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SOCIAL AND INSTITUTIONAL CONSTRUCTION OF REGIONAL BORDERS IN THE WESTERN AND NORTHERN LANDS – ON THE EXAMPLE OF ŻUŁAWY AND POWIŚLE[1]

ABSTRACT This article discusses the creation of contemporary regional borders in the Western and Northern Lands, which were incorporated into Poland after the Second World War. Using the example of Żuławy and Powiśle, the author presents an anthropological analysis of the social, cultural, and administrative developments in the region, as well as the effect of those changes on the perception of these areas by their current inhabitants. Hence, she describes the strategies used to legitimise the borders of Żuławy and Powiśle by the local communities and institutions. The author discusses different approaches to the notion of regional borders, and their relation to historical, cultural, geographic and administrative borders. She further analyses the emergence of regional borderlands, centres, and peripheries. Data regarding the borders of Żuławy and Powiśle has been collected using mixed methods research. Both qualitative research methods (conceptual maps, targeted in-depth interviews conducted among leaders and representatives of institutions) and quantitative research methods (questionnaires conducted among the inhabitants) had been used.

Key words: borders, regionalism, regional identity, Western and Northern Lands

After 1945, a new chapter began for the territories incorporated into Poland after the treaties of Yalta and Potsdam. The great migrations that took place the end of the Second World War and continued for many years afterwards have shaped the so--called Regained Territories (Western and Northern Lands[2]). Prior inhabitants of those areas, mostly of German origin, were forced to leave their homeland and settle in Germany. The area where they lived before the war was, in turn, inhabited by settlers from central and south-eastern Poland (mainly Mazowsze and the vicinity of Łódź, but also Małopolska, Kielce, Lublin and Białostok regions), and from the former Eastern Borderlands of the 2nd Republic of Poland (including the Vilnius Region and Volhynia).[3] In 1947, settlers had been moved to the Western and Northern Lands as part of Operation 'Vistula'. These people were primarily Ukrainians and the Lemkos, but there were also groups of Ruthenians: Boykovs, Dolinians, and Shlakhtov Ruthenians. Returnees from Western Europe and repatriates from the USSR had also arrived in the region; they were joined by Greeks, Macedonians and Jews several years after the end of the war.[4] This conglomerate of many cultures gathered in the post-war reality put pressure on the settlers to come up with new forms of cultural adaptation in spaces they found alien and often incomprehensible.

For many years, the new inhabitants of the Western and Northern Lands felt that their living situation was temporary. As a result, they did not feel the need to identify with their place of residence. Policies supporting national memory, implemented at the national level, highlighted the Polish nature of the territories incorporated after the Second World War. It was not uncommon to read that *the former lands of the Piast dynasty have been returned to the Motherland*. Those artificially invented ideological traditions have given rise to many myths. Those myths became part of the propaganda efforts of the People's Republic of Poland (PRL). These efforts revolved around the notion of Poland under the Piast dynasty rule, and took an interest in Slavic traditions and Polish folk culture. National traditions were to help the settlers feel at home in areas that had been inhabited by the Germans shortly before. The settlers regarded the German property left in the area after the war with disdain, because the authorities of the People's Republic of Poland also held it in contempt. In the early decades after the war there were many attempts to erase any trace of the past of these lands. One of the ways to do so was destroying post-German property, cemeteries and non-Catholic churches, and neglecting antique houses taken from the Germans.[5]

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[2]   Scientists and researchers use also another phrase "Polish Western and Northern Territories".

[3]   J. Burszta, "Kategorie ludności i ich typ kulturowy", in W. Markiewicz, P. Rybicki (eds.), *Przemiany społeczne na Ziemiach Zachodnich*, Poznań 1967, pp. 134-177.

[4]   J. Schmidt, "Die West- und Nordgebiete Polens. Geschichte – Menschen – Kulturelle Landschaft", *Jahrbuch Polen*, vol. 23 (2012), pp. 40-52.

[5]   A. Brencz, „Oswajanie niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego. Z badań etnologicznych na Środkowym Nadodrzu", in Z. Mazur (ed.), *Wokół niemieckiego dziedzictwa kulturowego na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych*, Poznań 1997, pp. 191-216.

Policies implemented in the People's Republic of Poland had negatively influenced the settlers' sense of attachment to their new homeland. Prioritising national identity and a lingering sense of temporariness have pushed aside the construction of regional identity of the inhabitants of the Western and Northern Lands for many years. Due to selective memory about the past, the achievements and traditions of other ethnic groups that used to inhabit those regions were gravely under-appreciated.[6] Furthermore, the settlers felt no need to identify with their new place of residence. For them, it was more important to make a living than take an interest in the history and former culture of their newly inhabited region.

It was only after the political transformation in Poland of 1989 that a change took place in the activities of cultural institutions, which have adopted a new approach to the memories of the past and decisively influenced the regional movement in the Western and Northern Lands. In many instances, initiatives were put forward to create a sense of connection at a regional level. Hence, regional borders need to be delineated, and their historical, cultural and social contexts subsequently established. Some approaches to the notion of regional borders accepted at the turn of the 20th and 21st centuries are currently quite controversial. Regions such as Żuławy and Powiśle in northern Poland are particularly interesting in this aspect. While the former is described in the context of geographical borders, the borders of the latter could be viewed both in the cultural and geographical context. Powiśle is not considered a historical region – its borders and name function in several variants.

The aim of this article is to present an anthropological perspective on the mechanisms of the creation and legitimisation of the borders of Żuławy and Powiśle within the Western and Northern Lands through institutions and organisations (cultural centres, local governments, museums, associations) and local communities (activists, leaders, inhabitants). Following Wojciech Łukowski's approach,[7] I assume that identity-building in relation to particular regional borders focuses around the physical, phenomenological and mental construct of the region. A community's awareness of belonging to a certain space can become the unique and distinguishing feature of that community. Furthermore, spatial identity makes people more likely to get involved in activities benefitting the region. Hence, this article seeks answers to several questions: 1) whether the delineation of regional borders is necessary both from the point of view of institutional (top down) and social (bottom up) policies; 2) whether border creation stems from the need to legitimise the created identity, or strengthen the position of the region in a given voivodship; 3) what differences exist between the construction and conceptualisation of regional space as a top-down and bottom-up process. The answers to these questions will serve as a basis for further analysis. The analysis will focus on the perception of the centre-periphery relations and borderlands in Żuławy and Powiśle by representatives of local communities and institutions.

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6   M. Ziółkowski, "Pamięć i zapominanie: trupy w szafie polskiej zbiorowej pamięci", *Kultura i Społeczeństwo*, vol. 45, no. 3-4, (2001), pp. 11-12.

7   W. Łukowski, *Społeczne tworzenie ojczyzn*, Warszawa 2002, p. 82.

RESEARCH METHODS

Between September 2014 and June 2016 I have conducted ethnological field research in the areas of Żuławy and Powiśle. I collected empirical data regarding the creation of contemporary regional and local identities in the Western and Northern Lands. The study involved multiple field research sessions, during which I have conducted observations, which constitute a key part of anthropological investigation.[8] I have conducted 109 in-depth targeted interviews based on a standardised procedure[9] in order to gather data on the perception of Żuławy and Powiśle, their conceptual borders, centres, peripheries and borderlands. Data has been gathered using both qualitative and quantitative methods. I believe that mixed-method research makes it possible to integrate different types of data and find convergence points between them.[10]

When choosing respondents, I took into account the profile of activity of the institution in which they were employed. Hence, I distinguish between four categories of interlocutors: 1) local government employees at the voivodeship, poviat and municipal levels who co-implement regional policy; 2) employees of cultural institutions (cultural centres, museums, regional chambers, historical chambers and libraries); 3) members of associations and organisations; 4) local community leaders.

I assumed that both the respondents' involvement in the activity of a given institution or organisation and their place of residence affected their perception of the region. In most interviews, questions regarding regional borders have been supplemented by the conceptual map task as an additional research tool. I have shown a printed map of the region and its surroundings to my interlocutors and asked them to draw the borders of Żuławy and Powiśle according to their subjective understanding. In further stages of data analysis, the collected materials allowed me to create a graphic representation of the conceptual borders of these regions.[11] Next, I have compared them to maps and border descriptions made by regional experts. As a result, I was able to contrast data on the location of the borders of Żuławy and Powiśle gathered at various stages of my research.[12] In order to increase the validity of results, I drew analogies between existing and elicited data through source-method triangulation.[13]

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[8]   T. Buliński, M. Kairski, "Pytanie o teren w antropologii", in iidem (eds.), *Teren w antropologii. Praktyka badawcza we współczesnej antropologii kulturowej*, Poznań 2013, p. 16.

[9]   I have conducted 54 interviews in Żuławy, 47 in Powiśle. Further 8 interviews involved participants representative of both regions.

[10] J.W. Creswell, *Research Design. Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches*, Thousand Oaks 2013.

[11] The borders of Żuławy have been delineated on 53 maps, while the borders of Powiśle on 52 maps. In some rare instances the respondents refused to specify the borders of the region on a map, saying they felt unqualified to do so. They were more engaged in the verbal description of the borders of the region.

[12] M. Hammersley, P. Atkinson, *Ethnography. Principles in Practice*, London 2007.

[13] U. Flick, *Managing Quality in Qualitative Research*, London 2007.

The second part of the study involved quantitative research. During this stage, I have returned to the towns and villages 4 located in Żuławy and 4 in Powiśle in which I have previously conducted the in-depth interviews in order to administer 740 questionnaires among the inhabitants. Data points were chosen on the basis of comparisons drawn between towns from the two regions. I have been searching for similarities between towns, e.g. smaller towns developing their own status in the region in opposition to larger cities (Nowy Staw and Dzierzgoń); villages with significant community involvement (Fiszewo and Nebrowo Wielkie); municipal villages where the local government, associations, and community leaders exhibit high awareness of cultural heritage (Cedry Wielkie and Ryjewo); municipal capitals located further from the centre of the region introducing certain identity practices (Ostaszewo and Mikołajki Pomorskie).

I decided to focus my research efforts outside of larger agglomerations and poviat towns as the majority of institutions and organisations that contribute to local culture are usually centred there. I assumed that the main aim of quantitative research will be to investigate the perception of the regional and local character of towns and villages as seen by their inhabitants, particularly in places that are affected by the policies of poviat towns while conducting their own regional and community activity organised to a larger or smaller extent. Questionnaire results were expected to show whether the vision of the region promoted by community leaders and institutions is reflected among the potential benefactors of these policies (local residents) in the form of their knowledge of regional borders, the perception of these borders, and their view of the centre--periphery relations.

