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Veröffentlichungsversion / Published Version

Zeitschriftenartikel / journal article

#### Empfohlene Zitierung / Suggested Citation:

Liubimau, S. (2017). Relating bordering and scaling in qualitative urban research: the case of a Polish-German trans-border revitalization project. *Europa Regional*, 24.2016(1/2), 35-49. <https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:0168-ssoar-54418-3>

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# Relating Bordering and Scaling in Qualitative Urban Research: The Case of a Polish-German Trans-Border Revitalization Project

SIARHEI LIUBIMAU

## **Abstract**

In recent scholarship, state border areas and trans-border conditions are increasingly often conceptualized and discussed from the perspective of approaches to geographical scales as dynamic processes, rather than as given pre-defined structures. This article's aim is to systematize such existing conceptualizations and to assess their potential for studying a particularly localized urbanization process. The qualitative case study of the revitalization of the Neisse suburb on the Polish side of the German-Polish border town Goerlitz-Zgorzelec is analyzed in this paper in order to argue for a key role of built environments in the process of change of socio-geographical scalar formation induced by EU enlargement and the change of border regime. I describe and interpret the traits of the Zgorzelec Neisse Suburb as a new spatial unit enabled by the broader EU-25 scalar regime. The interpreted empirical material is taken from qualitative interviews with actors involved in spatial planning and in cultural trans-border cooperation projects crucial for the analyzed spatial unit, and from fieldwork observations conducted in Goerlitz-Zgorzelec between 2007 and 2009. This paper consists of two steps. The first step is an overview of existing research on processes of scalar change in border regions. Here, I reconstruct existing attempts to coordinate and apply the terms of bordering and scaling in connection to the empirical realities of EU border areas. I demonstrate that in such studies more attention should be paid to the meanings and functions of built environments activated in the course of cross-border exchanges. As a second step, I present a case study of the revitalization of the Neisse suburb after EU enlargement in 2004 and develop a methodological category of a professional scalar stance. This category is used as a guiding principle to gather data on socio-geographical change in the border areas and to interpret scales and logics of practical integration of the built environments of trans-border towns.

*Politics of scale; revitalization; built environment; professional scalar stance; border regime; scalar formation; Goerlitz-Zgorzelec*

## **Zusammenfassung**

### **Beziehung zwischen Grenzziehung und skalaren Strategien in der qualitativen Stadtforschung: Ein grenzübergreifendes polnisch-deutsches Neubelebensprojekt**

In der neueren Forschung werden Grenzgebiete und grenzübergreifende Bedingungen aus der Perspektive geopolitischer Maßstäbe oft als dynamische Prozesse aufgefasst und diskutiert, statt als bestehende vorgegebene Strukturen. Aufsatzziel ist es, das vorhandene Begriffsverständnis systematisch zu erfassen und seine Möglichkeit zur Untersuchung eines örtlich begrenzten Urbanisierungsprozesses zu bewerten. In einer qualitativen Fallstudie wurde die Neubelebung der Neißevorstadt auf der polnische Seite der deutsch-polnischen Grenzstadt Görlitz-Zgorzelec untersucht, um die wichtige Rolle bebauter Flächen bei der Veränderung sozio-geographischer Maßstäbe zu betonen, die durch die EU-Erweiterung und die Änderung des Grenzsystems begann. Es geht um die Vorstadt Zgorzelec Neisse als neue Flächeneinheit, die durch die EU-25-Erweiterung möglich wurde. Das empirische Material stammt aus qualitativen Befragungen von Personen aus Stadtplanung und grenzübergreifenden kulturellen Projekten sowie aus Feldbeobachtungen zwischen 2007 und 2009 in Görlitz-Zgorzelec. Im Überblick über die bisherige Forschung zur skalaren Veränderung in Grenzregionen werden die Versuche zur Abstimmung und Anwendung der Bedingungen von Grenzen und Maßstäben in Verbindung mit den empirischen Realitäten der EU-Grenzregionen nachgestellt, wobei in diesen Studien mehr Nachdruck auf die Bedeutungen und Funktionen bebauter Flächen gelegt werden sollte, die im Zuge des grenzüberschreitenden Austauschs aktiviert werden. Es folgen die Vorstellung einer Fallstudie der Neubelebung der Neißevorstadt nach der EU-Erweiterung 2004 sowie die Entwicklung der methodischen Kategorie einer professionellen skalaren Einstellung. Diese Kategorie wird als Leitprinzip angewendet, um Daten zum sozio-geographischen Wandel in Grenzgebieten zu erfassen und Maßstäbe und Logik der praktischen Integration bebauter Flächen von Grenzstädten zu interpretieren.

