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# “Taming” Borders. Actions Taken within the Border Areas in Selected European Twin Cities

## Abstract

The aim of the article is to show the changes that are currently taking place in the border areas of the selected twin cities. Rivers that are passing through those cities, according to the current pro-European integration trends, become their symbolic places. They support creating twin cities spaces of the new quality and organizing common plays and celebrations. Taking part in those events in the ethnically mixed groups encourages renewing contacts and establishing new ones between people on both sides of the border.

The paper will be illustrated by some examples of the activities that take place at border bridges and twin town river. Contemporary events and projects that weaken the role of the state border as a barrier will be also discussed. I will describe actions and initiatives that cause that border areas periodically function as the city centre and become a special area of intercultural relations.

**Keywords:** border, twin cities, European integration.

Every city's space is crossed by many different borders (Lynch 1969: 35). However, a state border running through the city indicates a specific situation. This paper will cover a particular category of borders running through the cities divided by a state border. For years, those cities have been the subject of interest of the representatives of different scientific disciplines. They are examined by social scientists, political scientists, historians, culture anthropologists, economists, town planners, linguistic scientists, population scientists, Europeanists and regionalists etc. Monographs which concern particular pairs of cities are valuable (see e.g.: Zenderowski 2002; Sikos & Tiner 2008; Kurcz 2009; Musiał-Karg 2009; Opilowska

2014). Findings from such case studies apply to comparative analyses aimed at the determination of features which distinguish cities divided by borders from between other types of cities (see e.g.: Buursink 1994; Schultz 2005; Joenniemi & Sergunin 2011). Given the research results from such reports, it is possible to determine disputes as to terminology, definitions, as well as to build typology and analyze factors that define similarities in the origin of such cities or difficulties of the processes of disappearing borders and reintegration of these cities, observed today (see e.g.: Sadowski 1996; Buursink 2001; Dębicki & Tomáska 2014; Zenderowski & Brzezińska 2014). Elaboration of theoretical framework for the research on this category of cities requires further performance of wide-ranging, interdisciplinary comparative studies.

The purpose of the hereby paper is to describe different activities organized mainly by local cultural institutions in the recent years. The activities took place within a border space of a few selected pairs of divided cities. The examples, which are going to be discussed here, lead to the formation of a question about their influence on the shift of the meaning of borders which, according to pro-European integrative tendencies, is supposed to become qualitatively a new space fostering cross-border communication. Reviewing various double-urban initiatives, which in recent years have helped the inhabitants to get used to a new function of European state borders, I will refer to the examples related to a few pairs of cities included in a table below. Apart from the names of the centers, the table contains also information about: approximate size of population, nationality, names of the rivers dividing given cities and the year of establishing the border between them.

Table 1. A list of chosen twinned cities, which are mentioned in the paper as examples of discussed frontier integration actions

No.	city A	city B	population city A ~	population city B ~	country A	country B	river	year of establishing the border between city A and B
1	Strasbourg	Kehl	273,000	34,000	France	Germany	Rhine	1697
2	Guben	Gubin	27,000	19,000	Germany	Poland	Nysa Łużycka	1945
3	Frankfurt/ Oder	Słubice	60,000	18,000	Germany	Poland	Oder	1945
4	Görlitz	Zgorzelec	55,000	31,000	Germany	Poland	Nysa Łużycka	1945
5	Bad Muskau	Łęknica	4,000	2,600	Germany	Poland	Nysa Łużycka	1945
6	Český Těšín	Cieszyn	26,000	36,000	Czech Republic	Poland	Olza	1920

Source: own elaboration.

I have been dealing with cities divided by state border since the beginning of my research work (Szalbot 2008, 2010). The purpose of the broader research project, implemented for a few years, is to determine the sociocultural nature of the municipal centers divided by a state border, as well as to seize the dynamics of transformation of identities of collective societies residing in those cities (Szalbot 2011). So far, I have been doing the anthropologically-oriented field research in the following twin-cities: Zgorzelec/Görlitz, Gubin/Guben, Słubice/Frankfurt n. Odra, Łęknica/Bad Muskau (Polish-German state border), Strasbourg/Kehl (French-German state border), Komárno/Komárom (Slovakian-Hungarian state border), Giurgiu/Ruse (Romanian-Bulgarian state border). On an everyday basis, however, I am concerned with my home city Cieszyn and the Czech Cieszyn located on the opposite bank of Olza river. This twin-city constitutes the subject area of systematic observations and research of mine, implemented with participation of ethnology students from the Department of Silesian University in Cieszyn. My research work is based on methods and tools for cultural anthropology: oral interview with field observation and survey. I have been gathering available existing sources concerning categories of cities of my interest, such as: archival materials, press releases, official reports and statements, personal documents and diaries etc. An additional field of research is also the virtual space, abounding in sources and comments on the topic of border cities which are the subject of my analysis based on netnographic approach (Kozinets 2012).

I would like to point out that this paper is an analysis of selected, and because of that, narrow aspects of currently taken actions in the cities divided by a border. It should be considered as a partial report of a research project which has been realized for a few years and which considers the socio-cultural specificity of frontier divided cities located in Central and Eastern Europe. The border generates certain processes and socio-cultural phenomena, that is why the frontier "dual-cities" constitute for an urban anthropologist an interesting cultural space from a research point of view. In this paper, activities taken in the border cities are determined on the basis of the understanding of the term of public space (see e.g.: Zieleniec 2002; Tonnelat 2013). Moreover, theoretical framework for the considerations constitute ideas previewing the dynamic evolution of the consumption society seeking amusement and entertainment (Ritzer 2001; Combs 2011). In the urban public space this tendency is reflected by the organization of festivals and other popular entertainment events as well as setting places to enjoy entertainment (Stevens 2007; Kuligowski 2013), which will be discussed further in more detail.

