CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING IN EUROPEAN BORDERLANDS

A study on familiarity and unfamiliarity

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Bianca Szytniewski, 1 October 2018

Contents

1 INTRODUCTION

Borderlands can be perceived as sites for encounters with both differences and similarities. When crossing a state border, we move from one state to another, come across different people and cultures, hear different languages, notice different characteristics of our surroundings and submerge in otherness. At the same time we might find out that locals in restaurants or shops speak our language or sell known brands and goods. Our border experiences, local narratives and regional histories colour our perceptions of a borderland and enable us to give meaning to the differences and similarities we encounter. Some of these may be known and expected, but many others can be new and unfamiliar. Whereas familiarity and recognition often contribute to feelings of comfort and ease when visiting a place that is different from home (Blokland and Nast 2014; Cresswell 2010; Wise 2009; Van Houtum 1999), a certain degree of unfamiliarity seems to encourage cross-border practices (Díaz-Sauceda et al. 2015; Spierings and Van der Velde 2013; Edensor 2007). Unfamiliarity resulting from differences in, for instance, culture, landscape or facilities between the two sides of a state border can trigger interest and curiosity, and consequently lead to cross-border mobility. The presence of both familiarity and unfamiliarity can influence how we deal with the state border and cross-border differences and similarities in the borderland. The way cross-border mobility evolves then depends largely on our perceptions and daily life practices (Rumford 2014; O'Donoghue 2013; Terlouw 2012; Paasi 2009; Rumford 2009; Löfgren 2008; Newman 2006). This dissertation further unravels this notion of familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to encounters with differences and similarities in borderlands, by offering theoretical reflections on familiarity and unfamiliarity, and examining cross-border mobility, shopping practices in particular, in different European borderlands.

1.1 Borders from a territorial and relational perspective

The debate on borders and borderlands is often a territorial one, with state borders symbolising a division between nationalities and borderlands being 'spaces that straddle two sides of a state border'. There is a differentiation in a mental sense between 'us' and 'them', and in a spatial sense between 'here' and 'there', which is important for organising political, judicial, economic, cultural and social life

(Yndigegn 2013; Newman 2006; Anderson and O'Dowd 1999; Kristeva 1991). This spatial differentiation is also associated with the "construction of citizenship as a collective `identity', a system of rights and duties, normative principles and capabilities" (Balibar 2009: 190).

A rather recent development is that borderlands are increasingly considered a resource for political, institutional, economic and social practices and discourses, as opposed to areas that are economically disadvantaged because of their geographically peripheral location (Sohn 2014; Paasi 2009; Newman 2006; Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2003). In Europe, it is assumed that the removal of borders, particularly those between EU member states, will contribute to further European integration and more cohesive cross-border regions (Sohn 2014; Yndigegn 2013; Terlouw 2012). As a result, the EU integrated into its regional policies the idea of open and transnational spaces, seeking to realise "a single space within which all constraints to the movement of goods, peoples, services and money have been removed" (Rumford 2006: 160). Borderlands can then become places where people from different social and cultural backgrounds meet, exchange, interact and even "create distinctive border cultures and transnational regionalisms" (Soja 2005: 38-39); spaces where differences and similarities come together.

Daily practices in European borderlands can be found, for instance, in cross-border shopping, both functional and for leisure (Makkonen 2015; Guereño-Omil, Hannam and Alzua-Sorzabal 2014; Amante 2013; Spierings and Van der Velde 2013; Dimitrovic and Vida 2007), and cross-border commuting and labour mobility (Wiesböck et al. 2016; Decoville et al. 2013; Gerber 2012; Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004). EU citizens who live and work in different member states are often seen as those who contribute to 'Europeanization from below' (Recchi and Triandafyllidou 2010). It does not mean, however, that all European borderlands become more cohesive border regions with unrestricted cross-border practices. Institutional and regulatory frameworks at the national and the European level still influence the daily lives of people living in the borderland and can hinder cross-border mobility (Decoville et al. 2013; Terlouw 2012). In addition to the daily practices, closer political and institutional cooperation is also visible in European borderlands both within the EU (Prokkola, Zimmerbauer

and Jakola 2015; Scott 2015; De Sousa 2013; Perkmann 2003) and at its external borders (Celata and Coletti 2015; Khasson 2013; Popescu 2008). Nevertheless, by removing the physical barriers formed by border control and travel restrictions between EU member states, a clearer distinction is made between the internal and external borders or spaces of the Union (Sanguin 2014; Paasi 2009). The securitisation of the external borders of the EU remains an issue at the top of the EU agenda (Wunderlich 2013; Van Houtum 2010; Lavenex and Wichmann 2009).

Although territoriality and the concept of the nation state have not disappeared from national and international policymaking, academic research is increasingly moving away from a traditional territorial approach towards a relational approach with regard to borders and borderlands. Relational borders cut across social spaces and are understood as mental representations rather than fixed territorial entities formed by state borders (Varró 2014; Harrison 2013; Paasi 2009). According to Konrad (2015: 3), "borders and bordering in globalisation may be uncoupled from the national scale and linked to identity and belonging within and beyond the state". Mental representations therefore concern differences and similarities related to someone, something or someplace different from home. They take form through the assessment of for instance languages, social rules, norms and values, as well as the physical surroundings found across the state border.

By taking into account the identity and feelings of belonging of those who live in the borderland, it is possible to move to a more local scale of daily practices in borderlands. Rumford (2014: 23) introduced the term 'borderwork' to refer to "the activity of ordinary people leading to the construction or dissolution of borders, and driven by their own 'grass roots' agendas rather than those of the state". In other words, people construct their own borders and give meaning to differences and similarities in the places where their social practices take place. These social constructs are formed and experienced differently by different actors (Massey 2005), and result from consciously or unconsciously transforming "social exchanges, memories, images and daily use of the material setting into scenes and actions that convey symbolic meaning" (Low 1999: 111-112). Therefore, some consider a particular border a barrier, whereas others regard the same border as a source of opportunities (Rumford 2014, 2009, 2006; Newman 2006; Yuval-Davis 2004). Also an attitude of indifference may play a role in perceiving borders.

Being indifferent however does not always mean being unaware of cross-border practices (Szytniewski 2015; Ernste 2010).

For those who consider the border a barrier, mental distance may be at play and discourage cross-border mobility (see also Paasi 2009; Van Houtum and Strüver 2002; Cresswell 1996). People who do make use of the state border – the 'regionauts' (Löfgren 2008) or 'bordersurfers' (Terlouw 2012) – are motivated by the opportunities afforded by the presence of the state border and act upon the perceived differences and similarities in the borderland. Consequently, it can be argued that border crossers have agency and decide and act on their notion of a border and borderland. Here, Giddens' (1984) constitutive understanding of structure and agency can be recognised. According to Giddens, actions take place in contexts that include other people as well as constraints and opportunities created by the social structures. These social structures in turn are also the product of social actions performed by the agents, who interpret and transform the rules around them. Brunet-Jailly (2005), for instance, recognises structure and agency as mutually shaping borderlands. Structuring characteristics such as institutional and social processes at the macro level then coexist with activities of individuals across and around borders who colour the specific nature of a borderland at the micro level.

Following from this, cross-border practices are associated with both territorial and relational borders, representing territoriality and the nation state, and social constructs in the form of mental representations, respectively (Newman 2010). In this border context where both territorial and relational borders are present as a result of differences and similarities in the borderland, the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity can offer an interesting perspective on cross-border mobility. The presence of both familiarity and unfamiliarity can influence how border crossers deal with the state border and how they give meaning to the places in the borderland where their daily life practices take place.

1.2 A theoretical understanding of familiarity and unfamiliarity

The concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to international mobility is taken up in both border studies and tourism research. This section elaborates on these two strands of literature and provides a foundation for the further use of the concept in this dissertation.

In border studies, Spierings and Van der Velde (2008) introduced the 'bandwidth of unfamiliarity' to explain the degree of familiarity and/or unfamiliarity people are prepared to accept before becoming mobile and engaging in cross-border shopping practices. Here, differences between the two sides of a state border are framed within the bandwidth of unfamiliarity, which reflects a push/pull and keep/repel model for cross-border mobility (see also Bygvrå and Westlund 2005; Di Matteo and Di Matteo 1996; Timothy and Butler 1995). Both push and pull factors demonstrate the decision to move, in this case, across the state border. Whereas push factors involve reasons to escape the daily setting of everyday life, pull factors include the perceived opportunities and benefits on the other side of the state border. In the case of cross-border shopping, for instance, people expect to find not only unfamiliar townscapes and different socio-cultural encounters, but also differences in merchandise, prices and local atmosphere. Keep and repel factors reflect the decision to stay, preventing mobility. Here, shopping facilities at home can be more attractive than those abroad and, for instance, having to pay in another currency or deal with after-sales services on the other side of a state border can play a role (Spierings and Van der Velde 2008). Following earlier research on the attractiveness of the unfamiliar in the tourist experience (Edensor 2007; MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997; Bauman 1995), Spierings and Van der Velde (2008) argued that unfamiliarity rather than familiarity can trigger curiosity about and interest in visiting places across a state border.

Spierings and Van der Velde (2013) further expanded the bandwidth of unfamiliarity by examining the interplay between familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to cross-border shopping practices. When international differences are related to push and pull factors, people in a borderland can experience both comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity, which together can

contribute to cross-border mobility, attention and interaction. Comfortable familiarity follows from the ability to make a mental connection with the places across the state border, whereas attractive unfamiliarity is found in the notion that cross-border differences are considered appealing and an incentive to become mobile. Richards and Wilson (2006: 1220) also recognised this interplay between familiarity and unfamiliarity, stating that "[w]hile 'difference' seems an essential prerequisite for people to move from one place to another, difference can only be consumed within a familiar frame of reference". Keep and repel factors, on the contrary, can be linked to uncomfortable unfamiliarity and unattractive familiarity, and lead to immobility, aversion and avoidance. The other side of the state border does not have 'a luring effect' and discourages people from engaging in cross-border practices (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013).

The interplay between familiarity and unfamiliarity has also been examined in other research within border studies. Spierings and Van der Velde (2013, 2008) initiated the EuroCORECODE project 'Unfamiliarity as signs of European times'.[1] Amante (2013) discusses processes of identity construction and cross-border shopping at the Portuguese–Spanish border. Shifting perspectives on feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity were found among the different cross-border shoppers as a result of geographical distance to the state border. Similarly, Jagetić Andersen's (2013) study on the Slovenian–Croatian border region demonstrates how the daily practices of people living in the borderland contributed to more familiarity, whereas political discourses related to national identity construction articulated unfamiliarity between the two sides of the border. Yndigegn (2013), however, found contrasting results in his study on the German–Danish border

[1] This research on cross-border shopping in the European borderlands was part of the EuroCORECODE project, which aimed at researching the construction and deconstruction of borders by analysing historical representations and daily practices in border regions. Under the umbrella of the overall 'Unfamiliarity' project, every partner examined the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity from a different perspective, covering labour mobility at the Danish-German, Slovenian-Italian and Slovenian-Croatian border (University of Southern Denmark), cross-border cooperation practices and 'Mediascapes' in the Finnish-Russian and the Finnish-Estonian contexts (University of Eastern Finland), and the cultural construction of cross-border Dutch and Belgian Limburg (University of Maastricht and Free University of Brussels). More information about this EU funded research project and the partners can be found at www.unfamiliarity.eu.

region. Whereas political discourses sought the removal of state borders to form an institutionalised border region, deep-rooted animosity against both the EU and Germany prevented debordering processes and more familiarity, despite the daily cross-border practices in the borderland. This historical focus is found in a number of studies on familiarity and unfamiliarity. Both Scott (2013) and Izotov and Laine (2013) illustrate, for instance, how a common history and common cultural landscapes in the Finish–Russian border region of Karelia produce feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity in cross-border practices, notwithstanding changeable EU–Russia relations. Also, Knotter (2014) and Klatt (2014) related the concept to the historical development of labour mobility in the Dutch–Belgian–German borderland and the Danish–German border region, respectively.

In tourism research, a more multidimensional approach has been taken in understanding familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to perceptions of a tourist destination. The concept was first operationalised by Baloglu (2001) as a multidimensional construct, consisting of previous experiences and information sources; thus, experiential and informational familiarity. Prentice (2004) expanded the construct into seven dimensions, adding proximate, self-assured, self-described, educational and expected familiarity to the concept. Proximity reflects the extent to which an individual feels distant or close to a place. Self-assured familiarity illustrates people's judgements and feelings concerning a place and is considered an interpretation of experiential familiarity. Self-described familiarity refers to the self-rated and subjective understanding of a place, educational familiarity covers the extent of formal and informal mediated learning, and expected familiarity considers expectations of cosiness and attractions by tourists of a destination. These three dimensions, namely self-described, educational and expected familiarity, reflect self-assessment and can be related to informational familiarity. Taking the seven dimensions into account, an affective, a cognitive and a conative understanding of people's sense of place can be recognised (Low and Altman 1992; see also Stylos et al. 2016; Kim and Chen 2016; San Martin and Rodríguez del Bosque 2008; Kyle and Chick 2007; Tasci, Gartner and Tamer Cavusgil 2007; Beerli and Martín 2004; Pike and Ryan 2004). An affective evaluation of a place is found in proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity, a cognitive one through informational, self-described, educational, and expected

familiarity and unfamiliarity, and a conative one is related to experiential and self-assured familiarity and unfamiliarity. In short, these evaluations reflect proximity, knowledge and experiences, respectively.

The concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity has been applied in different empirical studies within tourism research, mostly taking a quantitative approach to understand the relations between the different variables. For instance, by examining international destinations with visitors from around the world (Prentice 2004) or exploring differences in place images among tourists from one particular country (Baloglu 2001). Different elements of familiarity and unfamiliarity have also been highlighted in understanding destination images and visit intention (Tan and Wu 2016; Huang, Chen and Lin 2013; Yang, Yuan and Hu 2009), the role of stereotypes in a tourist destination (Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002), and tourist motivations and experiences in relation to heritage consumption (Prentice and Andersen 2007).

This multidimensional take on familiarity and unfamiliarity initiated in tourism research could be of great value for examining cross-border mobility in border studies. In border studies the concept has so far been used in a rather static and normative way: something is familiar or unfamiliar and encourages or discourages cross-border mobility. Jagetić Andersen (2013, 2014) and Spierings and Van der Velde (2013) are exceptions here as they reflect on the theoretical implications and the multidimensionality of the concept. When identifying proximity, knowledge and experiences as part of familiarity and unfamiliarity, the concept can be operationalised as proximate, informational and self-assessed, and experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity (Prentice and Andersen 2007; Prentice 2004; Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Baloglu 2001). First, proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity indicate how distant or close people feel to/from someone, something or someplace who/that is different in one way or another. Proximity, be it geographical, social or cultural proximity, reflects an affective evaluation of a place. Second, informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity concern people's beliefs and impressions related to the particularities of a place, involving objective and subjective knowledge. Cognitive evaluations are used to assess and make sense of perceived differences and similarities in places that are different from home. Third, experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity refer to

the way people experience passive and active encounters with various others at the places they visit. Experiences during previous visits can differ between first-time and repeat visitors. This can influence the intention to visit a place again, the conative evaluation. These dimensions presume a mutual interdependency as they together reflect familiarity and unfamiliarity. In other words, they offer a multidimensional approach to understand what actually makes something, someone or someplace familiar or unfamiliar. This approach will be used to examine cross-border mobility, which is further specified in this dissertation as 'cross-border shopping'.

1.3 Cross-border shopping in the borderland

Shopping in another country can be identified as tourism shopping and understood as part of leisure activities and touristic experiences at a travel destination (Murphy et al. 2011; Tosun et al. 2007; Moscardo 2004). Tourist destinations can lie 'on the other side of the world', but they can also be situated within relative geographical proximity in a borderland. When crossing a state border specifically for the purpose of shopping, the activity can be understood as cross-border shopping. As stated by Jansen-Verbeke (1991: 11), "[s]hopping tourism in border areas is a well-known pattern all over the world, and tourist flows are changing in intensity and direction according the price fluctuations of neighbouring countries". This way cross-border shopping may be considered a functional and economic endeavour resulting from differences in price and product quality between two sides of a state border (see also Sharma, Chen and Luk 2015; Sullivan et al. 2012; Asplund, Friberg and Wilander 2007; Bygvrå and Westlund 2005; Wang 2004; Di Matteo and Di Matteo 1996). While cross-border shopping is mostly associated with shopping for own consumption, in practice, it also takes the form of small-scale informal trading, whereby border crossers buy goods on one side of a state border and sell them on the other side (Rogerson 2015; Szytniewski 2015; Radu 2013; Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012). From this functional and economic perspective, cross-border shopping includes rational reflections on the differences and similarities of a borderland. In addition to the functional and economic motivations, cross-border shopping has become increasingly recognised as a leisure activity that even can play a role in the attractiveness of a particular cross-border destination

in a borderland (Choi, Heo and Law 2016; Makkonen 2015; Timothy, Guia and Berthet 2014). Various studies emphasise that pleasure shopping, 'discovery' and exoticism should also be taken into account when considering cross-border shopping practices (Díaz-Sauceda et al. 2015; Guereño-Omil et al. 2014; Baruca and Zolfagharian 2013; Spierings and Van der Velde 2013; Edensor 2007; Timothy and Butler 1995). These leisure motivations concern the subjective experiences of cross-border shoppers, and thus cover emotional reflections with regard to cross-border shopping.

Crossing a state border involves corporeal travel into spaces containing landscapes and townscapes that are different from those at home (Urry 2002). Social and cultural differences and similarities may then come to the attention at a cross-border shopping destination where people see, hear and meet different others and engage in what Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) call 'fleeting encounters' with otherness. Hannam, Sheller and Urry (2006: 13) consider these places of encounter as "forms of material and sociable dwelling-in-motion, places of and for various activities". A cross-border shopping destination becomes a place for temporary physical presence, where different others come together in order to depart again. In line with the ambition of the EU to create open and transnational spaces, cross-border shopping offers a context for discussing European borderlands as meeting places, or 'contact zones', where co-presence, interactions and social practices take place (Yeoh and Willis 2005). Moreover, borderlands usually cover social and cultural differences and similarities in a relatively small geographical area, where the immediate presence of otherness across the state border can become part of everyday life (Galasińska and Galasiński 2003; Spierings and Van der Velde 2008).

In addition to recognising cross-border shopping as an economic and leisure endeavour, the daily life worlds of individual border crossers and their specific encounters with social and cultural differences and similarities in a particular borderland can also enrich the debate on cross-border shopping. In understanding cross-border shopping behaviour, more emphasis should be placed on the personal backgrounds of the border crossers (Dmitrovic and Vida 2007) and the perceived added value of shopping practices (Choi et al. 2016). Cross-border shopping practices can then be further understood by considering the way perceptions and experiences of 'being-in-the-world' are shaped, and how they provide a means

to make sense of encounters with differences and similarities, in this case, in a borderland. People's sense of space resulting from these emotional reflections can not only provoke sensations but also drive actions (Edensor 2007; Davidson and Milligan 2004). Here, the multidimensional framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity can become useful. Border crossers who live in the borderland can feel a certain degree of proximity with regard to a shopping destination that is geographically 'close' but assumedly socially and culturally 'different', their knowledge is used to assess and make sense of perceived differences and similarities found in the borderland, and cross-border shopping practices contribute to the experiences of places across the state border. The structures of the borderland and the perceptions and activities of the border crossers form the spaces of consumption where proximity, knowledge and experiences are formed. Unravelling the degree and intensity of the various dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity in cross-border shopping can explain the reasons behind the behaviour of the border crossers and the perceived added value of visiting a cross-border shopping destination.

1.4 Research objectives and research questions

The integration of the two strands of literature on familiarity and unfamiliarity from tourism research and border studies provided an opportunity to gain a further understanding of cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands. The main objective of the present research was therefore twofold. The first objective was a theoretical one, namely to contribute to the framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity in border studies. The multidimensional approach in tourism studies offered a novel perspective on the complexities of familiarity and unfamiliarity in a daily cross-border shopping context. By exploring the characteristics of the separate dimensions in more detail and subsequently examining the dynamic interplay between the three dimensions, the research expands the theoretical framework. The second objective was to find empirically grounded explanations for cross-border shopping practices in different European borderlands by using the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity. This focus on the lived experiences of border crossers contributes to further understanding the presence of both territorial and relational borders as part of daily life in borderlands. While

institutional and regulatory frameworks at national and European levels remain in place, people also socially construct their own borders, and thus give meaning to the places where their daily life practices take place. The use of familiarity and unfamiliarity puts the border crossers at the centre of the research and offers an explanation how people deal with the state border and cross-border differences and similarities in the borderland. These objectives led to the central research question, namely:

In what way do familiarity and unfamiliarity influence daily cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands?

Following the distinction between the dimensions of the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity, proximity, knowledge and experiences, four sub-questions were developed to understand the dimensions in more detail before reflecting on the main question:

1. *In what way can proximity influence daily cross-border shopping practices in a borderland?*
2. *How does knowledge about a shopping destination relate to cross-border practices in a borderland?*
3. *In what way do border crossers practise and experience cross-border shopping as part of their daily lives?*
4. *How are the dynamics and multidimensionality of the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity reflected in the European borderlands?*

1.5 Methodology

As every borderland consists of its own local narratives and regional histories, but also can have some similarities with other borderlands, it was expected to find variations between European borderlands in the way familiarity and unfamiliarity come to the fore. In this dissertation, a case study approach was taken, as it would lead to an in-depth understanding of the concept in every borderland. A case study is a research frame, "an in-depth exploration from multiple perspectives of the complexity and uniqueness of a particular … system in a "real life" context

(Simons 2009: 21). According to Thomas (2011: 513), the case covers "the subject of the inquiry [which] will be an instance of a class of phenomena that provides an analytical frame—an object—within which the study is conducted and which the case illuminates and explicates". In the present research, the subject was the border crossers who live in the different European borderlands, and the object was the theoretical frame of familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to cross-border shopping practices. Here, the historical context is also of importance. Valentine and Sadgrove (2014: 1982) argue that history matters for understanding encounters with and across difference, as "the personal pasts and the collective histories of the communities within which we are embedded [influence the way] individuals perceive and react to encounters". When considering a particular borderland as a site for encounters with differences and similarities, an understanding of its historical context can shed light on the degree of cross-border mobility in that borderland.

Three European borderlands were chosen, namely those between the Netherlands and Germany, Germany and Poland, and Poland and Ukraine. Since the EU enlargement of 2004, these borderlands reflect the old internal, new internal and new external EU borders. From an EU policy perspective, the three case studies represent stable and open state borders between the Netherlands and Germany, a focus on European integration in the German–Polish borderland, and a close historical and cultural relationship coinciding with controlling border policies in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland (see also Wassenberg 2017). Processes of Europeanisation, albeit in different time periods and moving from west to central eastern Europe, can be recognised. The three borderlands were chosen to thoroughly unravel every dimension of familiarity and unfamiliarity, and to explain how proximity, knowledge and experiences are visible in cross-border shopping practices. The particularities of the borderland can play a role in explaining the different or similar outcomes of familiarity and unfamiliarity. Each case study highlights one of the three dimensions (i.e. proximity, knowledge or experiences) without losing sight of the other. All three dimensions are brought together again in the conclusions. This approach extends the separate meaning of the different dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity, and thus allows for a more comprehensive understanding of the concept as a whole.

Qualitative research methods were used to examine cross-border shopping practices in the three European borderlands. The case studies focused on the social relations and daily life worlds of individuals who were engaged in cross-border shopping. Following the theoretical and empirical aim of this dissertation, the research was conducted "less to test what is already known … but to discover and develop the new and to develop empirically grounded theories" (Flick 2009: 15). Earlier mentioned research on familiarity and unfamiliarity in tourism research and cross-border shopping in border studies, used mostly quantitative methods and provided a structured theoretical framework. Here, qualitative methods were chosen to complement this earlier research and highlight 'subjectivity' as a means for deeper understanding. Subjectivity is important here, as the particular social setting in which cross-border practices occur is far messier in reality than in theory as a result of ever changing political, economic and socio-cultural processes in borderlands (Crang and Cook 2007). Therefore, data collection in the form of observations and in-depth interviews provided a thorough understanding of the daily lives of the border crossers, which in turn provided insights into the feelings, perceptions and motivations that underlie and influence cross-border shopping practices.

Intensive qualitative fieldwork took place between 2012 and 2015 in the Dutch–German, German–Polish and Polish–Ukrainian borderlands. In-depth interviews were held with Dutch border crossers visiting Kleve in Germany, German border crossers shopping at the bazaar in Słubice in Poland, and Ukrainian border crossers in Medyka in Poland. The interviews involved different interview guides, representing topics relevant to the various dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity. Whereas in-depth interviews were leading during the fieldwork, observations were used to contextualize the research site and the physical surroundings of the particular cross-border destination. In the case of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, observations in the form of participant observation played an even larger role, as interactions between border crossers were part of the field study. A more detailed overview of the choices made with regard to the methods can be found in the empirical chapters, each of which has a methodological section.

1.5.1 Proximity in the Dutch–German borderland

The dimension 'proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity' was highlighted in the study on the Dutch–German borderland. The borderland has been subject to fewer restrictions and border controls for a long time now. Therefore, it was expected that extended daily life practices across the borderland had rooted in this old internal EU border and had led to proximity in the borderland. Border crossers would then be accustomed to the social and cultural differences and similarities in a borderland and feel comfortable in their cross-border practices. The question that arises, however, is whether more geographical proximity, following from open state borders, also leads to more socio-cultural proximity (Kavanagh 2013; Ernste 2010; Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004; Schack 2001).

Since the Second World War, everyday cross-border practices and institutional cooperation within the context of the EU have developed in the Dutch–German borderland. In 1958, it became the first borderland within the EU to institutionalise cross-border cooperation by establishing the EUREGIO in the form of a joint association of local and regional authorities in the borderland to further European integration (Perkmann 2007; Scott 1997). Over the years, various cross-border initiatives have been established in the field of regional governance and cooperation in the borderland (Princen et al. 2014; Varró 2014). At the same time, establishing cross-border governance at the level of the EUREGIO remains a challenge. The state border still marks the end of a territory for which the local and regional authorities in the borderland are responsible (Wassenberg 2017; Terlouw 2012). In addition to these institutional developments, everyday cross-border practices also developed, for instance cross-border leisure and shopping practices (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013, 2008) and cross-border labour mobility (Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004). The past decade or so has seen the emergence of a new form of transnationalism in which Dutch nationals move to the German borderlands while keeping their social lives and work in the Netherlands (Terlouw 2012; Gielis 2009; Strüver 2005).

1.5.2 Knowledge in the German–Polish borderland

The study on the German–Polish borderland addressed 'informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity', which together form the dimension of

knowledge. After Poland acceded to the EU and joined the Schengen agreement, cross-border mobility in this new internal EU borderland became less restricted. Until then, policies in both states had accentuated socio-cultural distance between the Polish and the German nation, and had made it hard to engage in cross-border practices (Dołzbłasz and Raczyk 2015; Szytniewski 2015; Stokłosa 2012). As a result, it was expected that the former Soviet politics still influenced what people actually knew about the places and people across the state border. To shed light on the current place images of border crossers in this particular borderland, the focus was put on how people select, process and assess accessible information in light of historical representations that had been strengthened up until 30 years previously. Outlining these processes contributes to further understanding how knowledge is constructed and used to make sense of perceived differences and similarities in a borderland.

After the Second World War, the German–Polish state borders moved geographically to the west as a result of post-war territorial changes and Soviet politics. Major resettlements of both Germans and Poles took place in the former German territories in western Poland, nowadays the German–Polish borderland. As a result of forced migrations of Germans and the emphasis on the nationalisation of Poles in these territories, differences between Germans and Poles were amplified, stressing the distinction between 'us' and 'them' (Kulczycki 2001). As a result, people living in the German–Polish borderland remained unfamiliar with the other side of the state border for most of the period between 1945 and 1989. However, following attempts at rapprochement at the national level in the early 1970s, border restrictions and policies were loosened and a new border-crossing tradition emerged. Many of the Germans who had been expelled after the Second World War visited their former homes, cultural and educational initiatives were undertaken, friendships were formed and cross-border tourism, consumption and labour mobility increased significantly (Stokłosa 2012; Chessa 2004; Jajeśniak-Quast and Stokłosa 2000). Initially, curiosity prompted many people to engage in cross-border practices, seizing the opportunity to get to know and experience the other side of the state border for themselves. In the years that followed, however, cross-border mobility declined and the novelty of the new border situation between East Germany and Poland appeared to wear off (Stokłosa 2003; Jajeśniak-Quast and Stokłosa 2000). Following the emergence

of the Solidarity movement in Poland in the early 1980s, East Germany decided to re-impose border restrictions. In that period, the state border between East Germany and Poland was heavily controlled, practically closed, except for some cross-border labour mobility, since East German manufacturing firms needed Polish workers. After the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989, changes to border policies and restrictions led to new cross-border practices in the Polish–German borderland (Galasiński and Meinhof 2002). From the early 1990s onwards, cross-border shopping mobility thrived as a result of the opening of the Polish bazaars in the borderlands and beyond.

