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The influence of the EU's eastern frontier on the socioeconomic situation of border areas

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Abstract
For several decades, Poland's eastern border was a spatial barrier hindering any development of near-border regions, which were thus afflicted by unfavourable demographic processes and growing peripheralization. Following the fall of the Soviet Union, more positive experiences of development associated with the opening of the border became apparent. However, Poland's accession to the European Union (EU) and the Schengen area limited flows of people and goods once more. Is it true, then, to say that today's eastern frontier of the Union is a spatial barrier limiting borderland socioeconomic development? Or perhaps the reverse is true, with the EU frontier actually stimulating local development? To address such questions, this paper discusses research carried out in Poland's Lubelskie Province (*voivodship*), which borders both Belarus and Ukraine. The research is based on extensive interviews with representatives of local authorities and on questionnaires distributed among residents of the communes (*gminas*) located in closest proximity to the border. The results obtained show that socioeconomic development is first and foremost present near-border crossings, reflecting both EU support for improved border-crossing infrastructure and local-level entrepreneurship reflecting locational benefits, especially for firms in the services, commerce and logistic sectors. In turn, areas located further away from border crossings are seen to feature distinct economic peripheralization, to the extent that the EU's external frontier has to be perceived as a spatial barrier that hinders local development.

Keywords
border region, frontier of EU, local development, Lubelskie Province, Poland

The dichotomy of political borders

In line with the classic definitions of a border, the main function of a border is to separate one political entity from another (Pounds, 1963; Prescott, 1965, 1987; Barbag, 1987). In that connection, borders are among those spatial barriers that Yuill (1965) considered as he studied the phenomenon of the diffusion of innovation. Specifically, Yuill identified three categories of border: the absorbing barrier, the reflecting barrier and the permeable barrier. In extreme cases, state borders may be

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either absorbing or reflecting, though most often they exemplify the permeable type, with the degree of openness (permeability) differing from one situation to another, and in accordance with whether it is people, goods or innovation that are being referred to. In line with such considerations, regions located on either side of a given border may be treated as barometers of the political and cultural transformations taking place in neighbouring countries (Kaplan and Häkli, 2002).

The permeability of a border has a major impact on shaping the economic situation of border regions, causing discontinuities in the cross-border flows of goods and steering the flow of people (Van Houtum, 1997). The European Union (EU) as a whole is affected by its internal and external border regimes (Magone, 2009), as shown in studies culminating in attempts at their classification (Strassoldo-Graffenberg, 1974; Sanguin, 1983; Seger and Beluszky, 1993; Martinez, 1999). This body of research suggests the existence of three main categories of border region:

- *integrated regions*, with borders not representing a significant spatial barrier to flows (to the extent that they are little more than lines on a map), with the effect that integration as regards the economy and social relations becomes possible;
- *cooperating regions*, where the border does impede flows to a greater or lesser extent, and the dependent relationships between adjacent areas take on the form of various kinds of symbiosis; and
- *isolated regions*, in which borders interfere with all kinds of flows, making it impossible for areas on either side to link up.

The character of a border depends on a number of factors and may change over time. At present, European borders have become multi-functional and have been increasingly perceived not only as a division between political entities and people, but also as something that may be overcome (Grabbe, 2000). A border can be seen to play a key role in the social and economic development of border regions, may improve European competitiveness (European Commission, 1999), or may reduce economic interactions, depending on its nature. The latter phenomenon has been seen in several European regions, such as the Finnish–Russian border (Eskelinen, 1999) or the Irish–Irish border (Democratic Dialogue, 1999). Each case is very different from the others and depends on local circumstances, but what links them is that the character of the political border results in particular types of influence on the economic and social life of the population on both sides of the border.

On the other hand, a border may be treated as a source of locational benefits. In the vicinity of the Polish border crossings leading through to the east, south and west, it is first and foremost service and trade firms catering for transit and local traffic that tend to establish themselves. Interest in the border regions of the Central East European countries is also increasing among foreign investors (Djarova, 2004). The Schengen Agreement both abolished internal border controls and strengthened controls at external frontiers, through the introduction of the common visa regime and common procedures connected with crossing the border elsewhere, as well as guaranteeing international police cooperation. The inclusion of Poland in the Schengen area has raised several expectations about the issue of diminishing migration in the old EU countries. New member states were assumed to absorb significantly higher numbers of immigrants from the former Soviet Union and from Asia who formerly used to head for the old EU countries instead (Grabbe, 2000). However, this did not fully occur: large, although incalculable, numbers of illegal immigrants from the East are smuggled through the territory of Poland to Western Europe, which is still the main destination for migrants in this part of the world. Nevertheless, Schengen membership limited official flows of people and goods once more, making it necessary to ask what the influence of the EU's external frontier on the local development of border areas has been. As Van Houtum put it (2002: 54): 'borders differentiate between those who benefit from the division and those who are left out.' It seems that not only potential immigrants from the East and inhabitants of border regions in Belarus and Ukraine but also local communities in border

regions in Poland are left out, despite the fact that they are formally included. All in all, exclusion de jure and de facto may not overlap in the case of border regions. Therefore, shifting the borders of either the EU or the Schengen area eastwards should take into account the necessity of creating conditions for development not only of international relations and cooperation within the scope of European neighbourhood policy, as postulated by Smith (2005), but also of regions located within the EU, in proximity to the new external border of the EU.