*Räumliche Dimensionen der Politik; skalare Strategien; Neubelebung; bebauter Flächen; professionelle skalare Einstellung; Grenzordnung; räumliche Maßstababbildung; Görlitz-Zgorzelec*

## Introduction

European political, economic and cultural integration, which accelerated in the late 20th century in the broader context of global integration, has provoked manifold attempts to update and advance the understanding of relations between geographical space and social processes. Re-definitions and new operationalizations of the concept of spatial scale that were produced for various empirical situations have generated an influential discussion about the nature of these relations. This discussion was not limited to the historical situation of the late 20th and early 21st centuries (e.g., MARSTON and SMITH 2001). However, in most cases it was focused precisely on portraying and explaining the fate of the 'national' as a spatial arena and as a dimension of political and economic practice, in the context of growing economic interconnections between spaces across national borders and transformations of state agency in attempts to regulate and make sense of those interconnections from the 1980s (AGNEW 2005; BRENNER 2004; MACLEOD 1999; MANSFIELD 2005; ROBINSON 1998). The European Union in this context was portrayed as a revolutionary post-modern mode of socio-political organization, a potential model for the rest of the world (AGNEW 2001).

The recognition of the European Union itself as a scalar formation of a new kind has enhanced formal sensitivity to geographical scales as socially produced. As has been noticed and discussed in detail, the order of European modernity presupposed the redefinition of the relations between 'here and now', on the one hand, and the experience of time and space on the other. Roger FRIEDLAND and Deidre BODEN (1994) have shown that this redefinition meant the universalization of time and space and the incorporation of these universalized categories into everyone's everyday life. The framework of nation-state borders turned out to be the key element of this universalized historical and geographical configuration. The European Union as a new scalar formation implied a new nature of state borders and hence provoked questions about new grounds

for universalism. In this conceptual and empirical context, the internal and external borders of the EU-25 – a scalar formation which made the German-Polish border discussed in this paper an internal EU border – came to be seen as strategic loci for the production of the EU scale. I put EU-25, and not EU-28, for this was the European Union enlargement stage that turned the studied border into an internal EU border and caused the re-scaling of both towns adjacent to it. The weakening of nation-states' borders inside the Union and hardening of those European states' borders which constitute its external limits were two indispensable developments within a single scalar formation. This scalar formation has not merely created common space inside the EU, but also has redefined relations among its smaller socio-spatial units of regions, cities and neighbourhoods. In new member states like Poland, it made cities and regions (instead of nation-states) the strategic locations of intra-EU cooperation and of the competitiveness of Europe as a whole. It has also redefined the scales of state functioning and provoked questions about the scales of the processes of EU enlargement (BARTKOWSKI 2008; JALOWIECKI 2008).

In this respect, closer conceptual attention to European borders as key localizations of scalar production and the re-configuration of the EU has the potential to significantly enrich both theories of the social production of scale and attempts to theorize the institutions of contemporary internal and external EU borders. In the analysis that follows, I intend to review recent attempts to empirically study border areas and cross-border projects, in which the transformations of those areas and projects are operationalized as scalar transformations. This review makes it possible to see exactly how different diagnoses of the 'national' in the context of globalization and EU integration are translated to border studies and are argued from the perspective of state border regime change. Further, I demonstrate that such studies of border areas and cross-border projects are predominantly made from a perspective of the transformation

of institutions and identities. I argue that this angle will benefit from closer attention to the social meaning of the built environment, which acquires new shape and uses due to a change of border regimes. I ground this argument in an empirical case study of the revitalization of the Neisse suburb in Zgorzelec, the Polish part of a twin town on the Polish-German border, as a localized project of EU enlargement in 2004. Firstly, this analysis helps to demonstrate what kind of new scales, or relatively bounded spatial units (BRENNER 2004), are produced by the internal EU border regime. Secondly, it allows us to better understand the nature of the 'urban' as a multi-scalarly determined process, and not as a pre-defined reified settlement type (BRENNER and SCHMID 2015). Therefore, the aim of the paper is to show that in the course of EU integration, urban-scale specificity crucially determines the effects of new state border regimes. This determination works as the production of new socio-spatial limits resulting from the re-positioning of built environments in a changed scalar configuration through individual and collective human agency.

