. Even though according to many authors territory and common past are the two basic elements of a national identity, we cannot consider them as sufficient for explaining national identity issues, especially in periphery territories in borderlands. In borderlands, where territory and common past are shared by at least two and often more nations and often become objects of confrontation and competition, a very important role for national identity is played by language and cultural and religious identification.

Contemporary Polish-Ukrainian Borderlands

For a very long period of neighbourhood these two nations, Poles and Ukrainians (western Ukrainians, to be precise), were not divided by a state border. The contemporary border was established (with some later alterations) as the Soviet-German border in September 1939. After the World War II it became the border between Poland and the Soviet Union. Only from 1991 can we talk about the Polish-Ukrainian border. This border used to be – until the start of Poland's intensive integration with the EU and NATO structures – the most open and friendly border ever for the two nations. Poland's entry into the EU has made this border a dividing line not only between Poland and Ukraine, but also between Ukraine and the European Union member-states. As a result, on one hand, the contacts between people have become more difficult, despite the declarations of closeness and “strategic partnership” by politicians. On the other, the border has become much more than a matter of interest for petty businessmen and smugglers. It has also become the place of human trafficking. People started to cross this border illegally in order to escape from conflict zones in Asia and Caucasus or simply to look for better living standards and economic opportunities in Europe, especially in Western Europe, perceived by them as the space of wealth and democracy, tolerance and social security.

The population of the Polish-Ukrainian borderlands has changed considerably in ethnic terms as a result of forced repatriation, deportations as well as voluntary migration. Few Ukrainians were left on the Polish side of the border and few Poles – on the other side of the border, in the (former) Soviet Union. The intensification of trans-border contacts and the beginning of revitalization of the ethnic borderlands have been related to the independence of Ukraine and the national revival.

The themes most often studied within the research of borderlands include national identity and factors that shape it. It is obvious, especially for borderlands scholars, that this issue is directly related to language, religion, social stratification and, in particular, to historical memory and trans-ethnic relations. We are also aware that despite the fact that after the WWII both countries remained in the same political sphere but different forms of state organisation, there were considerable differences with regard to the implementation of state policy and the level of indoctrination of citizens in respective states.

Even the distance to the border demonstrated how different the attitude to it was on its both sides. The so-called “sistema” (the system) – a barbed wire fence with special devices, a signalisation system, a network of sentry and observation towers and numerous military watchtowers – has been dismantled only recently, sometime after the proclamation of independence of Ukraine. The change of attitude towards the border and the process of getting accustomed to it and its new accessibility could start only later on. Before that the borderland was a forbidden territory, getting close to which resulted in severe consequences. Also the ideological perception of the border as the dividing line from a foreign state – which was not necessarily friendly towards the Soviet Union, and from the 1980s also incited trouble in the “camp of progress” – started to change only recently, as a result of observable changes as well as independent domestic and foreign policy of the Ukrainian state. The fast pace of these changes is also noteworthy, even though it is not the same in all parts of Ukraine. It is easy to predict that in Galicia the situation is different than the situation in the east the country. To a large extent this can be attributed to differences in their historical experiences during and after the war, their attitudes towards the Soviet Russia, Germany as well as Poland and Poles, and most of all, their attitudes towards their own history.

Watchtowers and barbed wire that often can be spotted at borderlands are a distinct sign of independence that defines territorial boundaries, as Donnan and Wilson (2001, Introduction) point out. For decades they were present at the border between Poland and the Soviet Ukraine, or rather Ukraine, which was part of the Soviet Union, to be precise. Yet, for many residents of the borderland area these attributes were not symbols of their own statehood or relative independence, even though this land was called the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic and had its own representative in the UN. The deciding reasons why local people did not accept this border and had a hostile attitude towards it were the circumstances of its emergence and the accompanying acts of forced repatriation, burning of villages, destruction of churches and cemeteries, etc.

