



**Master of Arts in Euroculture Thesis**

**Historical (Dis)Continuity  
in the Identity of the Young Generation  
of Warmia and Mazury**

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I, Marek Mikunda, hereby declare that this thesis, entitled “Historical (Dis)Continuity in the Identity of the Young Generation of Warmia and Mazury,” submitted as partial requirement for the MA Programme Euroculture, is my own original work and expressed in my own words. Any use made within it of works of other authors in any form (e.g. ideas, figures, texts, tables, etc.) are properly acknowledged in the text as well as in the List of References.

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## **Introduction**

After WWII, as a result of decisions made by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt at the Teheran, Yalta and Potsdam conferences, the political map of Central Europe was altered drastically compared to its prewar state. As a result, Poland's borders were moved hundreds of kilometers to the West, as its eastern territories, known as the Kresy, were suddenly part of the USSR, while German eastern territories were suddenly part of Poland. These border changes were accompanied by massive population movements, as a result of which millions of people, under various circumstances, left or were forced to leave their homes, and resettle elsewhere.

One of the regions affected by these changes was East Prussia, which was divided between Poland, the Soviet Union, and Lithuania, with Poland receiving the southern part of the region. The German population fled or was expelled and all that remained from the prewar inhabitants of East Prussia was a part of the Warmian and Mazurian Polish-speaking minority. Those that fled or were expelled were replaced by Poles from eastern Polish territory taken by the Soviet Union, from other parts of Poland, and also Ukrainians and other groups in smaller numbers. In effect, the populations of entire cities and villages were almost completely replaced, and the region became a mosaic of ethnic, national, religious, and cultural groups. Most of the new inhabitants came from places where their roots reached back hundreds of years. Now, they were transplanted to a completely new place that had been the homeland of different people for hundreds of years.

What followed in Poland was nearly half a century of communism, in which great efforts were made to integrate Poland's new territories, including former East Prussia, now Warmia-Mazury, and their new inhabitants with the rest of the country. These efforts included policies meant to homogenize the entire nation, and were accompanied by Marxist-Leninist ideology. To help Poles get used to their new homes, the history of the territories was changed. Signs of German culture were covered up, and propaganda claimed that the regions had been "recovered" from Germany. At the same time, the eastern Kresy, from where a large part of the region's population came, were said to never have been Polish. The new ideological situation, the altered history,

and dependency on the Soviet Union meant that issues dealing with post-WWII expulsions, loss of homeland, forced migrations, etc., were taboo or censored subjects, especially regarding former eastern Polish territory. But, at the same time, as years passed, a natural process of assimilation and integration took place, as people generally busied themselves with rebuilding their lives after the war. To a large extent the mosaic of groups in Warmia-Mazury intermarried, and successive generations were born. This was accompanied by a steady emigration of the remaining Warmian and Mazurian minority, which had comprised the last remnants of the region's prewar population.

After the fall of communism, all of the issues that had been swept under the rug suddenly came to the surface. There was an explosion of interest in the region's history, culture, and identity. "White stains" in the region's past were addressed. Various organizations, formed through local initiative, explored all subjects that were taboo under communism through the arts, literature, historical research, and grassroots dialogue with the region's former inhabitants and current neighbors. In essence, these initiatives asked questions about the region's, and its inhabitant's, identity in light of its history: How is it that we ended up here? Who was here before us? What do we do now? But, this wave of interest and enthusiasm began to taper off towards the end of the 1990s. Poland's democracy stabilized and it became anchored in Western and European institutions through NATO and EU membership. Local initiatives still address the questions they were asking in early 1990s, but those concerned with such issues belong to a minority cultural elite. In essence, the exciting years following 1989 have themselves passed into history.

Today, Warmia-Mazury is integrated with the rest of Poland, although it is a peripheral region, especially from an economic perspective. The generation that came to the region after the war is disappearing. Their children were born during communism. Their grandchildren are the third generation since the dramatic population movements after WWII. They were born, grew up, and live in a region that only 65 years ago was within the borders of a different country, and was inhabited by different people. Signs of that past can be seen everywhere. Gothic and neo-Gothic churches, Teutonic castles, Protestant, Jewish, and WWI cemeteries, train stations, etc., these are all reminders of a not so long ago past. Not so long ago because there are still people alive today that lived in East Prussia before the war. And there are still people alive that

came to the region from today's Lithuania or Ukraine, or from near Warsaw or Kielce, etc.

This leads to the central question that is posed in this study. What does it mean to be a young person belonging to the third generation of Warmia-Mazury inhabitants after WWII in light of the complex and dynamic issues of regional history and identity? This generation's grandparents or great-grandparents experienced WWII, came to the region after the war and had to deal with the loss of their homeland and socialist reality. Their parents were born and grew up in that socialist reality and experienced Solidarity, Martial Law, and the fall of communism. The third generation was born in the 1980s. WWII, border changes, expulsions, migrations, communism, censorship, propaganda, historical ideology, Solidarity, martial law, the change to democracy – that is all history for them. The heady times after 1989, including the explosion of interest in the region's past and the blooming of local initiatives are history for them as well, for at the time they were rather too young to understand what was happening. Today, some of them are finishing their education and are entering adult life. But, how has this dramatic, complicated and turbulent history impacted their identities? Is there any historical continuity within their identities? In other words, where, or how, do they locate themselves in the context of their families' and region's past, present, and future? How does this generation identify with Warmia-Mazury? Do they identify with any aspects of the past? Do they think about these things at all?

## **The study**

The main purpose of this narrative study is to gain insight into the identity of the young, third generation, of Warmia-Mazury after WWII by analyzing their narratives, or stories, about the history of their families and region, life experiences, future plans, and way of identifying with the region. The narratives of six young people from Warmia-Mazury, collected in the city of Olsztyn between July 2009 and January 2010, are analyzed to gain insight into these questions. A narrative approach was chosen because individual narratives can provide a glimpse into an individual's identity, although of course only a fragment of it. But, the fragment of these young people's identities that is of concern here is connected to how they see themselves within the

history of their families and region, or if they see themselves as part of that history at all. It is also connected to how they identify with their region. By recording and analyzing their narratives, or stories, about their family history, regional history, life experiences, future plans, etc., insight into their understanding of these issues can be gained.

Such a study is important for a few reasons. For one, it is a qualitative study. There have been a number of quantitative studies looking into the historical consciousness and regional identity of young people in the region, but it does not appear that a complete qualitative study has been done. Quantitative research should be supplemented with a qualitative study that examines the subjective narratives of the region's young people. But also, the narratives collected and analyzed for this study are unique because they represent the young people that are the subject of this study at this very moment in time. In other words, these are the narratives of young people in the year 2009/2010, who are the third generation in the region since WWII. They are in their early to mid 20s and are entering adulthood, and this is the only chance to do this type of research on this group of people at this exact point in their life and at this exact point in history.

## **Theories and definitions**

This study touches on a number of terms and theoretical issues, the most important of which are introduced and defined here.

Identity is defined here from the constructivist perspective, according to which individuals construct their self-image through interaction with other individuals and society, so according to a specific interpersonal context (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 9). As young people grow up and mature, they gain “multi-identities,” related to family ties, generational ties, ties with friends and colleagues, with their locality, and also related to gender, religion, language, culture, career, etc. Simultaneously with these processes of multi-identity formation, national and ethnic identities are also shaped. Everyday situations actuate an individual's identifications related to being a son or daughter, brother or sister, friend, student, etc. Among all of these multi-identities, family is the most important and primary identification for young people, and



one on which other, collective, identifications are based. External factors, such as social-economic status, also influence the shaping of identity (Sielatycki 210). And if identity is constructed from “building blocks” available in an individual's culture, then when an individual speaks about him or herself, they are providing a self-narrative, or self-image, which transmits individual and cultural meanings, and provides insight into the individual's system of meanings, culture, and social world (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 8-9).

Historical continuity in this study is understood mainly as seeing oneself as a part of linear time, in which the present, including the self, is between the past and the future, and furthermore, the present, and the self, are a result of a chain of events leading up to the present (qtd. in Lewandowska 32).<sup>1</sup> In this study, this applies to how an individual sees him or herself within the history of their region and their family. Here, historical continuity is interchangeable with historical consciousness, which in general is a person's way of understanding the past, and is influenced by knowledge about the past and about how it is connected to the present (Nesenhöner and Kurowska 372). Understanding of the past is influenced by the current political, economic, and cultural conditions (Nesenhöner and Kurowska 373), as well as a system of values, myths, stereotypes and symbols (qtd. in E. Traba 212).<sup>2</sup> Therefore, historical continuity and consciousness can be based on a real, as well as a false understanding of the past (qtd. in E. Traba 213).<sup>3</sup>

And finally, regional identity is generally an individual's connection and identification with a place or region (Sakson, “Przemiany Tożsamości” 120). Regional identity is only one possible place identity, as one can identify with his or her region, or more precisely with a city, or even a part of a city, or in a wider context with a country, or even a continent. A person can be attached to a place for various reasons, including the presence of family and friends, childhood and life experiences, and family roots, so all things that are important for personal identity. Identification with a nation or region may also influence the formation of emotional bonds with places, as cities are parts of regions, and regions parts of countries, etc. (Lewicka 212).

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<sup>1</sup> This conception of historical continuity is adapted after an aspect of historical consciousness as defined by B. Szacka, cited by Lewandowska.

<sup>2</sup> This is part of a sociological definition of historical consciousness after J. Rulka, among others, cited by E. Traba.

<sup>3</sup> According to Suleja and Wrzesiński, cited by E. Traba.

## **Overview of chapters**

Chapter I outlines the history of Warmia-Mazury from 1945 to the present, with a focus on the region's population. The first section describes the post-war geopolitical situation, border changes, and population movements and settlement in Warmia-Mazury. The second section deals with the communist period, namely how Warmia-Mazury's new population dealt with its new reality and environment, and processes of integration that took place. The third section addresses the period from the end of communism to the present day, with a focus on local initiatives dealing with the region's history and identity, and a contextualization of the young people who are the subject of this study within the region's history.

Chapter II outlines the methodology, in which narrative research as a qualitative research method is introduced. The methodology of choosing the research site and participants, carrying out interviews, and analyzing the interview texts is described. Ethical issues are also briefly addressed.

Finally, Chapter III presents the analysis of the narratives. First, the six participants are briefly introduced to the reader. Next, their narratives are analyzed to determine if there is historical continuity in their identities regarding family history and regional history. The narratives are then analyzed for signs of how each individual identifies with his or her region or locality. An in-depth discussion of the results follows in the conclusion.

# **Chapter I – History of Warmia-Mazury, 1945-Present**

## **1.1 – Introduction to chapter**

In the aftermath of WWII, the region that is the topic of this study, Warmia-Mazury, underwent profound changes. Within this historical outline a certain thread will be followed, namely that of the incoming population to the region after WWII, and their integration, or lack of it, with their new environment. Today's population of Warmia-Mazury cannot be understood unless it is placed within the context of post-WWII population movements, the integrating (or disintegrating) processes that occurred in the region, the ideological and political atmosphere under communism, and finally, the fall of the socialist system in 1989 and the consequences of that change. As all of the participants of this study are the biological result of Poles resettled in the region after the war, this outline will focus on that part of the incoming population, while placing it within a larger social, cultural, and political context.

## **1.2 – 1945**

### **1.2.1 – Changing Central Europe's borders**

The map of Central Europe was drastically altered after WWII. As a result of the complicated geopolitical situation, Poland's borders were shifted westwards so that it acquired vast tracts of land that had belonged to Germany before the war, including parts of the territory of East Prussia that would go on to become Warmia-Mazury.<sup>4</sup> All of the territorial changes were also accompanied by staggeringly large population movements that would reshape the national, ethnic, and cultural make-up of Central Europe, especially in areas like Warmia-Mazury. Central Europe's new borders were negotiated during the war between Joseph Stalin of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR), Winston Churchill of Great Britain, and Franklin Roosevelt of the United States at the Teheran and Yalta conferences (Osekowski 11). During the postwar

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<sup>4</sup> See Appendix I, II and III.

Potsdam Conference, the issue of Poland's new borders was practically concluded. Those agreements made by a few leaders of victorious countries after WWII would have profound consequences on the lives of millions of people who were displaced and resettled. Part of the agreements meant that East Prussia was divided by the USSR and Poland to form the regions of Kaliningrad and Warmia-Mazury.<sup>5</sup> The German population of the region was forced to leave and move West. They were replaced by Poles from eastern Polish territories taken by the Soviet Union, but also by Poles from other regions, Ukrainians, Roma, and others. And within that melee there was also the local population of Poles who had lived in the region for generations but whose national identity was not easily defined.

According to Norman Davies, “In 1945, the scheme to establish the Polish-German frontier on the Oder and Lusatian Neisse, and to compensate Polish territorial losses in the East by equal grants of territories in the North and West entirely denuded of their native German inhabitants, must be largely attributed to Soviet policy” (373). The USSR already had plans of moving Poland's borders westwards and northwards after WWI, when Soviet commanders retreating from East Prussian territory “expressed their government's belief that this 'ancient German land' should be returned to its rightful owners” (Davies, “Volume II” 371). But it was not until the second half of WWII, after the Soviet Union joined the Allied Powers against Nazi Germany, that Stalin was able to begin executing those plans. The Soviet Union was adamant about moving Poland's borders westwards. The plan was to take eastern Polish territories, while Poland would take eastern German territories. Territories taken from Germany in the West would partly compensate Poland for the eastern losses. At the same time Poland would be dependent on the Soviet Union when making claims towards German territory in the West, since no other Allied power would support such claims. And since the Soviet Union would only cooperate with communist Polish authorities, Poland would effectively become dependent on a communist government controlled by the Soviet Union (Osękowski 10).

Stalin put forth his claims to Poland's eastern territories and to parts of East Prussia at the Teheran Conference in 1943, where the two other participants, Britain represented by Churchill and the US represented by Roosevelt, agreed for the Curzon

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<sup>5</sup> See Appendix II.

Line<sup>6</sup> to delineate Poland's border with the Soviet Union. This was despite the fact that the US officially denounced Soviet territorial claims (Osękowski 11).

The Teheran agreements were reaffirmed at the Yalta Conference which took place from 4-11 February 1945. The Polish-Soviet border was confirmed by the Western Powers to run along the Curzon Line and the division of East Prussia between the Soviet Union and Poland was agreed. In effect, with the compliance of Western Powers, Poland's eastern border was drawn according to the Hitler-Stalin Pact of 1939<sup>7</sup> and the Soviet Union arranged the territory Poland gained from Germany in the North and West (Bartoszewski 449; Biskupski 115-19). But, these were more or less only formalities, for the Soviet Union had already decided to move Poles from the east of the new border westwards to the shifted Poland, and to remove all non-Poles from the west of the new border to the USSR (Davies, "Volume II" 379). In other words, Stalin was proceeding as if the borders were already set, and the post-war population transfers were already on the horizon.

During Stalin's negotiations with the Western Powers concerning Central Europe's new borders, the USSR was at the same time closely cooperating on the matter with Polish communists. This was especially the case after relations with the Polish government-in-exile in London broke down in April 1943 (Osękowski 11), after which point the government-in-exile would have no say in changes made to Poland's borders. On 1 November 1943, a declaration of the Polish Workers' Party (PPR - Polska Partia Robotnicza) claimed that resignation from Poland's eastern territory will secure Poland peace in the East and strengthen its position in the West and along the Baltic coast. This program went on to be accepted by the Polish Committee of National Liberation (PKWN - Polski Komitet Wyzwolenia Narodowego) (Osękowski 11-12). Resignation from the eastern territories would gain Soviet support for taking German territory in the West (Osękowski 11), and the Polish communists, who represented an extremely small minority in Poland, were working with the Soviet Union to execute its territorial plans.

This cooperation took a further step forward in July 1944, when the PKWN signed an agreement with the USSR which confirmed that the Polish-Soviet border

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<sup>6</sup> Named after British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon, who proposed it as the new Polish-Soviet frontier in the aftermath of WWI. It was rejected by both Poland and the Soviet Union (Davies, "Volume II" 376). Later, it served as the dividing line of the partition of Poland between the Soviet Union and Nazi Germany during WWII (Biskupski 115-19). See Appendix I.

<sup>7</sup> The Pact of Non-Aggression between Germany and the USSR, also referred to as the "Nazi-Soviet Treaty of 1939" (Davies, "Volume II" 321, 350) and the "Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact."

would run along the Curzon Line. The dividing line of East Prussia between the USSR and Poland was also agreed. And in an attached clause, the Soviet government agreed to support Polish efforts to set the Polish border with Germany along the Oder and Lusatian Neisse Rivers (Osękowski 12). None of these territorial changes had been approved by the Western Powers at that point, since the Yalta Conference had not even taken place yet, but Stalin and the PKWN were proceeding as if the changes were already facts (Kossert 307).

At the Potsdam Conference which took place from 17 July to 2 August 1945, the Polish delegation, made up of communists loyal to the Soviet Union<sup>8</sup>, argued its case for eastern German territory, including the southern part of East Prussia, and after lengthy negotiations an agreement favorable for Poland was reached on 2 August (Osękowski 12-13). The following is a communique from the conference regarding decisions related to Poland's borders:

The three heads of the Government agree that, pending the final determination of Poland's western frontier, the former German territories east of a line running from the Baltic Sea immediately west of Swinemunde [Świnoujście], and thence along the Oder River to the confluence of the western Neisse River and along the western Neisse River to the Czechoslovak frontier, *including that portion of East Prussia not placed under the administration of the USSR...and including the area of the former free city of Danzig [Gdańsk], shall be under the administration of the Polish State and for such purposes should not be considered as part of the Soviet Zone of Occupation of Germany.* (Davies, "Volume II" 373-4) [emphasis added]

The highlighted segment of the communique refers to the region of East Prussia that was to be divided between the Soviet Union and Poland to form Kaliningrad and Warmia-Mazury, with Lithuania also getting a significantly smaller part of the territory. Whereas Poland and Lithuania put forth historical claims towards parts of East Prussia, the Soviet Union, having no historical ties to the region whatsoever, effectively claimed that it can take a part of the region because it is a huge empire and one of the main

<sup>8</sup> However, to be fair, it should be mentioned that although it was the communists that were cooperating with the Soviet Union to change Poland's borders, various other political groupings in Poland, including far right nationalists, also had their own territorial programs. Although the communists were unique in putting up no protest to the loss of eastern territory to the Soviet Union, many other political spheres agreed with them about the Western and Northern border, believing that after the war Poland should receive East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia from Germany. These claims towards German territory in the West were usually justified by a "historical right to 'Piast land.'" It was also commonly accepted that after the border changes the German population would necessarily have to be removed from the new territory (Osękowski 9). Some of these nationalist political groupings would go on to work with the communist authorities in securing, administering, and ethnically cleansing the Western and Northern Territories after the war.

victors of WWII (Kossert 307).<sup>9</sup> The exact division of East Prussia between the Soviet Union and Poland would not be finalized until years later,<sup>10</sup> but in the end the largest chunk of the region (23,489 out of 36,991 square kilometers) went to Poland (Kossert 324), with the Soviet Union taking most of the rest.

So, as a result of the Potsdam agreements, Poland received administrative control over lands east of the Oder-Neisse and bordering the Baltic Sea, although the final confirmation of the new borders was to take place at a future peace conference. However, since the peace conference never took place, the Potsdam decisions became binding despite their provisional status, and even though they were later undermined by the West on multiple occasions as a result of political tensions (Osękowski 13). Despite not being officially internationally recognized until much later,<sup>11</sup> the new Western and Northern territories effectively became a part of Poland after the Potsdam Conference<sup>12</sup> (Davies, “Volume II” 373-4, 398).

But, at the Potsdam Conference Poland, along with other Central European countries, also received permission to remove the German population from its new territories. According to Clause XIII of the Report of the Potsdam Conference, “the transfer to Germany of German populations or elements thereof remaining in Poland, Czechoslovakia and Hungary will have to be undertaken...in an orderly and humane manner” (Davies, “Volume II” 422). Thus, the victorious Allied countries sanctioned the removal of millions of Germans from territories that now belonged to Poland. The resettlement of Germans would be accompanied by the resettlement of millions of other

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<sup>9</sup> In Potsdam Stalin argued that the Soviet Union should receive some territorial compensation from Germany, and that the USSR needed an unfrozen port, which “can only be Königsberg.” In the end Soviet claims towards the region can be viewed as geopolitical tactics aimed at establishing a western bridgehead of the Soviet empire (Kossert 307).

<sup>10</sup> Although Poland, Russia and Lithuania were already setting up their administrations in East Prussia in the spring of 1945, the exact border demarcations were still not clear. On 16 August 1945 Poland and the Soviet Union signed a border agreement as a first step in finalizing the division of the territory. After some changes, on 7 May 1945 the dividing line was agreed to run roughly through the middle of East Prussia horizontally. One more change in favor of the USSR was made in 1954 before the Polish-Soviet commission on delimitation finally finished operating in 1958 (Kossert 308).

<sup>11</sup> The new borders eventually went on to be recognized in 1950 by the German Democratic Republic (GDR), which was established in the Soviet Zone of Occupation. West Germany *de facto* accepted the borders in 1970 and finally in 1991 Poland's Western and Northern borders were officially recognized by the reunified Germany (Davies, “Volume II” 398).

<sup>12</sup> Poland gained 103,000 square kilometers of German territory in the North and West (Makowski 59), which was 21.3% of prewar Germany (Osękowski 14) and made up 33% of postwar Poland. While in the East, Poland lost 179,000 square kilometers to the Soviet Union, which was 46% of prewar Poland (Makowski 59). All in all, after 1945 Polish territory consisted of 312,000 square kilometers compared to 389,000 before 1939 (Bartoszewski 449).

inhabitants of Central Europe. As a result, the southern part of East Prussia that became Warmia-Mazury, aside from belonging to a different state and political system, also took on a completely different ethnic and cultural make-up.

### **1.2.2 – WWII population movements in a larger context**

The vast population movements that took place in Poland's new territories after WWII must be viewed within larger contexts of time and space. Almost as soon as the war started large numbers of people, especially in Central Europe, began moving around for various reasons. The expulsion of the German population from former East Prussia, and the replacement of that population with Poles and others from various regions were only a fragment of the expulsions, resettlement programs and mass migrations that were the direct or indirect results of WWII. Even today, German and Polish literature on postwar population movements tends to focus on the forced expulsions of either the German or the Polish population, overlooking the fact that these were parallel processes that occurred within a much larger context (Bömelburg and R. Traba 9).

Expulsions and population movements resulting from WWII began to take place only a few weeks after the German invasion of Poland on 1 September 1939, when Poles and Polish Jews were expelled by German police and the SS from territory attached to the Reich, such as Gdańsk and East Prussia, and moved into the General Government, which, according to Nazi plans, was to be a “Polish reserve.” People would continue to be forcibly moved into the General Government from parts of prewar Western and Northern Poland until 1941, and after that there were further expulsions and resettlement actions within the General Government itself where Poles were moved by the SS into still smaller “Polish reserves.” Starting in 1941 this was accompanied by the transport of Polish Jews for mass murder, whose homes and property were given to German re-settlers or Poles whose own property was given to Germans. Also, an estimated 2.3 million Polish citizens were deported to the Reich for forced labor between 1939-1945, while their homes and property were given to Germans resettled from eastern regions that were part of the Soviet Union according to the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact. Many of them could not return home after the war because their home



was now outside of the new Polish borders, or had been completely destroyed. Meanwhile, eastern Poland was invaded and occupied by the Soviet Union on 17 September 1939, and beginning in 1940 hundreds of thousands of Polish citizens were deported into the USSR. There were also “wild expulsions” of Poles carried out by Ukrainian partisans in cooperation with German authorities in the Wołyń and Galicja regions in 1943-1944. The resulting ethnic tensions led to 80,000 Polish and 20,000 Ukrainian deaths and the displacement of 300,000 people. Finally, the Warsaw Uprising in 1944 led to yet another wave of expulsions when the civilian population of the city was forced to leave the Left Bank of Warsaw (Bömelburg and R. Traba 10-11).

Towards the end and after the war more than 12 million ethnic Germans fled or were displaced from various parts of Central and Eastern Europe and the Balkans, including Poland, the Baltics, Bohemia, Moravia, Slovenia, Serbia, Ukraine, Slovakia, Croatia and Hungary. About two million of them lost their lives in the process. After the war seven million Germans were forcefully removed from Poland itself: 3.5 million from German territory taken over by Poland after the war, and 3.5 million from other Polish territory. On the other hand about 1.5 million Poles and Polish Jews were forced to leave former eastern Polish territory, today's Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. Nearly all of them were moved to new Polish territory, including East Prussia, Pomerania and Silesia, to replace the German population. In addition to those westward migration flows, about half a million Ukrainians, Belarussians and Lithuanians were forced to leave Poland and resettle to the east of the new Polish-Soviet border (Fassmann and Munz 521-3).

In general, the whole situation was sheer chaos with millions of people moving around in all directions. “For three years [after the war], Polish roads and railways were crammed with endless processions of refugees, deportees, repatriates, transients, expellees, and internal migrants” (Davies, “Volume II” 419). People who were displaced during the war were now attempting to get back home. Over 520,000 deportees returned from forced labor in Germany. Smaller numbers returned from the Soviet Union.<sup>13</sup> Transients included Soviet deserters and prisoners-of-war going back to the USSR, while tens of thousands of Polish Jews who survived the war in Russia were moving West on their way to Israel. German expellees were sent westwards out of

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<sup>13</sup> Most were kept from returning until after 1956.

new Polish territory, and Ukrainian expellees sent from Poland to Ukraine. Polish repatriates from eastern territory taken by the Soviet Union were moving westwards, while repatriates from Western Europe were moving eastwards. All of the repatriates, along with internal migrants from other Polish territory, were heading towards new Polish territory gained from Germany in the West and North (Davies, "Volume II" 419-22).

