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## **Place-Promotion and Scalar Restructurings in Urban Agglomerations on Internal EU Borders: The Case of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec**

*Abstract:* This paper analyzes recent socio-spatial changes in cities adjacent to European Union internal borders. The idea is to show how mutations in the functioning of territorial nation-states in the conditions of post-1989 transformations, European integration, and, more broadly, economic globalization, are reworked by trans-border municipal cooperation. All these macro changes are unpacked from the angle of the growth of the importance of the urban scale in comparison to the national scale and the more active role of cities as units in changing scalar hierarchies. More specifically our focus here is on the strategies of place-promotion of the German-Polish border city Goerlitz-Zgorzelec in the context of planning hallmark events (here, European Capital of Culture 2010). This article argues that closeness to a political border is utilized by Goerlitz-Zgorzelec within various strategies for gaining place-specific competitive advantage by means of an active politics of scale.

*Keywords:* borders; Europeanization; trans-border cooperation; place promotion; politics of scale.

The main idea of this paper is to analyze current developments in urban agglomerations on recently established European Union internal borders in the broader perspective of globalization and European integration. As an initial working assumption, globalization is understood here as the fusion of distinct national economies into a single market and, thus, as a world order which challenges the domination of the territorial nation-state as the most important player in the economic domain. In this vein, the establishment and growth of the European Union is regarded as a response to the emergence of the single global market and as a place-specific reworking of this broader trend. In the context of this article, such a conceptualization presupposes two further refinements. The first concerns the function and role of urban agglomerations in the conditions of a crisis of state territoriality. The second refers to a surplus gained by areas adjacent to political borders in the context of an enhanced mobility of capital, people, technology, etc. across these boundaries. Both are elaborated with reference to theories of the spatial dimension of globalization and, in particular, to the concept of globalization as a rescaling of the territorial units of cities and states, and to the concept of a 'politics of scale'.

In order to present a more coherent argumentation, this paper is divided into six sections. The first section proves the mutual dependence of political borders and the dynamics of nation-states and introduces the main problems emerging from this

interdependence in the situation of European integration. The second section places the trends of strengthened cross-border relations and the respective mutations of urban governance, which took place in the Central and Eastern Europe after 1989, in the context of recent global trends. The third section dwells on the theory of globalization as a change of scalar hierarchy and dismantles the notion of a 'politics of scale', with reference primarily to Neil Brenner's analysis. The fourth section focuses on the most significant dispositions and institutional frameworks of German-Polish trans-border cooperation, which started in the 1990s. The fifth section aims to show the importance of the projecting of a hallmark cultural event (European Capital of Culture 2010) as an instrument for place-promotion and for the gaining of place-specific competitive advantage by Goerlitz-Zgorzelec on various scales of competition. And finally, the sixth section, based on empirical qualitative research conducted in Goerlitz-Zgorzelec in 2007 and 2008, identifies various modifications of the politics of scale utilized on the both sides of the Neisse River in the course of the preparation for the ECC 2010.

### **The Significance of Political Borders for European Nation-States**

This paper adheres to a conceptual angle which holds that the institutional and territorial framework of the political border is the indispensable attribute of the modern nation-state, while the constitution of political borders is seen as the core aspect of modernization. In this light, naturally, a question emerges about recent developments in the social, political and cultural aspects of state borders under the conditions of globalization and, in this particular case, of European integration. To put it more radically, based on a case study of the twin town Goerlitz-Zgorzelec on the German-Polish border, this article strives to contribute to current endeavors to answer the question, in what way does the institution of the border and its related mechanisms articulate a shift in the relations between two or more territorial states divided by this or that border in the broader framework of the European Union? In addition, what are the outcomes of the tension between the territorial nation-state, as a certain geographical configuration, and the manifold supra- and sub-national geographical configurations, which, as it is usually argued, both constitute and are constituted by the processes of globalization and European integration? It must be pointed out that recent trends of European integration are scrutinized here in a broader context, i.e. as the European response to the changing social and spatial relations between the global and the local.

The issue of the mutual interdependence of the phenomena of the border and the modern nation-state has recently gained a lot of attention in the works of scholars from diverse disciplines. One of the most bold statements concerning this issue can be found in Etienne Balibar's book (2003). As Balibar puts it, European border areas—zones, countries, and cities—are not marginal to the constitution of a public sphere, but rather are at its center. To put it another way, if we consider the center of Europe as the locus where European people are formed, then it is precisely borders that have

the function of the center of Europe. Balibar proves the significance of borders for European history by arguing that the very name Europe, instead of 'Christendom', became politically significant in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, when the 'balance of powers' was coordinated between sovereign nation-states through the establishment of the borders between these nation-states. A compatible claim is made by Lila Leontidou, Hastings Donnan and Alex Afouxenidis (2005) "instead of being a marginal element in the structuring of the wider socioeconomic and cultural environment, borders are a major barometer of the (re)construction of identity and the (re)affirmation of culture with larger economic and political repercussions."