1.5.3 Experiences at the Polish–Ukrainian state border

'Experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity' were at the centre of the study on the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. Whereas the external EU border accentuates the institutional, political and economic differences between the two sides of the state border, this particular region is known for its common history and shared culture, which have remained part of the daily lives of those living there. Also, cross-border practices in the form of small-scale economic practices, shopping and petty trade in particular, continue to exist in the borderland (Bruns, Miggelbrink and Müller 2011; Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012; Xheneti, Smallbone and Welter 2012; Stern 2016). As a result, it was assumed that the historical and cultural relationship between the two nationalities in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland had contributed to the development of knowledge and proximity with regard to the otherness across the state border. At the same time, cross-border experiences seemed to be affected not only by the historical and cultural connection but also by the reality of the external EU border. This latter aspect is a relative new one that can reveal changes in the earlier cross-border practices and show how this affects the daily life experiences of border crossers in the borderland.

Similar to the German–Polish state border, after the Second World War, the Polish–Ukrainian state border was moved westwards, dividing the borderland institutionally and ending Poland's historical and cultural presence in the region, a presence that had extended as far as the city of Lviv. Although both Poland and Ukraine fell under Soviet control in the period that followed, the state border was a

relatively closed one and the relationship between Poland and Ukraine was rather hostile after the redrawing of borders between the two states (Stokłosa 2012). Following the collapse of the Soviet Union in the early 1990s, however, changes to travel regulations and border policies led to an increase in cross-border mobility. Price disparities between the two countries resulted in short-term, circular cross-border trade and shopping practices. In the early 1990s, Ukrainians were selling consumer goods in Poland, and by the second half of the decade a substantial amount of Polish goods for daily consumption could be found in western Ukraine (Wolczuk 2002). The historical and cultural relationship between the two nationalities in the borderland was again accentuated as Poland and Ukraine found common ground on a number of regional bilateral initiatives concerning lower and higher education, cultural exchange and economic cooperation (Stokłosa 2012).

The 2004 EU enlargement changed the regional balance between the two countries: Poland became an EU member, whereas Ukraine fell under the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The ENP was directed at the immediate neighbouring states of the EU, and was intended to soften and control the external borders of the Union by furthering Europeanisation and integration between the EU and its neighbours (Celata and Coletti 2015; Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias and Pickles 2013). As the relationship with the EU changed for both states, new travel restrictions and border policies were put in place in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. At first, they were merely symbolic, but after the expansion of the Schengen agreement in 2008 they were made more restrictive through customs and border control (Gawlewicz and Yndigegn 2012). These institutional developments at the European level not only transformed the Polish–Ukrainian state border into an external border of the EU, but also impacted everyday life and the established tradition of cross-border mobility in the borderland (Xheneti etal. 2012, Bruns et al. 2011, Mrinska 2006). Subsequently, as a result of the historical and cultural relationship between Poland and Ukraine, the two countries signed a local border agreement enabling Ukrainians who live in the borderland or have relatives in Poland to obtain special identity cards to ease local cross-border mobility (Mikołajczyk 2015, Witkowski 2014).

1.6 Outline

Within this dissertation, the theoretical concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity is further unravelled distinguishing between proximity, knowledge and experiences. Chapter 2 starts off with an introduction to the framework. The two strands of literature, namely those of tourism research and border studies, are combined to elaborate on the meaning of proximate, informational and self-assessed, and experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity in the context of cross-border mobility. The chapter makes a distinction between informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity, which are placed together further on in the dissertation in the form of knowledge. After this first theoretical discussion on the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity, the subsequent chapters present three case studies, each of which highlights one dimension while also taking the others into account. In chapter 3, the dimension of proximity (that is, proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity) is used to examine the shopping tourism of Dutch border crossers in the German town of Kleve in the Dutch–German borderland. Chapter 4 discusses the concept of knowledge (composed of informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity) in the context of place image formation of German border crossers visiting the bazaar on the Polish side of the border-crossing town Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice in the German–Polish borderland. In chapter 5, the focus is on daily life experiences (experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity) with regard to the shopping and petty trading practices of Ukrainian border crossers living in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. After discussing all case studies and dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity, the conclusions in chapter 6 provide a conceptual reflection on the theoretical and empirical implications of familiarity and unfamiliarity for cross-border shopping in European borderlands. The chapter concludes with an agenda for future research.

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2 ENCOUNTERS WITH OTHERNESS: IMPLICATIONS OF (UN)FAMILIARITY FOR DAILY LIFE IN BORDERLANDS

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Abstract

While the European Union aims to diminish and remove borders as obstacles for integration, state borders continue to mark differences between countries. People living in borderlands may feel near to and familiar with "the other side" but far away and unfamiliar at the same time. Scrutinizing the concept of (un) familiarity promises intriguing insights into understanding how people perceive and interpret differences and similarities in borderlands, their implications for cross-border leisure and labor practices, and related attitudes towards sameness and otherness. With a relational perspective on borders, this paper therefore aims to unravel the complexity of the (un)familiarity concept by attempting to find an answer to the question how familiarity and/or unfamiliarity come into being and develop during daily encounters in borderlands? Our examination of the (un)familiarity concept reveals dynamic and interrelated dimensions of (un)familiarity—i.e. experiential, informational, self-assessed and proximate. Depending on the ways in which people perceive and interpret sameness and otherness, different degrees and forms of (un)familiarity are at play, resulting in cross-border attention, interaction or avoidance in everyday life.

[2] Earlier reflections on the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity can be found In the following book chapter: Szytniewski, B. (2013). The dynamics of unfamiliarity in the German-Polish border region in 1970s, 1980s, and 1990s. *Borders and Border Regions in Europe: Changes, Challenges and Chances* (pp. 183-200). Bielefeld: transcript Verlag.

2.1 Introduction

Despite the globalization of the world we live in, borders as demarcations of differences still matter. The importance of state borders may especially be noticed in the border policies of the European Union. While the EU aims to strengthen and secure its external borders, it actively tries to decrease the importance of internal borders (Paasi 2013). At the same time, differences between neighbouring states can be important drivers for cross-border practices. Borders divide but simultaneously provide opportunities for people with different political, social and cultural backgrounds to meet and explore perceived otherness (Perkmann and Sum 2002; Soja 2005; Paasi 2009). Moreover, differences between political and economic systems, national histories and narratives, heritage and landscapes continue to play a role in encouraging or discouraging cross-border practices (Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004; Spierings and Van der Velde 2008; Jagetić Andersen, Klatt and Sandberg 2012).

Both self-awareness of being another and the awareness of otherness could be more present in borderlands— regions which "straddle state borders" (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999: 595) — than elsewhere as the other is near and prominently present to differentiate between the self and the other, us and them, and in a spatial sense, here from there (Sahlins 1989; Kristeva 1991; Duncan 1993; Stråth 2002). These dichotomies however are more dynamic and fluid than they initially appear, as boundaries also reflect selective filtering systems, in which differences are perceived differently by different actors in different spatio-temporal situations (Massey 2005). Moreover, bordering—as well as debordering and rebordering – is an ongoing process, which involves changing perceptions, interpretations and practices in everyday life. Cross-border practices are also not limited to processes of national state formations, but are enacted in international borderlands as well as elsewhere (Jagetić Andersen 2013), including within nations, cities, neighbourhoods, or even workplaces (Newman 2006a).

Because of the physical proximity and the often distinct presence of otherness in borderlands, perceived differences may be felt near and familiar, but at the same time far away and unfamiliar (Bauman 1993). Therefore, feelings of cross-border (un)familiarity could offer intriguing insights into the understanding of people's

attitudes with regard to otherness, and in particular the mobility or immobility of people living in a borderland. In past research, the degree of mobility—be it for touristic, shopping, labor or migration purposes—has often been examined through a framework of push- and pull-factors and keep- and repel- factors. Push and pull factors reflect the decision to move, whereas keep and repel factors influence the decision to stay (Lundberg 1980; Timothy and Butler 1995; Di Matteo and Di Matteo 1996; Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004). Building on this framework, Spierings and Van der Velde (2008) introduced the "bandwidth of unfamiliarity," which reflects both the maximum degree of unfamiliarity and the minimum degree of familiarity people consider necessary before becoming mobile. At the same time, it also involves a minimum degree of unfamiliarity and a maximum degree of familiarity people need to perceive and are willing to accept. Thus, cross-border mobility not always takes place as a result of familiarity, but rather a degree of unfamiliarity could work as an incentive to cross borders, to explore unknown places and to get into contact with (un)familiar others.

With a relational perspective on borders, this paper aims to unravel the complexity of the (un)familiarity concept in the context of sameness and otherness in borderlands, which contain and cross state borders. In so doing, the focus will be on the question: How does familiarity and/or unfamiliarity with people and places come into being and develop during daily encounters in borderlands? An answer to this question will be searched for through examining the complex nature of the (un)familiarity concept in relation to perceived differences and similarities. In order to illustrate the complexities and the interrelation between border practices and feelings of (un)familiarity, examples will be drawn from two divergent practice typologies in cross-border contexts: people taking part in leisure practices on the one hand and labor commuting on the other. Both types of daily life practices are performed for different reasons with different implications for how differences and similarities in cross-border contexts are perceived and interpreted.

We will start by discussing what sameness and otherness imply and how they are perceived and interpreted in cross-border contexts. While otherness reveals cross-border differences, the concept of (un)familiarity provides more specific insights in the experience, knowledge and assessment of those differences and consequent attitudes and behavior in borderlands. The dimensions of experiential,

informational, self- assessed and proximate (un)familiarity will be discussed in the third section. The ways they influence and are influenced during daily encounters when performing cross-border trips for leisure and labor practices will be the main theme of the fourth section. The paper ends by drawing conclusions on what (un)familiarity and perceptions of sameness and otherness imply for people living in borderlands.

2.2 Sameness and otherness

Unfamiliarity involves both not having knowledge of and experience with someone, something or someplace. The unfamiliar may for instance be a person, a place or spatial context, a situation, an interaction or a practice. Different features of the unfamiliar can come to the attention as a result of changes in people's perspective, knowledge, practice and placement. When confronted with otherness, a reflective process occurs between the self and the other "which is informed by a relation to something other in the sense that the self reflects in the other and as the other" (Jagetić Andersen 2013: 48). Not only do we reflect on our own practices and identity, but also on the way we perceive differences and similarities. According to Schütz (1962: 11–12, 19), this is because "I, being 'here', am at another distance from and experience other aspects as being typical of the objects [of people and places] than he is, who is 'there'." The perception of differences and similarities, influenced by unique biographical situations and spatial contexts in which a person uses otherness to assume its own role, contributes to different experiences by individuals. In doing so, some rather seek the familiar while others are much more inclined to interact with unfamiliar people and explore unfamiliar places (see Basala and Klenosky 2001).

The presence of otherness in daily life contributes to a dynamic social relationship between the self and the other or us and them, which is neither near nor distant. The other does not belong to the group, he is an external actor, but at the same time influences the group by bringing qualities into it that do not and cannot originate from the group itself (Simmel 1950). These qualities can evoke different reactions, but more often than not, when making sense of them, people anchor these perceived differences in existing knowledge, or social representations—people

try to make the unfamiliar familiar (Moscovici 1988). As such, the perception and presence of the other not only changes the attitudes towards familiar and unfamiliar attributes in our lives, but also influences the meaning we give to ourselves and others (Gurevitch 1988; Riggins 1997; Geertz 2000). Consequently, during different spatio-temporal encounters, people choose, consciously or unconsciously, which part of the identity to use and how to identify oneself to the other. A parallel could be drawn here with places which derive meaning when being connected and compared with others. Many places are mentally traversed and experienced simultaneously when people relationally construct and give meaning to the particular place they visit and try to understand (Spierings 2009).

The differentiation between sameness and otherness, both defined individually or collectively as well as stressed by others, for example through national spatial and identity policies, contains awareness of different others and different places. It follows from a continuous interpretation process between the self and the other through different perspectives, direct and indirect experiences and changes in obtained and assessed knowledge, which is always open to reinterpretation. As a result of these changing perspectives and perceptions, images of sameness and otherness are not static, but dynamic (Petersoo 2007).

The degree of differentiation between sameness and otherness, or the process of "othering," is different for each individual and is part of ongoing bordering processes. According to Bauman (1995: 130), "it changes as one passes from one area to another, and the rhythm of the shifts differs between various categories of strangers." Consequently, otherness can be perceived and (re)interpreted at different socio-spatial levels and be expected in places of mobility, places where otherness is continuously present and swift and passing encounters take place (Simmel 1950; Bauman 1995; Pearce 2005). Such heterogeneous places with different types of people are not only found in borderlands as suggested in the introduction, but also in perhaps more obvious places such as international airports, train stations and bus terminals, and near touristic attractions, and in perhaps less obvious and more daily spaces such as local shopping centers and in neighborhoods. Although othering changes over time and in space, it does not only depend on movement since categorical distinctions are mostly based on "social processes of [inclusion and] exclusion [...] whereby discrete categories are

maintained despite changing participation and membership" (Barth 1969: 10). Furthermore, othering not only takes place during face-to-face encounters. As we know more about different parts of the world—distances have become smaller due to new communication networks (Castells 2005)— feelings of otherness and (un)familiarity can also develop in a state of physical immobility.

2.3 Borders, borderlands and otherness

Feelings of sameness and otherness in borderlands are likely to be different than in other parts of a state. As Amstrong (2003: 165) puts forward "borderlands, as front lines between states, are places of high sensitivity and self-awareness, in which the sense of identity and belonging to a special place is heightened." As such, people in borderlands are not only confronted with otherness, but also "must contend with the immediate presence of the ethnic other in their lives" (Galasińka and Galasiński 2003). As a result of differences in political and economic policies, narratives, landscapes, customs and languages, people may frame otherness within national identities. According to Anderson (1995: 71), sharpening of differences "is part of nationalism, which defines people belonging to a nation or territory with a set of unifying symbols, sense of identity and criteria of 'belonging' in the particular history and geography of a territory." Consequently, otherness is then associated with "the one who does not belong to the state in which we are, the one who does not have the same nationality" (Kristeva 1991: 96).

Sahlins (1989) elaborates on national identity from a different perspective, stating that the subjective experience of these above-mentioned differences matters most, as national identity is both conditional, defined by social and/or territorial boundaries, and relational, because of distinctions made between one group and another according to our own biographical situations, practices and experiences. As such, sameness and otherness do not only coincide with national boundaries. In this context, Riggins (1997: 4) signals that otherness is broader than countries and cultures only, stating that "others may also be women for men, the rich for the poor [or] tourists for natives." Thus, people associate others and themselves in more than one role at the same time—constructing mental borders by using different attributes of sameness and otherness in different times, places and situations. Both people and places are not limited to one narrative but consist of

a bundling of "different social stories with different spatial reaches and differing temporalities" (Massey 2005: 131).

Mental borders—which do not necessarily coincide with physical borders as dividing lines between nations— can contribute to significant levels of perceived otherness in borderlands. They should be understood as socially (re)produced phenomena, which are imaginative, but not less genuine in experience and consequences (van Houtum and Strüver 2002; see also Newman 2006a). Mental borders address the meaning people attach to differences demarcating borders, and in particular the meaning given to sameness and otherness within borderlands. Perceptions of otherness do not have to start or end at state borders—they are also found within states (Donnan 2005) and within cities (Spierings 2012), for instance. National policies often emphasize differences and similarities between ethnic others, but this does not necessarily mean that people living in borderlands comply with these divisions and connections. People construct their own divisions by meeting different others or changing their practices, subsequently making bordering a dynamic process, continuously changing and different for every individual. Cultures go beyond "boundaries of society and polity, but [they] may also be seen to define these boundaries and the symbolism which makes life meaningful both within and across territorial and other borders" (Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2003: 23).

Degrees of cross-border differences and similarities on the one hand and the physical proximity and immediate presence of different others on the other contribute to the awareness that different people and places can be encountered within borderlands. When using and (re)constructing these differences and feelings of proximity, people identify and practice their own borders. While sameness and otherness represent perceived similarities and differences respectively, the conceptualization of being and feeling (un)familiar gives further insights in the knowledge and experience of these perceived differences. Finding explanations for degrees of being and feeling (un)familiar – with people, places, narratives, social and cultural systems and so forth – could therefore provide deeper understanding of perceived differences and similarities in cross-border practices, and related attitudes towards sameness and otherness in borderlands. The next section will elaborate on the concept of (un)familiarity and its four interrelated dimensions.

2.4 Dynamics and multidimensionality of (un)familiarity

The perception of cross-border differences is different for each individual and depends among others on previous experiences, available information, social attitudes and cultural backgrounds. As such, being and feeling (un)familiar is a relational construct which develops through a dynamic interplay between several dimensions of (un)familiarity. By distinguishing these dimensions – experiential, informational, self-assessed and proximate (un)familiarity – a multidimensional approach towards (un)familiarity becomes possible, which has been applied before in research on image representation, in particular with regard to tourism destinations (Baloglu 2001; Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Prentice 2004; Prentice and Andersen 2007). These dimensions will be discussed here with specific attention for borders, borderlands and otherness, and look further than only the dimensionality, by including the dynamic interplay between the different dimensions.

The first-mentioned dimension, *experiences*, reflects the extent in which people have gained direct experience with destinations through previous visits (Baloglu 2001), including differences in social and spatial assessment between first-time and repeat visitors (Fakeye and Crompton 1991; Lau and McKercher 2004). Experiences include "passive" encounters with others – such as watching them pass by – as well as "active" encounters – such as having a conversation – which can occur in different cross-border situations. Not only the practice, location and circumstances play an important role for how encounters with people and places are experienced, but also personal experiences and attitudes.

As already mentioned, places are likely to be experienced differently by first-timers and repeat visitors. People who are unfamiliar with a place use mostly cognitive evaluations, based on perceptions and beliefs, while those familiar with a place reflect on previous images and affective appraisals (Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Beerli and Martín 2004; Prentice and Andersen 2007). Moreover, people activate different parts of their knowledge when partaking in cross-border practices. We will focus on these different parts of knowledge next, distinguishing informational and self-assessed (un)familiarity.

Knowledge as access to and quality of information, has been identified as informational (un)familiarity (Baloglu 2001; Prentice 2004). Information about people and places in borderlands, as elsewhere, is partially based on indirect information from family, friends and acquaintances. Other sources are media networks, but also information given by the authorities. These sources of information can contribute to being and feeling familiar with regard to unknown people and places. Not only the amount and content of information influences attitudes in cross-border practices, but also the way knowledge is processed. In the words of Schütz (1962: 14) "[n]ot only what an individual knows differs from what his neighbour knows, but also how both know the 'same' facts". The latter type of knowledge is linked to self-assessed (un)familiarity (Park, Mothersbaugh and Feick 1994), which has been defined by other authors as "self-reported familiarity" (Baloglu 2001) and "self-described familiarity" (Prentice 2004).

Self-assessment has a strong cognitive element because it reflects what people think they know about other people and places. Personal mental images and social categorization play a significant role in the way cross-border differences and similarities are assessed. Moreover, a distortion between spatial estimation and spatial reality occurs, when the cognitive distance between people and places differs from the actual distance due to overestimation or underestimation (Van Houtum 2000). People construct their own borders and distances, and when making such estimations, a selection is made of personal attributes and spatial features to represent otherness. This selection is not only based on personal experiences and social learning, but also on assumptions, which play a crucial role in people's attitudes towards the other. When trying to understand someone's activities, behaviour and opinions, Schütz (1962) argues, we assume that the person acts upon certain relevant structures and constant motives which indicate a particular pattern of action and several personal features. In doing so, stereotyping could occur, when shared descriptive and evaluative beliefs about a group of people, the other, are remembered and interchangeably used when referring to individuals of the other group (Leyens, Yzerbyt and Schadron 1994).

The last dimension of this overview, *proximity*, reflects the likelihood that some cultures, places and situations feel more familiar than others—they may be unknown but yet familiar. Rather than the cognitive component of proximity (how

distant something or someone seems to be), the affective dimension is important here, giving an indication of how distant or close something or someone feels (Wilson et al. 2008). When encountering others or visiting relatively unknown places, a degree of proximity – be it geographical, physical, social or cultural – could be felt through similarities in surroundings and architecture, ethno-linguistic expressions or cultural practices. Depending on the individual and the spatio-temporal circumstances, some features of proximity are at times more prominent than others. Some people and places feel for instance "socially distant yet physically close" (Bauman 1993: 153) while in other times, it may be the other way around.

The dynamic interplay between experiences, knowledge, self-assessment and felt proximity makes the (un)familiarity concept highly dynamic in nature. While experiences contribute to the reconsideration of earlier knowledge regarding certain differences, knowledge is also needed to give meaning to these experiences of otherness. What is more, previously obtained experiences are for instance reconsidered or seen from a different perspective as a result of new information or reassessed knowledge. This in turn could affect a person's feelings of proximity towards the unfamiliar. After having encountered others or having visited or revisited a place, people reconsider and reinterpret—but also re-establish—former pieces of information, beliefs, assumptions or stereotypes. Not only does this change the degree and form of (un)familiarity, but it also puts feelings of sameness and otherness in a different perspective. As a result, some people and places become relatively familiar, while others will remain unfamiliar or become unfamiliar. The following paragraph will elaborate on these dynamics of (un) familiarity by reflecting on people that take part in regular cross- border leisure activities on the one hand and cross-border labor commuting on the other.

2.5 Cross-border (un)familiarity and leisure and labor practices

The dynamic and multidimensional nature of (un)familiarity leads to different ways of dealing with differences and similarities between us and them and the here and there. Physical proximity may encourage mutual interaction in everyday life of people living in borderlands, while reducing the dividing function and meaning of the state border. Otherness, however, could also result in a situation where people recognize and are aware of different people and places but remain largely unfamiliar, having only partial knowledge of and no experience with cross-border practices. The following section will elaborate on implications of being and feeling (un)familiar – based on experience, knowledge, self-assessment and proximity – for cross-border leisure and labor practices, and related attitudes towards sameness and otherness.

2.5.1 Dynamic perceptions

When considering borderlands with places for leisure and labor practices on both sides of the border, political, socio-economic and cultural narratives affect experiences, knowledge, self-assessment and felt proximity with regard to otherness. Moreover, the stability of state borders and the degree and development of "openness" of the border concerned influence the daily lives of people in borderlands (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). Stable and institutionally open state borders have a different impact on the ways people interpret and deal with perceived differences than troubled or strictly controlled state borders. In the latter border situation for instance, national governments seek to control external information flows and release selective, partial and colored information, influencing people's knowledge and often creating a distance between locals living on either side of the state border.

Encounters with others, however, do not always coincide with state borders, but are most of the time practice- and context-related. Especially when different border restrictions diminish or are removed, it becomes easier for people living in borderlands to meet and share practices by working for the same company, visiting the same museum or shopping at the same grocery store. These encounters

can be regarded as encounters between different nationalities, but more often than not they are interactions between people with different social and cultural backgrounds, of which nationality is only one aspect. As a result, people become familiar with one another by exchanging ideas, images, goods, services and cultural traits in what Newman (2006b) calls "sub-cultural buffer zones," where meeting different others becomes something natural and familiar. Yet, "differences can persist despite inter-ethnic contact and interdependence" (Barth 1969: 10).

When visiting a new place, people often have certain expectations based on obtained and self-assessed knowledge—anticipating for instance something different or unusual and act as such. Instead of differences, however, we could also encounter similarities and subsequently need to adjust our earlier assessments. People on a cross-border leisure trip may, for example, be surprised to find locals in restaurants or shops speaking their language or selling known brands and goods. While looking for otherness, they find sameness and proximity of which they were not aware of before. Subsequently, details of otherness such as local produce or festivities which were previously not considered or taken for granted are noticed and could become an incentive for future cross-border practices.

Although different dimensions of (un)familiarity are continuously present, degrees and forms of (un)familiarity can vary in different situations. Experiential and self-assessed (un)familiarity could for instance be found in daily cross-border labor commuting. While borders are crossed on a daily basis and the surroundings and journey to work become familiar, the commuter may not actively integrate in the social community across the state border and therefore only have detached, visual experiences by looking through the car window on the way to work and back. He or she "works" on one side and "lives" on the other side of the state border. Even though otherness only seems to be experienced within the work context and through the daily commute, the cross-border commuter may believe to be very familiar with the borderland as a result of felt proximity and intercultural exchanges with his or her colleagues at work.

Feelings of (un)familiarity are for a large part related to the purpose and expectations of a cross-border practice. For instance, people visiting a shopping center across the border with the purpose of finding a specific good have a

different mind-set compared to people doing the same for pure leisure-related motives. This could result in a different satisfaction with retail services on offer for both types of shoppers due to different expectations beforehand (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013). Moreover, cross-border leisure visits involve a certain freedom to lengthen, shorten or change a visit according to personal preferences. These visits are usually less predetermined than, for instance, labor commutes, and contribute to different expectations and assessments of (un)familiarity with regard to cross-border encounters.

2.5.2 Knowing (of) people and places

In addition to gained experiences, being and feeling (un)familiar also includes self-assessed knowledge, people's beliefs about otherness. As Bauman (1993, 149) puts it, these are "humans we do not know, we know of them". The same could be said of places: places we are not really familiar with, we only know of them. Known differences, but also believed and assumed ones, between for example language, culture, history and landscapes could trigger interest and curiosity, making places across the state border attractive to discover and explore. What is more, some of these differences actually promote cross- border mobility, for instance through price differences, labor opportunities or cultural attractions. Spierings and Van der Velde (2013) refer to this as "attractive unfamiliarity" which produces cross-border attention and possible interaction. At the same time, differences and feelings of unfamiliarity can cause feelings of unease and threat, when people do not know what to expect, a situation that could result from the opening of the border with a formerly isolated neighbouring country. This "uncomfortable unfamiliarity" may produce strategies of avoidance and cross-border immobility (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013).

The attractiveness of the unfamiliar, knowing of places and people but not really knowing them becomes at times part of the incentive to become familiar with someone, something or someplace. However, as MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997: 542–543) state, "at a certain point, familiarity becomes less attractive" and over-familiarity takes over which could result in inattention or estrangement. Thus before becoming over-unfamiliar or "unattractive unfamiliar" (Spierings and Van

der Velde 2013), unfamiliarity can mobilize. In this case, people prefer to discover the unknown and experience something new. Cross-border unfamiliarity then becomes a precondition for mobility instead of a rationale for immobility (Spierings and Van der Velde 2008). When considering the labor commuter again, having a break from the daily routine and stopping at the high street to shop or visit the local restaurant can lead to a different perspective on otherness in the daily commute. As a result of new information through this unplanned experience, the cross-border commuter may extend his or her border practices with occasional leisure practices or even come back on a free day. He or she however could also find it unnecessary to repeat this specific leisure practice—as it is on the route to work, the destination loses its appeal and is not regarded as an escape of the daily life anymore but part of the everyday.

People can actively look for new and unfamiliar places and experiences, but may also come across them without registering immediately—finding unfamiliarity in the familiar. When sights and people commonly seen are viewed or brought to our attention from a different perspective or in a different context, differences are reactivated and formerly familiar features can become somewhat less predictable and a bit unfamiliar. A frequent cross-border shopper for instance could be familiar with cross-border price differences and availability of goods through experiences, but will have to reconsider his or her knowledge when informed by locals about differences in quality, especially when it comes to local produce.

While the relationship with the other is usually anchored in active socialization, passive attitudes also occur, especially when attention is paid to physical features of places and destinations rather than its social features. In the latter case, certain people could frequently be noticed, but only little attention is paid to them. These others become part of the regular experience and may be recognized as "commonplace-folk," people we do not register actively and pay only little attention to (Nathaniel Shaler 1904 in Stichweh 1997: 2004), or as "familiar strangers," individuals who are part of our daily lives, but we do not actively interact with (Paulos and Goodman 2004). They become almost a part of the physical features. A border guard at the main border crossing could for instance become a familiar stranger for a daily border-crossing labor commuter. These feelings on familiar strangeness could also work the other way around. Moreover, a similar relationship

is to be found in regular cross-border encounters between for instance a local shop owner and the cross-border shopper. The other is particularly associated with a function or place at or on the way to a destination, rather than being part of an active interaction.