The population movements were also not restrained to WWII and the years directly following it. Between 1955-1959 about 250,000 Poles that had been deported to the USSR during the war were allowed to return to Poland, and 80% of them settled in the Western and Northern territories. There were also about 20,000 repatriated Polish citizens of Jewish background (Osękowski 23). And finally, hundreds of thousands of people continued to emigrate to Germany in successive waves throughout the communist period.

All of these people took part in "one of the greatest demographic upheavals in European History" (Davies, "Volume II" 422). Statistical estimates are difficult because many of the population movements overlap one another and many people were involved in multiple movements (Bömelburg and R. Traba 12). Nonetheless, the total number of people involved in migration flows related to WWII, including internal migration, was probably as high as 30 million, and when taking into account only major cross-border migration flows, the number is still as high as 15.4 million (Fassmann and Munz 521). An estimate considering all WWII migration taking place on German, Polish and USSR territory is 24.85 million (Davies, "Volume II" 420-1). It can generally be estimated that almost 20% of both the Polish and German population was in some way directly affected by population movements related to WWII. Given the size of the Polish and German populations at the time, this means that 12 million Germans and 6 million Poles were affected. Practically every Pole and German was related to or knew at least one person that was directly affected by WWII displacement (Bömelburg and R. Traba 12).

### **1.2.3 – Population movements in Poland's Western and Northern Territories**

So, the post-war re-settlements and expulsions that occurred on Poland's new

territory after the war can be seen as yet another stage in a continuous process of forced migration flows and displacements involving millions of people. Population movements involving Poland's new territories were the result of Soviet policy and agreements made at Potsdam. In general, the goal of Poland's Soviet backed communist authorities was to completely replace the German population of Poland's new territories with Poles.<sup>14</sup> The whole operation was overseen and organized by the State Repatriation Bureau (PUR – Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny), which was created by the PKWN in October 1944 and functioned until 1951 (Davies, “Volume II” 422).

In the fall of 1944 the Red Army was advancing into territory to be taken from Germany after the war. Many Germans began to flee West, and when the Soviets arrived they began expelling the Germans that remained. The remaining German population in the new Polish territories was expelled between 1945-1948. At first the expulsions were “wild,” where German citizens were removed from their homes and forced to move westwards across the border (Bömelburg and R. Traba 11). These “wild expulsions” were executed by the Polish military and followed a policy of “not giving up a single Pole, and not letting in a single German.” At a meeting of the Central Committee of the PPR in Warsaw on 20-21 May 1945, General Secretary Władysław Gomułka stated, “Border guards have to be placed on the border and Germans have to be thrown out, and the conditions of those who are there have to be made such that they would not want to stay” (Kulczycki, “National Identity” 209). In June and July of 1945 about 500,000 Germans were removed this way from territories that would be administered by Poland after the war (Osękowski 21-22). Later transfers of the German population were sanctioned by Potsdam decisions and agreements between Polish, British and Soviet authorities<sup>15</sup>. Those agreements outlined how the German population was to be transferred from former German territory to British and Soviet occupation zones in Germany. The transfers were not voluntary except for families with dual nationality. Germans were concentrated in collecting centers in primitive conditions and for the journey West they were stuffed into trains and harassed, robbed, even raped along the way. Many people did not survive, often because of illness (Davies, “Volume

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<sup>14</sup> According to the PPR declaration of Polish-Soviet cooperation regarding border changes from 1 November 1943, it had already been agreed at that time that these westward population movements were to occur simultaneously (Osękowski 11-12).

<sup>15</sup> For example, among others, an agreement between Polish and British representatives of the Combined Repatriation Executive signed in Berlin on 14 February 1946 (Davies, “Volume II” 422).

II” 424).

At the same time the removal of the Polish population from eastern territory given to the Soviet Union began in 1945. Polish citizens in those regions were “repatriated” to Poland within its new borders. Most of them were not physically forced to leave, but if they chose to stay they would have to relinquish Polish citizenship and become citizens of the USSR. Many of them were also left with practically no choice because they were persecuted by the Soviet authorities for taking part in underground resistance to Soviet occupation during the war (Karp and R. Traba 16-17). They were allowed to take only movable property and transported West on trains, suffering harassment from Soviet authorities at nearly every step of the process (Bömelburg and R. Traba 12). In general, the transportation of Poles from East to West was extremely chaotic and they suffered as much as the Germans expelled from Poland (Davies and Moorhouse 442-3). An example of such a journey, based on the experiences of Danuta Śleszyńska, demonstrates some of the traumatic difficulties that re-settlers faced. During the war her family began to migrate West, leaving their village in what is today Lithuania. On the western side of the Curzon Line they were captured by Germans and taken to Poznań and from there to work camps in the German locations of Schönewalde and then Bärwalde. After the war they went back to Poland, first to Stuzno in central Poland, then northwards to Lipno and from there northeast to Pisz, which was former East Prussia, before finally ending up in the capital of Warmia-Mazury, Olsztyn (Śleszyńska 127).

Although Germans and Poles from the East were the most numerous groups being moved out of and into Polish Western and Northern territory, many other groups were involved as well. By 1948 Poland's new territories were settled by about 2.5 million Poles from central Poland.<sup>16</sup> There were about 235,000 Poles that returned from West and Northern Europe. About 150,000 Ukrainians were settled in the new territories in 1947 after being forcefully removed from the countryside in southeast Poland as part of Operation Vistula (Akcja Wisła)<sup>17</sup> (Osękowski 21). About 130,000 Jews that survived the Holocaust were settled in the new territories for a short time after

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<sup>16</sup> Central Poland in this context refers to areas that were neither taken by the Soviet Union, nor gained from Germany after the war.

<sup>17</sup> The communist authorities wanted to eliminate the Ukrainian underground in southeast Poland by dispersing the Ukrainians from that region throughout the Western and Northern territories. They were settled in Warmia-Mazury, Lower Silesia and Pomerania (Bömelburg and R. Traba 12).

the war. There were 30,000 Polish repatriates from France, 15,000 from Yugoslavia, 6,000 from Germany, and smaller numbers from Romania and Belgium. Small numbers of Roma were also forcibly settled in the new territories, although the numbers are difficult to estimate. And about 13,000 refugees of the Greek Civil War<sup>18</sup> were also settled there (Strauchold, “Próba Stworzenia” 74-6).

#### **1.2.4 – Population movements and resettlement in Warmia-Mazury**

The southern part of East Prussia that became Warmia-Mazury was the northern part of Poland's new Western and Northern Territories after the war, but the population movements there had their own specific character. As a result of transfers and resettlement actions, almost the entire prewar population of the region, with the exception of local Warmians and Mazurians of Polish descent, was replaced by Poles and other national groups from various places.

There were about 2.5 million people in East Prussia before WWII, mostly Germans, and with Polish, Lithuanian and Jewish minorities. Directly after the war there were between 500-550,000 (Osękowski 72). In the southern part of East Prussia taken over by Poland, there were about 250,000, which was roughly 25% of the prewar number (Beba and Pijanowska 23). 100,000 of those 250,000 were Germans that had not fled ahead of the Red Army, had not been deported to the Soviet Union for labor, and had not yet been expelled to Germany. The “wild expulsions” of the remaining German population were followed by the planned transfer agreed at the Potsdam Conference and afterwards. This lasted from 1946 to 1948 and was carried out by local Polish authorities. According to official data 65,381 Germans were transported out of the region during that time (Karp and R. Traba 16). The other 150,000 people that remained in the region after the war were Warmians and Mazurians (Strauchold “Odzyskanie” 94), who were put through a process of “verification” in which they had to declare whether they were Polish or German. As a result of verification, 106,717 Warmians and Mazurians were “verified for Polishness” between 1946-1950 (Karp and R. Traba 16).

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<sup>18</sup> The Greek Civil War lasted from 1946-1949 and Poland took in refugees from the losing communist side that fled the country.

The first new settlers of the region at the beginning of 1945 came from across the former East Prussian border, from neighboring areas of Mazowsze, Suwalszczyzna, Kurpiowszczyzna and Białostoczczyzna. Because of the general lack of authority in the region at the time, migrants from these regions often expelled the local population, including Warmians and Mazurians, out of their homes and took their property. At this time there were also bands of looters all around, also usually from neighboring areas, but later from all over Poland. For the PUR, which was responsible for organizing the settlement of the region, the biggest challenge was the settlement of Poles coming from the eastern territories. Between 1945-1949 273,882 Poles from former eastern Polish territory were resettled in the region. During that same period 306,662 people also came to the region from central Poland. In 1947 between 55-60,000 Ukrainians were also settled in the region as part of Operation Vistula (Karp and R. Traba 16-17). Finally, there were also small groups of Roma settled in the region, and some Belarussians and Lithuanians resettled as well (qtd. in Lewandowska 106).<sup>19</sup>

The most massive resettlement operations ended by 1950. In that year there were 689,000 people in the region. That number consisted of four main groups: roughly 25% were settlers from central Poland, about 23% were “repatriates” from the East, mainly from what is today Lithuania, about 19% were Warmians and Mazurians, and roughly 10% were Ukrainians (Beba and Pijanowska 24).

### **1.3 – 1945-1989**

#### **1.3.1 – Post-war situation in Warmia-Mazury**

The post-war situation in Warmia-Mazury was truly remarkable. The population of the region had been almost completely replaced, and the region's new inhabitants were a mix of various national, ethnic, cultural and religious groups, all coming from different places. After being uprooted from their previous homes, where most of them had been for generations, they all had to suddenly co-exist with each other in a strange, new place. Not only did this new place have a different natural landscape, but it also had a foreign, or German, cultural landscape that had developed in the region for

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<sup>19</sup> Numerical data from S. Żyromski, W. Gieszczyński and A. Sakson, cited by Lewandowska.

hundreds of years. Everything, including the architecture, the street names, the statues and memorials, reminded the new settlers of Germany and Germans. After the experiences of most people during the war, it is understandable how difficult that must have been. The fact that the region was heavily destroyed during the war and looted after it made things even more difficult. And in addition to all of that, the new inhabitants also found themselves under the watchful eye of Soviet controlled communist authorities bent on monopolizing power and control over the entire society by all means necessary. That is the atmosphere in which hundreds of thousands of people started to build a new life for themselves in Warmia-Mazury after the war.

### **1.3.2 – The new inhabitants**

#### **1.3.2.1 – Overview of major groups in Warmia-Mazury after WWII**

The mixture of people that composed the new population of Warmia-Mazury after WWII has been referred to as an ethnic-national-cultural mosaic (Beba and Pijanowska 25; Karp and R. Traba 17). The various groups differed in a number of ways, including territorial origins, culture, ethnicity, nationality, religion, language and material wealth.

The local Warmians and Mazurians were the only part of the population that was not new to the region. In general, they were a frontier group, especially in a national and ethnic sense. This was characterized by an often not precisely defined national identity, a preference to integrate on a regional or local level, and to maintain a level of autonomy. Before 1945 they were exposed to organized Germanization which, combined with hundreds of years of being surrounded by German culture, had such an effect that after the war Warmians and Mazurians were often considered to be Germans, especially because of the use of the German language. Especially Mazurians were equated to Germans because of their Protestant faith, while Warmians were Catholic. Both groups' national identity was varied. It ranged from those speaking Polish and identifying as Polish, to those speaking German and identifying as German, and many variations in between, including more local Warmian or Mazurian identity, and indifference towards Poland or Germany. However, the Warmian population contained

some groupings that had a tradition of organized Polish resistance to Germanization efforts, while Mazurians were slightly more prone to a German identity. In general, both groups lived mainly in the southern parts of East Prussia, the Warmians more condensed in Warmia and the Mazurians more spatially spread out across Mazury. Mazurians dominated Warmians numerically. Both groups generally had problems reading and writing Polish, and did not speak literary Polish, but a unique dialect. In general, they were both a traditional farming group and had a low level of education. Demographically, they lacked a middle generation as a result of the war (Beba and Pijanowska 26; Osękowski 27-33).

Poles from central Polish territories were comprised of diverse groups from various regions of Poland, each having its particular cultural and territorial characteristics. But, in general, they were mostly poor small farmers, Catholics, often coming from overcrowded areas, and migrated more or less by choice looking to improve their material situation. Those coming from neighboring areas such as Białostoczczyzna, Kurpiowszczyzna, or Mazowsze were particularly poorly educated, very traditional, and very religious, sometimes fanatically. They usually settled in Warmia-Mazury in a scattered way. They tried to be politically active, seeing it as a way of improving their social and material situation. Demographically, they were mostly young people in childbearing age, and oftentimes had young children with them. They lacked an older generation, which contributed to a weakening of their traditions (Beba and Pijanowska 27; Osękowski 36-42).

People from eastern Polish territory were characterized by their traditional ethnic culture, closely tied to Catholicism, and strong feeling of Polish national identity and patriotism. This was a result of life in a cultural diaspora in the East, consisting of Lithuanians, Belarussians and Ukrainians. Eastern Poles usually resettled in order to remain Polish citizens. They were mostly rural and rather poor materially, although a significant part of their group, in particular those from the city of Vilnius, was well educated and urban. The educated part of their group settled mostly in southern and central Warmia-Mazury, particularly in Olsztyn, where after the war settlers from the East in general comprised 42.8% of the city's population. They were quite active in social and cultural life. They also often resettled in extended families and as communities or in larger groups, and for these reasons were able to better maintain their



traditions (Beba and Pijanowska 25-7; Osękowski 43).

Ukrainians differed from the other groups in nearly every way, especially religiously and linguistically, because most of them were Greek Roman Catholics, some were Eastern Orthodox, and they spoke Ukrainian. They were generally poor and had their own particular way of farming, dressing, and family structure. They were often resettled as extended families and forced to settle on the most damaged farms in northern Warmia-Mazury. The authorities wanted to make sure they have no opportunity to express their nationality, so they were closely monitored and not allowed to be socially or politically active. For a while, their isolation from other groups allowed them to maintain their culture and consciousness of their ethnic, national and religious uniqueness (Beba and Pijanowska 27-8; Osękowski 41).

### **1.3.2.2 – Settlement and acclimatization difficulties**

Overall, the process of leaving behind their homes and moving to a strange and foreign place was a very difficult experience for most of the settlers, whether they came by force or by choice. Despite the devastation of infrastructure, most of the settlers were exposed to a higher, more modern, technological standard than they had back home. Many of them did not know how to use mechanized agricultural technology, so many tools were unused and left to rust. This also made them look bad in the eyes of the local population (Beba and Pijanowska 26).

Upon arrival, Poles from the East found ruin, an unfriendly government, belligerent Russian soldiers, little if any help from the authorities to get started, and even hostility from Poles from different areas of Poland who got there earlier. In the countryside the situation was particularly insecure. To make things worse, in school their children were taught that the lands in the East had never been Polish. All this led many settlers from the East to resignation and a lack of will to contribute positively to the development of the new territories (Davies and Moorhouse 442-3). A re-settler from the Vilnius area that ended up in a village near Olsztyn after the war describes the situation in the following way:

Here everything was foreign: the people, the buildings, the land. We were heading into the unknown. Most important was that our own [re-settlers from the East] lived next door. Together it was easier to survive that storm. So what

if we got a big farm, since we weren't at home. After all it wasn't us who built those houses, they weren't from our sweat...Ours remained in the East, while we were here as if banished... (qtd. in Sakson, "Przemiany Tożsamości" 121)<sup>20</sup>

Some settlers from the East were against the new borders and maintained hopes of returning home (Osękowski 53). Many of them never got used to their new homes and continued to look back with nostalgia on the ones they left behind. They compared everything, even mushrooms, to the landscape of the East (Brakoniecki, "Polak" 79). It was similar for many Ukrainians who did not even unpack all of their things for the first few years because they hoped that they would be allowed to go back home (Łukowski 48).

### **1.3.2.3 – Inter-group interaction and integration**

The confrontation of these various groups with each other in Warmia-Mazury has been described as "culture clash" (Beba and Pijanowska 25; Karp and R. Traba 17). The national and ethnic tensions were most volatile from 1945-1948 (Strauchold, "Próba Stworzenia" 74). Because the groups were so different from one another, at first there was mutual distrust and difficulties in understanding each other. For the most part, people limited contacts to their own group, which delayed the formation of social bonds (Osękowski 21, 50-1)

After 1948, under the force of state repressions and policies aiming at Stalinization, there was a cooling of inter-group relations, social activity, and national movements. Inter-group tensions were simply "frozen," which did nothing to solve national and ethnic problems. Also, national and ethnic minorities were becoming increasingly alienated, as the state refused to deal with their existence, preferring repression and a facade of homogeneity (Strauchold, "Próba Stworzenia" 74). After 1956 the authorities liberalized their approach to social issues which resulted in minorities and ethnic groups receiving limited autonomy rights. As a result, some groups, such as Ukrainians and Germans, could form social-cultural organizations. Such a liberalization was meant to ease growing tensions among minorities, but also to create a bridge between minority groups and the communist party. In the end, such organizations often became tools used by the authorities to control minorities. Also, the

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<sup>20</sup> Statement of anonymous interviewee from Sakson's research on regional identity.

post-1956 process of de-Stalinization did not actually improve inter-group relations because tensions that was repressed during Stalinism resurfaced (Hejger 359).

Nonetheless, inter-group tensions eventually gave way to processes of cultural integration, and by 1956, with the exception of national minorities, most Poles were accustomed to their new life. Integration started with adaptation to the new environment and material conditions, and was later accompanied by social stabilization in the form of breaking through mutual mistrust and opening up to aspects of different cultural elements (Beba and Pijanowska 25-6). In other words, a natural process of adaptation began to slowly take place. People had to unpack because everyday situations forced them to. Homes needed to be fixed up for the winter to stay warm. And contacts with neighbors inevitably began through conversations, conflicts, or drinking (Łukowski 48). In this way, the process of integration began at the local level. Animosity turned into tolerance which later turned into acceptance of cultural differences. Identification with the Polish nation and Catholicism was often the main integrating factor among Poles. People also found common values, such as hard work, and they all had to adapt to a new environment. Time also did its part, as the standard of living slowly improved, and a new generation was born and raised in the region (Osękowski 68-69). People born in the region after the war were “locals.” Warmia-Mazury was their homeland and they did not look back towards the East or elsewhere with nostalgia (Sakson, “Przemiany Tożsamości” 121). But, it is important to mention that this process of integration did not involve every group. Warmians and Mazurians never became integrated, which resulted in most of them leaving Warmia-Mazury during the communist period (Osękowski 68-69), while Ukrainians took much longer to integrate.

### **1.3.3 – The state**

#### **1.3.3.1 – Taking over and administering the new territory**

The Polish communists in cooperation with the Soviet Union were taking steps to take over East Prussia and other eastern German territory as soon as the Red Army reached the area during the winter offensive of 1944-1945. The plan was to have

control over the region before any official decisions were made regarding its future. On 5 February 1945 Bolesław Bierut, the leader of the National Homeland Council (KRN – Krajowa Rada Narodowa), declared that Poland had taken over the civil administration of East Prussia. But, Poland's authority was only symbolic at the time since large parts of the region were still under the control of Germany or the Red Army. Nonetheless, the Polish administration slowly took shape and on 23 May 1945 the territory was ceremonially handed over to Poland by Soviet military authorities, although the USSR maintained a strong military presence (Kossert 324).

The task of administering and settling the region immediately after the war was extremely difficult because of the dire economic and material situation. The region was already one of the poorest of the post-German territories taken by Poland (Karp and R. Traba 14), and war destruction was severe. For example, in May 1945 the number of horses in the region was a mere 2.1% of the prewar total, while the destruction in cities reached 40-50%, and in villages 25-30%. A lot of infrastructure was destroyed and burned by the retreating German army (Osękowski 15) and much of what was left was then taken or burned down by the Soviet military (Karp and R. Traba 14-15; Osękowski 15). The population was only 36% of its prewar state and in addition a typhus epidemic broke out in the summer of 1945 (Kossert 324-5). All of this combined with the presence of Soviet troops and looters made security in the region very poor. During this time it was not uncommon for Poles from central Poland to go back where they came from (Osękowski 16). It was not until 1946 that the situation began to stabilize (Kossert 324-5). But, despite the difficulties, the authorities wasted no time in settling the territories and imposing their agenda.

### **1.3.3.2 – De-Germanization and Re-Polonization**

Immediately after Polish authorities took charge of southern East Prussia they began “de-Germanization” and “re-Polonization” of the region. The main goal was to create a homogeneous nation-state of Poles, and it was to be based on the historical myth that the Western and Northern Territories had been under German domination for hundreds of years. All German place names, inscriptions, street signs, and names of buildings were changed to Polish. Use of the German language was outlawed

(Strauchold, "Próba Stworzenia" 78). Warmians and Mazurians who wished to be Polish citizens were pressured to change their names to Polish-sounding ones. For example, the first name Zygfryd became Tadeusz, while the last names Gurck and Chłosta became Gurek and Chłosta (Brakoniecki, "Polak" 35-7). There was also an effort to uncover and stress signs of "Polishness" in the region, while ignoring, or covering up, signs of "Germanness" (Hejger 345). In general everything that hinted at the centuries old connection of the region to German culture was to be destroyed<sup>21</sup> (Osękowski 169).

In introducing this nationalistic ideology the communists were taking advantage of heightened postwar anti-German sentiments. Considering most Poles' experiences during the war under Nazi occupation, such an attitude was indeed a natural psychological mechanism. People simply wanted to get rid of anything that could remotely remind them of Germans. But, the authorities intensified these anti-German sentiments through political manipulation (R. Traba, "Pamięć Zbiorowa" 93). In fact, this was a necessity for the authorities, since communism had virtually no public support in Poland and anti-German sentiment was one of the only platforms on which they could find common ground with the public, especially in the new territories (Siebel-Achenbach 272-3).

In May 1945, the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Poland in southern East Prussia, Colonel Jakub Prawin, sent a circular to local authorities in the region asking them to destroy signs of "Germanness." Already on 1 May 1945 he had arranged for Kaiserstr. in Olsztyn to be changed to Marshall Stalin St. (ul. Marszałka Stalina). Stalin was to be the patron of every main street in every city. Sometimes this led to particular irony. For example, in the city of Morąg Hitlerstr. was changed to Stalin St. (ul. Stalina). Other street names were simply translated from German to Polish. For example, Schlosstr. became Castle St. (ul. Zamkowa), or Markt became Market (Rynek). Others were named after regional Polish figures that had taken part in or supported the Polish national movement, such as Gizewiusz, Mrongowiusz, or Pieniężny. They often replaced streets named after famous German figures, such as Bismarck or Hindenburg. Even streets named after German cultural figures were

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<sup>21</sup> It should be mentioned, however, that every sign of German culture was not blindly destroyed or thrown away throughout the communist period. To be fair, many German cultural artifacts were saved by various individuals, scholars, collectors, artists, etc. (Jasiński 38).

changed to their Polish counterparts. Beethovenstr. became Paderewski St. (ul. Paderewskiego), Bachstr. became Chopin St. (ul. Szopena), and Schillerstr. became Mickiewicz St. (ul. Mickiewicza). Kopernicus-Platz at first became Copernicus Sq. (Pl. Kopernika), but was later renamed Red Army Sq. (Pl. Armii Czerwonej) after a Statue of Gratitude to the Red Army was built there. But, there was still a Copernicus St. (ul. Kopernika) (Jasiński 31-2).

Many statues had already been taken down by the Red Army, and those that remained were removed quickly. In Olsztyn, the statue of Wilhelm I was replaced by a statue of Mickiewicz (Jasiński 33). The Statue of Gratitude to the Red Army mentioned above was sculpted by famous Polish sculptor Xawery Dunikowski, using materials from the Tannenberg memorial near Olsztynek, which was built by the Germans in honor of a victory over the Russian Army during WWI (Brakoniecki, "Prowincja Człowieka" 28). A propaganda statue dedicated to the German plebiscite victory over Poland in 1920 was replaced by a monument dedicated to Heroes of the Struggle for the National and Social Liberation of Warmia and Mazury. The city's theater was named after Stefan Jaracz, a Polish artist and Auschwitz prisoner. The Regional Mazury Museum began functioning in 1945 at the castle, its goal being the popularization of the age-old Polishness of the region. The museum replaced an East Prussian national museum that had functioned in the same location and had aimed to popularize the German plebiscite victory of 1920 (Brakoniecki, "Polak" 36). Statues, street names and institutions that had served as symbols of the region's connection with Germany were now replaced by statues, street names and institutions that served as symbols of its connection with Poland.

### **1.3.3.3 – Verification of Warmians and Mazurians**

The regime also had to deal with the local non-German population. The authorities tried to galvanize Warmians and Mazurians as "autochthons" that withstood hundreds of years of German domination and were able to maintain their Polish culture. Their presence in the region was supposed to prove its Polishness and Poland's historical rights to it (Kraft 108). On the one hand they were used by the authorities as proof of the Polishness of the region, but on the other hand they were often treated as

second class citizens by the same authorities, and also by Poles moving into the area (Bömelburg and R. Traba 11-12), who were suspicious of regional differences, especially when they contained aspects of German culture. Oftentimes there were doubts as to whether Warmians or Mazurians were actually Polish (Kulczycki, “Who is a Pole” 108-10).

To address the need of differentiating natives from Germans, the regime devised a policy of national “verification.” An announcement was made for all Poles of Warmian and Mazurian origin to register for an affidavit of membership in the Polish nation. After they registered a background check was performed to make sure they never acted against Poland. Applicants then signed a declaration that stated, “I solemnly swear to remain loyal to the National and Democratic Polish State and conscientiously to fulfill my civic obligations.” If approved, they received an affidavit of Polishness (Kulczycki, “Who is a Pole” 108-9). In essence they had to declare whether they were German or Polish. For many of them this went against their private and subjective understanding of national identity (Karp and R. Traba 16). Also, Germans were deprived of all rights<sup>22</sup> as the state strove to rid itself of any national minorities (Strauchold, “Próba Stworzenia” 78). This left Warmians and Mazurians with the choice of declaring Polish nationality or leaving the country.