Without doubt the participants of those events perceived the border as out of place and had a hostile attitude towards the new situation. Due to the way it was established, the state border between Ukraine and Poland was associated with injustice, harm, loss of family and places important for the local population on both sides of the border including homes and households, churches and cemeteries with graves of the close ones. As a result, the smooth process of passing on local ethno-cultural traditions and historical memory was interrupted, which opened the opportunities for changing their ethnic identity and creating *homo sovieticus*. Within half a century the communist authorities partly succeeded in this.

The local people treated the border as an institution that not only violated their social system but also considerably complicated their everyday life. This was particularly true for the residents of the territories belonging to the Soviet state.

Yet, in a matter of several decades the attitude of the local population to the border has changed radically. This is also true for the local residents themselves, their behaviour, mentality or everyday life. The process of de-population of these territories – when the elder population has been dying out and young people have been leaving local villages – has shaped the current state of historical memory and local identity in a considerable way. This is especially true for the eldest generation and the people who could be seen as bearers of memory who bring up next generations.

The formation of the border and local communities

< The cleansing of Poles from what became western Ukraine and the cleansing of Ukrainians from what became southeastern Poland ended hundreds of years of mixed settlement of borderlands. Since the early modern period, the three main languages of Galicia and Volhynia had been Ukrainian, Polish, and Yiddish, the four main religions Orthodoxy, Greek Catholicism, Roman Catholicism, and Judaism.2

Galician and Volhynian Jews were all but annihilated in the Holocaust, and many of the survivors emigrated after the war. Poles and Ukrainians continued to inhabit these lands, but by 1947 were divided for the first time by a durable border between political units called “Polish” and “Ukrainian.”>, (Snyder 2006, p. 203).

The account of what was happening in the territories of the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian borderlands after WWII to a large extent depends on who is making it. The interpretation of the events often depends on the national identity of the speaker – whether it is Ukrainian or Polish. For this reason we started this fragment of the text with citing the opinion of Timothy Snyder, an American historian, and not a Ukrainian or a Pole, whose advantage is that he does not rely exclusively on Polish or Ukrainian publications, but does his own research in the archives of Kyiv, Warsaw and other cities and forms his opinions on the basis of his own assessment of the documents he has come across.

We will complement Snyder’s claim with the information necessary to understand the statements of our interviewees. We try to limit ourselves to dry presentation of selected fragments of the events that took place as a result of the agreement referred to by Snyder as well as the implementation of the Soviet policy of establishing a new geo-political order in Eastern Europe, including a new ethnic map.

Repatriations started already in 1939 and were continued by the Soviet authorities until 1944. On the Polish side whole villages – not only those in the immediate proximity of the border, but also those located much further to the west, but populated by Orthodox and Ukrainian residents – were relocated to the east, to the territories within the boundaries of the Soviet Union. Soviet agitators were able to persuade even residents of villages located several dozen kilometres to the west from the border to relocate voluntarily.

Despite the fact that the war was over, the activities of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA), active in this region, were the reason or the pretext for the intensification of the repatriation actions. Some people from mountain villages on the Polish side were repatriated to the north and west of Poland as part of the so-called Operation Vistula. Some were resettled to the east – to the Soviet Ukraine. This operation does not seem to have been conducted according to any clear guidelines. Part of the resettled population was sent to collective farms in eastern Ukraine, some could settle relatively closely to the border in villages and households left by repatriated Polish and Ukrainian population, still others could stay in the immediate proximity to the border. Since not all could come to terms with the banishment from their native land and were returning to their households across the narrow at this point border river San, whole villages, including houses and churches, were burnt down by the Polish army in order to prevent people from coming back. Our interviewees who live in Beniowa see only a clump of trees on a slope above the San and the Polish bank, where years ago there used to be a village cemetery and a local church nearby.

Some border villages on the Ukrainian bank were also resettled entirely, just the way the villages on the Polish side were. Today they are not more than just place names on a map. Sometimes there have remained some traces of villages, church ruins, a cemetery, wild orchards and old fruit trees amid a young forest. Many a time inhabitants of villages on the Ukrainian side tried to put up resistance and come back to their forsaken households. In those cases, they were once again driven away from their homes, the army fenced the territory and did not let in anybody to the village, later on the villages were burnt down in order to make their return impossible.