The sequence in which research methodologies were applied (first qualitative, then quantitative research) demonstrates that I have chosen to prioritise the former along with the collected empirical data (interviews, observations, mental maps). The aim of this model was to recognise, describe and classify various socio-cultural phenomena. In this research project I have chosen to focus on the ethnographical perspective; the analysis is conducted from the point of view of cultural anthropology. Data from the questionnaires, on the other hand, served to support empirical research. In this way, I strived to establish practical relationships between qualitative and quantitative data.[14]

SEARCHING FOR REGIONAL BORDERS:
AN ANTHROPOLOGICAL PERSPECTIVE

A key matter in this project was capturing the criteria that the contemporary inhabitants of Żuławy and Powiśle use to define the region and delineate its borders. To organise the discussion it is necessary to look at the meanings of the term 'region'. Initially, the term referred to power relations. The area of a region was often decided by geographic and cultural factors, or legal regulations.[15] At the same time, the term refers to

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[14] Ibid., p. 156.

[15] H. Kubiak, *U progu ery postwestfalskiej. Szkice z teorii narodu*, Kraków 2007, p. 77.

a particular area characterised by certain properties and delineated by borders. From a narrow ethnographic perspective, the term region refers to areas with homogenous cultural traits. From a broader historical viewpoint, the term denotes areas with shared settlement traits, often referred to 'the land'.[16] According to Krzysztof Kwaśniewski *the traits of a region include: 1) uniformity in more than one aspect; 2) the presence of characteristic traits defined on the basis of at least several criteria; 3) a bond with, and a sense of distinctness of the region shared by its inhabitants; 4) the presence of some centre of the region where the traits are the most visible; the blurrier the borders of the region, the more important the existence of the centre.*[17]

With Kwaśniewski's definition in mind, the Żuławy region is homogenous only in the sense of its geography and cultural landscape. The Żuławy landscape consists of lowland plains, with little to no forestation and a large number of rivers and watercourses. River regulation and regional architecture are two characteristic elements of the cultural landscape of Żuławy. The cities of Nowy Dwór Gdański and Nowy Staw could be considered the centres of the region.

On the other hand, pinpointing one trait that would distinguish Powiśle as a separate region is quite difficult. The area consists of both lowlands and hills dotted by forests and lakes. The name 'Powiśle' emerged only in the inter-war period, following the plebiscite conducted in 1920. The name had been introduced by the members of the Union of Poles in Germany to stand for those poviats that were not part of the Warmia and Masuria region.

Both regions share one common trait: multiculturalism, which manifested itself on the national, ethnic and religious level. Prior to 1945, Żuławy had mainly been inhabited by persons of German origin; there was a large percentage of Poles in Powiśle, in particular in the Sztum poviat. Mennonite settlers from the Netherlands had been present there for a number of centuries,[18] which influenced the cultural landscape in the Vistula Valley and Vistula Delta. On a regional level, the experiences and traditions of post-war settlers are a continuation of multiculturalism as the settlers came from various regions of Poland. Hence, the extent to which the new inhabitants of Żuławy and Powiśle feel a sense of regional distinctiveness is difficult to measure; even more so when it comes to their actual ties to the region. It would be possible to identify the cities that constitute the centres of these regions (e.g. Nowy Dwór Gdański and Nowy Staw for Żuławy, Sztum and Kwidzyn for Powiśle) which exhibit the traits of the cultural region, for instance through human activity and the transformation of geographic environment (i.e. the creation of own cultural landscape). Furthermore, the region is distinguished by separate customs and traditions regarding both historical and contemporary events,

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[16]   A. Szyfer, *Warmiacy. Studium tożsamości*, Poznań 1996, p. 201.

[17]   K. Kwaśniewski, *Regionalizm*, Poznań 1986, pp. 7-8.

[18]   Mennonites are Anabaptists from the Netherlands who came to Poland in the 16th century due to the country's religious tolerance policy. The founder of the Mennonites was Menno Simmons, a Catholic priest. Members of the denomination practiced baptism of adults, were forbidden to hold public offices and serve in the military, rejected violence, delivered assistance to those in poverty and need, and referred to the New Testament Cf. P.J. Klassen, *Mennonites in Early Modern Poland and Prussia*, Baltimore 2009.

and the shared experience of the inhabitants of the area in question.[19] In Żuławy and Powiśle, these experiences are related to the resettlements, adaptation and integration into a foreign cultural landscape.

Andrzej Sakson stated that the differentiation between the categories of 'regional collective' and 'regional community' is important for understanding the notion of a region. A regional collective is characterised by the inhabitants' similar approaches to the shared value represented by the land. The emergence of a bond comes from living in the same space and emotions that are responsible for certain beliefs regarding the territory as an ethnographic, geographical or historical region. A regional community represents high levels of community involvement and significant socio-cultural integration.[20] Thus, we can say that what can be found in the Western and Northern Lands are regional collectives rather than communities. The latter are formed more quickly at the local level, when the place of residence becomes the 'little homeland' or the private homeland.[21]

The region as a research category was further described in sociology. In Poland, ethnologists and anthropologists have so far focused on the region as an ethnographic unit with particular representations of material and non-material culture.[22] In recent years, borderlands became an important issue in the context of research on regional borders. Borderlands *were defined as the reality of those groups from areas of Europe that live near to one another yet are divided by the existence of some kind of border, whether in the form of different socio-cultural worlds, or a particular piece of land.*[23] The notion of borderlands is important in the context of discussion about the processes shaping ethnic, national and regional identity in areas that have been divided for political reasons. What makes them distinctive is the constant changeability, temporariness, and fuzziness of divisions and socio-cultural processes. Regional borderlands usually operate between two larger entities seen from the spatial and social perspectives.[24] Żuławy and Powiśle can also be viewed as borderland regions. They are distinct and diverse in terms of culture while sharing some of their past. These regions, however, are not delineated by distinct historical, cultural or social borders. Hence, they should be viewed as new borderlands. According to Grzegorz Babiński, it is possible for new borderlands to be territorial (i.e. with an obscure or symbolic territory), ahistorical (established recently), or found between areas that have been selected by processes related to the migration and settlement of social collectives.[25]

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[19]   K. Kwaśniewski, *Regionalizm*, p. 6.

[20]   A. Sakson, "Specyfika procesów społeczno-kulturowych społeczeństw postmigracyjnych", in B. Domagała, A. Sakson (eds.), *Tożsamość kulturowa społeczeństwa Warmii i Mazur*, Olsztyn 1998, pp. 9-10.

[21]   Cf. S. Ossowski, *O ojczyźnie i narodzie*, Warszawa 1984.

[22]   Cf. A. Brencz, *Wielkopolska jako region etnograficzny*, Poznań 1996; A. Szyfer, *Warmiacy...*

[23]   A. Chwieduk, "Pogranicza w badaniach etnologów polskich. Przegląd zainteresowań", in J. Schmidt, R. Matykowski (eds.), *Granica symboliczna i jej pogranicza w czasach najnowszych*, Poznań 2007, p. 147.

[24]   G. Babiński, "Tożsamość na pograniczach", in E. Budakowska (ed.), *Tożsamość bez granic. Współczesne wyzwania*, Warszawa 2005, p. 99-100.

[25]   Idem, "Pogranicza stare i nowe. Ciągłość i zmiana procesów społecznych", in K. Krzysztofek, A. Sadowski (eds.), *Pogranicza etniczne w Europie. Harmonia i konflikty*, Białystok 2001, p. 79-80.

When analysing the processes that contribute to region creation from an anthropological perspective, the influence of politics on the shape of the borders should be viewed in a broader context. In case of Western and Northern Lands, national borders become particularly important. Administrative borders are relevant at the regional level, as the structures and relations of local authorities are constructed around them. Administrative borders either replace non-existent regional borders, or both types of borders co-exist. What is more, they may contribute to the delineation of the region.[26] In this case, the region can become an area affected by institutional efforts, which are in turn affected by the social activities and contact networks of local stakeholder groups.[27] Nevertheless, regional experts frequently advise that the administrative borders of the region should reflect its historical or cultural borders. A breakdown into smaller units at the level of local government can negatively affect the cohesion of regional movements and social contacts. It needs to be remembered that a unified cultural and regional policy should be preferable, as it leads to the creation of a coherent image of the region and image of its borders. On the other hand, adopting the idea of open regionalism which supports national decentralisation and increasing the autonomy of local self government is one feasible alternative. This, in turn, would support the concept of the 'small homeland' and help strengthen bonds at the local and regional level.[28] Hence, further in this article I am going to draw a distinction between the conceptualisation of regional space and its interpretation at an institutional and social level on the examples of particular regions.

WHERE ARE THE BORDERS OF A REGION?[29]

Żuławy are seen as a region with prominent natural borders. According to linguists, the name of this geographical region comes from the word 'żuł', meaning aggradate mud[30]. Some argue that the name is related to the word *solov*, which stands for 'island' in Old Prussian. Zygmunt Gloger insisted that the word took on a Polish form, because *sala* means 'island' in Latvian, želu means 'to become green', while žole stands for 'grass'.[31] Thus, the name of the region seems to be related to its location and topography. The borders of the region are as follows: the western border runs along the national road No 91 between Gdańsk and Tczew; later it follows the Vistula to the Vistula Delta in

[26]   K. Kwaśniewski, *Regionalizm*, p. 7.

[27]   A. Bukowski, *Region tradycyjny w unitarnym państwie w dobie globalizacji. Przypadek województwa małopolskiego*, Kraków 2011, p. 47.

[28]   A. Sakson, "Przemiany tożsamości mieszkańców Ziem Zachodnich i Północnych", *Rocznik Lubuski*, vol. 36, part 2, (2010), p. 308.

[29]   Some parts of this subsection are also cited in the author's book: cf. A. Paprot-Wielopolska, *Żuławy i Powiśle. Kreowanie współczesnych tożsamości lokalnych oraz regionalnych na Ziemiach Zachodnich i Północnych* (in preparation).

[30]   J. Szukalski, *Żuławy Wiślane*, Warszawa 1975, p. 4.