Hastings Donnan and Thomas Wilson (1999) write that originally the modern state was an institution whose power enabled a homology between culture, nation, territory and identity, and therefore presupposed the bordering of geographical space. However, the border should not be regarded as a mere line dividing distinct territories or an object embedded into neutral space. An important aspect of border functioning is its relational nature. In this sense, the border does not just delineate, it also serves as a medium or a form of communication between territories, cultures, markets, political constellations, etc. As Donnan and Wilson eloquently put it,

changes in the structure and function of international borders, whether they be world-wide or restricted to one state, reflect major changes in the strength and resilience of the nation state, and in the variety of social, political and economic processes long thought to be the sole or principal domain of the state. State borders in the world today not only mirror the changes that are affecting the institutions and policies of their states, but also point to transformations in the definitions of citizenship, sovereignty and national identity.

An instrumental question which stems from such an understanding of the border is how to treat the current developments of European integration from the perspective of the functioning of EU internal borders? Or, more broadly, what impact does the increasing interconnectedness of national territories across the globe have on political borders and areas adjacent to them? Can we say that the post-modern global economy, culture and media, which constantly make the world 'flatter', are still operating in the framework of modern political borders, reconfirming the nation-state's sovereignty? And, in the last instance, if we adhere to a question posed by Balibar (2003) what can be done in order to democratize the institution of the border, or, alternatively, "to put it at the service of men and submit it to their collective control, make it an object of their 'sovereignty', rather than allowing it to subject them to powers over which they have no control (when it does not purely and simply serve to repress them?)."

### **European Union, Globalization and the Fate of Territorial Nation-State**

The case of the urban agglomeration on the political border Goerlitz-Zgorzelec is interesting not only as a local reworking of the world-wide process of the growth of trans-national connections between different localities. It also presents an example of the trans-national cooperation of two urban units which originally formed a single urban unit; then, in 1945, they were divided and belonged to the territories of two

rather hostile nation-states; and then, from the beginning of the 1990s till 2004, were divided by an EU external border. In this sense, it is important to note that for the towns on both sides of the border the process of building trans-national relations and an international image coincided with the broader transformation processes which started in Central and Eastern Europe after the fall of the Berlin Wall. As claimed by Francois Bafoil (1999) who writes about such transformations along the Oder-Neisse line, since the hyper centralization of power and the negation of local autonomy was one of the traits of Soviet-type states, then the transformation of political borders after 1990 meant an opportunity for populations which were located on the periphery to claim their autonomy in terms of decision making and to establish rights “attached to territories.”

A similar claim is made by Marek Furmankiewicz (2007) who analyzes the results of the cross-border and international cooperation of Polish local governments in the period before Poland joined the European Union, i.e. in 1990–2004. In his view, before the 1980s municipalities had no autonomy and were totally subjugated to the Communist Party, while the establishment of the frameworks and networks for international cooperation provided opportunities for the self-organization of territorial units and therefore for gaining more independence from national government in the realms of politics and economy. The fact is that when local self-government was created in Poland in 1990, the number and intensiveness of trans-national relations significantly increased. Hence, one of the outcomes of this change was the acquiring of power in terms of decision-making by municipalities and an increase in their activity within the frameworks of the international level, such as the United Nations Organization and the European Union. In this sense, proximity to political borders was perceived by local governance not only as a burden, but also as a certain advantage. As Bafoil (1999) puts it,

the interest of the Oder-Neisse border case lies in the fact that it has brought together Polish (and also German) protagonists around a definition of the border as a control in two different senses. In one, it is the established limit of each state and the basis of national and local political identities; while the other perceives it as an opening for common exchanges and as the creative force in German-Polish collective rule-building.

Such a perspective is consistent with the piece quoted from Etienne Balibar. It should be also added here that in towns adjacent to political borders—especially those borders which undergo a process of transformation, such as the new internal borders of the EU—the processes of the internationalization of the economy and the weakening of the nation-state, usually regarded as macro-processes of the global and EU scale, are more obvious than anywhere else. German-Polish cooperation, which started in the beginning of the 1990s, brought border-cities closer to the status of circuits on networks of global circulation. Leontidou, Donnan, and Afouxenidis (2005: 390) argue that post-socialist transformations and the enlargement of the European Union in 2004 have turned some of the former peripheral zones into centers in the sense that “people living along the border may experience re-territorialization without necessarily migrating, since EU re-borderings impose spatial change and reshuffle spatialities.”

