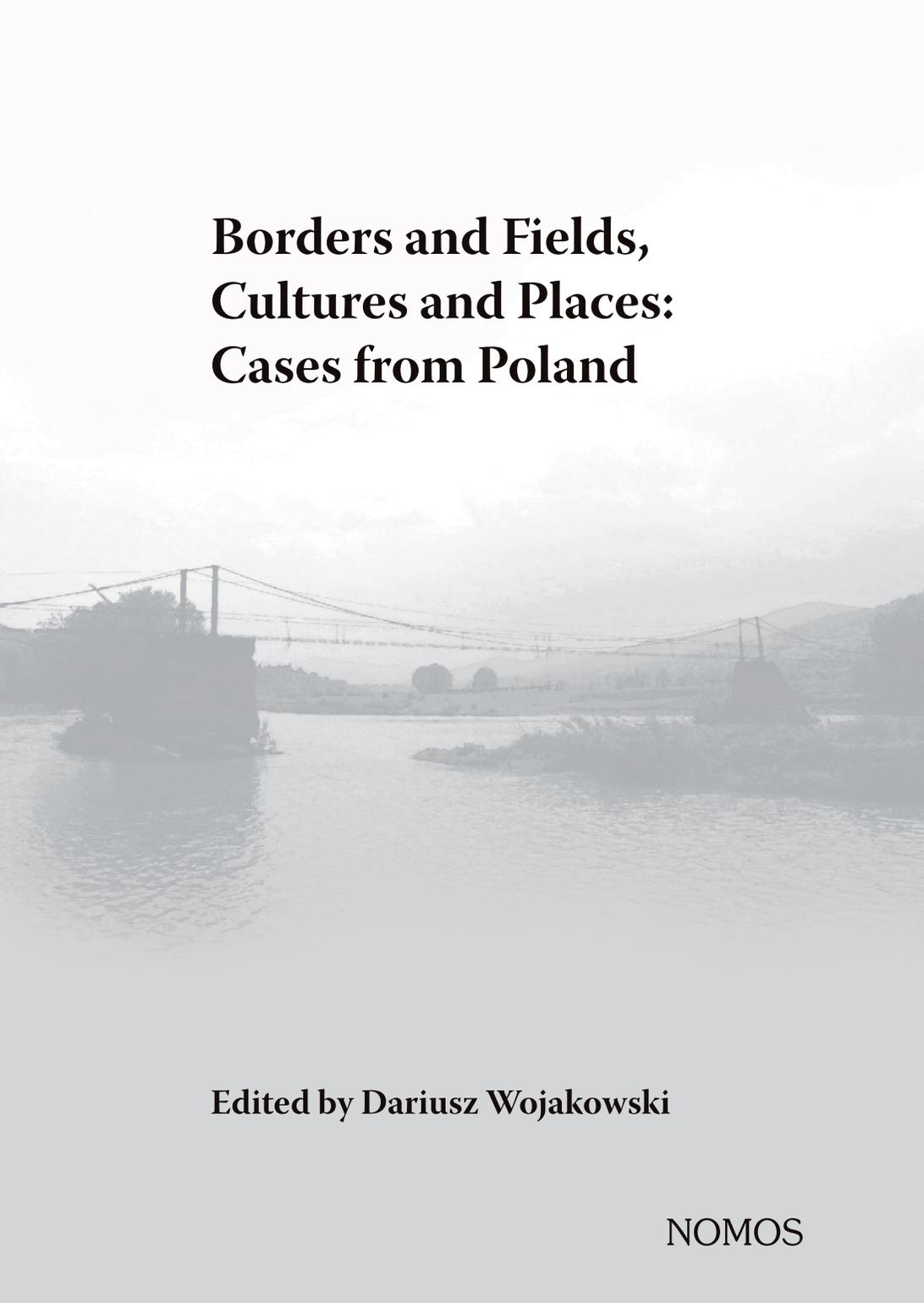
A landscape photograph of a suspension bridge over a river. The image has a strong purple color cast. The bridge spans across the river, with two large stone pillars supporting the suspension cables. The background shows rolling hills and a cloudy sky. The water in the foreground is calm, reflecting the bridge and the sky.