In the north of the Polish-Ukrainian borderland, the population of the majority of villages on both sides of the border river Bug escaped forced resettlements. Only in 1951 as part of the “territories exchange” a fragment of the border was moved to the west as a result of the Soviet authorities’ intention to have the coalfield to the south of Sokal on the Soviet and not Polish territory. At the time the Polish population was

resettled from the territories that were incorporated into the Soviet Union mainly to the town of Ustrzyki Dolne as well as the territory given to Poland in return for the coalfield.

Our interviewees' knowledge about repatriations mainly refers to their immediate experience: their family, village, or neighbourhood. Their information with regard to the scope and time frame of particular repatriation operations and activities of the authorities is much more limited. The agreement regulating repatriation was signed between the temporary Polish authorities and the Council of People's Commissars of the Ukrainian SSR still before the end of the war, on September 9, 1944. First resettlements from Poland to the east started as early as November of the same year. The Soviet authorities conducted forced repatriation operations predominantly to Siberia in several phases. In 1947-1952 more than 160 thousand people considered as family members of the Ukrainian Insurgent Army (UPA) were resettled. Some of the people resettled to eastern Ukraine were trying to get to western Ukraine or even Poland to their former households. Attempts to return were numerous (Hryciuk 2008, p. 210-211).

Our interviewees more often mention the Soviet authorities in the context of repressiveness and destruction of villages, houses and churches, than the Polish authorities. This may partially be attributed to the difficulty to reconcile the image of contemporary Poland as well as economic migration to Poland with that older image. The contemporary situation may shape the memory and perception of what happened then. It is also possible that the interviewees' opinions have been influenced by the discomfort felt in front of two researchers, one of whom was Polish and the other was Ukrainian, yet not local.¹

Two different memories

The fact that on the Ukrainian side some villages have been preserved, even though their ethnic structure has changed – the Jewish population was deported and exterminated, the few German colonists disappeared, the Poles were either deported or ran away – is the fundamental factor of the differences in the memory and perception of rootedness and identification with the territory on both sides of the border.

The pre-war policy of the Polish authorities towards the Ukrainian population, the attitude and active part of the Greek Catholic Church and the polonisation operations led to resistance and hostility towards Poles. Programmatically anti-Polish ideology of the Organisation of Ukrainian Nationalists (OUN) in its fight for Ukrainian independence as well as the activities of the UPA led to further deepening of the ethnic distance. Its effects can be seen still today in the form of deep prejudice of the considerable part of the resettled population on both sides of the border. All these activities resulted in the tragedy of hundreds of thousands of people. Thus, the border became in a way an ethnic border and, what is more, a hostile one. On the Ukrainian sides only small clusters of the Polish population, or to be precise, only individual families remained. On the Polish side the situation was similar: only individuals, individual families – so almost nobody – remained of the Ukrainian population. The whole territory of the southern part of the borderland was populated by colonists from different parts of Poland or the resettled population sent here as a result of the discussed above exchange of territories between the two states. Only on the Ukrainian side some villagers – those who either were not expelled or managed to return – retain memories about the pre-war period, including the memories about the multiculturalism of this region on both sides of the border. On the Polish side of the border the newcomers from more central regions of Poland started their lives there from anew, they had no previous experience of these territories. There they found the remains of households overgrown with shrubs, devastated churches, other

¹ We are aware of the significance of this methodological problem. Pro-European aspirations of the population of the region where the research was conducted could have influenced their attitudes, including the emphasis put on the relatively more favourable opinions about the activities of the Polish army.

people's cemeteries, traces of a community that was culturally alien to them and, what is more, was perceived almost exclusively negatively, as cruel perpetrators of Poles' tragedies. That was the way the conflicts with Ukrainians were presented in those days not only in the press, but also in the process of school education as well as by the state authorities' policy towards the Ukrainian population. The operations of the Polish partisans against Ukrainians were seen as a justified form of self-defence or retaliation actions.