The familiar other could also be perceived as someone who shares the same practice. As stated by Pearce (2005: 121), "[t]he flaneur, the social observer in the crowd, is not truly alone—there are indeed others walking the same path." The other is a distant other and only passively registered, but does contribute to the overall experience of a place—for instance, the fellow border-crosser at a tourist attraction or a shopping center. Furthermore, due to the relation between the self and the other people can distinguish between different familiar and unfamiliar others at different times and in different places (Jagetić Andersen 2013). Familiar others are for instance fellow cross-border shoppers in a shopping center or fellow commuters on our way to work, but can also be people close to us through familial and friendship relationships. The unfamiliar other however does not always remain unfamiliar and the familiar other does not always stay familiar—as previously mentioned people often look for familiarity in the unfamiliar and may find unfamiliarity in the familiar.

In addition to familiar and unfamiliar others, people often cope better with otherness of one destination than with another (Prentice 2004). A cross-border shopper will for instance experience a shopping street differently when similar brands and chains are found to the ones in the home town. Feelings of recognition, where people anchor these perceived similarities in existing knowledge and experiences, could contribute to comfortable familiarity in an unfamiliar place.

2.5.3 Changing attitudes

It may also be the case that inhabitants of a borderland are indifferent to people and places across the state border—some places are just absent from people's minds. Cross-border practices, be it for leisure trips or for labor commuting, are then not considered during daily life. It is simply not included in people's decision-making process (Van Houtum and van der Velde 2004). At the same time, while the space across the state border is regarded as distant, or "non-existent," strong feelings of

spatial belonging can exist, where "people express and perform to belong, to create (and defend) their 'own space', to separate, to differentiate and to demarcate" (Van Houtum and van der Velde 2004: 104; see also Bourdieu 1990, 2005 on Habitus).

Places are continuously and dynamically constructed (Lefebvre 1991), contributing to changes in human and non-human mobilities. For that reason, it could be difficult to keep up an attitude of indifference in a borderland. As stated by Ernste (2010), border crossings by others, the introduction of products from different places at the local grocery store or information in the local newspaper about cross-border labor opportunities, over time, can modify and also put an end to people's attitude of indifference. Such encounters with otherness can lead to a change in attitude. This does not necessarily mean that people will actively get involved in cross-border practices, but they might redefine their framework of knowledge, their (un)familiarity towards otherness across the state border.

Former beliefs, assumptions and stereotypes also change, consciously or unconsciously, as a result of information about neighbors and neighboring places and immediate contacts and experiences with different people and places in a borderland. Coming back to the cross-border labor commuter, the person in question does not only bring professional qualities to the work environment, but also cultural and social familiarity through intercultural interactions. By sharing cross-border experiences and providing information about the home town, the cross-border commuter reflects on differences and similarities he or she notices in the everyday border practice. These border experiences are therefore not isolated cases, but also influence the knowledge and assessment of others in the work environment, and also at home. A certain proximity may be felt among the co-workers, who select and evaluate the information that is presented to make up their own mind about these differences and similarities—possibly generating curiosity and cross-border mobility on the one hand or perhaps disinterest or feelings of over-familiarity preventing mobility on the other.

2.6 Conclusion

Borderlands are spaces where often relatively large differences stand next to each other and meet at the same time. These differences are relational in the sense that they are constructed through personal perceptions and interpretations, border practices and spatio-temporal circumstances. Individuals constitute their own borders. At the same time, national differences resulting from different political, socio-economic and cultural narratives continue to play a role in cross-border practices, and are part of people's assessment of otherness and the subsequent feelings of (un)familiarity.

(Un)familiarity comes into being via many different ways and represents itself through at least four dimensions: experiences, information, self-assessment and proximity. These different dimensions reveal a strong interdependence and interplay, especially as they are not fixed, but influence one another and change over time. Whereas informational and self-assessed (un)familiarity can change as a result of direct experiences with otherness, new information or the reassessment of former knowledge could lead to different ways of experiencing daily practices. Hopes and expectations resulting from proximate (un)familiarity may need reconsideration after unexpected experiences, pinpointing a need to update the informational and self-assessed dimensions, and so on. Moreover, becoming more familiar or unfamiliar with features of daily life that are different to us – such as places, practices, situations, people – is an individual process and the outcome differs between people as a result of different individual biographical and spatio-temporal circumstances.

In this contribution, the dynamics of (un)familiarity in cross-border contexts have been illustrated through two typologies of daily life practices—people involved in cross-border leisure practices or in cross- border labor commuting. In addition to personal features, the purpose related to the cross-border practice affects which degrees and forms of (un)familiarity are at play. As a result, otherness can be perceived as someone, something and someplace unknown but at the same time attractive – resulting in cross-border attention and interaction – or unwanted and uncomfortable – possibly producing feelings of anxiety and avoidance. When considering these dynamics of (un)familiarity, feelings of familiar strangeness

can also develop when people and places are encountered regularly but remain a passive part of the everyday life. People also try to make the unfamiliar familiar to such a degree that it feels comfortable – stimulating cross-border mobility and interaction – whereas a further increase of familiarity could make interactions unattractive and unacceptably boring and then even inhibit and prevent them from occurring. Furthermore, unfamiliarity could also be found during encounters with familiar places when they are viewed from a different perspective or when previously unknown features are suddenly noticed through, for instance, changes in border practices or social and cultural interactions with different others. This could for instance trigger new interests in formerly familiar features.

The unravelling of the interrelated and dynamic dimensions of (un)familiarity not only contributes to a deeper analysis of being and feeling (un)familiar with sameness and otherness in borderlands, but also contributes to a further understanding of the initial "bandwidth of (un)familiarity" (Spierings and van der Velde 2008). An intriguing issue which is still open for investigation is how feelings of (un)familiarity are expressed in daily life in different types of European borderlands? In addition to local narratives, histories, border practices and biographical spatio-temporal circumstances, numerous enlargement rounds and the extension of the Schengen zone have impacted not only everyday life at the inner borders but also at the outer borders of the European Union. In what way do these political decisions influence people's feelings of (un)familiarity on the one hand and their cross-border practices on the other? To what extent do these feelings develop differently along different borders and in different borderlands? What does this mean for the dynamic interplay between the different dimensions of (un)familiarity and cross-border (im)mobility? And, when, how and why do people perceive "tipping points" from mobility to immobility, and the other way around, possibly turning borderlands into "zones of undecidability" (Eisenman 1998)? What makes hesitation about whether to cross a border or not come into play (Spierings 2012)? Finding answers to such questions—within this paper's framework of multidimensional and dynamic (un)familiarity and through specific case studies—could provide further insights with regard to implications of perceived sameness and otherness for border practices and cross-border mobility in European borderlands.

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3 SOCIO-CULTURAL PROXIMITY, DAILY LIFE AND SHOPPING TOURISM IN THE DUTCH–GERMAN BORDER REGION

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Abstract

This paper analyses feelings of socio-cultural proximity and distance with a specific focus on the tourist experience in cross-border shopping and everyday life practices in border regions. We examined shopping practices of Dutch border crossers who visit the German town Kleve in the Dutch–German border region. This particular border context has allowed us not only to reflect on a multidimensional approach towards socio-cultural proximity and distance, but also to examine how these different dimensions express themselves in the tourist experience when it comes to people and places that are geographically 'close' but assumingly socially and culturally 'distant' from home. Although some differences prompted feelings of discomfort, in particular, differences in social engagement, feelings of comfort stand out in our analysis of cross-border shopping tourism. Furthermore, our study shows that shopping tourism and exoticism, on the one hand, and everyday routines and the mundane, on the other hand, are closely intertwined in the lives of people living in a border region, resulting in a fluid interpretation of the exotic and the mundane in the cross-border context.

3.1 Introduction

Nowadays, more and more people travel around the world and engage in a variety of tourist activities, experiencing many places different from home. Tourist destinations, however, do not always have to be situated far away 'on the other side of the world', but can also lie within geographical proximity and still be seen as an attractive place to visit. Cross-border tourism and intraregional mobility in particular have increasingly come to the attention in research on tourism (Barbini and Presutti 2014; Dıaz-Sauceda, Palau-Saumell, Forgas-Coll and Sanchez-Garcıa 2015; Honkanen, Pitkänen and Hall 2015; Prokkola 2010; Rogerson 2015; Sofield 2006; Wachowiak 2012). As stated by McCabe (2002), everyday life worlds also influence how people experience their tourist activities and vice versa. Within a cross-border context, the relationship between home and away comes even more to the foreground as tourists face geographically 'close' but assumingly socially and culturally 'distant' people and places. An analysis of feelings of proximity and distance in relation to a destination could therefore contribute to a better understanding of the tourist practices (Ahn and McKercher 2015; Kastenholz 2010; Tasci 2009). By focusing on how distant or close something, someone or someplace feels (Wilson, Boyer O'Leary, Metiu and Jett 2008), we want to draw attention to social and cultural characteristics of proximity and distance in relation to intraregional tourism.

Following Amin (2002: 976) in his argument that coming to terms with differences 'is a matter of everyday practices', we have chosen in this study to focus on shopping tourism in a cross-border context. Shopping involves the experience of walking through a shopping street, seeing, hearing and meeting different people, browsing and rummaging through different shops, coming across different restaurants, food corners and bars – temporary but also recurring experiences that reflect 'fluid, brief, incidental encounters' (Blokland and Nast 2014: 1146). Not only can regular cross-border shopping practices involve encounters with differences in shopping facilities and surroundings, but they may also include interactions between people with different social and cultural backgrounds, who often live in relative geographical proximity. What is more, these differences can be important drivers for cross-border practices. Shopping tourists, for instance, not only expect to find intercultural encounters and unfamiliar physical surroundings, but also

different products, prices and atmosphere – differences that may attract cross-border shopping tourism and intraregional mobility (see, for instance, Bygvra 1998; Spierings and Van der Velde 2008, 2013; Timothy and Butler 1995). Within this context, the life worlds of cross-border shoppers are also influenced by local narratives, regional histories and border experiences, which in turn play an important role in the dynamics of everyday life, and perceptions on encounters with differences and cross-border mobility (O'Donoghue 2013; Radu 2013).

This study examines two research questions. First, how do people who live in a border region experience and reflect on feelings of proximity and distance with regard to places that are assumingly socially and culturally 'distant' but geographically 'close' to home? And related to this, in what way are these feelings expressed in cross-border shopping experiences within this intraregional context? Following Edensor (2007), who questions the exoticism of tourism as such and considers these touristscapes in the realm of mundane routines and sensations, we would like to argue that the distinction between the exotic and mundane in cross-border shopping tourism may be much more fluid than it initially appears.

3.2 A theoretical approach towards socio-cultural proximity

Feelings of proximity and distance reflect a subjective understanding of a relationship with something, someone or someplace that is perceived as being 'close or far away from the self, here and now' (Trope and Liberman 2010: 440; see also O'Donoghue 2013). These feelings may be related to physical distance or closeness, but mostly they encompass an affective feeling towards otherness. As Radu (2013: 172) suggests, feelings of proximity and distance are 'sensed, rather than known, for proximity is not understood as a way of knowing, but as a sensibility'. In this paragraph, we will place proximity and distance in a socio-cultural context, where we distinguish between an affective, normative and interactive understanding of the concept (see Lewandowski and Lisk 2012 for an overview on social distance). These different dimensions of proximity and distance are interlinked and can be simultaneously present and interact with one another. As suggested by O'Donoghue (2013: 406), 'proximity is not about being fixed,

neither is it solely about movement [...] it is about recognising the positioning of ideas, concepts, and selves as they come into being through interaction with or alongside other beings'. Although cultural proximity is sometimes regarded as a separate feature when speaking about proximity and distance (Karakayali 2009; Kastenholz 2010; Ng, Lee, and Soutar 2007), we would like to argue that the cultural dimension is interwoven in the affective, normative and interactive understanding of proximity and distance. The cultural background always plays a role, as people consciously or unconsciously use their cultural baggage when being in places different from home (Kastenholz 2010).

First of all, feelings of proximity and distance consist of an affective aspect, in which 'those who are socially close to us are those we feel close to, and vice versa' (Karakayali 2009: 540; see also Magee and Smith 2013; Trope and Liberman 2010). Here, affective feelings of distance and closeness can influence the level of comfort with regard to people and places different from home. Following Blokland and Nast (2014: 1147), 'comfort is associated with ease'. As explained by the authors, '[w]e know the rules of conduct because the setting occurs predictably and is understandable to us'. Consequently, frequent social and cultural encounters can generate feelings of familiarity, recognition and security (Van Houtum, 1999; Wilson et al. 2008). However, when cultural differences are too great, people may not be able to make sense of them when using existing knowledge and representations of otherness (Moscovici 1988; Tajfel and Billig 1974), and eventually experience discomfort.

People, consciously or unconsciously, differentiate between the self and the other, us and them, and in a spatial sense, the 'here' and the 'there'. In this process, normative proximity centres on group membership and collectively recognised norms and values, and cultural identity of a specific group (Karakayali 2009; Kristeva 1991; Petersoo 2007; Tajfel 1981; Turner 1982). It must be noted, though, that when it comes to differences, it is largely assumed that there are more differences between than within countries. However, sometimes, regional differences within a country can be stronger than the international ones. As a result, social and cultural adaptation to otherness may occur not only at the international but also at the regional or local level (Ng et al. 2007).

Representations of otherness that follow from encounters with different people and places are subjective understandings, based on past experiences and acquired knowledge, but often also on assumptions and stereotypes which are based on generalised attributes concerning the other (Brislin 1999). Moreover, '[t]he abstract nature of stereotypes makes it possible for people to impute them to individual members of social groups and to interpret a wide array of behaviours as consistent with the stereotypes of an individual's group' (Magee and Smith 2013: 168). Stereotypes often include performative associations in which people differentiate between one group and another, not only influencing their interpretations of a place, but also their practices in future encounters (Cresswell 1996). In addition to these internal interpretation processes, external factors also play a role. As already noted by Simmel (1908: 143), even if the other, a stranger, is regarded as an outsider or external actor, he or she still influences the self or group by bringing 'qualities into it that are not, and cannot be, indigenous to it'. What is more, the presence of otherness in our daily lives influences the meaning we give to ourselves and others (Geertz 2000, Riggins 1997). This may occur through co-presence, but also through active participation and interaction.

Another feature of proximity and distance has been recognised by Karakayali (2009) as interactive. The more a person needs to adapt, the less culturally, but also socially proximate the person may feel. Molinsky (2007: 623) refers to this form of adaptation as 'cross-cultural code-switching', which he describes as 'the act of purposefully modifying one's behaviour, in a specific interaction in a foreign setting, to accommodate different cultural norms for appropriate behaviour'. Here, we recognise a normative distinction as a result of differences in norms and behaviour between one group and another, but also affective proximity and distance following interactions and the effort people need to make to adapt in a setting different from home. As suggested by Blokland (2014: 1147), everyday routes, but also recurring visits to a place, 'bring about encounters with others who differ from themselves, and whilst people come with their own cultural baggage, the inevitability of passing each other produces codes of conduct in the street that repeat and conform with expectations of the next encounter' (see also Cresswell 1996). Not only the frequency and length of interactions between disparate groups may influence feelings of proximity and distance, but also

different forms of interaction, in particular verbal communication in the form of language, and also non-verbal communications such as body language, bodily contact and gestures. In addition, perceived social rules and conventions can also play a role in the ways social interactions are perceived and experienced (Ward, Bochner and Furnham 2001). What is more, people develop a sense of place as a result of repetition and routine (Edensor 2007; see also Cresswell 2010). These encounters with differences may be experienced consciously or unconsciously and even become part of daily life, shaping 'the very nature and experience of our being-in-the-world' (Davidson and Milligan 2004: 524).

Following Radu (2013: 189), we recognise that experiences with differences are 'realised in physical absence, as virtual co-presence [formed by individual perceptions and life worlds]; other times it is based on real co-presence [and actual practices and encounters]'. This interplay between what people feel and know as part of their personal life worlds, on the one hand, and how they perceive and experience encounters with differences, on the other hand, will be at the centre of the following case study. We aim to reach a further understanding of how the abovementioned affective, normative and interactive dimensions of socio-cultural proximity and distance are related to practices of border crossers who are engaged in cross-border shopping mobility within the context of intraregional tourism.

3.3 Kleve as a case-study: Context and methods

In line with our aim to examine the multidimensionality of socio-cultural proximity and distance, on the one hand, and daily practices and lived experiences of shopping tourists in an intraregional context, on the other hand, we have selected the relatively small German border town, Kleve, as a shopping destination for our case study (Figure 1).

Kleve has approximately 50,000 inhabitants and is situated about 18 kilometres from the Dutch–German state border, close to the Dutch city Nijmegen. Kleve is chosen because it is not a major tourist attraction as opposed to some of the near German cities such as Dusseldorf, but it does have a major shopping street with a wide variety of shopping facilities, attracting Dutch day-visitors. According

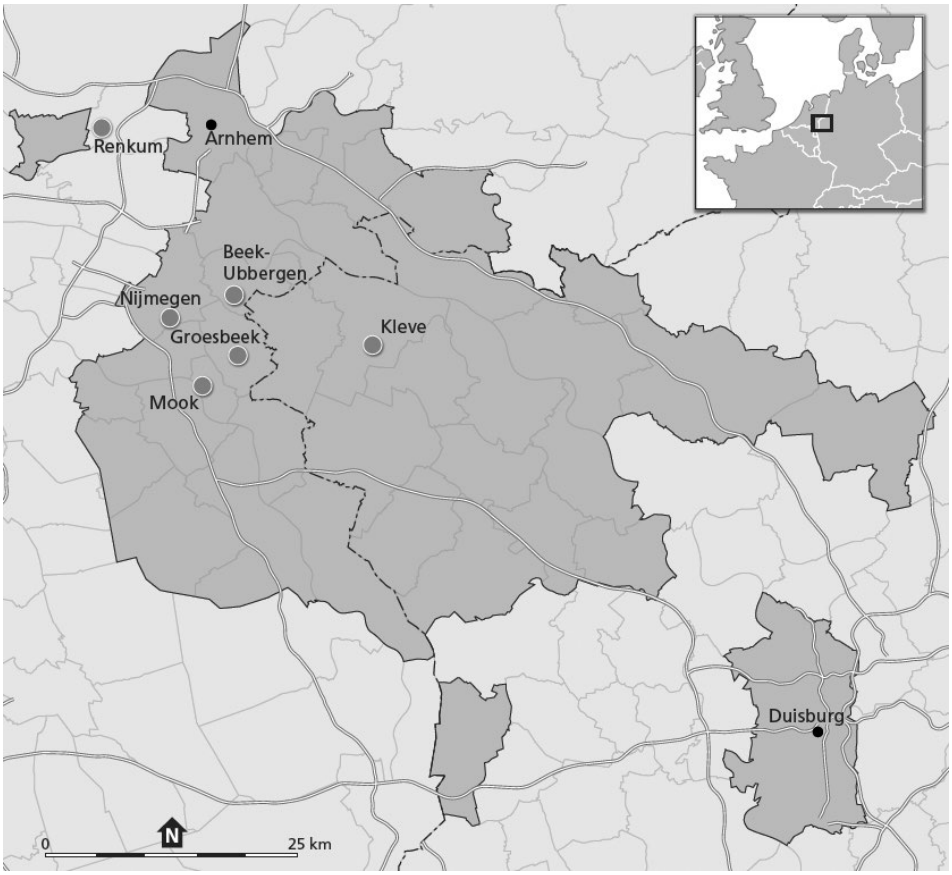

Figure 1: Case study area in the Dutch–German border region.

to the most recent regional study on cross- border shopping tourism in this specific border region (Nijmegen 2009), Kleve was the most popular shopping destination for people living in the Arnhem–Nijmegen area. Forty-one percent of the respondents had undertaken at least one cross-border shopping visit to the German border region in the year prior to the study, almost half of which chose Kleve as their shopping destination. Both leisure and functional shopping were the main incentives to engage in these cross-border shopping practices.

The Dutch–German border region has a long tradition of institutional cooperation, which has contributed to stable and open borders and everyday cross-border practices. Especially, the way these practices are perceived and experienced

can give interesting insights on how people reflect on feelings of proximity and distance in a border region. What is more, because of this intraregional context, we consider the geographical dimension of proximity and distance as given and were able to focus on the socio-cultural aspects of the concept in particular.

In the first phase of data gathering in the summer of 2013, street interviews were con- ducted with Dutch visitors in and around the high street of Kleve. Eighteen interviews took place during weekdays on a next-to-pass basis. These interviews were of an average length of 20 minutes and people were shortly informed about the theme of research. The aim of the interviews was not only to gain information about people's reasons for visiting Kleve, but also to explore people's experiences of seeing, hearing and meeting different people and coming across differences and similarities in the shopping street. The interview guide included two pictures, illustrating explicitly an image of a 'Dutch' symbol in the shopping street of Kleve, in the form of a Dutch fish shop, and a 'German' symbol, in the form of a selling point for typical German sausages called Bratwurst. These images were shown at the end of the interviews and were used to trigger additional reactions on cultural differences with regard to the normative dimension of socio-cultural proximity and distance.

Emergent themes from the first set of interviews were used to operationalise the theoretical framework further, in particular the socio-cultural attributes of feelings of proximity and distance, and develop a deeper focus for the second phase of data gathering, that is in-depth interviews in the spring of 2014. While the street interviews mostly focused on perceived differences concerning places, people, products, the shopping street in Kleve and the surrounding area, the in-depth interviews included topics such as feelings of home and belonging, and differences in social-cultural backgrounds, interactions, language issues, adjustments in behaviour and awareness of social rules.

In this second phase, ten cross-border shoppers were selected through four independent informants from our personal network who did not take part in the study themselves. This approach contributed not only to a diverse sample of respondents, but also helped to build a relationship of trust and a more personal dialogue with the respondents prior to the interview. Interview partners were

informed in advance about our study on the Dutch–German border region, and we particularly expressed our interest in personal dialogue about people's daily experiences with regard to cross-border shopping visits to Kleve. Our relationship of trust developed further after explaining that the researcher also worked in the Nijmegen area.

When selecting our interview partners, the main criterion was that the respondents were Dutch nationals, living in the Netherlands in the border region, and visitors of Kleve. We interviewed five men and five women, ranging in age from 18 to 66 years, living in Nijmegen, Renkum, Mook, Gennep, Beek-Ubbergen or Groesbeek. The interviews took place in an informal setting, at people's home or at a coffee place. Similar to the first phase of interviewing, the same pictures of a Dutch and German symbol were used once again at the end of the interview to trigger further reactions on cultural differences and similarities in the shopping street of Kleve.

All interviews, which were held in Dutch, were fully transcribed and coded thematically. We have used multiple rounds of open and axial coding – breaking down, comparing and categorising data (Corbin and Strauss 2008) – to determine the relative strength of the themes in connection to the different theoretical dimensions of proximity and distance. As a result, our analysis revealed multiple expressions of feelings of proximity and distance in relation to everyday life and shopping tourism in Kleve. What is more, different ways of placing and understanding encounters with differences came to the surface, which will be discussed in the following paragraphs. First, we will cover affective feelings concerning practices in this specific border region by reflecting on feelings of familiarity and unfamiliarity; second, we will discuss normative differences perceived by the respondents; and finally, we will focus on interactions and cultural code switching in everyday encounters with different others in the border region.

3.4 Everyday life and shopping tourism in the Dutch–German border region

3.4.1 Affective proximity and distance: Practices, familiarity and unfamiliarity

Most Dutch respondents who took part in the field study grew up in the region and had developed an affective feeling towards Kleve and its surroundings. They visited the town regularly, ranging from every week to a couple of times a year. When discussing Kleve and its shopping facilities, different respondents noted feelings of both familiarity and unfamiliarity in their cross-border practices. Overall, people felt familiar and appreciated the familiarity with the shopping street and the shops they regularly visited. Respondents admitted that exploring the town is only occasionally part of the visit and that they often keep to fixed routes, places and patterns when visiting Kleve:

> *We do have a fixed route actually, one that we usually walk. We park the car 'at the bottom of Kleve' as we call it ... And when it's time for coffee, we take the street on the right. There is a cafe-restaurant at the corner... there are various small shops on the left and the right [of the street] where we stop at... And then you end up at the Neue Mitte... but often we don't get that far... and we walk back down. By then, it's time for lunch and we walk back to that first restaurant to have lunch... (female, 1975, Mook).*

Even when arriving from a different side of the town, or taking another route, people noted that they are able to find their way as a result of being to some extent familiar with the town, having developed a sense of place through previous visits.

Differences in facilities, products and atmosphere were considered one of the main reasons to go shopping in Kleve. With regard to products, differences in price, but more often than not, differences in quality and assortment of foods, clothing and other non-foods are important. The following respondents visit Kleve on a regular basis:

I am not going there for my daily groceries... but to buy special things you cannot buy in the Netherlands, [things] I can for instance experiment with or that I know I like to use before- hand... (male, 1968, Nijmegen).

It's becoming more normal. I feel it fits easier into my rhythm. But you don't go that often that it feels as being in Nijmegen; for me it's still different. That's why I am still going, otherwise I would stay in Nijmegen... (male, 1983, Nijmegen).

As illustrated by these last two quotes, familiarity with cross-border differences may contribute to feelings of ease and comfort, while expected but sometimes also unexpected differences can lead to a sense of unfamiliarity. Spierings and Van der Velde (2013) recognise this as the presence of both comfortable familiarity, which is found here in the repetition and routine of the everyday, and attractive unfamiliarity, which is related to the exoticism of facilities, products and atmosphere in Kleve and its surroundings. Not only do these notions of familiarity and unfamiliarity contribute to feelings of affective proximity, but they are also a reason for cross-border mobility.

In addition, most respondents visited Kleve for both leisure and functional shopping, and often alternated their purpose during and between visits. When functional shopping is combined with leisure, the shopping experience also encompasses more time for browsing and rummaging through different shops and consuming food and beverages at the local facilities in town. Experiences can thus vary as a result of both 'discovery' and leisure shopping, and goal-oriented functional shopping. This change in mind-set and motivation may not only influence the way differences and similarities are perceived, but also the degree of felt proximity and distance. Here, we can recognise a mixture of the mundane of the exotic and the exotic of the everyday. On the one hand, crossing the state border has become an everyday or routine-like experience, while, on the other hand, differences found in Kleve contribute to the attractiveness of these cross-border shopping practices.

3.4.2 Normative proximity and distance: Differences and similarities in the border region

How feelings of socio-cultural proximity and distance are perceived depends very much on the way normative differences between us and them and the 'here' and the 'there' are noted and experienced. Here, proximity is construed through feelings of comfort, ease and familiarity when being in Kleve, but also by comparing the areas around Nijmegen and Kleve with the western parts of the Netherlands:

> *I think we are quite similar. Also because I have lived my whole live in the east of the Netherlands. The differences with people from the western parts of the Netherlands might be even bigger, now I think of it... (female, 1973, Renkum).*

> *A day or so [in Amsterdam] is nice, but I am happy when I am back in the east of the Netherlands, because it's much quieter and more convivial... (male, 1949, Groesbeek).*

Not only did people speak of a certain form of regional attachment in relation to the eastern parts of the Netherlands, attachment towards Kleve was also noted when reflecting on a long tradition of extending daily life practices across the state border, for instance, through family and friends who live across the state border, and as a result of regular cross-border practices in Kleve and its surroundings.

Regional differences and similarities were, for instance, noted when discussing symbols in the shopping street. As mentioned before, the shopping street consists of some 'Dutch' symbols, such as a 'Dutch' fish and cheese shop and a snack bar. Although a number of respondents considered the presence of these shops as somewhat odd, they explained it by noting that the Dutch and German borderlands are more interlinked than they appear:

> *Well it is a bit of an outsider, isn't it? But I don't have any problems with it. No, I don't really have problems with it. Well, Kleve and the Netherlands are quite intertwined with one another... (male, 1949, Groesbeek).*

At the same time, however, people also emphasised the importance of normative differences, arguing that there should not be more 'Dutchification' of Kleve, as their incentive to visit the town was not based upon Dutch supply and demand, but on differences in products and even a kind of exoticism:

> *Well then I might as well go to Nijmegen. I visit Kleve for the differences and not for the Dutch ... (male, 1947, Beek-Ubbergen).*

> *There is a little bit of exoticism going on in the sense that I would like to see something different. I am not visiting Kleve because it's the same as in the Netherlands... (male, 1968, Nijmegen).*

In addition to the 'Dutch' symbols in the shopping street of Kleve, the ultimate 'German' association is found at one stand in the street selling Bratwurst, the typical German sausage. Although the stand was not necessarily part of the visit for most respondents, it was considered as something belonging in a German shopping street:

> *... those stands with Bratwurst ... those you can find everywhere in Germany. Yeah, that's just part of it, yeah... (male, 1983, Nijmegen).*

Here normative differences are strengthened, following a positive and somewhat stereotypical association. These associations are explained by the respondents in light of differences, but at the same time they trigger feelings of recognition and familiarity.