[31]   Z. Gloger, *Geografia historyczna ziem dawnej Polski*, Warszawa 1991, p. 159.

the vicinity of Biała Góra; the south-eastern border follows the river Nogat over Malbork, and goes further south along the Tina river to the Druzno Lake, only to later go through Elbląg in the direction of the Vistula Lagoon; in the north it runs along the Vistula Spit.[32]

The Żuławy region can be divided into three parts. Żuławy Gdańskie, also known as Żuławy Steblewskie are located west of the Vistula.[33] The area located in the Vistula Delta is called Żuławy Wielkie. The name Wielkie Żuławy Malborskie is used interchangeably with this term. The third part is Żuławy Elbląskie, located east of the river Nogat and reaching beyond the Druzno Lake all the way to the Elbląg Upland.[34] Małe Żuławy Malborskie are sometimes also considered a separate region located east of Malbork and stretching to the vicinity of Fiszewo and Żuławka Sztumska.

This region was connected to multiple centuries of human activity and struggles against the elements, particularly water. According to researchers, traces of settlement in this area date back to the Middle Ages. Establishing settlements required huge amounts of effort, the soil needed to be drained and the wetlands required regulation to prevent flooding. Hence, as soon as 1407, the Grand Master of the Teutonic Order established the first Floodbank Union in Żuławy Gdańskie. The union was responsible for water and land management in the Vistula Delta.[35] Following the Teutonic times, it was the settlers from the Netherlands who moved to the Vistula Delta and began draining the wetlands. The knowledge and skills of the former inhabitants of Żuławy had been forgotten only after the Second World War. Newcomers to the region had to find their way in this very specific cultural landscape practically from scratch.

From the beginning of the 1990s, a change in the social and institutional activities could be seen in Żuławy. One of the main aims of the newly established regional movement was to build the regional identity of the inhabitants and to search for its indicators. This particular example of social and cultural identity was supposed to shape the attitudes and behaviours of the post-war inhabitants of the region so that they reflected their attachment to their places of residence. The third generation of post-war inhabitants (second to be born in the Western and Northern Lands) is the first to search for their own roots and build their own identity. The first generation is the generation of migration; the second generation is the generation of stabilisation. Both grew up and lived in the atmosphere of nostalgia for their 'lost homeland'.[36]

On the other hand, those who seek to explain where Powiśle is located and what its borders are will encounter multiple theories. Researchers from a variety of disciplines

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[32]   B. Lipińska, *Żuławy Wiślane. Ochrona i kształtowanie zabytkowego krajobrazu*, Nowy Dwór Gdański 2011, p. 9.

[33]   The term is related to the name of Steblewo, a village that used to hold some importance in the area.

[34]   J. Szukalski, *Żuławy...*, p. 4.

[35]   K. Cebulak, *Delta Wisły powyżej i poniżej poziomu morza*, Nowy Dwór Gdański 2010, p. 19.

[36]   Cf. J. Poniedziałek, *Postmigracyjne tworzenie tworzenie tożsamości regionalnej. Studium współczesnej warmińsko-mazurskości*, Toruń 2011.

adopted different criteria for delineating the region, e.g. related to language, culture, history and geography. Furthermore, the name of the area itself is imprecise and exhibits some variation.

Some researchers and regional experts maintain that the term 'Powiśle' dates back to the inter-war period. Supposedly, the Union of Poles in Germany proposed the name for the area where the Malbork dialects had been spoken.[37] The organisation had been registered on November 6, 1923, some time after the 1920 plebiscite held in the area that was then East Prussia. The aim of the union was to connect Poles who decided to remain in Germany within a single organisation.[38] After the plebiscite, the name Powiśle as a term for the area located next to Warmia and Masuria became increasingly popular. With time, the name Powiśle was assumed to stand for the areas of the poviats of Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn and Susz in their former borders.

Near the end of the 19th century researchers understood this area partially in the context of the former malborskie voivodship, and partially in the context of the former Sztum poviat, the southern part of the Malbork poviat and the northern part of the Kwidzyn poviat. Poles who spoke the Malbork dialect lived in the above-mentioned region.[39] Ethnographer and priest Władysław Łęga also believed that the Malbork dialect and Polish nationality were important indicators for research on the area he called 'ziemia malborska' (the Malbork land). In the inter-war period, the borders ran approximately along the area designated by the Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn, Susz and Gniew poviats, including Wielkie Żuławy. According to him, the Malbork land was located between the rivers: Vistula, Nogat, Dzierzgoń and Liwa.[40] Ethnographers at that time delineated the area of the cultural region, i.e. land characterised by traits of traditional culture and dialectal Polish community.

Other researchers propose the name Pomesania, the former name of the land in Prussian, to stand for the Powiśle area. They are simultaneously searching for elements of Old Prussian culture in the area, in particular in the local folklore and terminology, including place names. *Pomesania is undoubtedly the oldest historical name of the region. Its western border ran along the Vistula; from the east, Pomesania including Pogesania was bordered by Pasłęka; Druzno Lake from the north (or Tolkmicko if Pogesania is included), and rivers Osa and Drwęca from the south. Originally, Pomesania was one of the eleven Old Prussian lands inhabited by the Prussian tribe called Pomesanians.*[41]

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[37]   H. Górnowicz, *Toponimia Powiśla Gdańskiego*, Wrocław 1980, p. 5.

[38]   "Nasza Historia", Związek Polaków w Niemczech, at <http://www.zpwn.org/nasza-historia>, 31 December 2016.

[39]   Dr. Nadmorski [J. Łęgowski], "Urządzenia społeczne, zwyczaje i gwara na malborskiem", *Wisła*, no. 3 (1889), p. 717.

[40]   W. Łęga, *Ziemia malborska. Kultura ludowa*, Toruń 1933, p. 1.

[41]   D. Przechadzki, "Pomezania czy Powiśle, kwestia właściwego historycznie określenia regionu", Pruski Horyzont, 18 April 2012, at <http://pruskihoryzont.blogspot.com/2012/04/pomezania-czy--powisle-kwestia-wasciwego.html>, 25 December 2016.

Pomesania is also the area of the former Pomesania diocese, the seat of which was located in Kwidzyn and Prabuty. Today, the area is more or less limited to the poviats of Malbork, Sztum, Kwidzyn and part of the Iława poviat; which are part of the Elbląg diocese.

The debate regarding the borders of Powiśle returned after the Second World War. In 1953, geographer Rajmund Galon wrote that Powiśle does not exhibit the traits of a separate geographical region, and consists of several distinct natural areas between the Vistula and the Neman. At the same time, he stressed that the neighbourhood of the Vistula lowlands and the sea gave Powiśle a distinct character. According to him, the area of the region could be delineated in the following way: *the eastern border goes along the Pasłęka river, and then along the eastern end of the Elbląg Highlands. The southern border of Powiśle keeps to the political borders from before 1939.*[42] The area consisted of the former poviats of Elbląg, Malbork (including Żuławy Elbląskie), Sztum, Kwidzyn, Susz, Morąg, Pasłęk and reached the historical borders of Warmia.

In the People's Republic of Poland, using the name 'Powiśle' to refer to the areas incorporated after 1945 carried important ideological and propagandist undertones. The name 'Powiśle' does not contain any references to the names of the Prussian tribes, including Pomesania and Pogesania, neither does it resemble any of the German place names related to the Prussian partition. Currently, part of Powiśle is described as Oberland (Pogórze). This area is equated with Upper Prussia, which had been a poviat of the Duchy of Prussia since the 16th century.[43]

The various understandings of the Powiśle borders discussed above are shown in the map 1.

The name Powiśle appears in two more collocations: Powiśle Gdańskie and Dolne Powiśle. The former was proposed by a linguist, Hubert Górnowicz, who between the 1970s and the 1980s advocated for the inclusion of the adjective 'gdańskie' in the name, and argued for the introduction of new administrative borders. At that point in time, the poviats of Malbork, Sztum and Kwidzyn had been incorporated into the Gdańsk voivodship (until 1975). The vicinity of Prabuty, which belonged to the Iława poviat in the Olsztyn voivodship, was also considered part of Powiśle.[44] On the other hand, the name Dolne Powiśle (Lower Powiśle) appears to be an amalgam of two geographical terms: the Lower Vistula Valley and Powiśle, which are located on both sides of the Vistula. This name is controversial because it provokes questions about the location and extent of Upper Powiśle, which would 'complete' the Powiśle region together with Lower Powiśle. However, there is no answer to this question. The term 'Upper Powiśle' is non-existent in common usage.[45]
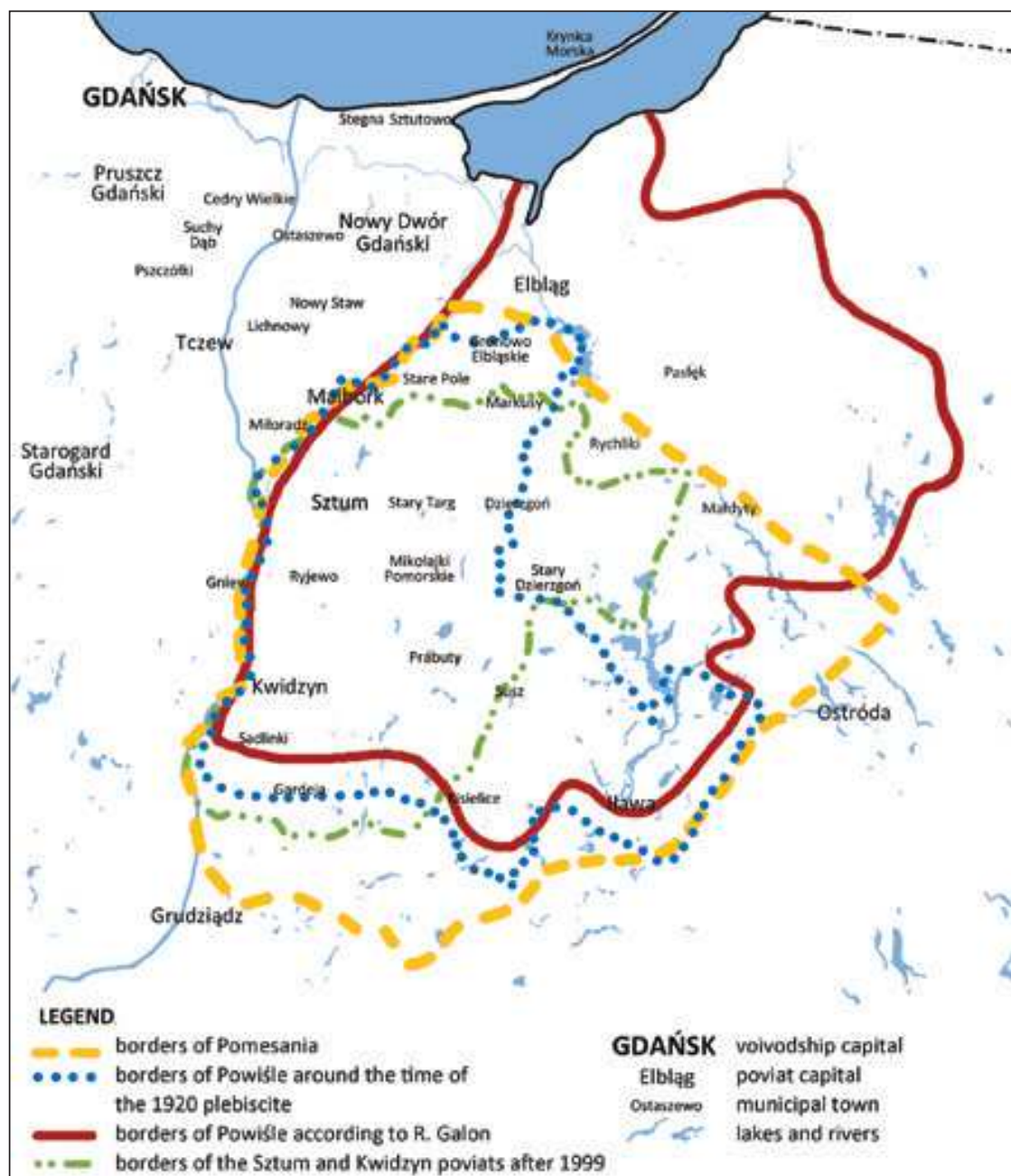
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[42] R. Galon, "Powiśle. Geografia", in S. Zajchowska, M. Kiełczewska-Zalewska (eds.), *Warmia i Mazury*, part 1, Poznań 1953 (*Ziemie Staropolski*, vol. 4), p. 282.