Verification was easier in the Catholic Warmia, but locals from Protestant Mazury were not as willing, which led to repressive actions by the authorities (Kossert 327). In addition, many of those that declared Polish nationality did so in order to be able to stay on their farmsteads or in their homes, or not to be sent to work camps (Hejger 344). This resulted in a large number of people that identified as Germans being verified as Poles, and the authorities tried to conceal this fact as they tried to marginalize the German minority (Osękowski 25).

Despite what the authorities and some Poles expected, the reality of the situation was that the local population, and Mazurians in particular, were not interested in becoming citizens of the Polish nation. But, in striving to build a nationally homogeneous state deprived of minorities, the authorities could not see the locals for what they were, namely a local community with the inclination to identify as a separate ethnic group (Strauchold, “Odzyskanie” 98). At first the authorities used the local

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<sup>22</sup> The use and teaching of German was outlawed, as was the possession of property by Germans (Strauchold, “Próba Stworzenia” 78).

population as proof of the area's Polishness, but later verified the locals to make sure they are Polish. The Polish settlers from other regions were not subjected to verification, and this offended the natives. Also, re-Polonization policies, in which people were pressured to change their names, and the local dialect, influenced by German, being discouraged and laughed at, had a negative impact on the local population (Kulczycki, "National Identity" 216). In short, the communist authorities alienated Warmians and Mazurians, causing them to emigrate to East and West Germany in successive waves, especially after 1956 and again after 1971 (Karp and R. Traba 16).

#### **1.3.3.4 – Historical ideology**

If the region was to be incorporated into the Polish state in the consciousness of its new inhabitants, it was not enough to simply change the names of streets and silence the German language. It was necessary to change the region's history as well.

To start, the regime referred to Poland's new territories as "recovered" to imply that the territories had Polish, or Slavic origins, but had spent hundreds of years under German domination. Jerzy Sztachelski, the Plenipotentiary of the Government of Poland for East Prussia, wrote in 1945 that "age-old Polish land" was "returned to its source" after being "stamped on" for "ages" by the "Teutonic" boot, and was finally connected to Poland as an "unbreakable" whole (qtd. in Jasiński 29). The press used similar terminology. For example, "Farmer takes into possession old Piast lands," or "When for 700 years the Mazur and Warmian defended Polish speech with his own life..." (Jasiński 29). This went against academic and historical evidence already available at the time (Jasiński 27). The fact was that most of the Western and Northern Territories had not been under Polish control for hundreds of years. Certain parts of East Prussia had been incorporated into Poland's borders from the 15<sup>th</sup> to the 18<sup>th</sup> century (Kossert 59; Davies, "Volume I" 393), but others were never within Polish borders, or were at most a fief (Davies, "Volume I" 99). And Poles were also certainly not the first people to inhabit the region, themselves inviting the Teutonic Order to Christianize and pacify the pagan Old Prussian tribes of the region in the 13<sup>th</sup> century (Kossert 27).



Similar terminology was used regarding the settlers from the East, who were called “repatriates,” and their resettlement from the East to the Western and Northern Territories “repatriation.” This implied that Poles from the East were simply returning to the so-called “age-old” Polish lands that had finally been recovered. The fact is that the only re-settlers that could accurately be called “repatriates” were Poles that had been sent to Siberia during the war and later returned to Poland, albeit within different borders. But, the new political-ideological situation after the war did not even allow Poland's former eastern lands to be a part of public discussion in any way that was considered to undermine the new Soviet presence there (Bömelburg and R. Traba 8-9). Throughout the communist period, the fate of Poles who lost their homes in the East could not be publicly or officially discussed (R. Traba, “Kraina” 191), and Poles from the Kresy could not gather in organized groups (Kossert 326). There was essentially no public space in which such individuals could talk about their experiences, and recollections were made only in the private sphere (Bömelburg and R. Traba 13). This is because the Polish communists had agreed to relinquish the eastern territory to the Soviet Union in exchange for support in acquiring the Western and Northern Territories. The communist regime argued that only it, with the backing of the Soviet Union, could guarantee that the new territories would remain as part of Poland. This put most of the people resettled in the new territories in a difficult position because the new territory was their only home, since they had lost their previous one. They in effect had no choice but to support the new borders, which de facto meant supporting the new regime. If anyone opposed the new borders, they were quickly labeled unpatriotic. This is one of the main reasons why the authorities were more successful in consolidating power in the new territories than in the rest of Poland (Davies and Moorhouse 411-12).

In addition to the terminology used to imply the age-old Polishness of Warmia-Mazury, the history of the region in general was presented as a constant battle of an ethnically pure Polish population against brutal attempts of Germanization by an incoming German population. An example of this was a book titled *Poland-Germany. Ten Centuries of Struggle (Polska-Niemcy. Dziesięć Wieków Zmagania)*, written in 1945 by Professor Zygmunt Wojciechowski, one of the propagators of Polish western thought, in which he presented Polish-German relations as a thousand year battle

between Poland, representing the Slavic people, against Germanic imperialism constantly pushing further into the East. This type of historical ideology gave the impression that Poles had a holy duty, or mission to regain the Western and Northern Territories from Germany (R. Traba, "Kraina" 183).

In the new postwar historical picture, on the one hand the history of the eastern lands was cut out, and on the other hand the German history of the new Polish territories was removed as well. The new 'Piast' vision of Polish history played an important role in helping the new settlers, and all Poles in general, adjust to the new territories and to a Poland shifted westwards. In a way it was necessary to provide a different vision of history, one that moved away from the Jagiellonian vision in favor of the Piast vision, in order for society to come to terms with a completely new, nationally homogeneous Poland situated within shifted borders (Mazur 30).

But, it was not only the communist authorities that were rewriting the history of Warmia-Mazury and the "Recovered Territories." The new myth of age-old Polish Warmia-Mazury was also created and upheld by pro-Polish activists, poets, artists, writers, historians, academics, etc., usually survivors of the war who had experienced German occupation. They were attempting to create a mono-Polish identity of Warmia-Mazury for the new settlers, and their work was influenced by nationalist ideology and conformity to the political situation at the time, which meant that farmers and workers were galvanized, for example (Brakoniecki, "Prowincja Człowieka" 51, 62-7). Meanwhile, in school teachers were doing their part to present the Polishness of the new territories. Their job after the war, as part of Polonization and social integration, was to bring up youth in such a way that the new territories would be tightly connected to Poland in their consciousness. Students were taught only the Polish elements of the region's history and told that its return to Poland is historically just. Time periods during which the region was not within Polish borders were always presented negatively. Historical accuracy was not as important as the idealized picture of Polish Warmia-Mazury (Lewandowska 135). But, for adults, this new myth was to help replace the homelands they lost, especially in the East. The building of this new myth continued until the 1960s, but even afterwards most artistic work was still influenced by socialist ideology. If someone tried to bring up topics that were taboo, or write in a way that was not conducive with socialist ideology, they were censored.

This is not to say that all literature and art was controlled by the authorities and subjected to socialist ideology. Some exceptions included writers that managed to write about the eastern lands as a “paradise lost”<sup>23</sup> (Bömelburg and R. Traba 14), or good quality literature about Warmia-Mazury<sup>24</sup> (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 62-7). Particularly after the Stalinist period in Poland came to an end after the Polish October in 1956, the cultural and academic atmosphere livened up. Scholars, regional enthusiasts, and interested teachers had more room to maneuver and several new institutions were opened,<sup>25</sup> which resulted in new historical research no longer focusing solely on the Polishness of Warmia-Mazury. On an academic and scholarly level, these studies contributed to dispelling some of the historical myths about the region.<sup>26</sup> Such studies continued into the 1980s, but the results of scientific research were always separate from political propaganda, which continued to dominate in the public sphere (Jasiński 45-7).

Although the atmosphere was somewhat more relaxed after 1956, in general the protests of the local educated class after October 1956 were not effective. The authorities continued to view such initiatives with suspicion. The multicultural heritage of the region remained hidden from public view. All in all, people and students were subjected to a censored, nationalist, Polish, socialist version of their region throughout the communist period. School children went on field trips to places that represented the “Polishness” of Warmia-Mazury and dressed up as Polish knights from the Battle of Grunwald for 1st of May celebrations. In 1966, the thousand year anniversary of the Christening of Poland, Warmia-Mazury was teeming with declarations of its Piast heritage. The anniversary of the Battle of Grunwald was celebrated every year. The propaganda was “We were, we are, we will be,” in Warmia-Mazury, the “Recovered Territories,” etc. The history of the region had changed again after WWII, and it would remain that way until 1989 (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 28, 53-4, 62-7).

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<sup>23</sup> For example, Czesław Miłosz, Tadeusz Konwicki, Józef Mackiewicz, Włodzimierz Odojewski (Bömelburg and R. Traba 14).

<sup>24</sup> Erwin Kruk, for example (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 83-9).

<sup>25</sup> Komunikaty Mazursko-Warmińskie started operating in 1957, Rocznik Olsztyński in 1958, Ośrodek Badań Naukowych im. Wojciecha Kętrzyńskiego in 1963, and Studia Warmińskie in 1964 (Jasiński 45-6). Also, Pojezierze, an association and periodical that published regional literature and organized various events, started operating in 1957 (Lewandowska 135).

<sup>26</sup> Such as the myth of hundreds of years of forced Germanization and subversion of Polishness; the myth about the unbending stance of Warmians and Mazurians against Germanization politics; and the myth about the German plebiscite win in 1920 being a result of terror, intimidation and falsified results (Jasiński 46).

### **1.3.3.5 – Political, ideological and economic repression**

There was lack of personal freedom and no such thing as free speech. In the first days of June 1947 the Security Agency (UB – Urząd Bezpieczeństwa) arrested 24 people in Warmia-Mazury for “whispered propaganda,” and that was only the beginning, as the number of arrests reached the tens of thousands. Between 1948-1953 every year between 12-15,000 people were jailed in Poland for political reasons. Representatives of national minorities were especially targeted as “class enemies” and accused of spreading “enemy propaganda,” when in reality they were punished for identifying with a different nation. It was a situation in which people feared their neighbors, strangers were never trusted, teachers had to be careful of what they said in front of their students and colleagues, and some people informed on others (Osękowski 58-9).

Schools generally played an integrating role by helping to neutralize regional differences between children, helping to equalize the social level, and helping students make friends and learn proper Polish. But, the political situation made the normal functioning of schools difficult. A “proper” ideological-political climate was being forced into schools. In 1947-1948 teachers that were known to side with the PSL were removed, while the rest were trained in the new ideology and jobs depended on political loyalty to the party (Osękowski 61-2, 68-9).

As the authorities embarked on a program of nationalization of the entire economy, people were being detained and harassed for engaging in private enterprise. Between 1945-1954 a special commission dealing with economic crimes handed out over 9,000 sentences, and many people were sent to labor camps (Karp and R. Traba 17). Yet, the socialist economic system was much easier to introduce in Warmia-Mazury than in other regions of Poland, especially in agriculture, where in many parts of the region over 80% of farms were nationalized (Karp and R. Traba 17-18). The collectivization of agriculture had a disintegrating effect. The process led to many arguments among neighbors, even from the same group, as the authorities persuaded people to run collective farms. A person's attitude towards collectivization sometimes became a measure of solidarity, and influenced neighborly relations for years after it

was no longer enforced (Osękowski 59-60).

### **1.3.3.6 – Effect of state policies on integration**

State political and economic policies made it difficult for people to form bonds with one another. They also alienated the population from the authorities, as most people did not identify with the regime's values and goals. Groups also became isolated from each other and even groups that seemed uniform often fell apart. In general there was an atmosphere of fear and distrust, which caused people to keep contacts only within their own group (Osękowski 54-5).

Regarding economic policies, people were prevented from owning property, which contributed to a feeling of uncertainty. Combined with high unemployment and a poor standard of life, this resulted in significant numbers of people leaving the region in the first few years after the war. But, despite the economic problems, the authorities continued to under fund the Western and Northern Territories. In 1955 less than 15% of state expenditure was directed to the new territories, and 60% of that sum went to Silesia, leaving the rest for Warmia-Mazury and other post-German regions (Mazur 65, 68-9). Throughout the communist period the region was plagued with economic stagnation and underinvestment, the effects of which are felt to this day (Worobiec, "Drogi" 158-9).

Overall, save for only a few exceptions, the politics of the communist authorities were aimed against any identity and community. Germans, Ukrainians, even Catholics and so-called repatriates from the East were a threat. Warmia-Mazury became "no one's land." Interpersonal divisions were so exacerbated that at first people were afraid of everyone, including Hitlerites, Germans, Ukrainians from the UPA, etc. The region was a landscape of dilapidated homes inhabited by uprooted PGR (State Farm Collective - Państwowe Gospodarstwo Rolne) workers. During the communist period in general social energy was squandered (Brakoniecki, "Prowincja Człowieka" 9, 53-4).

### **1.3.4 – The Catholic Church**

The religious proportions in Warmia-Mazury were reversed after the war.

Whereas before Protestants were the majority over Catholics, it was now the opposite (Karp and R. Traba 15). The Polish Catholic Church also made its presence felt in the region right after the war, as it was able to bring about all the institutions necessary for its proper functioning. In fact, the regime tolerated the influential Church in practical ways to further its political goals, despite officially denouncing Catholicism. The Catholic Church, in cooperation with the authorities, took over Protestant churches. In Warmia-Mazury, about 250 Protestant churches were given to the Catholic Church between 1945-1980 (Kopiczko 37). This continued into the 1980s and contributed to the emigration of Protestant Mazurians through the communist period (Michalak 222).

The Stalinist period was the most difficult time for the Church in Poland. Church administrators were removed, arrested and jailed by the authorities, and further appointments required the approval of the regime. Religion was also removed from schools, some religious educational institutions were closed down, and in 1950 Caritas was eliminated. Church-goers were repressed by special groups of the UB (Kopiczko 36).

Things improved after 1956 and the Church continued to have a major influence on society and played a major role in the eventual downfall of the socialist system. The Church's important role in helping integrate society and bring together various groups was acknowledged by the communists. At the same time the Church's relations with Protestants, whether German or Polish, were not so good, which was generally a projection of widespread views among Polish Catholics at the time (Strauchold, "Próba Stworzenia" 77). Priests arriving in the region were often unfamiliar with the particular situation regarding ethnic and national relations and the specifics of various groups. There were also conflicts between German and Polish priests. But, overall the Church was a stabilizing force in a volatile and uncertain environment (Osękowski 65-6).

#### **1.4 – 1989-Present**

During the communist period all aspects of political, economic and social life were controlled centrally from Warsaw. Local or regional initiatives were at least discouraged by the authorities, if not flat out suppressed. With that there was also officially no such thing as a local or regional identity, since Poland was officially a

nationally, ethnically, and culturally homogenous country. And since there was no regional identity, there was no regional history, only an ideologically tainted history of the Polish nation in general. At least that is what the authorities strove to create after 1945. In addition to that, the vast population movements that occurred after the war largely as a result of Soviet initiative, and all the sensitive issues related to them, were a taboo subject. The removal of Germans from the Western and Northern Territories was described as a “migration,” (Bömelburg and R. Traba 9) while the forceful removal of Poles from Poland's former eastern territory was described as repatriation. Poles from the East could not publicly express their nostalgia for their former homes as it would offend the Soviet Union. In fact, in the official version of history the Kresy were never a part of Poland. This atmosphere of an enforced version of history accompanied by repression of social impulses was particularly poignant in post-German areas like Warmia-Mazury where practically the entire population was replaced after the war, and the authorities tried to mold the diverse groups of settlers into a homogeneous socialist mass.

This whole situation changed dramatically after 1989. All of a sudden, people could talk openly about everything that had happened. Almost all subjects that had been taboo came to the surface. For example, in the early 1990s, one of the first ways that Poles learned about German expulsions after WWII was through an account of the personal experiences of Warmian priest Gerhard Fittkau (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 34). Public debate about the expulsions exploded and reached its peak in the mid-1990s. Questions that could not even be fathomed before were being asked: Were Poles in any way responsible for the expulsions? Should Poland apologize for them? (R. Traba, “Kraina” 212). Poles that were forced to leave the Kresy could also speak openly and form organized groups, the same with Ukrainians. While historians could write about topics that were strictly forbidden before.

As national minorities were legally recognized, thousands of Germans, Warmians and Mazurians that had not fled or been expelled after the war, or emigrated during communism, now declared German nationality (Strauchold, “Próba Stworzenia” 78). By the late 1990s the German minority in Warmia-Mazury counted about 25,000, with about 15,000 belonging to a multitude of German associations and organizations

that were formed,<sup>27</sup> most of which aimed to preserve the German language; maintain contacts with other German institutions and organizations in Poland and Germany; help protect German cultural heritage, etc. (Czesła, “Niemcy na Warmii” 71-2, 74). This “explosion of Germanness” was extensively covered by the local press, which kept the German minority in the public sphere (Wańkowska-Sobiesiak 164).

In effect, there was an eruption of interest in the past, occurring simultaneously with a reaction against the centralization of everything that had characterized the communist period. This explosion and movement away from the center and towards the periphery was most evident in the formation of self-governed voivodships and rebirth of civil, social and cultural life. Countless nongovernmental, cultural, and minority organizations, publications, literary groups, and civil committees were formed on the “wave of euphoria” right after 1989, as “the center fell” and “the province rose” (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 54-5). Such local initiatives were undertaken by local cultural elites and intellectuals wanting to bring the past to the surface and contribute to the reshaping, or “reconstruction,” of local and regional identity (R. Traba, “Kraina” 284). Examples of such initiatives in areas that were peripheral during communism include “Pogranicze” in Sejny,<sup>28</sup> “Przegląd Polityczny”<sup>29</sup> and “Tytuł”<sup>30</sup> in Gdańsk, “Kresy” in Lublin, “Pogranicze” in Szczecin, and others still in Silesia (R. Traba, “Kraina” 284). Post-German regions, in particular, were practically competing with one another in bringing their historical heritage to the surface (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 51). In Warmia-Mazury, such initiatives included “Borussia” in Olsztyn and “Wspólnota Mazurska” in Giżycko, amongst others. This explosion of interest was characterized by a multitude of publications, conferences, student exchange and volunteer programs, artistic initiatives, the restoration and conservation of various relics, buildings, cemeteries, etc.

#### **1.4.1 – Borussia**

One of the best examples of the type of initiative that resulted from the wave of

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<sup>27</sup> By 1993 there were already 14 German social-cultural associations in the Olsztyn voivodship (Czesła, “Niemieckie Stowarzyszenia” 66).

<sup>28</sup> English: “Borderland.” Sejny is located in northeastern Poland near the border of Lithuania.

<sup>29</sup> English: “Political Review”

<sup>30</sup> English: “Title”



interest after 1989 is Olsztyn's "Borussia," founded in 1990 as "Cultural Collective Borussia." The name Borussia is Latin for Prussia, and according to Kazimierz Brakoniecki, one of its founders, the name was meant to move away from ideology and nationalism by using a more neutral term to refer to Warmia-Mazury as a European region. Borussia's founders wanted to somehow contribute to discovering the region's real heritage and at the same time take part in creating an open, critically thinking civil society. For them, such a society should be based on respect for an inherited foreign past and heritage, and critical patriotism (Brakoniecki, "Polak" 48-9).

Borussia's original program and declaration, published in its first quarterly, also titled "Borussia," expressed the ideological ideas behind its formation. Parts of the program and declaration are cited here at length to project the mood and atmosphere that was present at the time of the organization's founding:

1. Cultural Collective "Borussia" came into being in December 1990 as a result of months of efforts by a group of people [...] brought together [...] by a common idea [and] willingness of authentic creation above political disputes and nationalistic conflicts. [...] The land between the Lower Vistula and the Niemen [Rivers], of which we are inhabitants, went through various vicissitudes [...] "Borussia" is one of the primeval, Latin names of this land. [...] It is our independent [...] answer to ideological and historical stereotypes.
2. Poland, as well as neighboring countries, is changing [...] The future [of these countries] is rooted in creating and respecting democracy, the free market, the personal and political freedom of citizens. Serious [...] political and social, regional and national challenges lie ahead of the citizens of these countries. No less important are ethical and spiritual dilemmas [...] "Borussia" yearns to actively take part in creating a unified Europe, a Europe of ethical homelands. We are a Polish and an international association. We come from Warmia and Mazury, from former East Prussia, from land [that used to be home to] Old Prussian tribes, and later Germans, Poles, Mazurians, Warmians, Lithuanians, Ukrainians...Through getting to know the region's past, its political and national relations, its cultural [...] values, we want to critically and creatively strive towards building new knowledge, a new culture, and new attitudes here in Warmia and Mazury. We will mainly address historical, educational, cultural topics with the intention of creating such a critical world view, which could actively take part in recognizing and constructing the region's, Poland's, and finally, Europe's future.
3. There is no way to separate Warmia and Mazury from the historical heritage, multinational and multicultural tradition of this northern land [...] We were born here after 1945. This land is our homeland. We are conscious of its multicultural and multinational past, we yearn to be responsible for its future. In creating a Polish identity [...] we at the same time discover the Prussian,

German, native heritage found here in order to – despite 20<sup>th</sup> century tragedies – prove that we are striving towards a free and democratic homeland that respects the good of other nations. We treat relics of every national past as relics of humanity. For us there is no other way of thinking about the world than ethical thinking. On the road to a reconciled and free Europe of homelands we yearn to cultivate love for the homeland in the context of universal human values based on respect for historical, moral, existential truth. Above that we believe that our task is building reconciliation and understanding between the German and Polish nations.

We will address regional, but also European themes, while creating the rules of responsible and critical cultural and historical thinking. We want to realize this program among others by publishing “Borussia,” a periodical dedicated to the culture, history and literature of northern Poland and Europe.  
(“Borussia” 108-9)

In essence, for the founders of Borussia, the organization was a reaction against everything that weighed them down during communism, and at the time just thinking and talking about initiating something from the bottom, without any supervision or directive from the top, or center, was completely new (R. Traba, “Kraina” 278). In essence, Borussia's founders were asking themselves, “Who are we? Where are we from? And where are we heading?” (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 60). Or more specifically, what does it mean to live in the city of Olsztyn, and call that city one's home? After the war the city was destroyed by Germans and Russians and placed within new borders by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt. Most parents of people born there after the war would never have met if not for that very war and those decisions taken by Stalin, Churchill and Roosevelt, which resulted in the loss of Poland's eastern lands, expulsions and migrations, life under a repressive regime, etc. – All resulting from the victory of one totalitarian system over another (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 44).

Such questions led to a search for the past of Warmia-Mazury and the realization that the people living in the region today are the “inheritors” of a wider historical memory and culture than had been claimed by communist propaganda (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 48, 56). Borussia wanted to spread the idea of an open patriotism, of historical and critical thinking, which was possible only within a self-assured identity without any insecurities, and placed within a European context (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 103-4). All in all, Borussia was about a search for a new identity based on accepting Warmia-Mazury's diverse heritage, with both its positive and negative aspects.

### 1.4.1.1 – Atlantis of the North and Open Regionalism

Borussia's ideology came to be represented by two main ideas: “Atlantis of the North”<sup>31</sup> and “Open Regionalism.”<sup>32</sup> “Atlantis of the North” stood for “discovering the metaphysics of the place in which we live” (R. Traba, “W Szpagacie” 6). The official history of Warmia-Mazury changed after 1945, and its German past disappeared. But, signs of that past were always everywhere, and Brakoniecki<sup>33</sup> called it the “Atlantis of the North,” which was represented by simple things like fire hydrants or sewer covers with German inscriptions. Because the German past of the region had been covered up and taboo, when people came across such things, especially if they were born after the war, they often had no clue what they meant. But, such signs, as represented in the idea of “Atlantis of the North,” were emblems of a “lost civilization,” and after 1989 this lost land was being rediscovered (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 37). For Brakoniecki the idea is a symbol of the collapse of a civilization in the region but also hope for a new life in a democratic Poland for the region's current inhabitants. The shadow of this Atlantis can be seen everywhere in forgotten cemeteries, deserted villages, and not only in Warmia-Mazury, but in other post-German regions, as well as regions left behind by Poles, such as Lithuania, Belarus and Ukraine. According to Borussia's ideology, all of these reminders of past times, and former inhabitants, need to be discovered, recognized, and brought back to memory (Brakoniecki and Lipscher, “Atlantyda Północy 7). This is a way of universalizing locality and Borussia treated it as a kind of activism in which the provincial region of Warmia-Mazury was placed within the context of European changes after 1989 (Brakoniecki, “Polak” 51). In this way, regional themes are connected with universal ones to look at the world from a particular place (R. Traba, “Kraina” 279).

“Open Regionalism” was the building of a network of contacts and connections between people through drawing on personal experiences and the specifics of various regions, and its goal was to create the “foundations of contemporary Europe” (R. Traba, “W Szpagacie” 6). More specifically, “Open Regionalism” aimed at the creation of

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<sup>31</sup> Polish: “Atlantyda Północy”

<sup>32</sup> Polish: “Otwarty Regionalizm”

<sup>33</sup> Brakoniecki organized an exhibition called “Atlantis of the North” in Olsztyn in 1993, in which old photographs of forgotten East Prussian cities and villages were presented. He also published a collection of poems under the same title.

long-lasting contacts and building of civil society in Kaliningrad, western Lithuania and Warmia-Mazury (former East Prussia); developing trans-border cultural consciousness on the basis of common history; breaking mutual stereotypes and prejudices; shaping tolerance towards “others”; building a new, open regional and national identity by taking advantage of regional specifics and the historical-cultural landscape; and creating long-lasting organizational structures to continue this work. Such a declaration was signed in 1996 by representatives of cultural initiatives from Lithuania, Russia (Kaliningrad), and Germany (“Otwarty Regionalizm” 190-1). The program of the project points out that “Open Regionalism” is to be differentiated from separatist movements, and that it aims to construct a Lithuanian, Polish, Russian, and finally European regional future. The program also puts as one of its main tasks the building of reconciliation and understanding mainly between the Lithuanian, German, Russian, and Polish nations (“Otwarty Regionalizm” 190-1). “Open Regionalism” is taking an interest in national minorities that lived and live in Poland, and adding the whole richness of the country's past and present to local identity. It is an effort to get past the closed nature of Polish society, characterized by a lack of contacts with neighboring countries, especially Lithuania and Kaliningrad (R. Traba, “Kraina” 282).