Borders and Fields, Cultures and Places: Cases from Poland

Edited by Dariusz Wojakowski

NOMOS

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Cultures and Places:
Cases from Poland**



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INTRODUCTION

The present volume is the outcome of the Polish Ministry of Science and Higher Education research project No. 1 H02E 012 30 entitled *Swojskość i obcość jako kategorie konstruowania rzeczywistości kulturowej we współczesnej Polsce* (“Ourness” and “Otherness” as Categories in Constructing Cultural Reality in Contemporary Poland), implemented in 2006-2007. The project was designed to investigate perceptions of social differentiation in today’s Poland, based on the assumption that multiple external influences combined with internal variations in Polish society will reveal highly complex interpretive patterns of such differentiation. In the search for specific interpretive models used by individuals, the research was qualitative in nature and covered communities that were highly divergent culturally: immigrants from the West and from the Ukraine, inhabitants of a small town in ethnic Polish territory (Subcarpathian Pilzno) and a provincial capital (Rzeszów).¹ Research findings could be compared with data obtained in the slightly earlier Polish Committee for Scientific Research (KBN) project No. 2H02E 020 23 entitled *Granice w wyobrażeniach i działaniach społeczności lokalnych wschodniego pogranicza Polski w przededniu integracji z Unią Europejską* (Borders in the Imagination and Actions of Local Communities in the Eastern Polish Borderlands on the Eve of Integration with the European Union).² The latter used the same methodology to study multi-ethnic local communities: Polish-Ukrainian (Zagórz), Polish-Byelorussian (Gródek), Polish-Lithuanian (Sejny), and the town of

¹ The project included 102 extended interviews: 20 each at Pilzno and Warsaw among Western immigrants, 21 each with Ukrainian immigrants in Warsaw and Subcarpathia, and 10 each with Polish inhabitants of Rzeszów and Western immigrants residing there.

² The project was implemented in 2002-2005. The project manager was Hanna Bojar; chief researchers were Kaja Kaźmierska and Dariusz Wojakowski. Project findings have been presented in Kurczewska, Bojar 2005. Findings from this project have been used in the chapters contributed by Stopa, Wojakowski, and Nijander-Dudzińska to the volume at hand.

Braniewo on the Russian border inhabited by Poles, Ukrainians, and Germans.

The role of ourness-otherness in constructing mental notions of social differentiation in the communities under study has been presented in a separate publication as part of this project (Wojakowski 2007). The problem of forming notions of Polish social organization turned out to be multi-faceted and the material collected sufficiently ample to generate the present collection of contributions by members of the project team.³ The item considered by all of us to be particularly significant in interpreting social realities, but also ourness-otherness, is space and especially its corresponding social concepts of territoriality.

Undertaking an analysis of territoriality, we should not assume that it is a crucial component in the construction of any notion of social differentiation. Without a doubt, however, a denial of territoriality as an organizing principle in social order, and the concept of non-territoriality of cultural differences (see Gupta, Ferguson 1997) suggest an important role played by space in constructing the social world. These concepts thus uphold the importance of this category in scholarly discourse.

Our discussion of the role of space and territoriality in constructing cultural interpretations of social realities may be divided into two main perspectives as reflected in the volume's two parts. First, space is an element of a social conception of the world. This perspective permits studying its various understandings by contemporaries. A review of territorial "ideologies" manifested in public discourse is presented in Joanna Kurczewska's chapter.

In contemporary public discourse, the author notes fairly traditional spatial notions, present in Europe since the 19th century and superimposed upon various concepts of territoriality proposed by postmodernism, communitarianism, and constructivism. Such philosophical proposals for an understanding of space remain mutually linked to political notions of territory and borders while they also define individual visions of borders and social identities.

The core element in organizing spatial notions is the border which Joanna Kurczewska believes represents an ontological phenomenon as well

³ In addition to the present contributors, researchers included Miroslaw Bieniecki and Justyna Frelak who contributed significantly to the fieldwork.

as analytical category: a tool with which to describe territoriality. Kurczewska demonstrates how much the problem of space is present in contemporary European visions of national, political, and regional communities as well as in discourse on globalization and identity (which is even evident in the concept of de-territorialization which negates the meaning heretofore ascribed to space).