We do not want to undertake an analysis as to what extent that state of affairs was shaped by the Stalinist and Soviet ethnic policy and policy towards the conquered and dependent nations and to what extent it was created by Poles and Ukrainians themselves. What we know for sure is that as a result of the post-war repatriation operations both sides of the border look very different from what they looked like before the war. The pre-war cultural, language and religious mix has become only a vague memory for the population of the Ukrainian side of the border and on the Polish side of the border at best it is known from books and the accounts of people who ran away or were resettled and often is not known at all.

For obvious reasons also the Ukrainian memory is not uniform. The prevailing opinions lack criticism towards the activities of Ukrainian partisans, their cruelty (with the exception of a few interviewees), their attitude towards the local Jewish population or ethnic cleansings. To some extent this state of affairs is understandable, being the outcome of the socialisation at home as well as the frustration related to the Soviet times' propaganda and education that presented the nationalist anti-communist partisans in an unambiguously negative way.

One cannot help but notice the unwillingness to see and recognize the crimes committed by "one's own" people in the name of patriotism and loyalty towards one's community. This is true for both the Ukrainian population of this region (one needs to remember that many local villagers served in the UPA), as well as the Polish population, who are unwilling to talk about or justify the crimes committed by Poles against Ukrainians or Jews.

More than 60 years have passed since the demarcation of the border dividing the Soviet Ukraine and the People's Republic of Poland. Such a period of time is long enough – at least one would assume so – for the reconciliation between the two communities divided only by a river, or – in the middle part of the region researched by us – only by a belt of land. However the repressiveness of the internal system made the border – so close in terms of space – very distant and inaccessible in terms of perception. The rigour of the system on the Polish side was incomparably weaker: people could approach the border without the fear of repressions, yet any contacts with the inhabitants of the other side were still impossible. The two ethnoses lived close to one another, yet completely separately, facing the centre of each one's own country and state and with their backs on one another. Each community had its own memory and a very selective approach to the past. The media discourse and current political developments were also not without significance for the mutual perceptions of the two neighbours.

The differences in the way of life of the two communities on both sides of the border also contributed to the separateness between them. The economic foundations of the two states were not entirely different, yet the organisation and administration principles, the structure of authorities and the approach towards an individual as well as individual economic activity were essentially different. We will finish this part with a statement by Snyder: "These Ukrainian and Polish memories are different in substance [---] They are similar in form: both speak of the destruction of ways of life, and of the compulsion to begin anew," (Snyder 2006, p. 204).

Yet, despite all this, new tendencies in the Polish-Ukrainian relations can be observed. The situation where the resettled Poles, whose families suffered at the hand of the UPA in Volhynia, today cooperate

intensively with Ukrainians in the sphere of trans-border trade may appear to many scholars of historical memory as paradoxical. What is even more surprising is the cooperation with regard to taking care of the graves of the neighbours' family members. In the neighbourhood of Sokal, local Ukrainians help the resettled Poles to look after and renovate their places of memory. And vice versa – children of the resettled Poles (today's middle generation, born already on the territory of south-eastern Poland) help to renovate churches, remains of graves and crosses on the devastated Ukrainian cemeteries. This means that the mutual stereotypical approach towards the past does not prevent the two communities from cooperating today and looking together into the future.

Memory or rather historical accounts and activities based on memory are characterised by certain specific features of inconsistency that demonstrate the contextuality of what and how is remembered, the disunity between the picture remembered from the past and the contemporary activities, as well as a certain practicality or rationalisation of memory and activities in the borderland territories (or at least in the area where we conducted our research). We can see certain tendencies in the Polish-Ukrainian relations in the borderland that should be perceived as positive both from the point of view of ordinary people as well as the common future of the neighbouring nations.