In this paper, I will use a few expressions, which indicate the cities divided by a state border. I have accepted for the working mode of this study Helga Schultz's point of view that the features distinguishing the cities being at issue, are: (1) direct vicinity (the distance amounts to 0 kilometers); (2) they are not separated by any empty space, except the river; (3) a river forms the course of a state border

which separates both cities; (4) before being divided by the border, the cities functioned as an administrative unity; (5) these cities are usually characterized by: inequality of resources, peripheral location, small size and these features form key drivers to establish cooperation with the center situated on the opposite bank of the river (Schultz 2005: 3–9).

Not so long ago a border line in most of the Central and Eastern Europe divided cities, remaining an isolated “nobody’s” space. Border crossing points were the places of official meetings. However, ordinary citizens did not have such an unrestricted access to them, as they have today. Crossing the border (for example “on pass”) has left a vivid mark in the memory of the older generation. Its representatives, still feel and perceive the border space differently, unlike the present generation of 20-year-olds. Today, the border still holds on to its characteristics as an “unusual” space. Apart from the fact that crossing the borders became recently much more simplified, actions taken within the border line are an additional factor influencing its perception and increasing appreciation by the inhabitants of this part of the city. For the citizens of frontier twinned cities, the border is continuously becoming an everyday neutral or even positively valued part of space. And it’s not just the urban promotional folders which focus the attention on its uniqueness and touristic attractiveness.

In the region of Central and Eastern Europe, sides of boundary rivers, flowing between the cities located in neighboring countries, which once had been closely guarded, recently become their symbolic places. Metaphorically speaking, they are more often transformed into building/conversion sites of contemporary Europe. In addition, they are an important part of a double-urban spatial land use. The photograph below, taken in Frankfurt/Oder in July, 2011, shows a border post, situated on the German side of the river. Around the post – not surprisingly for anyone today – the works are conducted, which are connected with arrangement of another place aimed at recreation and leisure of Frankfurt/Oder and Słubice cities.

Along with an ongoing expansion of the borders for individual European divided cities, favorable conditions appeared for preparation of different cross-border projects as well as cultural and entertainment events. Joint celebration of different double-urban ceremonies and parties – most often in mixed and binational groups – for which the hedonistically-focused urban consumer society shows an increasing demand, aims to change frontier relationships. In divided cities, one can distinguish a group of events, which are feasible to be organized and which fulfil their purpose pretty much only within border area. The purpose of these initiatives arises from assigning them to these parts of a double-city space, which the undivided centers simply do not have. This group of events includes: any festivals, parties, sporting events, and other mostly playfully-characterized double-urban undertakings, the concept of which refers to the presence of a border space in these pairs of cities.



Picture 1. Frankfurt, Oder quay, view on Słubice city (phot. M. Szalbot, 9<sup>th</sup> June, 2011)

The part of the border dividing and, at the same time, connecting the centers is a suitable place for organizing joint integrative events. For example, the roads on both sides of the river connected with a border bridge, are attractive for street runs, bicycle races, marches, Nordic walking, etc., which gain through this an international character. Border bridges still function as places of official meetings of both cities' governmental and local representatives, and even of organizing concerts, theatrical performances and implementing informal inhabitants' initiatives. They are also – what is seen through the events from 2004 and December 2007 – a proper setting to celebrate joining the European Union or the Schengen zone of one or both double-urban members.

The sides of border rivers in double-urban cities also constitute a proper background for different kinds of events, sport competitions and cultural events. These cross-border events organized for the communities from both sides of the river elicit a new meaning of the border. Thanks to them, the inhabitants not only accomplish its symbolic "adaptation", but also have a chance to notice that the route of the state border which distinguishes their city acts as a real catalyst for multi-cultural events and undertakings creating an attractive tourist destination.

## Strasbourg and Kehl

The case of the first discussed pair of cities, situated on a French-German border, is atypical and stands out from other “twins” included in the above table. Due to a large French population of this double-city, a relatively distant date for setting the border on the Rhine and historical connections between these centers, this example does not fully comply with the original criteria concerning the belonging to the described category. Despite these objections, it was taken into consideration – not mistakenly as a first one – because it gives the possibility to analyze the assumptions on which the standard cross-border public space called “the Garden of Two Banks” is based (Lipowsky & Heck 2005).