At this point it is necessary to emphasize the mutuality of two distinct trends, i.e. between the growth of the autonomy of the local self-government of urban units and the rise of trans-border links between urban units of different national territories. Moreover, it is important to remember that both the decentralization of decision-making and the creation of the single European market are obvious socio-spatial outcomes of European integration. These two important trends for Europeanization should also be placed in the context of the global economy and the shift in the world-wide geography of production. In other words, the point is that these changes in the socio-spatial order of Europe were designed in order to enhance the competitiveness of the whole region through raising the competitiveness of its distinct locations. Here, a theoretical elaboration of the spatial outcomes of globalization is needed.

Very often globalization is understood as the crisis of the territoriality of nation-states, or, as the situation when, due to the advancement of communication technologies and the fusion of national markets into one global market, distinct territorial governments are unable to control the mobility of goods, people, knowledge, etc. Quite often such a vision is accompanied by the claim that globalization makes geographical space unimportant. However, as can be concluded from the analysis of the geographer Allen Scott (2005: 47), despite the proliferation of economic interconnections and fusions, we cannot talk about the spatial liquification of the world. Moreover, as he shows, it is impossible to say that globalization has made space unimportant. On the contrary, the recent changes in the geography of production have accentuated “localized processes of growth and development,” whereby most capital and human labor are now concentrated in dense metropolitan areas, which are “the basic units of a new global mosaic of regional economies.”

Scott writes that the model of developed geographic spaces now consists of two elements: a center (metropolitan area) and a surrounding dependent hinterland of variable radius. Here, it would also be valuable to refer to the results of the research conducted by Saskia Sassen (2002) who writes that global metropolitan cities articulate a new geography of centrality. According to her, since the nation-state as a spatial unit is becoming weaker it falls upon other spatial units and scales to articulate the idea of centrality. In a similar fashion, Neil Brenner (1999 : 432) argues that the widely shared idea that today the space of places matters less than the space of flows, circulation and processes of deterritorialization, neglects both relatively fixed and mobile types of territorial organization (primarily urban-regional agglomerations) and the reorganization of scalar hierarchies also currently underway. In the context of this article, the issue of the mutation of scalar hierarchies is key.

As Brenner puts it, the relations between cities and territorial states have been crucial in the development of capitalism. In this vein, the Keynesian system meant the incorporation of urban nodes into the centralised state production process with a “spatially isomorphic relationship between capital accumulation, urbanization and state regulation” (ibid.: 432). In contemporary conditions, when the most important players within the world economy are firms with international capital, it is precisely cities with their place-specific competitive advantages, and not nation-states that are becoming the prime locations of investment. In other words, in this situation the rep-

representatives of municipalities became less dependent on their national governments in the process of negotiation with private investors. Seen from such an angle, globalization is a twofold process, presupposing on the one hand time-space compression (David Harvey's (1989) term), or deterritorialization; and, on the other, the production of relatively stable spatial configurations, like the literal infrastructure of cities and states, or reterritorialization. In this regard, Brenner (1999: 435) writes that as cities become the main localizations of territorialized capital, it is the urban scale that gains a central role in the scalar hierarchy. Therefore, in such a perspective we should understand globalization precisely as the process of the re-scaling of the territorial units of cities and states.

### **The Competitiveness of Urban Agglomerations and the Politics of Scale**

As already argued above, geographical scales must be regarded as socially produced ones, (ibid.: 433–434) i.e. we should take into account that certain socio-political transformations also cause a rescaling process, and it is precisely the debates about the spatial aspect of globalization and about the interconnections between the global and the local that have made this assumption obvious (in contrast to the earlier assumption that scale is some pre-given framework of geographical processes).<sup>1</sup> As Brenner writes further on, capitalism was always spatially structured in the form of varying scalar hierarchies, yet precisely the historical context of globalization and global restructuring is characterized by a radical change in the scalar set-up. More precisely the tendencies in geography and economics caused by the neoliberal global project in the late 1970s, made the prevailing scales of sociopolitical regulation (ones centered on the Keynesian welfare nation-state as the main socio-geographical unit) outdated. Now, the new modes of relations between global, national, regional and local scales must be read as one of the most crucial aspects of institutional adaptation to such features of neoliberalism as “unrestricted capital mobility, unfettered market relations, intensified commodification and a logic of ‘beggar-thy-neighbor’ competition” (Brenner 2001: 594).