A Look across the Border

Looking across the border from the Ukrainian side, the residents of some border villages see not only the remains of cemeteries or trees hiding what used to be the village church. They also see buildings on the other side of the border, some of them preserved from the olden days, but not many; they see churches turned into Roman Catholic ones as well as cemeteries; they see people and watch how life goes on there. But most of all they see what they know only from the memories and accounts of the eldest villagers. And even if things look different now, they still remind of and confirm their localness and rootedness. What they see across the border helps them to keep the picture of the past as well as make the image of the other side of the border more familiar. The memories of the past have not been eliminated even by barbed wire and watchtowers. Our interviewees – especially the eldest ones, those who remember the pre-war period from their own experience – remember very well that e.g. they were going to the market or to the church in Lutowiska, that there was the “Prosvita” building there, and Ukrainians were gathering together and singing “Shche ne vmerla Ukraina” in it, singing quietly, otherwise they could expect an intervention from the authorities' representatives and punishment.² They also remember their neighbours, Poles and Jews, and their children plays or the school they attended. That other side of the border is an element constantly present in their accounts, something significant that complements the image of the pre-Soviet past. Without further research we are not able to find how much from this image of the former life has been passed on to the younger generation and what role it plays in their awareness and construction of their own identity. The interviews with the younger generation point to the lack of connection to the territory behind the barbed wire. In their perception it is the territory of another state, Poland.

The image from the Polish side of the border has a different impact on the perceptions of the contemporary local population. The Polish interviewees perceive the border not only as the boundary of the Polish state but also as the end of the familiar territory. Everything behind it is alien. Nothing connects them with that country behind the border, there are no memories, no private history – just the knowledge passed on by official sources.

Individual Ukrainian families living in border villages in Poland are not originally from this territory

2 A remark by a resident of Ustianowa, born in 1929.

either. After a very hard and complicated return to their native land, to their familiar mountains, from Poland's "Recovered Territories"³, where their parents had been resettled to, they settled in any villages where local authorities allowed them to settle and where there was work in the forest. Generally speaking, Ukrainians felt alien on not quite their own land in the Polish neighbourhoods (as we learn from the interviews). One needs to remember that the majority of them came from villages located further away from the border and they never perceived the demarcation of the border as a great harm. In fact they did not leave anything behind the newly created border, their historical memory and personal tragedies were related to different historical events. Many of them were afraid to admit that they were Ukrainians – they were going to Catholic churches and baptised their children according to the Roman Catholic Church ritual. Behind the barbed wire there were Ukrainians who were the same as them but occupied by the "Soviets", which also did not give any hope for the revival of the nation and its cultural life. For the local Ukrainian the perspective of the ethnic development and rebuilding of family, economic and other ties, irrespective of the existence of barbed wire, came into being only after the political changes of the 1990s and the independence of Ukraine.

A separate issue is mixed families, which were resettled to the Soviet Ukraine during the 1946 demarcation of the border and its 1951 correction and could be repatriated only in 1956-1957. They knew the Soviet everyday life all too well and were happy – as we were told – to be able to leave that state. The case of mixed families (mixed in the religious sense, which was probably the most important determinant of national identity at the time) illustrates many phenomena often encountered in culturally mixed territories that could be termed changeable, even liquid or contextual identity. We do not know the reasons for their resettlement and cannot always reconstruct them, since the main actors are no longer alive and their descendants, who were young people at the time, not always can explain those situations and ethnic choices. Thus we do not know whether the resettlement to the east was the only option without a possibility of resistance or rather it was to some extent the result of being influenced by the Soviet propaganda that promised comfortable and calm life without problems and fears that had constantly accompanied their lives at their old place of residence.⁴ The fear of the unknown, of the change of place of residence and the forsaking of the home land might have been weaker than the hope for the improvement of their lot and achieving peace and calm desired so much after the years of war and local conflicts. This must have influenced their identity choices, making them choose the Ukrainian identity that was supposed to give the opportunity for a better life. When after some time it became clear that the reality of life in the east was fundamentally different from the one they had expected, and when new political conditions appeared, their identity was reoriented, at least the declared one. They started to claim their Polish identity, which gave them an opportunity to leave the USSR and settle in Poland, as part of the repatriation operation. This sort of reorientation was certainly not easy for mixed families or families with double identity living in the borderland territories. We can see this change as a practical, utilitarian approach to their declared identity.