Even though many social and cultural differences are noticed, people stated that there are probably more similarities than differences, which may also contribute to an affective feeling towards the border region:

> *In fact the Netherlands and Germany are quite similar, even if we don't really want it, I think we are only all too similar actually... (male, 1983, Nijmegen).*

These feelings of affective proximity with regard to normative differences were

especially found when people compared their own social and cultural background to Germany and other European countries:

> *In that respect, I think that the distance is larger between the Netherlands and England or France. More language differences [and] differences in culture. In that respect, I think Germany and Belgium... they are literally nearby, but they are also closer with regard to the nature of the people... (female, 1973, Renkum).*

The state border, however, was not totally discarded by everyone. Although most respondents associated Kleve with a local and familiar feeling, the presence of the state border continued to play a role in the way people approached cross-border differences:

> *Yes maybe you feel you are crossing the border... although it is not that different. But maybe [it is about] this feeling: right, now I am crossing the border and I will have to speak German... (male, 1949, Groesbeek).*

> *I do think, well, I am Dutch and I am now in Germany. This also means that I behave as a guest. That's the way I am raised I guess... (male, 1975, Beek-Ubbergen).*

This last quote expresses a strong normative distance as a result of recognising the state border in this particular way and illustrates a continuous differentiation process between one group and the other, and spatially between the 'here' and the 'there'. These perceptions may have developed as part of actual encounters with otherness, but may also be part of people's individual perceptions and life worlds, as is the case here. In addition, when discussing living in the Kleve area, for instance, many respondents considered a possible move across the state border a step too far. Arguments ranged from normative feelings of being too Dutch, to affective feelings concerning the overly quiet surroundings of Kleve. When looking at Kleve from this perspective, a certain affective distance remains to Kleve and the German border region, or to put it the other way around, a certain degree of proximity is felt towards Nijmegen or the Netherlands as a result of a normative feeling:

One way or the other, it is different over there and that appeals to me. But, in any case I would not want to live there and only profit from the good house prices and keep further everything in the Netherlands... in that case I would also have to put my children to school [in Germany] ... I don't know if that is something I would want... (female, 1974, Beek-Ubbergen).

3.4.3 Interactive proximity and distance: Everyday encounters

Many people living in the Nijmegen area grew up in the area and as a result of open and stable state borders experienced an organic way of meeting each other. People had time to get used to one another, to meet, connect and exchange as part of daily life practices, and also to become accustomed to the differences and similarities found in this particular Dutch–German border region; something that may not be the case in other border regions, or at other levels of cross-border practices, as a result of different border restrictions and policies.

This organic way of meeting has led to a certain notion of 'contact zones' (Yeoh & Willis 2005) not only in terms of co-presence, interactions and understanding, but also mutual awareness and feelings of comfort. When visiting places that are different from home, however, people to some extent negotiate appropriate behaviour by adapting themselves socially and culturally to the place and people around them. Feelings of interactive proximity and distance are then closely related to normative and affective associations regarding otherness.

In a shopping street, people see, hear, meet different others and engage in what Valentine and Sadgrove (2012) call 'fleeting encounters' with otherness. Even though people felt comfortable in Kleve and its surroundings, there were moments where cultural code-switching mechanisms (Molinsky 2007) were applied to accommodate differences in cultural norms. Language in particular plays an important role in understanding feelings of interactive and cultural proximity in the region. Respondents noted that the language spoken in Kleve lies closely to the Dutch language spoken in the region:

> *German spoken in this region lies closely to the Dutch language, because when you have trouble communicating you can switch to Dutch to find the right word, whereas this will not be possible in Berlin... (female, 1975, Mook).*

Moreover, many people from the border region grew up with German television, as the German channels had better reception than Dutch ones. When speaking to the respondents, they associated old German programmes with positive memories – even nostalgia – and realised that these programmes had contributed to their language skills and maybe even to their interest and feelings of affective proximity regarding the German culture. These notions with regard to language reflect a general sense of comfort in the border region, where state borders do not necessarily matter:

> *You know it is a bit different, but at the same time it is so well-known and familiar, not because you go there that often, but just because... well maybe because of this local feeling (male, 1968, Nijmegen).*

This last quote also illustrates a connection between what people know and feel about a place, showing that emotions with regard to a travel destination are intertwined with people's stock of knowledge, representations of otherness and past experiences, indicating a personal sense of place.

Adaptation in language was mentioned by the respondents, but not considered as something causing negative feelings. It was mostly regarded as a given and as part of visiting Kleve that happens to lie across a state border. At the same time, it was also felt as the strongest point of adaptation of the self when visiting Kleve, resulting in some affective distance in some situations:

> *It's always a little bit more uncomfortable than in your own language of course... It does not bother me a lot, but now you ask me about it, you do feel a little bit of restraint to ask something in a shop... (male, 1983, Nijmegen).*

Social interactions with the German others were mostly perceived in a positive

way. People in shops and on the street were regarded as polite and helpful, contributing to a feeling of ease and comfort. Differences were noted when relating social experiences in Kleve to the ones in Nijmegen. They revealed characteristics that belong to one group but not to the other and vice versa. In the context of social experiences, German nationals were considered more formal and restrained, whereas people in Nijmegen and surroundings appeared more outward looking and open. People noticed differences in social engagement, such as politeness or people being more obliging. Some of these differences found in traditions and habits were regarded in a way of positive stereotyping, in particular when discussing the German tradition of Kaffee und Kuchen:

> *Yeah those Germans on Sunday... here you don't see that anymore, in the past you saw it too, but over there, Sunday is sacred, meaning coffee and cake. But that's something, I also learned from my [German] grandmother. Everything needs to be precise and tidy... that's something they do over there. Here we don't do that anymore... (female, 1969, Gennep).*

These stereotypes are socially constructed and remain part of people's perceptions of the town, but are also a reason for visiting Kleve. Differences in social rules, habits and traditions, however, were not only noticed, but also contributed to self-awareness and differentiation between the self and the other, varying feelings of normative and affective proximity and distance. At times, these different rules of engagement were recognised as positive, for instance, when considering the strict work ethics which people associated with Germany, whereas other perceived rules of engagement felt constrictive, prompting some discomfort. One couple with children reflected on the difference in upbringing by mentioning that they felt they had to be stricter with their children when visiting Kleve and its surroundings, while another respondent mentioned a feeling of distrust when coming across associations with traditional festivities and clothing which he associated with nationalism. Consequently, positive associations with regard to the other can lead to feelings of normative proximity, whereas negative ones often increase normative distance between one group of people and another. This can, subsequently, influence the way encounters with differences are perceived and experienced.

3.5 Conclusion

Our findings reveal interesting insights for understanding socio-cultural proximity and distance with regard to cross-border shopping tourism and encounters with differences in daily life practices. In this study, we paid particular attention to the relationship between socio-cultural proximity and distance and cross-border shopping practices of Dutch border crossers who visit the German town Kleve in the Dutch–German border region – a region which can be characterised by open and stable borders, allowing people to move freely across the state border. This, however, does not mean that borders have disappeared entirely from people's minds. As stated by Newman (2006: 172), '[m]any of the borders which order our lives are invisible to the human eye but they nevertheless impact strongly on our daily life practices'. For most respondents who took part in the case study, the state border has to a large extent worn off in an institutional and physical sense. The border is mostly considered as a symbolic line rather than a physical one. Although this is the case, the state border continues to represent differences between Nijmegen and Kleve, not only producing a division between us and them as well as the 'here' and the 'there', but also contributing to cross-border practices, such as shopping tourism, in this specific intraregional context.

Following Edensor (2007), who questions the notion of exoticism in tourism and places tourism in the realm of mundane routines and sensations, it appears that shopping tourism and exoticism, on the one hand, and everyday life, on the other hand, are closely intertwined. From our study, we found that cross-border shopping visits to Kleve as part of the everyday resulted in feelings of regional attachment and comfortable familiarity concerning Kleve and its surroundings, whereas differences in facilities, products and atmosphere contributed to a sense of exoticism and feelings of attractive unfamiliarity. These feelings of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity show a degree of fluidity when interpreting the mundane and the exotic in this specific Dutch–German cross-border context. We recognise these perspectives in expressions as 'it's in our system and part of our daily life to go to Kleve' and 'we are going there for the differences', which both turned out to be important drivers for intraregional mobility.

The particular border context discussed in this study has allowed us to reflect

on a multidimensional approach towards socio-cultural proximity and distance. By distinguishing between an affective, normative and interactive dimension of the concept, we were able to examine how these different dimensions are simultaneously at play and interact with one another when it comes to the tourist experience of cross-border shoppers in the Dutch–German border region. As people use their cultural baggage to make sense of otherness, normative cultural aspects, in particular, can influence the way encounters with differences are perceived and experienced. In our study, interactions resulting from cross-border shopping practices and encounters with different others contributed to reflections on otherness and feelings of affective proximity and distance. These affective feelings were, for instance, found in the examples discussing the German tradition of Kaffee und Kuchen and the differences regarding the upbringing of children in the Netherlands and in Germany. Although respondents sought appropriate behaviour and a degree of adaptation in both examples, normative differences led to feelings of interactive proximity and distance, respectively. These dynamics of everyday life and actual practices and encounters with differences are not only at play when feelings of socio-cultural proximity and distance come to the surface, but they also shape the tourist experience.

When it comes to Kleve as part of people's everyday life worlds, cross-border practices and the organic way of meeting one another over time had contributed to feelings of both affective and interactive proximity. Respondents had become accustomed to the differences and similarities across the state border and spoke of regional attachment. They noted a stronger attachment towards Kleve and its surrounding, regardless of the state border and the assumed normative differentiation between the 'here' and the 'there', than to, for instance, western parts of the Netherlands. This notion of regional attachment, which is also based on the earlier mentioned balance between comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity, appeared to play an important role in cross-border shopping practices, as it contributed to feelings of comfort, ease and recognition in the border region.

What is more, our study has proven an interesting case in examining socio-cultural proximity and distance in relation to shopping tourism in a border region with open and stable borders. As not all border regions are characterised

by stable borders and a long history of institutional cooperation, further research should also focus on differences in shopping tourism between different types of border regions. Social and cultural adaptation to otherness in particular may be very different in border regions without a tradition of extended daily life practices across the state border. Furthermore, a longitudinal study on cross-border shopping could give additional insights into not only the development of local narratives and border experiences when it comes to cross-border shopping tourism, but also the multidimensional and dynamic character of the concept of socio-cultural proximity and distance.

Related to this, the attractiveness for cross-border shopping practices in Kleve and its surroundings appears to lie in the reciprocal relationship between the mundane of the exotic and the exotic of the everyday. As mobility in general, and shopping in particular, are important issues in cross-border shopping policies, this observation is of particular interest for developing new strategies for retail and tourism promotion in border regions. Regional and tourist policies could not only promote intraregional mobility and shopping tourism, but also have the potential for further strengthening cross-border cohesion and regional attachment.

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4 PLACE IMAGE FORMATION AND CROSS-BORDER SHOPPING: GERMAN SHOPPERS IN THE POLISH BAZAAR IN SŁUBICE

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Abstract

This study focuses on differences in place image formation between cross-border shoppers who visit the bazaar in the Polish part of the border-crossing town of Frankfurt-Oder/Słubice. By examining the German--Polish border context and the historical and regional particularities of this shopping destination, our qualitative analysis reveals differences in place image formation between two groups of German border crossers: locals from Frankfurt-Oder and visitors from other parts of the borderland. It turns out that the locals regarded the border-crossing town as part of daily life and had lost interest in the bazaar, while cross-border shoppers from further afield visited the bazaar regularly, were motivated by leisure, and assessed the bazaar more positively. These differences in place image formation between the two groups resulted from differences in mind-set and motivation, influencing not only the knowledge and experiences of the border crossers, but also the likelihood of visiting this specific shopping destination again.

[3] An earlier version on cross-border shopping in the German-Polish borderland appeared as a book chapter. Here, the focus was put on the historical perspective of cross-border shopping practices. Szytniewski, B. (2015). Changing borders, mobilities and places: Petty trade and shopping in the German–Polish borderlands. In M. van der Velde & T. van Naerssen (Eds.), *Mobility and Migration Choices: Thresholds to Crossing Borders* (pp. 17–28). Dorchester: Ashgate.

4.1 Introduction

With the opening of the internal borders of the European Union, EU citizens were able to move more widely and engage freely in cross-border practices. As a result, not only mobilities changed, but some places near borders transformed from crossing points into tourist destinations (Timothy et al. 2014). One of these places is Słubice with its bazaar on the Polish side of the border crossing town of Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice. Following the fall of the Berlin wall and the subsequent reunification of East and West Germany in 1990, the bazaar became a well-known shopping destination for German shoppers from both Frankfurt–Oder and further afield.

In addition to being a functional endeavour, shopping has increasingly been recognised as a leisure activity, not only in the home country but also abroad (Timothy and Butler 1995; Dmitrovic and Vida 2007; Sullivan et al. 2012; Spierings and Van der Velde 2013; Makkonen 2015). Like tourism shopping (Tosun et al. 2007; Murphy et al. 2011), cross-border shopping involves leisure activities and touristic experiences in another country. Cross-border shoppers usually live in relative geographical proximity from a shopping destination, making day-trips possible. Some may even live within walking distance, as is the case for people living in the border-crossing town of Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice (see for instance Dołzbłasz and Raczyk 2012). When shopping across a state border, people often expect to enter a different space. They expect to find not only unfamiliar physical surroundings and different sociocultural encounters, but also differences in merchandise, prices and local atmosphere – particularities that often motivate people to engage in cross-border shopping (Spierings and Van der Velde 2008).

These expectations contribute to place image formation, described by Crompton (1979: 18) as 'the sum of beliefs and ideas and impressions that a person has of a destination' with its physical, cultural and social attributes (Imamoğlu 2009; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015; Kim and Chen 2016). In comparison to holiday making, which often entails a longer period of stay and is less likely to be repeated frequently, place images may be different for those involved in cross-border shopping as their practices can be recurring, of variable duration and have seasonal variation (Bell and Ward 2000). Place images may also differ

between shoppers who live within walking distance from a cross-border shopping destination, and shoppers who live further away. Timothy and Butler (1995), for instance, have demonstrated that the frequency of cross-border shopping practices increased with geographical proximity to the shopping destination across the state border. Although different studies in tourism recognised the visitor's origin or place of residence to influence place images, they mostly focused on personal characteristics as nationality (Beerli and Martín 2004; Prebensen 2007; Prayag and Ryan 2011; Prayag 2012), or the distinction between domestic and international visitors (Crompton 1979; Joppe et al. 2001; Yuksel 2004; Falk 2013; Sharma et al. 2015). Little research has specifically focused on differences in place image formation between border crossers who live in the borderland and are involved in cross-border shopping tourism.

Therefore, in this study, we will differentiate between two groups of German border crossers who visit the Polish bazaar in Słubice on day-trips, namely locals from Frankfurt–Oder, and shoppers who live further away from the town in the borderland. We aim to enrich the debate on shopping tourism in relation to place image formation by examining the place images of these two groups concerning the Polish bazaar, a shopping destination that is geographically close to but in one way or another different from home and situated across the state border. We examine the following research question: how do these two groups of border crossers perceive and assess the differences and similarities they find in the Polish bazaar in Słubice, and how does it influence their place images and attraction of the shopping destination? Differences in mind-set and motivation among the shopping tourists seem to play an important role for their place image formation, and subsequently for the attractiveness of the shopping destination.

4.2 Place image formation in a border context

Place image formation is a well-known concept in tourism research, often used in understanding tourist behaviour (see Tasci and Gartner 2007 for an overview). Many studies focused on the cognitive–affective nature of place image formation with the cognitive component covering knowledge and beliefs about a destination, and the affective one indicating feelings towards a destination (Baloglu and

McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martín 2004; San Martin and Rodríguez del Bosque 2008). Lately, a conative component has been added in understanding place images, referring to the purpose or likelihood of visiting a specific destination (Pike and Ryan 2004; Tasci and Gartner 2007; Kim and Chen 2016; Stylos et al. 2016). Following this approach, different factors are identified to influence place image formation. Knowledge, experiences, and mind-set and motivations related to the purpose of visiting stand out, in particular (Gartner 1993; Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martín 2004; Prayag and Ryan 2011; Kim and Chen 2016).

First of all, knowledge about a shopping destination involves various information sources, which can be categorised as organic, induced or autonomous image formation agents (MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997; Tasci and Gartner 2007). Whereas induced images result from marketing efforts by tourist organisations and travel agencies, organic and autonomous information sources are influenced by personal selections and perceptions. Autonomous image formation agents include, for instance, newspapers, educational materials, films and popular culture and are largely out of a destination's direct control. Related to the organic image formation agents are non-commercial sources of information, which result from perceptions of otherness and personal experiences at a specific place. Perceptions of otherness are particularly important as place images are not necessarily neutral, but often include meanings that are widely accepted due to the strength of particular representations (Dunn 2006). Although these representations may be facts, personal or common assumptions or stereotypes are often as important when making sense of otherness and give meaning to perceived differences and similarities (Brislin 1999). In a cross-border context, these beliefs may be strongly related to the history of the state border and the borderland in people's minds. Strüver (2005), for instance, found that history-based perceptions can create very sticky but also powerful images, often stereotypical, of both the self and the other, and the 'here' and the 'there', even if cross-border practices take place on a daily or regular basis. These place images can create expectations that may be either quite misguided or quite accurate, but most of all they influence people's perceptions of otherness (Moscovici 1988).

Experiences at a shopping destination develop through encounters with

differences where different socio-cultural backgrounds, for instance, language and customs, and physical surroundings, such as different squares, streets, shops, restaurants and bars, are likely to become part of the shopping experience. These notions of the social and physical environment are related to the historical and regional particularities of a destination (Imamoğlu 2009; Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015; Kim and Chen 2016). Here, the history of the borderland and the particular border policies, such as customs regulations and document requirements, play a role in the assessment of a shopping destination, and the degree of cross-border mobility (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). A pleasant drive and no visa control at the state border will most likely contribute to a more positive assessment of a shopping destination than long queues at the border crossing and extensive customs regulations (Wang 2004).

Furthermore, people's experiences can be influenced by frequency and previous visits. Feelings of familiarity or unfamiliarity concerning a shopping destination may come to the surface when a visit to a particular destination is repeated. More specifically, repeat visitors, 'tend to develop attachment to specific activities, areas, people, and destinations' (Prayag and Ryan 2011: 139). They are 'through past experiences […] it might be assumed that their thoughts about places become more sophisticated, and their reaction to proffered advertising more critical' (Ooi in Prentice 2004: 926). Repetition of a visit does not necessarily mean replication, as every visit can be different as a result of people's company, the presence of other visitors, and social and cultural interactions with locals (Ryan 2012). Ward et al. (2001: 87), for instance, argue that the presence of co-nationals – that is, other visitors from the home country – 'can be harmful or helpful [for the experience of a place], depending

on the nature of individual supporters and their group dynamics'. Co-nationals can contribute to some feelings of familiarity at a shopping destination, but also create feelings of annoyance when the main purpose of a visit is to engage in cross-border differences without being confronted with people from the home country (see also Pearce 2005).

In considering purpose or likelihood of visiting a specific shopping destination, socio-demographic characteristics, such as place of residence, and psychological

characteristics, concerning for instance mind-set and motivation, should also be taken into account (Gartner 1993, Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martín 2004; Kim and Chen 2016). When it comes to motivation, a distinction is often made between functional and leisure shopping. A person who visits a shopping destination to purchase specific goods has a different mind-set and motivation compared to a person who visits the destination purely for leisure (San Martin and Rodríguez del Bosque 2008; Szytniewski and Spierings 2014; Sharma et al. 2015). While many authors associate shopping across the state border with a functional purpose (Piron 2002; Dmitrovic and Vida 2007; Sharma et al. 2015), Timothy and Butler (1995) argue that people engaged in cross-border shopping can also be motivated by leisure motivations. Moreover, according to Timothy and Butler (1995), people who live in close proximity to a state border cross the border more frequently for shopping purposes than people living further afield. Visit frequency combined with travel distance seems to play a role in the way a destination is assessed. In fact, previous research on place image formation in relation to place of residence shows that domestic tourists are more critical of a destination than international visitors (Crompton 1979; Joppe et al. 2001; Yuksel 2004; Sharma et al. 2015). It must be noted though that the accumulation of knowledge and past experiences may shape new expectations and perceptions, contributing to new evaluations of a destination (Imamoğlu 2009; Ryan 2012; Kim and Chen 2016).

4.3 Methodology

Our research site was the large bazaar in the Polish part of the border-crossing town of Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice. Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice comprise a border-crossing town that resulted from the redrawing of the Polish state borders after the Second World War. The two parts of the town are on opposite sides of the Oder river, which is now the state border between Germany and Poland. The German part includes the former city centre and has approximately 62,600 residents; the Polish part, which was formerly known as Dammvorstadt, has almost 20,000 residents (Stadtverwaltung Frankfurt (Oder) 2013). The physical environment of the town is characterised by its common past: the town bridge and the pre-war 'German' architecture in Słubice. Although the post-war state border led to substantial resettlement and new communities on both sides of the

Oder, over the years, border restrictions and policies changed and a lively border crossing tradition developed between the two parts of the town (Szytniewski 2015).

From the start, the bazaar became a well-known shopping destination for German shoppers living in the borderland. The first stalls appeared on the streets of Słubice in 1990, but the municipality soon decided to move the traders out of the city centre to an open field approximately two kilometres from the Frankfurt–Oder/Słubice bridge (Figure 2). This field is the current location of the bazaar, which now has 1,200 permanent stalls selling clothing, foot ware, fresh food, cigarettes and alcohol. There are also various food and beverage outlets and a few hairdressers. The Polish market vendors interact and trade in German and one can pay with euros, even though the zloty is Poland's official currency. Following a destructive fire in 2007, the bazaar was transformed from a semi-provisional market into a permanent shopping area with brand-new stalls. Despite its changed appearance, the bazaar can still be described as an open market with covered structures (Sik and Wallace 1999). Shoppers from various parts of Germany visit the bazaar on day-trips. They come not only from Frankfurt–Oder, which is just across the state

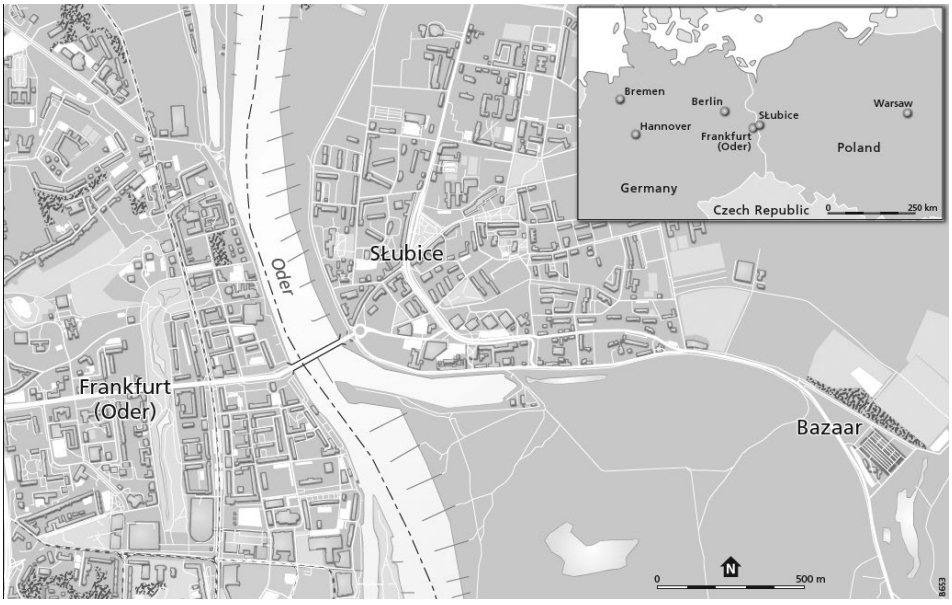

Figure 2: Map of Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice.

border, or Berlin, about 100 kilometres away, and the Brandenburg region, but judging by the car number plates we saw, also from Hanover and even Bremen, which are over 300 kilometres away.

After an initial rise in the early 1990s as a result of changes in border policies, cross-border shopping declined somewhat but continued to be a part of the everyday in the German-Polish borderland, with Polish towns along the state border remaining attractive for the foreign visitor (Baláž and Williams 2005; Więckowski 2010; Szytniewski 2015). According to the most recent report by the Central Statistical Office Poland (2016) on cross-border mobility between Poland and its neighbouring countries, the state border between Germany and Poland consisted of the highest number of border crossings into Poland in 2015. Although there is no specific customer data about the bazaar, 64 per cent of the border crossings made by German nationals were related to shopping. The largest groups of cross-border shoppers consisted of German border crossers visiting a shopping destination in Poland within a range of 30 kilometres from their place of residence. Most interestingly, there is a drop in cross-border mobility for those living between 50 and 100 kilometres from the shopping destination, followed by an increase in the number of visitors living further than 100 kilometres. Although this may confirm the earlier mentioned observation of car number plates from Berlin and further, it must be noted that these numbers on cross-border mobility do not mention the bazaar in Słubice independently but cover the whole German-Polish borderland.

The data collection took place in September 2012 in the form of in-depth interviews. We chose qualitative research methods as we were interested in the individual processes of place image formation of the shopping tourists, and their perceived differences and similarities concerning the bazaar. Prior to the in-depth interviews, in which the border crossers elaborated on their experiences and perceptions of otherness, we held an explorative survey among forty customers at the car park to get an overview of the motivations and sources of information, and to use it as an additional input for the interviews. Our interview partners were German visitors to the bazaar, who we approached on a next-to-pass basis at various places in and near the bazaar, on different days of the week and at different times of the day. We selected respondents who had visited or were visiting the

bazaar, and paid attention to ensuring variety in gender, age and place of residence. Open-ended questions were asked about how people assessed their current and past shopping practices in the bazaar, their knowledge about the town and the bazaar, and the extent to which they experienced differences and similarities across the state border. In total, 18 in-depth interviews were conducted with German nationals, whose ages ranged from 24 to 88 years. Although almost all interviewees had visited the bazaar before, three interviews included first-time visitors, who were part of a larger party visiting the market.

Fourteen of the 18 interviews took place along the Oder river (seven on the Polish side of the town and seven on the German side). Four interviews were held in the bazaar itself. As a result of this approach, the social and physical environment of the bazaar and its surroundings became an engaged part of the described practices and encounters. For instance, respondents referred to other customers in the bazaar, purchases they had just made, their walk to or from the bazaar, the green patch along the Oder or the 'German' pre-war architecture in Słubice.

All interviews were fully transcribed and coded thematically by using multiple rounds of open and axial coding, breaking down, comparing and categorising data (Corbin and Strauss 2008). A number of themes related to place image formation emerged during this process; such as, perceived differences and similarities across the state border, the distinction between daily life and a day out in the bazaar, the role of sticky stereotypes and the presence of others as part of cross-border shopping practices. Two groups of visitors were taken into account in our analysis: locals from Frankfurt–Oder and visitors from further away, in particular Berlin and other parts of the borderland. Eight interview partners were part of the first group and 10 were part of the second one. All quotations taken from the interviews have been translated from German into English.