The idea of connecting the French and German riverside with a revitalized green area appeared in 1995. The axis of the completed in 2004 garden is a footbridge designed by Marc Mimar. The project idea was to bring together the French and German nations. Just by the Rhine River, a “privileged” public double-city space with a symbolic meaning appeared. The undertaking was about: the change of meaning of this place, revalorizing the riversides and creating a space for “cultural continuity”. Within the area of the park, divided by the Rhine river, the previously mentioned footbridge for pedestrians and cyclists adjusted also for the needs of disabled is located, as well as hectares of generally available lawn, walking routes, playgrounds, places allowing to play different sports, a podium used while holding cultural events, observation towers, places assuring safe access to the river, rose garden, volleyball pitches, a skate park and many other facilities used for leisure, play and recreation. According to internet sources, such well-equipped and revalorized urban border space by the river, is an eagerly visited place by the tourists and inhabitants from both banks of the Rhine. The aim of the authors of the French-German garden concept was to create a place of rest, leisure, sharing pleasure, celebrating and everyday social life. As the description taken from the website says, the garden by the Rhine is supposed to symbolically provide the space of “friendship and European cooperation”, “the bridge between two banks and two countries, which for a long time remained in enmity”, “allowing to overcome II World War heritage”. “The Garden of Two Banks” additionally has to be “a symbol of European construction” and “a space for meetings and exchange between the inhabitants of two cities”.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://culture-routes.net/fr/news/la-passerelle-mimram-et-le-jardin-des-deux-rives> (access: 16.08.2011).

## Guben and Gubin

A similar cross-border space aimed at recreation and leisure activities for the inhabitants of frontier centers, arises or is being prepared in a few other twinned cities. Polish Gubin and German Guben, running on both sides of Nysa Łużycka, have been one organism since 1945 (Kaczmarek 2001: 369). For the authorities of Gubin and Guben, reaching the decision about implementation of the project "Eurocities" in 1996 constituted a continuation of previous cooperation (Lisiecki 1999: 487–488). Recent plans concerning the establishment of common Gubin-Guben qualitatively new cultural spaces, have been achieved with three elements: assigning a new function to Theatrical Island situated between the centers developing banks of Nysa according to the assumption of the projects "Park of Bridges" and "the Garden of Two Banks" as well as renovation of the old town within the city of Gubin.<sup>2</sup> Theatrical Island, which was wracked during II World War, was unavailable for the Poles and Germans during the 1990s. In 2000, a Polish-German concept of managing the island was developed. This area, situated between two centers, seemed to be a suitable place for setting – partially available now – playgrounds, walking routes and cafés, beer gardens and other typically urban attractions intended for leisure activities. Due to its location just by the border bridge, Theatrical Island has become – equally to the border bridge connecting two main walkways of both cities – a common showcase of Gubin and Guben (Guz-Vetter 2002: 108).

## Frankfurt/Oder and Słubice

The cooperation in the fields of spatial planning and setting the cross-border public spaces can be noticed also in the example of Słubice and Frankfurt/Oder. Daily and festive cross-border practices described in promotional materials of the cities<sup>3</sup> – with the use of slightly different terminology and set of metaphors with similar meaning – duplicate already described examples. They confirm the existence of certain schemes, according to which, an area for mainly recreational purposes is designed. The axis of cultural and spatial connection between Słubice and Frankfurt – just like in cases of other described pairs of cities – is formed by a border river and elements accompanying it such as an island, riversides and urban centers situated in the near distance. Integrated spatial development of the divided with border dual organism, discloses the inspiring influence of "the Garden of Two Banks" project. The center of "European Garden", running along the riverside

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<sup>2</sup> See: <http://www.guben-gubin-2030.de> (access: 15.09.2015).

<sup>3</sup> See e.g.: <https://www.frankfurt.pl/poczatek> (access: 11.05.2011); <https://www.facebook.com/S%C5%82ubice-Frankfurt-jedno-miasto-690171241030076/> (access: 20.12.2016).

of the frontier river, is the island of Ziegenwerder belonging to the German part of the city. Setting up “the Garden of Two Banks” aims to “improve the relaxation and recreational conditions as well as increase aesthetics of both cities”. Together with the riverside, Słubice and Frankfurt island functions as “common, green center”, in the form of “open near-Oder scenery” without borders” (Romiszewska 1996: 238).

## Zgorzelec and Görlitz

Similar plans for the establishment of space, which aim at integrating frontier cities, were documented during my field studies performed in the Polish city of Zgorzelec and German Görlitz in 2010. According to conversations with the representatives of local authorities including Deputy Major of Zgorzelec<sup>4</sup> and materials promoting double-cities projects published in minor circulation,<sup>5</sup> Zgorzelec and Görlitz have a specifically formulated – but not dynamically realized – concept of spatial development of the Polish-German border line along Nysa. The main theme of these two cities’ integrating plan is the project called “Park of Bridges”. The idea of connecting urban riverside covering the distance of two kilometers, with seven bridges demolished during the war, seems to be obvious, knowing the history of this center. The plan to establish a communication link can be compared – using the metaphor of the architect involved in implementing the discussed urban project Piotr Pańłowicz – to knitting the broken arm, which does not progress quite correctly. That is why in the place of rupture – an implant in the form of bridges – is needed. Creating additional footbridges across Nysa Łużycka is supposed to create a situation in which “what until now was between Zgorzelec and Görlitz, but was situated on their outskirts, will become their new center.” The aim of this project is to constitute new area available for the inhabitants from Polish and German sides of the border, the functional scope of which will be focused on free time, leisure and play. The bridges connecting riversides aim at creating the network of trails leading to museums, galleries, cafés, parks, playgrounds and other daily meeting places situated on both sides of Polish-German border. The new center “Europe-Cities” is also supposed to be an area of “practicing bilingualism”, from which both the Poles and the Germans are supposed to draw benefits. “Riversides, neglected for years, are to become (...) cultural center of Europe-