#### **1.4.1.2 – Initiatives**

The main public space of Borussia's activity is culture, and its pillars, or mainstays, are the periodical “Borussia,” seminars and conferences, educational youth projects, and publications (R. Traba, “W Szpagacie” 6). The quarterly “Borussia,” has been published since 1991, and its content deals mainly with the history, culture, and identity of Warmia-Mazury, while also serving as a platform for local writers, poets, and artists. As such, “Borussia” also became a literary movement in the 1990s, and the movement's main role included filling in white stains of history, expressing local, family, and national identities that had been lost or broken off by war, saving heritage, and putting questions of the universal meaning of human life into local literature (Brakoniec, “Prowincja Człowieka” 10). There are also meetings with local authors regarding regional topics. Seminars and conferences organized by Borussia often deal with the subject of stereotypes, and include Polish-German and Polish-Lithuanian

teacher conferences on teaching common history. Young people from Poland, Lithuania, Russia, Germany, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia, and Estonia take part in meetings and projects, including creative camps, musical-theatrical groups, and reconstruction, restoration, and conservation of WWI cemeteries (R. Traba, “Kraina” 280-2; “Pamięć Zbiorowa” 88-9). Finally, Borussia's publications include works of former East Prussians (R. Traba, “Kraina” 280-2), and contemporary historians, writers and poets from the region, but not only. One of the most important publications was *Borussia. Ziemia i ludzie*,<sup>34</sup> a literary anthology composed of the most significant pieces of literature related to Warmia-Mazury/East Prussia, written by authors of various nationalities and throughout history, including Immanuel Kant, and published in German, Polish and Russian, among others (Brakoniecki and Lipscher, “Borussia” 9-12).

#### 1.4.2 – Fading of enthusiasm

This wave of interest and enthusiasm reached its peak towards the end of the 1990s and started to gradually cool off. A politically and economically stable Poland entered the European Union, and people generally got used to democracy, freedom of speech, and non-governmental initiatives. Things like Open Regionalism and Atlantis of the North began to lose their meaning (R. Traba, “Kresy” 131). Today it is no longer shocking for people to hear of yet another historical connection their region has with German heritage. The German minority is just another part of regional life. Issues like postwar expulsions, although still controversial, have become a rather normal element of public debate, less often arousing intense negative emotions and reactions (R. Traba, “Kraina” 209). Only some of the initiatives that took off in the early to mid 1990s survived (R. Traba, “Kraina” 284), and in the end, they generally only reached elites and intellectuals, although even that seemed unimaginable at the beginning (Brakoniecki, “Prowincja Człowieka” 8). In this respect, Borussia can be looked at as a “mini-movement,” but it does not represent the general population, in which there is still a strong tendency towards a traditional understanding of Polishness in nationalistic categories (R. Traba, “Kraina” 282).

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<sup>34</sup> English: *Borussia. Land and people*.

Borussia, along with a number of other organizations and initiatives, continues its work, however, in line with the idea of “long lasting,” according to which it is much more difficult, and important, to keep going and creating over the long run, especially when the atmosphere of enthusiasm has faded (R. Traba, “Kraina” 284). This long lasting is necessary for ideas to take root in society (R. Traba, “Czas” 4). All of Borussia's mainstay initiatives are still active, while new, or more recent ones include efforts to bring the region's prewar Jewish heritage back into the public consciousness through the restoration of a Jewish funeral home<sup>35</sup> and cemetery in Olsztyn, or joining up with other local organizations and groups in an effort to preserve a wood-yard in Olsztyn dating back to the 19<sup>th</sup> century (Worobiec, “Cepeliada” 254). Similar efforts of trying to save relics from the past can still be seen throughout the region.

### 1.4.3 – Participants of study

Today's inhabitants of Warmia-Mazury are a post-migratory population formed out of various incoming groups after 1945. Almost the entire prewar population was removed or emigrated, and the few thousand that remain are a small minority. Warmia-Mazury and its population have become integrated with the rest of Poland to the point where people living in the region consider it to be an integral part of Poland, albeit with its own local specificity,<sup>36</sup> while Poles in other parts of the country consider Warmia-Mazury to be an integral part of Poland as well (Sakson, “Przemiany Tożsamości” 124-6).

However, despite EU membership and the passing of more than 20 years since a centrally-planned economy, Warmia-Mazury is still a peripheral region,<sup>37</sup> characterized by the highest unemployment in the country<sup>38</sup> and a largely tourist-based economy in a region where the tourism season lasts only three months (Sakson, “Filozofia” 12). In

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<sup>35</sup> Built in 1913 and designed by architect Erich Mendelsohn (1887-1953), who was born into a Jewish family in Olsztyn and went on to design buildings in Germany, Israel, the United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union (R. Traba, “Dom” 184-5).

<sup>36</sup> Aside from its German past, specific characteristics of Warmia-Mazury include Ukrainian, German, Warmian, and Mazurian minorities; a border shared with Russia in the North; a particularly rural agricultural structure; and low population density (Osękowski 7-8).

<sup>37</sup> Interestingly, East Prussia was a peripheral region of the Prussian state before WWII as well (Sakson, “Filozofia” 12).

<sup>38</sup> In 2002, the unemployment rate in Warmia-Mazury was 28.2% (Wierzchośłowski 117), as of March 2010 it was 21.1%, compared to a national average of 13% (Główny Urząd Statystyczny).

many ways, today the center has returned, while the periphery has fallen, as the region faces serious social, economic and educational problems (Brakoniecki "Prowincja Człowieka" 54-5). In addition, the exciting years after 1989 have passed and the enthusiasm related to gaining freedom and resulting in an explosion of social energy, has faded. The various initiatives and ideas that sprung up during that time did not reach the majority of the population anyway. Perhaps, at some point another wave will follow.

And this brings us to the present day and the participants of this study. They are the third generation in Warmia-Mazury since WWII, and were born and grew up in the region, although their family roots reach back to various other places. In essence, history had to take countless twists and turns for them to be where they are now, namely Olsztyn. But, what do they think about their family's fate? What do they think about their region's past? How do they identify with their region? Do they think about these things at all?

## **1.5 – Conclusion of chapter**

To briefly conclude, Warmia-Mazury, formerly East Prussia, in its present state was shaped by big monarchies that redrew the map of Central Europe after WWII, and every individual comprising both the prewar and postwar populations of the region, up to today's generations, was and is caught up in that big history.

## **Chapter II – Methodology**

### **2.1 – Introduction to chapter**

This chapter will familiarize the reader with the methodology guiding this study. First, the narrative approach to qualitative research will be summarized. Then, the strategy for choosing the site of the research and participants will be outlined, followed by basic information about the participants and why they were chosen for the study. Next, the methods used to design and carry out the interviews will be discussed, and the narrative methods guiding the analysis will follow. Finally, ethical issues will be addressed.

### **2.2 – Narrative research**

There are a number of qualitative research approaches, including narrative research, phenomenology, grounded theory, ethnography, and case studies. Qualitative research in general is an interpretive form of inquiry that situates a study within the political, social, and cultural context of the researcher, the participants, and the readers of the study. Some of the characteristics of qualitative studies in general include the collection of data in a natural setting, inductive data analysis that establishes patterns or themes, and a presentation of the results that includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a contextualized description and interpretation of the problem being studied. A qualitative study also extends the literature on a problem or brings an issue to light (Creswell 35-7).

The qualitative approach used in this study is narrative research. A narrative is generally a spoken or written text that provides an account of an event or action, or a series of events or actions that are chronologically connected. As a method of inquiry, narrative is the lived and told stories of individuals, and narrative research entails collecting the stories of a small number of individuals from interviews, sometimes



documents, and presenting those stories within a larger context of a particular problem being studied. To do this, narrative research draws from various humanities disciplines, including anthropology, literature, history, psychology, and sociology (Creswell 54, 78-9). Narratives can be analyzed through either analysis of narratives, or narrative analysis, and the distinction is important to note. Narrative analysis involves the researcher collecting the experiences, or the story, of an individual, and turning them into his or her own narrative about the individual, also referred to as re-storying. Analysis of narratives, on the other hand, entails a researcher collecting narratives and analyzing them as they are presented by the participant (Creswell 54). This latter approach is the one used in this study, although it may at some points be referred to as narrative analysis.

The biggest advantage of using the analysis of narratives approach in this study is the fact that a personal narrative can give insight into an individual's identity. According to Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber, "...personal narratives, in both facets of content and form, *are* people's identities" and:

[...] stories [...] present an inner reality to the outside world; at the same time, however, they shape and construct the narrator's personality and reality. The story *is* one's identity, a story created, told, revised, and retold throughout life. We [...] reveal ourselves to others, by the stories we tell. (7)

Generally speaking, narratives can provide researchers with insight into identity. Of course, identity is very complex, layered, and impossible to pin down and define. In fact, a story or narrative provided during an interview is only an instance of an individual's life and identity. Personal narratives develop and change throughout life, so when a narrative is recorded, it is essentially a "text," or a static photograph of an identity that is in reality dynamically changing. Every narrative is also influenced by the context within which it is told, including the aim of the interview, the nature of the listener, the relationship and interaction between the narrator and listener, the mood of the narrator at that given time, etc. So, one particular narrative is one instance of many versions of a person's self, expressed in a specific situation at a given time. Furthermore, the text resulting from that particular narrative is read and interpreted within a particular context by the researcher (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 8). So, theoretically, the subjective text provided and its subjective interpretation are one of a kind, and if they were told and read at a different time or place the results would be

different. And of course, because of their subjectivity, texts are naturally interpreted differently by different people. It is even possible for one text to be interpreted in several ways by the same individual (Czarniawska 69), depending on what he or she is looking for. And this is why Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber believe that “...stories and their readings are as multi-layered and complex as human identity, so that – as in psychotherapy – conflicts and contradictions consist as part and parcel of narrative inquiries” (167).

In the end, despite the above complications related to narrative research, a narrative still “transmits individual and cultural meanings,” as people are “meaning-generating organisms” that “construct their identities and self-narratives from building blocks available in their common culture” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 8-9). A narrative is always told within a context, or within a larger narrative of social history (Czarniawska 5). This is why the narrative approach is useful for this study. In seeking to gain insight into how the young generation of Warmia-Mazury identifies with their region's and family's past, and with their region in general, it is essential to understand the context of their attitude towards those issues. They were born, grew up, studied, and are now beginning their adult lives, in a certain environment, during a certain span of time, and in a certain place. That environment, span of time, and place, all influenced their identity, and their narratives give insight into how. Therefore, this study will aim to gain insight into a small, single layer of the participants' identities related to the subject of the thesis.

### **2.3 – Location of research site and participants**

The site of the research was the Warmian city of Olsztyn in the Warmia-Mazury voivodship of Poland. The city's history and inhabitants make it quite an ideal place to carry out research dealing with the topic of this study. But, convenience also played an important role in the choice of the site, since I have family and friends in Olsztyn, and had the opportunity to spend some time there during the summer and fall of 2009 and winter of 2009/2010, making it a natural choice.

Convenience also played a major role in the selection of individuals that took part in the study. Generally, in a narrative study the researcher needs to find a small

number of individuals who are accessible, willing to provide information, and who shed light on the phenomenon being explored. Individuals can be found through the pragmatic approach, in which they are met by chance or are volunteers, or they can be “ordinary people” that are an example of a larger population (Creswell 119). A mix of both approaches was used in this study. Taking into consideration time restrictions and a low budget, a convenient, or pragmatic approach was used to select the participants from my social network in Olsztyn. I started with one person, who then put me in touch with a few more people, and so on.

Before a time and place for an interview were arranged, I confirmed with the participant that he or she meets some basic criteria. Aside from willingness to take part in the study by sharing their story, in general each individual had to meet the following criteria of age, education, space, and family background:

- Age: between 20-25 years
- Education: currently studying or has completed a higher education
- Space: born, and currently lives, in Warmia-Mazury
- Family background: grandparents or great-grandparents from at least one side of the family came to the region after WWII

Age and education are important because the study focuses on the identities of young people in Warmia-Mazury. They are usually the third generation of Poles in Warmia-Mazury since 1945. The 20-25 age range was chosen because individuals at this age are, for the most part, mature, as they are preparing to enter adult life. This age constriction is also related to the higher education requirement, which eliminates younger students. Higher education is a matter of maturity as well, but it was also assumed that the individuals should have a higher education because of the topic of the study and interview questions, which includes themes of regional history, family history, regional identity, etc. Individuals with a higher education were thought to be more likely to be able to talk at length and in depth on such topics during the interviews. Space and family background is important because the study focuses on the region of Warmia-Mazury for historical reasons. To gain insight into how the third generation in the region after 1945 identifies with regional history, family history, and the region, it is necessary to study descendents of people who settled in the region after

the war, and who still live there. In other words, there must be continuity starting from settlers in Warmia-Mazury after WWII, and ending with their descendents' presence in the region today. This criteria proved to be almost unnecessary as every potential participant I came across, even those that did not participate in the study in the end, are descendants of post-WWII settlers. Gender was also considered as a criteria, as it was assumed that there may be differences between male and female narratives regarding the study's themes. Therefore, an effort was made to interview the same number of male and female participants.

But, despite the convenient approach used for selection, the participants are also ordinary or typical representatives of their demographic group. In other words, each individual is a typical, or ordinary, 20-25 year old with a higher education living in Warmia-Mazury.

## **2.4 – The selected participants**

Some basic information about the participants that were selected is presented in Table 1 to show how they met the criteria outlined above. As can be seen in the table, six individuals, three males and three females, were interviewed for the study. Most are 24 or 25 years old, with the exception of Anna, who is 21. The three males have completed Master's degrees in law, while Izabela received a Master's degree in political science. Monika finished a Bachelor's cosmetician course, and is currently working on a Master's in psychology. And Anna is also currently working on a Master's degree in psychology. All the participants, with the exception of Anna, finished university, or are still studying, in Olsztyn. Anna is studying in Warsaw. Most of those who studied in Olsztyn received their degrees from the University of Warmia and Mazury (UWM – Uniwersytet Warmińsko-Mazurski), with the exception of Monika, who is studying at a different school in Olsztyn.

With the exception of Izabela, who was born in Kętrzyn and grew up in S.<sup>39</sup> in the Mazury part of the voivodship, all of the participants were born in Olsztyn, and grew up in or around the city. Also, Monika, Anna and Jacek currently live in Olsztyn, while Piotrek and Dominik live just outside of the city. Anna is in Warsaw for most of

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<sup>39</sup> Some locations are abbreviated to maintain anonymity of the participants.

the year because of her studies, but it can be said that her permanent residence is just outside of Olsztyn in T., where her parents live.

Three of the participants were able to state for sure that both sides of their family settled in Warmia-Mazury after the war, while the other three were able to confirm that at least one side of their family did so. All in all, what is most important is that all of the individuals are at least in part descendants of post-WWII settlers, all were born and grew up in Warmia-Mazury, all are young people with a higher education, and they were all willing to participate in the study by sharing their narratives.

**Table 1** – Participants of study in light of selection criteria<sup>40</sup>

<i>Participant</i>	<i>Age</i>	<i>Gender</i>	<i>Education</i>	<i>Space – birth place and current residence</i>	<i>Family background</i>
<b>Piotrek</b>	24	Male	Master's: Law	Born in Olsztyn Lives in D.	Both sides settled after war
<b>Dominik</b>	24	Male	Master's: Law	Born in Olsztyn Lives in W.	At least one side settled after war
<b>Monika</b>	24	Female	Bachelor's: Cosmetician Studying: Psychology	Born in Olsztyn Lives in Olsztyn	At least one side settled after war
<b>Anna</b>	21	Female	Studying: Psychology	Born in Olsztyn Lives in T./Warsaw	At least one side settled after war
<b>Jacek</b>	25	Male	Master's: Law	Born in Olsztyn Lives in Olsztyn	Both sides settled after war
<b>Izabela</b>	24	Female	Master's: Political Science Studying: Post Graduate HRM <sup>41</sup>	Born in Kętrzyn Lives in Olsztyn	Both sides settled after war

## 2.5 – Interviews

In a narrative study, researchers collect information from individuals who agree to participate in the study. Information can be collected from documents, archival data, open-ended or semi-structured interviews, subject journaling, participant

<sup>40</sup> The participants are listed in the order they were interviewed.

<sup>41</sup> Human Resource Management

observation, and casual chatting (Creswell 120-3, 130). In this study, semi-structured interviews were used to collect narratives for analysis, although some information attained through casual chatting, or building up rapport, before and after the interviews, became useful later during analysis.

An interview is “collecting views and opinions on whatever topic is mentioned,” and during interviews stories or narratives are essentially elicited from the participant, although the researcher is also interested in facts, or attitudes, or any other information outside of the interview, the “reality behind it” (Czarniawska 43, 47). In narrative research, the interviewer's role is to listen, pay close attention, and not interrupt (Creswell 134; Czarniawska 48), since the goal is to record the teller's subjective view or story on the topic of interest. The narrative that is given is insight into the participant's perception and interpretation of the world, and this is what the researcher is after, since it can be assumed that that perception and interpretation also informs and guides the interviewee's actions and choices in life (Czarniawska 49).

There are issues to be aware of, however, regarding interviews. For one, the authenticity of accounts provided during interviews can be questioned (Creswell 121). A criticism of narrative research is that individuals can simply tell a story however they want (Czarniawska 5). And related to this is the issue of “logic of representation,” which is the assumption that a person will naturally try to present him or herself in a good way during the interview (Czarniawska 53). But, it seems that this logic of representation takes place all the time, whether an individual is speaking during an interview, or interacting with others in other situations. Regarding authenticity, all the interviewer can do is provide anonymity for the participant, and conduct interviews only with participants who are willing to give their time and volunteer. It is also important to note that interviews “do not stand for anything else; they represent nothing else but themselves” (Czarniawska 49). In other words, an interview is a recorded interaction between the interviewer and interviewee, and that is all. It is not a “window on social reality,” but it is a “sample of that reality,” and that is why it is valuable to the researcher, nevertheless (Czarniawska 49).

The interviews for this study were carried out on an individual basis with each participant between 22 July 2009 and 11 January 2010. Each interview was arranged in person or by phone. Two of the interviews took place in the participant's home, two

took place in a cafe in Olsztyn's Old Town, and two took place in one of the participant's work place, where the other participant was also present. Here it should be mentioned that although not all of the locations were ideal for a lengthy personal interview, the environment during each session was more intimate than was expected, and so this did not seem to cause problems. In fact, only one of the interviewees seemed to be visibly nervous, even though the interview took place in his own home with no one else around. Aside from two sessions being briefly interrupted by telephone calls, there were no other distractions. I should also state at this point that I knew three of the participants prior to the interview, one as family (a cousin) and two as acquaintances. The other three I met through the first three. I did not, however, as the interviewer, notice any visible differences between sessions with individuals I knew and didn't know. All the interviewees seemed generally open and willing to provide information.

Each interview started with a short conversation, which especially helped build up rapport with the participants I knew less. Once the topic of the interview emerged, each participant was first notified that they would be granted anonymity in the form of aliases when the thesis is submitted. Next, the participants were also given a copy of the interview protocol.<sup>42</sup> The interview protocol was prepared prior to the interviews and guided each session. It included space for writing in the time and place of the interview, general demographic and background information about the interviewee, and the questions that would be asked. This was followed by a brief and general description of the research project. After filling in information about the participant in the interview protocol, he or she was asked if they agree for the interview to be recorded by a voice recorder. All of the participants agreed to this. Finally, any questions the interviewee had were answered, and the interview commenced.

During the interview, questions from the protocol were asked in order. These questions were the base of the interview, and were formulated to elicit the participant's narrative on a number of issues relevant for the study. This is the categorical approach to narrative research, in which the primary interest is a problem or phenomenon shared by a group of people (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 12). Here, the phenomenon shared by the participants is the fact that they are inhabitants of Warmia-Mazury, with

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<sup>42</sup> See Appendix IV.

all the historical background that carries with it, and historical continuity in their identities is the main subject of this project. Therefore, the interview was semi-structured (Creswell 130), or directive (Lieblich 112), as the questions were meant to elicit narratives on certain topics. Once the participant finished speaking on a given topic, more direct follow up questions were asked when something was not clear, or something interesting had come up. The questions can be seen in the interview protocol.

Starting with family history, this question was meant to get the participant to tell the story of their family reaching as far back into the past as possible. The answers to this question could later be analyzed to see if there is continuity of family history in the participants' identities. The next question asked each participant to talk about some of their life experiences, and this information was later used as background and context, but also provided key insight into issues of identity. The participants were asked if they plan to live in Warmia-Mazury in the future to gain insight into the kind of relation they have with their region. The question regarding their impressions of Warmia-Mazury had a similar purpose, mainly in seeing how the participants view their region. The participants were then asked to tell the history of their region, as these “stories” were to provide key information into whether or not there is any continuity of that history within their identities. A question about local initiatives dealing with regional history was also posed to get a sense of the participants' awareness of, and interest in, such issues. Next, the participants were asked how they identify with the region, for the answers could obviously be useful when looking at their regional and local identity.

The remaining two questions were added to the protocol after the first and third interviews, respectively. This was part of refining and fine tuning the interview procedure by making changes and adjustments (Creswell 132-4). The question about places that are significant or important to the participants personally was added to see if they would name places of historical significance, or places they have sentiment towards. The question about local media and publications was added to see how interested each participant is in what is going on in his or her region. And one more adjustment that was made during the interview process included providing a bit more detailed introduction to, and description of, the project before the interview to help focus the participants' thoughts.



## 2.6 – Analysis

In the end, the recorded interviews yielded spoken narratives that were between about 12 and 45 minutes in length, for a total of nearly three hours of material from all six participants. Each interview was transcribed,<sup>43</sup> and the parts that were used for analysis were translated by me from Polish to English. Such a translation can be problematic (Czarniawska 95-6), and I found it most difficult to retain the tone, mood, and emotion behind the narratives. Nonetheless, an effort was made to present as close and exact a translation as possible, and try to evoke the language and style of speech of each participant.

Narratives can be analyzed along various dimensions, including content, structure, style of speech, motives, attitudes, beliefs of the narrator, etc. (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 9). The main analysis approach used in this study is content analysis (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 126). This approach can also be referred to as categorical-content, or the categorical perspective, for it focuses on sections of the narrative, or categories, as opposed to the entire narrative as a whole, and on the content within those categories, as opposed to their form. In categorical-content analysis, categories or themes are identified and parts of the narrative are placed into those categories (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 12-13). The main categories or themes in this study are historical continuity in the identity of the participants, and their identification with their region or locality.<sup>44</sup> So, for example, the analysis starts out with an examination of historical continuity within the participants' identities. This category is divided into continuity of family history, and of regional history. Next, sections dealing with family history are taken out of each interview text, and analyzed for signs of continuity or discontinuity. Later, the same is done for the regional history category.

The narratives are analyzed descriptively, as opposed to statistically (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 112). In other words, signs of continuity or discontinuity are described during the written analysis of each narrative segment, as opposed to being

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<sup>43</sup> The transcribed interviews have been submitted electronically with the thesis as separate files.

<sup>44</sup> The historical continuity category was identified at the start of the research, before the interviews, while the theme of the relation of that continuity, or lack of it, to regional or local identity emerged during close reading of the interview texts.

counted and added up. During the analysis, each section of the interview text is “interrogated” by asking questions such as, what are the motives behind it? And how does it say what it does? (Czarniawska 69). More specifically, in analyzing the content of each theme within each interview text, explicit concrete information, such as who, what, why, when, and where, is sought out, and it is determined if that information signals continuity or a lack of it. But, implicit content is also sought out by looking at the meaning the section of the narrative projects (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 12). So, for example, in a participant's narrative about the history of Warmia-Mazury, explicit information such as time periods, national and ethnic groups, historical figures, and events are examined, while implicit information is sought out to try to understand what the narrative says about the participant's understanding and interpretation of that history. In other words, do they identify with it? What do they think about it? Are they interested in it? And so on. In this way, content analysis is “impressionistic-interpretive,” or based on the impression, interpretation, intuition, and insight of the researcher (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 126). Once a section of an interview text has been interpreted, or analyzed, it is sometimes useful to compare the findings across participants and other themes.

However, while content, especially that which is explicit, tends to be on the surface of the narrative, the form of the narrative may sometimes provide insight into deeper layers of identity since it is more difficult to control or manipulate by the narrator. For this reason, sometimes some formal aspects of the narrative sections, such as the sequencing of events, complexity, coherence, feelings evoked, style, or choice of words (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 13), are also looked at. For example, does a narrative of family history, or of regional attachment, summon up emotions? Does the narrator refer to the region as “my” region or “our” city? And so on. A few deconstructionist analytic strategies are also used, such as the examination of silences, or of what is not said and who or what is excluded, and examining disruptions and contradictions, or places where the text does not make sense (Czarniawska 96-7).

It should also be mentioned that although categorical analysis focuses on sections of the whole interview text, it is still necessary to see that section in a larger context. The more that is known about the participant in general, the more informed the analysis will be. This includes familiarity not only with the entire interview text, but

also any additional information about the participant's life in general, their linguistic style, and the broader social and historical context (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 164). For this reason, information that I knew about the participants from conversations we had outside of the interview, research that I had done on Warmia-Mazury, including its history, and information I had from being in contact with the region and spending time there – all of that also informed the analysis.