In other words, the same border may be perceived as being either 'too hard' or 'too permeable', depending both on the context examined and on the point of view adopted. Facilitating migration flows by abolishing the visa regime results in increased ability to meet the demand for a cheap labour force in local markets, but at the same time crime rates may increase, which contributes to changes in the host society's attitudes towards immigrants. Despite the claim that '[t]hese two issues are often talked about in the same breath in public discourse, although they should not be causally linked: migration does not necessarily cause cross-border crime' (Grabbe 2000: 498), cases of illegal activity by non-citizens are often linked by the public with the growth of immigration and can cause an increase in pressure towards sealing the border again.

In theory at least, the importance of borders for the economic development of integrated regions is low, because the lack of any clear limitations on flows of people and goods strongly facilitates development. This was expected to be the experience of a united Europe after the establishment of the European Economic Area – a *borderless Europe*, as Christiansen (1999) puts it. In isolated regions, by comparison, the border would seem to have a decisive, mostly negative, influence on social and economic development, with such regions usually deemed to be peripheral. Indeed, the character of areas located close to the old 'Iron Curtain' meant the long disconnection of neighbouring states and regions and created huge developmental disparities, with transportation infrastructure, living standards and institutional incompatibility as leading examples (Eskelinen, 1999). The most disparate influences are those exerted by borders in cooperating regions, because in this case everything depends on the degree to which the border is open to the flow of people and goods.

For several decades, Poland's eastern border was a spatial barrier hindering any development of the border regions, which were thus afflicted by unfavourable demographic processes and growing peripheralization. However, following the fall of the Soviet Union, more positive experiences of development associated with the opening of the border became apparent (such as the development of services and small-scale trade, and the development of cross-border contacts, both official and private). Previously hard borders have become more and more open, which additionally encourages the transformation of the traditional nation-state into a more heterogeneous structure (Christiansen and Jorgensen, 2000; Magone, 2009). In some cases, the increased level of border permeability may even lead to gradual transboundary regionalization, although one of the most decisive factors has been the attitude of neighbouring countries towards European integration. As Eskelinen (1999) puts it, the development of cooperation on the Finnish–Russian border will continue to be hampered by the fact that the Russian Federation will not join the EU in the foreseeable future, therefore cross-border cooperation (CBC) is not planned there as preparation for membership. The case of Belarus and Ukraine, two states neighbouring Poland, may be perceived in this way to a significant extent. Belarus has for many years remained within the sphere of political and economic influence of the Russian Federation, whereas Ukraine's political attitudes shift with successive presidential and parliamentary elections; at present a scenario of close cooperation with Russian partners is developed. Therefore, the eastern state border of Poland seems to be in the process of becoming a hard border again, at least since Poland's accession to the European Union and the Schengen area. This clearly shows that the approach by Christiansen (1999) – that a clear common EU border does not really exist – is outdated. On the other hand, what can be noted is an increasing tendency towards the creation of a more uniform CBC regime in Europe, which is being described in terms of norms, imperatives, institutions and instruments (Scott, 1999).

The regime has been adapted to the EU's external borders, since originally it was developed as a model of cooperation between member states (Eskelinen, 1999). The way it influences the Polish eastern border determines, to a significant extent, the possibilities for the border regions' development.

The main aim of this paper is to examine the question of what the real impact of today's eastern frontier of the European Union is on the socioeconomic development of its border regions. The frontier influences development in multiple ways, both stimulating and limiting it on various grounds. The net effect of these influences for particular places of a limited spatial range is expected to be both quantitatively describable and quantifiable. The study area is Lubelskie Province (*voivodship*), the easternmost province of Poland, where the state border is part of the external frontier of the European Union with Ukraine and Belarus.

To shed some light on theoretical understandings of borders, particular attention is given to the perception of the role of the border by the inhabitants of border communes and by members of local authorities. It is difficult to underestimate the role of local communities' perceptions of borders, since such populations are the first both to experience any change in the border regime and to verify the efficacy of European policies towards borders and border region development. Our survey of 1140 respondents offers a unique opportunity to gain insight into local perspectives on the results of European integration at local and regional levels. The survey focused on the Polish side of the border, since the goal of the research was to broaden knowledge and understanding of the results of the transformation of the new EU border region, and not of EU borderlands as a whole.

Preconditions of development in Lubelskie Province

The study area is formed by 11 communes (NUTS 5) located near the border with Belarus and Ukraine, within five districts (called *poviats*, NUTS 4) that make up part of Lubelskie Province (NUTS 2) (see Figure 1). Two of the areas represent local centres of development (B1 and U1), present in the immediate vicinity of bigger cities and border crossings; the other two areas are more peripheral locations (B2 and U2).