In this context, the notion of a ‘politics of scale’ emerges. Brenner finds it appropriate to juxtapose two distinct meanings of this notion. The first, singular meaning of the notion ‘politics of scale’ is “the production, reconfiguration or contestation” of a certain dimension of sociospatial organization in the framework of a relatively bounded geographical arena, “usually labeled the local, the urban, the regional, the national and so forth.” From such a perspective, scale is treated as a “*boundary* separating the unit in question—be it a place, a locality, a territory or any other spatial form—from other geographical units or locations” (ibid.: 599). In this sense, the focus is on the diverse socio-historical processes which set up a certain socio-spatial unit. Yet Brenner finds it fruitful to introduce a second, or plural meaning of the notion of a politics of scale, which “refers to the production,

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<sup>1</sup> N. Brenner (2001: 591–592).

reconfiguration or contestation of particular differentiations, orderings and hierarchies *among* geographical scales.” In such a plural meaning, the word ‘of’ refers not merely to the production of differentiated spatial units as such, but equally to their “embeddedness and positionalities in relation to a multitude of smaller or larger spatial units within a multi-tiered, hierarchically configured geographical scaffolding” (Brenner 2001: 600). In this case, the focus should lie on the very process of scaling which makes possible different spatial units and the relations between them (ibid.: 601).

Precisely from the theoretical angle of the second meaning of the notion “politics of scale,” it is worth analyzing what are the current relations in terms of a re-mapped geography of production and competitiveness between the scale of the territorial nation-state on the one hand and the urban scale on the other. As argued above, urban agglomerations on political borders are a special and interesting case here since they lie in the core of the current transformations of the geography of production and the function of nation-states. Brenner reformulates the already introduced broadly shared assumption that nowadays the nation-state is becoming weaker. His claim is that the state remains important, but that it starts to operate within a different scalar constellation. First, it operates (regulates and governs) more on the regional than on the national scale, and, second, it applies certain policies in order to enhance the “place-specific competitive advantage” of its most developed urban centers (Brenner 2000).

The example he gives here is the changes in the German economy launched in the 1980s in order to make the German national market better incorporated into the global one. As Brenner shows, the strategies employed in order to achieve this goal had an explicit spatial or geographical message. He refers to the German notion ‘Standortpolitik’, or, in English, locational politics, which signifies the institutional changes aimed at enhancing capital investment in certain geographical locations and was supposed to be achieved in the process of the delegating of fiscal responsibilities and socio-economic tasks from national governments downwards (primarily to municipalities). The projected result of these reforms was the global competitiveness of German capital through forcing localities to become ‘self-reliant’ (*eigenständig*) in securing financial resources, external capital investment and popular legitimation (Brenner 2000a).

Therefore, it is now better to conceptualize the nation-state not as the agency dominating a certain unified territory through a planned production process, but as the regulating framework for different locations or spaces as destinations for investment. Based on Brenner’s analysis, it is possible to say that economic globalization, being to a certain extent subversive of the modern nation state and favorable for firms with international capital, also creates new geographies of production. As just argued, the geographical or spatial dimension is not fully eliminated by global networks. It would be more accurate to say that the pressure of competitiveness on the global market obliges governments to promote the place-specific competitive advantages of their localities included in the global network, with the expectation that this will ensure the competitiveness of the entire national economy.

### **The Major Trends of German-Polish Trans-border Cooperation**

As already discussed, the intensification of German-Polish trans-border cooperation had two crucial interconnected outcomes. First, it gave more say to local self-government, and, second, it turned cities and municipalities into more significant players on the international market. Marek Furmankiewicz (2007) writes that there are three aspects of the cooperation between municipalities: economic, social and political. The projects in each of these aspects were enabled within three main types of international networks available for municipalities: border networks (euro regions and border town-twinning), international town-twinning, and multilateral international organizations such as EUROCITIES. In Furmankiewicz's view, the international cooperation of municipalities has two major goals: first, the exchange of information between units which helps to solve their specific problems and, second, the lobbying of central government. Moreover, as he puts it, this cooperation helps to avoid competition between these units, at the same time as it competes within the framework of competition on the global scale.

Furmankiewicz shows that the most important programs fostering the cooperation of municipalities are the Polish-German Co-operation Foundation and the EU PHARE Cross-Border Co-operation program and, further on, the Ecos-Ouverture, PHARE-Partnership and Town-Twinning. PHARE program (Poland and Hungary: Aid for Economic Restructuring) launched by the European Union in order to prepare future EU member states for entering the Union. The major problems identified in this respect in the countries that participated in the program were low GDP per capita and over-centralized administrative resources. Here, it must be pointed out that the most subsidized dimension of cooperation was the improvement of infrastructure, i.e. roads, border check-points construction, environmental protection, etc. In a way, it is possible to say that these investments redefined the role and function of territories traditionally perceived as peripheral and, therefore, rather underdeveloped in terms of infrastructure.