[43] D. Przechadzki, "Pomezania..."

[44] H. Górnowicz, *Toponimia...*, p 5.

[45] J. Zaremba, "Powiśle", *Jantarowe Szlaki*, vol. 28, no. 1 (1985), p. 76.

Map 1. The borders of Powiśle on the basis of the four concepts of the region
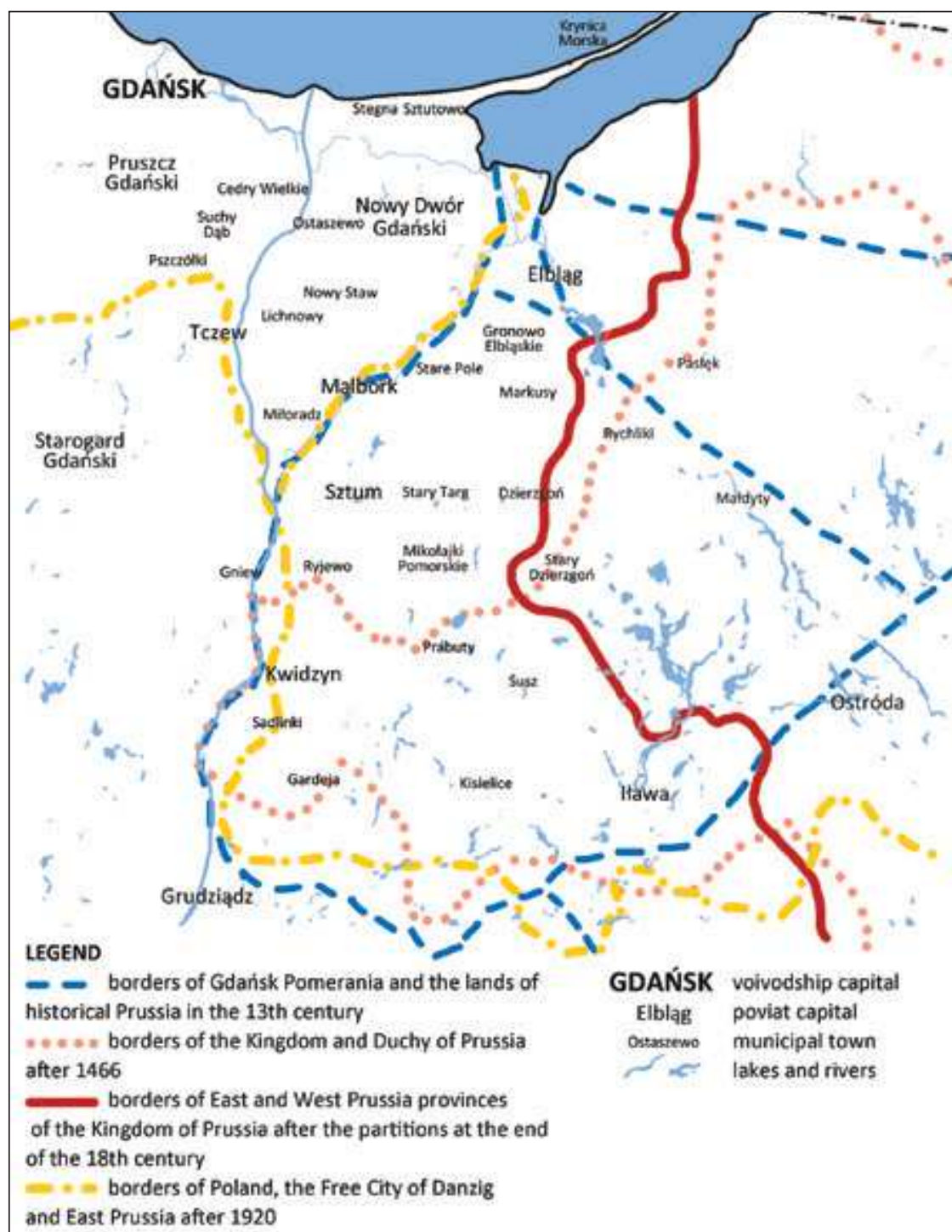

Source: own research, graphics by: Agnieszka Robakowska.

Furthermore, it should be noted that throughout the ages, Żuławy and Powiśle belonged to various larger administrative units and political entities for centuries. Their status had been influenced by political issues related to these, and the neighbouring areas. Several historical events and periods have influenced the creation of the conceptual borders of both regions. Initially, Żuławy and Powiśle were located within the borders of Pomorze Gdańskie (Gdańsk Pomerania) and historical Prussia. Another important change of borders took place after the Second Peace of Toruń, when the above-mentioned areas had been incorporated into the Kingdom and Duchy of Prussia. The third period is related to the establishment of West Prussia and East Prussia, which

became provinces in the Kingdom of Prussia after the partitions that Poland underwent in the 18th century. The final period of historical importance was the establishment of the Free City of Danzig and East Prussia after 1920.

Map 2. Historical borders going through the areas of Żuławy and Powiśle

Source: own research, graphics by: Agnieszka Robakowska.

Taking into account contemporary region-building processes taking place in Żuławy and Powiśle, we can identify several criteria that serve to designate regional

borders. Institutions, organisation and the inhabitants usually rely on the historical, administrative, geographical and cultural borders. Further in this article I argue that the perception of Żuławy and Powiśle stems from a variety of historical and political circumstances. These, in turn, affected how researchers and regional experts drew the borders at a given point in time.

WHICH REGION DOES MALBORK BELONG TO?

Malbork is frequently associated with its Teutonic castle, which between the 14th and 15th centuries was the seat of the Grand Masters of The Order of the Teutonic Knights of St. Mary's Hospital in Jerusalem. In the times of the First Republic of Poland, Malbork became the capital of the Malbork voivodship. After the partitions it became part of the area occupied by Prussia. Thus, stories about the city contain both German and Polish elements. Although its contemporary historical borders are not contentious, the regional identity of Malbork is the subject of some discussion.
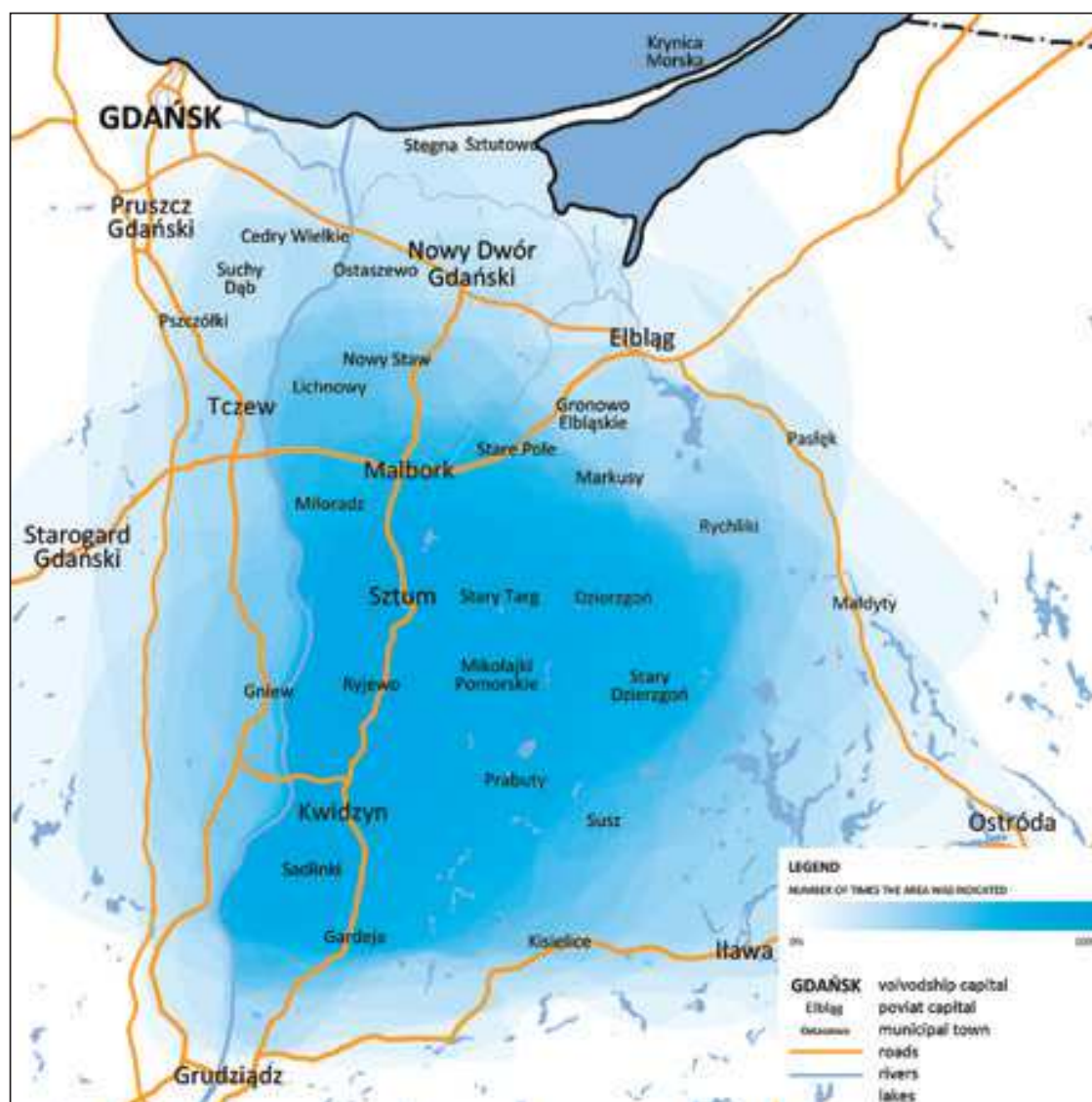
Research shows that Malbork is a city in the borderlands without a clear identity. Malbork is often described as a 'Teutonic city', and the inhabitants of the neighbouring regions frequently call people from Malbork and its vicinity simply 'Krzyżacy' (Teutonic knights). For many years after the war, Malbork was associated more with German than Polish cultural heritage. After the war, efforts were made to bring back memories of Malbork's Polish history. Some effort to bring up the matter had been made recently, as a monument of king Casimir IV Jagiellonian was built in the city centre in 2010. Malbork's tourist information website states: *The statue is of the Polish king whose triumphant entry to the city in June 1457 began the 315 years of Polish presence in the city. The statue reminds everyone about the Polish heritage of our city*.[46] The monument was supposed to become one of Malbork's tourist attractions.