The eastern part of Lubelskie Province represents an interesting subject for research because of its proximity to the transition zone between different cultural realms (Huntington, 1997; Eberhardt, 2004; Ostergren and Rice, 2004). Here various cultures meet and intermingle, which is a result of the complexities of history being encountered. In the interwar period, Lubelskie Province was actually located centrally within Poland, since the state border was then much further to the east. When the Second World War ended, international agreements led to the delimitation of the Polish–Soviet border in accordance with the so-called 'Curzon Line' that British diplomats had proposed (as a demarcation line between the Polish and Bolshevik armies back in July 1920) (Leslie. 1980). The fall of the Soviet Union brought no changes to the postwar border.

During the communist era, Poles treated their country's eastern border as a kind of 'end of Europe' that bore some resemblance to the 'Iron Curtain'. Few Poles were enthusiastic about crossing the border with the USSR, since this was not a direction typical for either tourist visits or trips for financial gain. Only after 1992 did interest in setting off to the east begin to grow, albeit that far more citizens of East European countries were coming across to Poland than vice versa (Komornicki, 2001).

The borderland areas have thus been strongly affected by the decades-long period of very low permeability of the border. At present, the border areas continue to be characterized by low levels of urbanization (the coefficient of urbanization is 22 percent) and have a low population density (about 37 people per km^2). These characteristics are the result of the protracted and selective process of outmigration, which also rendered the gender and age structure of the population unusual (Bański, 2002). Migrations of varying intensity have continued through to the present day, owing to the difficult economic circumstances that the borderland has continued to experience (Flaga, 2002). The outflow of the young and most economically active to other

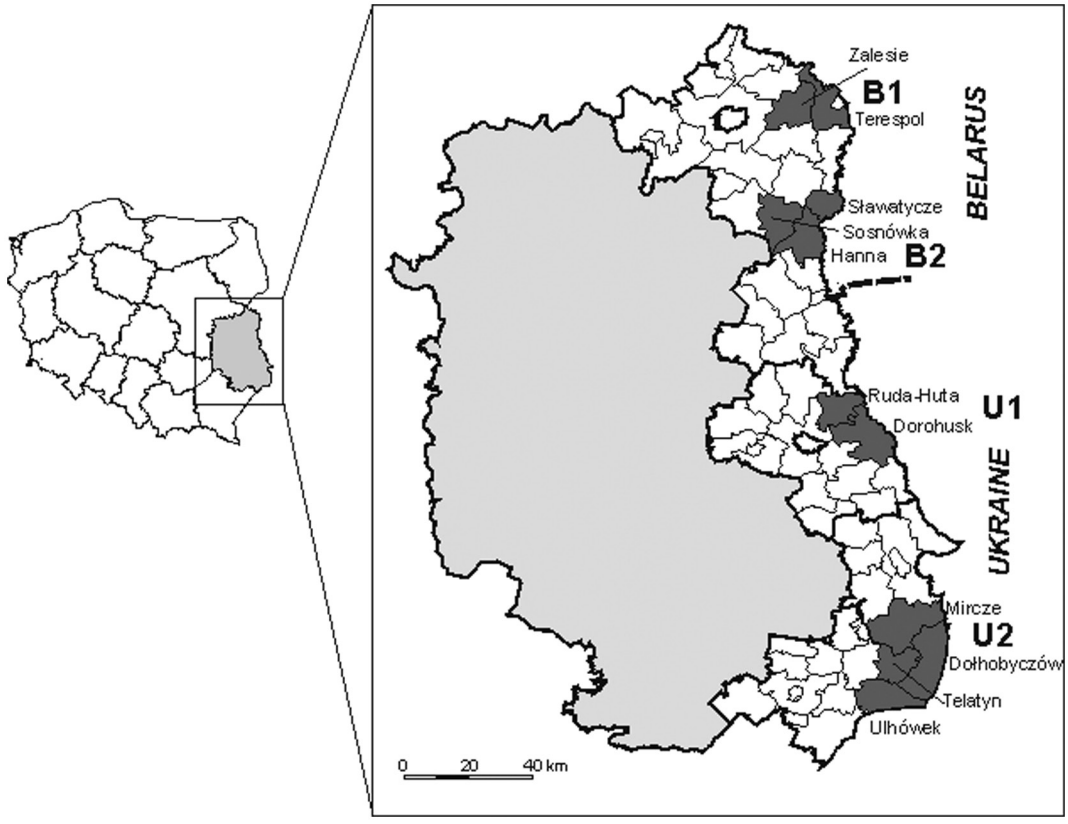

Figure 1. The study area.

regions of Poland and abroad has been a major barrier to any economic revitalization. Indeed, the result has been a worsening of an already unfavourable socioeconomic structure. Even though much of the more mobile element of the population has already left this region, all of the districts under study continue to feature negative migration balances – in the period 1995–2006 they all fell between –0.7‰ and –8‰ on a yearly basis.