4.4 Place image formation and cross-border shopping tourism in the Polish bazaar

4.4.1 Borders and differences

According to many respondents, the Słubice bazaar is well-known in the German–Polish borderland and beyond. From its start in the 1990s, information about the bazaar mostly spread through word-of-mouth among friends and family, and media in Germany. Even now, it continues to attract first-time visitors, not only because of the low prices and what is on offer, but also because it is regarded as an interesting place to explore and spend some time in. One local, for instance, explained how people know the bazaar and why they visit it:

> *simply to have a look how it is. People know it. It is an institution, the Polenmarkt, it is that ... well the Polenmarkt ...you know what you can find there and that it is cheaper ... (male, 22 years, Frankfurt–Oder).*

The particularities of the location of the bazaar in Słubice influenced the cross-border shopping experience of the border crossers. Although the bazaar is in the Polish part of the border-crossing town, not all German shoppers immediately feel that they are 'abroad' or that their expectations of entering a different space are immediately confirmed. Remnants of German architecture in Słubice are part of the physical surroundings and contribute to maintaining the knowledge that Słubice used to be a German suburb. Many visitors who live in Frankfurt–Oder and those who come by train cross the bridge on foot, walk along the river and pass these former German buildings. Sudden confrontations with differences pinpoint otherness and produce a sense of being abroad:

> *When you don't know that there is a border, then you probably would not have noticed it. Well, like every other bridge ... [old bus, probably from the 1970s, passes by] ... so when I walk here I think that I am still in Germany. If only the bus had not passed ... we don't see such buses in Germany. No ... That's again Poland, and not Germany (male, 24 years, Brandenburg, walking to the bazaar).*

Many Germans who visit the bazaar do not visit other parts of Słubice, nor do they stop in Frankfurt–Oder. In contrast to the bazaar, the town itself is often regarded as less appealing and not exotic or different enough. The bazaar is especially attractive because of perceived differences compared to shopping premises in Germany:

> *There is no such market in Germany. We only have shopping centres. American-like ... (male, approx. 60 years, Berlin, walking from the bazaar).*

Differences in merchandise, interactions and atmosphere are especially appreciated and contribute to the attractiveness of the bazaar as a shopping destination. For instance, many German customers still remember the former 'traditional' characteristics of the first market back in the 1990s and relate their past experiences and knowledge to their perceptions of today's bazaar. In particular, the semi-organised and somewhat provisional market stalls of the old days and the more authentic market atmosphere evoke good memories. Past features of the bazaar, which are also present these days in the form of less commercialized goods and small stalls, are still reasons for visiting the bazaar. However, for some, recent infrastructural changes after the destructive fire of 2007 are too much of a change, making the bazaar less attractive. A visitor from Berlin reflected on the newly built market structures:

> *[The market] becomes too commercial. There is no fun to it anymore (male, approx. 50 years, Berlin, in the bazaar).*

Thus, as the border wears off and shopping facilities in Germany and Poland become more alike, differences between 'home' and 'away' are slowly disappearing too. At the same time, however, previously noticed social, cultural and physical attributes and differences are still appreciated and remain part of the motivations to visit the bazaar.

4.4.2 Sticky stereotypes

Historical perceptions of otherness also continue to play a role in the assessment of the bazaar as a place where one can buy goods for a cheaper price and these

prices can be negotiated. For several interview partners, the assumption that people are more open in Poland raised the expectation that one can bargain in the bazaar. This was particularly mentioned by visitors who lived further away from the market:

> *The behaviour is different ... for example, that you can bargain at the Polenmarkt. That's not possible in Germany at all (male, 24 years, Brandenburg, walking to the bazaar).*

The belief that prices can be negotiated in the bazaar is assessed as a positive socio-cultural difference between markets at home and the Polish bazaar, giving pleasure when a negotiation is successful and disappointment when an attempt fails. Regardless of how market vendors react to bargaining, the belief that one can bargain in the bazaar is part of the attraction of cross-border shopping and could even be seen as an incentive for more cross-border shopping tourism.

Even though most German interviewees had been crossing the German–Polish state border since the early 1990s and were aware of the economic development in Poland and the country's accession to the European Union and the Schengen zone, perceptions of Poland as a country with a lower living standard still persist. As a consequence, German customers often seemed surprised to see that price differences between Germany and Poland were becoming smaller. Some stereotypical characterisations of Poland and Polish people as underdeveloped were also noted by the respondent who spotted an old bus passing by during the interview and connected it to his feelings of being abroad:

> *The Eastern bloc. The future has not yet arrived here. They still live in the 19th century here (male, 24 years, Brandenburg, walking to the bazaar).*

Another 'sticky' image related to the perceived lower living standard is found among both groups of Germans, reflecting a higher level of criminality on the Polish side of the border, car theft in particular:

> *There is lots of smuggling going on, that is, cars are being stolen. There*

is no [border] control ... Criminality is being encouraged as a result of this openness [of the state border] (male, retired, Frankfurt–Oder).

They don't have anything, right? In the past, it was said that much was stolen. It probably still is, but, well, most of it goes further, to Russia ... (male, retired, Berlin, walking to the bazaar).

These perceptions about Poland and Polish people illustrate that 'pre-existing stereotypes are not dismantled by actual experiences, but instead serve as standards against which the visited culture is evaluated' (Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002: 403). Related to this, some locals also mentioned a distance in the social and cultural backgrounds between Germans and Poles, which has not disappeared despite the border liberalization in Central and Eastern Europe. When discussing cross-border differences, one respondent said that:

The border, it is always there. We are too different, one can say the difference is too big – the language barrier, in general the social structures, they are too different from one another ... we are at a different level (male, approx. 40 years, Frankfurt–Oder).

Following Strüver (2005), pre-existing stereotypes can be quite 'sticky' and influence people's place images. They are most often used to grasp and explain perceived differences and similarities at a shopping destination, without wondering whether or not they are true. Some stereotypes with regard to, for instance, opportunities for bargaining and cheaper prices as part of a lower living standard were part of the attractiveness of the bazaar and its positive assessment. In particular for cross-border shoppers from further afield, stereotypes did not necessarily prevent them from engaging in cross-border shopping, on the contrary. As such, 'sticky' stereotypes related to cross-border differences may be considered as either appealing and a motive for cross-border shopping, or unappealing and a motive for cross-border immobility. This reflects the mind-set of a leisurely day out among the shoppers from further afield and the mind-set of the everyday among the locals, respectively, which will be discussed further on.

4.4.3 Seeing different others

Experiences as part of place image formation were in this case study further formed through the presence of other visitors, and the social and cultural interactions with locals. Both groups of shopping tourists were well aware of different others. When reflecting on actual interactions and shopping practices in Słubice, both groups of German respondents reported experiencing encounters with Polish locals in town and in the bazaar as pleasant, and recognized positive differences in mentality. In comparison to people in Germany, Poles were regarded as less hectic and tense, making time for each other and their daily practices. However, the way these perceived differences and similarities between Germany and Poland are assessed also depends on the frame of reference taken. From both groups, some people mentioned, for instance, that the market vendors were a bit pushy, while others compared their encounters in the bazaar to other comparable intercultural encounters and evaluated the Polish market vendors as not pushy at all:

> *… but when you go to Italy for example or somewhere else, they nearly knock you over. Very bad. That's okay here ... (male, 53 years, Bad Sachsa, bazaar car park).*

In addition, German respondents also reflected on the fellow shoppers with whom they shared their shopping experience in the bazaar. They were mostly aware of other German shoppers at the market, but instead of associating themselves with this familiar other, they mostly tried to disassociate and distance themselves from other German shoppers. They were, for instance, perceived as cross-border discount hunters:

> *of course you have those like my neighbour. He has been here a few times, drives here often only for cigarettes eh ...he comes here, parks and gets his cigarettes and ...he is gone (male, approx. 40 years, Berlin, in the bazaar).*

Both locals and those from further away regarded other German customers as poorer individuals who needed to cross the state border to meet their basic needs. Therefore, these familiar but different others were sometimes regarded as people they did not need to meet:

The Polenmarkt is actually for people that do not have much ...our socially weaker class in society (male, approx. 40 years old, Frankfurt–Oder).

Well, sometimes you also meet people, who you not necessarily need to meet. You can see them from afar, when they get out of the bus ...who knows, where those people come from. That's how it is ...(male, retired, Berlin, walking to the bazaar).

Shoppers reflected on the presence of co-nationals to explain their experiences and practices at the market. This distinction was mostly made by shoppers from further afield who considered shopping at the bazaar as a leisurely day out and buying something for a cheaper price as a secondary motivation. Their assumptions about other people's motives reduced to some extent people's positive experiences of the bazaar as an escape of the everyday and brought to the attention that other visitors may regard the bazaar only as a place where goods can be bought for a cheaper price.

4.4.4 Daily life or a day out in the bazaar

Previous research has shown that place images vary with geographical proximity. As distance increases, the image of a place becomes more positive (Crompton 1979; Joppe et al. 2001; Yuksel 2004). This also proved to be the case for our analysis of the bazaar in Słubice. While both groups were relatively familiar with the bazaar as a result of previous visits, the bazaar as a cross-border shopping destination was assessed more positively by those visiting from further away than locals from Frankfurt– Oder. Differences in mind-set and motivation play a role here.

Locals from Frankfurt–Oder have become familiar with the bazaar mostly through past cross-border shopping practices. They had gradually lost interest in the bazaar as they got accustomed to the Polish market vendors, the shopping facilities and the merchandise. They no longer expected to find something new or different in the bazaar, and therefore visited the bazaar only occasionally. This confirms the argument of Baláž and Williams (2005) that the feelings of novelty

and curiosity that accompanied border liberalisation in Central and Eastern Europe since the 1990s have diminished over time. As one local put it:

> *It's actually all junk ...In the past, I have been there on occasion. But, well, I do not need to go there ...at first it was out of curiosity ...(male, approx. 40 years old, Frankfurt–Oder).*

Having become familiar with the bazaar, the locals felt that they got to know everything about the bazaar and no longer needed to visit it. MacKay and Fesenmaier (1997: 542) call this over-familiarity, where 'at a certain point, familiarity becomes less attractive' and results in inattention or even estrangement. Such over-familiarity is found with regard to not only the bazaar, but also Słubice. For locals from Frankfurt–Oder, the bazaar, its surroundings and its visitors have become a normal part of their daily lives:

> *[While things] look different … but that's only at first sight. A second look reveals everything ... when one looks behind the curtains, one sees that everything is the same, all the same ... (male, retired, Frankfurt–Oder, walking from the bazaar).*

However, as a result of the many shopping tourists passing through the city centre on a daily basis, locals were continuously reminded of the popularity of the bazaar. Although they recognised the bazaar as an attractive shopping destination for others, they themselves did not consider it attractive:

> *People from Frankfurt–Oder no longer go there often. Well, because it is normal. However, those who do visit, are the day-trippers arriving on buses ...many tourists ... for them it is something special (female, 88 years, Frankfurt–Oder).*

Most cross-border shoppers who lived further away from the market experienced a visit to the bazaar as a leisurely day out, even though the majority were return visitors who visited the bazaar on a regular basis. They perceived it as something different from the everyday. When asked about their motives for visiting, one of them replied:

… shopping, cigarettes, browsing and rummaging … we are on a day out with the girls, we've left our men at home (female, approx. 50 years, Brandenburg, in the bazaar).

Whether people regard visiting the bazaar as a day out or as part of daily life appears to play an important role in their place image formation. Although both groups of respondents visited the bazaar, their perceptions were related to different mind-sets and motivations. The interviews illustrated that shoppers living further away from the bazaar developed new expectations and perceptions as a result of regular cross-border shopping practices. As opposed to locals, their perceptions of otherness seemed less fixed and they kept on changing with every visit. Previously obtained knowledge and active experiences following a leisurely day out, contributed to new evaluations of a destination, which has also been recognised by Ryan (2012), and are in this study part of the reasons to visit the bazaar again.

Moreover, people living further away from the bazaar perceived and remembered the bazaar more vividly, by noticing and reflecting on particularities of the shopping destination. The following visitor from Berlin, for instance, seemed to have considered the organization of the stalls in the bazaar in detail:

… and then the shops repeat themselves. Every few metres ... the same. It may then lead to the impression that they all somehow work together ... and that they only spread themselves a little bit just to make more profit (male, approx. 40 years, Berlin, in the bazaar).

Resulting from their mind-set of the everyday, locals from Frankfurt–Oder, however, not only seemed to perceive fewer details and speak in more general terms about their experiences in the bazaar, they were also more critical about the bazaar and the shopping facilities in Słubice than people who came from further away. There appeared to be a degree of disinterest among the locals when it came to renewing cross-border interactions. They seemed not to feel much affinity with what was going on in Słubice, which prevented them from seeking new experiences in either the bazaar or Słubice. They felt content in their own part of the town, as that was where they had both their professional and their private lives.

4.5 Conclusion

In our study on place image formation, we have focused on border crossers who were engaged in cross-border shopping in the Polish bazaar in the German–Polish border crossing town of Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice. Whereas previous research found differences in place image formation as a result of nationality (Beerli and Martín 2004; Prebensen 2007; Prayag and Ryan 2011; Prayag 2012), and a distinction between domestic and international visitors (Crompton 1979; Joppe et al. 2001; Yuksel 2004; Falk 2013; Sharma et al. 2015), we found differences in place image formation between two groups of border crossers: locals living in Frankfurt–Oder and visitors from other parts of the borderland. Following the debate on the cognitive, affective and conative nature of place image formation, we identified knowledge, experiences, and mind-set and motivation, respectively, as factors to influence the way border crossers perceive and assess differences and similarities at a shopping destination across the state border (Baloglu and McCleary 1999; Beerli and Martín 2004; Prayag and Ryan 2011; Kim and Chen 2016).

Our study revealed similarities in the knowledge and experiences concerning the bazaar between locals from Frankfurt–Oder and those from other parts of the borderland. The shopping destination at this specific border-crossing town was strongly influenced by the historical and regional particularities of the borderland. For both groups of shoppers, feelings of being somewhere different, or abroad, appeared gradually due to the pre-war 'German' architecture, giving an impression of a German town at first sight. Another similarity was found in the assessment of others in the bazaar. Both groups reflected positively on interactions with locals, while referring to other German shoppers as people they did not need to meet, associating them as poorer individuals from a socially weaker class. We also found that some of the earlier established perceptions towards otherness still remained among both locals and visitors from further afield. In particular, those related to the historical division between east and west Europe were often used to make sense of the differences and similarities found in Słubice and the bazaar. Stereotypes, such as opportunities for bargaining and cheaper prices as part of the perception of Poland as a country with a lower living standard, appeared quite 'sticky', but did not necessarily influence people from engaging in cross-border shopping.

What influenced the differences in place image formation and the subsequent attractiveness of bazaar the most, appeared in the mind-set and motivation between the two groups of border crossers. Whether people considered a visit to the bazaar as part of everyday life or a leisurely day out turned out to be the most important factor. Different from earlier research that associated cross-border shopping with a functional purpose (Piron 2002; Dmitrovic and Vida 2007; Sharma et al. 2015), our study shows that leisure motivations were important drivers for visiting the bazaar. Cross-border shoppers from further afield, in particular, were motivated by leisure and assessed the bazaar more positively, whereas locals from Frankfurt–Oder had lost interest as a result of functional shopping motivations and feelings of overfamiliarity. Living at walking distance to the shopping destination implied that the bazaar was perceived as part of the everyday life as opposed to providing opportunities for a leisurely day out. Moreover, we derived that people who lived within walking distance from the bazaar were not necessarily the ones who regularly engaged in cross-border shopping. The frequent visitors were found among the border crossers from other parts of the borderland. Contrary to the findings of Butler and Timothy (1995), in our study, the frequency of cross-border shopping practices increased with more geographical distance. Following Ryan (2012) on the relationship between experiences and expectations, we found that as a result of new experiences, the place images of the shopping tourists from further afield not only became more sophisticated, but also contributed to new expectations of the bazaar. This group seemed to be more positive and interested in the specific social and physical environment of the shopping destination, such as shopping facilities, merchandise and atmosphere. This mind-set and motivation related to a leisurely day out instead of part of the daily life influenced not only the likelihood of visiting this specific shopping destination again, but also the knowledge and experiences of the border crossers. When people's place images continue to change as a result of new experiences and encounters with differences, familiar and unfamiliar features of otherness may consciously or unconsciously come to their attention and motivate them to engage in cross-border shopping.

Following these results, which revealed novel insights on place image formation in cross-border shopping tourism, we would like to outline a few recommendations for further research. First, we need to point out that our findings provide information about the lived experiences of a group of German shopping tourists

who live in the borderland. Judging by the car number plates, however, we also know that shopping tourists from other parts of Germany are visiting the bazaar. In order to further enrich our findings on cross-border shopping in the Polish bazaar, a follow-up study on shopping tourism could go beyond the borderland and include a more diverse group of day-trippers with people who live in other parts of Germany. Second, from our results we also derived that, over the years, locals living in the border-crossing town have become less engaged in cross-border shopping practices. Further research could look in more detail at motivations for cross-border immobility, with particular attention for 'indifference' towards a shopping destination that lies geographically close to but is in one way or another different from home (see also Ernste 2010). Third, historical and regional particularities of a tourist destination are of great importance in understanding place image formation and cross-borders shopping practices and experiences. While our case study covers one specific European borderland, it would be worthwhile to explore the implications of these particularities in other borderlands. We would suggest a comparative analysis with the focus on cross-border shopping tourism of different types of borderlands along both the inner and the outer borders of the EU. In so doing, we can achieve a more comprehensive understanding of the role of state borders in place image formation processes and the way functional and leisure motivations influence cross-border mobility and immobility.

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5 STRETCHING THE BORDER: SHOPPING, PETTY TRADE AND EVERYDAY LIFE EXPERIENCES IN THE POLISH-UKRAINIAN BORDERLAND

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Abstract

This contribution examines practices and experiences of Ukrainian border crossers who are engaged in informal small-scale economic practices, namely shopping and petty trade, at the Medyka border crossing in Poland. Examining the societal, network and territorial embeddedness of the economic activities of these border crossers shed light on practise and experience as part of their daily lives. For many, the presence of the state border has become a resource for shopping and petty trade. People share a common purpose of making the most out of their border crossing, and work together, plan and coordinate, or improvise and semi-plan, in the borderland and beyond, to supplement their incomes or to make a living. As a result, daily life for these border crossers occurs on both sides of the state border, stretching the border in both a mental and a physical sense, despite the controlled institutional and physical demarcation between Poland and Ukraine.

5.1 Introduction

As long as there is a border, there will be trade ... There will always be trade, and there will always be wheeling and dealing.[4]

Borderlands are increasingly recognised as areas of opportunity for political, institutional, economic and social practices, as opposed to economically disadvantaged areas because of their geographically peripheral location (Newman 2006b; Paasi 2009; Sohn 2014). The presence of a state border can actually contribute to the emergence of transitory and thriving spaces, where daily life experiences and practices take place across the border. According to Soja (2005: 38-39), "the border serves to draw people together, to intensify border crossings and interactivity, even to create distinctive border cultures and transnational regionalisms". Löfgren (2008: 196) calls people who make use of a state border 'regionauts': "people who develop skills of using the world on both sides of the border [by] exploring differences in anything from the legal system to market conditions". What is more, cross-border mobility practised by regionauts "often goes against the intentions of planners and policymakers, and may include creative subversions of existing conditions: bending rules and identifying loopholes" (Löfgren 2008: 196-197). This phenomenon is visible in a particular way in central and eastern Europe. Already during Soviet times, people engaged in cross-border shopping and petty trade as a way to supplement their incomes and to distribute or redistribute scarce goods (Czakó and Sik 1999; Sik and Wallace 1999; Wessely 2002; Egbert 2006; Vianello 2013; Pine 2015). Differences resulting from the presence of the state border gave rise to cross-border mobility in the form of small-scale economic practices, namely shopping and petty trade, both formal and informal. Within this context, Pine (2015: 28) refers to 'grey zones' where "ambiguous economic practices [take place] that are not necessarily illegal, but which may be shrouded in informality". These practices played an important role in daily life during the Soviet period, and they continue to exist as a coping mechanism for the uneven economic development that resulted from post-socialist transformation problems (Yükseker 2007; Marcińczak and Van der Velde

[4] Excerpt from field notes (24/06/2015) concerning a conversation with a Ukrainian border crosser (1966) from Mostyska.

2008; Bruns, Miggelbrink and Müller 2011; Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012; Xheneti, Smallbone and Welter 2012; Polese, Rekhviashvili and Morris 2016; Stern 2016; Karrar 2017).

In this contribution, we examine the external EU border between Poland and Ukraine, with a focus on the daily life practices and experiences of Ukrainian regionauts who are engaged in shopping and petty trade at the Medyka border crossing. Following numerous enlargement rounds and the extension of the Schengen agreement to central and eastern Europe between 2004 and 2008, the EU has actively promoted the strengthening of cross-border practices within the Union, while simultaneously putting policies in place, such as the European Neighbourhood Policy, to control cross-border mobility at its external borders (Casas-Cortes, Cobarrubias and Pickles 2013; Sanguin 2014; Celata and Coletti 2015). Despite these policies, local regionauts have remained actively involved in cross-border practices in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland (Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012; Polese 2011). They are motivated by the opportunities afforded by the presence of the state border. This illustrates that simultaneous with the institutional approach towards borders and borderlands a relational one can be identified where border crossers decide and act on their notion of a border within the institutional and social realities of a borderland (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Van Schendel 2005; Rumford 2014). The relational approach opens up new ways in which borders are perceived. Rather than fixed territorial entities, borders are understood as mental representations that are continuously evolving (Newman 2010). People themselves decide how they consider a particular border; as barrier or as source of opportunities (Yuval-Davis 2004; Newman 2006b; Rumford 2006, 2009, 2014). Spatial demarcations are then also influenced by dynamic social processes and practices (Paasi 2009; Newman 2010; Jagetić Andersen, Klatt & Sandberg 2012; Harrison 2013; Varró 2014; Brambilla 2015, Konrad 2015). The case of the regionauts in the Polish-Ukrainian borderland shows a persistence of informal small-scale economic practices at this external EU border, and forces to reconsider the institutional approach to borders and notions of the EU as a 'fortress Europe' or 'gated community' (Van Houtum & Pijpers 2007).

Most previous research on petty trade and shopping in post-Soviet states has focused on the motivations of the border crossers (Sik and Wallace 1999; Wessely

2002; Wolczuk 2002; Egbert 2006; Bruns et al. 2011; Xheneti et al. 2012; Vianello 2013; Stern 2016). This contribution gives insight in how new spaces emerge through cross-border shopping and petty trade. To analyse the extent to and ways in which daily regionauts make use of the presence of the state border and how they experience the border when performing informal small-scale economic practices, this study built on Hess's (2004) conceptualisation of societal, network and territorial embeddedness. The following research questions were at the centre of our case study: how do Ukrainian regionauts practise and experience shopping and petty trade as part of their daily lives? And to what extent, and in what way, does their everyday borderwork in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland coincide with a 'stretching', mentally and physically, of the external border of the EU? What kind of new mental and physical spaces emerge through cross-border practices?

5.2 Societal, network and territorial embeddedness

When engaged in small-scale economic practices, border crossers are not only physically involved in crossing a state border; they also mentally experience the differences and similarities that are found in a borderland. According to Giddens (1984), actions take place in contexts that include other people as well as constraints and opportunities created by the social structures. These social structures in turn are also the product of social actions performed by the agents, who interpret and transform the rules around them. This concept of embeddedness (Hess 2004), borrowed from the field of economic geography, links agents, in this case border crossers, to the structures, here the particularities of a borderland where small-scale economic practices take place. The way border crossers are embedded in a borderland can contribute to understanding the emergence of new spaces through a multi-actor process involving not only state governance but also ordinary people (Rumford 2014). The three forms of embeddedness – societal, network and territorial – represent three different facets of the daily lives of border crossers engaged in cross-border economic practices; the cultural background of the border crossers, their social ties and networks, and their attachment to the particular territories or places in the borderland, respectively.

With regard to the societal embeddedness, the border crossers' cultural background

plays an important role in the way they deal with the differences and similarities that are found in the borderland. People are "likely to encounter discontinuities and contradictions between values and attitudes that are transmitted through different spaces" (Valentine and Sadgrove 2012: 2051). In these so-called 'contact zones' (Yeoh and Willis 2005), where people meet and interact with different others, border crossers may feel the need to adjust their behaviour and to accommodate different languages, social rules, norms and values, and habits and traditions when encountering different others. Molinsky (2007: 623) calls this 'cross-cultural code-switching'. Over time, however, people may become accustomed to these discontinuities and contradictions in which their cross-border practices take place, and no longer pay attention to, for instance, different social and cultural norms and values or languages. As a result of frequent interactions and routine in and repetition of practices, border crossers can develop feelings of familiarity and spaces of comfort and ease in the borderland and beyond the state border (Szytniewski, Spierings and Van der Velde 2017; see also Wise 2009; Cresswell 2010; Blokland and Nast 2014).

Languages, social rules, norms and values, and habits and traditions that are of importance for societal embeddedness are both conditions and sources for the network embeddedness of border crossers. This form of embeddedness centres on the structures and evolution of social ties and networks. According to Rumford (2014: 32), "[p]eople can 'invoke' the scale of the border themselves: as a 'local' phenomenon, a nation-state 'edge' or as a transnational staging post, thereby allowing them to reconfigure the border as portal [… to transnational or global to connectivity]". Social ties and networks can then connect different individuals in their practices across state borders, and provide opportunities for interactions beyond the territoriality of a place or region (Amin 2004; Newman 2006a; Jones 2008). The economic outcomes of these opportunities depend largely on the strength of the social ties between the actors who are involved in the activities (Granovetter 2005). These social ties may be formed through family relations and networks of friends, identified as strong ties, and contacts and interactions with people from outside the personal circle or group, recognised as weak ties. Weak ties have been recognised as an even more important factor for obtaining new information, improving productivity and profit, and furthering social networks

(Amin and Cohendet 1999; Granovetter 2005). Here, trust building between actors within a network is particularly important for the durability and stability of interpersonal relationships and the success of the common economic practices (Granovetter 1985; Hess 2004; Putnam 2007).

Whereas social ties and networks emphasise relationships between the different actors involved in cross-border practices, there is also the relationship of border crossers with the particular territories or places where their daily lives take place, which Hess (2004) calls 'territorial embeddedness'. So-called borderland societies can emerge with social and cultural systems straddling a state border (Van Schendel 2005). In some cases, people may even feel closer to the borderland that straddles both sides of a state border than to the state in which they live. This form of regional attachment can, for instance, result from a tradition of extended daily life practices in the borderland, contributing to the development of shared narratives, regional histories and everyday familiarity with the border (Szytniewski et al. 2017). The meaning that border crossers give to a borderland and the presence of the state border is then closely linked to their feelings of belonging within and beyond the state in which they live (see also Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004; Paasi 2009; Konrad 2015). Such territorial embeddedness related to borderlands depends on how border crossers interpret and act upon the institutional and physical permeability of the state border. Some border crossers consider travel regulations and border policies as constraints, due to, for instance, custom checks and visa controls, hampering their mobility. Others take this for granted and see ways to profit from cross-border differences in prices and produce, and are able to participate in the economic activities and social dynamics that are already in place in the borderland (Hess 2004; Van Schendel 2005; Löfgren 2008; Terlouw 2012).

These forms of embeddedness, and their interconnectedness, were considered to gain an understanding of the daily life practices and experiences of Ukrainian regionauts. The three different facets of the daily lives of border crossers allow us to colour the economic activities in a borderland, and shed light on the mental and physical stretching of the border through their borderwork. A mental stretch may be found in the way the two sides of the state border become part of the daily life experiences of the border crossers and contribute to a feeling of belonging in the borderland. Regionauts are then able to accommodate the differences

and similarities in, for instance, languages, social rules, norms and values, and successfully develop and extend their social ties and networks across the state border. The institutional state border remains, but it may be physically stretched as border crossers act upon the state border through their cross-border practices. They make up their own borders and spaces, influencing the permeability of the state border. After describing the methodology, the following subsections empirically consider the three forms of embeddedness in relation to shopping and petty trade in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland.

5.3 Methodology

5.3.1 Medyka border crossing

The border crossing at Medyka served as our case study. Medyka is a small Polish village on the border between Poland and Ukraine. The village is about 12 kilometres from Przemyśl, the closest Polish city, and about 100 kilometres from the Ukrainian city of Lviv. The Medyka border crossing is an interesting one as it is the only border crossing of the six between Poland and Ukraine that is open to pedestrians (Stokłosa 2013). Figure 3 shows the research site.

According to the most recent report by the statistical regional office in Rzeszów (2014) on cross-border mobility between Poland and the external borders of the EU with Ukraine, Belarus and Russia, in 2013 the largest number of border crossings into Poland were made at Medyka: 4.4 million people crossed the state border here, in comparison to, for instance, the Polish–Belarusian border crossing at Terespol, which saw 2.3 million border crossings. Of these border crossers at Medyka, 61 per cent crossed the state border a few times a week and 28 per cent did so a few times a month. Almost 90 per cent of all visits by Ukrainians to Poland were related to shopping. There are, however, certain restrictions on the value and weight of goods that people are allowed to take back into Ukraine: individuals travelling by road, rail or sea are allowed to import goods worth up to a total of 500 euros and with a weight of 50 kilograms or less. This is also the limit for tax-free shopping (State Fiscal Service Ukraine 2014).