Narrations regarding the memories of the city's past compete at the local level. At the regional level, the debate concerns whether Malbork should be considered part of Żuławy or Powiśle. The conversations I have conducted with representatives of local government, cultural institutions, associations, and community leaders suggest that the southern border of the Żuławy region is designated by the river delta in Biała Góra: *they are here, at the crossroads of Vistula and Nogat. Żuławy Wielkie stretch from here* [...] *to Malbork* (106/IS/76).[47] Doubts and reservations regarding this location appeared when my interlocutors attempted to delineate the eastern border, and assign the city to a particular region. A similar situation took place in case of respondents from Powiśle.

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[46]   "Pomnik Króla Jagiellończyka", Visit Malbork, at <http://www.visitmalbork.pl/index.php?option=
com_content&task=view&id=584&Itemid=54>, 1 January 2017.

[47]   The quotes from the interviews are anonymised and assigned codes. The first three digits are the number of the respondent; the letter stands for the region: Ż – Żuławy, P – Powiśle, ŻiP – Żuławy and Powiśle; the next part stands for the respondent category: IS – local government, IK – cultural institution, SO – association or organisation, LS – community leader; the final part of the code is the last two digits of the respondent's birth year.

The northern border of the region was far from clear. Its location evoked many emotions, in particular on the topic of the cooperation between local governments, as well as mutual stereotypes. *Because when we have those administrative borders most people say that Malbork is already in Żuławy, even though people don't really agree with that* (019/P/SO/76).

When asked to draw the border of Żuławy on a conceptual map, almost all respondents from Żuławy marked Malbork as part of their region. Only when asked to comment on the borders did they start to wonder about the validity of their choice. A much smaller number of respondents tried to omit Malbork entirely due to the shape of the terrain: *Regarding Malbork,* [...] *it is difficult to tell, because on the one hand yes, but on the other hand it is on the border.* [...] *It is enough to go outside Malbork and you'll see hills and valleys* (087/Ż/IK/76).

Map 3. Conceptual borders of Żuławy

Source: own research, graphics by: Agnieszka Robakowska.

Map 4. Conceptual borders of Powiśle

Source: own research, graphics by: Agnieszka Robakowska.

Respondents from Powiśle exhibited similar tendencies. Most have indicated on the map that Malbork is located outside of their region or on its borders. However, when commenting on the map, they mentioned that the city should belong to Powiśle: *Żuławy are associated with a certain terrain shape and we here have a problem with that. I would consider Malbork part of Powiśle, even though it keeps itself apart* (017/P/LS/70) or: *The castle in Malbork is, in my opinion, already in Powiśle* (046/P/IS/61). The situation is illustrated by the attached maps of the conceptual borders of Żuławy and Powiśle.

I found it interesting that my interlocutors expressed doubt regarding the regional identity of Malbork. This could be due to the memories of the former Malbork voivodship, which functioned in the times of the First Republic of Poland, or the Malbork land described by priest Władysław Łęga.[48] These areas were characterised by the pres-

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48   W. Łęga, *Ziemia...*

ence of Polish culture. As stated by one of my interlocutors: *It was over 300 years ago and we still have it somewhere in our bones; we eat it in the bread made from the grain, this tradition of the Kingdom of Poland* [...] (096/ŻiP/LS/57).

Some respondents also believed that the area between Żuławy and Powiśle could be simply called the Malbork land. *I think that* [...] *it would sound nicer for them and if it was called Malbork land rather than Powiśle then people would be happy to identify with it* (017/P/LS/70).

Many of the respondents believed the current poviats of Sztum and Kwidzyn belong to Powiśle along with parts of the Malbork poviat.[49] Their responses were characterised by certain nostalgic feelings regarding the 'Malbork land' which, according to them, testified to the Polish heritage of these areas, although with the exception of Malbork itself. In particular, interviewees from Sztum believed that: *The Malbork land was a notion related to the separation of the Malbork voivodship, but in the context of Poland, Malbork land is also Sztum land because the majority of people here were Polish while Malbork was already German* (054/P/SO/52).

At the beginning of the 1990s, local publication *Nowiny Malborskie*, which was an attachment to the *Dziennik Bałtycki* regional newspaper, published a series of articles by Józef Pałka under the title "Poznajemy ziemię malborską" (Let's get to know the Malbork land). The articles covered towns located within the area of Żuławy rather than the Malbork land as understood by priest Łęga. Furthermore, some articles in the series called "Poznajemy ziemię sztumską" (Let's get to know the Sztum land) covered the towns that belonged to the Malbork land in its 'proper' understanding. This demonstrates that even establishing the location of the Malbork land posed a problem in that period.

Another reason for the varying interpretations regarding Malbork's heritage is certainly the legacy of animosity that stems from the administrative divisions. Until a few decades ago, the social and economic ties between Malbork and other towns in Powiśle were much stronger. This can be seen in the fact that after the administrative reforms of 1999 the newly created Malbork poviat included Sztum along with its neighbouring municipalities. This state of affairs had been maintained until 2002, when local elites and politicians lobbied for creating a separate Sztum poviat. *Initially, the Malbork poviat established in that area included 11 municipalities. The local activists from Sztum strived to create a separate poviat for Sztum.* [...] *Hence, the Sztum poviat was created. I believe it to be rather weak* (039/P/LS/55).

Separatist tendencies that stemmed from policies implemented at the poviat level in Sztum have significantly affected the image of both regions. Since 2002 a significant part of the Malbork poviat has been located in Żuławy. Thus, it seems accurate to say that *at this point in time, Malbork is more willing to be associated with Żuławy. I don't know why* (022/P/IK/67). Furthermore, the authorities of the Malbork city and poviat have rejected cooperation attempts from the poviats of Sztum and Kwidzyn proposed

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[49] Frequently, my interlocutors referred to the fact that the 1920 plebiscite had been conducted in the Malbork poviat as well as in the poviats of Kwidzyn and Sztum.

as part of the organisational efforts for the Powiśle Year, proposed to take place in 2007 and adopted by the Pomeranian Regional Assembly. One of the respondents mentioned it: *Now we have this awkward situation where Malbork is somehow reluctant to be associated with Powiśle. We have adopted the name 'Powiśle', and we keep using the term during various public festivities. I realise that this border is already established naturally. Naturally, I don't know, as a political thing. Because, in case of Malbork they explicitly, during the Powiśle Year, they had been invited and said they did not want to* [participate – A.P.-W.] (017/P/LS/70).

On the other hand, one respondent from the Malbork poviat mentioned that splitting the poviat between Sztum and Malbork was apparently beneficial in terms of closer cooperation with the poviat of Nowy Dwór Gdański in the Vistula Delta: *people comforted each other saying: that's a good thing. If those people from Sztum are so mean to want their own poviat we will take Nowy Dwór Gdański. There were those tendencies that later disappeared.* […] *We were not affected by any problems with the Żuławy economy* (091/Ż/IS/51).

The regional identification of Malbork causes some inhabitants to question their own regional identity: *Because people here in Malbork are not called Żuławiacy then which group do we belong to?* (090/Ż/IK/80). Representatives of local governments are aware of this problem. Institutional policies, however, are gradually causing Malbork to be considered part of Żuławy: *Who should be considered a leader in this Powiśle land? Kwidzyn and Sztum say: us. Malbork says: I am the lord of Żuławy* (091/Ż/IS/51).

The image of Malbork as part of Żuławy also appears in the results of questionnaires conducted among the inhabitants of 4 Żuławy towns and villages. When asked whether the city was part of this region, 70% of respondents replied 'yes', 17% 'no', and 13% said 'I don't know'. On the other hand, the inhabitants of Powiśle believe Malbork to be part of Powiśle, with as many as 74% of respondents agreeing on this. Only 10% rejected the statement, while 16% were unable to associate the city with any of the two regions. This demonstrates that the question of Malbork's regional identity has been solved only superficially through the activities of various institutions (e.g. local government or cultural organisations) and remains an issue for local communities. Furthermore, inhabitants of the Malbork–Kałdowo district located on the left bank of river Nogat, that is in Żuławy, feel a bond with the region. The inhabitants of Malbork may, on the other hand, simply identify themselves as Malbork citizens because: *You cannot feel the Żuławy character in Malbork at all. It is just a city. For me, Malbork could just as well be this thing with a view of Żuławy* (068/Ż/LS/85).