The region's economy is dominated by agriculture. Dispersed fields of small-sized farms, a shortfall of technical and technological inputs, and the limited professional qualifications possessed by farm-owners characterize the agricultural economy. All of these factors combine to keeping productivity low, with imperfect use being made of this area's productive potential (Bański, 2001). Although agriculture is supplemented by services and trade to some extent, these are very much concentrated in urban areas, as well as along the main transportation routes. The greatest concentrations of businesses lie close to border crossings, of which the section under study has six operational examples accessible by road and four involving rail (Figure 2).

The borderland itself features marked disparities in terms of both spatial structure and economic development. Favourable economic processes are observable near the main transportation routes leading to border crossings, as well as in the immediate vicinity of those crossings, whereas more peripheral areas develop less rapidly or are even in danger of economic stagnation (see Bański, 2009). Areas B2 and U2 faced economic stagnation in the decade leading up to Poland's accession to the EU.

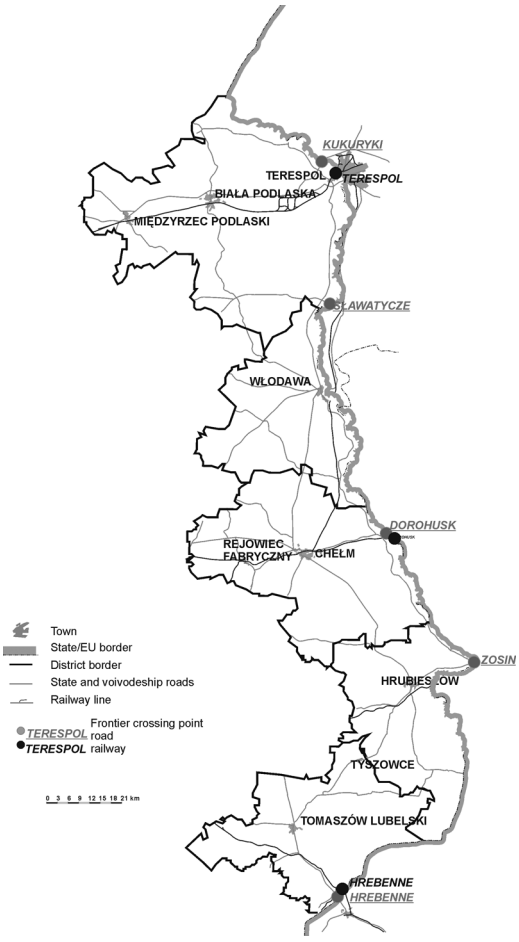

Figure 2. The road network and border crossings within the study area.

In contrast, a rather more favourable situation characterized the communes of areas B1 and U1, with some signs of economic growth being present there. Specifically, when the border opened more fully in 1992, these areas witnessed the development of different forms of CBC. There was a particularly dynamic development of 'shuttle trade', which was obviously not fully subject to registration, control or taxation, the most visible result being the appearance of stalls and ad hoc bazaars close to the borders (Iglicka, 2001). Food, furniture, clothing and building materials were bought on the Polish side, and alcohol, cigarettes and fuel on the Ukrainian and Belarusian sides. Market services developed hand in hand with this kind of trade.

Also of significance for the development of the local economy was the influx of low-cost seasonal workers into the construction and agricultural sectors. Similar cross-border migration flows occur elsewhere in Central Eastern Europe (see, for example, Williams et al.'s, 2001, analysis of the impact of the migration of workers on the Slovak and Ukrainian labour markets). There are no figures to indicate how large the flows in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland are, but some idea of the scale may be gained from a 2003 estimate that there were around 500,000 Ukrainian citizens in Poland (International Organization for Migration, 2004). The collapse of the USSR is also known to have been accompanied by an influx into the EU of some 5–7 million migrants from Ukraine (Düvell, 2007).

Poland's accession to the European Union in 2004, and its entry into the Schengen area in 2007, have had a significant impact on the socioeconomic situation of the border areas. A trickle of EU funding and material support for Poland prior to accession has grown into a significant amount since 2004, the objective at all times being the promotion of development at regional and local levels. To provide an example, the total amount of pre-accession EU funding in Poland in 2000 amounted to €879 million in the form of three basic support programmes: PHARE (Poland Hungary Action for Restructuring of Economies), ISPA (Instruments for Structural Policies for Pre-accession) and SAPARD (Special Accession Programme for Agriculture and Rural Development). In the accession year (2004), EU funding in Poland amounted to €2.4 billion and in 2008 to €7.4 billion, mainly in the form of the Cohesion Fund, Structural Funds and the Common Agricultural Policy. The border areas of the country also in some sense 'received' – or at least were the target for – considerable funding for the development of border crossings and attendant infrastructure, as well as for the improved equipping of the Border Guard and for the strengthening of the Polish border/EU frontier in general. The role of EU funding is commonly perceived as being of strategic importance for local development because, without these

financial means, development would certainly be hindered (Magone, 2009).