## Bordering, Scaling and the Trans-Border Built Environment

A robust attempt to coordinate the terms of bordering and scaling within a single approach to the current empirical realities of EU borders was recently made by Hans-Joachim BUERKNER, in a paper written for an ambitious research project on EU border regions (BUERKNER 2015). In this working paper, BUERKNER starts with the observation that "concrete agents and their contribution to scaling and re-scaling have hardly ever been theorized in border studies" (2015, p. 2), and suggests paying closer attention to scalar change as resulting from shifting borders in the EU context. Here, border change is grasped in the process of the implementation of a set of EU policies, such as EU enlargement policy, European Neighbourhood policy, cohesion policy, Single Market policy, security policy, migration policy, etc. (2015, p. 2), while scales are perceived as basically scopes of action (2015, p. 13). BUERKNER

notes that the range of debates in globalization studies has “inspired flexibilized perspectives on agent-driven rather than structure-dependent scaling” (2015, p. 2). In such a light, scales in his argumentation are “socio-spatial bubbles, emerging from individuals or groups, which comprise networks, organizations, institutions, etc. assembled around specific projects or strategic objectives” (2015, p. 12). Summarizing, he argues that a balanced scale-related perspective helps to identify and analyse the polymorphic nature of state borders and of the very process of bordering (2015, p. 21). It is therefore possible to generalize that methodologically BUERKNER’s conceptualization directs us towards observing and making sense of scales from the perspective of actions and processes, and not from the perspective of structures and results. His focus is thus placed on how borders and border spaces – as rather passive objects – are altered by the practices of more or less powerful agents. Re-scaling is then seen as an instrument to introduce new border regimes, or to adapt to them, utilized by those agents (2015, p. 4).

An approach to scaling and re-scaling that BUERKNER sees as generally lacking in border studies has been explicitly advocated by a range of recent arguments based on data obtained on both internal and external borders of the EU (BUZALKA 2009; JOHNSON 2009; KAISER and NIKIFOROVA 2006, 2008; LIUBIMAU 2009, 2011, 2013; SOHN and REITEL 2013). However, it is apparent that these arguments do not share a common understanding of the notion of geographical scale and of the ways this notion should be operationalized in European border research. Adam MOORE (2008) makes a helpful summary of the rich debate about this notion and its applicability. He argues for distinguishing between the practical and analytical dimensions of the category of scale and for putting more emphasis on the former. In view of his suggestion, one can expect that the peculiarity of border areas, and of various practices of bounding and re-bounding these areas, promises to be helpful empirical material for

understanding the processual nature of geographical scale and for avoiding reified conceptions of scales as containers or ‘matryoshka nesting dolls’ (HEROD and WRIGHT 2002, p. 7). This is so because a focus on border areas and on cross-border projects is especially helpful to juxtapose the ‘national’ as a mode to delimit space with other such modes, like ‘regional’ or ‘urban’. Understanding geographical scale as a mode of delimiting space, therefore, helps to overcome readings of scale as size or as level (MOORE 2008). First, attention to border areas makes it easier to study and to articulate to what extent the state border sustains a broader scalar order and remains a central boundary that limits and shapes social processes (LIUBIMAU 2013). Second, it makes it possible to nuance and complicate the widespread understanding of border zones as ‘laboratories’ of integration or ‘third cultures’ (MUCHA 2001) and to identify practical formats and arenas in which this integration is enabled. In countries like Poland, studies of border areas have for a long time been dominated by studies of fuzzy cultural borderlands (WOLK 2001; SADOWSKI 2004; KURCZ 2009).

In this respect, Corey M. JOHNSON elaborates a representative argument by paying more attention to cross-border cooperation and its impacts on the prevailing scalar configuration. He holds that the capitalization of trans-border regions (and it probably would be appropriate to talk in general about the capitalization of border conditions, or of the border itself) is a distinct trend within global socio-spatial restructuring, characterized by new formats of competition and levels of governance. Other scholars have also made this observation. In a more recent article, Christophe SOHN has summarized how functions of borders make border [urban] areas advantaged locations. He singles out five functions of borders – to delimit, to separate, to be an interface, to differentiate, and to affirm (SOHN 2014, p. 1703). According to Sohn, the first, third, fourth and fifth functions can be linked to four types of opportunities enjoyed by areas adjacent to borders. These

are positional benefit, differential benefit, benefit through hybridization and the benefit of a symbolic resource for staging various claims and projects (SOHN, 2014, p. 1704). In Johnson’s view, a focus on cross-border cooperation makes it possible to analyse the “scales of exchange and interaction”, because local and regional officials from border areas were the first to have to learn how to obtain and use EU funds, and hence needed to internalize globally induced international thinking and orientation (JOHNSON 2009, p. 186). However, as he points out, the research on “transboundary” areas only minimally overlaps with the research on scalar politics, a situation which seems to him striking since “transboundary spaces along national borders in the EU offer some of the most thought-provoking shifts to existing territorial orderings and understandings” (2009, p. 178).