<sup>4</sup> An interview with the Deputy Mayor of Zgorzelec – Mr. Radosław Baranowski in the Municipal Council on 5 July 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Information booklets: *Miasto 2030 – wspólna wizja rozwojowa Europa-Miasta Zgorzelec/Görlitz* (CD); *Miasto 2030. Przyszłość Europa – Miasta Zgorzelec/Görlitz; Park Mostów Nysa. Międzynarodowy warsztat w dniach 19–23 lutego 2004 r. w Görlitz i Zgorzelcu na temat utworzenia artystycznej koncepcji ogólnej Parku Mostów Nysa; Zgorzelec – Görlitz 1945–1998; Prezentacja koncepcji ramowej „Europejskiej Stolicy Kultury” Radzie Miasta Zgorzelec na sesji w dniu 28.11.2003 przez Petera Baumgardta, Dyrektora Biura Projektu Europejskiej Stolicy Kultury.*

Cities, places of Polish-German meetings, communication and exchange." The project is to work as a showcase catalyst for cultural transfer (Brol & Brol, information booklet).

## Łęknica and Bad Muskau

The other pair of cities from the border areas of Poland and Germany – Łęknica and Bad Muskau, situated by Nysa Łużycka, are characterized by two media images. For the Poles it is a market operating just behind the bridge, while for the Germans – Mużakowski Park with well-preserved old town. The prospect of establishing a new qualitatively cross-boundary space depends mainly on the presence of before mentioned park. Stretching out on both sides of the frontier river, the park is said to be the biggest park representing an English style both in Poland and Germany. After the war, it was abandoned and fell into ruin. In 2004, the right- and left-bank part of the park were connected by a bridge, which serves as a starting point in discovering an important aspect of identity for these frontier pair of cities. Regeneration together with providing new functions to the park includes establishing and connecting cycling paths running through the cities. A landscape park situated in the center of these cities, connected with a footbridge, is becoming a non-imposed space and, finally, a space of non-trade contacts of the locals and tourists from both sides of the border (Parowicz 2003: 211–220).

Mużakowski Park has for only a short period of time been – as said by Izabella Parowicz – “one of its kind historical garden”, due to its location on the Polish-German border, constituting an area of cross-border cooperation “in the field of the cultural landscape conservation”. After 1945, Nysa Łużycka, flowing through Mużakowski Park, which became a border river, separated two sides of the park which once were a whole. The inhabitants of the German city started to appreciate the cultural and economic value of the park, which since 1955 has been fully protected. At the same time, migrant population from the Eastern Borderlands settling down in the eastern part of the city, which after the end of the war obtained its name as Łęknica, treated Polish part of the park as a regular forest, and local administration did not counteract its proceeding devastation.

On the Polish side, this relic of the garden art (or rather only elements that remained) was considered as a fully protected natural reserve as late as in 1965. Over the past decades, the park fell into ruin. Only in 1999 the German and Polish preservation services took measures to renovate it. However, in the beginning it was difficult to convince proper authorities and services in Łęknica about the meaning of the costly renovation works. As recently as in the 1990s, the inhabitants of Łęknica who would make their living mainly from frontier trade, did not notice a huge potential of the park. Not only from the point of view of the German and Polish services dealing with renovating the park, is the area an indivisible

whole. Polish-German agreements reached after 1993 concerning cooperation, assuming restoring the original quality to this place, began to gain ever-greater approval. The cooperation of Polish and German experts was awarded in November, 1999 with honorable UNESCO prize for their efforts in recreating the 19<sup>th</sup> century layout of the park, which contributed to the increase in tourist attractiveness of the whole region, improvement of both cities' image and, in a long-term perspective, achievement which can affect the economic development of both destinations (Parowicz 2003: 220).

## Cieszyn and Český Těšín

Further part of the paper describes the examples of Cieszyn and Český Těšín inhabitants' non-trade contacts places and common Cieszyn-Český Těšín integrative undertakings initiated by local authorities and various organizations and associations, which refer to the motif of the border dividing both cities based on the field studies of these cities, many years' systematic observations, press reports and informants' reports. The review of initiatives taken in chosen frontier dual cities shows that a state border running through such centers encourages local government and other formal and informal groups to design and realize different unconventional actions. The example of both cities of Cieszyn confirms these regularities as well. Thanks to this, the inhabitants – either as participants or only as observers of the organized events – “familiarize themselves” with new ways of exploiting the border line. Such experiences undoubtedly influence the way of perceiving and placing emphasis on this exceptional part of space, which constitutes the property of both cities.

The period from which the examples of implemented projects come from, thrived in undertakings the aim of which was to constitute different cross-border spaces of Polish-Czech integration. I am aware that analyzing below described Cieszyn-Český Těšín initiatives only from the perspective of Polish-Czech relations is a relative simplification. The example of this center, divided in 1920, which for a long time was the capital of the Cieszyn Silesia with a peculiar culture, is specific and distinguishes itself from other cities taken into consideration. However, considering objectives of the article stressed in the introduction, it will be analyzed in the same way as previously described examples.

During the post-war era, the number of bridges connecting Cieszyn and Český Těšín did not change. In the 1970s, there was a footbridge between the Bridge of Freedom and the Bridge of Friendship. It was later destroyed during the time of an excessive water rise. The political climate of Polish and Czech relations was not conducive to perform the reconstruction. In the 1990s, the number of bridges returned to the baseline thanks to the opening of a modern road crossing-point situated far from the city center, in the part of Cieszyn called Boguszowice. How-

ever, the idea of communication connection of both city centers was still alive and came back in public debates from time to time.