On the Ukrainian side the opinion about a more favourable situation of the EU member states, including Poland, is rather wide-spread. The fact that many Ukrainian citizens work there results in not only greater interest in Poland, but also a more positive image of Poles. It appears that the establishment of an independent

3 The so called "Recovered Territories" was an official term to refer to the western territories of Poland which were united with Poland at the cost of Germany. As part of the Operation Vistula, Ukrainian population from villages from the eastern part of the country was resettled here.

4 There are cases when whole villages relocated under the influence of agitators, as it was in the case of the Świerzowa Ruska village in the Lower Beskid mountains. The whole village moved all together with its priests and church equipment to the USSR in 1944, persuaded by agitators. Their first encounter with the Soviet reality happened immediately after crossing the border. Yet, there was no possibility of return any more.

Ukrainian state, the hostile attitude towards Russia, which is associated with collective farms and repressions against Ukrainians, has changed the stereotyped image of Poles and Poland among the Ukrainian residents of the western Ukraine in a positive way.

Getting Accustomed to the New Borders

Political and economic changes and the independence of Ukraine have fundamentally changed the attitude towards the border, which has ceased to be the forbidden territory, getting close to which was not allowed, and breaking this rule was severely punished. Today the “obstacle” is in a lamentable state, the wires are rusted and broken in many places, the “sistema” (system) does not work anymore. There are only shadows of its former “greatness” and rusted wires left. The purchase of land, the return to the pre-war type economy and the possibility to cultivate one’s own land or possess horses and cows also have changed the attitude of the local residents to the border. Now it is not the fear of getting close to the border, but the care of possessions that shape the attitude towards it. A good illustration of this attitude is the opinion of one of our interviewees, a resident of the Szandrowiec village, born in 1953: “Let there be the wire, so that the cattle does not go there, but the border is unnecessary”⁵. There are more similar opinions. Their essence is that the wired fence is necessary, because otherwise cows would go to the other side, to Poland. Thus, the attitude towards the border is ambivalent: the wire is necessary as a sort of fence, but the border as such is needless. “Our cows go to them, to Poland, it is good that there is wire”⁶. The same interviewee, who lived several hundred meters from the border, behind which Polish villages start, adds that if there was no border, he would go to the bar, and his wife – to the shop across the border, and now the closest shop 5 kilometres away, in Shandrovet, the closest village on the Ukrainian side (male, born in 195, Tarnava-Khutor).

On the Polish side the question about the need to have the border provoked different emotions and opinions. To a large extent they were determined by the ethnic identity of the interviewee or at least part of his/her family. Ukrainians and representatives of mixed families usually wanted Ukraine to join the EU and get rid of the border as soon as possible. In their understanding the border is a relic of the Soviet system, accompanied by a whole complex of problems of the old regime including bribing, corruption, rudeness and humiliation of an individual. The main reason for getting rid of it is the possibility to quickly cover several dozen kilometres in order to visit family, family members’ graves or places significant for promoting one’s national and cultural identity, e.g. Lviv. Poles generally would also like to have civilised relations with their neighbours (the way it is done in the EU), yet they are afraid of the inflow of criminals not only from Ukraine, but also from Russia, Moldova, the Caucasus countries and Central Asia. Almost all complain about drinking problems of the local residents related to the scarcity of jobs and easy access to cheap alcohol from Ukraine. Yet, the “green border” is also used for trade contacts beneficial for both sides. Polish citizens of different national identities are much more careful in their opinions about the abolition of the border, especially after the change of the political authorities in Ukraine as a result of the 2010 presidential elections. If almost all interviewees from the Ukrainian side were unambiguously in favour of the abolition of the border, the opinions of the Polish side inhabitants were much more complex and ambivalent.