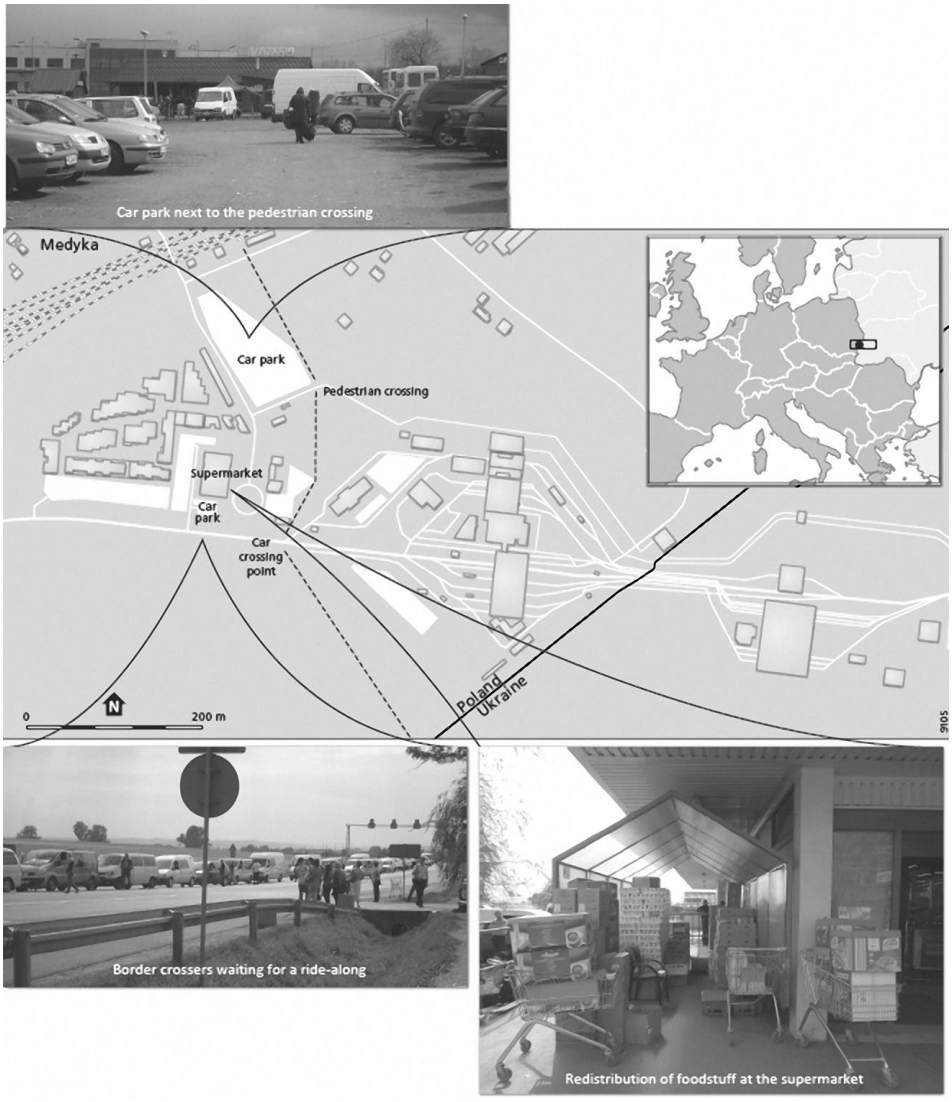

Figure 3: Medyka border crossing in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland

The high number of border crossings across the Polish–Ukrainian state border is also related to the local border agreement between the two countries that was signed after Poland's accession to the Schengen area in 2008. The agreement enables Ukrainians who have lived for at least three years within the border zone, which extends 30 kilometres from the state border, to obtain a special identity card for local border traffic, the MRG (*Mały Ruch Graniczny*). In comparison to those

without the card, local Ukrainians with an MRG can engage freely and without visas in cross-border mobility (Witkowski 2014; Mikołajczyk 2015). In addition to the MRG, which is based on residence, people who speak Polish and have relatives in Poland are eligible for the 'Pole's Card', which is based on a cultural relationship with the Polish nation. The card allows them to, for instance, work and set up a company in Poland in the same way as Polish citizens, and gives them the option of obtaining a fee waiver or reimbursement of visa costs (Mikołajczyk 2015). There are more detailed differences between these cards, but in this study, they are only referred to as a means that eases cross-border mobility.

5.3.2 Ethnographic field study

Data collection consisted of two field studies (in April 2015 and in June 2015) in which an ethnographic approach was taken. In the first phase of data gathering, exploratory observations were made of and conversations were held with people, both Poles and Ukrainians, at the Medyka border crossing. The aim of the fieldwork was to achieve a good understanding of people's cross-border practices (i.e. who is involved and in what way). We observed interactions between border crossers in four areas around the border crossing: the car park next to the pedestrian border crossing, the pedestrian border crossing itself, in and around the supermarket, and the queue of cars at the car crossing point (see figure 1). In so doing, we focused on situations where "two or more persons are in [each other's] immediate physical presence and strive to maintain a single (ordinarily spoken) focus of mutual involvement" (Lofland et al. 2006: 124). The main places of interaction also became the places where we approached Ukrainian border crossers engaged in their practices, and Polish entrepreneurs working, for instance, in the car park or the supermarket. The fieldwork was carried out in an overt manner by showing interest in the practices from a researcher's perspective and establishing a 'note-taker' role from the beginning. Following Cloke et al. (2004), the daily field notes included the physical space of the border crossing, the interactions between the border crossers, the researcher's participation in these interactions, and reflections on the position of the researcher and the research process. As a result of the daily presence in the field, at times the researcher became a participant in the interactions occurring on site, as also discussed by Emerson, Fretz and Shaw

(2011). This reduced the distance between the researcher and the border crossers, and thus contributed to a natural environment in which the border crossers felt they could speak freely.

The exploratory observations and conversations from the first phase of the fieldwork were used to develop a plan for the second phase, during which the focus was on Ukrainian border crossers. In addition to new observations and conversations which took place from morning till the end of the day, the second phase of data gathering included in-depth interviews held during the day at the border crossing. We conducted sixteen semi-structured interviews while people were engaged in their cross-border practices. Nine women and seven men were interviewed at the earlier mentioned places of interaction at the border crossing. We covered in more depth such topics as cross-border shopping and trade practices, familiarity, cultural and social differences and similarities, social networks and interactions, daily life and feelings of home. The respondents' ages ranged from 27 to 64 years and they all lived in the Ukrainian borderland. The interviews were held in both Ukrainian and Polish. Following the informal character of the cross-border practices, the interviews with the border crossers were not audio-taped, but were collected as field notes covering all topics discussed with the respondents. This procedure contributed to establishing a relationship of trust. A relationship of trust was already in place with some respondents as a result of small-talk in the first phase of data gathering (see Bruns and Miggelbrink 2012 for the importance of trust building in similar ethnographic case studies).

After the field study, all field notes regarding the observations, conversations and interviews were digitally processed and analysed. As the interviews had a semi-structured form, we organised the interview notes according to the various topics discussed with the respondents. We were then able to look for patterns among the opinions of the respondents and apply a selective coding approach by relating the data step by step to societal, network and territorial embeddedness. Following Emerson et al. (2011), we created field note excerpts that comprised the building blocks for the empirical section. It must be noted that daily field notes already included a first layer of interpretation from the researcher as a result of choosing the words to describe a situation or writing down an interview. To remain close to the events from the field – here, the daily life practices and experiences of

Ukrainian regionauts at the Medyka border crossing – we visually separate the excepts from the analytic commentary in the following section.

5.4 Informal small-scale economic practices at Medyka

5.4.1 Border crossers and their practices

Before discussing the societal, network and territorial embeddedness of border crossers in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, it is important to understand what sort of cross-border practices they engage in at the Medyka border crossing. From the field study, we identified various economic activities undertaken by the Ukrainian regionauts that can be broadly categorised as planned and coordinated practices, or improvised and semi-planned practices. At first glance, it seemed that the border crossers were involved in one practice or the other, but it soon became clear that the practices were often connected, or supported one another.

Improvised and semi-planned practices were especially found among the pedestrian border crossers, who usually crossed the state border on a daily or weekly basis to buy some groceries at the supermarket, as certain products were cheaper in Poland than in Ukraine. Most of them lived within 30 kilometres of the Polish–Ukrainian border and had an MRG card for local border traffic. We observed that a small group of these pedestrians engaged in petty trade by taking two cartons of cigarettes and a litre of vodka – the maximum permitted amounts – to sell illegally on the street in Medyka just past the pedestrian border crossing. In addition to buying groceries or engaging in petty trade, most of the time these pedestrian regionauts walked over to the car crossing point and tried to get a lift home from someone waiting in the queue (see figure 3). Although they often had not arranged a lift in advance, we were told that people usually managed to get a lift and only occasionally had to return on foot and catch a bus on the Ukrainian side of the border. Getting and offering lifts was quite profitable for both the pedestrian border crossers and those crossing by car. Each additional passenger allowed border crossers travelling by car to increase the amount of goods they took across the state border, and the pedestrian border crossers were paid a small

fee for getting a lift home. As a result of lifts, pedestrian border crossers saved on local public transport and therefore enjoyed a slightly larger income.

A number of informal small-scale economic practices were performed in a planned and coordinated way, individually or as part of an organised group. These practices ranged from tax-free shopping to purchasing and redistributing goods between individuals for transport to, for instance, shops, supermarkets, restaurants or wholesalers in Ukraine. Border crossers who were involved in tax-free shopping were usually independent individuals or part of a small group. The conversations and interviews revealed that most of the goods purchased by these border crossers were electronics, for instance, televisions, laptops and phones. Some of the goods were for own use, but most were for resale in Ukraine. Price differences and fluctuations in exchange rates played an important role, as the prices of these products were mostly higher in Ukraine than in Poland. When engaged in tax-free shopping, however, people did not immediately receive a tax reduction at the Polish shop. They needed to take the goods across the state border into Ukraine, obtain a stamp at the border crossing and return to Poland within two months to receive a tax refund. It turned out that for many this was also an opportunity to engage in another trade and shopping trip.

> *A local trader (b. 1966) from Mostyska was waiting next to the supermarket. He worked in construction when work was available. That day, he had crossed the state border early in the morning to pick up his tax refund from a shop in Przemyśl. He had then stopped by at a car shop to look for tyres, ending up in Medyka where he had just arranged a lift home from his friend and would receive 10 hryvnia, the Ukrainian currency, for the lift. (Field note 24/06/2015)*

This excerpt illustrates how the practice of tax-free shopping was extended over time and connected with the often improvised and semi-planned practice of offering and getting lifts. In order to make the most out of their border crossing, people used the restrictions on the value and weight of imported goods to their own advantage, by looking for additional passengers and offering them a lift. Sometimes these additional passengers were part of an organised party, but often pedestrian border crossers were asked to accept a lift and were paid a small fee.

Planned and coordinated practices were further found among another group of border crossers, whose goal was to transport large amounts of goods across the Polish–Ukrainian border and then resell them. Although various goods were being transported across the state border, two sorts of goods stood out: foodstuffs and consumer goods, and home appliances and car parts. The foodstuffs and consumer goods that were mostly commonly bought in Poland ranged from fruit, vegetables and dairy products, to washing-up liquids and cleaning products. There were always cars and lorries crammed with foodstuffs and consumer goods parked at the border crossing, and the area around the supermarket was often used as a redistribution point (see figure 3).

> *During the second week of fieldwork, a woman in her early twenties had occupied the space next to the entrance to the supermarket. For a whole week, she spent every day collecting and redistributing foodstuffs among other border crossers. Some were acquaintances, others strangers, but all became accomplices in the cross-border trading. The young woman recorded all people who were to transport these goods across the state border by writing down their names, ID numbers and the amount of foodstuffs taken. People were to deliver the goods at a collection point across the state border, where they would receive a small payment. (Field note 23/06/2015)*

The car park next to the pedestrian crossing was another meeting place for the organised traders. These traders mostly dealt in new and second-hand home appliances (e.g. fridges, freezers and washing machines) and car parts, ranging from tyres to bumpers.

> *A couple of border crossers who were engaged in their practices of redistributing new and second-hand car parts at the back of the car park, explained how they usually meet once every week or two with a group of friends and acquaintances in the car park in Medyka. One of them was a man (b. 1964) from Mostyska, who was involved in the practice for 20 years. The group waits for the arrival of the supplier, who mostly transports his goods from western Europe, from countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Czech Republic. Then upon*

arrival, they empty the van, weigh and redistribute the goods amongst themselves, and transport the goods across the state border. (Field note 10/04/2015)

The Medyka border crossing is a lively one where different informal small-scale economic practices come together. Improvised and semi-planned practices were found concerning giving and getting lifts or the spontaneous involvement of individual border crossers in taking some additional goods across the state border, and planned and coordinated practices could be recognised in the collection and redistribution of goods at the border crossing or the transport of goods across the state border as part of an organised group. In all practices, the Ukrainian individuals shared a common purpose of making the most out of their border crossing and they worked together, planned and coordinated or improvised and semi-planned, to supplement their incomes.

5.4.2 Societal embeddedness: Cultural attachment and daily life

Our fieldwork revealed that the informal small-scale economic practices of Ukrainian regionauts took place in an environment that was regarded as familiar and normal, as part of their daily lives. In contrast to Molinsky (2007), who noted the possible need for cross-cultural code-switching when in a foreign setting, more cultural similarities than differences were recognised by the Ukrainians in this particular borderland. They recognised cultural commonalities in language, social rules, habits and traditions, as well as a common past:

In our conversation about cultural differences and similarities between Poland and Ukraine, one woman, who was probably in her late fifties, stated genuinely that there were no differences. She referred to the common past of the region and the rich Polish heritage in the city of Lviv, which was part of Poland before the Second World War. She also had many Polish friends and did not experience any differences. She considered the Polish culture, Polish churches and Polish schools as normal parts of everyday life. (Field note 23/06/2015)

Many Ukrainian regionauts spoke Polish and had relatives and friends in Poland.

As a result, many border crossers experienced a form of cultural attachment to Poland and Polish culture. This degree of cultural attachment contributed to the normality of the informal small-scale economic practices. For many, Medyka had become part of the normal working day. Shopping and trading practices were especially attractive to those who lived in the borderland and were unemployed or paid very little in their regular jobs.

> *During the second field visit in June, the earlier mentioned group of border crossers redistributing new and second-hand car parts was again found at the back of the car park. One of the members (b. 1964), who lived in Mostyska, explained that there was no work in Ukraine, but there was always work here [at the border crossing]; it was his way of earning a living. (Field note 24/06/2015)*

Although the frequency often depended on the goods and the trade opportunities, there was a clear repetitiveness and routine visible in the economic activities of the regionauts. The border crossers had become used to going about their business in the borderland on a daily basis as part of their daily lives.

> *At the car crossing point, a young border crosser (b. 1988) from Mostyska was engaged in organising the transport of goods across the state border. He had picked up these activities a few years earlier as he saw that others from his village were involved in the practice. When asked about how he feels about being in Medyka, he said he felt at ease. He explained that this feeling had mostly to do with being familiar with the work environment and with working together with other Ukrainians, some of whom were his neighbours. (Field note 24/06/2015)*

As a result of both the cultural attachment and the daily nature of their practices, the regionauts had developed spaces of comfort and ease in the borderland and beyond the state border. They felt familiar with Polish culture and had relatives and friends in Poland, and they therefore knew how to interact and behave in Medyka. Moreover, as shown in the excerpt above, their shopping and trading practices had become part of the normal working day and involved cooperation with other Ukrainian regionauts, which contributed to their network embeddedness.

5.4.3 Network embeddedness: Social ties and networks

The social networks found among the Ukrainian regionauts were not just situated around the state borders of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland: they had a larger geographical reach, connecting individuals, organised parties, supermarkets, restaurants or wholesalers in Ukraine to suppliers in western Europe. In an earlier example, we spoke of car parts being transported across the border. These car parts came from countries such as the Netherlands, Germany and Czech Republic. People themselves reconfigure the border as a portal for their practices (Rumford 2014).

From the field study, we also found that the Ukrainian regionauts had many contacts in the borderland and other parts of Poland, and used these contacts to work on short notice and sometimes ad-hoc.

> *In one conversation at the border crossing, a young regionaut (b. 1987) in possession of an MRG card explained that he did not have a regular job and was involved in these cross-border practices for the past three years. His economic activities in the borderland usually took place as follows: wholesalers or individuals who are low on goods contact him, after which he gets in touch with the suppliers in Poland. He orders the goods, arranges a price and sometimes puts down an advance payment. On the day of the conversation, he had travelled to Kraków to get fruit and vegetables and was redistributing the goods among the border crossers who were interested in delivering the goods at the collection point in Ukraine for a small payment. He hoped to get all the goods across the border in three days. (Field note 27/06/2015).*

As the areas around both the pedestrian and the car crossing point brought together many different people, we saw that many border crossers had established contacts and interactions with other regionauts who were involved in shopping and petty trade. Some groups were more organised than others, and the amount and sort of goods taken across the state border varied. Common practices connected these different border crossers and contributed to the building of flexible and permanent social ties and networks.

Flexible social ties and networks were found in the earlier mentioned improvised and semi-planned practices, such as giving lifts, or the planned and coordinated involvement in the redistribution and transport of goods across the state border. Trust building processes between these two practices varied. Pedestrian border crossers had to trust their driver to drop them off at the agreed location, whereas goods for redistribution and transport were recorded and controlled, as shown in the earlier excerpt on the redistribution of foodstuff. Although the level of trust differed in these interpersonal relationships, a common purpose to make the most out of a border crossing was an important reason for establishing weak ties with these other border crossers.

> *When discussing trust at the border crossing, a man in his early fifties (b. 1964) from Mostyska said that by looking at people you can tell whether it will be possible to arrange something with them. According to him, most of the time people are honest. (Field note 25/06/2015)*

Through the daily nature of their engagement in cross-border practices, border crossers had also built more permanent interpersonal relationships, or strong ties, mostly in the form of organised groups. These permanent social networks contributed to engagement not only in shared economic activities, but also in information sharing. For instance, people were well aware of who the border guards were and differentiated between the lenient and the strict ones. Information about the schedules of the border guards travelled fast between friends, acquaintances and family, making strong ties, in addition to weak ties, important for successful economic outcomes.

> *In one conversation with a young man (b. 1985) from Lviv about knowing people at the border crossing, the social network was regarded as very valuable for his cross-border practices. The border crosser considered the long queues on the Polish side of the border as very tiresome and unnecessary. In order to reduce the waiting time, he used to call a friend or acquaintance to find out which border guard was working and whether he should wait or not. (Field note 25/06/2015)*

During the fieldwork, we also found that in addition to waiting at the state border

for a specific customs officer to come on duty, some border crossers also supposed that certain goods were easier to transport at different border crossings along the Polish–Ukrainian state border:

> *While standing in the car park next to the pedestrian crossing, one of the border crossers (b. 1971), who lived about 200 kilometres from the state border, said that every Pole and Ukrainian here had his or her own contraband, from second-hand goods, car parts and building equipment, to fruit and meat. According to him, some goods crossed the state border here, but for other goods the circumstances at the other [car] crossing points were better. It was easier to cross. (Field note 26/06/2015)*

These Ukrainian regionauts were continuously aware of the state border and worked around it. By consciously delaying or speeding up cross-border practices or deciding on the specific border crossing or the goods to focus on, they tried to create favourable circumstances that would facilitate successful economic activities.

The social networks between different border crossers and their suppliers and customers arose from their common purpose of transporting goods across the state border and getting some money out of it. This generated not only trust and ties across borders, but also a platform for mutually exploring economic opportunities beyond the territoriality of the state.

5.4.4 Territorial embeddedness: Borders, borderland and belonging

Most goods in Medyka were bought in other parts of Poland or in western Europe, and the border crossing area was where these goods came together to be redistributed and transported to Ukraine. Rather than being constrained by the non-EU membership of Ukraine, the regionauts interpreted and acted upon the institutional and physical permeability of the external EU border in such a way that it facilitated and supported their shopping and petty trade across the border. For many Ukrainian border crossers, the Polish territory became part of their daily life space. Some also obtained the earlier mentioned MRG or Pole's Card,

which eased cross-border mobility. The Pole's Card acknowledged and formalised the relationship between the Ukrainian border crosser and the Polish nation.

The field study also revealed that shared car ownership between Ukrainian and Polish nationals also contributed to people's territorial embeddedness in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland:

> *In one of the conversations with a young Ukrainian border crosser (b. 1988) from Lviv, the principle of shared car ownership was explained. He had bought a car in the Netherlands for 2000 euros, as a similar car would cost around 8000 euros in Ukraine. The car was co-owned by his Polish relatives, who lived in the Polish–German borderland. The Ukrainian authorities, however, had introduced legislation requiring Ukrainians who drive a car on Polish number plates to cross the state border every five days. (Field note 23/06/2015)*

Sharing a car with a Polish national appeared a common practice among Ukrainian regionauts who had relatives or friends in Poland. Moreover, it played a role in the frequency and motivation to engage in cross-border mobility. Similar to the return visits that were related to tax refunds as part of tax-free shopping, the necessary border crossings encouraged the Ukrainian border crossers to engage even more in informal small-scale economic practices in the borderland.

The tradition of extended daily life practices across the borderland contributed to a degree of regional attachment to the territories where their cross-border practices took place. These practices had strengthened the societal embeddedness of Ukrainian regionauts, and thus contributed to developing a feeling of belonging with regard to places across the state border and in particular Medyka as part of their territorial embeddedness:

> *While talking about being in another country, one of the pedestrian border crossers (b. 1964) from Mostyska said that she felt at home in Medyka, only fifteen kilometres from home. She explained that when you were there every day, you got to know the place and the people. She saw similiarities between the Polish and Ukrainian culture and also*

her son in law was Polish. She associated the border crossing with 'little Ukraine', as shop assistants understood Ukrainian and Ukrainians also attended church in Medyka. (Field note 22/06/2015)

Some people noted that they saw their neighbours more often at the border crossing than in their own town or village in Ukraine. In addition to being engaged in daily cross-border practices, seeing these familiar faces and hearing Ukrainian contributed to experiencing Medyka as a 'lived extension' of Ukraine.

5.5 Conclusion and discussion: Stretching the border through daily practices and experiences

This contribution examined borderwork at the external EU border between Poland and Ukraine, with a focus on the daily life experiences and practices of Ukrainian border crossers who were engaged in informal small-scale economic practices, namely shopping and petty trade, at the Medyka border crossing in Poland. The particular institutional and physical character of the state border influences how people go about their business. Although the EU puts in place policies that control cross-border mobility at its external borders, our analysis of shopping and petty trade at this specific external EU border clearly shows that informal small-scale economic practices thrive in this borderland, which is also found in other studies (Bruns, Miggelbrink and Müller 2011; Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012; Xheneti, Smallbone and Welter 2012; Pine 2015; Polese et al. 2016; Stern 2016; Karrar 2017).

The societal, network and territorial embeddedness (Hess 2004) proved to be a useful and meaningful framework to shed light both on how Ukrainian border crossers make use of the presence of the state border, and on the way they practise and experience the borderland as part of daily life. For many years now, Medyka has been a workspace and a part of daily life for many Ukrainians who live in the Ukrainian borderland. These so-called regionauts explore opportunities afforded by the presence of the state border, and are involved in informal but often highly organised economic activities. They actively shape the Polish–Ukrainian borderland through feelings of cultural attachment and the daily

nature of their practices, by continuously creating both temporary and enduring informal networks with the common purpose of transporting goods across the state border, and as a result of their experiences of perceiving Medyka as a 'lived extension' of Ukraine. The case study demonstrates how structure and agency are mutually shaping borderlands (Brunet-Jailly 2005; Van Schendel 2005; Rumford 2014). Structuring characteristics such as the formal and informal institutions and social interactions coexist with activities of Ukrainian border crossers that are influenced by their personal skills and knowledge, and their own interpretation and understanding of borders. Unravelling the three forms of embeddedness allowed us to give insight into how people mentally and physically stretch the border.

The mental stretching of the border was reflected in the daily life experiences of the Ukrainian border crossers, their cultural and regional attachment, and their consequent feeling of belonging in the borderland. The Ukrainians involved in informal small-scale economic practices were familiar with the borderland and experienced the places where they worked as spaces of comfort and ease; shopping and petty trade had become part of the normal working day. Social and cultural differences concerning the other side of the state border were considered small by our respondents, when reflecting on their cultural attachment with regard to Poland and the Polish culture. Most border crossers spoke Polish and had relatives and friends in Poland, which further contributed to the societal and network embeddedness of their economic activities. Many Ukrainians also translated this feeling into being 'at home', and at times they even experienced the border crossing as an extension of Ukraine. As a result of this form of regional attachment and belonging, Medyka mentally became part of their daily lives, despite its institutional and physical location across the state border in Poland.

The border was also physically stretched and created a new kind of space at Medyka with its own specific characteristics of shopping and petty trade. The daily nature of cross-border practices characterised by the hustle and bustle around the car park, the pedestrian crossing point, the supermarket, and the car crossing point, shaped the Medyka border crossing. Although the different activities were directed at passing goods across the state border, Medyka was at the centre of it. Medyka had become a place where social networks connected people and places

far beyond the state border, from Ukraine to western Europe. The social structures evolved through the presence of the different agents and their activities. Many Ukrainians held an MRG or a Pole's Card and were able to engage in cross-border mobility freely and without visas. In this way, they created a daily and normal workspace across the external EU border. As a result, many Ukrainians involved in cross-border practices experienced Medyka as a 'lived extension' of Ukraine.

This case study demonstrates the persistence not only of a phenomenon that was already in place in Soviet times (Yükseker 2007; Marcińczak and Van der Velde 2008; Bruns et al. 2011; Byrska-Szklarczyk 2012; Xheneti et al. 2012; Polese et al. 2016; Stern 2016; Karrar 2017), but also of the practice of 'bending rules and identifying loopholes' (Löfgren 2008). The particular institutional and physical character of the state border influences how people go about their business. Although the EU puts in place policies that control cross-border mobility at its external borders, our analysis of shopping and petty trade at this specific external EU border clearly shows that cross-border practices are an important part of everyday life in the borderland. The three forms of embeddedness – societal, network and territorial – show how borders are stretched and influenced by dynamic social processes and practices, allowing a more relational approach to borders (Paasi 2009; Newman 2010; Jagetić Andersen et al. 2012; Harrison 2013; Varró 2014; Brambilla 2015, Konrad 2015).

Our study on shopping and petty trade in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland led to a number of recommendations for future research. We focused on the personal experiences and practices of the daily border crossers in Medyka, leaving the formal institutions such as customs and border control in the background. When considering the rules and policies regarding tax refunds as part of tax-free shopping, shared car-ownership, and even the MRG or Pole's Card, we found that these were institutional measures that contributed to even more cross-border mobility in this particular borderland. Further research into the practices and experiences of customs and border control officers, including their perspectives on and interactions with regionauts, can provide more detailed and valuable insights into the institutional embeddedness of informal small-scale economic practices in borderlands. In addition, our fieldwork was conducted in a public setting and focused on the visible interactions between border crossers during

the day. Practices that took place beyond the border crossing, within and beyond the borderland, or that were hidden from sight or took place during the night, were not taken into account. Insight into these matters could provide a more comprehensive understanding of the practices and experiences of borderwork. It would also be worthwhile to extend the field study to other border crossing points along the Polish–Ukrainian border, or to the EU's external borders in general. In our case study, we focused on the daily life practices and experiences at the Medyka border crossing. However, as found in the fieldwork, people obtained their goods from contacts in Poland and western Europe and delivered their goods to various parties in Ukraine, using Medyka as a point of redistribution and further transport. The extensiveness and structures of the social networks involved demonstrate the connectivity and the larger geographical reach of the economic activities. Cross-border practices and experiences are then not confined to borderlands but connect many people and places throughout Europe, also across the external borders of the EU.

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6 CONCLUSION

An adapted version of this chapter will be submitted to the 'Outlook on Europe' section of Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie, titled 'Cross-border shopping in European borderlands: A study on familiarity and unfamiliarity'. This article will be single-authored.

The main aim of this dissertation was twofold, namely to gain a more comprehensive theoretical understanding of the complexities of familiarity and unfamiliarity in border studies, and to use the theoretical framework of the concept to find empirically grounded explanations for cross-border shopping in different European borderlands. Building on tourism studies, the concept was recognised as a multidimensional construct consisting of three dimensions: proximate; informational and self-assessed; and experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity. These three dimensions – in short, proximity, knowledge and experiences – were used to arrive at a deeper understanding of the extent to which people who live in European borderlands engage in shopping practices across the state border. The selected borderlands were an old internal, a new internal and a new external EU border, namely the Dutch–German, German–Polish and Polish–Ukrainian state borders, respectively.

The conceptual study presented in chapter 2 considered the different dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity. The chapter distinguished between proximity, information and self-assessment, and experiences, and revealed the first theoretical indications of a dynamic interplay between the dimensions in relation to encounters with differences and similarities in borderlands. In order to give a more comprehensive understanding of every dimension within the context of border studies, the chapters that followed highlighted one dimension while also taking the others into account. Chapter 3 examined socio-cultural proximity in relation to the shopping tourism of Dutch border crossers in the German town of Kleve in the Dutch–German borderland. Chapter 4 discussed knowledge as part of the place image formation of German border crossers visiting the Polish bazaar in Słubice in the German–Polish borderland. Chapter 5 focused on daily life experiences with regard to the shopping and trading practices of Ukrainian border crossers at the Medyka border crossing in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. To understand the theoretical concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity as a whole, all dimensions are explicitly brought together again in this chapter.