The issue of Malbork's regional identity is one example of the negative impact that administrative borders may have on a local level. In a way, this caused problems for the inhabitants of the city and its vicinity who no longer have clear identity on a macro scale, regarding their association with a particular region. Hence, one can suspect that, in particular among the inhabitants of Malbork, on a micro scale local identity would manifest itself in ties with their place of residence rather than region.

REGION WITHIN THE BORDERS OF THE VOIVODSHIP

When it comes to Żuławy and Powiśle, the construction of regional identity *based on regional tradition, referring to a clearly defined region, the particular cultural (symbolic), geographic or even historical traits that separate it from other regions*[50] is supposed to support identification with the community living in that socio-cultural space through increased awareness of cultural heritage. Thus, it seems that for the local elites the geographical and ethnographic perspectives seem to be especially attractive as means of establishing regional identity[51]. The emergence of territorial identity focuses on creating an emotional bond with the area as early as at the level of socialisation and enculturation.[52] Regions divided between two voivodships that are diverse also in terms of local culture are an interesting example. This is certainly the situation in Żuławy, which became part of both the Pomorskie and Warmińsko-mazurskie voivodships after the administrative reform of 1999, while Powiśle became exclusively associated with the Sztum and Kwidzyn poviats in the Pomorskie voivodship.

According to a vast majority of respondents, Żuławy are divided into three parts: *there are those three sub-regions of Żuławy.* […] *We have gdańskie, malborskie and elbląskie* (079/Ż/LS/60). The region is delineated by the geographical borders of the lowlands and other land located below the sea level (*this is what you learn in primary school I remember that on the topographical map Żuławy were so green it hurt your eyes* [066/ŻiP/SO/67]). Therefore, today many people think that the region should be encompassed by the borders of a single voivodship, as this would facilitate the introduction of unified regional and cultural policies.

In 1945, all three parts of Żuławy became part of the newly created Gdańsk voivodship. In 1975, following another administrative reform, the Elbląg voivodship was created. Żuławy Wiślane in the Vistula Delta and Żuławy Elbląskie became part of the new voivodship. Until the next administrative reform in 1999, Żuławy Gdańskie have remained part of the Gdańsk voivodship. Then, Żuławy Wielkie and Małe Żuławy Malborskie have been incorporated in the newly established Pomorskie voivodeship. Żuławy Elbląskie, on the other hand, have been incorporated into the Warmińsko-mazurskie voivodeship.

Long term observations of the situation in the region demonstrate that the division into two voivodships has significantly affected the socio-cultural initiatives implemented in the area. Żuławy Gdańskie, the western part of Żuławy, does not seem to identify strongly with the rest of the region. Due to its proximity to Gdańsk, initiatives in the region are strongly related to the merchant bourgeois traditions of the city. If

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[50]   M.S. Szczepański, "Na peryferiach systemu światowego? Socjologiczna refleksja wokół miejsca pogranicza kulturowego w układzie globalnym", in K. Krzysztofek, A. Sadowski (eds.), *Pogranicza...*, p. 31.

[51]   Ibid., p. 41.

[52]   Z. Rykiel, "Tożsamość terytorialna jako uczestnictwo w kulturze", in idem (ed.), *Tożsamość terytorialna w różnych skalach przestrzennych*, Rzeszów 2010, p. 24.

cooperation is established, it would have to be with the institutions from Nowy Dwór Gdański (i.e. a city in the Vistula Delta). According to one of the inhabitants of Żuławy Gdańskie: *The Vistula is this border. It is common to say: those across the Vistula. As if one was crossing this informal border* (058/Ż/LS/79). The inhabitants of Żuławy Gdańskie refer to the part of the region located beyond river Nogat in the context of regional borders rather than social and cultural exchange.

The inhabitants of Żuławy Elbląskie are in a similar situation. Local governments and associations usually establish cooperation with the Nowy Dwór poviat precisely due to the existing communicative infrastructure and good practices between those two regions, even though they currently belong to two different voivodships. Administrative borders have caused that part of Żuławy to become interested in the promotion of their Mennonite heritage only recently, even though Żuławy Wielkie have capitalised on it for many years.

Most respondents disapproved of the division of Żuławy between voivodships. They witnessed differences in the levels of socio-cultural development between the three parts of the region, and the effects of the limited cooperation between Elbląg and its neighbouring municipalities. One of the respondents from Malbork admitted: *we aren't really in contact that much, even at the local government level during meetings There is no exchange.* [...] *We don't really know what is happening with them – honestly.* [...] *I'm more inclined to look* [...] *towards Gdańsk rather than Elbląg. Perhaps this is for* [...] *cultural reasons, it would have been closer* [to Gdańsk – A.P.-W.]*, but this administrative division verifies this a bit, leading in a different direction* (093/Ż/IS/82).

Others claimed that the borders were delineated incorrectly as a result of political decisions: *it was a very bad thing that the administrative division was done this and not another way.* [...] *There had to have been some political tradeoffs* (072/ŻiP/IK/74) or *this is not a natural division* (125/Ż/IK/60). Additionally, the inhabitants of Elbląg said that *we were the ones who wanted to join the Pomorskie voivodship and now we have to suffer the consequences a bit* (067/Ż/LS/61).[53]

Powiśle is a region with fuzzy borders. Hence, the respondents contested the division into voivodeships only with regard to its eastern borderlands, the Prabuty and Stary Dzierzgoń municipalities, frequently described as peripheral, with scarce regional and cultural impact by Powiśle. In this area, the tendency is to construct identity at the local rather than regional level. Some respondents from Powiśle treated the vicinity of Prabuty as a borderland. At the same time, they would underscore the social interactions with Susz, a town that remains close to the region despite being part of the Warmińsko-mazurskie voivodship.

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[53]   Controversies around the 1999 administrative borders in the context of the former elbląskie voivodship are discussed in more detail by sociologist K. Ciechorska-Kulesza in her book *Tożsamość a przestrzeń w warunkach niestabilnych granic. Przypadek byłego województwa elbląskiego* (Identity and space within unstable borders. A case study of the former Elbląskie voivodship), Gdańsk 2016. In recent years, she has been conducting research among community leaders in the area of the former Elbląskie voivodship.

Map 5. Administrative borders within Żuławy and Powiśle in 1945-1999
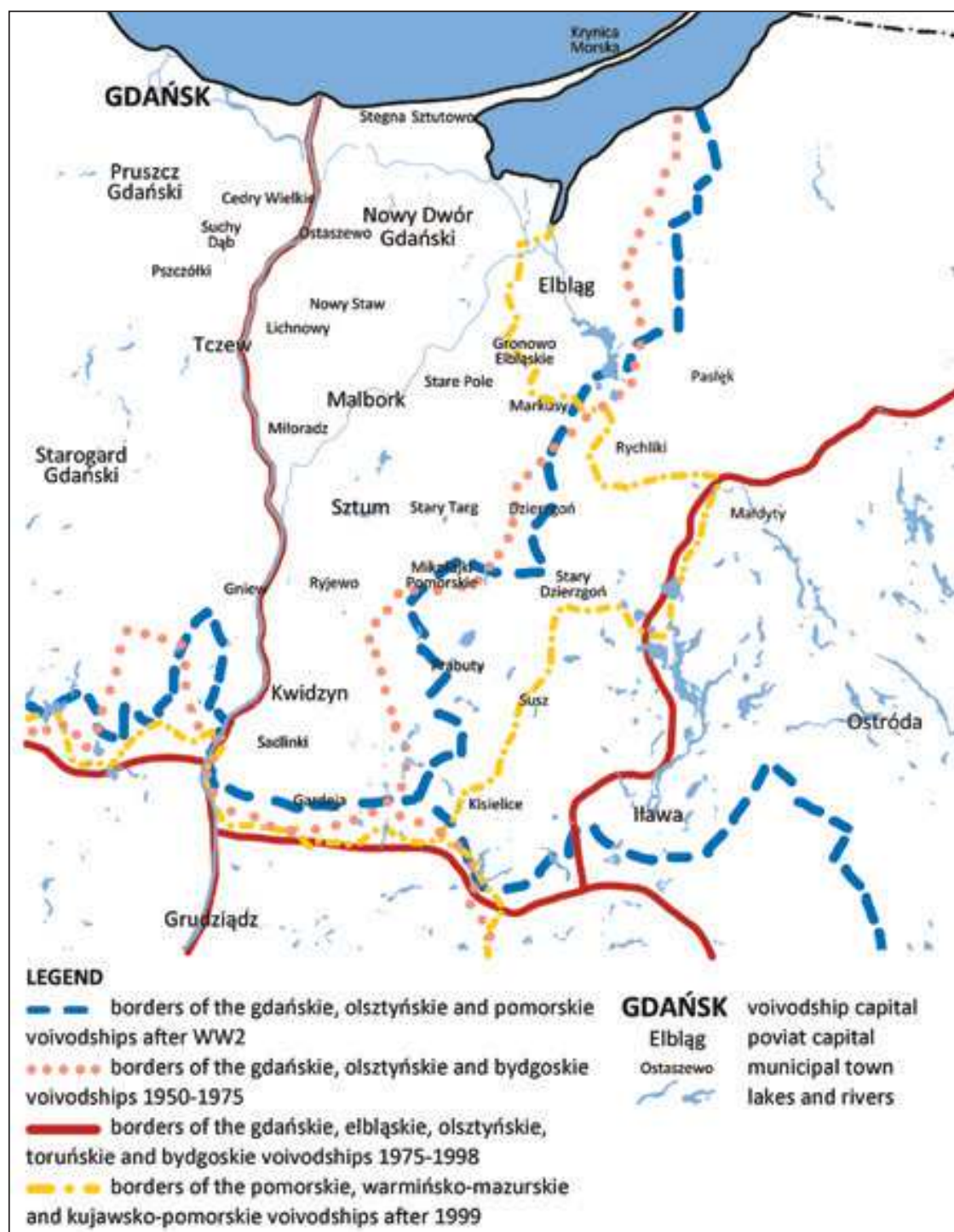
Source: own research, graphics by: Agnieszka Robakowska.

During the 1920 plebiscite, Susz and its neighbouring areas were considered parts of Powiśle. Today, however, this is not reflected in the views of the inhabitants: *I'm relying on the borders of Powiśle after the plebiscite.* [...] *But now Susz is becoming more remote* (053/P/LS/92). This perception is different among organisations. Maps from the publication *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Warmii, Mazur, Powiśla. Stan*

zachowania, potencjały i problemy[54] published by the Warmińsko-Mazurskie Spatial Development Office in Olsztyn, demonstrate that Powiśle is an area located within the voivodship that is neither considered part of Warmia, Masuria, the Lubawa land nor Mazowsze.