In the scholarship about trans-border economic cooperation it is usually noted that by fostering business networks across borders, uneven social and economic development can be intensified. For instance, Francois Bafoil refers to the so-called 'Stolpe Plan', which was supposed to establish a Polish-German trade area based on the advantages of each side of the border. Yet, as he shows, such a cooperation proved to be problematic, since within it Polish lands served as the mere providers of raw materials, while the processing, marketing and financing was concentrated on the German side. It is interesting that Bafoil (1999: 570) finds it appropriate to compare this disposition with the maquiladoras and unequal trade between Mexican and American partners. Maquiladoras, usually seen as the symbols of unequal trans-border exchange, are the Mexican assembly manufacturing (mostly electronics, cloth and textile) located near the US border, whose functioning had a crucial role for the growth of Mexican towns located close to American territory. From the 1960s, products made in the US were shipped to Mexico duty free, assembled there, and then shipped back, again duty free. The maquiladoras were run by American owners (as branches or subcontractors of



American companies) and worked for US markets. The main variable which made the development of the 'maquiladoras' possible in Mexico was low wage labor, whereas institutionally the major factor stimulating such a trajectory of production was the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA).<sup>2</sup>

At the same time, it must be admitted that the unevenness of the social and economic contexts divided by a border do not only deepen the social disparities in the area, but also can be used by the area for gaining local competitive advantage. Referring to the material of the Oder-Neisse line, Bafoil (1999) argues that

the setting up of the 'Euroregions' which flourished on the German-Polish border from 1991 provided a straightforward pretext. The German municipalities counted on obtaining large subsidies through these Euroregions, which were created on the western model; while the Polish border municipalities hoped to benefit from their proximity to their East German counterpart.

From this point of view, the analysis of recent developments in the area between Poznań and the German-Polish border (i.e. in the period just before Poland joined the EU) as a result of investments from the West made by an urbanist Wilfried Hackenbroich seems particularly opposite. He writes that, stimulated by proximity to the European Union, the industries around Poznań took advantage of the economic discrepancy between the European Union and Poland. Lower wages and appropriate standards for production in Poland on the one hand, and easy access to consumers in the EU on the other, have increased international investment. The outcome was that the territory close to Poznań has been activated by flows of international capital, and has totally changed its physical and functional appearance.

For instance, a former village, Tarnowo Podgórne, situated near Poznań has attracted 32 companies (most of them German) (Hackenbroich 2006). The economically defined trajectory of flows Berlin-Poznań, on the one hand, and a well-developed transport infrastructure, on the other hand, gave the effect of a growing urban agglomeration. The concentration of hotels, bars, shops, bistros, sex salons, petrol stations, and other services on the road near Poznań became denser than in Berlin, which makes it reasonable to speak about the 'metropolitan activation' of the Polish-German part of the motorway E30 (ibid.: 77). Here, small but frequent services along the road signify a high density of mobility of people and capital. As Hackenbroich writes,

The transformation of a country road into a transit road shows the spatial impact of border regulations, economic factors, different salaries and the flows of goods. The borderline between the European Union and Eastern Europe has been transformed into a border space... An entire region has been adapted to the needs of international transition in order to participate in the flow of goods and capital (ibid.: 81).

As it is possible to conclude from this example, the fact that investors make use of the uneven economic development between Germany and Poland does not necessarily entail harm to the local population. On the contrary, locals can benefit from such a disposition. In any case, geographical uneven development, which reflects "the different ways in which different groups have materially embedded their modes of sociality into the web of life, understood as an evolving socio-ecological system,"

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<sup>2</sup> R. B. South (1990).

must be regarded as a certain glue which in many respects makes possible trans-border cooperation and the creation of trans-border institutional alliances, economic networks, and, as will be argued further on, even cultural imageries (Harvey 2006).

Furthermore, it must be added that trans-border cooperation fosters the constitution of regional identity and therefore, softens the social cleavages resulting from the sometimes hostile relations between nation-states. For instance, Furmankiewicz (2007) observes a significant improvement in the perception of Germans by the Polish population as the result of cultural and business exchanges. In his analysis from 1991–2002, the positive attitude to Germans among Poles increased most rapidly of all in regions with intensive trans-border cooperation. However, it must be pointed out that the constitution of regional identity does not always presuppose the pacification of social cleavages. As Francois Bafoil (1999: 578) writes about Silesia, “emphasizing the informal relationships of neighbourhood and community, the association distinguishes itself by highlighting the ideology of a group that has its roots deep in an idealized past and builds a landscape of representations using oppositional pairs: ‘Them and us’; Centre and periphery; exploiters and victim, etc.”