With the content analysis approach, hypotheses or propositions are made during the analysis (Creswell 154; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 10). In other words, I wanted to find out if there is or there is not historical continuity in the participants' identities, but, it was only during the analysis that answers to that question could be provided. Similarly, for the other main theme of regional or local identity, it was only during analysis that any proposition could be made about how historical continuity influences the participants' identification with their region or locality. After the interview texts are analyzed according to the main themes, an in-depth discussion of the results follows in the concluding chapter. There, the results are related to literature dealing with issues addressed in the study, and placed within a larger context.

To sum up, the analysis of the collected narratives entailed closely reading the interview texts; identifying themes and categories; analyzing sections of the narratives dealing with certain themes through interpretation; making conclusions and putting forth propositions; and finally, discussing the results by contextualizing them within literature.

## **2.7 – Ethical issues**

No significant ethical problems were encountered during the research. All of the participants are legal adults above the age of 18. The issue of confidentiality is addressed by providing the participants with anonymity. The participants were also informed about the purpose of the study and why they were asked to participate. There was no monetary compensation for taking part in the study, and since the participants are volunteers, it is hoped that the accounts they gave during the interviews are authentic. Finally, if they wish, the participants will also be given access to the finished thesis.

## **2.8 – Conclusion of chapter**

This chapter has outlined the methodology guiding this research project. This included basic information about the nature of narrative research, the way the research site and participants were selected, information about the participants, the way the interviews and analysis were carried out, and ethical issues. The analysis of the interview texts follows in the next chapter.

## **Chapter III – Analysis of Narratives**

### **3.1 – Introduction to chapter**

This chapter will introduce the reader to the participants of the study, present the data that was collected, and provide an analysis of the data. The introduction of the participants will consist of basic information gained from the interviews. This will serve as a part of the collected data, while the other part will be quoted extracts from the interviews and other more specific content used during analysis. Finally, the analysis will consist of two sections. The first will analyze historical continuity in the participants' narratives of their family histories, and of their stories of the history of Warmia-Mazury. Both narratives will be analyzed to see if they display any continuity with the past, or if they point to a break with the past, or discontinuity. In other words, do the participants identify with their family's and their region's past? The second section of the analysis will try to discern how that historical continuity influences the participants' regional or local identity. In other words, given the results of the first two sections, how do the participants identify with their region?

### **3.2 – Introduction of participants**

Before presenting the analysis of the collected data, I would like to provide an overview of the narratives I collected by giving an “introduction” to each of the individuals I interviewed. The information in these introductory segments comes primarily from the interviews, but also from conversations I had with the individuals outside of the recorded interviews, and sometimes background knowledge that I had as well. It should be noted that the information provided within these introductions consists of the subjective narrative of each interviewee re-told through the subjective interpretation of the interviewer. By providing these “snippets” of the participants' biographies, I hope to “acquaint” the reader with them by providing some very basic background information. This way when reading the analysis, the reader has at least a

basic idea, or wider context information, about the fragments of narratives being analyzed, and the individuals who provided that content.

Piotrek:

Piotrek is 24 years old, was born in Olsztyn and later moved with his family to D. just outside of the city, where he still lives today. He recently finished studying law at UWM in Olsztyn. At the time of the interview he had a summer delivery job and had not yet decided on what type of full time job he will look for. Generally he is interested in music and the humanities, and enjoys reading philosophy and various other subjects.

Piotrek's grandfather from his father's side comes from the southeast, or today's Ukraine, and his grandmother from near the city of Kielce. From his mother's side the family comes from near Vilnius in today's Lithuania and they migrated to Warmia-Mazury around WWII.

Piotrek is considering moving to another country for some time to earn more money and develop personally. But, he definitely wants to come back because his family is in D. and Olsztyn. He also likes his region's natural landscape and feels good there. He could not live in a big city for very long, at some point he will need to come back home where it is peaceful and quiet.

Dominik:

Dominik is 24 years old and was born in Olsztyn. He distinctly remembers growing up in the Zatorze neighborhood of Olsztyn, which at the time was known as the most dangerous neighborhood in the city. During high school he moved with his family to W. outside of Olsztyn where he continues to live. Dominik just finished studying law at UWM and at the time of the interview he was preparing to take the national law examination (aplikacja), which would allow him to continue studying law. Dominik enjoys sailing and actively taking part in various sports.

Dominik's family from his father's side comes from near Białystok near Poland's eastern border with Lithuania and they migrated to Warmia-Mazury. From his mother's side, from what he understands, everyone is from Olsztyn.

Dominik is basing his future plans on the national law exam. If he passes, he will most likely stay in Olsztyn and eventually open his own law firm. If he does not pass, he will definitely leave Olsztyn for a bigger Polish city in search of better earnings.

#### Monika:

Monika is 24 years old, was born in Olsztyn and still lives there, although she is living apart from her parents. She finished a three-year cosmetician bachelor's study course and started her own business. She is also studying psychology and is preparing to defend her master's thesis. Monika has very fond childhood memories of spending time outdoors with her father. Currently, she is very busy with work and studying and practically does not have time for anything. But, whenever she gets a chance she enjoys going into the woods or to a lake near the city.

From her mother's side Monika's family probably comes from Vilnius, and her mother was born in Biskupiec before her family moved to Olsztyn. She is not sure where her father's family comes from.

Monika “loves” Olsztyn and plans to stay there and raise her children there. She is especially attached to the nature of the area, and is also happy with the way her business is going.

#### Anna:

Anna is 21 years old and was born in Olsztyn. She is currently living in Warsaw where she is studying psychology, while her family home is in T. outside of Olsztyn, where they moved a few years ago. She has a big family in Olsztyn, and they always maintain close contacts, which is something she misses when she is in Warsaw.

From her mother's side Anna's family comes from Lithuania, where her great-grandmother grew up in Vilnius. They came to Biskupiec in Poland “during the war,” after which they moved to Olsztyn. Her father's side of the family has rural farming roots, but she is not sure where exactly they come from.

Anna would like to stay in Warsaw after her studies because the city has a lot

more to offer than Olsztyn in the way of culture, employment opportunities and recreation. She likes Olsztyn, but says it is a good city to be in during the summer, while it can be quite boring throughout the rest of the year.

Jacek:

Jacek is 25 years old, was born in Olsztyn and continues to live there. At the time of the interview he was living with his parents, but has since started renting his own apartment. He recently finished studying law at UWM and currently works for a bank.

From his mother's side of the family Jacek's grandmother comes from Vilnius in Lithuania and came to Olsztyn "during the war or right after the war began." While from his father's side his grandfather comes from the Lublin area. Both of his parents were born in Olsztyn and met there.

For the time being Jacek sees himself living in Olsztyn because he has a job and he generally likes the city because of the nature surrounding it, which he takes advantage of. Most of his family also lives in Olsztyn and he would be nervous about arranging his life all over again somewhere else. But, on the other hand those are the only things keeping him in Olsztyn, and since there are not many opportunities for career development and good earnings there, he is keeping the possibility of moving somewhere else open.

Izabela:

Izabela is 24 years old and was born in Kętrzyn in Mazury. She recently finished studying political science at UWM and found a job working for a bank in Olsztyn, where she rents an apartment. She is also enrolled in human resources management graduate studies. Her family home, where she grew up, is in S. outside of Kętrzyn. She recalls her childhood as very calm, and describes the area as very rural.

From her mother's side Izabela's family comes from Lithuania and settled outside of Kętrzyn after WWII. Her father's family comes from central Poland, she thinks maybe from the Łódź area, and they came to the Kętrzyn area at some point after



WWII.

Since right now she has a job in Olsztyn, Izabela is connecting her short-term plans with the city. But, at some point she will want to move to a bigger city like Warsaw or Gdańsk where there are more opportunities for career development.

### **3.3 – Analysis**

At the start of my research I posed some basic questions that I wanted to gain insight into. Most broadly, I wanted to gain insight into the identity of the third generation living in Warmia-Mazury since WWII. More specifically, I wanted to find out if there is any sort of continuity in the identity of this generation regarding the history of their families and region. And based on whether there is or there is not continuity, how these young people identify with their region or locality is also examined. To gain insight into these issues I asked the interviewees various questions. Below is my analysis of their narratives broken down according to the two most important themes. The first theme is continuity, divided into continuity of family history and continuity of regional history. The second theme is identification with the region in relation to the results of the analysis of the first two themes.

#### **3.3.1 – Historical continuity**

##### **3.3.1.1 – Continuity of family history**

The main problem to be explored here is continuity, or lack thereof, of family history in the participants' identities. In other words, do the interviewees identify with their family's past in any way? And if so, which aspects of that past do they identify with?

Each participant's primary narrative of their family history is presented below. This is their story of their family history. Additional information related to family history that was revealed by the participants during other parts of the interviews is summarized as well. The extracted narratives and summaries of additional information are followed by the analysis.

During the analysis, several aspects of the narratives are examined to determine if there is continuity with the family past. Generally, the more information and detail an individual provides about his or her family's past, the more continuity there is (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 132-3), since that individual demonstrates interest and a connection with that past. Knowing one's roots also implies a need or desire to maintain one's sense of continuity in spite of change (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 134-7), where change in the context of this study can be the migration of their grandparents or great-grandparents. In this respect, the participants' knowledge of where members of their family's previous generations were born or where they come from, and also providing information about those generations' lives and experiences, are taken into account. How far back in time the participants reach is also examined. If one talks about their ancestors reaching back through many generations that is a clear sign of continuity.

Within the framework of this study the narratives are also examined within a context of post-WWII migration, so the fact that all the participants are descendants of people that settled in Warmia-Mazury after the war for various reasons. Because of this, it is important to see if the participants provide any information about their grandparents or great-grandparents' experiences during WWII, and about their migration to Warmia-Mazury. If such information is provided, that entails continuity since the participant can be assumed to understand that his grandparents or great-grandparents came from another place, and so he or she is in a way a result of that migration. Perhaps the participant may even feel somehow connected with his ancestors' previous homeland.

Information about parents is also examined for they can be seen as a generational link between the grandparents or great-grandparents and the participant. Such information helps to determine if the participant sees himself or herself as the result of a line of generations that underwent certain experiences and in the end ended up where they are now. If the participant explicitly mentions himself or herself in the narrative, that is also a sign that they see themselves as a continuation of the family history.

Naturally, the narratives should also provide clues as to how much interest the individual has in his or her family history, and also how much communication there is

between the individual and older generations regarding the family history. Most families have stories that are told about the family history, a process that “consolidates” a “community feeling by reifying its history” (Czarniawska 37). The more interest and communication between generations, the more continuity can be assumed. On the other hand, the individual may show signs that he or she is not interested, and that communication is weak, which would suggest that he or she consciously does not identify with the family's past. And related to the communication of the family history, sometimes narratives may show that there is a “significant figure” (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 134-7) in the family that passes such information on to the participant, or has a major influence on the participant in general.

As can already be discerned from the above criteria being used to search for signs of continuity or discontinuity, it is useful to look for “unsaid” or “missing” information in the narratives (Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 62-3), also known as “examining silences” (Czarniawska 97). Much insight can be gained from looking into what part of the family history is missing. What individuals, events, time periods, and experiences are not mentioned? Such a lack of information is often a sign of conscious or unconscious discontinuity.

In the end, there will of course be no clear cut answers, for continuity and discontinuity are not polarized, closed off categories, but can be viewed as two ends of a spectrum, where all sorts of possibilities lie in between. Some narratives may clearly display continuity, others may show very little, while others still may show continuity in some respects, and discontinuity in other respects. Every individual is unique. This analysis simply tries to gain insight into a small aspect of the identity of these young people to get an idea of their perception of their family's past. Judging whether or not there is continuity within that perception is often a matter of intuition, and sometimes the interpretation of even a single phrase or utterance shows how much continuity there is.

#### Piotrek:

Below is the full extract of Piotrek's primary narrative about his family history, before responding to follow up questions:

*From what I know, my dad's family comes from the southeast, so today's Ukraine. I'm talking about grandparents, my dad's great-great-great grandparents. My dad's mom was born in, I don't remember the name of the place, I just know she comes from near Kielce. Yeah, and, I don't know actually how they ended up near Olsztyn, what prompted them to do that, and in what year that took place. Dad was born in [19]52, he was born near Thorn, yeah? So his mom was born near Kielce, and he near Thorn, so that family migrated, yeah?, from region to region. My mom's side of the family comes from Wileńszczyzna, yeah? And that's what I know about that, I don't know more. I don't even know in what year, you know, for example, my dad came to Olsztyn. My dad's dad was in the military, and it was probably caused by that, yeah?, that he was transferred here to Olsztyn by the army, to some military unit, right? Yeah, something like that.*

Responding to some follow up questions, Piotrek also specified the place where his father was born as “Pieczek” near Thorn, although he was unsure of the exact name. He also added that it was his “great-great-grandmother” that comes from Wileńszczyzna, and that after the war that side of his family “somehow came to Olsztyn.” And asked where his mother was born, he said that it was “generally in the Warmia-Mazury voivodship,” maybe in Orneta or near Orneta.

In general Piotrek's knowledge of his family history is incomplete and very general, with little detail, although there were a few indicators of continuity. Geographically he talked about general regions, but at the same time this shows that he is aware that his roots go back to today's Ukraine and Lithuania, and central Poland. He also demonstrates a connection through time to those roots by referring to his “great-great-great grandparents,” or “great-great-grandmother,” although at the same time he does not give any detail of his ancestors' lives in those places.

He also does not refer to any family experiences during the war or resulting from it, except to say that his mother's side of the family “somehow came to Olsztyn” after the war. As for his father's side of the family, he speculates that their migration was related to his grandfather's military service, although WWII was not mentioned, and he explicitly admits that he does not know how, why, or when they came to Olsztyn. In this way he demonstrates little or no knowledge of how either side of the family was resettled or migrated to Warmia-Mazury after the war.

He also provides little or unclear information about his parents, only mentioning the general area where they were both born, without certainty as to the exact locations or names of the locations. And finally, he does not include himself in the narrative. Generally his story of his family's history is fragmentary and discontinuous as it lacks connections between themes and time periods.

Dominik:

Below is the full extract of Dominik's primary narrative about his family history, before responding to follow up questions:

*I know little, really. My grandmother, who I remember, who is the oldest in my family, she was my great-grandmother, and she lived in Olsztyn along with my grandmother. From dad's side the family comes from the Białystok region, so that area. From mom's side everyone comes from Olsztyn, practically. And from what I know, from my father's side they sort of migrated to Olsztyn and settled here. Yeah, so, and of course they settled with my great-grandmother then, and she is the oldest person in my family that I remember. And I don't know more about my family's history.*

Responding to some follow up questions, Dominik added that he knew his great-grandmother from his father's side and talked about the positive impression she made on him by being independent and having a “fresh mind” despite being over 90 years old. However, he never spoke with her about the family's history. He also added that from his mother's side there was nobody that migrated to the Warmia-Mazury voivodship from a different region in Poland. I mentioned that that is quite interesting since almost everyone in the region today is from the incoming population, but he said that he doesn't know any more details about it. He also specified that the exact location where his father's side of the family came from is Dolistowo.

Dominik's knowledge of his family history is weak and shows almost no continuity. He provides the exact location of where his father's side of the family comes from and also says that his mother's side of the family is from Olsztyn. However, he does not provide any information about his ancestors' lives in either place. It is also very surprising that he does not know any details about his mother's side of the family coming from Olsztyn. If they do indeed come from Olsztyn and did not migrate from another region they may be Warmians, also known as “autochthons” after the war. If that is the case it is a very interesting part of Dominik's family history, as there are almost no Warmians left in the region since nearly all of them emigrated to Germany during the communist period. Perhaps Dominik offers a clue to this part of his family history in another part of the interview in which he talks about why he thinks local initiatives dealing with regional history are important. He says that there are people that left Olsztyn during the “inter-war period, or right before the war, or after the war.” Now, they are returning to Olsztyn because of life situations or to visit, and such initiatives can help them recall their memories, or they themselves can “tell a history

that appears on a photo.” This may be a reference to Warmians, maybe even Germans.<sup>45</sup> Maybe this has something to do with his own family history. If that is the case than the fact that he is not aware of it shows a major gap in his narrative of his family history.<sup>46</sup>

The furthest back that Dominik reaches through generations is to his great-grandmother, and his keenness of her is one of the few indicator's of continuity. He does not mention WWII at all when talking about his family history, and only states where his father's family comes from, but not how or why they moved. Finally, he gives no details about his parents and does not include himself in the narrative. Dominik's narrative lacks continuity.

### Monika:

Below is the full extract of Monika's primary narrative about her family history:

*My mom was born in Biskupiec and lived there with my grandfather and with my grandmother for a good few years, but I can't say honestly how many. Later, they came to Olsztyn. Grandpa worked in LO3, in High School number 3, he advanced to the position of director and then they stayed here permanently. My dad was always in Olsztyn, I think, from birth. And he met my mom in high school, and they are together until today. I think my great-grandmother used to live in Vilnius, but I'm not positive, my great-grandmother from mom's side. From dad's side I know the family somewhat less. And these are all Olsztynians. And I also have family in Gdańsk from my grandfather's side. My grandfather's mother is also from Gdańsk, she lived there and died there, the same as her daughter...lives in Gdańsk with her husband and daughters. The daughters have husbands and children already. But everyone, really I think only my mom changed her place of residence, where they were born there they lived. And I live in Olsztyn from the day I was born and I intend to stay here, we will see how it goes [laughter], my life later on, but I would like to stay in Olsztyn. I think that's it.*

Monika's knowledge of her family history is quite incomplete by focusing almost exclusively on her mother's side, but her narrative also displays some signs of continuity. Monika believes that her great-grandmother from her mother's side used to live in Vilnius, but she is not sure, and she does not provide any information about her

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<sup>45</sup> I did not inquire further as I only noticed this “clue” later when reading the transcribed interview.

<sup>46</sup> Unless he is aware of this but omitted it on purpose, which is possible. It is also possible that this part of the family history was purposefully not passed on to him by his parents and grandparents, or it was not stressed. And it is also possible that he simply never inquired.

great-grandmother's life there. She also mentions that her other great-grandmother from her mother's side comes from Gdańsk, but also does not provide any information about her life there. Her great-grandmothers are as far back as she reaches in the family tree, although temporally she does not provide any information referring to dates or historical events. Her grandparents from her father's side are absent completely as she admits to knowing that side of the family “somewhat less,” only saying that she thinks her father was born in Olsztyn.

Monika does not mention WWII at all in her narrative, and her family's journey from Vilnius is absent as well. Here her knowledge is fragmentary, since she thinks her great-grandmother may have lived in Vilnius, but offers no clues as to how she ended up in Biskupiec after the war. Again, the father's side is absent altogether.<sup>47</sup> She also says that she believes that only her mother moved from the place where she was born. So, here the absence of post-war migration is apparent, for her grandfather and grandmother, who's roots reach back to Gdańsk and Vilnius, must have met as a result of migration.

Monika does, however, offer more information about her parents, focusing decidedly on her mother, which sets her apart from the other interviewees. And she also knows quite a bit about her mother's family after they came to Olsztyn from nearby Biskupiec, including her grandfather's profession, and expands somewhat on the branch of the family that now lives in Gdańsk. It is also interesting that she begins her narrative with her parents, then reaching back to her grandparents and great-grandparents from her mother's side, before finally saying of herself, “And I live in Olsztyn from the day I was born and I intend to stay here.” This is a clear sign of continuity, since it shows that Monika sees herself as part of the family history, and furthermore, she plans on staying in Olsztyn, therefore continuing that history. This is interesting because she sees her family as being connected to the city. She says, “And these are all Olsztynians,” referring to her family living in Olsztyn. It seems that she feels like she comes from Olsztyn, and in a way her family belongs there as well, as she does not focus on Vilnius or Gdańsk. The narrative starts in Biskupiec, already Warmia-Mazury, briefly mentions Vilnius and Gdańsk, but focuses on Olsztyn.

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<sup>47</sup> This is surprising considering her very positive childhood experiences of spending time with her father (see section 3.3.2). It does not seem that such close relations with her father included conversations about the family's history.

So, Monika's narrative is unique compared to the others, for her knowledge is fragmentary and she shows little or no identification with the family's past before the war, but, at the same time, she sees her family as being more rooted in Olsztyn, and sees herself as a continuation of that. This is exemplified in the way she ends the narrative, by saying, "And I live in Olsztyn from the day I was born and I intend to stay here."

Anna:

Below is the full extract of Anna's primary narrative about her family history, before responding to follow up questions:

*From my mom's side my family comes from Lithuania. Our great-grandmother was born in Vilnius, she grew up there and during the war she had to flee so they went in the direction of Poland and landed, at first somewhere here in the vicinity of Olsztyn, I think that it was Biskupiec. My great-grandmother lived there with her husband and two daughters, my grandmother and her sister. Next they moved to Olsztyn and here our family started to expand to the point it is today. And from dad's side I'm not completely sure where exactly they came from. They definitely lived in the countryside. My great-grandfather lived in the countryside, I think he was a farmer and my dad's family was very large, because grandpa had eight siblings and somehow each of them started their own family and they all moved in different directions. I know that somewhere in the North there is a part of those siblings, grandpa stayed in Olsztyn, a few are in Warsaw, others moved to the South. And from grandma's side, my dad's mom, I'm also not completely sure. But those are also sort of farming roots. While mom's side is decidedly more educated.*

In answering follow up questions Anna specified that her great-grandmother, grandmother, and grandfather from her mother's side all finished school, even college, and worked in their professions. Her grandfather, grandmother, mother, and aunts were or are teachers, or work in pedagogy. A great-grandmother was the principal of a nursery school and later of a preschool, and her great-grandfather was a railway man. Her father's side was not very educated, although that changed starting with her father's generation. The only exception to working on the farm from her father's side was her grandfather, who was a military mechanic. Her grandmother from her father's side stayed home and took care of the house and children. She also mentioned that one of her great-grandfathers was a baker and she once saw a silent film about him at her great-grandmother's funeral in Gdańsk. The film was from the 1940s and showed her great-grandfather walking somewhere in Gdańsk and baking for the whole family.

Later, when talking about her experiences growing up, she talked fondly about her 93-year-old great-grandmother from her mother's side. She mentioned that her mother and aunt made an effort to record her lifetime experiences, and this way she found out a lot about her life in Vilnius and how she had to flee the city. Anna said that because her



grandmother spoke so much about how much she loved Vilnius and Lithuania, that sentiment rubbed off on her as well. She then went on to talk about how she went to Vilnius twice, once on a school trip, and once as part of a college integration camp. She said, “And I heard so many stories from my great-grandmother about all those places, where she lived, where she went for walks, where she met with friends, how she sang in a choir [in an Orthodox church], how she went to the Gate of Dawn, so that really I already knew all of these places from her stories. So, I somehow came to like Vilnius because I heard so much about it.”

And finally, when asked about her opinion about local initiatives dealing with regional history, Anna explained that some time ago people were more conscious of their past because there was no television or internet, which take up a lot of people's time, and people generally lived at a slower pace and had time to talk to each other more. She thinks that stories about the family passed from generation to generation, but now parents work all the time while their children sit in front of the computer, and “they are not interested in this on their own.” So, such initiatives are useful because they show people the past, “so they can find out anything.”

In general, and especially compared to the other interviewees, Anna has very good knowledge of her family history, although focusing on her mother's side, and she can be said to identify with aspects of her family's past reaching back to before the war. In other words, Anna's narrative shows continuity regarding her family history. Anna knows that her mother's side of the family comes from Vilnius, although she is not sure of even the region where her father's family comes from. But, regarding Vilnius, she gives a lot of detailed information about her great-grandmother's life there before the war, and even expresses an emotional connection to the city, which she visited twice. This is the result of a number of related factors, including the fact that her great-grandmother, apparently a significant figure, is still alive and shares her stories with the family; Anna's mother and aunt made efforts to record her grandmother's experiences; and Anna's family is very close-knitted, spending a lot of time together and generally getting along. It seems that the family's closeness has impacted Anna, for she shows interest in her family's past, and believes inter-generational conversations about family history are important. This is evident from her remarks about how family stories used to be passed down from generation to generation, a process that has been disrupted in recent times by a more fast-paced lifestyle.

Anna also talks about Gdańsk and shows some connection to the city not only because of a part of her family that lives there, but also because of the film of her great-grandfather that she saw. And despite not knowing where her father's side of the family

comes from, she knows quite a bit about the family, their professions and rural life. Her knowledge of her mother's family is even more detailed and very specific. Temporally, Anna consciously reaches back to before WWII when speaking about her great-grandmother from Vilnius, although she does not talk about the war itself. She mentions that her great-grandmother had to flee Vilnius, not stating exactly when, although implying that it was around the time of the war. She does not talk specifically about her great-grandmother's journey to Biskupiec, nor does she mention how a part of the family ended up in Gdańsk. She also does not say how her father's family ended up in Olsztyn. She offers clues of the family's post-war migration when she mentions that her grandfather's siblings moved in various directions, but she does not connect those migrations to the post-war period. Her parents are present in her narrative at various points, but the focus is never directly on them. And finally, she does not explicitly put herself in the narrative, but, when talking about her mother's side of the family, she says, "Next they moved to Olsztyn and here our family started to expand to the point it is today." So, that is also a sign of being aware of continuity.

Overall, Anna's narrative regarding her mother's side of the family definitely shows continuity. A thread can be traced starting with her great-grandmother in Vilnius before the war, then fleeing and ending up in Biskupiec as a result of the war, and finally the family moving to Olsztyn, where they are until the present day. Although the same cannot be said about her father's side, she still knows quite a bit about that side of the family. The fact that Anna identifies with Vilnius based solely on her great-grandmother's stories clearly sets her apart from the other interviewees, whose identities do not reach beyond their place of birth to the extent that Anna's does.