The fact that Poland's eastern border had indeed become an external frontier of the EU was a factor ensuring that citizens of Belarus and Ukraine could now only cross the border if they were in possession of a visa (Piorko and Sie Dhian Ho, 2003). The visa obligation imposed upon those living just beyond the eastern border thus introduced certain formal as well as economic restrictions on what had been a fairly free cross-border exchange for the previous decade. Initially the cost of Polish visas for Ukrainians was high enough to successfully restrain shuttle trade, because the potential gains from a trade excursion to Poland for most of the merchants were outweighed by the cost of a single-entry visa. There was a resultant decline in the movement of people, and more stringent border controls served to reduce border trade. All of this prompted Szmagalska-Follis (2009) to question whether the new EU frontier did not in fact resemble the pre-1989 Iron Curtain.

Further obstacles to cross-border interaction have involved the means by which people and goods are brought across the border. The border-crossing process is largely inefficient along the border with both Ukraine and Belarus, as shown by the frequency with which long queues of HGVs build up. At the same time, official/bureaucratic barriers have also increased, above all in connection with customs policy in Ukraine. Customs and VAT relief in special economic zones have been rescinded, and there is a protracted wait for the reimbursement of VAT associated with the export of Ukrainian-made goods. In turn, as we learn from Proniewski and Proniewski (2006: 728–9),

> the greatest difficulties for trade with and investment in Belarus among other things lie in the relatively high prices, the introduction of seasonal duties and periodic raising of customs fees; occasional freezes on imports and limits on the bringing in of agricultural or food products; complex and expensive certification procedures; and frequent modifications made to the law in the fields of commerce, taxation and customs – all of these factors combining to ensure unequal treatment of businesses and state bodies alike.

The processes and situations described above are typical of the borders of states in Eastern Europe, irrespective of whether they are external borders of the European Union and consequently create new economic and institutional circumstances for international trade at the local level (see, for example, Williams and Balaz, 2002).

The research

The research on which the paper is based involved a survey conducted with 1140 respondents in the selected communes that was completed in late 2007 and early 2008. The sample was large, given the total number of inhabitants of the research area – almost 54,000. The main criterion of sample selection was that the place of long-term residence of the respondents was identical to the place of the research. This decreases the likelihood of bias in the answers resulting from lack of knowledge about the direction of changes in the socioeconomic situation of the place of residence, which might affect the results in the case of short-term residents. Since relatively low mobility is typical of parents of schoolchildren (Poulain, 1996; Kupiszewski and Rees, 1998; Janicki and Kubik-Komar, 2007), they constituted the core of the sampled population – 45 percent of the sample were people aged between 36 and 45. Mid-age residents may be expected to have relatively reliable opinions about the socioeconomic reality of their surroundings because their social situation is most likely to be stable and immune to temporal fluctuations (Czapiński and Panek, 2009). The age structure impedes analysis of links between age and the type of answer and also excludes the youngest age group, in addition to limiting the share of the oldest age group. However, given the character of the questions included in the questionnaires, the opinion of people younger than 20 may not be of significant value.

Almost 42 percent of the sampled population had secondary education and a rather significant (28.1 percent) proportion of the surveyed population had basic or vocational education. In this regard it should be noted that the questionnaires were completed in the main centres of population in the selected

Table 1. Research areas

Location	Bordering with:	
	Belarus	Ukraine
Local centre	B1: Zalesie, Terespol	U1: Ruda-Huta, Dorohusk
Local periphery	B2: Sławatycze, Sosnówka, Hanna	U2: Dołhobyczów, Mircze, Telatyn, Ulhówek

communes, that is, in areas with a relatively larger share of well-educated people. The respective numbers for the whole of the population of the research area are 29.5 percent and 58.7 percent. This fact is also reflected in the types of jobs performed by the sampled population: although it is true that farmers (characterized by the most limited educational background) were the principal group (accounting for 34.3 percent of those surveyed), a group almost as large involved employees (31.3 percent). Among the other groups, the unemployed were the most numerous (14.9 percent), followed by entrepreneurs (4.6 percent).

The survey was accompanied by in-depth interviews with representatives of the local authorities. In general, these were representatives of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland (U1 and U2) and the Polish–Belarusian borderland (B1 and B2), as well as local centres of development (B1 and U1) in the immediate vicinity of a bigger city and a border crossing, plus areas in peripheral locations (B2 and U2) (see Table 1 and Figure 1). The main objective of the interviews with representatives of the local authorities, who were mainly commune secretaries or their deputies, was to obtain opinions on how the location of a given commune and the EU's external frontier had been affecting development, as well as to assess cooperation with neighbours in Belarus and Ukraine. A total of 11 interviews were carried out, one in each of the communes selected for in-depth study.

The perception of local authorities concerning the influence of the EU on local development

Representatives of the local authorities offered very varied assessments of the influence of the EU's external frontier on the socioeconomic situation of the border areas. However, most responses point to the negative consequences of the administrative 'sealing' of the Polish border with Belarus and Ukraine. Most attention was drawn to the administrative and legal aspects of border operations. In particular, the visa and customs restrictions impinging upon both citizens and businesses in East European countries are seen to form a fundamental obstacle to borderland development. A similar view is expressed by one in four entrepreneurs operating in the study areas. A further major hindrance to border development is the lack of any stable transparent regulations governing trade, as well as of appropriate safeguarding for the settlement of payments. Analogous problems are present along other sections of the EU's eastern frontier, denoting that a speedy solution of a systemic nature is required (Burneika, 2004; Baranyi et al., 2005; Marcu, 2009). These claims are clearly reflected in a response from a local authority representative in the B1 locale:

> Since Poland joined the Schengen area, the border has come to act as a kind of 'Berlin Wall'. It gets in the way of small-scale trade, entrepreneurship in general and other activities once associated with a near-border location. The lack of a border agreement between Poland and Belarus continues to be a problem. For example, the introduction of limits on entries and a permitted importation of no more than 200 litres of diesel oil ensure that drivers of HGVs taking goods to Russia would prefer to take the road through Lithuania, rather than Belarus.