### **The Place-promotion of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as the European Capital of Culture 2010**

Since vigorous competition between different urban units is considered to be one of the constituent features of the global scalar reshuffling, where cities’ self-promotion as a major goal for municipalities is what makes it possible to talk about urban scale as gaining more significance in comparison to the scale of the nation-state, then the very strategies of such self-promotion can be an interesting material for the analysis of the changing relations within scalar constellations. Or, alternatively, such strategies reveal the place-specific mutations of state territoriality and give opportunities to scrutinize and hopefully to advance the widely spread notion of the modern nation-state as “a compact and isomorphic organization of territory, ethnos, and governmental apparatus,” which is currently encountering a “serious crisis” (Appadurai 1996). One of the most important steps in the process of the place-promotion of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as a single city was its application for the status of European Capital of Culture 2010. The case of this application is analyzed here in connection to the theories discussed above of the dominant recent socio-spatial restructurings in the European Union and wider.

The very program of the European Capitals of Culture emerged in 1985 (at that point its title was ‘European City of Culture’) and afterwards has been changed several times. In 1992, the side project of the ‘European Cultural Month’ emerged. Currently, the procedure is that every year two European cities are announced as capitals of culture and host a range of cultural, educational and scientific events. It is important to say that it is the European Commission that defines which nation-state (primarily this concerns members of the European Union) is eligible in which year to nominate one city for this status. For instance, in the year 2007 the countries which could nominate their cities were Luxembourg and Romania (as a result, the ECC was

hosted by Luxembourg Ville and Sibiu), in 2008—England and Norway (the selected cities are Liverpool and Stavanger), and in the year 2009 it will be Lithuanian Vilnius and Austrian Linz. The main message of this program, launched by the European Commission, was to be an instrument for promoting European culture and thus for the creation of a common European identity.

It is usually noted that the different cities applying and competing for this status have very different motivations for doing so. As is shown in the report of Palmer-Rae Associates (2004), most of the cities applying for ECC status were trying to increase the international profile of the city and its region; to attract visitors to the city and to raise the self-confidence of its dwellers; to increase the activity of local consumers of culture and to improve the cultural infrastructure of a city; to establish networks with other European cities and to support creativity and innovation. Yet, to look at this problem from its most formal angle, it is possible to say that it is precisely the framework of the global competition between different geographical locations that makes culture (concerts, exhibitions, theatres, festivals, nightlife, etc.) a medium of competitiveness in the global or European context. Recently, a series of researches have been conducted showing that tourism and ‘hallmark events’ attracting a lot of visitors to certain locations, being cultural phenomena, have a significant role for the economic growth and social modernization of cities (Roche 1992).

The twin city Goerlitz-Zgorzelec unsuccessfully applied for the ECC status for the year 2010, when it will be Germany’s turn to hold this event. In the end, it was the city Essen (together with the entire Ruhr area, encountering deindustrialization and related socio-economic problems), which was selected. Here, an interesting point is that both Goerlitz and Essen were represented in the application process not as merely urban nodes. On the contrary, both agglomerations positioned themselves within broader scalar constellations and, moreover, actively made use of their specific embeddedness in a broader hierarchy of geographical scales. As I will try to argue further on, on the basis of the results of my qualitative research of the rhetoric and concrete strategies of the Goerlitz-Zgorzelec application, both towns divided by the Neisse River were engaged in the “production, reconfiguration or contestation of particular differentiations, orderings and hierarchies *among* geographical scales” (Brenner 2001: 600). In other words, they were engaged in a certain politics of scale, which—as already proven with reference to Neil Brenner—is one of the major trends of the functioning of urban areas in the contemporary socio-economic geography of globalization, and of European integration as a response to global challenges.

As was already argued above, most of the projects realized in the framework of the cooperation between Polish and German municipalities were aimed at the improvement of infrastructure. In many respects, the collaboration between Goerlitz and Zgorzelec took place in the framework of the program INTERREG IIIA, whose major objective is the support of integrated and sustainable development in the domains of the economy, society and culture. This program was funded by the European Regional Development Fund, with the entire budget of the program for

the years 2000–2006 amounting to 70.6 million EUR.<sup>3</sup> Another important framework for the cooperation was the Euroregion Neisse, which was founded in 1990 with the objective to bring together neighboring Polish, German and Czech municipalities (prior to 31<sup>st</sup> December 2003, 820 projects were contracted within this cooperation).<sup>4</sup> Besides such results of cooperation as common planning acts, environmental projects, and, therefore, the coordination of infrastructural investment, the issue of the activation of cultural exchanges and cultural production in general was here important. In this context, it is possible to say that this crucial role of cultural production for the urban economy—especially in the case of post-industrial cities—is a global trend, also acquiring equal importance within the European Union.<sup>5</sup> In Furmankiewicz's (2007: 353) research on the town-twinning of Goerlitz and Zgorzelec, the most commonly mentioned aspects of the cooperation were: 'education, sport and recreation', 'culture', and 'the promotion of tourism'. Therefore, the attempt of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec to gain the ECC status can be regarded as one of the most significant moments in the process of cross-border collaboration. It concerns the aspects of economic growth and social modernization, of building a common cultural identity and pacifying existing cleavages, and of the promotion of the international image of these urban units.