Declared Identities on Both Sides of the Border

The analysis of the field research results, the studied events and processes reflected in our interviewees’ opinions demonstrate that we face a dynamic and not a static phenomenon. It is clear that the way of thinking of the local residents, their past, their individual life stories and their experience in the Soviet state and later on

5 In Ukrainian: “Дріт хай буде, щоб худоба не йшла, але границя - непотрібна.”

6 In Ukrainian: “Наші корови ідуть до них, до Польщі. Добре, що є дріт.”

in the independent Ukraine as well as the observable changes in the neighbouring states influence their identity, and most probably not only the declared one. We cannot be sure how precisely the ethnic identification and identity of our interviewees has been changing over time. However the volatility of the memories of the past is clearly observable in the opinions of our interviewees. A person's individual history and their changeable opinions about their own lives are an important factor shaping the fluctuations of the historical memory.

Our interviewees said very little about conflicts between Poles and Ukrainians. This theme appeared only several times in their recollections. More often we encountered opinions that there were no conflicts and if there were any, they were just clashes between male youths "about the girls". To illustrate this lack of conflicts, the interviewees emphasised the mutual respect for the holidays of the neighbours: during Polish holidays Ukrainians did not do any hard work, during Ukrainian holidays Poles also abstained from working hard.

The theme of the activities of the UPA – "our boys", as the partisans were referred to by many interviewees from Ukraine – was recurrent in the memories about the war and first post-war years. Interviewees most often declared that they were not sure whether the UPA had fought Russians or Poles. Irrespective of how they presented the activities of the UPA, the partisan movement and the memory about, it is certainly an important element of the Ukrainians borderland inhabitants' self-awareness. Village solidarity, the feeling of community and the understanding of the aims of the UPA's activities, as well as, in case of some interviewees, the fear of the partisans make this theme very important for the self-identification of so many local residents. Such a situation is further promoted by the activities of veteran organisations and local media.

It has been known for a long time that religion and church are exceptionally important factors shaping identity. If before the war in some places indeed church was an important indicator of national identity (even though we were also told about attending churches of "the others"), the situation changed fundamentally after the war. Churches and places of cult were destroyed by the Soviet authorities and if some of them survived, they were closed down. This was especially true for Catholic churches. Greek Catholicism was liquidated by the Soviet authorities and churches were often taken over by the Orthodox Church or turned into warehouses and storerooms. After the independence of Ukraine the state of affairs from before the war has not been restored. Part of the population has got used to the Orthodox Church and has been reluctant to get rid of an Orthodox priest only to accept a Greek Catholic one. The similarity of rituals played a role here. Besides, for many residents the reasons why particular churches have been subject to different ecclesiastic authorities are not obvious.

The impact of religious identity on national identity on the Polish borderland is complex. For many Ukrainians of the older generation a trip to a church that is several dozen kilometres away every week is a clear declaration of their national identity and a way of maintaining their historical memory. The majority of the middle generation of local Ukrainians as well as their children were baptised in Greek Catholic churches. For them the deciding factor in the choice of confession was the wish to participate in church services and not their national identity. They do not think of themselves as worse or not patriotic enough. They feel in a similar way as Ukrainians of the Moscow Patriarchate in Ukraine – they do not perceive themselves as traitors of the Ukrainian identity. It appears that today religion does not play such an important role in shaping national identity as it used to.

Ukrainian identity does not imply homogeneity. The past is a dividing factor among the residents of the region that we researched. First of all the memory of being either local or a newcomer is exceptionally durable. Today, 70 years after the end of the war and about the same time after the repatriation operations, the memory of yet another generation about not being local is rather striking. Disputes between the local inhabitants, born

there and those who came in the beginning of 1950s from Poland demonstrate the persistence of historical memory.

The awareness that the independent Ukraine has given them back the land taken away earlier by the Soviet authorities and that now it is possible to farm their own land (even though life is hard and many leave for other countries, especially the European Union) as well as the fact that the economic situation in Poland is generally better also shape the attitude towards the border of the Ukrainian inhabitants of the Polish borderland. It appears that the Ukrainian identity is not constructed in opposition to being Polish. The borderland is not perceived as the area close to a hostile neighbouring state.