In arguing this, Johnson intends to criticize Neil BRENNER’s (2004) overemphasis on state agency (and the way it mutates due to global socio-spatial restructurings). Instead, he looks for the agency of scalar restructurings in transboundary spaces:

“In highlighting overzealous accounts of autonomous subnational units, these and other authors still overlook what I found to be a more complicated picture. In this case, a messy, complicated EU regional policy (but one with plenty of funds available for disbursement) was seen as an avenue by local and regional authorities for pursuing aggressive strategies of internationalization. The only real condition on receiving EU monies, of course, was that there had to be some cooperative element” (2009, p. 185).

On the other hand, JOHNSON suggests that if we do not deploy scalar analysis, “particularly a conceptualization of scale that emphasizes its constructed, produced and political natures”, then “transboundary” space will be read as merely “discrete territorial constructs alongside many others” (2009, p. 187). Based on this, he proposes using the term “euro-politics of

scale" (2009, p. 178), which implies that the 'politics of scale' present in EU trans-border zones often diverges from the initial intentions of general EU regional policy and hence must be concretized by the terms "cross-border scale" (2009, p. 187) or "transboundary scale" (2009, p. 188). Hence, JOHNSON's approach suggests that the re-scaling of border areas in the course of EU integration is primarily the result of institutional design. The major feature of this re-scaling is newly created and utilized possibilities of capitalization beyond central state structures. It is, however, necessary to say that this criticism of a state-centered approach to border areas is not always supported by empirical research. An interesting case of such research is a study of the cross-border metropolitan region of Luxembourg, a scale which does not coincide with any administrative borders (DOERRY and DECOVILLE 2016). By focusing on transportation policy networks, the authors demonstrate the key role of precisely central state institutions in defining cross-border transportation policy (2016, p. 83).

A third deliberate attempt to analyse trans-border conditions from the viewpoint of theories of the social production of scale can be found in the work of Robert KAISER and Elena NIKIFOROVA, who elaborate the "political genealogy of scale ontologies, as historically contextualized study of the naturalizing and sedimenting production of scaled knowledge, in order to expose the power relationships lying behind the truth claims about scales and scalar hierarchies" (2008, p. 538). They show that scales are performed, and like identities, are embodied by means of the "repetition of sets of citational practices that stabilize as well as challenge the boundary, fixity, and surface effects that materialize" (2008, pp. 541–542). To describe this, they use the notion of "scalar stance" (2008, p. 541, 2006) (the second part of the term derives from the theory of Rogers BRUBAKER [1996]), which is supplemented by the broader notion of "scalar politics" and the methodological term "scalar talk". In this respect, borderland spaces are conceptually constructed

by KAISER and NIKIFOROVA as "spaces of becoming where actors representing a multiplicity of scalar stances engage in the re-narration and re-enactment of place and identity" (2006, p. 940). And, further on, "the borderland serves as multiscalar site of imminence – a zone of contestation and a space of becoming or conjuncture – where the interiority and exteriority of place and identity are interactively and iteratively re-narrated and re-enacted" (2006, p. 951). It should be pointed out that the research agenda of KAISER and NIKIFOROVA is placed within studies of the cultural politics of memory and of landscapes of commemoration, while the border itself is viewed here as a set of narratives which delimit the parameters of place and identity (2006, p. 936). Scale, in this formulation, is a fabricated instrument of power.

These three arguments, by BUERKNER, JOHNSON, and KAISER and NIKIFOROVA, persuasively demonstrate that the social analysis of border spaces can significantly gain if the research data are gathered and interpreted in the scope of theories of the social production of scale. JOHNSON argues that this procedure will help us to deal with the socio-spatial complexity of the EU in the global context, while KAISER and NIKIFOROVA emphasize that this perspective will shed light on borders as practically enacted, and will make it possible to criticize the reified notion of state borders as unproblematic delimiting lines. BUERKNER shows that the notion of scale provides a better lens to identify agency in the process of bordering, and of socio-spatial structuring more generally. A striking coincidence is that all three of these approaches neglect the aspect of the material space of the 'urban' (BRENNER and SCHMID 2015), which should be recognized as a crucial driving force, medium, and outcome of cross-border exchanges. Such close attention to the 'urban' has recently been advocated by Christophe SOHN (2014). His argument is that instead of focusing on spatial aspects of cross-border urban areas, researchers tend to focus on functional (economic flows and exchanges), institutional (governance

and the coordination of public policy), or 'ideational' (identity construction and communal representations) cross-border processes (SOHN 2014, p. 1698). A spatial lens would mean here the examination of "the phenomenon of the cross-border metropolis itself". By reviewing mainly 2000s literature on cross-border regions, he concludes that there is "no single model for cross-border metropolitan integration" and that differences are determined by the "geo-economic, political and historical context at play" (SOHN 2014, p. 1701). As I further argue in this paper, the aspect of the built environment used for enhancing and re-tooling relations between two or more cross-border urban units is a crucial one. And its analysis reveals how urban-scale specific processes determine the production of new spatial units in the course of internal EU bordering.