Jacek:

Below is the full extract of Jacek's primary narrative about his family history:

*So, it's like this, from my mom's side, from what I know, grandma comes from Lithuania. And during the war, or right when the war began, they had to escape from Vilnius. And, you know, they simply came here to the North of Poland, specifically to Olsztyn, and they settled here permanently. In turn grandpa from my dad's side comes from southern Poland, from the Lublin area. But, was he born in Lublin?, I have to tell you I don't know. I know that he lived there for a long time as a child and later he*

*moved to this region and settled here, and died here, because he is not alive anymore. And when it comes to my grandparents that is basically it. In turn my parents, well, it's obvious, they got married, they live here right?, they were born here too, so we are all here. But, we still have some family in the Lublin area, right?, but that is a brother<sup>48</sup> from my dad's side, he lives there. But, he was born in Olsztyn, but, studies and, you know, he moved there.*

Jacek's knowledge of his family history is not complete, focusing on one grandparent from each side of the family, and his narrative is very general and does not show many signs of continuity. Jacek knows that his grandmother from his mother's side comes from Vilnius and his grandfather from his father's side from the Lublin area, although he is not positive if his grandfather was born there. He does not give any information about either grandparents' or family's life in Vilnius or Lublin. The furthest back in the family tree that he reaches is to his grandparents. Regarding historical events he mentions WWII only in the context of his mother's family having to escape from Vilnius during the war, or right after it began. He does not provide any detail about their escape and journey to Olsztyn, and from his father's side he only mentions that his grandfather moved to Olsztyn and settled there. So, there is no specific mention of any WWII experiences (except for escaping Vilnius), and no description of either side of the family's migration resulting from the war. But, despite this, it should be pointed out that Jacek is aware that his family's roots reach back to other places, but he does not stress this fact and does not seem to place any part of his own identity in those places.

Finally, Jacek includes his parents and himself in his narrative of the family history when he says, "In turn my parents, well, it's obvious, they got married, they live here, right?, they were born here too, so we are all here." In a way Jacek does present himself as a continuation of the family history, which reaches back to Vilnius and Lublin, but he does not stress this point emotionally the way Anna does. It seems to be simply a matter of fact for him. And in other respects, his narrative is rather discontinuous as there are gaps and a lot of missing information.

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<sup>48</sup> Jacek is referring to his first cousin. In Poland first cousins are sometimes referred to as brother (brat) or sister (siostra), which is a short, perhaps more intimate way of saying male/female first cousin from a parent's brother (brat/siostra stryjeczny/a) or male/female first cousin from a parent's sister (brat/siostra cioteczny/a).

Izabela:

Below is the full extract of Izabela's primary narrative about her family history, before responding to follow up questions:

*You know what, maybe I will say it like this. Because from my mom's side her parent's definitely came from, or they lived in, Lithuania. Grandpa during WWII ended up in the Soviet gulags and worked there. And later after WWII, when the borders were open and practically everyone could go back to the country, grandpa and grandma came back and settled in Warmia-Mazury, practically not far from Kętrzyn. And in general I think that's it from mom's side. And from dad's side I will say that his parent's lived somewhere in southern Poland and only later moved here to our area. I don't know how it was but I know that they definitely didn't live here from birth and only later they kind of resettled them in this direction. And later what?, they settled here, lived here, and that's how it stayed. Yeah, but I know that from mom's side for sure grandpa worked in the Soviet gulags and they lived there in Lithuania for a very long period, grandma and grandpa worked. But, later they were kind of forced, or not exactly forced because it was already normal, they could normally go back, and that's what they did, and they came here.*

Responding to follow up questions, Izabela spoke more of how her grandparents came to Warmia-Mazury, saying that her grandfather's cousin was already there so they had a place to go, and later they inherited the house from him. If they hadn't had a place to go to they probably wouldn't have gone back to Poland. She said that her mother told her about this.

She also talked about her grandfather's testament which included his biography in which he wrote down his experiences of working in the gulag, becoming sick there, how the prisoners were punished, and then getting out and coming to Warmia-Mazury. She looked over the testament once, and said that although she doesn't know where it is now, "...it is fairly interesting, to get to know your grandparent's roots."

Regarding her father's side of the family, she specified that she thinks her father's parents lived somewhere near Łódź and they were farmers. I asked if they moved after the war and she confirmed. She thinks her grandfather was active in the Home Army (Armia Krajowa),<sup>49</sup> but that she is not sure about anything else. Although later, when talking about where she got historical knowledge of the region from, Izabela talked about a university class she had about the Olsztyn countryside during Stalinism, in which she learned that many people were illiterate. Here, Izabela gave her grandmother from her father's side as an example, saying that in those times one could choose to either go to school or stay home and help with the farm, and her grandmother "chose the easy path...and because of that, well, she wasn't educated."

When asked where her parents met, she answered that they lived near each other, both

<sup>49</sup> The largest Polish underground resistance organization in Poland during WWII, loyal to the Government-in-Exile in London.

worked in PGRs, and met in the 1980s. Later they moved nearby with Izabela to S. near Kętrzyn, which she describes as a typical Masurian, rural, post-PGR area.

Later in the interview some more information about her family came up when Izabela was talking about her village and said that her knowledge of its history after the war is “very fragmentary,” but that her mother, who was born one year after Izabela's grandparents came to Poland, knows more from hearing their stories. She also said, “From my mom's side the history of her [mother's] parents is very interesting, from my dad's side not so much.”

And finally, when asked if there are any places that are important to her personally, she said that one such place is next to her grandparents' house, where there are remains of the Masurian Canal (Kanal Mazurski),<sup>50</sup> and where she always goes back “with great sentiment.” And when speaking of her grandparents' house itself, she said, “I also go back there with great sentiment.” She elaborated that there were plans to sell the house after her grandparents passed away, but in the end her mother and her siblings decided to keep it as a family keepsake. Izabela said, “Because the truth is that place will always remind us of parents, grandparents...that house stayed and is still there...it requires a general repair, but it has its charm, and there is always a place to go back to, that is the most important thing probably.”

Izabela has basic knowledge of her family history, comparable to the other interviewees, although she has significant additional knowledge regarding her mother's side of the family. Throughout her narrative it is apparent that she got most information about the family history from her mother, while her father's side is decidedly less present. Izabela knows that her grandparents from her mother's side come from Lithuania, and she mentions that they lived and worked there for a long time. But, she does not provide any details about their life there, except that her grandfather worked in a Soviet gulag, but that was a result of the war. From her father's side she is aware that the family comes from southern Poland, maybe Łódź, and she thinks they were farmers. Generally, there is little information in the narrative about her grandparents' lives before coming to Warmia-Mazury. Her narrative also does not reach back beyond her grandparents in her family tree. WWII is mentioned in the context of her grandfather being sent to a gulag during the war, and her grandparents “returning” to Poland after the war when the “borders were open.” Her grandfather being sent to the gulag, which she knows about from reading his testament, is the most clear example of WWII experience or trauma out of all the interviewees. Another example could be her other grandfather possibly being active in the Home Army, but she is not sure about that.

<sup>50</sup> A system of canals connecting regional rivers and lakes. It's construction, begun in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, was interrupted by WWII and never completed.

Izabela's grandparents' journey to Warmia-Mazury is not described for either side of the family except for very general information. Regarding her father's side, she thinks they were somehow resettled, or moved after the war. But, the way Izabela explains how her grandparent's came from Lithuania is interesting. Taking into consideration Izabela's age, and the fact that her mother was born one year after her grandparents arrived after the war, that means her grandparents must have arrived after 1956, when hundreds of thousands of prisoners that were sent to the gulags during the war were allowed to return to Poland after the end of the Stalinist period. Izabela's grandfather was one of them, and he naturally came to Warmia-Mazury because someone from his family was already there, presumably having arrived shortly after the war from the eastern Kresy. But, Izabela does not specify any of this, in other words, this part of the narrative is not placed within the context of historical events going on at the time, and so it is at first puzzling for the listener or reader. Once this historical context is present, parts of the narrative make more sense, like the borders being open and her grandparents returning because they already had family in Warmia-Mazury. Izabela does not, however, mention why her grandparents returned together, and what her grandmother was doing between roughly 1945 and 1956 while her grandfather was in the gulag.

Izabela's parents were not really mentioned until she answered follow up questions or talked about other topics, at which point basic information is provided about them working in PGRs. But, throughout the narrative Izabela's mother plays a major role, and appears to be a significant figure as the provider of information about the family history and information about the past in general. Her father being largely absent from her narrative may have a lot to do with her focus on her mother's side of the family's history. A good example is the fact that she feels quite connected to her grandfather being sent to the gulag, but does not display any emotion towards her other grandfather possibly being active in the Home Army. She also mentions her other grandmother only in the context of illiteracy after the war.

Izabela does not explicitly include herself in the narrative, but a certain degree of continuity can be seen nonetheless. This continuity can be seen as reaching back to her grandparents from Lithuania, and mainly anchored in her grandfather working in the gulag. Izabela's mother, by telling her the family history, and showing her

grandfather's testament, is the connection between Izabela and the family's past.<sup>51</sup> In a way, her connection to her grandfather's gulag experience can be compared to Anna's connection to her great-grandmother's experience in Vilnius, although the major difference is that for Izabela it is not an emotional connection with a different place, such as Lithuania, but more of a connection with her grandfather's experiences themselves. In fact, Izabela feels an emotional connection to her grandparents' house near Kętrzyn, but that is already after the war, and in Warmia-Mazury.

So, overall, Izabela can be said to have some historical continuity with her family history, but her connection with the past does not seem to have a major impact on her identity. It seems to be more of a matter of having good relations with her mother and happening to see her grandfather's testament. It is interesting, but not profound, as Izabela says that “it is fairly interesting, to get to know your grandparent's roots,” but also admits that the testament is the only thing that ever made her even a little interested in her family history for a moment, and she does not even know where the testament is now.

### **3.3.1.1.1 – Summary of results for continuity of family history**

As could be expected, the results are mixed and varied, with different levels of continuity being expressed by each individual. Dominik and Jacek can be said to have no or very little continuity, while Anna, unique compared to all the other interviewees, displays clear continuity by identifying with her great-grandmother's experiences in Vilnius. The rest of the cases are not as straight forward. Piotrek generally has no continuity, but he shows some connection with his roots by referring to his “great-great-great grandparents.” Izabela shows some continuity through her connection with her grandfather's gulag experience after the war, but that does not have a major impact on her identity. And Monika's narrative is unique because although she knows very little about her family's past, she nonetheless sees herself as continuing the family history, which in her identity is rooted in Olsztyn.

But, despite the variations, if a generalization had to be made it would be that the narratives suggest that there is discontinuity, or a break with the past when it comes

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<sup>51</sup> All of Izabela's grandparents passed away by the time she was nine or ten years old, so they did not talk to her themselves about their experiences.

to the participants' identification with their family history. The only clear-cut exception is Anna. She is the only one out of the six participants that sees herself as a continuation of her family history by understanding where the family (at least one side) comes from, and feeling a connection with that place. None of the other participants showed such continuity with their family's past before the war. But, perhaps in the context of this study, the most visible evidence for a lack of continuity is having little or no knowledge of why and how the participants' families today find themselves in Warmia-Mazury. This makes it difficult to identify with their family histories.

### **3.3.1.2 – Continuity of regional history**

This section is structured in the same way as the previous one. Here, the problem of continuity, or lack thereof, of regional history in the participants' identities is explored. In other words, do the interviewees identify with any aspects of their region's past in any way?

Each participant's primary narrative, or story, of the history of Warmia-Mazury is presented below. Additional information related to regional history that was revealed by the participants during other parts of the interviews is summarized as well, followed by the analysis.

As with the previous section regarding continuity with family history, generally the more information and detail an individual provides about the region's past, the more continuity there can be assumed to be. This includes mentioning geographical locations and historical figures and events related to regional history. The accuracy of the information is also considered. The more accurate, the more continuity, although sometimes it is possible for continuity to exist based on information that is not necessarily accurate, and this distinction is also sought out.

How far back in time the participants reach is also examined. This is important considering that all of the participants are descendents of people that settled in Warmia-Mazury after WWII, so it is difficult to expect them to have knowledge of the region's history before the war in the form of collective memory passed down from generation to generation. Therefore, if one talks about the region reaching back through many centuries that is a sign of continuity. However, it is also important if the information



provided refers to the region as its own entity. Do the main themes mentioned have to do with the particular history of the region? If a participant provides such information, that means he or she understands that the region has its own particular past. For this reason, the narratives are also analyzed for information about the influences of non-Polish groups and cultures on Warmia-Mazury throughout history. Because although it is a Polish region today, Polish influences were overshadowed by others, particularly German or Prussian, throughout long periods the region's history. So, here, as in the previous section, it is useful to look for missing information in the narratives. What part of the region's history is missing? What groups, historical figures, events, and time periods are not mentioned? A lot of missing information is often a sign of conscious or unconscious discontinuity.

If the participant mentions himself or herself in the narrative, that is also a sign of continuity since it means that they see themselves as a part of that history. Does the participant see himself or herself as a part of, or a result of, historical events leading up to the present? For a participant to be able to place themselves in the context of the region's history in this way, they would necessarily have to mention population movements or resettlement after WWII, since they are a part of the region's history because of those events.

The narratives also provide information regarding how much interest the individual has in the region's history, and where they got the information from. The more interest, the more continuity can be assumed. On the other hand, the individual may show signs that he or she is not interested, which would suggest that he or she consciously does not identify with the region's past. And do significant figures play a role? Perhaps someone passes information about regional history on to the participant, or ignites interest within the individual. The existence of such figures may often have a big influence on a person's knowledge and interest in regional history, and therefore lead to continuity.

In some cases, it is also helpful to look at some formal aspects of a participant's version of the region's history, including the complexity and coherence of the story. Are there contradictions or disruptions, or places where the narrative does not make sense or suddenly breaks off? The feeling or mood that the story gives off is also important. Such signs and clues may provide insight into the participant's more emotional and

personal attitude towards the history (Czarniawska 97; Lieblich, Tuval-Mashiach, and Zilber 13).

As with the previous section, there are not always clear cut answers of continuity or discontinuity. Some narratives may display continuity, others may show none, and others still may have mixed results.

### Piotrek:

Below is the full extract of Piotrek's primary narrative about the region's history, before responding to follow up questions:

*Well, from what I know, well, Warmia, we are talking about Warmia, because I live in Warmia. A history of many nations, well, many nations, yeah, I don't know, multicultural, yeah, Prussian, German, Polish. If you are walking down a street in Olsztyn, you can see many Germans, and they also feel some sort of bond with this land. For many years it was under their rule, Prussia rather, German also, yeah?, inter-war.*

Responding to follow up questions, Piotrek added that the region's rather recent history is mainly a German-Polish history.

He also said that he got his knowledge of the region's history from reading a few books during high school. One was about the history of Prussia by Achremczyk, and another author he read is Traba. He mentioned a teacher he had in high school who always repeated to his students how important knowledge of one's region is, and he recommended various literature to his students. Piotrek says that this teacher sort of "injected" that interest into him, and he believes that "it's important to know where one comes from."

Earlier in the interview, when asked if he thinks he will live in the region in the future, Piotrek said that he has some kind of "local patriotism." When asked to specify what he means by local patriotism, he said that, among other things, it is also some kind of historical consciousness, and that he always liked reading about the history of his region.

When later asked about local initiatives dealing with the region's history he said he heard of "Borussia" and that they publish books about the history of Prussia, so the region, including Warmia. When asked what he thinks of such initiatives, Piotrek said that today's times require things like this. He added that, "You cannot forget about your history. For me, of course, today's Warmia is Polish, but it used to be, let's say German, and we have to respect that." He also said that it's nice that someone is doing things like that so that the history is "alive, and not fossilized."

Piotrek's narrative of the region's history is very general and practically without any details. He talks about the history of Warmia, since that is where he lives, which shows that he is aware that there are historical differences between Warmia and Mazury. For the most part, he stresses that it is a multicultural history, mainly Polish-German, and that for many years the region was under German control. Other than that his narrative lacks a time frame and historical figures.

But, what is significant and interesting is Piotrek's open interpretation of the region's history. He is aware that the region was inhabited by more than one nation in the past, and he believes that the region's previous inhabitants and cultures should be respected, even if they were not Polish. This attitude makes sense in light of the fact that he read a book by Robert Traba, one of the founders of "Borussia," and an advocate of celebrating the region's multicultural heritage. It also seems clear that Piotrek's high school history teacher was a significant figure for him because of the way he impacted his attitude and interest in regional history.

Despite presenting a very general, perhaps foggy, narrative of the region's history, Piotrek feels connected to that history, and sees himself as a part of it. More than once he stresses the importance of knowing where one comes from, of knowing the history of one's region, and he defined his local patriotism partly as having historical consciousness. Also, the fact that his narrative during the interview is not very detailed could be a result of simply forgetting a lot of information, since he read books on the topic in high school. He also seemed a bit nervous during the interview, which could have had an effect on his ability to express his thoughts verbally at the time. Nonetheless, he seems to have some background knowledge gained from reading books, and this clearly shapes his views towards the history.

So, overall there is continuity in Piotrek's narrative of the region's history. This is characterized by his eagerness to familiarize himself with the history of the place he is from, and his open acceptance of what that history entails. Piotrek may not be able to tell a detailed history of the region, but it is his attitude towards that history that allows him to identify with it.

Dominik:

Below is the full extract of Dominik's primary narrative about the region's history, before responding to follow up questions:

*Well, I know little [laughter]. Because I was never interested in this. I only know that Warmia and Mazury, there is a Teutonic castle in which was Nicolaus Copernicus, who defended Olsztyn from a Teutonic Knight siege. This city developed, I can't tell you anything more. I have a book, I would have to look in it because for me speaking from memory is not so good. I mean, I was never interested in the history of Olsztyn. For me it was simply I live in Olsztyn because I live here, but what is tied with Olsztyn, that means nothing to me. That's all, yeah.*

Asked where he got the little knowledge that he has from, Dominik replied that he “should have that knowledge really,” mainly from history classes and books that he has, but only looked through or skimmed without trying to remember anything. But, what he knows was “absorbed” through living in Olsztyn for 24 years. He said, “I simply live in Olsztyn, I know that there is a castle, Nicolaus Copernicus, that's all,” and that “nothing more from Olsztyn's history is necessary for happiness. For me that's enough.” He added that he was never interested in the history and never needed it for anything.

When asked about local initiatives dealing with the region's history, he said that he heard of “Borussia” and that the Museum of Warmia and Mazury at the castle probably has something about regional history. He also said, “Well this is like a continuation of the previous question, because if I was interested I would know, and since I am not interested I have no clue.” And asked about his opinion regarding such initiatives, he said he supports it because it helps tourists find out about the place they are visiting, and there are also people that left Olsztyn “during the inter-war period or right after the war,” and are now coming back for various reasons, and such initiatives can be useful for them.

Dominik's narrative of the region's history shows that he is practically not familiar with that history at all. It can be said that everything is missing from his narrative. The only thing he mentions is that Nicolaus Copernicus lived in Olsztyn's Teutonic castle and defended it from the Teutonic Knights. He also certainly and consciously does not feel any connection to the history of his region, and this is perhaps the key to his narrative of that history. He says that whatever history is tied to Olsztyn “means nothing” to him, and that he never needed it for anything. This shows that he does not identify with the city's, or region's, history at all, and furthermore, he sees no need to identify with it. He is aware of initiatives that try to inform about regional

history, including “Borussia,” but for him that is useful only for tourists and people who used to live in Olsztyn.<sup>52</sup> This implies that such initiatives, and the history in general, do not apply to him or concern him. They are useful for others, but for him, aside from knowing that Copernicus used to live in the castle, “nothing more from Olsztyn's history is necessary for happiness.” As far as he is concerned, he lives in Olsztyn, and that is all.

Considering his approach to regional history, exemplified by a nearly complete lack of interest, and seeing no need to know the history of his place, it can be concluded that there is no continuity in Dominik's narrative of the region's history. He simply does not see himself as a part of that history.

### Monika:

Below is the full extract of Monika's primary narrative about the region's history, before responding to follow up questions:

*Honestly, I'm not too interested in history, and cannot say much. [Laughter], really. And that is my downside, but I should know. I should be more interested. Well, up to now life has arranged itself so that one was thinking about the present moment, right? So, about what I have to do right now. School, matriculation, university, getting through university, I was already working while studying, I opened my business right after university. And I regret it because sure enough, I never even went to our Olsztyn observatory, for example. Nor was I ever interested in history, I simply live from day to day and, I don't know, I don't look back. But, I should, I know [laughter].*

When asked why she thinks she should know more Monika said, “Because I think that every person of a region should be able to say something about this topic. I, for example, am embarrassed that I can't tell the history of my own region. Even just the city, well anything.” She added that history was always her “Achilles heal” and she never really liked it because she prefers to “look into the future than the past.” She said, “I always think for the future. Let's not rake over the past.”

Monika is not aware of any initiatives dealing with regional history, and only mentioned school. In high school they sometimes mentioned the region, but the focus was never on “what was going on *here*, to teach *us*.” She says that not everyone is interested in history on their own, but perhaps if someone “subtly nudged them in the right direction” they may be inclined to look deeper. She also said that, of course, she could go to the museum and find something out there, but, she doesn't go to museums.

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<sup>52</sup> See section 3.3.1.1 for more on this theme.

Asked more about her history classes in high school, Monika added that her matriculation subject was world history, which had nothing to do with “our” region. She thinks there should be a separate department dedicated solely to the region, “because it would be very useful if everyone could say something about where they come from, what the history of a given place is.” She added, “I regret, for example, that I don't know. If someone came here and asked me about it I would burn from embarrassment that I don't know.” But, she does not have the time now, as “one rather prepares for the next day of work and doesn't think about being able to impress someone with their knowledge [laughter].”

Monika's narrative of the history of Warmia-Mazury shows that she is not familiar with that history at all. Everything is missing. However, a major theme in her narrative is embarrassment of not knowing the history, and stressing the importance of knowing. More than once she says that she “should” know, that she “should be more interested,” that she is “embarrassed” that she can't say anything about it, and that everyone should know at least a little. If someone came to the region from elsewhere and asked her about the history, she would “burn from embarrassment” that she doesn't know. All of these statements suggest that she wishes that she did know the history, that it is important to her, but she just doesn't know. In fact, she was probably feeling embarrassed about it during the interview itself. Such a feeling of embarrassment for not knowing seems to be related to Monika's close identification with her city and region.<sup>53</sup> When she talks about the city, she says that she never went to “our” Olsztyn observatory, that in school they never focused on what was going on “here” to teach “us” about “our” region. Such terminology shows that she feels a connection to the city and region, that she feels at home there, and therefore should naturally also know the history, to be able to place herself within that history. It is almost as if it is awkward for her to feel so attached to where she lives, yet not know anything about that place's past.

Monika justifies her lack of knowledge by a lack of time, but also a lack of interest. And here, a paradox, or contradiction, appears in her narrative. On the one hand, she says that she should know, but on the other hand, that she was never interested in history. On the one hand, everyone should know something about the history of the place they live, but, on the other hand, she prefers to look to the future instead of the past, and says, “Let's not rake over the past.” When she says that she is busy preparing for the next day of work, and doesn't think about impressing someone

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<sup>53</sup> See section 3.3.2 for Monika's identification with the region.

with her knowledge,” it is as if she is saying that knowledge of the region's history is something additional, something she doesn't have time for. It is as if she wishes she knew the history in order to be able to “impress” someone with it, and because it is befitting of a person of any place to know that place's history. But, whether she feels like she needs that knowledge for herself is hard to say. Perhaps not, considering she already feels attached to the region without that historical connection. The contradiction is also visible in the way she views the historical education she received. On the one hand she has a grievance towards school for not focusing on the region, and on the other hand she admits that history was always her “Achilles heal”<sup>54</sup> and that she never liked it. It seems as though she is admitting that she would not look into it on her own, and puts the blame on school, because if regional history was taught in school in an interesting way, she would know at least something from being in class.

All in all, it can be said that Monika does not know the history of her region, and therefore does not see herself as a part of that history, as a continuation of it. There is no continuity of the region's history in Monika's identity, although her close emotional bond with the region makes her feel as if there should be.

#### Anna:

Below is the full extract of Anna's primary narrative about the region's history, before responding to follow up questions:

*For the longer part of the history of our country this land was occupied by Prussians, later by Germans. And the truth is a large part of the history of our region is based on these contacts with western neighbors. And Warmia and Mazury, everyone says Mazury, but in truth there is a tiny piece, a triangle, that is Warmia, and Olsztyn happens to be in it. And Warmia was always somehow protected from German and other, Prussian, influences. It was this one little scrap that tried to fight for that Polishness and for it to be peaceful here [laughter], and to keep and cultivate that history. And, wait, I had a class about the history of Warmia, I know przyśpiewki,<sup>55</sup> but I won't sing [laughter]. There is a Warmian przyśpiewka: “Dajcie mi tu szata szata,” and “Pofajdok,” and there are dances that go with it, these are, well, traditional, old dances and przyśpiewki that are not in use anymore and really you can only learn about this in history. I also learned a lot about holiday traditions, but I don't know if I*

<sup>54</sup> Which is interesting considering that history was her chosen matriculation subject for the last two years of high school.

<sup>55</sup> Folk songs accompanied by dance.