I wrote more on the distortions concerning a plan to build a new bridge based on a design by a French architect François Roche elsewhere (Szalbot 2009). Although the project was not carried out, an interesting form of promotion of this additional bridge's construction, in a place where some years back there had been the said footbridge, destroyed by flood, is worth mentioning. In summer of 2004, during the "Era Nowe Horyzonty" Film Festival, an additional border crossing was opened for three hours. Employees of the company organising "climbing" events would clip volunteers to a rope and pull them to the other bank of the Olza river. Satisfied Festival guests regretted that the Olza river was not a little bit wider... Tourists would slide down the rope to the other bank of the Olza river, and then come back through a rope bridge. The aim of that happening was to show that a bridge, according to Roche's project, built in that particular place, would create the shortest route between the squares of the two cities.

In the summer of the same year, the inaugural concert of the 13<sup>th</sup> edition of the "Viva il Canto" International Festival of Vocal Music was organised on the Friendship Bridge. In the organisers' opinion "it was an extreme media event. Some journalists were not interested in either performances or performers, but rather in the fact that the CONCERT [would take place – author's note] ON THE BRIDGE", a border bridge. It was not the first concert within the festival organised in an unusual venue. However, a coverage in the local papers emphasised that it was the first concert to draw over 600 people in the audience, mainly from Cieszyn and Český Těšín, at the border crossing. That evening, music enthusiasts from both sides of the Olza river sat in the audience under the border bridge (not existing anymore) on the Czech side and in front of the stage set up behind the barrier on the Polish side. Thus – as journalists put it – they listened to the concert which took place in two cities and countries at the same time (*Muzyka nie zna granic*, "Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie", 27/08/2004: 4).

Another event intentionally organised right at the border river in November of 2004 was a "baptism" ("chrzest") in the Olza river of a CD with music pieces composed for the play entitled: *Cieszyńskie niebo*. Czech border guards – still present there at that time – ceremonially aspersed the CD.

In 2005, a part of the border Olza near the Friendship Bridge became – after appropriate conversion works – a venue for an open-air musical and dancing performance entitled *Olza* and directed by Leszek Wronka. The transition of a small part of the quayside on both sides of the river into an outdoor theatre showed a new sense of all elements constituting the border space between the centres of the two cities. During the three evening performances, a unique atmosphere and "special effects" were provided by the river itself, reflecting spotlights and fireworks. A metal structure of the stage set up on the Polish riverbank opened out into a jetty. Actors were within reach of the audience erected on the left bank and

intended for 1,380 people. For a few days, between Cieszyn and Český Těšín an additional bridge – “cultural bridge” (“most kultury”) – as described by the media, was established, symbolically joining the Polish and the Czech part of the city (*Trzy dni zabawy*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 18/06/2005: 2). On the days of the performance, the bridge and the two opposite river banks were full of people, for those places served those spectators who did not buy the audience tickets as a public balcony in “the theatre on water”.

The audience erected for the purpose of the said performance, which currently is covered with grass and is used as a meeting place by groups of young people and strollers, is still engaged, from time to time, as a venue for other Polish-Czech open-air events. For example, in 2009 during the 9<sup>th</sup> “Kino na granicy” Film Festival, a screening of a film entitled: “Muzyka”, took place. Czechs, Poles, citizens of Zaolzie and perhaps – representants of other groups living in both cities – sat on concrete steps on the Czech side to see the film on an outdoor screen set up on the Polish side of the border (*Zobacz film przez Olzę*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 30/04/2009: 7).

The example of the two Cieszyn cities shows that within the considered category of cities many actions and projects refer to a border theme. In this sampling review of the most interesting cross-border Cieszyn events of the recent years, I intentionally limit myself in giving examples of only those happening in open-air – directly in the areas co-creating the border line. Even if some of them are of a niche or chargeable nature and attract a relatively small number of those interested, then the fact that they take place outdoors makes them visible to communities of both cities. Even casual passers-by can observe that “there is something going on at the border again”.

Symbolic connection of two banks of the Olza river at the turn of June and July 2006 was a special artistic initiative. The project was carried out by Grzegorz Majchrowski who initiated stretching of two kilometres of a blue banner material between trees on both sides of the border river. By doing so he symbolically connected two cities and countries. By “stitching” Cieszyn and Český Těšín we “are physically blurring the border. We connect people, cities, countries”; “I symbolically join an indivisible land. I decorate the river – the jewel of the divided city” – in such a way Majchrowski interpreted the sense and aim of the entire project (*Chrupki i wódka w galerii*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 14/07/2006: 8; *Incydenty – Zabliźnianie*, “Wiadomości Ratuszowe”, 30/06/2006: 4). Perhaps not all subtleties of the project’s message reached the “ordinary” residents travelling between the cities, but the appearance of such an extraordinary installation could not have gone unnoticed.