### **Planning of a Hallmark Event and the Politics of Scale**

An important aspect of the ECC application by Goerlitz-Zgorzelec was the redefinition of the phenomenon of the border, or, in other words, an attempt to make the political border a certain currency and advantage of the location. More specifically, the German-Polish frontier was presented here as a new center of Europe, a bridge, connecting 'Old Europe' and 'New Europe', while Goerlitz-Zgorzelec utilized its status as a 'laboratory of European communal life'. This motive was actively used within the ECC application, whose motto was 'FROM THE MIDDLE OF NOWHERE TO THE HEART OF EUROPE':

The border, though a burdensome barrier like any other border, is actually a blessing, as it directs each half's view towards its respective neighbor and lends a European dimension to the city's dynamic. The border gives the city a role to play as a mediator; a role it played before when it was the hub of European East-West and North-South trade relations. Its new role, therefore, is a cultural one: the exchange of ideas, arts, and sciences across a language boundary—one of the most difficult in Europe.<sup>6</sup>

It is interesting that this way of understanding the institution of the political border is very compatible with recent theoretical elaborations of the notions of the border and trans-nationalism. It can be discussed for example in relation to Etienne Balibar's (2003) account discussed above that European border areas are actually not in the European periphery, but in its very center since this is precisely the locus

<sup>3</sup> Available online: <http://www.interreg.gov.pl>.

<sup>4</sup> M. Furmankiewicz (2007: 353).

<sup>5</sup> A. J. Scott (2005: 53).

<sup>6</sup> *Living Cultural Unity Living Cultural Diversity*. The Application of Goerlitz Zgorzelec For European Capital of Culture 2010.

where European people emerge. In this vein it would also be interesting to refer to the research of Bernard Reitel (2007), who writes that border cities gain advantages in comparison to other urban units embedded into national territories since first, they are more diverse, and second, they can easier build an international image, and, third they are prominent since there are few big cities located near borders.

A remarkable fact that could be observed in the process of the preparation of both towns for the ECC year was the proliferation of diverse attempts to use symbolically the imagery of trans-border mobility as a certain currency or a place-specific competitive advantage for the locations. The pivotal motif within the self-imagination of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as a transnational German-Polish city, and one of the major symbols of the projected ECC event, was the symbol of the *Via Regia*, the medieval trade route from Kiev to Santiago de Compostela that passed through Goerlitz. The importance of the route was explained in a booklet introducing Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as an ECC applicant for 2010. First, the *Via Regia* was presented as the common link, connecting countries and creating the common cultural and spiritual identity of a politically united Europe. Second, the idea of peace, understanding and cooperation for mutual benefit was postulated as its basis. And third, as the booklet claims, it was always connected with trade centers and tradesmen, farmers and modern industries, banks and financial institutions as agents in cultural and historical processes. Therefore, the *Via Regia* was presented here as a symbol of mobility, of weakening borders between countries, and, thus, producing a common European space.

In this way, it is possible to say that Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as a distinct urban unit promoted itself by performing political border and trans-border mobility as crucial for the constitution of the idea of Europe. However, interesting mutations in this mode of place-promotion took place in 2006 when it was announced that the application of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec for ECC status had been unsuccessful. As already mentioned, within the ECC 2010 application the *Via Regia* was perceived as a line connecting different European cities, from Kiev in the East to Santiago de Compostela in the West. In this context, the political border dividing Goerlitz and Zgorzelec can be seen as the border between ‘Old Europe’ and ‘New Europe’, or, in other words, as the center of Europe, and, brings the two towns to the “heart of Europe.” Hence, in this case the twin-city as an entity gains “place-specific competitive advantage” when put on the EU-25 scale.

When the application of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec for the ECC 2010 failed, cultural activists from Goerlitz decided to turn the brand of the *Via Regia* into the symbol of a County Exhibition—an important cultural event taking place every four years in the county of Saxony—and, by using this powerful imagery, to bring the event to their city. Consequently, the *Via Regia* as the main theme and symbol of the Saxony County Exhibition was now perceived not so much as a line connecting cities, as a corridor connecting regions from Polish Silesia in the East to the German Rhine in the West. Here the border was substituted by the border town Goerlitz, which is the biggest Silesian town in contemporary Saxony/Germany. The *Via Regia* thus comes to be that which represents Goerlitz as an indispensable part of Saxony, Germany and Europe, while only the German part of the twin-city gains place-specific competitive advantage

when it embeds itself on the regional scale; Zgorzelec, meanwhile, is virtually excluded from the actions of the Exhibition and the advantages brought by this event.