The remainder of this concluding chapter reflects on the findings presented in the previous chapters. It consists of three parts. The first comprises theoretical and empirical reflections on the dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity, based on the three case studies on cross-border shopping. In the second part, the

research findings are used to reflect on the dynamics and multidimensionality of familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands. The third part addresses the main research question of this dissertation by revisiting the theoretical framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity, reflecting on border policies in Europe, and presenting a research agenda.

6.1 The dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity

In order to gain insights into the theoretical and empirical implications of familiarity and unfamiliarity in border studies, the following subsections reconsider the three dimensions of the concept. The case studies are used to better understand the different dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity – namely proximate, informational and self-assessed, and experiential.

6.1.1 Proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity

Proximity gives an indication of how distant or close we feel to/from someone, something or someplace that is different or similar in one way or another (see O'Donoghue 2013; Radu 2013; Trope and Liberman 2010; Wilson, Boyer O'Leary, Metiu, and Jett 2008). Chapter 3 examined this dimension by looking at socio-cultural proximity in relation to the shopping tourism of Dutch border crossers in the German town of Kleve (Szytniewski, Spierings and Van der Velde 2017). As cross-border shopping already indicates geographical proximity, the focus was put on socio-cultural proximity and distance. Socio-cultural proximity consisted of an affective, a normative and an interactive feature, inspired by the work of Karakayali (2009). The affective feature concerns the subjective feeling of distance and closeness, both socially and culturally, with regard to people and places across the state border. The normative feature highlights the perceived differences between 'us' and 'them' as well as the 'here' and the 'there'. The interactive feature reflects the degree of proximity and distance through interactions in the borderland and the effort that border crossers need to make to adapt in a setting that is different from home. These three features of socio-cultural proximity and distance contribute to expanding the meaning of proximity as an affective

evaluation of a place by paying attention to how proximity and distance are developed, consciously or unconsciously, by the border crossers. In order to arrive at a further understanding of this dimension, the following question is discussed by reflecting on the three case studies:

1. *In what way can proximity influence daily cross-border shopping practices in a borderland?*

From the Dutch–German case study, discussed in chapter 3, two ways stand out: a sense of regional attachment concerning the borderland, and the presence of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity felt by the border crossers.

Attachment

Proximity is related to a sense of regional attachment concerning the borderland where daily cross-border practices take place. In the case of the Dutch–German borderland, Dutch border crossers had developed a degree of regional attachment whereby they felt socially and culturally closer to the people and places in the borderland than to the people and places in the western parts of the Netherlands. As a result of a long tradition of extending daily life practices across the state border, people had become accustomed to everyday encounters with otherness. Moreover, both cross-border differences and similarities were often perceived in a positive way. In chapter 3, regional attachment concerned normative proximity. This form of proximity depends on the differentiation in a mental sense between 'us' and 'them' and in a spatial sense between the 'here' and the 'there', and it is often initiated from a territorial perspective between states (Yndigegn 2013; Balibar 2009; Newman 2006; Anderson and O'Dowd 1999; Kristeva 1991). It turned out that in practice, attachment is not always confined to the institutional borders of a borderland. Mental and spatial demarcations took place across the state border through socio-cultural proximity and extended daily life practices.

When considering the German–Polish and Polish–Ukrainian case studies, attachment also cuts across the state border. As a result of the local narratives and regional histories, however, it does so in different ways. In the Polish–Ukrainian case, the cultural relationship with Poland and Polish culture played an important role for the Ukrainian border crossers and their relationship with the borderland.

Here, identity and a feeling of belonging to the borderland can be recognised (Konrad 2015; Paasi 2009; Van Houtum and Van der Velde 2004). Many border crossers experienced a form of cultural attachment. They had relatives and friends in Poland, spoke Polish, and recognised cultural commonalities through language, social rules, habits and traditions. As a result, some had also acquired the 'Polish Card' to formally acknowledge their relationship with the Polish nation.

In the German–Polish borderland, this form of regional or cultural attachment could not be identified, as a result of profound socio-cultural differences. Yet, people had still developed a sense of place by remembering their past experiences related to cross-border shopping in Słubice, which contributed to affective proximity. Their perceptions of today's bazaar were, for instance, formed through feelings of nostalgia concerning the former 'traditional' characteristics of the first market back in the 1990s. The semi-organised and somewhat provisional market stalls of the old days and the more authentic market atmosphere still brought back good memories to the border crossers. Attachment in the form of sense of place was further strengthened through repeat visits, as also suggested by Prayag and Ryan (2011).

Comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity

The presence of both comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity can be used to understand the extent of proximity in a borderland. Spierings and Van der Velde (2013) argue that an interaction between these forms of familiarity and unfamiliarity can contribute to becoming mobile and engaging in cross-border practices. Comfortable familiarity follows from the ability to easily accustom oneself to a place that is different from home, whereas attractive unfamiliarity is found in the notion that cross-border differences and similarities are considered appealing.

The Dutch–German case study revealed the presence of both comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity concerning Kleve and its surroundings. Cross-border practices as part of everyday life had contributed to feelings of ease and comfort across the state border; thus, comfortable familiarity. Border crossers were able to accustom themselves to the social and cultural differences and similarities they encountered in the borderland. This form of interactive

proximity resulted especially from the routine and repetition of crossing the state border that had developed over time through policies of open borders. In addition to this form of mundanity, differences in facilities, products and atmosphere in Kleve were associated with exoticism and contributed to attractive unfamiliarity. Here, affective and normative features of socio-cultural proximity played a role. Border crossers differentiated between the 'here' and the 'there, while at the same time they considered the Dutch and German borderlands quite interlinked. The presence of both Dutch and German symbols in the shopping street triggered, for instance, feelings of recognition and familiarity. As a result, both the mundane and the exotic were part of the cross-border shopping experience in the borderland, an interaction also recognised in tourism studies by Edensor (2007).

The simultaneous presence of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity also came to the fore in the other two borderlands. In all cases, border crossers were familiar with the intercultural encounters and the physical surroundings of the borderland. For many, cross-border mobility had become an everyday or routine-like experience as part of functional or leisure shopping, or a little bit of both. In the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, border crossers experienced the places where their daily practices took place as spaces of comfort and ease. Ukrainians recognised more social and cultural similarities than differences and there was barely any need for 'cross-cultural code switching', purposefully modifying one's behaviour in a foreign setting (Molinsky 2007). The different features of proximity were present and contributed to comfortable familiarity. Attractive unfamiliarity in this borderland was associated more with functional shopping than with a feeling of exoticism with regard to the differences and similarities across the state border. Ukrainian border crossers exploited small-scale economic opportunities afforded by the presence of the state border and engaged in distributing or redistributing scarce goods across the state border.

In the German–Polish borderland, German shoppers noticed an ongoing distance in the social and cultural backgrounds between Germans and Poles. While this was the case, comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity were both present in people's cross-border practices. Comfortable familiarity had developed through affective and interactive proximity concerning the cross-border shopping destination. Here, the earlier-mentioned sense of place and interactions with the

Polish market vendors contributed to positive experiences in the bazaar. Polish market vendors interacted and traded in German, allowing the German border crossers to speak in their own language, and they priced their goods in euros, even though the Złoty is Poland's official currency. Similar to the Dutch–German case study, perceived differences in facilities, products and atmosphere across the state border were often a reason for the German border crossers to engage in cross-border shopping. This sense of exoticism contributed to attractive unfamiliarity.

Proximity

In earlier research on familiarity and unfamiliarity, proximity was defined as how distant or close people feel to a place (Prentice 2004). Social and cultural features of proximity can be recognised here. Cultural proximity and distance reflects people's cultural identity and has widely been recognised as a factor for people's affective evaluations of a tourist destination (Ahn and McKercher 2015; Huang, Chen and Lin 2013; Kastenholz 2010; Ng, Lee and Soutar 2007; Prebensen 2007). Social proximity and distance looks at social rules and conventions in social interactions, but still seems somewhat under-exposed in tourism studies (Yilmaz and Tasci 2015). In this research, socio-cultural proximity and distance was used for unravelling the degree to which border crossers had to accustom themselves to social and cultural differences in a setting, situated across the state border in relative geographical proximity. The empirical findings show that border crossers accustom themselves to an initial foreign setting, either by routine and repetition or by regional attachment. Over time, people pay less attention to differences and similarities in cultural identity and social rules and conventions in social interactions. Here, the predictable and habitual practices of the border crossers allow for comfort and ease (see also Blokland and Nast 2010, Cresswell 2010, Edensor 2007). When people know their way in a place and are accustomed to encounters with otherness, they can also develop a sense of regional attachment, a connection to the borderland, that cuts across the state border. At the same time, cross-border practices are stimulated by the attraction of perceived social and cultural differences and similarities (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013). As a result, both a sense of regional attachment concerning the borderland, and the presence of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity in cross-border practices reduce the need for 'cross-cultural code switching' (Molinsky 2007) and contribute to understanding proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity.

6.1.2 Informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity

Knowledge concerns place images formed by people's beliefs and impressions related to the particularities of a place (Apostolopoulou and Papadimitriou 2015; Kim and Chen 2016; Imamoğlu 2009; Baloglu and McCleary 1999). Chapter 4 discussed the place image formation of German border crossers visiting the bazaar on the Polish side of the border-crossing town Frankfurt–Oder and Słubice in the German–Polish borderland (Szytniewski and Spierings 2017). In this case study, knowledge, experiences, and mind-set and motivation were identified as factors for place image formation processes. Knowledge consists of various information sources; not only facts but also personal or common assumptions and stereotypes. Experiences include encounters with the social and physical environment of a place. Mind-set and motivation are related to considering a destination a part of everyday life or a leisurely day out. These different factors led to a further understanding of how border crossers perceive and assess differences and similarities at a cross-border shopping destination; that is, of their cognitive evaluations of a place. In relation to the dimension of knowledge, the following research question is examined:

2. *How does knowledge about a shopping destination relate to cross-border practices in a borderland?*

In the case study of the German–Polish borderland, two features can be identified as influencing place image formation: representations with regard to otherness across the state border, and the mind-set and motivation of the cross-border shoppers.

Representations of otherness

An essential part of people's knowledge consists of representations of otherness. In the German–Polish case study, representations of otherness were formed particularly through assumptions and stereotypical associations, mostly negative but also positive ones. Negative associations, for instance, reflected the belief held by German border crossers that Poland and the Polish people were still far behind Germany. This was explained by economic differences. Positive ones were mostly associated with socio-cultural differences in the Polish bazaar, for instance, assumptions concerning specific rules of conduct such as negotiating

prices in the bazaar through bargaining. As noted by Strüver (2005), history-based representations can create very sticky and also powerful images despite daily cross-border practices. At the same time, they are an important means for border crossers to make sense of differences and similarities in a borderland. Because of their differentiating nature, representations of otherness are related to the earlier-mentioned distinction between 'us' and 'them' and the 'here' and the 'there'. Similarly, they do not have to be fixed to the territorial entities of a state border, but can reflect associations of different others and the particular behaviours that are assigned to them. These perceptions are often consistent with previously determined assumptions and stereotypical associations (Magee and Smith 2013).

In the Dutch–German case study, representations of otherness were mostly formed in the social space following encounters with different others. Dutch border crossers still recognised moments where they had to negotiate appropriate behaviour to fit in the social and cultural environment, the so-called cross-cultural code switching (Molinsky 2007). At times, these differences were assessed positively, for instance with regard to the German language spoken in Kleve, which lies closely to the Dutch language spoken in the region. Sometimes they were considered negatively, for instance in the case of differences in social rules and conventions. The subsequent representations of otherness were used to give meaning to the perceived differences and similarities at the cross-border destination. In the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, representations of otherness were formed somewhat differently. As a result of the cultural relationship between Poland and Ukraine, Ukrainian border crossers constructed their place images along these culturally familiar lines. They knew about the social rules and shared certain cultural habits and traditions. This meant that there was less need to adjust their behaviour or accustom themselves to social and cultural differences. Also, more cultural similarities than differences were recognised by the Ukrainians, which contributed to experiencing cross-border practices as part of daily life.

Mind-set and motivation of cross-border shoppers

The mind-set and motivation regarding cross-border shopping can influence people's knowledge and perceptions concerning differences and similarities in a particular borderland. In the German–Polish case study, differences in place images were found between two groups of German shoppers, namely between those who lived within walking distance of the Polish bazaar and those who lived further away from it. Locals from Frankfurt–Oder only sporadically engaged in cross-border shopping, which was mostly functional, and considered these practices as part of everyday life. They had come to know everything about the bazaar and felt content in their own part of the town, where both their professional and their private lives took place. In comparison, the place images of the other group of German border crossers, those living further afield, followed from a mind-set that was associated with a leisurely day out. This group was actively involved in cross-border shopping practices and attracted by cross-border differences. Regular visits contributed to renewed knowledge about the bazaar and motivated the border crossers to visit the shopping destination again. In this case study, both functional and leisure motivations for cross-border shopping can be recognised. Adding to earlier research (for instance Choi, Heo and Law 2016; Makkonen 2015; Spierings and Van der Velde 2013; Timothy and Butler 1995), the focus on place image formation, and the way people consider and interpret different pieces of information or experiences, sheds light on what these functional and leisure motivations mean in practice. They not only encourage people to cross a state border or discourage them from doing so, but are also part of the mind-set of the border crossers, that is associated with everyday life or a day out. These life worlds of the border crossers reveal how knowledge contributes to place image formation.

In the Dutch–German case study, most border crossers were involved in both functional and leisure shopping, and often changed their purpose during and between visits. The ease of cross-border shopping contributed to their perception of these practices as part of daily life. Similarly, in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, cross-border shopping and trading had become part of the normal working day of Ukrainian border crossers. A similar mind-set that regards the other side of the state border as part of everyday life was also found among the German

border crossers who lived in Frankfurt–Oder. In comparison to the Ukrainians, however, German locals were less inclined to frequently cross the state border. This difference could be explained by both the purpose and the level of need to cross the state border. German locals knew what to expect and had lost interest in the bazaar as a shopping destination. The added value of the cross-border practice was missing, as a result of 'over-familiarity' (MacKay and Fesenmaier 1997) or 'unattractive familiarity' (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013). In the case of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, however, knowing what to expect actually contributed to wanting to extend shopping and trading practices across the borderland and beyond. Ukrainians also felt more need to cross the state border. While German border crossers engaged mostly in leisure shopping, Ukrainians used their shopping and trading practices as a way to supplement their incomes.

Knowledge

Baloglu (2001) introduced the availability and content of different sources of information as the basis of the theoretical framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity. Self-assessment was soon recognised as being equally important, reflecting what people think they know about other people and places (Tasci and Gartner 2007; Prentice 2004). Knowledge then consisted of both informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity. In this research, the importance of self-assessment was further confirmed, as knowledge about a place was mostly a matter not of information but of making sense of encounters with differences and similarities in a particular borderland. Following Andsager and Drzewiecka (2002) and Prentice (2004), who already noted the role of stereotyping in the assessment of a destination, the case studies show that assumptions and stereotypes are often part of people's representations of otherness. Whether or not they are true, they are commonly used to make sense of otherness in borderlands. Moreover, the empirical findings reveal that subjective knowledge is further influenced by mind-set and motivation of the border crossers. While previous research on shopping tourism associated the mind-set and motivation with a functional purpose (Sharma et al. 2015; Dmitrovic and Vida 2007; Piron 2002), the case studies show that leisure motivations are as important for cross-border shopping as functional motivations. The subsequent associations concerning everyday life or a day out influence people's place images, and shape their knowledge about a tourist destination. Therefore, in understanding informational and self-assessed

familiarity and unfamiliarity, representations of otherness and the particular mind-set and motivation concerning cross-border shopping need to be taken into account.

6.1.3 Experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity

Previous visits to a destination are part of people's tourist experience (Prentice and Andersen 2007; Prentice 2004; Andsager and Drzewiecka 2002; Baloglu 2001). In chapter 5, the focus was on the daily life experiences of Ukrainian border crossers engaged in shopping and trading practices in Medyka in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. To further understand these experiences, Hess's (2004) conceptualisation of societal, network and territorial embeddedness was placed in a border context. Societal embeddedness covers the cultural backgrounds of those involved in cross-border practices, network embeddedness takes the social ties and networks of the border crossers into account, and territorial embeddedness reflects the relationships people have with the particular territories or places where their daily lives take place. These three forms of embeddedness offer insights on people's experiences and their intent to visit a destination, their conative evaluations. This led to the following question:

3. *In what way do border crossers practise and experience cross-border shopping as part of their daily lives?*

In this case study on the external EU border between Poland and Ukraine, the stretching of the border, in both a mental and a physical sense, and the notion of the border as a resource contribute to the understanding of experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity.

The border as a resource

Borderlands where border crossers experience the border as a resource rather than a barrier can become thriving spaces for interactivity and exchange on a daily life basis. Various studies argue that borderlands are increasingly recognised as a resource for political, institutional, economic and social practices (Sohn 2014; Paasi 2009; Newman 2006; Anderson, O'Dowd and Wilson 2003). Whereas these studies mostly focus on the borderland, cross-border practices can also

connect the borderland to places far beyond the state border and the borderland. The notion of 'border as a resource' then becomes less territorial and even more relational.

In the Polish–Ukrainian case, the presence of the state border had become a resource for exploiting opportunities in shopping and trading practices. Economic opportunities were found in the perceived differences and similarities, mostly economic ones, between the two sides of the state border. Instead of being discouraged by the institutionally controlling EU policies, mostly through border restrictions and customs, border crossers generated creative subversions of existing conditions and turned them to their own advantage. The previously mentioned cultural relationship with the Polish culture and Poland enabled the border crossers to practise shopping and petty trading in spaces of comfort and ease. These spaces, however, were not just situated around the state borders of the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. They had a larger geographical reach and consisted of extended social networks, connecting individuals, organised parties, supermarkets, restaurants or wholesalers in Ukraine to suppliers in Western Europe, and vice versa. Here, network embeddedness comes to the fore. The 'border as a resource' argument then covers larger spaces than just the borderland and leans on dynamic social processes and practices (Brambilla 2015, Konrad 2015; Varró 2014; Harrison 2013; Jagetić Andersen, Klatt & Sandberg 2012; Newman 2010).

In the other two borderlands, the border was considered a resource for cross-border shopping in the sense of being an attractive cross-border shopping destination. In contrast to the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, a more local focus on the borderland can be found. The way people considered the border a resource differed as a result of the border dynamics and the specific practices in the borderland. In the Dutch–German case study, stable and open state borders between the Netherlands and Germany had contributed to the simultaneous presence of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity. These sentiments were related to the presence of the border and emerged in feelings about the mundanity of the exotic and the exoticism of everyday life. The mundane represented known routines and sensations at the shopping destination across the state border, whereas exotic associations were found in the different facilities, products and atmosphere

at the cross-border shopping destination. The experience of these two feelings contributed to perceiving the border as a resource for cross-border shopping practices. Similarly, in the German–Polish borderland, differences and similarities between the two sides of the state border triggered one group of German border crossers to associate the border with a resource for shopping. In particular, feelings of attractive unfamiliarity were at play. When comparing the bazaar to shopping premises in Germany, the merchandise, interactions and atmosphere at the cross-border destination were incentives to shop on the other side of the state border. The border was thus associated with a source for a leisurely day out.

Mental and physical stretching of the border

As a result of cross-border practices, a mental and physical stretching of the border can become part of the daily life experience. In the Polish–Ukrainian borderland, the mental stretching of the border concerned cultural and regional attachment with regard to the Polish nation and the borderland. Border crossers had developed a feeling of belonging with regard to the border town, Medyka, and the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. They experienced cultural commonalities in language, social rules, habits and traditions that strengthened their societal embeddedness. In addition, border crossers saw the other side of the state border as part of their daily lives, an extension of Ukraine, despite the institutional and physical demarcation between Poland and Ukraine. This can be explained by the presence of territorial embeddedness. A physical stretching of the border was visible in the way daily life occurred on both sides of the state border. Networks and cross-border practices play a role here. The physical stretching of the border can be associated with the previous section on the border as a resource. Border crossers recognised opportunities in the presence of the state border and acted upon them through cross-border shopping and trading. As such, they extended the physical space of their daily lives across the borderland. This notion of mentally and physically stretching the border illustrates how ordinary people are involved in daily bordering processes (Konrad 2015; Rumford 2014, 2009; Newman 2006).

In the Dutch–German case study, comparable features of a mental and physical stretching of the border can be recognised. The earlier-mentioned feelings of regional attachment, in particular, reflect the presence of societal, network and territorial embeddedness. As a result of a long history of daily life practices across

the Dutch–German borderland, crossing the state border had become an everyday or routine-like experience. Not only cross-border practices but also family relations and networks of friends across the state border contributed to a better understanding of the German language and familiarity with German culture. As a result, Dutch border crossers associated the borderland with comfort, ease and familiarity, and also experienced an extension of daily life across the state border.

In the German–Polish case study, a certain mental stretching of the border can be recognised, in particular, through territorial embeddedness. As a result of the location of the bazaar in the Polish town of Słubice, the former German town of Dammvorstadt, pre-war 'German' architecture remained part of the shopping experience. Shoppers crossed the town bridge, which is also the official state border, and at first sight, they had the impression of visiting a German town. As they walked towards the bazaar, the surroundings changed somewhat and they gradually experienced being somewhere different. This often contributed to the awareness of the local past of the border crossing town as part of the former German territories. In this particular borderland, however, the earlier mentioned socio-cultural distance prevented further mental and physical stretching of the border. German border crossers continued to experience differences in language, mentality, and social rules and structures, which they recognised as an explicit feeling of distance in the social and cultural backgrounds between themselves and the Polish other. As such, societal and network embeddedness did not evolve further in the borderland. Despite the attraction of the Polish bazaar as a cross-border shopping destination, the state border as both a symbolic and physical line remained part of the experience.

Experiences

In previous research on experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity, experiences were examined from the perspective of frequency and previous visits (Prentice 2004; Baloglu 2001) and purpose or likelihood of visiting a specific destination (Stylos et al. 2016; Kim and Chen 2016; Tasci and Gartner 2007; Pike and Ryan 2004). The empirical findings demonstrate how, in the case of cross-border practices in the borderland, the perception of the border also matters for the cross-border experience.

Here, personal characteristics of the border crosser come into view through the cultural background of the border crossers, their social ties and networks in the borderland, and their relationships with the particular territories or places. These forms of societal, network and territorial embeddedness shed light on the perspective of the border crossers, and subsequently on the way they practise and experience cross-border shopping as part of their daily lives. The way personal characteristics influence the experience of a place has also been recognised in tourism research, especially from the perspective of the visitor's origin or place of residence (Prayag 2012; Prayag and Ryan 2011; Prebensen 2007; Beerli and Martín 2004). As a result, some people see a particular border, for instance, as a barrier or a resource (Rumford 2014, 2009, 2006, Newman 2006, Yuval-Davis 2004) or may be entirely indifferent (Ernste 2010). The case studies demonstrate that those who were engaged in cross-border shopping often considered the border as a resource. This can be seen as a 'tipping point' from immobility to mobility. Border crossers found opportunities in the differences and similarities across the state border, which contributed to the experience of mundanity and exoticism or that of leisure and trade as part of shopping. The 'border as a resource' argument reveals how borderlands can become thriving spaces for interactivity and exchange. Cross-border practices within the borderland contribute then to a mental and physical stretching of the border, as these spaces become part of everyday life. Here, certain places in the borderland turn into ordinary meeting places, or 'contact zones', where people from both sides of the state border come together (Soja 2005; Yeoh and Willis 2005). These places or zones are shaped by not only territorial borders, but also social constructs formed by the mental representations of the border crossers (Newman 2010). As such, both the stretching of the border, in both a mental and a physical sense, and the notion of the border as a resource contribute to experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity.

6.2 Cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands

Chapter 2 connected the multidimensionality of the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity to encounters with differences and similarities in a borderland (Szytniewski and Spierings 2014). Every dimension provides a unique perspective

on the degree of familiarity and unfamiliarity with regard to places and people across the state border, but all dimensions together contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of people's cross-border practices in a particular borderland. Whereas the previous subsections focused on the dimensions of proximity, knowledge and experiences, this section takes the dynamics and multidimensionality of familiarity and unfamiliarity into account to consider in more detail cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands. This subsection considers the following question:

4. *How are the dynamics and multidimensionality of the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity reflected in the European borderlands?*

The Dutch–German case illustrates how familiarisation processes take shape in a borderland that has stable and open borders. Since the Second World War, institutional cooperation had stimulated further European integration in the borderland, allowing those who lived there to extend their daily practices across the state border and to get to know one another. Here, 'Dutch' and 'German' symbols in the shopping street of Kleve were part of the cross-border experience of the border crossers. The 'Dutch' symbol of a cheese shop contributed to a feeling of socio-cultural proximity and a historical connection between the Dutch and German borderlands, whereas the 'German' symbol, *Bratwurst*, was associated with positive stereotypes as part of people's knowledge of the other side of the state border. The two dimensions, namely proximity and knowledge, shape a third dimension, the experience. Border crossers experienced feelings of recognition and familiarity when they came across a Dutch shop in Kleve and considered the German shop as something that belongs in a German shopping street. The two shops represented the cross-border experience of mundanity and exoticism, which was reflected in the words of the border crossers, for example 'It's in our system and part of our daily lives to go to Kleve' and 'We are going there for the differences'. Even though the physical border has disappeared, a cultural division through cultural symbols remains historically embedded in the borderland. The border crossers themselves give meaning to the differences and similarities in the places where their social practices take place, in this case, the symbols at the cross-border shopping destination.

The German–Polish case study shows how institutional and social realities prior to European integration processes continue to influence familiarity and unfamiliarity in the borderland. The knowledge formed by the German border crossers was at times based on perceptions of Poland as a country with a lower standard of living than Germany. These stereotypical associations were strengthened by socio-cultural distance, formed through differences in language, mentality and social rules. Also, for a long time, national policies accentuated the social and cultural differences between the Polish and the German nation, and thus strengthened the socio-cultural distance that was historically already in place. Although a degree of unfamiliarity remained, cross-border shopping in the Polish bazaar has flourished since the 1990s. Especially those who associated the border with a day out considered differences at the shopping destination as appealing and a motive for cross-border shopping. Experiences following from cross-border shopping, however, did not necessarily erase previous stereotypical associations or mental borders. Nor did the opening of the internal borders of the EU. The particular interplay of the dimensions can be explained by the history of perceiving the German–Polish state border as a dividing line between 'us' and 'them' and the 'here' and 'there'. The subsequent historical representations remain in people's minds and part of the place images, shaping familiarity and unfamiliarity in the borderland

The Polish–Ukrainian case reflects the close historical and cultural relationship between Poland and Ukraine that coincides with controlling border policies following from Poland's accession to the EU. In the borderland, proximity in the form of cultural attachment was strengthened through people's knowledge of regional past. Until the Second World War the Ukrainian borderland belonged to the Polish nation and the state border was drawn beyond Lviv. Even now, border crossers still experienced this cultural connection as a result of commonalities in language, social rules, habits and traditions between Poland and Ukraine. Local narratives and regional histories had enabled those living in the borderland to connect with the other side of the state border as part of daily life. As a result, the Ukrainians were not impressed by the changes in border structures that followed from Poland's accession to the EU. The Polish–Ukrainian borderland became a controlled external EU border. Border crossers, however, adapted to

the new travel restrictions and border policies and continued their cross-border practices. What is more, these actions led to changes in institutional measures in the borderland, such as the introduction of the MRG (*Mały Ruch Graniczny* – a special identity card for those living in the borderland) or the earlier-mentioned Polish Card, making cross-border mobility for many Ukrainian border crossers even easier. Feelings of familiarity that follow from the continuance of the historical and cultural relationship influence the permeability of the state borders in the borderland.