The establishment of the border in 1920 on the Olza river flowing through Cieszyn, had from the outset an influence on the remaining elements of the city infrastructure within the border line. After World War I, banks of the Olza river had a neutral, “park” character, showing the increased defense readiness condi-

tion. Before the city was divided, in today's Český Těšín, there was "Avion" coffeehouse and restaurant, right outside the Friendship Bridge, which played the role of one of the centres of cultural and social life in the indivisible city. In 1939, the damaged building of "Avion", belonging to a Jewish family, was demolished by the Germans. After World War II, the coffeehouse and restaurant was not rebuilt. There was no demand for such a place, because only few people could cross the border. In 2011, on the Czech quayside of the Olza river, a coffeehouse was opened being the reconstruction of the pre-war "Avion". The border river, bridge and historic Castle Hills on the Polish side can be observed from the coffeehouse terrace. The attractiveness of the coffeehouse is not only due to its history interweaving with the history of the city, but most of all it is due to its localisation. Observations made in other divided cities indicate that setting up a restaurant business right after a bridge with a view on a border river and a neighbouring city is a common practice.

In recent years, the surroundings of the border Friendship Bridge between Cieszyn and Český Těšín have changed their appearance, scope of functions and character. A renovation of the Czech seat of the "Śląsk Cieszyński-Těšínské Slezsko" Euroregion, located right at the border bridge, the unattractive shape of which was brought to life by fresh plasterwork in EU colours, which took place some time ago, attests the efforts to improve the aesthetics of this part of the city. A dismantlement of – at first – border guards' green booths, and then the shelter roofing the border bridge – also changed the character of this place. Putting aside plates on the Friendship Bridge, informing passers-by/drivers that they have just walked/driven into not only the other city, but also the neighbouring country, the Friendship Bridge between the two Cieszyn cities – especially in the light of day – has come to look like thousands of ordinary bridges, connecting parts of the indivisible city, which for centuries has developed itself on both sides of the river without any major obstacles. Only the evening hours unveil the border character of the bridge. You can notice tourists not only taking pictures on the border bridge with a Cieszyn or Český Těšín plate in the background, but also willingly taking pictures near the violet-blue backlight recently built in the pavement of the bridge, precisely indicating the border line.

To conclude the description of the functional and aesthetic changes to the Friendship Bridge and its nearest surroundings that have taken place in the recent years, further plans concerning the buildings inherited by the city from the border service which have been the subject of the public debate for some time now, are also worth mentioning. In 2005 in a Czech Cieszyn daily paper an article was placed entitled: *Jak zagospodarować przejścia graniczne?* (How to develop border crossings?), in which it was stated that an ordinary resident was familiar with a vision of shopping at the border itself. Residents of the borderline had been interested in that matter for a long time, namely whether empty premises would

“convert into exclusive restaurants – or – marketplaces with cheap eastern clothing” (*Kelner zamiast celnika*, “Głos Ludu”, 13/01/2005: 1).

In recent years the biggest changes have taken place in the area of the border crossing on the Friendship Bridge. A building located vis-à-vis the reconstructed “Avion”, which locals mischievously call an “aquarium”, with its aesthetics – unfortunately – stands out from the surroundings. When border controls ceased, its premises were used for various purposes. In a place where, not so long ago, documents necessary to cross the border had been checked, people travelling between the two cities could respectively i.a.: do the shopping in Polish zlotys or Czech crowns in a supermarket, purchase craftwork pieces in a souvenir shop which had functioned for a relatively short time, choose pushchairs or child safety seats or take part in meetings of the members of the “na Granicy” Political Criticism Clubhouse. Size, localisation and shape of the building prompt a discussion on how to fully exploit the potential of this place. Few years back, there was a discussion in press on an idea to convert the custom booths into quick service bars with a view at the Olza river. Utterances of persons quoted in one of the press articles included arguments that so used infrastructure could become a very interesting tourist attraction. As in the case of the “aquarium”, in connection with attempts to obtain EU funding for the modernisation of the building, postulates were called for the building not to be demolished but to be converted into Border Crossings Museum (*Zmodernizować czy wyburzyć?*, “Głos Ziemi Cieszyńskiej”, 16/06/2012: 3).

Ideas from local authorities, institutions, cultural associations and local entrepreneurs on how to develop elements of border infrastructure reveal an influence of market mechanisms and seem to indicate urban community’s preferences in respect of consumption and entertainment. Within the last several years, the border bridge and its surroundings have been converted from an inaccessible place into an element of a commercial pedestrian street shared by the two cities and serving commercial and touristic functions.

The most recent project carried out on the Cieszyn border line is “SportPark-Park Sportowy”, put into use in 2012. Development of “Pod Wałką” Park on the Polish side and revitalisation of Adam Sikora Park on the Czech side, which was established almost 100 years ago, were elements of this cross-border project. People could familiarise themselves with effects of another stage of changes in appearance of this part of the border during an open-air event called: The opening of the summer season in a sport park “Pod Wałką”, which was held on 24 June 2012 on Sunday afternoon. Beautiful weather and free of charge entrance to the event attracted residents of both cities to the banks of the Olza river. Their arrival in great numbers attests that there is a demand for a good development of urban recreation areas. In the “SportPark” project, a motif for cooperation and complementary development of both cities was clearly underlined. Free parking for over 160 cars and two coaches, which is a supporting area of the complex, on working days seems like a waste of free space. However, during the mentioned inaugural event it turned out to be too small.

The Polish side of the recreation and sport area includes: walking and cycling tracks, modernised play area, fitness trails, renovated “Olza” camp-site, which prior to that had not been used for a long time, picnic areas, twin cities plaza, resembling an island on the border Olza, three sports grounds – including a multifunctional sports ground with an artificial surface, tartan basketball court, sand court for beach volleyball and a modernised kayak pond with a jetty. On the other hand the Czech side makes available a play area, harbour, artificial lake, sports ground, restaurant and a cycling route along the Olza river.