In contrast to the uses of the *Via Regia* by cultural activists in Goerlitz, in Zgorzelec the imaginary route of the *Via Regia* is interpreted almost exclusively as the St. James route, one of the most important pilgrim paths from medieval times. Tourist Information agencies in Zgorzelec spread a booklet about the *Via Regia* issued with the participation of the organization, *Patriotism of Tomorrow*. The booklet quotes Goethe saying that Europe emerged on the pilgrim routes to Compostella. It also says that the beginning of the revival of the St. James route is the presentation of the “European Act” by Pope John Paul II in Santiago de Compostella in 1982:

I, John Paul, a son of the Polish people, that has always perceived itself as a European people, the son of Slavic people among Latin people and the son of Latin people among Slavic people, from Santiago tell you, O Europe, ... find yourself! Be yourself! Discover your roots. Give life to your roots.<sup>7</sup>

Thus, in the Polish part of the twin-city the *Via Regia* is read as part of the St. James pilgrim route and is perceived as a line connecting Głogów (a small town in Poland) and Zgorzelec. Then border remains the national border and the boundary between East and West. Accordingly, through such a mode of interpreting the *Via Regia*, Zgorzelec gains an important role in the framework of its nation-state.

Such a fluctuating use of the imagery of the *Via Regia* by individual players and institutions in Goerlitz-Zgorzelec shows what kind of stories and cartographies are made out of the history and the cartography of medieval European mobility. Here it is necessary to refer back to the notion of a ‘politics of scale’ dismantled with reference to Neil Brenner in order to reframe conceptually these changes of scales of place-promotion utilized by the twin-city Goerlitz-Zgorzelec and by the distinct sides of this twin-city, depending on the broader context of competition and on the possibilities for the Polish and German towns to come to terms with different scales of competitiveness. Different ways of performing the same geographical area and the political border, significantly differentiating the social, economic and cultural landscape of this area, can serve, therefore, as an illustration of the current fate of nation-states’ territories and of the urban units embedded into these territories in the context of globalization and European integration.

In conclusion, it is possible to say that nowadays European political borders and border areas are strategic loci, where the discourses and practices of Europeanization are crystallized. The processes which can be observed there show, in a condensed way, the specificity of the relations between two or more territorial nation-states in a historical perspective. In our context, this perspective is that of globalization and European integration as an indispensable part of it. Post-socialist transformation as one of the aspects of globalization significantly changes the role and function of the urban units adjacent to political borders. On the one hand, these units gain more autonomy from centralized government in terms of decision making and, hence, become

<sup>7</sup> *Droga św. Jakuba. Via Regia*. Part I. *Dolny Slask*. Available online: [www.camino.net.pl](http://www.camino.net.pl).

more active on the international scene. On the other, the number and intensiveness of cross-border networks is increased. Both aspects are closely connected to the crisis of the territorial nation-state as an outcome of the new order of global production. The socio-spatial outcome of the globalization of production and capital should be understood as a reconfiguration of the hierarchy of geographical scales. The very phenomenon of geographical scale should be regarded as socially produced. Then globalization is the historical context where the urban scale becomes more important than the national scale. This means that currently cities become more active players within trans-national networks, while the function of territorial states is to enhance the place-specific competitive advantages of its urban centers.

The cooperation between German and Polish territorial units adjacent to the border, which started in 1990, was encouraged mainly by the European Union and was centered on the problem of infrastructural improvement, administrative transformation and the equalization of living conditions. Geographical uneven development between two countries also was one of the driving forces of trans-border business collaboration and had certain positive outcomes, such as the activation of formerly underused and underinvested areas. The organization of cultural events and trans-border exchanges should also be considered as an important aspect of the internationalization of border cities, since it can be the basis for the creation of a common cultural identity. In the case of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec the application of the twin-city for the status of European Capital of Culture 2010 was an important step in the process of trans-border cooperation. Moreover, being a certain strategy of the place-promotion of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as a new center of Europe, this attempt was expected to transform already constructed trans-border relations into economic, social and cultural benefits. This paper argues that the framework of globalization and European integration, and their outcomes, such as the growth of the autonomy of municipalities and their active participation in institutions and networks on supra-urban scales, give border cities a range of possibilities to formulate and perform their place-specific competitive advantages in different ways. More precisely, the case of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec shows that the planning of various hallmark events by border cities presupposes the active “production, reconfiguration or contestation of particular differentiations, orderings and hierarchies *among* geographical scales” (Brenner). Or, alternatively, these border cities mobilize different historical resources and different perceptions of the political border depending on the scale of the competition in which they are to participate.

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