Respondents from Powiśle additionally stressed that they see the region from the perspective of cooperation between local governments, cultural organisations and associations. It is much simpler to gather the necessary funds for joint projects and initiatives because: *the administrative divisions are still very strong here* (030/P/IS/62). Lokalne Grupy Działania (LGD, Local Action Groups) are one example of this phenomenon, as they are usually established within a chosen voivodship and restrict operations to a single municipality or poviat. Local Action Groups are composed of members of the public sector, private entrepreneurs and NGOs, e.g. municipal self--government, cultural and educational institutions, church communities, companies and co-operatives.[55] Together, they implement projects and investments in areas that are cohesive in some respect, for instance in terms of economy, geography or culture. The respondents admitted, however, that: *When it comes to Local Action Groups, few operate within a whole geographically or historically cohesive area because of the artificial divides imposed by administrative borders. Voivodship borders made financing these groups rather difficult, and let's say from a very administrative, formal perspective it is a complicated matter. So, many local groups are either limited to the area of one poviat, or joined together within a poviat or two* (004/P/SO/63).

For this reason, there are only two Local Action Groups active in Powiśle: LGD Kraina Dolnego Powiśla (Local Action Group Land of Lower Powiśle) in the Sztum poviat, and Powiślańska LGD (Local Action Group Powiślańska) in the Kwidzyn poviat. Even this distinction between areas of operation and names of groups can be confusing for the inhabitants, appear unnecessarily divisive and undermine the legitimacy of the name of the region.

The administrative divisions within Żuławy and Powiśle should be analysed from the perspective of centre-periphery relations in the Pomorskie voivodeship. The structure of spatial domination affects the competitiveness of the regions of Pomerania: Kaszuby, Kociewie, Bory Tucholskie, Żuławy and Powiśle. The centre of the region is Gdańsk, the headquarters for political decision-making and voivodship management. The periphery is considered to be located beyond Vistula, which includes a large part of Żuławy and Powiśle. From the cultural and administrative perspectives, being considered peripheral can be seen *as a synonym for backwardness and narrow-mindedness, or an element of symbolic violence,*[56] which manifests itself through certain norms being imposed on the region, as well as stereotyping.

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[54]   Cf. B. Antonowicz et al., *Dziedzictwo kulturowe Warmii, Mazur, Powiśla. Stan zachowania, potencjały i problemy*, Olsztyn–Warszawa 2006.

[55]   R. Kamiński, "Partnerstwa w programie LEADER: czy można stwierdzić, że LEADER nie buduje kapitału społecznego na polskiej wsi?", *Polityka Społeczna*, no. 1 (2011), p. 29.

[56]   T. Zarycki, *Peryferie. Nowe ujęcia zależności centro-peryferyjnych*, Warszawa 2009, p. 28.

While Żuławy are closely connected to the centre and maintain an increasingly influential position in the voivodship, Powiśle seems to be vaguely defined and largely forgotten. *If you travel to Gdańsk, we would be called Zawiślanie* (039/P/LS/55). This stereotype was considered particularly annoying by the inhabitants of Kwidzyn, which is considered a rapidly developing town. The interlocutors stressed: *I prefer the name Powiśle than Zawiśle. Even in some of Marshall's* [official administrative – A.P.-W.] *documents they used the term Zawiśle* (015/P/IS/57).

Being regarded as peripheral and provincial is considered particularly offensive by members of the local elites.[57] With reference to this fact, it is worth noting that in 2010 a quarterly publication called *Prowincja. Kwartalnik Społeczno-Kulturalny Dolnego Powiśla i Żuław* was first published in Sztum. Founders of the quarterly stressed that the name was provocative because: *Although they are a dominant force, metropolitan centres are not the only source of interesting and creative cultural enterprises. Towns like Nowy Dwór Gdański, Krynica Morska, Malbork, Nowy Staw, Sztum, Dzierzgoń, Kwidzyn and Prabuty are also active in this regard.*[58] These towns are clear examples of the process through which the 'little homelands' acquire new centres.

Towns and villages in Żuławy, according to inhabitants
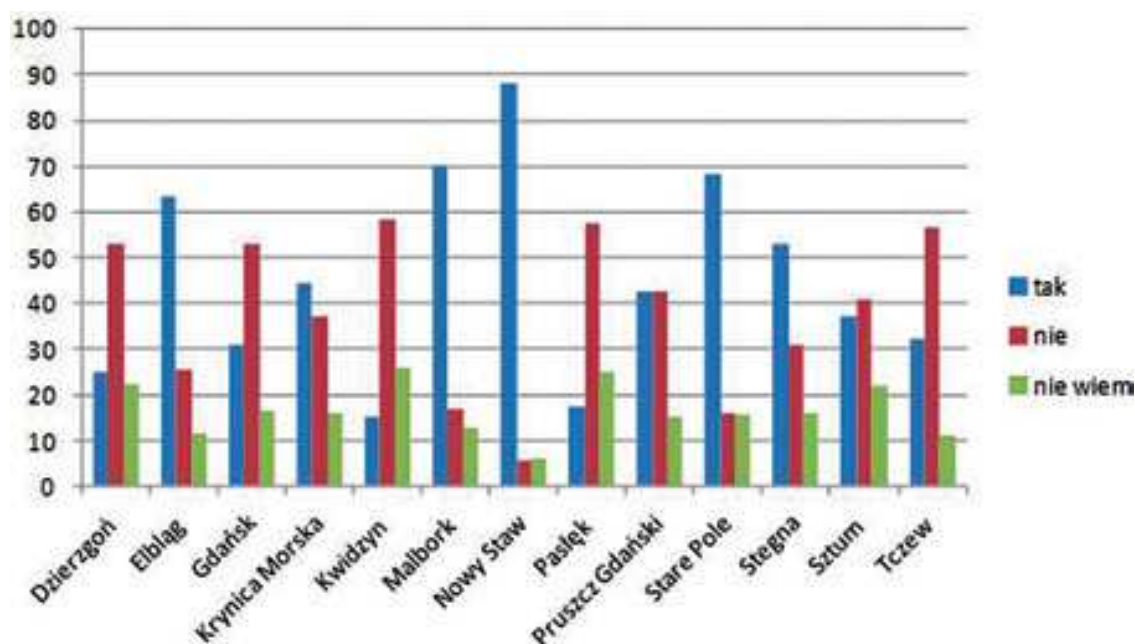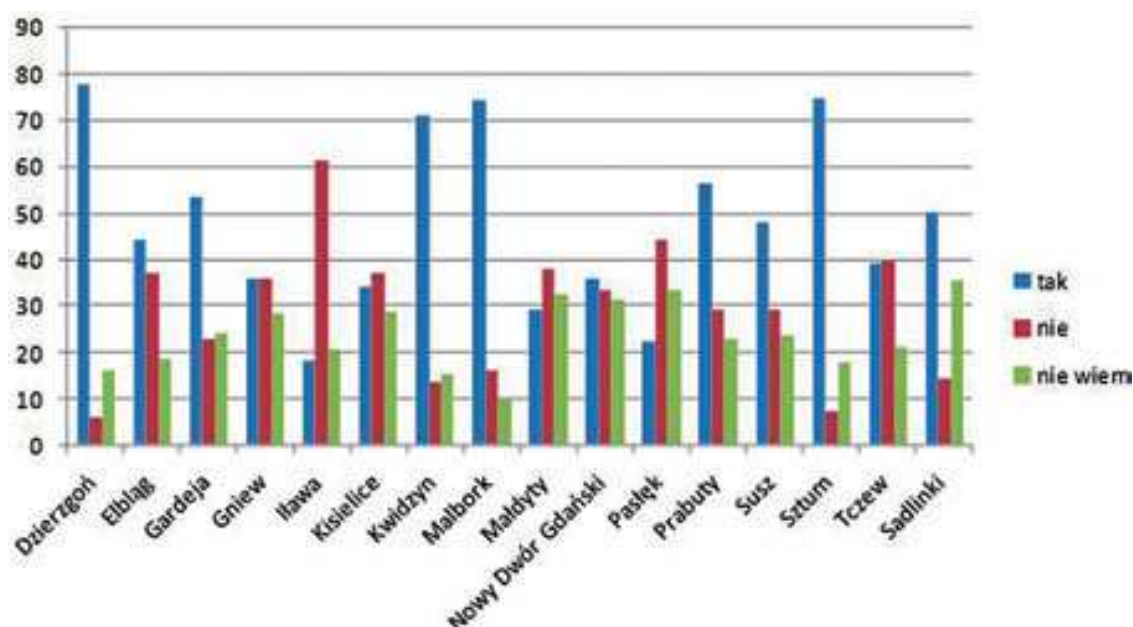

Source: own research.

Centre-periphery relations are sharply delineated also in the Żuławy and Powiśle regions, as witnessed by the inhabitants of both areas. Quantitative research results presented in the diagrams on this page demonstrate that in Żuławy, poviat capitals, towns and seats of municipalities constitute the centres of the region: Nowy Staw, Elbląg, Malbork,

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57　Ibid., p. 153.

58　L. Sarnowski et al., "Prowincja na dzień dobry", *Prowincja. Kwartalnik Społeczno-Kulturalny Dolnego Powiśla i Żuław*, no. 1, (2010), p. 5.

Stare Pole.[59] In Powiśle, in turn, this function is held solely by poviat capitals: Kwidzyn, Sztum and Malbork, as well as smaller towns such as Dzierzgoń and Prabuty. Cultural influence is supposed to radiate from these towns outwards. The difference between the regions may stem from the fact that the inhabitants of the latter exhibit a strong tendency to build their local identity around the centre of a municipality or a poviat.

Towns and villages in Powiśle, according to inhabitants

Source: own research.