Recently the two areas described above have become a one whole due to a sport footbridge, officially put into use on 6 June 2012, which is called the third border bridge between Cieszyn and Český Těšín. Plates saying Cieszyn/Český Těšín and The Republic of Poland/Česká republika, put up like on the other two, remind of its border character. The footbridge can be used by walkers, bikers, roller-skaters and disabled persons on wheel-chairs. Residents did not have to wait until 6 June for the opening of the 100 metres long pink footbridge designed by a Czech architect. Before it was officially put into service, entrance to the built footbridge had been fenced for some time from both sides of the border. Before the opening, however, you could see that residents on their own initiative had partially removed the fence and begun to use the footbridge according to its intended purpose.

Mayors of the two cities located on the sides of the Olza river opened the footbridge and unanimously expressed a wish for the next footbridge not only to connect the banks of the river, but also to remind of the “friendship and unity” connecting both cities. Mayor of Cieszyn reminded that for years bridges on the Olza river had divided. That day they became friendly, blended in the architecture of the city, functional, modern – and what was important – connected with a certain vision of development of those two centres. Mayor of Český Těšín emphasised, on the other hand, that the pink footbridge was built in a place where there had never been a bridge. Due to the footbridge, those parts of Cieszyn and Český Těšín which had not been developing too dynamically during the last years, were connected (*Most sportowy oficjalnie otwarty!*, “Wiadomości Ratuszowe”, 22/06/2012: 10; *W kosa pod Wałką*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 7/09/2011: 8; *Łukiem przez Olzę*, “Głos Ziemi Cieszyńskiej” 8/06/2012: 2).

Both cities joined their forces to apply for EU funding to finance the construction of the new bridge, which cost over 1.8 millions Euro. The investment would not have been possible if Poland and the Czech Republic had not acceded to the European Union, and later the Schengen Area. The Czech side was the lead partner in carrying out the project, which also played the role of the host on the day of the official opening of the bridge. Whereas Cieszyn authorities – under the Polish-Czech partnership agreement – undertook to perform some of the works on the Polish side (*Mamy kolejny most nad Olzą. Rolkarze się cieszą*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 8/06/2012: 3). It is already clear that the new crossing will make it easier for residents to enjoy this extensive complex, stretching along both

sides of the Olza river. Both banks of the border river will be, to a greater extent than before, an urban recreation area in shared use. It follows from the above that authorities of Cieszyn and Český Těšín, according to their capabilities, drawing on the example of the French-German twin city, intend to create a “bridge park” and a “garden of two banks” at the Olza river.

It may be reminded here that already in the 1970s projects were created, concerning the connection of Cieszyn and Český Těšín via the border area. Mirosława Pindór states that between 1963 and 1967 mutual Polish-Czech propositions of specific urban projects appeared, aiming to develop the area at the Olza river. The quoted author says that those ideas “even from the perspective of the 1990s, considered very bold, going repeatedly beyond our imagination as to the possibility of integrating Cieszyn with the Czech Cieszyn, remained only – following the events of August 1968 – a goal to be achieved. Similarly the idea for an international urban planning competition, regarding the future vision of the cities, had never been materialised”. In the Polish project a vision birthed of a closer urban planning connection of both cities by closing the Olza river in the section from the Friendship Bridge to the Liberty Bridge, thus creating an attractive boulevard. It was planned to build joint recreational facilities, community centre with an astronomical observatory, theatre, which would serve residents of both cities, joint exhibition gallery, an ampitheatre. Many joint technical and communication solutions were proposed. The idea for the “competition” was somewhat embodied in a Karol Cieślár’s thesis entitled: *Zdynamizowana przestrzeń linearna Cieszyn – Czeski Cieszyn*, from 1979, defended on the Faculty of Architecture of the Silesian University of Technology. That matter was again considered in the period between June and September 1990 during an exhibition under the title *Sedmdesát let mesta Českeho Těšina (...), held at (...) The Museum of the Cieszyn Land* (Pindór 2006: 52–53, 90). Comparison of the plans created in the 1970s with what have been achieved in the recent years shows that the idea to connect both cities via the border still has the same grounds.

To conclude I will give a few more examples of Cieszyn-the Czech Cieszyn events held within the border line. Since 1990 the border has been “domesticated” by events of a ludic character, organised within its area – as in the case of other twin cities. Convincing that further planning of activities taking into account the open border area in the cities located at the Olza river is logical, seems pointless. They give a particular colouration to both cities and make them touristically attractive.

Especially the Friendship Bridge, situated between the centres of the two cities, periodically becomes a scenery for entertainment of a great number of residents arriving from both sides of the border. An example of an event celebrated jointly on the border crossing by residents of the twin cities, was a celebration of the accession of Poland and the Czech Republic to the European Union. Local press informed that “Official [celebrations – author’s note] were held on 1 May in the af-

ternoon on the Friendship Bridge. Residents of Cieszyn came to the border crossing from one side and residents of the Czech Cieszyn from the other, and in the middle they fell into each other's arms. Then the Mayors (...) symbolically raised the barriers and runned the EU flag up the mast. We are together again – the residents cheered.” Jerzy Buzek – member of the European Parliament from Cieszyn Silesia, who was also present that day at the border crossing in Cieszyn, said with an emotion: “Now, there will be one Cieszyn again. (...) I would like today's meeting to change into true friendship and openness. (...) Here, in my homeland in Cieszyn Silesia we have a small Europe” (*Podnieśliśmy szlabany*, “Dziennik Zachodni w Cieszynie”, 7/05/2004: 3).