*should talk about that. Because at the castle in Olsztyn there were a lot of meetings that talked about, well, the history of Warmia, and they told us what holidays looked like once chronicles were already in tradition, what was used for decoration, and these were hand made decorations, from what they were able to find in the household, so various kinds of hay wound up in some specific way. Fruit was used to decorate also. And a symbol for the holidays was a horse head on a pole, it is something similar to the Cracovian lajkonik.<sup>56</sup> This horse head always appears during the period of Christmas, but I don't really remember the genesis of this. What else from the history of Warmia and Mazury?*

During follow up questions Anna remembered more information about the region's history. It is presented here as a continuation of the first primary narrative:

*And I just remembered more about the history of the region [laughter]. Copernicus lived in Olsztyn [laughter]. And the truth is Copernicus is associated by Poles mainly with Thorn because he was born there, grew up there, and started working there. But, the truth is that probably his biggest work, I think, he wrote here in Olsztyn. At least it was found here, or documents on the subject of that work were found, "On the Revolutions of the Celestial Spheres." And his biggest work, known all over the world, and that whole theory, he probably thought of here in our Olsztyn. But, really not many people realize that. And near the castle is a statue of him. He is presented as sitting and looking at the castle because he spent a few years here, worked here, and he is gazing at the place in which he lived and in this gaze you can see a little sort of nostalgia or melancholy, I don't know. And unfortunately they turned him into an object of drunken fun [laughter] really, because everyone who walks by in Olsztyn throws themselves upon him, takes pictures and grabs his nose, because the nose is already worn down completely. But, at least it's good that people realize that such a person lived and worked here. And he helped, from what I know, because the castle is a castle of the Warmia Chapter, and very many people think that it is a Teutonic castle, which is a mistake, because here, people living in the castle and around it defended it from the Teutonic Knights. So, Copernicus probably took part in the defense of the castle against the Teutonic Knights, from what I remember from history.*

Later, Anna said that she got her knowledge of regional history from middle school, where they had so called "paths," such as a "European path," in which they learned about the European Union, and a "regional path," in which they learned the history of the region. Anna said that the idea behind such a class was "for us to be conscious of where we live, what the tradition is." The class met once a week for a year, and they learned Warmian dances and przyśpiewki, while there were also meetings at the castle where historians gave talks about the region's past. Anna said, "I think that that was quite interesting, and from speaking with friends not many people are conscious of what kind of place they live in and what things used to look like here."

Asked if she is happy about having had such classes, Anna said, "I am happy because I rather be conscious, know anything about the place in which I was born, grew up, than not know anything really, and live without consciousness of that." She then talked about how her parents recently moved to T. near Olsztyn and one of their neighbors

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<sup>56</sup> A bearded Tatar with a wooden horse around his waist, one of the unofficial symbols of Kraków.



there wrote a book about the history of the village. One time Anna and her mother listened as Anna's brother read the book aloud, and they learned, for example, that an important WWI battle took place near by. Anna said, "That is quite cool that you can find out certain things, and it sticks in your memory. It's different when a person learns something in history class and it goes in one ear and out the other."

When asked about local initiatives dealing with regional history, Anna mentioned the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Olsztyn that took place in 2003, and how various events at that time informed people about the history of the city, including how and by who it was founded. She added that the founder was Jan of Łąjs. She also mentioned an association in T., where people of the village meet to learn about its history and practice local crafts that were historically present there. Anna said such initiatives are "necessary" and that "everyone should be aware of where they come from."

Anna's narrative contained a lot of detailed information about the history of the region and her story of the region's past is by far the most thorough out of the six interviewees. What is most striking is the amount of detail, such as differentiating between Warmia and Mazury, being aware of the 650<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Olsztyn's founding, and naming the founder, but also talking a lot about local Warmian folk traditions and Copernicus' stay at the castle. Her version of the region's history also has some basic temporal framework regarding the successive presence of Prussians, followed by Germans, and finally Poles. She does not, however, mention any dates or time periods, and it is noticeable that she leaves out the more recent history of the region (except for briefly mentioning WWI once), especially that related to WWII and its consequences.

A main theme of Anna's narrative also seems to be viewing the region's history from a Polish perspective. She states that the history was characterized by contacts with Prussians and Germans, and differentiates Warmia as a region that was always "protected" from German and Prussian influences, fought for "Polishness," and tried to "cultivate" Polish history. Such a version of the region's history is not accurate. For example, Anna says that Olsztyn's castle is mistaken as a Teutonic castle but is really a castle of the Warmia Chapter, but she does not say that it was built by Teutonic Knights and only later came under the ownership of the Warmia Chapter. The information she provides about Copernicus' stay in the castle is also not completely accurate as it somewhat exaggerates the significance of his stay in Olsztyn, and places his participation in the defense of the castle in black and white categories of Poles versus Teutonic Knights, when in reality, at the time, contacts between the two groups, and

national identity in general, were much more complicated. And the influence of Polish culture on the region is overrepresented in Anna's narrative, especially compared to the influence of German culture. Here, Anna's narrative can be compared to Piotrek's. Anna provides rich detail, but presents the region's history from a Polish point of view, while Piotrek offers almost no detail, but views the history as multicultural and openly admits the major German influence.

But, despite the above criticism of Anna's narrative, it has to be said that she is interested in the region's history and considers historical consciousness to be very important. It is telling that the other narratives could not really be criticized or examined this way because of their lack of information altogether. Her presentation of the history from a Polish point of view seems to be a result of the way that history was presented in the school classes that she had, where the focus was on the Polish heritage of the region. Perhaps if that history was presented in a more open way, Anna would tell a version of the region's history just as detailed as the one above, but including the influence of other nationalities and cultures. Her narrative shows the impact that regional history lessons can have on a young person's historical consciousness. Here, it is also useful to point out that Anna is three to four years younger than the other interviewees, which means that they missed out on the reformed school system, which included "regional paths" in middle school (Lewandowska 144-5). It is also obvious that Anna is simply interested in history, which is demonstrated by the amount of information she retained from classes she took so long ago, and her constant yearning to find out more about the place she lives, including the village her parents moved to. Perhaps this interest has something to do with the impact Anna's great-grandmother had on her through her stories of Vilnius.

All in all, Anna clearly identifies with her region's history. She sees herself as living in a place with a certain past, and she feels it is important that she knows that past. This means that she views herself as a continuation, and as a part, of that past. So, there is continuity in Anna's identity regarding her region's history.

#### Jacek:

Below is the full extract of Jacek's primary narrative about the region's history,

before responding to follow up questions:

*Well, first of all our region was a region already known from the Middle Ages. Because, I'm not sure if Malbork is in Warmia and Mazury right now, but regarding the area from that direction, well, it is known that those were regions where battles were fought for hundreds of years, let's say. Same thing during WWII, after all, here it was under occupation, this was even under Prussian partition, this was all divided up between Germans, or Prussians, and Russia. And, well, history, well, probably many people also settled here in this region after WWII. Or, well, yes, what else is there, history. Well, yes, you know, poor knowledge all in all, a person lives here in such a region and, you know, and isn't interested in things like this, indeed. I don't know, I think, you know, I will tell you that is everything yeah?, from what I am able to tell you [laughter].*

Asked where he got the information he does have, Jacek said that it is from history class in school, where there were sometimes references to the region, but that there was never a subject like “History of Warmia-Mazury” in high school or university, “because there is nothing like that.” Asked if there should be such a class, he said yes, but as an extracurricular activity for high school students as they are more mature.

Asked about local initiatives dealing with regional history, Jacek said that he thinks that some events are organized during anniversaries of Copernicus' birthday, and also that there are some historical-cultural events at the castle. He also went to a “Middle-Age market” that was staged near the castle a few years ago. Jacek thinks that such events are a good idea because people can be “reminded” of the region's culture and what the region is famous for, and people can “better imagine what was happening here, and not just read about it in books in black and white.”

Jacek's narrative of the region's history is very general and almost completely lacking in detail. Very generally, according to his story, since the Middle Ages there were hundreds of years of battles nearby, then there were partitions between Prussia and Russia, followed by occupation during WWII, and finally a lot of people settled in the region after the war.

Jacek says that his knowledge comes from history classes where there were some references to the region. This is reflected in his narrative, where it seems that the information he provides is related to general Polish history. The “hundreds of years of battles” probably refers to the conflict between the Polish Kingdom and the Teutonic Knights, while the partitions are one of the major themes of Poland's history. But, the region itself is absent from the narrative. This shows that Jacek imagines the region as if it was always a part of Poland but was often occupied by Prussia or Germany. This leads to many historical inaccuracies in the narrative. For example, he says that it was

under occupation during the war, but, in fact, it was not occupied because it was East Prussia, a part of Germany, before the war, and the war did not arrive in the region until 1945. Also, during the partitions, only a part of the region was taken from Poland, while other parts never lay within Poland's borders at all until 1945. All of this points to the fact that his knowledge of the history of Warmia-Mazury is based on a few things he remembered from Polish history class, and in his narrative he places the region into the context of that history. The only thing he mentions that is particular to the region is mass settlement after WWII. But, overall, he does not see the region as having its own complicated history, where Poland did not always play a major role in its development.

It is also interesting that later Jacek mentions that there are historical events during anniversaries of Copernicus' birthday, but he did not mention Copernicus when talking about the region's history. Copernicus has something to do with the city of Olsztyn, but he is somehow separate from the history of the region. But, also, Jacek does not see himself as a part of the history of the region. He points to this by explaining that although he lives there, he is not interested in the history. It is as if the history of the region is a separate matter that does not concern him, something he is not particularly interested in. This is perhaps even a little surprising since he mentions that a lot of people settled in the region after the war, and he is aware that his mother's side of the family, for example, came to Olsztyn from Vilnius. But nonetheless, he does not seem to view himself as a result, or continuation, of those events. Therefore, there does not appear to be continuity of the region's history in Jacek's identity.

#### Izabela:

Below is the full extract of Izabela's primary narrative about the region's history, before responding to follow up questions:

*Well, I know that before this was East Prussia, and this region was inhabited by Germans. And later after various resettlement actions, there was practically a diversity of various nations here. And also, later the Soviet Army intervened, indeed, the Soviets stationed here for a long time, implemented their administration. And the truth is that they freed us from that so that really we are now in this region and not people of German origin. And I think that's all, from what I, because, to be honest, I never really inquired. Of course, at university I had history of Warmia and Mazury, but that was rather condensed. Well, I just know that for a longer time the Soviet Army was here*

*and they sort of prepared us to later take over authority, Poles that is. And that's all.*

Asked where she got her knowledge of the region's history, Izabela said that it was from university classes, including “History of Warmia and Mazury” and “The Olsztyn Countryside during Stalinism.” Other than that she had regular Polish history in high school and the region was sometimes mentioned there. Izabela said that outside of classes she never looked into history on her own.

When talking about her impressions of Warmia-Mazury, Izabela said that to her it is a “typical post-German region,” including post-German historical relics. She said, “It certainly makes such an impression on me...with this sort of Germanness.” She also said, “I think that there is probably no other region like this in Poland, where there is so much diversity, because there is really a lot...we have a lot of Gothic churches...a lot of castles, and that also sets it apart amongst others.” Izabela continued by saying, “Where I live personally, I have a castle in Kętrzyn, there is Święta Lipka, a very beautiful Marian sanctuary.” She also mentioned that there are many post-German bunkers around where she lives, including Gierłoż near Kętrzyn, where Hitler had his headquarters in the “Wolf's Lair.” According to Izabela, such a diversity of historical relics is a distinguishing feature of the region that makes it attractive for tourists.

Izabela also talked about “Days of Ukrainian Culture” that take place in her town of S., where there are many people with Ukrainian backgrounds, including about eight out of her ten nearest neighbors. She also mentioned that there are a lot of Orthodox churches in her region.

Later in the interview, when asked how she identifies with the region, Izabela explained that she is not overly attached to it, and said, “We, as the young generation, we somehow don't contemplate history and somehow don't pay attention to the fact that we live here, that our roots are here. We look more to the future.”

When asked why the young generation doesn't look into the past, Izabela said that maybe her mother has a more sentimental relation with history because of her experiences and because she heard so much from Izabela's grandparents about their experiences, but Izabela said, “I am from a different generation, I didn't experience any of that. I am more focused on what is happening now and don't even want to look back on those times, because they weren't good times, very many people died and suffered from all of that, and I think there is no point contemplating on that. However, it's good that there are some organizations that try to show young people that history so that they know how it used to be. Because there is a large lack of awareness of Poles when it comes to history. They often know the history of other countries better than their own, and I think our history is very interesting, although also very cruel, because there was no large goodness in it. I personally somehow don't feel a sentiment, and I totally cut myself off from that.”

Izabela's narrative is rather general and focuses on the more recent history of the region. It generally describes how the region passed from German to Polish authority after the war. There is not a lot of detailed information, and the whole history of the

region before WWII is missing, save for the statement that it was East Prussia and inhabited by Germans. But, what is mentioned is generally accurate, with the Soviet Army administering the region after the war and passing authority on to Poland, and also resettlement actions that resulted in a diversity of nations. Izabela says that her knowledge mainly comes from university courses, and this is visible in her narrative. The information she mentions seems to be general information that she remembered from the classes. So, Izabela seems to have a very basic idea of the region's history after WWII.

Something that sets Izabela apart from the other interviewees is her awareness of the German influence on the region. She says that it is a “typical post-German” region that gives her the impression of “Germanness,” and she lists numerous historical relics and places that represent its German past, including Gothic churches and castles. Piotrek was the only other participant to mention the significant German influence on the region, although Izabela gave concrete examples. However, she also talks about the diversity of historical attractions, not only limited to German relics, including Orthodox churches and a Marian sanctuary. Her awareness of these places may be related to the fact that she grew up in Mazury, where most of them are located, and where she was exposed to the Ukrainian minority in her town. But, at the same time none of the other interviewees mentioned Orthodox churches or Gothic architecture as important historical landmarks, although Olsztyn has such landmarks as well. So, Izabela's awareness of these places and their representation of the region's diverse cultural heritage appears to be a sign of historical consciousness.

However, Izabela views this heritage as being interesting from a tourism perspective, by making the region attractive to tourists. And overall, aside from the classes she had, Izabela says she never looked into the history on her own. She seems to look at the history of the region as something that gives it tourism value, something unique, but she does not necessarily identify with that history herself. This is evident from her comments regarding how she identifies with the region. She says that she is “more focused on what is happening now” and doesn't “even want to look back on those times.” She says, “I personally somehow don't feel a sentiment, and I totally cut myself off from that.” This shows that she is making a conscious effort not to identify with the region's past, and perhaps even with the past in general. She says that it is

good that there are organizations that try to show young people history, but she cuts herself off from that. So, she does not seem to see herself as a part of the region's history, or at least does not want to. She prefers to be separated from it.

All in all, it can probably be concluded that there is no continuity of the region's history in Izabela's identity. She has some very basic knowledge of that history, and is aware of the region's diverse heritage, but chooses not to identify with that past, instead preferring to look to the future.

### **3.3.1.2.1 – Summary of results for continuity of regional history**

As with continuity of family history, there are also different levels of continuity expressed by the individuals in relation to regional history. For Dominik and Monika there is no continuity because of a complete lack of knowledge of the history of the region. However, while Dominik sees no need to know his region's history, and consciously disconnects himself from it, Monika feels like she should know the history, and stresses the importance of knowing it. But, at the same time, she has no interest in it and in the end she also does not see herself as a part of that history. There is also no continuity for Jacek, who presents the regional history as a part of Poland's history and with little detail and significant inaccuracies. He does not include himself in the region's history and is not interested in it either. There is no continuity for Izabela as well. She generally understands the recent history of the region after WWII and is aware of the region's diverse heritage, but does not identify with it, instead consciously separating herself from the past and looking to the future. Continuity is present in Piotrek's narrative, however. Despite not giving any details of the region's history, Piotrek identifies with it through an open attitude characterized by accepting its multicultural heritage. He shows interest in regional history and considers historical consciousness to be a part of his local patriotism. And Anna's narrative is the most clear cut example of continuity. She provides the most detailed information and offers a basic temporal framework of the region's history. Although her story of the history is told from a Polish perspective, she nonetheless considers historical consciousness to be important and clearly identifies with her region's past.

Although each case is different, in general there is a lack of continuity, or a

break with the past when it comes to the participants' identification with their region's history. The only exceptions are Piotrek and Anna. Even though Piotrek has a very cloudy idea of the region's past, while Anna views that past with a Polish bias, both of them nonetheless consciously identify with their region's past. None of the other participants showed such continuity with their region's history. The most visible evidence for a lack of continuity is the generally low level of knowledge about the particular history of Warmia-Mazury, which makes it difficult to identify with that history. Lack of knowledge and no identification with the past leads to difficulties in placing oneself within a historical context, specifically in the context of post-WWII population movements.

### **3.3.2 – Regional and local identity**

In this final section of the analysis, aspects of the participants' regional identity in the context of continuity of family and regional history will be examined. In the previous sections, it was concluded that there is generally a lack of continuity with the participants' family and regional history, although there were exceptions. Given the particular results for each individual, the next question is, how do they identify with their region or locality? In other words, how does the presence or lack of historical continuity influence regional or local identity? Does historical continuity lead to an attachment with the region? Does a lack of continuity lead to indifference towards the region? And regardless of whether there is, or there is not, identification with the region's past, is there identification with the region in any other ways?

The criteria used in this section are somewhat looser than the previous ones. The focus is on examining other parts of the overall narratives provided during the interviews and looking for clues of how each individual relates to their region. Relevant information for this analysis includes the participants' future plans, their impressions of, and identification with, Warmia-Mazury, their life experiences, and their relation to certain places. In order to gain insight into each participants' regional identity in the context of continuity of family and regional history, an attempt is made to find a defining theme, or themes, in each of the narratives.



### Piotrek:

Piotrek did not show much continuity with his family history, but did display continuity with the region's history. Piotrek provides more insight into his regional identity when discussing his future plans. He says that although he is considering moving to another country or city for some time, he is certain he wants to come back home. He describes himself as a family oriented person, and it is important for him to be near his family. He also says that he simply feels good where he is, that the natural landscape and the climate of the region suit him. He could not, for example, live in a big city for a longer period because it is too hectic, and he “likes and needs” to spend time in nature. And as mentioned in the previous sections, he believes it is a matter of local patriotism. He feels a bond with his home region because he was born and raised there, so he wants to grow old there as well. That local patriotism also includes historical consciousness, and Piotrek seems to identify with the region's multicultural heritage.

So, although Piotrek's narrative does not point to continuity of family history, his family is very important to him, and he wants to be near it. He values his family despite not necessarily knowing its past. Aside from that, he is attached to his region because he was born there and grew up there, so it is simply his home. In a similar way he very much enjoys the natural landscape or the place where he spent his whole life. Overall, Piotrek seems to be a person who is closely tied to his region because of family, nature, and local patriotism resulting from taking an interest in his region's history and simply growing up there.

### Dominik:

Dominik did not show continuity with either his family history nor with the region's history. Other parts of his interview narrative shed light on this by showing that he really does not feel connected to his region at all. When asked if he thinks he will live there in the future, Dominik said, “Ah, easy question. There is nothing keeping me in Olsztyn. *Nothing* completely,” and he added that if he gets a job in a bigger city, he will not hesitate to move there. That is an easy choice for him because

he sees no future for himself in Olsztyn. He says, “The fact that there are lakes, that I have a few friends, that's one thing. But really I can live without them.” Aside from not feeling any emotional attachment to the region, Dominik explains his desire to leave in economic terms. He looks at the situation in terms of career opportunities, a material standard, and money. He asks why he should live in Olsztyn and make 1,000 złoty (about €250) per month and be poor, when he could move to Wrocław, for example, and make 2,000? He said, “I was never a fan of poverty, never...I'm looking through a prism of money right now. Emotionally Olsztyn has no meaning to me.”

Dominik does, however, take advantage of the region's natural landscape. He describes himself as an avid sailor and enjoys spending time on the water, and also says that it is nice to just put on running shoes and go running through the woods where nobody disturbs him. He says that “in this way Warmia and Mazury is a fantastic place, but only in this way.” According to Dominik, taking advantage of the region's natural landscape for recreation and sport is the only way he identifies with it. He says that he does not walk around in “I love Olsztyn” shirts and does not take part in any local campaigns or initiatives, but simply uses, or benefits from, what the region offers, and identifies with it only in that way. He says, “For me there is no point taking part in such initiatives where Olsztyn is promoted, etc. I am Olsztyn myself, within myself. By taking advantage of being here I'm identifying with the city, or the region.”

So, Dominik is a person who identifies with his region by simply taking advantage of what it offers. But, according to him, other than sport and recreation related to nature, “there is nothing here.” When asked if he considers any places in the region to be important or significant, he said that “there are no important places in Olsztyn.” He says he wants to move away to be able to make more money, have a higher material standard of life, and live in a bigger city where there are more than just a few night clubs with the same people, the same music, and where he can be anonymous. Dominik does not identify with his region in almost any way, and this complements the lack of continuity with family and regional history.

### Monika:

Despite knowing little about her family history, Monika showed some continuity

with it by seeing herself as continuing that history. Regarding the region's history, she shows no continuity. Monika's case is interesting because she has little knowledge of history regarding both her family and her region, but at the same time she feels very strongly connected to the region and her family. Her emotional attachment to her region seems to originate in her childhood, from which she has very fond memories of spending time in nature with her father. They went fishing, kayaking, mushroom picking, and took trips throughout the “beautiful regions of Olsztyn and Warmia-Mazury.” Those early experiences had a major impact on her all the way up to the present day. She says she will never forget those moments and thinks about them when she's down and it helps her feel better. Those experiences injected Monika with a love for nature. To this day, every September she goes with her dad to watch deer fighting for territory and mates in the woods. When she goes into the woods, she feels like she is in a different world. She also loves to sail, while her favorite places are wild beaches on regional lakes, and it hurts her to see such places being increasingly more polluted by garbage. She feels like she needs nature around her so that she can escape from everyday “gray reality,” characterized by working all day, rushing everywhere and having little time to herself. When she has a chance to get away into nature it is a “Miracle on the Vistula”<sup>57</sup> for her. This love of nature is what causes her strong attachment to the region. She couldn't spend a vacation without woods, lakes and animals. She says that “when you live here from birth it's hard to just become separated from it all” and she wouldn't be able to live anywhere else. She simply “loves these parts” and would only leave if she was absolutely forced to. She also wants to pass on this love of the region's nature to her children in the future. She says she is lucky that her dad taught her to love nature, and she wants her children to become tied to it like her, and to understand it on a deeper level than most people, who just treat it as a space for recreation.

Monika's connection with the region's nature is also accompanied by her close family ties. For her, family was never just in a photo, it was always the most important thing. So, although Monika does not identify much with her family's and region's past, she has a close bond with her family and region through close-knit family relations and

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<sup>57</sup> A reference to the decisive Battle of Warsaw during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-21. The Polish victory on the banks of the Vistula River in the capital changed the momentum of the war and was believed by some to be the result of divine intervention, hence the word “miracle.” It has become a phrase widely used to refer to anything that happens very rarely or is very important.

a love of nature. Because of those two things, she is deeply rooted in her place and ties her future plans with it, as demonstrated by starting her own business and wanting to raise her children in Olsztyn.

Anna:

Anna was the only one of the participants to show continuity in family history and in regional history in her narrative. The analysis in this section will complement and expand on factors related to that continuity in her identity, and see how that continuity influences her connection with the region. From the previous sections, it seems that that continuity is a result of close family relations, especially contact with her great-grandmother, who came from Vilnius. Other parts of Anna's narrative support this. Anna has fond childhood memories of spending a lot of time with her family on her grandmother's allotment, and during holidays and vacations. Her big family remains close and keeps in touch to this day, and Anna misses this when she is at university in Warsaw.

Good family relations contribute to the fact that Anna feels at home in Olsztyn and that she is rooted there. When asked how she identifies with her region, Anna said, "This region, Warmia and Mazury, it's like, I feel at home." She says that when she is away from home anything that reminds her of it raises her spirits. When she is in Warsaw, for example, and sees an Olsztyn license plate number on a car, she thinks of her city and somehow feels connected to the person driving that car. Or, when Olsztyn is in the news or on the radio, she listens more carefully and is more interested than if it was about another city or region. One time she saw a billboard inviting tourists to Olsztyn and it made her feel good. She is happy when she finds out that someone is planning to visit her region. Even when someone tells her they are going to Mazury, she says, "Oh, you're going to visit us," or "you will be staying with us," even though Mazury is not Warmia, where Olsztyn is. To her it feels like the same home region, although she understands the difference. Anna says that for her, "A tie to the region, to the city, is there."

But, what is perhaps most interesting is that Anna would prefer to stay in Warsaw after university and build her life there. She says that Warsaw has a lot more to

offer culturally, recreation wise, and of course regarding employment, where earnings are twice as high. For her Olsztyn is a nice place during summer vacation, because of the lakes and woods, but during the winter there is nothing to do there. She also says that many of her friends moved to other cities, like Warsaw, Gdańsk or Thorn, and they also plan on staying there because there are simply more possibilities. So, although Anna is closely bonded with her family and region, she has no problem moving to Warsaw, where she feels there are more opportunities for her. It seems that it is enough for her to carry her roots with her. Anna's identity is rooted in Olsztyn, but she can live in Warsaw, and that will not change the fact that she loves her region and identifies with its history. It also will not change the fact that she is close with her family, and identifies with her family's history, which for her reaches back to her great-grandmother's childhood in Vilnius. In Anna's case, continuity of family history and regional history, and an emotional connection to home, can be maintained anywhere.

Jacek:

Jacek's narrative did not display continuity of family history nor of regional history. Other parts of his narrative point to a rather weak connection with his region, which complements this lack of continuity. Jacek says that he identifies with his region simply because he lives there and is interested in what is going on there. But, when he is somewhere else, he has an "indifferent attitude" towards the region. He says, "Maybe such a tie or identification will come with time, when one will have more life experience." This suggests that despite living in Olsztyn throughout his life, Jacek does not yet feel a strong emotional attachment, and does not have a strong sense of identity with the region. This is also reflected in the fact that he has no profound memories or experiences that would connect him to the region. He remembers falling off his bike as a child, and being assaulted by hooligans on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May a few years ago. But, he does not appear to draw on profound memories like Monika, for example, whose experiences of spending time in nature with her father as a child helped anchor her identity in her region. Now, the region's lakes and woods are important places for Monika that she says she could not live without, while Jacek says that he does not have such places at the moment, but that maybe he will later in life.