This situation results in the remodelling of the memory of the past. The Polish television also promotes the rapprochement. Not in the sense as years before, when the USSR citizens were looking in the Polish TV programmes for factual information and not what was presented in the Soviet media. In the opinion of some interviewees, watching weather forecasts on Rzeszów TV channel is important because only then they know whether to attend to hay, what to do in the field, since the weather forecasts from Lviv are not adequate for their region.

Without doubt television and other mass media (also the Ukrainian ones) in a significant way shape people's opinions on international affairs. Many would like Ukraine to enter the EU and NATO, because "we are sick and tired of being together with Russians"⁷, as one of the interviewees claims (male, born in 1935, the Vytsiv village). During a conversation about politics and Russia's policy towards Ukraine one of the interviewees said: "then we will go to Poland"⁸. When asked to clarify her statement, she explained: "we will join Poland, move the border, and renew the border along the Zbruch river"⁹ (female, born in 1953, the Boberka village).

Trans-border illegal trade relations shape in a significant way the perception of those who live on the other side of the border. Fishermen, who smuggle cigarettes across the Bug river, petty peddlers – the so called "ants", who carry several packs of cigarettes or a bottle of vodka across the border, create a network of relations that considerably impact the effects of the Soviet education. The mutual trust is well illustrated by an instance of trans-border interaction described by a resident of the Halivka village on the Ukrainian side bordering on a Polish village called Bandrów Narodowy in the Bieszczady mountains. After the patrol of the Ukrainian border guards (according to the interviewee, the border guards patrol the border at regular hours) a local resident leaves packs of cigarettes and bottles of vodka under a Ukrainian border pole. After some time, he or she collects the money left by a Polish buyer. Polish residents of Bandrów Narodowy also know the hours of border patrols on the Ukrainian as well as the Polish side. At the appropriate time they go to fetch the goods and leave the corresponding sum of money – the prices are known in the whole area. This small goods exchange between strangers illustrates the changes in the perception of the neighbour, especially their considerable trust towards a stranger. After all, one can deceive only once and as a result the whole network of economic relations and exchange, beneficial for both sides, would be broken. Donnan and Wilson claim that economic relations (sometimes illegal) between inhabitants of both sides of a border may influence their sense of loyalty towards their home country. This economic activity means that they have their own network of social contacts that form "us" across the border in opposition to "them" – those who belong to the same nation but are not part of the same network of relations (Donnan, Wilson, 2007, part 5). These findings by Donnan and Wilson reflect the nature of changes in the relations between the inhabitants of both sides of the

7 In Ukrainian: "бо з москалями нам вже надоїло".

8 In Polish: "to my wtedy pójdziemy do Polski".

9 In Polish: "no dołączymy do Polski, przeniesiemy granicę, odnowimy granicę na Zbruczu".

Ukrainian-Polish borderland.

The research conducted by us has demonstrated that political and economic changes and the emergence of the independent Ukraine have stimulated various social processes in the borderland that are strongly related to the presence of border and the interest in the situation and life across the border. On the Polish side, trans-border trade strongly impacts the earnings and the standard of everyday life. This fact considerably shapes the interpretation of the past and re-models the memory in such a way that it better corresponds to the contemporary experiences and hopes for the change of the situation in Ukraine. Local Ukrainians hope for closer relations with the European Union and improvement of the economic situation in the state. This dynamic process strongly shapes the Ukrainian identity, which is different from what it used to be. In this context it is easy to understand why the suspension or withdrawal of the Ukrainian authorities from the negotiations with the EU has provoked such a reaction and protests in the western part of the country.

Bibliography:

Donnan H., Wilson T. M., (2001) *Borders. Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Oxford.

Hryciuk G. (2008) *Ukraińcy, w: Wysziedlenia, wypędzenia i ucieczki 1939-1959. Atlas ziem Polski*, Sienkiewicz W. and G. Hryciuk (eds.), Warszawa, Demart.

Snyder T., *The Reconstruction of Nations. Poland, Ukraine, Lithuania, Belarus, 1569-1999*, New Haven and London, Yale UP.