“The Three Brothers Festival”, perhaps the most strongly connected with Cieszyn, is another example of a regular twin cities event. At first, only residents of the Polish side of the city took part in this festival. Only with the time passing it has converted into a joint Polish-Czech event. “The Three Brothers Festival” relates to the legend on the origins of the city. For many years people have had an opportunity to celebrate the above at the border bridge by taking part i.a. in a collective consumption of a Polish-Czech roulade or in a city feast.

Mainly bridges on the Olza river are those elements of the river border line of the Cieszyn twin cities, which since the 1990s has regularly become an area of Polish-Czech contacts. During my studies I have documented cases, in which the bridges connecting the two Cieszyn cities are the areas for the realisation of joint events, trying to bring about a situation where residents of the Polish and Czech side participating in an event will neutralise their border character by establishing a “ludic community”. As in the case of other divided cities, bridges on the Olza river become from time to time a place of marches of: colourful parades of groups participating in the “International Theatre Festival”, which has been organised for many years, children dressed up like a boogeyman, taking part in the open-air event “the Castle Hills Scares”, a fragment of a stage during the international road bicycle race “Tour de Pologne”, an open-air theatre or cinema gallery on the water, or a place for a collective consumption of several dozen metres long roulade prepared for “the Three Brothers Festival”, etc.

Initiatives of the twin cities, the main leitmotive or scenery of which is the border line, can be currently considered as a type of a local Cieszyn tradition. Making the border an element of the public space shared by the two Cieszyn cities as well as a part of joint cross-border cultural and leisure events, neutralises – even if only periodically – the awareness of the division of these two cities into two independent centres.

## Conclusions

Establishing of the described cross-border areas as well as arranging the mentioned actions, which are to encourage non-commercial communication between residents of the twin cities, make it clear that in the current Europe borders, which not so long ago served most of all as barriers, can now be regarded as a ground for “taming” groups in conflict over cross-border history and having wrong perception of one another. The ways these areas are managed as well as regular provision of opportunities for residents of both river banks to meet, not only refer to the idea of integration but also result from the knowledge about likings and expectations of members of a modern urban community seeking attractive places connected with consumption, entertainment and tourism. Studies show that majority of residents of twin cities not only is aware of events, described briefly in this article, and endorses the idea of integration as the motivation for these events, but also willingly participates in them.

In comparison to often high-sounding slogans on European integration, which as we all know encounters many obstacles in everyday life, creating opportunities to meet regularly to participate in consumption or in ludic activities in the same, beefed-up places in the twin cities, can be a major step on the way to mutual acceptance and agreement in selected areas of social life.

During recent years a lot of focus and funds were placed on implementing projects and actions aimed at European integration. A part of them was connected with establishing places for the purpose of recreation and leisure activities in frontier dual cities. Institutions sponsoring these kinds of actions are guided by the idea promoted by European Union, that proper shaping of parts of divided cities' space adjoining to the border, can be the factor enabling easier meetings of the communities living in the centers. Local authorities of certain frontier double-cities felt entitled to take actions leading to a more thoughtful creation of existing spaces, which foster the communication of the closest foreign neighbors. In many cities situated “aside” the border, planning and implementing the project is observed, e.g. in order to improve communication between these centers and the complementary development of their infrastructure and aesthetics. Comparison of a few pairs of such cities, shows that the spaces used e.g. for leisure activities and these connected with tourism and recreation, are designed in a very similar way. Aforementioned relation is a result of specific conditions prevailing in the frontier twinned cities. Implementing various cross-border projects is reflected in the creation of qualitatively better double-cities' public spaces. On the one hand, they are supposed to symbolically express the idea of integrated Europe, on the other – serve the practical objectives in everyday life for the inhabitants.

Creating various cross-border spaces in the centers is usually a result of spatial planning common strategy developed by local authorities of individual pairs of cities. Looking for new solutions is not limited to implementing the ideas of

professionals hired to come up with them. It also depends on activating the communities from both sides of the border, which during various contests and discussions (e.g. in social media), share their ideas and remarks connected with creating places for the purpose of leisure activities performed in a mixed group. It does not only concern improving communication between the centers being on the cities' border and those located in a close distance. The element of spatial structure of twinned centers, which enables the design of places incorporated in a program to create integrated double cities, is the border itself. Components which are the parts of the border space, such as: river, sometimes an island, riversides and bridges in frontier double-cities, periodically fulfill a function of a double-urban center, a peculiar "spine" of a dual facility and a catalyst for various cross-border initiatives.

The process of disappearing borders and reintegration of cities divided by borders is supported by different activities taken by the twin-city, with the border line as the leading motif or scenery. The positive direction of such transformations will be proved if, in the course of time, such events become a local tradition celebrated together by communities residing in the area of the opposite river banks of the two cities. The border, which is the common part of the public space of such pair of cities as well as the catalyst of the twin-city trans-border undertakings, makes a contribution to start time-consuming and systematic processes of disappearing borders and reintegration.

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