The case studies demonstrate that cross-border shopping practices are embedded in the historical context of the borderland. This also applies for familiarity and unfamiliarity and confirms Valentine and Sadgrove's (2014) statement that history matters for understanding encounters with and across difference. The dimensions of knowledge, experiences and proximity are interdependent and connected to the history of the state border and the borderland. For instance, feelings of comfortable familiarity were found in the European borderlands, but the explanations behind these feelings differed as a result of the variations in the three dimensions. In one case, border crossers had developed comfortable familiarity by associating their cross-border experiences with repetition and routine and knowing their way across the state border, whereas in another case study socio-cultural proximity played a role through cultural attachment. These associations were linked to the historical developments in the borderlands, with one borderland characterised by fewer restrictions and border controls for a long time now and another by a close historical and cultural relationship, respectively. In encounters with differences and similarities, one dimension can at times be more prominently present than the other, but together the dimensions provide an understanding of familiarity and unfamiliarity in cross-border shopping practices in a particular borderland. Therefore, this multidimensional approach reveals variations in the composition, degree and intensity of familiarity and unfamiliarity in the borderlands.

6.3 Reflections on familiarity and unfamiliarity in European borderlands

The remainder of this concluding chapter builds on the previous theoretical and empirical findings. The following subsections consider the main aim of this dissertation by reflecting on the central question:

In what way do familiarity and unfamiliarity influence daily cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands?

These reflections are addressed by revisiting the framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity in tourism research and border studies, and by placing the discussion of cross-border shopping in the context of the European Union.

6.3.1 From tourism to border studies: Revisiting the theory of familiarity and unfamiliarity

In tourism research, the concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity was initially operationalised by Baloglu (2001) and Prentice (2004) as a multidimensional construct. It was especially picked up as a concept for understanding images of tourist destinations (Tan and Wu 2016; Yang, Chen and Lin 2012; Yuan and Hu 2009; Prentice and Andersen 2007). The empirical research on the three European borderlands contributes to expanding the theoretical framework by elaborating on the definitions of three dimensions, namely proximity, knowledge and experiences. These insights into the three dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity reflect on the initial operationalisation of proximity as a feeling of closeness or distance towards other people and places, knowledge as the extent and assessment of information sources, and experiences of a destination through frequency and previous visits (Prentice 2004; Baloglu 2001). First, an emphasis on socio-cultural proximity specifies the extent to which individuals feel distant or close, socially and culturally, to a place that lies across the state border in relative geographical proximity to home. The affective evaluations of the social and cultural differences and similarities revealed two additional ways to understand proximate familiarity and unfamiliarity. That is, the development of regional attachment concerning the borderland, and the simultaneous presence

of comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity in the cross-border practices. Second, reflections on informational and self-assessed familiarity and unfamiliarity show that knowledge was mostly a matter of not information but of the assessment of obtained knowledge. The subjective knowledge consists of representations of otherness and the particular mind-set and motivation of the border crossers concerning cross-border shopping and is important for making sense of encounters with differences and similarities in a place. The cognitive evaluations are therefore mostly based on perceptions and beliefs. Third, experiences are influenced by both the social and the physical environment of a place and the degree of societal, network and territorial embeddedness of the border crossers in the borderland. Embeddedness can lead to the mental and physical stretching of the border, creating new spaces by addressing the border as a resource rather than a barrier. This understanding of experiential familiarity and unfamiliarity contributes to the conative evaluations of a place as it can explain the intention to visit a cross-border shopping destination again.

In border studies, previous research recognised an interplay between familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to daily life and cross-border practices (Amante 2013; Jagetić Andersen 2013; Yndigegn 2013; Izotov and Laine 2013; Spierings and Van der Velde 2008; Richards and Wilson 2006). Spierings and Van der Velde (2013, 2008) picked up on the multidimensional approach of the concept familiarity and unfamiliarity in tourism research and sought the dynamics of the concept in the 'bandwidth of unfamiliarity' and in the distinction between comfortable familiarity and attractive unfamiliarity. This dissertation has built further on this by specifying the dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity within a border context and empirically examining their dynamics in three European borderlands. The findings illustrate that familiarity and unfamiliarity include three dimensions, namely proximity, knowledge and experiences, and represent an affective, a cognitive and a conative evaluation. The focus on the three dimensions indicates a move from a rather static understanding of how familiar or unfamiliar an individual is with someone, something or someplace to a more dynamic one. The dimensions represent different but complementary facets of familiarity and unfamiliarity and together influence the perceptions of a destination and the subsequent shopping practices across the state border. By

using the theoretical framework of familiarity and unfamiliarity, the agency and the mental representations of the border crossers come to the fore and reveal the daily bordering processes. The focus on proximity, knowledge and experiences gives a multidimensional perspective on how people give meaning to the places in the borderland where their daily life practices take place. This contributes to understanding the relational approach in border studies, where borders cut across social spaces and are understood as mental representations (Varró 2014; Rumford 2014; Harrison 2013; Paasi 2009; Brunet-Jailly (2005). Moreover, these elaborations on the definitions of the dimensions are not restricted to the context of borderlands, but can be applied to other places and contexts where people encounter someone, something or someplace who/that is different in one way or another. Therefore, this expansion of the theoretical framework is valuable for using familiarity and unfamiliarity in tourism research and border studies, as well as other disciplines.

6.3.2 Reflections on border policies in Europe

While this research was being conducted, the discussion on closer political and institutional cooperation within the EU and the securitisation of its external borders became more heated. Not only the war in Syria and the movement of refugees and migrants over the Mediterranean and across the Balkans, but also the recent Brexit referendum in the United Kingdom have pushed the state border to the top of the agenda at national, European and international levels, intensifying the territorial debate with regard to borders and borderlands. Despite this discourse in public debate, daily practices of cross-border shopping and trade continued in the three case studies.

The case studies in this dissertation consisted of two internal EU borders, where the EU aims for further European integration and more cohesive cross-border regions (Sohn 2014; Yndigegn 2013), and an external EU border, where issues of control and securitisation are part of the current debate on borders in Europe (Wunderlich 2013, Van Houtum 2010, Lavenex and Wichmann 2009). These national and European institutional and regulatory frameworks continue to affect the permeability of the border and the way the local narratives and regional histories develop in a borderland. However, border crossers construct,

deconstruct and reconstruct their own borders. They decide and act on their understanding of the border and also shape the nature of the borderland. The agency of the border crossers can then influence the institutional and social reality of a borderland, and vice versa (Newman 2010; Dunn 2006; Brunet-Jailly 2005). This interconnectedness appears in all three case studies.

Being an old internal border of the EU, the Dutch–German borderland has a long history of institutional cooperation and the extension of daily life practices across the borderland. The borderland was the first to institutionalise cross-border cooperation and aim for further cross-border mobility and cohesion within the Union (Perkmann 2007; Scott 1997). Despite this policy perspective, the distinction between 'us' and 'them' and the 'here' and the 'there' remains part of the daily lives of those living in the borderland. At the level of daily cross-border practices, the most important incentive for cross-border shopping was the presence of both mundanity and exoticism at the shopping destination. This outcome confirms the earlier research findings that mobility in the form of cross-border shopping follows from not only similarities, but also differences between the two sides of the state border (Spierings and Van der Velde 2013, 2008). Thus, fewer restrictions and border controls only have a partial effect on encouraging cross-border shopping. More important are the associations related to the social and physical environment of a shopping destination.

EU policies concerning the German–Polish borderland as a new internal EU border are centred on European integration. The removal of border restrictions increased cross-border mobility and contributed to new cross-border shopping destinations in the borderland (Timothy et al. 2014). At the same time, however, these efforts to increase European integration triggered an awareness of the social and cultural differences between the two sides of the state border, confirming earlier socio-cultural distance between Germany and Poland. This form of mental distance was stronger in those living within walking distance of the shopping destination than in those from further afield. Moreover, it even discouraged many in the former group from engaging in cross-border mobility. For them, the border was a barrier rather than an opportunity, regardless of processes of European integration (see also Paasi 2009, Van Houtum and Strüver 2002, Cresswell 1996 on borders as barriers).

Whereas the EU aims to control its external borders as part of securitisation, it seems to have only a limited effect on daily cross-border practices of the border crossers in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. As a result of the historical and cultural relationship between the two countries, cross-border practices had become part of the daily lives of the Ukrainian border crossers. When border restrictions were tightened, border crossers found creative ways to continue their cross-border shopping and trading practices. These so-called regionauts (Löfgren 2008) or 'bordersurfers' (Terlouw 2012) were motivated by the opportunities afforded by the presence of the state border and maintained the permeability of Polish–Ukrainian state border as they saw fit. This demonstrates that alongside controlling EU border policies, borders not only separate but also provide spaces for interaction and exchange (Paasi 2009; Soja 2005).

The interconnectedness between the agency of the border crossers and the social structures of a particular borderland shapes the dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity. It allows for a dynamic interplay between proximity, knowledge and experiences that is characteristic for the borderland. The theoretical and empirical reflections on the dimensions in this research demonstrate how people's daily bordering processes at its most local level can be understood (Konrad 2015; Rumford 2014, 2009; Newman 2006). Towns such as Kleve, Słubice and Medyka, which are situated in the European borderlands, show a continuity in the daily life practices of border crossers within the institutional and social reality of the borderland. The presence of agency demonstrates that ordinary people construct their own borders, engage in cross-border practices in their own way and give meaning to the places where their social practices take place, here, the European borderlands.

6.3.3 Research agenda

In line with the aim to further understand the dynamic and multidimensional concept of familiarity and unfamiliarity, the case studies enabled the identification of subtleties and details with regard to the various facets of the three dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity, namely proximity, knowledge and experiences. An elaboration on the definitions of those dimensions, derived from the three

case studies, was used to understand cross-border shopping practices in European borderlands. The expanded meaning of the dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity contributes to a more comprehensive theoretical framework for future empirical research, both qualitative and quantitative. When using this framework, further attention could be given to the interplay between the dimensions and the various facets of the three dimensions. Taking into account the historical context could be useful here, as local narratives and regional histories of borderlands appeared part of familiarity and unfamiliarity in the borderlands. A longitudinal study on cross-border shopping could provide additional insights into the daily life dynamics of a borderland and the way historical representations are integrated in people's daily practices. It could reveal patterns and changes in cross-border practices and provide a better understanding of how proximity, knowledge and experiences develop, and subsequently interact, over time. Following a number of border crossers over a longer period of time could allow for an even deeper analysis of everyday narratives that are rooted in the specific borderlands.

The borderlands discussed in this dissertation consist of particular political, institutional, economic and social practices and discourses. Future research on familiarity and unfamiliarity should, therefore, take into account and compare other border crossings and borderlands too. For instance, in the Polish–Ukrainian case study, border crossers at Medyka noted that certain goods were easier to transport at other border crossings. Other border crossers, and possibly different practices, may have been found at other border crossings in the Polish–Ukrainian borderland. Similarly, the border-crossing town of Frankfurt–Oder/Słubice was one of the three border crossing towns in the German-Polish borderland. While the towns are situated in the same borderland, the urban environment differs (Sternberg 2017). Depending on how the state border was drawn after the Second World War, the former city centre of the border crossing town was to be situated in either Germany or Poland. As a result, some urban structures were already in place in one part of the town, but not in the other. This had an effect on the physical environment and the shopping facilities of the town, and could, nowadays, influence the cross border practices. Moreover, familiarity and unfamiliarity can differ in the various borderlands of a state. For instance, socio-cultural proximity in the Dutch–German borderland may be different from that in the Dutch–

Belgian borderland. The commonality in the Dutch language can already make a difference and affect familiarity and unfamiliarity in the borderland. In addition, different border contexts may be found in other European borderlands. For instance, the dynamics of cross-border shopping at the Mediterranean borders of Europe are most probably influenced by EU policies following from a surge in cross-border migration, whereas in the Balkans the former Yugoslavian past may still play a role for cross-border mobility (see for instance Brambilla et al. 2016; Jagetić Andersen and Pinos 2015). Expanding the research to include other borderlands in Europe and in other continents could uncover different cross-border shopping practices and bring to the fore other features of the dimensions of familiarity and unfamiliarity. This could contribute to more diversity in the results on this topic.

This research took a close look at cross-border shopping practices at the regional and the local level. The focus from the beginning was on those who live in a borderland and cross the state border for the purpose of cross-border shopping. The case studies also touched upon those who do not engage in cross-border mobility. In the German–Polish case study, for instance, it appeared that geographical proximity to the cross-border shopping destination influenced people's place image formation, and thus the motivations for and frequency of cross-border shopping. A larger study that compares those who engage in cross-border shopping with those who do not even consider the other side of the state border for daily practices, could reveal differences in the composition, degree and intensity of familiarity and unfamiliarity.

As a result of the particular focus on the agency of the border crossers, less attention was paid to changes in the political and institutional structures in which people decide on cross-border mobility. The Polish–Ukrainian case study, for instance, touches upon the role of institutional measures, such as Poland's introduction of the MRG (the special identity card for those living in the borderland), which eases local cross-border mobility. The question that arises: is it a tool to increase Europeanisation and integration between the two countries, or is it used to control the state borders for the further securitisation of EU borders? Additional research on the institutional and regulatory framework of the EU could shed light on the relation between the initial purpose and the practical outcome of these measures in the borderlands.

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NEDERLANDSE SAMENVATTING

Shoppen in Europese grensregio's: Een studie naar bekendheid en onbekendheid

Wanneer we de grens over steken, bewegen we ons van het ene land naar het andere. We komen in aanraking met andere mensen en culturen, we horen een andere taal om ons heen en we merken dat we in een andere fysieke omgeving zijn. Tegelijkertijd kan het zo zijn dat de lokale bevolking onze taal spreekt en producten verkoopt die we kennen. De lokale verhalen uit de grensstreek, de regionale geschiedenis en onze eigen grenservaringen kleuren onze percepties van de grens. Ze geven ons de mogelijkheid om betekenis te geven aan de verschillen en overeenkomsten die we tegenkomen wanneer we een grens oversteken. Sommige verschillen en overeenkomsten verwachten we en kennen we, maar andere kunnen nieuw en onbekend zijn. Terwijl het gevoel van bekendheid en herkenning vaak bijdraagt aan een gevoel van comfort en gemak, lijkt het erop dat juist een bepaald niveau van onbekendheid ons aanmoedigt activiteiten over de grens te ondernemen. Verschillen in bijvoorbeeld cultuur, omgeving en voorzieningen kunnen een gevoel van onbekendheid oproepen, en daarmee tegelijkertijd ook een prikkel zijn voor grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. De aanwezigheid van zowel het bekende als het onbekende kan de manier waarop we omgaan met een staatsgrens en de daarbij behorende verschillen en overeenkomsten beïnvloeden. De mate van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit is daarom afhankelijk van onze beeldvorming over en dagelijkse activiteiten in een grensregio.

Probleemstelling

Van oudsher kent het debat over grenzen en grensregio's een territoriale benadering, waarbij grenzen scheidslijnen vormen tussen de natiestaten. Dit kunnen buurlanden zijn, maar ook een groep landen zoals de Europese Unie die zowel open binnengrenzen als gecontroleerde buitengrenzen kent. In de wetenschappelijke literatuur wint de relationele benadering steeds meer terrein. Binnen deze benadering staan mentale representaties van de grens centraal. De grens is een sociaal construct en wordt gevormd door zowel institutionele als sociale processen. Vanuit dit perspectief biedt het theoretische concept bekendheid en onbekendheid een interessante invalshoek om grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit te begrijpen.

Het concept is veelvuldig gebruikt in toerisme-onderzoek. Bekendheid en onbekendheid is daarbij opgedeeld in drie dimensies: nabijheid, kennis en ervaringen. Deze dissertatie bouwt voort op de eerste stappen die zijn gezet in het toepassen van dit concept in grensstudies. Het doel van deze dissertatie ligt in het definiëren en verder ontwikkelen van een theoretisch kader van het concept bekendheid en onbekendheid binnen de grenscontext. Anders dan in het toerisme-onderzoek ligt de nadruk op de dynamische wisselwerking tussen de dimensies. Daarnaast richt deze dissertatie zich op empirische verklaringen voor grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit, en in het bijzonder shopping in de vorm van winkelen, struinen en kleinschalige handel, door gebruik te maken van het concept bekendheid en onbekendheid.

In deze dissertatie staat de volgende hoofdvraag centraal:

Op welke manier beïnvloeden noties van bekendheid en onbekendheid dagelijkse grensoverschrijdende activiteiten als shoppen in Europese grensregio's?

Deze hoofdvraag bestaat uit drie deelvragen, elk gericht op één van de drie dimensies nabijheid, kennis en ervaringen en een overkoepelende deelvraag met de focus op de dynamiek en het multidimensionale karakter van het theoretische concept. Om de hoofd- en deelvragen te beantwoorden, begint hoofdstuk twee met een uiteenzetting van het theoretisch kader rondom het concept bekendheid en onbekendheid. De drie hoofdstukken die volgen, corresponderen met drie empirische deelonderzoeken waarbij één dimensie en één grensregio centraal staan. In hoofdstuk drie wordt het begrip nabijheid besproken in de Nederlands-Duitse grensregio, in hoofdstuk vier wordt ingegaan op kennisconstructie in de Duits-Poolse regio en in hoofdstuk vijf staan ervaringen centraal in de Pools-Oekraïense grensregio. In deze dissertatie is gebruik gemaakt van kwalitatieve onderzoeksmethoden: semi-gestructureerde diepte-interviews, observaties en participerende observaties.

Bevindingen

In hoofdstuk twee wordt de theorie behandeld rondom het concept bekendheid en onbekendheid. Hierbij dient de multidimensionale aanpak uit het toerisme-

onderzoek als uitgangspunt en wordt deze toegepast binnen de context van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. In de literatuur betreft nabijheid een gevoel van dichtbij of ver van iets, iemand of een plek zijn, kennis gaat in op de hoeveelheid en beoordeling van informatiebronnen, en ervaringen worden gerelateerd aan de frequentie van bepaalde activiteiten en ervaringen opgedaan tijdens eerdere bezoeken. Bekendheid en onbekendheid wordt gevormd door de samenhang en wisselwerking tussen de drie dimensies. De manier waarop informatie wordt beoordeeld kan bijvoorbeeld veranderen door grenservaringen, die vervolgens weer leiden tot een nieuw gevoel van nabijheid. De samenhang en wisselwerking is bovendien afhankelijk van individuele achtergronden van grensbewoners en van de historische en regionale bijzonderheden van een grensregio. De mate van bekendheid en onbekendheid die hieruit volgt, kan grensbewoners aanmoedigen of juist ontmoedigen om de grens over te gaan.

Hoofstuk drie gaat in op het gevoel van socio-culturele nabijheid onder Nederlandse bezoekers uit de Nederlands-Duitse grensregio die regelmatig de grens over gaan om te winkelen en voor vrijetijdsbesteding in het Duitse stadje Kleve. Uit deze casus blijkt dat grenstoerisme niet altijd gekenmerkt wordt door exotisme maar ook door het alledaagse en gevoelens van socio-culturele nabijheid. Tegelijkertijd kunnen bepaalde plekken die geografisch dichtbij liggen, alsnog worden geassocieerd met een gevoel van socio-culturele afstand. Vanuit de affectieve invalshoek blijkt dat Nederlandse respondenten die in de grensregio wonen en Kleve bezoeken zich enerzijds op hun gemak voelen en het bezoek als onderdeel van hun dagelijkse routine ervaren, maar anderzijds ook op zoek zijn naar verschillen in faciliteiten, producten en sfeer. Vanuit een normatieve invalshoek wordt duidelijk dat meerdere Nederlandse respondenten een sterkere regionale binding met de grensregio voelen dan met de westelijke delen van Nederland zoals de Randstad. Dit is gegroeid door de lange traditie van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit als onderdeel van het alledaagse. Tegelijkertijd blijven bepaalde normatieve verschillen op sociaal en cultureel vlak voortbestaan. Hoewel dit niet tot minder mobiliteit hoeft te leiden, worden hierdoor wel gevoelens van socio-culturele afstand aangewakkerd. Vanuit een interactieve invalshoek valt op dat mede door de stabiele en open staatsgrens natuurlijke interacties tussen de Nederlandse en Duitse inwoners van de grensregio zijn ontstaan. Men spreekt

elkaars taal en is gewend geraakt aan de verschillen en overeenkomsten aan weerszijden van de staatsgrens. Stereotypen dragen bij aan de manier waarop de interacties worden ervaren, waarbij positieve stereotypen het gevoel van nabijheid versterken en negatieve stereotypen leiden tot een gevoel van afstand.

In hoofdstuk vier staat de beeldvorming van Duitse bezoekers van de Poolse bazaar in het Poolse deel van de grensstad Frankfurt-Oder/Słubice centraal. Terwijl in eerder onderzoek naar grenstoerisme vooral is gekeken naar verschillen in beeldvorming tussen bezoekers met verschillende nationaliteiten en tussen binnenlandse en buitenlandse bezoekers, blijkt uit deze casus dat er ook verschillen bestaan tussen bezoekers die net over de grens wonen en bezoekers van verder weg. Duitse respondenten die net over de grens wonen, zien beide zijden van de grensstad Frankfurt-Oder/Słubice als onderdeel van het alledaagse en tonen daardoor minder interesse in het bezoeken van de Poolse bazaar. Respondenten die verder weg van de grensstad wonen, bezoeken de bazaar als onderdeel van een dag uit. Omdat het onderdeel is van vrijetijdsbesteding, kijken zij ook positiever tegen de Poolse bazaar als toeristische bestemming aan. Er is een verschil zichtbaar in de mind-set en motivatie van de twee groepen, wat van invloed is op hun grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. Ondanks deze verschillen, is er een gedeelde perceptie van de historische en regionale bijzonderheden van de grensregio, waarbij de grensstad Frankfurt-Oder/Słubice wordt gezien als een onderdeel van het vroegere Duitsland. Kennis, ervaringen, mind-set en motivatie zijn allen onderdelen die de beeldvorming binnen grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit beïnvloeden.

Hoofdstuk vijf onderzoekt de ervaringen en activiteiten van Oekraïners die betrokken zijn bij shopping en kleinschalige handel rondom het Poolse stadje Medyka, een centraal verzamelpunt aan de buitengrens van de EU tussen Polen en Oekraïne. Twee soorten activiteiten zijn het voornaamst aanwezig: geïmproviseerde en semi-geplande activiteiten zoals tegen een kleine betaling een aantal producten over de grens meenemen en afleveren, en geplande en gecoördineerde activiteiten zoals het verzamelen en distribueren van producten om ze vervolgens over de grens te transporteren via een vast of flexibel netwerk. De inbedding van grensoverschrijdende shopping en kleinschalige handel van de Oekraïners in het dagelijks leven draagt bij aan de mentale en fysieke rekbaarheid

van de grens. De mentale rekbaarheid uit zich in het gevoel van culturele en regionale binding met Medyka en het thuisgevoel ten aanzien van de grensregio onder de Oekraïense respondenten. De fysieke rekbaarheid is zichtbaar in de vorming van een nieuwe plek met zijn specifieke kenmerken van shopping en kleinschalige handel. Voor veel respondenten wordt het grensstadje ervaren als een verlengstuk van Oekraïne. De dagelijkse informele grensoverschrijdende activiteiten in de grensregio laten een poreuze grens zien ondanks dat het om een gecontroleerde buitengrens van de EU grens gaat.

Conclusie

De drie empirische deelonderzoeken geven inzicht in de bruikbaarheid van de dimensies van het theoretische concept bekendheid en onbekendheid voor het begrijpen van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit in verschillende Europese grensregio's. De dimensies zijn naar aanleiding van de empirie als volgt gedefinieerd en ontwikkeld. Ten eerste, bij nabijheid gaat het in de literatuur vooral om een gevoel van dichtbij of ver van iets, iemand of een plek te zijn. Uit de empirie blijkt dat nabijheid verder kan worden gedefinieerd door gevoelens van regionale binding met een grensregio en een gevoel van comfortabele bekendheid en aantrekkelijke onbekendheid in de grensoverschrijdende activiteiten. Bij grensregio's ligt de nadruk op het sociale en culturele, aangezien een grensregio al een bepaalde geografisch ruimte vertegenwoordigt. Ten tweede, kennis betreft volgens de literatuur de hoeveelheid en beoordeling van informatiebronnen. In de praktijk ligt de nadruk des te meer op de subjectieve beoordeling van informatie. Hierbij zijn representaties van andere personen en plekken en de mind-set en motivatie ten aanzien van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit belangrijk voor de beeldvorming. Ten derde, ervaringen worden in de literatuur vaak gerelateerd aan de frequentie van bepaalde activiteiten en ervaringen opgedaan tijdens eerdere bezoeken. Uit de empirie komt naar voren dat ervaringen worden beïnvloed door de sociale en fysieke omgeving van een plek enerzijds en de inbedding – met betrekking tot de culturele omgeving, het netwerk en de fysieke ruimte – van activiteiten in een grensregio anderzijds. De dynamische samenhang tussen de dimensies toont dat soms de ene dimensie sterker aanwezig is dan de andere in het vormen van bekendheid en bekendheid met een plek over de grens.

Naast de institutionele processen die tot nieuwe binnen- en buitengrenzen van de EU leiden, laten sociale processen zien dat inwoners van een grensregio zelf ook hun grenzen construeren en deconstrueren. Er is sprake van een onderlinge vervlechting van beide processen in alle deelonderzoeken. Hierbij spelen ook de historische ontwikkelingen van een grensregio een belangrijke rol. De Nederlands-Duitse grensregio kent een lange geschiedenis van institutionele samenwerking en dagelijkse grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. Vanuit de beleidsmakers ligt de nadruk op versterking van de samenwerking en cohesie in de grensregio. Echter, in de praktijk blijkt dat juist de dynamiek tussen de verschillen en overeenkomsten leidt tot een aantrekkelijke grensregio voor de inwoners. Een soortgelijke ontwikkeling is gaande in de Duits-Poolse grensregio. Terwijl Europese integratie centraal staat bij de beleidsmakers, worden grensbewoners juist bewuster van de sociale en culturele verschillen tussen beide zijden van de staatsgrens. Dit leidt niet tot meer nabijheid maar mogelijk zelfs tot meer afstand. In de Pools-Oekraïense grensregio lijkt de institutionele grens een beperkt effect te hebben op beperkingen van grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. In dit geval is zelfs een nieuwe plek ontstaan aan de Poolse zijde van de staatsgrens dat wordt ervaren als een verlengstuk van Oekraïne waar de dagelijkse activiteiten plaatsvinden.

De mate van bekendheid en onbekendheid van inwoners van een grensregio speelt een belangrijke rol voor grensoverschrijdende mobiliteit. De dynamische samenhang tussen nabijheid, kennis en ervaringen geeft vorm aan de bekendheid en onbekendheid van een individu en beinvloedt de manier waarop wordt omgegaan met de verschillen en overeenkomsten aan weerszijden van een grens. Grensbewoners geven dan ook zelf betekenis aan een grensregio.

CURRICULUM VITAE

Bianca Szytniewski (1985) obtained a BA in Language and Culture Studies in 2007 and a MA in International Relations in 2008 at Utrecht University. She continued her academic career by obtaining a MA in European Union Studies in 2009 at Leiden University. At the start of the EuroCORECODE project, which aimed at researching the construction and deconstruction of borders by analysing historical representations and daily practices in European border regions, Bianca was appointed PhD researcher of the Dutch team of human geographers. Other members of the team were colleagues from the University of Southern Denmark, University of Eastern Finland, University of Maastricht and Free University of Brussels. During this period, Bianca worked at both Radboud University Nijmegen and Utrecht University, conducted fieldwork at the Dutch-German, German-Polish and Polish-Ukrainian state borders and became a guest researcher at the University of Southern Denmark for two months. She presented her work at many international conferences in Europe and the United States and published several articles and book chapters. Besides writing her dissertation, Bianca taught human geography at Radboud University Nijmegen and Utrecht University focusing on topics as urban geography, creative cities, migration, world cities, European integration and qualitative methods. Since September 2017, Bianca works as a researcher at DSP in Amsterdam, where she pursues her research interests in the cultural field, migration, labour mobility, urban spaces and encounters.

Borderlands can be perceived as sites for encounters with both differences and similarities. When crossing a state border, we move from one state to another, come across different people and cultures, hear different languages, notice different characteristics of our surroundings and submerge in otherness. At the same time we might find out that locals in restaurants or shops speak our language or sell known brands and goods. Our border experiences, local narratives and regional histories colour our perceptions of a borderland and enable us to give meaning to the differences and similarities we encounter. Some of these may be known and expected, but many others can be new and unfamiliar. According to various scholars not only familiarity but also unfamiliarity can encourage cross-border practices. Unfamiliarity resulting from differences in, for instance, culture, landscape or facilities between the two sides of a state border can trigger interest and curiosity, and consequently lead to cross-border mobility. This dissertation further unravels this notion of familiarity and unfamiliarity in relation to encounters with differences and similarities in European borderlands, by offering theoretical reflections on familiarity and unfamiliarity, and examining cross-border mobility, shopping practices in particular, in the Dutch-German, German-Polish and Polish-Ukrainian borderland.