The contribution by Mateusz Stopa concerns the creation of regional identities and group divisions perceived in the consciousness of Subcarpathian inhabitants. In this part of Poland, regional identity is very poor. Moreover, the author observes that the most favorably disposed to the region are young people who, nonetheless, are unwilling to stay in their present place of residence. Regional identity is more salient among the Ukrainian minority, although it is not very large in the region. Under such circumstances, in order for regional identity to express itself in the absence of any distinct plan by regional authorities, the line between ours and otherness in Subcarpathia is still built mainly based on local or national criteria; regional identity has been no match for these large-scale identifications.

Elayne Fracaro-Bieniecka, in reference to an understanding of territory as a cultural value and a constituent of social imagination as proposed by Kurczewska, tries to use sociological theory and empirical material to capture the functioning of the notion of a global community as a collective category with no internal borders. "A World without Borders" is an idea present both in social theory and in the beliefs of people involved in global migrations. Yet, as she analyzes the responses of Western expatriates in Poland, the author concludes that it is more a projected than experienced reality, often treated with skepticism. In Fracaro-Bieniecka's view, the feature that describes contemporary shifts in mentality better is not so much a rejection as a crossing of borders through an "expanding identity." Borders as part of the social imagination are and will be significant as long as individuals need social and supra-individual frames of reference.

Part II addresses the problem of multiple symbolic orders and their superimposition as experienced by territory-bound communities as well as immigrants. Here the concept of social field is suggested as a theoretical tool permitting effective description of the symbolic entanglements resulting from such multiplicity. Its theoretical outline is offered in the contribution by Dariusz Wojakowski.

A social field is described here as similar to that in Victor Turner's (1974) theory. It consists in the entirety of interactions oriented at shared symbols and meanings. The main properties of the presented approach to social fields include spatiality of varied effective ranges, plurality within an individual biography and territorially distinct community, and varied strength with which a field manifests itself in this community or in individual experience. Thus understood, a field is a category describing the social and symbolic aspect of reality, but abstracted from its territorial and physical context. The physical setting in which social fields manifest themselves is the anthropologically understood environment. A distinction between the symbolic and the physical in social occurrences permits the description of cultural diversity both in individual experience and biography and in spatially understood places which offer shared living conditions to a number of people. The properties of social fields and the relations of these fields with the environment are presented as illustrated by research conducted along Poland's eastern fringes.

In the next chapter, Agata Nijander-Dudzińska describes social fields in Subcarpathian local communities: Pilzno and Zagórz. The author focuses on how various fields observed in a local community affect that of the local authority. She demonstrates the complexity of cultural content on a small and relatively homogeneous territory, as well as the overlapping, reinforcement, and domination of various social fields in the communities studied.

The chapter by Alla Karnaukh and Natalia Nesterenko studies participation in the social fields of Ukrainian immigrants – people who, on the one hand, aspire to enter culturally alien fields and, on the other, agree to limited contacts in other fields significant to them. The authors present two ways in which immigrants enter new social fields. One shows a desire for strong involvement in new social fields, while the other is oriented solely at resources in the occupational field in Poland. Interestingly, these two types of immigrant connections to new social fields have little effect on their involvement in respective political or national fields which, in terms of respondent values, appear as weakly affecting their lives. The differences, therefore, are seen in how powerful the ties to local fields are as defined by interactions in the family, with friends, and the immigrant's immediate surroundings.

To conclude this outline of the ideas that guided the research team, I would like to thank persons and institutions assisting us in our work. I am

especially thankful to Markian Szaszkewicz Ukrainian Public School in Przemyśl which provided support during our fieldwork in that town in 2006. I would like to thank the Institute of Slavic Studies in Rivne, Ukraine which co-organized a seminar devoted to this subject in October 2007. On behalf of the team, I gratefully acknowledge the valuable input from the Institute's staff members: Bohdan Yuskiv, Oleg Tishchenko, and Sergiei Trojan.

Dariusz Wojakowski