Respondents from the U1 area pointed also to the lack of coherence between the transportation infrastructure on the EU and the non-EU sides of the border: 'inadequate border infrastructure limits traffic (e.g. there are six approach lanes to the border

on the Polish side, two in Ukraine).' This shows how focusing financial and infrastructural efforts on border infrastructure mostly on the Polish side of the border results in the apparent permeability of border crossings, but actually creates bottlenecks because of the infrastructure on the Ukrainian side of the border. The same concerns were raised in relation to the Polish–Belarusian border infrastructure.

In the view of local authority representatives, entry into the Schengen area impinged most upon small-scale, commercial or service-related activity close to the border. Whereas 'big business' has been able to cope with the new conditions, and is not therefore encountering significant difficulties, small-scale border traffic has clearly suffered. In this regard, an important challenge is posed by the facilitation of visa procedures for neighbours residing just across the border, as well as by legal standard-setting over economic cooperation and trade at the local level.

Representatives of more peripheral areas are even harsher in their judgements of the influence of the border on the development of their communes. In many cases they consider most of the changes to be negative, which apparently clashes with their earlier expectations:

> The introduction of sanitary checks on the border has limited cross-border trade. Ukrainians have stopped coming across on major shopping excursions and there is a lack of summer-season workers from Ukraine, because these people have difficulties getting a Polish visa. Farmers also have big problems with taking on Ukrainian workers. (Representative of a local authority in the U2 locale)

Similar concerns were raised by respondents on the Polish–Belarusian border in the B2 locale.

Interestingly, none of the interviewed representatives in peripheral areas identified any benefits arising from a location in close proximity to the EU frontier. In the case of areas located near the main transportation routes, the judgements were less severe and some positive results were identified. For example, one local authority representative in the B1 locale identified the following factors: 'The proximity of an absorbent market (above all for food and agricultural products), the opportunities for commercial cooperation to develop, a transcontinental transportation route, and dynamic development of transit traffic, increasing demand for services required by those crossing the border.' Other respondents argued that '[p]roximity to the border may stimulate interest among investors' (representative in U1) or that 'the building of the A2 motorway will improve the transport accessibility of Poland's "Eastern Wall" and raise the significance of Terespol as a communications hub' (representative in B1). Generally, it is the influx of investment linked with border traffic that was identified as the primary benefit of a location close to the EU frontier. In area B1, the near-border status is at the heart of a development concept that sees the border as activating entrepreneurship in specially prepared economic zones. The main development at present is the growth of the larger trading and service firms that are catering for transit traffic. This has given rise to new job opportunities and has brought a tangible improvement in the material situation of inhabitants. Similarly, in area U1, attention was drawn to the way investment and economic activity is concentrating along (rail and road) routes to the border.

In contrast, the view of local authority representatives in areas B2 and U2 is that the border does more to hinder than to encourage development, which is not to say that they see no potential for such development taking place in the future. Among the elements highlighted in these interviews was the need for new border crossings to be installed so as to stimulate peripheral areas. For example, in the commune of Dołhobyczów (U2), news of the planned construction of a border crossing generated a marked rise in land prices and an influx of investors into the commercial and logistics sectors.

Differences of perspective exist between representatives of local authorities located in more peripheral and less peripheral border locations, suggesting a certain ambiguity in their assessment of the influence of the EU's external border on local development. The impact of transportation routes seems to prevail over the existence of the border itself. What was common to both types of area, surprisingly, was the overall assessment of Poland's EU membership, which was markedly and unswervingly positive. The negative opinion of

Table 2. Barriers to the development of communes based the inhabitants' views (percentage identifying the listed factors as a barrier)

	Agricultural character	Weak infrastructure	Lack of investors	Authorities' incompetence	Peripheral location	Distance from border crossing	Limits on movement imposed by border	Lack of cooperation with neighbours across the border	Other
B1	29.7	29.8	69.7	20.6	24.6	3.8	23.9	10.9	0.4
B2	33.3	42.8	70.4	28.4	27.1	5.2	25.1	21.4	1.4
U1	28.9	48.3	66.7	34.2	22.9	9.5	20.9	18.9	0.5
U2	35.3	44.7	63.7	31.0	31.4	7.2	18.4	15.8	0.5

Note: Each respondent could select no more than three barriers.
Source: Authors' own elaboration.

representatives in the B2 and U2 locales about the impact of the EU's border, obviously resulting from the accession of Poland to the EU and the Schengen area, was therefore not in any way connected to their evaluation of the EU accession in general.