Regarding his future plans, Jacek would like to stay in Olsztyn, on the one hand, because he likes the natural landscape, which is suitable for outdoor recreation that he enjoys, such as bike riding. But, on the other hand, he would like to move somewhere else because of low earnings in Olsztyn. The only negatives he sees in moving away is leaving his family and having to start over in another place, including making new friends. But, he says that “above all it's about the money,” and he wants to live in a place that allows him to have a higher material standard. In many ways, Jacek's case can be compared to Dominik's. Neither of them identifies with their region's history nor their family's history, and neither feels an emotional connection with the region, although both enjoy taking advantage of outdoor recreation made possible by the region's natural landscape. And both of them want to move away to have opportunities to earn more money and have a higher material standard of life. All in all, Jacek seems to have a rather weak identification with his region, and a lack of historical continuity pertaining to the region and his family do not appear to be compensated by any other identifying factors related to the past nor the present.

Izabela:

Izabela's narrative about her family history contained some signs of continuity, although her connection with that history does not seem to play a major role in her identity. In a similar way, her narrative of the region's history shows that she is aware of its diverse historical heritage, but she consciously separates herself from the region's past. Izabela's identification with the region and her future plans also reflect this lack of continuity and conscious separation from the past. She would like to move to a bigger city, like Warsaw or Gdańsk, where she will have more opportunities for career development. And she will probably not come back, for she sees herself starting a family there as well. She says, “I was raised here, so I have some sort of sentiment, but even if I didn't live here it would not be a big tragedy for me.” Similarly to Jacek, she says that it is nice having all her friends and family around, but despite that moving somewhere else wouldn't be a problem for her since she could always visit.

Izabela elaborates on her lack of attachment to the region by saying, “I am not overly attached to this region, I somehow don't have sentiment towards it and honestly

it is indifferent to me whether I live here or if I will live somewhere else. We, as the young generation, we somehow don't contemplate history and somehow don't pay attention to the fact that we live here, that our roots are here. We look more to the future.” She also says that Warmia and Mazury is one of the poorest regions in Poland, and from that perspective a young person like herself cannot guide their decisions by sentiment. Izabela believes that times have changed, and “a person...looks for better solutions, a better place for oneself.” She adds, “Right now, nobody ties themselves down with sentiment by thinking, 'Oh, my region, my family land.'” So, Izabela does not tie her long term plans with the region, and she would definitely leave if she had a chance.

Similarly to her conscious separation from the region's past, and perhaps even her family's past, Izabela's attitude towards her lack of attachment to the region also shows a conscious separation. She has nice memories from her “very calm childhood” in S., where everyone knew and helped each other, and she feels an emotional attachment to her grandparents' house. But, she explicitly states that she does not take those things into consideration when planning her future. She will most likely always feel sentiment when she goes back to her grandparents' house, and will probably always recall her childhood positively, but that is where it ends for her. Those memories and places do not translate into a deeper emotional attachment with her region. Her main concern is a better future, and she sees that future elsewhere. This attitude could perhaps be compared to Anna's, who also sees her future elsewhere. But, the major difference is that Anna seems to carry her regional identity with her wherever she goes, while Izabela consciously cuts herself off from having sentiment towards her region. Altogether, a major theme in Izabela's identity seems to be cutting herself off from the past and looking to the future, and this is also true for her connection with the region.

### **3.3.2.1 – Summary of results for regional and local identity**

It appears that individuals that show less continuity of family and regional history generally also display a weaker regional identity. The only way that both Dominik and Jacek identify with the region is by taking advantage of what it has to offer regarding outdoor recreation. They do not feel connected to the region at all, or

very little, and want to move to bigger cities to have better earnings. This lack of attachment to the region complements the lack of historical continuity. The major theme in Izabela's narrative seems to be cutting herself off from the past and looking to the future, and this is also true for her regional identity. She consciously does not tie herself to the region with sentiment in order to build her future elsewhere.

Individuals that showed more historical continuity generally also display a stronger regional identity. Piotrek is closely tied to the region because of his family and local patriotism resulting from growing up in the region and also from taking interest in regional history. And even though he doesn't know much about his family's past, he is a family oriented person, and ties his future plans with the region. For Anna, close family relations contribute to her feeling at home in Olsztyn and being rooted there. But, what is interesting is that despite her strong regional identity she wants to live in Warsaw. It is enough for her to take her regional roots with her, and living elsewhere will not change the fact that she has a sense of historical continuity with her family and region.

And finally, Monika seems to be an exception, because despite showing little historical continuity, she feels strongly connected to her region. This connection results from a love of the region's nature and close family ties. She wants to continue both traditions by planning her future in Olsztyn and passing the love of nature she got from her father on to her children.

### **3.4 – Conclusion of chapter**

This chapter introduced the six participants of the study and presented an analysis of their narratives regarding historical continuity of family and regional history, and the impact of that continuity, or lack thereof, on their regional identity. The conclusion that follows includes an in-depth discussion of the results of the analysis.



## **Conclusion**

This study started out with exploratory questions about the identity of the young generation of Warmia-Mazury. In a historical context, this generation is the result of population movements that followed WWII. These population movements resulted in a break of historical continuity, or a break with the past, in two ways: the historical continuity of Warmia-Mazury was broken as its long time inhabitants were replaced by others; and the historical continuity of the new inhabitants of Warmia-Mazury after the war was broken as they left regions of which they themselves had been long time inhabitants, and resettled in a new place. During communism, this break with the past was exacerbated through false historical ideology and the tabooization of the uprooting of millions of people, in an attempt to form a homogeneous national identity in the region. Since the end of the communist period, there have been local efforts to address that break with the past by creating a new regional identity based on discovering and accepting the real history of Warmia-Mazury before WWII. These efforts, led by cultural and intellectual elites, reached a peak in the second half of the 1990s and have since cooled off, although work continues to be done. In hindsight, such efforts only reached a fraction of the population.

Today, the third generation in the region since WWII is entering adult life. The break with the past that occurred after WWII, false historical ideology under communism, and attempts of creating a new identity in the 1990s – all of that is history for this generation. And within this context, right now, in the year 2010, this study explores what this generation thinks about all of that. Is there indeed a break with the past in their identities? More specifically, do they identify with the region's past, and how? Or do they consider their roots to reach elsewhere, perhaps where their grandparents came from? And finally, how do they identify with their region? Or how does continuity, or discontinuity, with the past influence their regional identity?

### **Discussion of results**

The narratives of six young individuals from Warmia-Mazury were analyzed to

gain insight into these questions. As is to be expected with a qualitative analysis of narratives, the results were particular for each of the studied individuals. Nonetheless, some general propositions were put forth, mainly that there is a break with the past in the identities of the participants, although to various extents for each individual. The other main proposition was that, save for one exception, those individuals that displayed more signs of continuity with the past showed a stronger connection to their region or locality. These propositions are not conclusive deductions. They do, however, raise a number of issues that are worth discussing further, as they provide insight into wider trends and phenomena related to the construction of the identity of the young generation of Warmia-Mazury.

### **Generation without history?**

Some of the participants of this study showed very weak, or non-existent, knowledge of their region's and family's past. A number of them also showed no interest in history in general. Even those that were somewhat exceptions and did show some awareness of the past, cannot be said to have a full historical consciousness, a real understanding of how past events have led up to the present. But, is this something unique to the region of Warmia-Mazury, and resulting from the fact that historical continuity was effectively broken off there because of a complete change of populations after WWII?

It seems, in fact, that the problem of a weak knowledge of, and interest in, history or the past is becoming widespread. Interest in history has generally decreased since the fall of communism (Kula 23). Before 1990, the past often served a purpose, such as the integration of the nation or the legitimization of the ruling elite or ideology. But, since the 1990s, the past began to lose meaning as it no longer served any concrete purpose. Instead, it increasingly became a topic of interest in and of itself. It became the domain of specialized groups, such as historians, politicians, victims of communism, expellees, etc., while most of society was less and less interested (Szpociński 19-20).

In addition, simultaneously occurring cultural trends related to globalization and based on “fast consumption” are also contributing to a different understanding of, and

relation to, the passage of time in general. Instead of understanding the present as connecting the past and future in linear time, it is being increasingly taken out of the context of linear time and understood as bundles of moments unrelated to one another. The present is seen as being in and of itself (Szpociński 19-20). This is increasingly the case for young people in Polish society, who are concerned with everyday life, with the present, and not with the past (Kula 23). This phenomenon has been referred to as “loss of collective memory” (Woźniakowski 188-189), “not-memory” (Szpociński 20), “beginning everything anew” (Żyliński 37), etc. Its consequences are that young people often don't know even quite recent history (Kula 23), are unable to experience “cultural inheritance” even when they are exposed to signs of the past (Szpociński 21), and have a “sanctioned gap in memory” (Żyliński 37). All of this amounts to young people who are not interested in history nor the past and are focused only on the present and the future, and therefore there is no continuity with the past in their identities. Because in order to have continuity with the past one must place him or herself, and the present, in a “mosaic of generations” to become an element of “historical duration” between the past and future (Żyliński 35).

Many themes that came up during the analysis of the narratives of the participants of this study seem to be closely related to the phenomena described above. A nearly complete lack of knowledge of history was seen in Dominik's and Monika's narratives, to a lesser extent in Jacek's, while Piotrek's narrative was very general, Izabela's focusing on only recent history, and Anna's having a decided Polish bias.<sup>58</sup> Some of the participants confirmed that history has become a topic of interest in and of itself, and specific signs of this can be found in Dominik's, Monika's, Jacek's, and Izabela's narratives. All seemed to treat history as extra, or additional knowledge that one could have, but did not need, or as something useful for others.<sup>59</sup> Also, the way the history of Warmia-Mazury, and even their family history, was described by some of the

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<sup>58</sup> Some quantitative studies based on survey analysis also show young people's low level of awareness about the region's history: A 1996 study of the historical consciousness of Warmia-Mazury high school students, carried out by Elżbieta Traba, showed that knowledge of regional history was generally very low, with many of the students not knowing about border changes after WWII, German expulsions, historical relics sites, etc. (E. Traba 211-19). And a 2000 study of the historical consciousness of high school students from various cities in Warmia-Mazury, carried out by Izabela Lewandowska, showed a lack of familiarity with regional history, and that most students were indifferent towards or not interested in local history (Lewandowska 81-3).

<sup>59</sup> Most participants in Lewandowska's study also treated the history of Warmia-Mazury as a separate subject of interest (Lewandowska 169).

participants resembles an understanding of the past as moments and events not quite related to one another. Very few of the narratives provided connections between past events leading up to the present, instead mentioning whatever historical event or individual they could remember separately. And finally, a focus on the present and future is also a major theme in the narratives. Some of the participants, including Monika and Izabela, explicitly said that they are not concerned with the past, but prefer to live from day to day, or look towards the future.

Does all of this lead them to an inability to experience “cultural inheritance” even when exposed to signs of the past? All of the participants live in Warmia-Mazury, a place where there are signs of the past, particularly a German one, everywhere. Dominik knows there is a Teutonic castle in Olsztyn, but he does not seem to think anything of it. Izabela is aware of various post-German relics, and the region reminds her of a “Germanness,” but that has tourism value, while she consciously cuts herself off from the past. Usually, historical sites create a sense of continuity with the past and embody group traditions (Lewicka 211), but here this is not the case. Indeed, most of the participant's do not appear to feel as if they “inherited” the region's past, instead treating that past as somehow separate from their lives in the present day.

According to Robert Traba, such a disconnect from historical sites and relics is related to treating them as a “deposit,” or something left behind by others that should be preserved. Today, most people in Warmia-Mazury do not need to be convinced of the importance of protecting the region's cultural heritage. But, most of them also do not really feel connected with the region's cultural landscape, or do not feel emotion towards it. Of course, German monuments or relics will never arouse the same emotions for today's Poles in Warmia-Mazury, as they did for Germans in East Prussia. But, Traba claims that instead of being treated as deposits, they should be viewed as something that is permanently connected to the history of the region, and therefore in some sense connected to its current inhabitants as well. So, the young people of Warmia-Mazury should feel not like “depositors, but co-inheritors of Prussian cultural heritage” (“Cztery Refleksje” 26).

Traba believes that such an approach to the region's cultural heritage is appearing because of a natural need for emotional identification with the cultural landscape (“Cztery Refleksje” 26). However, this is not reflected in the narratives

analyzed in this study, which instead are characterized by a lack of awareness of the previous cultural heritage, or indifference towards it, save for its tourism value. This probably has a lot to do with the participants' lack of knowledge of regional history. If one is taught only Polish history in school, and their cultural codes are connected with that history, that makes it impossible for him or her to understand non-Polish regional symbolism (Lizewska 120-1).

But, that does not fully explain this phenomenon, because if a person comes across a strange sign of the past, and they have no idea where it comes from, why wouldn't such a situation arouse their interest and lead to efforts of finding out more? Because even though young people are confronted with signs of the region's past at nearly every turn, this usually does not seem to arouse interest in that past. And here the problem of “not-memory” or “beginning everything anew” reappears. In today's times, young people simply don't see a need to know about the past.

Anna is the only exception, as shown by the way she relates to Olsztyn's statue of Copernicus and the castle in which he lived, which suggests that she may have “inherited” parts of the region's past. Her narrative also displayed signs of continuity with regional history, and she expressed the importance of historical consciousness. But, an important issue is raised here regarding Anna's identification with only Polish aspects of the region's past. This is related to the fact mentioned before, namely that both real and false knowledge of the past can form historical consciousness. Therefore, although the history of Warmia-Mazury cannot be properly understood in separation from its Prussian-German-Polish heritage and the diverse influences exerted upon it by neighboring regions and nations (Brakoniecki “Prowincja Człowieka” 128), a complete and open understanding of the region's history is not necessary for historical consciousness. In fact, there were already numerous attempts to build historical consciousness on nationally biased versions of history in the region, and it seems that this is still a problem, despite over 20 years of efforts to address it.

Anna's knowledge of regional history comes from school, where she had a “regional path.” This is generally a positive thing, because regional history is being taught, but it also shows that the ideological presentation of that history after WWII still influenced history lessons when Anna was in middle school. Izabela Lewandowska noted this phenomenon in her study of Warmia-Mazury high school students as well.

She commented that students often mention the Polishness of the region, or the struggle for its Polishness, while remaining silent about periods when the region was not within Polish borders, even though those periods were often positive for the region, and this shows a simplified understanding of the region's history by not taking into account its complexities (90).

However, fitting local events into national history, and in this way ignoring events that do not relate to national history, is a natural and universal mechanism referred to as “local memory,” (R. Traba, “Myślenie Nie Boli” 10), or “place memory” (Lewicka 213). This mechanism leads to, among other things, local history being taught in a chronology reflecting breaks in Polish history, even though it should reflect the particular history of the region (R. Traba, “Myślenie Nie Boli” 10). A critique of teaching regional history this way is that it simply lays itself over the specificity of a certain place and takes out of it only those elements that fit the central Polish canon (R. Traba, “Myślenie Nie Boli” 10). The solution to this problem lies in the realization that collective memory is constructed, and that it is natural for every nation to have “landmarks of memory” that define it as a collective. However, a group will not find much out about itself if it constructs collective memory around central events and “monolithic canons of memory” (R. Traba, “Myślenie Nie Boli” 11). Instead, collective memory should be rebuilt, or reconstructed, through local phenomena, which can lead to a more accurate, but also a richer, understanding of the place in which one lives, starting from the local, in this case Warmia-Mazury, and widening the context to East Central Europe and Europe in general (R. Traba, “Myślenie Nie Boli” 11).

This is exactly the type of thinking that Borussia and other initiatives were and are promoting, but again, it is evident that it did not reach the majority of the population, and certainly not the educational system. But, the extent and type of knowledge and understanding of history often also comes down to differences between individuals. An example is Piotrek, who, encouraged by his high school history teacher, and then through his own initiative, read a few books about regional history. As one of them was written by Robert Traba, the more open understanding of regional history, based on acknowledgment of its diverse heritage, seemed to make an impression on Piotrek. This type of thinking being present in one out of the six individual narratives in this study perhaps says something about its actual scope for this segment of the

population in Warmia-Mazury.

Another interesting issue is raised by Anna's connection with Vilnius through her great-grandmother, which shows continuity with family history reaching back to a different place. What is most striking about Anna's identification with Vilnius is the emotion her narrative seems to evoke when she talks about the city. For it would be one thing, and already rare, for a young person from Warmia-Mazury, in today's times, and given the historical context, to take some general interest in their roots, but it is another thing for such a person to express emotion or sentiment towards those roots. According to Jerzy Kochanowski, today's young generation of Poles are interested in the Kresy simply as something interesting about their family past, and the reason for this is simply that one cannot pass emotional memory on to others and inject them with real nostalgia (122). This certainly seems to be the case for most of the participants in this study, but Anna's case is quite surprising, because although it would be an exaggeration to say she feels nostalgia for Vilnius, she does express sentiment, so it is more than simply something interesting to her.

And finally, one last interesting theme arises in Anna's narrative, already touched on during the analysis. Although Anna has a strong identification with Warmia-Mazury, and even shows aspects of historical continuity with the region's past, she nonetheless wants to live in Warsaw because there are more opportunities there. In this respect, Anna is an example of how, in today's times of globalization and mobility, an individual can move around, or settle outside of their home region or locality, but still have consciousness of where they come from and feel connected to that place. Stefan Chwin has suggested that there is nothing wrong with being a "mobile human" with no dreams of being "rooted" in a single place, instead treating a "voyage in search of a better place on Earth" as something normal, and carrying one's roots within oneself as "spiritual capital," which does not restrict, but strengthens the individual. In other words, "Life is everywhere" (63-5).

### **Regional and local identity: If not the past, than what?**

Most of the participants were found not to identify with aspects of the past. In other words, the past does not form a significant part of their identities, and this seems

to be the case for both regional and family history. One of the questions that arises out of this is: if they do not identify with the region's past, than how do they identify with it? What is it that does make up their regional identities? Each participant's interview text provides a small window into fragments of their identity, and an effort was made to find something that seemed to be an important part of the identity of each individual. This was already described in more detail in the analysis chapter, but what was not addressed fully was that all of the participants mentioned Warmia-Mazury's natural landscape, and tourism was also a common theme.

Piotrek said that the natural landscape of the region suits him, and his main impressions of, or associations with, the region are lakes, greenery, and spending time outdoors. Dominik talked about his sailing hobby, and he associates the region with lakes, rivers and woods. Monika feels very connected to the region's natural landscape, and it certainly forms a major part of her identity. Anna did not focus on nature in her narrative, but she did say that she associates the region with lakes and woods, and that “all of Poland” comes to the region for that. Jacek said that he enjoys taking advantage of Olsztyn's natural environment for outdoor recreation, and the only thing that comes to mind when he thinks of the region is tourism. And finally, Izabela was the only one who mentioned historical relics as something that she associates the region with, although she did also mention rich vegetation and tourism.

This trend of associating Warmia-Mazury with nature and tourism was also noted in Lewandowska's study of Warmia-Mazury high school students, for whom the most common associations with the region were the beauty of the landscape and tourism (Lewandowska 195). Regarding this trend, Lewandowska also cites a 1997 study by Wojciech Wrzesiński on Olsztyn citizens' social identity, in which he concluded that geographic criteria increasingly dominate how people identify with the region, while traditional values and historical heritage play a lesser role. According to Wrzesiński, aspects of Warmia-Mazury's past are becoming an “archaic-museum element.” Instead, young people love lakes, woods and landscapes, although those are not the most important things in strengthening ties with the region. The most important thing for the formation of enduring ties connecting society with a region is collective memory of the past. It should be history, and not geography, that links old and young generations, and traditions with modernity (qtd. in Lewandowska 204). In other words,



a bond with, or appreciation of, the natural landscape is not enough to assure historical continuity.

This seems to be true for the participants of this study, for although most of them talk about the assets of their region's natural landscape, they do not identify with its past. However, Monika's case is interesting in this context. Despite having no knowledge of the region's history, weak knowledge of her family history, but feeling a very strong connection with the region's natural landscape, Monika considers her family to be deeply rooted in Olsztyn, and she wants to live and raise her children there in the future. There is no continuity in her identity with the region's past, and not much continuity with her family's past, but she nonetheless sees herself as continuing the family tradition by seeing herself as a continuation of her family's presence in Olsztyn. Also, her connection with the natural landscape is genuine and seems to lead to an enduring connection with the region, which is especially exemplified by her desire to raise her children with the same appreciation for Warmia-Mazury's nature as she received from her father. Perhaps this is the beginning of a new tradition that will be passed down from generation to generation.

But, aside from the natural landscape of the region, there do not seem to be any other outstanding regional aspects with which the participants identify. It seems to be the case that simply being born and growing up in the region, having friends and family there, and enjoying nature, is as far as their local identity goes. For some the connection is more intense, while for others it is weaker or non-existent.

In 1995, Wojciech Łukowski wrote that “today” it is a fact that people identify with Warmia-Mazury, but at the same time the level of that identification does not come close to the level shown by groups in regions where they have been present for many generations. Identification with Warmia-Mazury as a region is very diffused and shallow, and it is generally a regional identity that is still being formed. On the other hand, an identity based on taking an active part in local civil society has been taken on by a limited group of elites, and it aspires to be a regional identity. However, this remains only an ideological identity, an intellectual project, for the divide between adherents of this project and the region's general population is quite large (49-50). Even though written 15 years ago, based on the narratives analyzed in this study, such an evaluation of the situation still seems current today.

## **Is continuity possible?**

In conclusion, one must ask what kind of continuity young people in this region can really have in their identities? Considering that their grandparents or great-grandparents migrated to Warmia-Mazury from all sorts of other places after the war, their family histories are defined by moving around and uprooting. In a way, these narratives confirm that uprooted past. How can a young person be expected to identify with Vilnius, Warsaw, and often even more places, simultaneously? Instead, these young people are identifying mostly with their own lives and experiences growing up. The only exception is Anna, who reaches back to Vilnius through her great-grandmother. But, still, what about her other great-grandparents? Can she be expected to identify with such a complicated past? It seems then that the only way for an individual in such a situation to identify with the past is to be conscious of being a link between that past and the future. Even if the past is complicated and does not point to any single location where one can locate their roots, being aware of that complicated past, and knowing that they are the result of that history, is probably the only sort of continuity one can expect this generation of Warmia-Mazury citizens to have.

However, this sort of identification, or continuity with the past often depends on personal interest. Because if an internal feeling of continuity through time with family and region is not taken out of the family environment during childhood, only one's personal initiative remains. Most of the participants of this study did not express interest in the past. If they are considered as representatives of their generation, age group, and educational level, it seems that, save for a few individual exceptions, the collective identity of this generation of Warmia-Mazury is cut off from the past.

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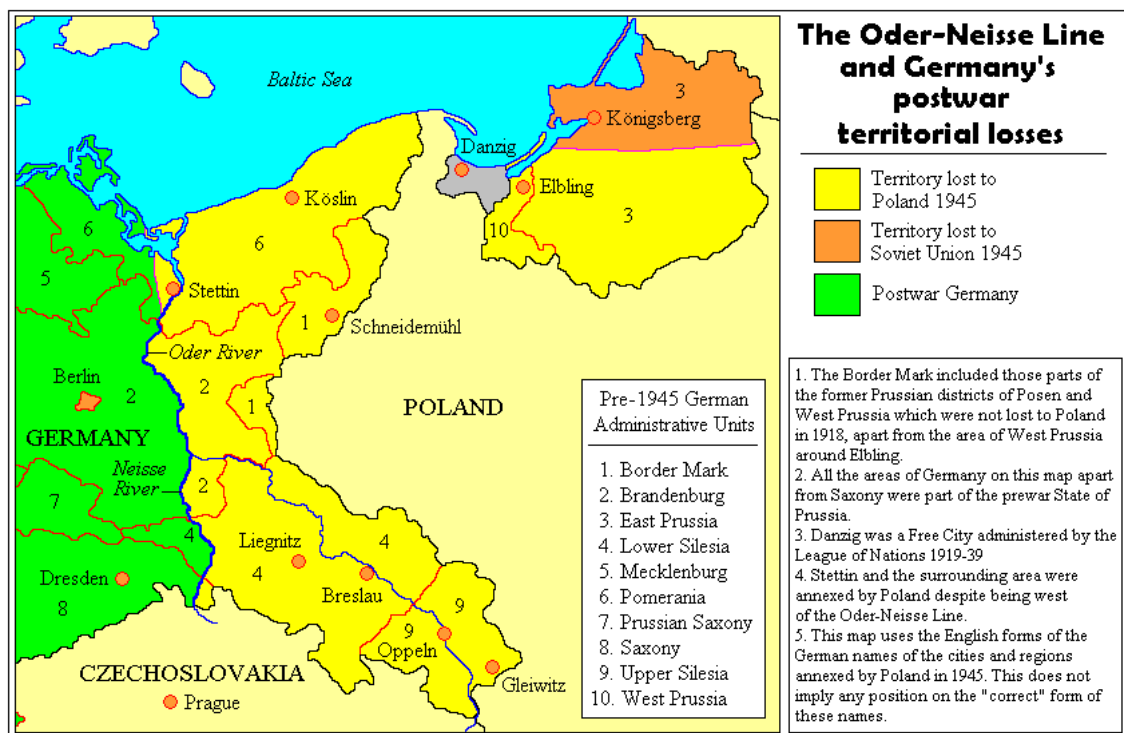
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**Appendix I: Poland's Shifted Borders; Curzon Line**



Source: Wikipedia Commons.

## Appendix II: Division of East Prussia between Soviet Union and Poland



Source: Wikipedia Commons.

### Appendix III: Polish Voivodships



Source: Wikipedia Commons.

## **Appendix IV: Interview Protocol**

MA Thesis Project: “The Identity of the Third Generation of Warmia-Mazury after WWII”

Time of Interview:

Date:

Place:

Interviewer: Marek Mikunda

Interviewee:

Sex:

Age:

Education:

Occupation:

Place of Birth:

Current Residence:

(Brief description of project)

Questions:

1. Can you talk about your family history as far back as you know? How is it that your family ended up here?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
2. Can you talk about your experiences growing up and living here? If you think about different stages of your life, such as childhood, adolescence, university, adult