THE BORDERS AND IMAGE OF THE REGION VS. THE IDENTITY OF ITS INHABITANTS

One difference between the two regions is definitely the broad-scale effort that Żuławy put into the promotion of the region as a tourist destination. Powiśle, on the other hand, remains uncharted territory to anyone from outside the region. The name itself can cause confusion as many people associate Powiśle with a district in Warsaw. Furthermore, the name can be found in multiple places on the Polish map: there is 'Powiśle Gdańskie', a name proposed by Hubert Górnowicz[60], Powiśle Kampinowskie, Powiśle Garwolińskie (Powiśle Otwocko-Garwolińskie), Powiśle Lubelskie, and Powiśle Lubelsko-Podlaskie. The name always refers to a swatch of land located in direct proximity to the Vistula.[61] This was also highlighted by the respondents: *This name Powiśle*

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[59]   In the quantitative part of the research I have deliberately refrained from asking about Nowy Dwór Gdański, which is considered the capital of Żuławy. This choice was validated by the respondents during the interviews.

[60]   H. Górnowicz, *Toponimia...*

[61]   J. Liguz, "Tożsamość Powiśla – zagadnienia z dziejów regionu – wykład", Edukacja regionalna – Ad-ademia Umiejętności Pedagogicznych, at <http://www.aup-kwidzyn.ckj.edu.pl/jliguz/edukacja_regionalna.html>, 2 January 2017.

is found in Warsaw and somewhere in the south of Poland near the Vistula. Here at the local level it is situating us, if you view it from the perspective of Gdańsk – that we are here around the Vistula, behind the Vistula, beyond the Vistula (014/P/IS/55).

After the end of the war, various organisations attempted to promote the name Powiśle by introducing it into urban spaces and everyday life. For instance, as early as 1949, Spółdzielnia Pracy Powiśle, a cooperative that produced carnival dress, was established in Kwidzyn. The Powiśle Song and Dance Ensemble was founded in 1961. The goal of the ensemble *is to promote the folk song and dance of the Powiśle region, and cultivate folk tradition* [...].[62] What is more, in 1975 the Powiślanie Song and Dance Ensemble was established in Sztum[63]. The region also has a cinema called 'Powiśle'. Attempts to promote the name of the region have also been made through the promotion of cultural heritage and tradition such as the Powiśle flat embroidery, or pickled plums, a specialty of Powiśle's cuisine.

Yet, in the eyes of its inhabitants, the current name of the region does not make it unique. Despite cultural efforts made by the local authorities, of the Pomorskie voivodship, it is still common to see ignorance regarding the location of the region: *I really have no idea* [how to draw the borders – A.P.-W.]. *For me, Powiśle is a non-existent term in official nomenclature* (075/ŻiP/IS/72); [...] *the region was never particularly distinct, and it never radiated influence. Because it all depends also on whether the region radiates* (070/ŻiP/IK/57).

Local elites from towns and cities considered regional centres are able to see the problem. They openly state that the need to define Powiśle is more prominent at the level of institutions, rather than inhabitants. *I think the tendency is to revolve around cities. This notion* [...] *is not used in everyday life. We* [institutions – A.P.-W.] *are the ones using it. The awareness of the inhabitants is related more to the cities than to the concept of Powiśle* (013/P/IS/57).

Much like was the case with Żuławy, the actions of an institution can influence the creation of social conceptual borders of the region. This becomes an aspirational cultural phenomenon, wherein *the concept of the region that exists in the minds of particular people influences the establishment of that region in the future.*[64] Undoubtedly, the activity of local associations promoting regional cultural heritage that developed after 1989 has had an important effect. For many years, Mennonites and their history in the Żuławy region had been reliably used for that purpose. Museum exhibitions, tourist trails and promotional materials devoted to the topic have also indirectly affected the promotion of the borders and image of the region. Furthermore, both locals and tourists found the Mennonite heritage of the region exotic and curious. For institutions, this opened up the possibility to promote a 'safe' history of the region that was carefully stripped of any controversy regarding its Polish and German past. The settlement of Żuławy was supposed to remain a romantic vision.

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[62]   E. Jamrozek, J. Liguz, P. Sadkowski, "Zespół Pieśni i Tańca Powiśle", *Krople Historii*, no. 22 (2011), p. 1.

[63]   Several years ago the ensemble ceased performing.

[64]   I. Łęcka, „Zróżnicowanie granic regionów kulturowych", in J. Plit (ed.), *Granice w krajobrazach kulturowych. Cultural Landscapes Boundaries*, Sosnowiec 2006, p. 47.

Although the lowlands along the Vistula River had also been inhabited by the Mennonites, Powiśle did not capitalise on their history as a means for promoting the region through organised efforts. Here, the traditional culture of the region and its history regarding the 1920 plebiscite became more of a focus. In the area of the Sztum poviat the Polish character of the region is highlighted, and the involvement of Poles during the inter-war period is frequently brought up, in particular that of the local gentry. Today, these tendencies manifest themselves also through the movement and adoption of national narratives at the regional level. For instance, many organisations bring up the country's political history when it comes to the so-called 'cursed soldiers' from the 5th Vilnius Brigade of the Home Army in Powiśle. Perhaps the strong national ties of the inhabitants affect the way they appreciate these types of narratives and ground them in the context of a region with fuzzy borders.

Quantitative research results appear to confirm this, as approximately 60% of Powiśle inhabitants when asked 'Which of the statements below do you find the least and the most important?' (see table on this page), have indicated national identity as the most important. Around 43% of respondents believed local identity was important, approx. 49% believed regional identity to be unimportant.[65]

Although national identity seems to be equally valued in Żuławy and in Powiśle, with 57% of the inhabitants of the former finding it the most important, there are differences in terms of regional identity as 48% of respondents believed it to be less important. Local identity is important only to 35% of respondents. In Żuławy, the difference between the number of inhabitants who believe local identity is important (over 28%) and those who believe regional identity is important (about 35%) is relatively small, at 7%. It could be assumed that in Żuławy identifying with one's home town equals identifying with one's region. For Powiśle, the difference between the percentage of people believing in the importance of local (approx. 23%) and regional (approx. 43%) identity is larger, equalling 20%.

Identity declared by the inhabitants of Żuławy and Powiśle

	European (%)		national (%)		regional (%)		local (%)	
	Żuławy	Powiśle	Żuławy	Powiśle	Żuławy	Powiśle	Żuławy	Powiśle
Most important	12	4.5	**56.9**	**59.4**	5.3	3.1	25.9	32.7
Important	13.7	14.9	21.7	19.1	28.4	22.7	**34.7**	**43.1**
Less important	7.6	18.1	20.2	19.6	**48.4**	**48.5**	22.9	13.3
Least important	**66.4**	**62.5**	1.2	1.3	17.3	25	14.7	10.2
Others	0.3	4.5	0	0.5	0.6	0.8	1.8	0.8

Source: own research based on sample: Żuławy N= 342, Powiśle N= 398.

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[65]   The question asked the respondent to sort identities according to their importance: national, regional, local, European and other.

An area where the inhabitants share a prominent regional identity is certainly more likely to be recognised at a regional and national level. Evidence for this comes, for instance, from the success of social initiatives launched by associations and private individuals to protect and promote cultural heritage. An increasing number of regional events is organised in the Żuławy region. In Powiśle, on the other hand, socio-cultural initiatives have gained prominence within the local space of the so-called small homeland.

CONCLUSIONS

The creation of borders between regions in the Western and Northern Lands is a challenge both for various institutions and inhabitants of these areas. Actions of the local government and cultural institutions demonstrate the dual nature of regional policy which does not reflect the inhabitants' needs and extent of regional identification. Attempts to increase involvement and promote the region made by formalised bodies become competitive with informal efforts.[66] Choosing only some events from the history of the region may cause conflict at the very early stages of image creation, and hindering the efforts to reinforce regional borders at the local level.

To sum up, three factors have affected the delineation of the regional borders of Żuławy and Powiśle: the influence of geographical, administrative and historical borders. Żuławy are an example of the socio-institutional model for border creation. The social understanding of the region is defined by its geographical borders. The only natural borders found in the area are rivers. They diversify the activity that benefits the region.

One obstacle to the institutional creation of cohesive regional borders and image is the administrative divide. The division into voivodships has created artificial borders between Żuławy's sub-regions. The main reason for establishing regional borders is the social need to separate a distinct cultural region. This, in turn, facilitates the promotion of Żuławy as a tourist destination. At the institutional level, strengthening the position of Żuławy in the voivodship in competition to more established regions with solid cultural traditions, e.g. Kociewie and Kaszuby is an important factor.

A similar strategy for creating regional borders can be observed in Powiśle. The institutional model for creating regional borders is visible through, for instance, activities meant to combat the image of being a periphery, or provincial. These activities legitimise the regional policy in order to separate a distinct cultural region. Powiśle is seen as a region with fuzzy borders. Hence, institutions find it safer to operate within the administrative borders of the Sztum and Kwidzyn poviats. The potential historical borders of the region are more important in regional discourse involving local communities from cultural borderlands such as the area around Malbork.

Space is a basic element in the construction of regional identity. It constitutes the

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[66]   A.W. Brzezińska, "Dualizm polityki regionalnej na przykładzie Żuław. Rzeczywistość kreowana a doświadczenie indywidualne", in W. Dohnal, A. Posern-Zieliński (eds.), *Antropologia i polityka. Szkice z badań nad kulturowymi wymiarami władzy*, Warszawa 2011, p. 141

stage where life takes place and individual personalities are shaped.[67] This is why search-ing for regional borders is so important for the Western and Northern Lands, where further generations of post-war settlers begin to identify with their place of residence.

Factors influencing the construction of regional borders

	Żuławy	Powiśle
Model of regional border construction	socio-institutional	institutional
Influence of geographical borders	– they determine the social concept regarding the borders of the region – natural borders, such as rivers diversify social and institutional activity	– lack of unambiguous borders
Influence of administrative borders	– they are an obstacle for creating a coherent image of the region and unified cultural and regional policy for the whole region – they create artificial divisions (separate the region into sub-regions)	– they determine the social understanding of the borders of the region – they become the conceptual borders for regions where the borders are already unclear
Influence of historical borders	– no explicit reference in promoted narration about the region	– important for regional discourse on the social activity of the cultural borderlands
Reasons for delineating regional borders	– social need to separate a distinct cultural region – promoting the region as a tourist destination	– need to separate a distinct cultural region at the institutional level – legitimisation of chosen regional and historical policy – fighting the stereotype of provinciality and peripherality
	– strengthening the position in the voivodship in competition to more established regions with solid traditions, e.g. Kociewie; or more expansive regions, e.g. Kaszuby	

Source: own research.

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[67]   A. Posern-Zieliński, "Tożsamość a terytorium. Perspektywa antropologiczna", *Przegląd Zachodni*, no. 3, (2005), p. 11.

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