The perception of inhabitants concerning the influence of the EU border on local development

The restricting of cross-border traffic was seen by the inhabitants of the border communes as a major consequence of the new border regime. For example, one-fifth of the respondents made reference to the limited movement across the border and a lack of the kind of cooperation with neighbours just over the border that they feel ought to be present (see Table 2). In the Polish–Belarusian borderland, the share of people expressing such views was even slightly higher, an implication here being that there are greater expectations for local Polish–Belarusian contacts than for those across the Polish–Ukrainian border. The introduction of clear and transparent visa and customs regulations may be one way in which the unfavourable situation described by residents when referring to the functioning of the border could be improved.

In the view of the inhabitants, the communes face their most serious barrier to development in the form of the lack of investors. In this regard, it is hard to anticipate much of a change for the better in the more peripheral areas where access to communications is more limited. That situation stands in marked contrast to what has been happening close to border crossings, with many new enterprises in services, commerce, warehousing and transportation coming into existence and stimulating local development. Other major barriers that were identified by residents – the prevalence of agriculture and a shortfall in technical and social infrastructure – reflect longer-term processes not directly linked with the rather recent establishment of the EU frontier in the region.

In a similar way to the opinions of the representatives of local authorities, and despite having negative opinions on the functioning of the EU frontier, most surveyed residents saw Poland's accession to the EU as positive. Surveyed residents did not see a near-border location as a valuable feature as far as development was. The invoking of this by 42 percent of respondents compares with the attractiveness of the region for tourism, which was cited by 37 percent of the surveyed population, and proximity to a border crossing by 38 percent, in addition to the opportunities for producing organic food, cited by 37 percent. Between almost 40 percent and over 60 percent of the surveyed population, depending on their location, were inclined to see their location at the EU's external frontier as beneficial to their commune's economic situation (Figure 3). Such views were especially prevalent in area B1, with its

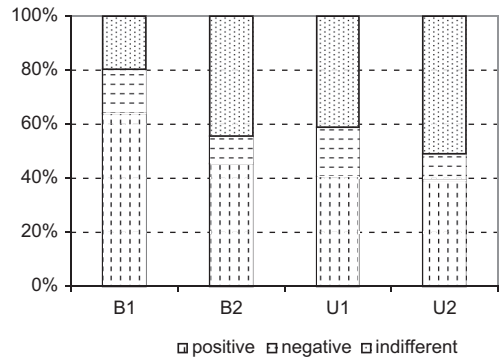

Figure 3. Respondents' answers to the question 'How does a location near the frontier of the EU influence your commune's economic situation?'

location near the major Terespol crossings for both road and rail traffic. This has been confirmed in numerous other studies examining the significant role of border towns in transborder cooperation (see, for example, Pikner, 2008).

Transborder cooperation as an engine of local development

Transborder cooperation is commonly perceived as potentially the best prospect for the development of border regions. CBC is widespread across Europe and many local administrations situated on both intra-EU borders and the external borders of the EU are committed to its development (Perkmann, 2002). Many Euroregions flourish because of their unique ability to implement European regional policy at regional and local levels across political borders (Perkmann, 2007, 2011). However, in many cases there exist factors that hinder the development of both transborder cooperation and the emergence of coherent regions. The latter happens even within the EU and often close to its internal political borders (Johnson, 2009).

One of the perceived benefits of a border location is the possibility of obtaining EU funding for local development and CBC. In fact, targeted funding from the EU has first and foremost gone to streamlining border operations. Beyond that, other kinds of development activity pursued by communes with the help of EU funds have been rather sporadic, and mainly concerned with small-scale undertakings, particularly road modernization and the renovation of buildings used in education or culture. EU support by virtue of the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument has also been directed towards Belarus and Ukraine, though there it has largely focused on developing CBC (Budkin, 2004; Kawałko and Miszczuk, 2005).

The main form of CBC in the study area is the cross-border association Euroregion 'Bug', which was established in September 1995 on the Polish–Ukrainian border and extended in 1998 to the Polish–Belarusian border. The basic objective of the Euroregion is to develop tripartite cooperation in the near-border areas. In theory, this cooperation is wide-ranging, encompassing planning and physical development, communications, education, culture, sport, the prevention and combating of natural disasters, and the development of inter-institutional contacts and contacts between businesses (Związek Transgraniczny Euroregion Bug, n.d.).

Unfortunately, however, in the view of the surveyed residents, Euroregion Bug has not succeeded in implementing CBC in a systemic fashion. The response of most representatives of the local authorities also suggested that Euroregion activity is confined to the apportionment of funding. For example, one official in the B1 locale argued: 'Our commune receives funding from EU programmes via the Euroregion. In fact, what the activity of the Euroregion boils down to is the distribution of EU funding. It doesn't take any initiatives of its own that would help resolve border problems.' The perspective of the local representative in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland (U1) is quite similar: 'The commune draws no benefit from being in the Bug Euroregion.'

Examples of other Euroregions, especially those in the Polish–German borderland such as the Pomerania, Viadrina and Nysa Euroregions, make it clear how positive the influence on borderlands can be (Bertram, 1998; Kepka, 2004; Mirwaldt, 2009). Moreover, a detailed examination of the transformation of institutional entrepreneurship in CBC in Europe over decades shows how adaptable and flexible Euroregions can be (Perkmann and Spicer 2007). On the one hand, therefore, some

optimism might be permitted about the results of cooperation in the Euroregion Bug too, provided that its problems of a formal and administrative nature are addressed. On the other hand, the experience to date of activities in the Euroregion Bug raises the question of what has prevented it from following the more positive examples of other Euroregions and whether any change is possible here.

Of equal importance to the smooth running of CBC are policies pursued at a state level, both foreign and domestic. The cooperation-related goals and tasks that are to serve in the development of border areas are set out in a series of strategic and planning documents at the national level (the National Strategy for Regional Development and the National Development Plan), the regional level (the Strategy for the Development of Lubelskie Province and the Strategy for the Socioeconomic Development of Eastern Poland) and the local level (commune-level development strategies and physical development plans). The main tasks include the development of road infrastructure, improved throughput at border crossings and the building of new crossings, mainly to serve local traffic, as well as the implementation of bilateral projects in the sociocultural sphere.

Although the main legal provisions and agreements on cooperation are at the state level, many agreements have also been signed regionally or locally. This reflects the relatively far-reaching competences that authorities in Poland possess when it comes to cooperative cross-border activity. However, this tier of local authority does not have a true counterpart across the border in Ukraine and Belarus. The administrative structures of the three countries look similar on paper, but the actual competences and entitlements are more limited in Belarus and Ukraine, with a very high degree of subordination to the central authorities in Minsk and Kiev. Because many decisions in these countries are taken centrally, any attempts to forge cooperative ties tend to be needlessly prolonged and complicated. Ultimately then, local authorities on the Polish side do not have genuine partners across the border, which tends to limit cooperation to courtesy visits or cultural/sporting events.

Conclusions

This paper has argued that the eastern border areas of Poland suffer from geographical and economic peripherality. The idea that a border can play a main role in the social and economic development of border regions has not been found here (European Commission, 1999). The eastern borderland has experienced a process in which negative social and economic features accumulate, and there are few traits that might serve as the potential for economic progress. The unfavourable conditions concern the demographic 'depression' in the region, its economic monofunctionality, a lack of any more major investment and limited transportation accessibility. The main attributes of the border areas, in turn, include a clean natural environment, potentially attractive from the point of view of tourism, and the potential for commerce and services to develop.

Cross-border cooperation is found to be developing rather weakly. This state of affairs is attributable to limited economic potential and the lack of enfranchised partners over the border in Ukraine and Belarus with which to cooperate. The cross-border association Euroregion Bug, despite articulating numerous goals, operates mainly as a distributor of funds. One of the reasons for this is that local authorities in Poland do not have clear partner authorities in Belarus and Ukraine with which they can collaborate. This is the result of the deep centralization in these states, which limits decision-making powers at the local level. This resembles the pattern observed in many other locations across Europe, with borders asymmetrical in terms of competences granted to local authorities and models of governance; the Finnish–Russian border serve as one possible example (Eskelinen, 1999). The examples of cooperation that we do see are mainly sociocultural and are not seen to be bringing truly tangible economic benefits.

It has so far been rare for communes to participate in projects funded from external sources. However, Poland's EU accession was followed by heightened interest – among authorities and inhabitants alike – in the possibility of money being obtained for investment. In this regard, the next few years will be critical, since this period will see objective-setting

for physical development in the near-border areas of Lubelskie Province. If the right choices are made, it may at least be possible to secure this region against further social and economic marginalization.

The most important contribution of this paper has been in examining the impact of the external EU border on the development of border regions. Sealing the border, which results from the accession of Poland both to the EU and to the Schengen area, has further marginalized the border areas and significantly limited transborder traffic and international trade on the local scale. The development of areas located in the vicinity of border crossings is apparent, since international transport using these crossings is an important incentive for the growth of services and offers the potential for the establishment of larger investments. In turn, in those communes located further from the border crossings, there is a greater likelihood of such areas suffering from economic stagnation, encouraging still further peripheralization. Consequently, the common EU border is regarded unambiguously as a spatial barrier that hinders socioeconomic development in such locales, as opposed to what Christiansen (1999) argued about the diminishing of the common EU boundary. This is confirmed in interviews carried out with representatives of the local authorities, for whom the border represents an opportunity only when it has crossing points nearby. Consequently, there is a perceived need for the introduction of clear regulations on border traffic, along with an easing of restrictions arising from Poland's entry into the EU and the Schengen area. Overcoming obstacles connected with the very existence of the political border, as elaborated by Grabbe (2000), has not been successful yet. Conversely, the Schengen Agreement has locked the eastern Polish border and limited development of the border areas. Therefore, it seems that local communities, despite being formally included in the Schengen area, do not benefit from the division of the area by the political border, as Van Houtum (2002) puts it, but are left out.

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