All three of the reviewed approaches share the assumption that scale is one of the forms of structuring space and of constructing boundaries which define trajectories for social action (BUERKNER 2015). In such a conceptualization, social action can be read as scalar stance as in KAISER and NIKIFOROVA, or as a scale-making institutional alliance as in JOHNSON. However, by placing emphasis entirely on representational practices or on institutional networking, we tend to overlook material border effects and to treat the state border as a line (even though a represented and negotiated one), and not as an institution of the complex mediation of social and material space. In other words, geographical scales are practically constructed not only by those who use a scalar lens when narrating their identity or by those who challenge scalar hierarchies when establishing institutional cooperation. Those who prefer this or that side of the border for investing in land or shopping also constitute scales and therefore produce space, as do those who apply a certain meaning to spatial configurations on this or that part of the border in order to deal with an ecological problem or to make a political claim. The practical meaning of a built environment, which is located in proximity to state borders and

is used by trans-border agents, has explicit scalar significance. Its transformation is unequivocally determined within scalar transformation due to prevalent regimes of border functioning. It is, in this light, unclear if it is reasonable to coin the terms 'transboundary scale' or 'cross-border scale' as Corey JOHNSON does. Does trans-border space refer to a certain scale or socio-spatial unit? If yes, then what constitutes its limits?

This overview and brief discussion of case studies of trans-border space based on a scalar approach can be located in a broader conceptual context. If we retain the angle on the geographical dynamics of the EU as a new type of scalar formation, we have to assume the importance of spatial planning as an instrument to realize the overall goals of the European Community. In this connection, the urban scale, as the major locus of territorialized capital and respective institutional set-ups, must become the major focus for studies of broader socio-spatial, or scalar, transformations. Yet, although the term "spatiality" remains very important in these attempts to theorize the processes constituting the EU in its border areas, until recently it has been possible to talk about a lack of analysis of how spatial forms on the urban scale articulate the change of border regime and hence of wider scalar formation. In other words, there is a lack of analysis of specific built environments and of the ways in which their meaning is created by the uses of social actors constrained and incentivized by the scalar formation of the European Union. Hence the purpose of this paper is to show that built environments in border areas become loci of scalar shifts and struggles in the process of the re-bounding of urban, nation-state, EU, and global scales within a prevalent formation. The effects of a distinct regime of border functioning, identified in uses of the built environment, help to historicize and visualize historical modes of production and reproduction of spatial units and the ways border regimes mediate asymmetrically developed social and material space. From this perspective, borders do not divide space, but create

space or set up scalar configurations (LIUBIMAU 2013), – of relations between the EU as a territorial block, nation-states and cities. Thus, internal and external border regimes in the EU do not merely filter different movements, but create complex rules and regularities of land uses.

### **Professional Scalar Stance as a Methodological Category**

One of the most frequent messages of constructivist operationalizations of the term geographical scale is to show that space – or, more precisely, bounded or scaled space – is manipulated by governance for strategic ends (MCLEOD and GOODWIN 1999; BRENNER 2000; PECK 2002). This point is accentuated in all three of the attempts to apply scalar theories to trans-border conditions discussed at length above. However, such manipulation can be fully comprehended only if we pay closer attention to the various types of agency constituting this manipulation: i.e. not only to those who invent scale-making institutions and public claims, but also to those who materialize and rework them within their everyday practices and motivations. These everyday practices and motivations are inseparable from their specific environments, which define social action by serving as a material toolkit that enables and constrains action itself. In this sense, the socially grounded analysis of scale-making is inseparable from the study of built forms on the urban scale as foci and loci of trans-border scalar restructurings. At the same time, to operationalize the built environment as a toolkit means to emphasize agency which invests practical meaning into urban form, and is itself altered by doing so. This approach relies on the traditions of comprehending and researching infrastructures in the social sciences, anthropology in particular (NIEWOEHNER 2015).

From this angle, the notion of the 'politics of scale' (BRENNER 2001) can be fruitfully applied in the analyses of trans-border locations. In particular, it helps to trace changing meanings and uses of built environments due to a change of border regime and concomitant scalar

reformatting. It is useful to conceptualize this type of trans-border built environment as 'Architecture of Europeanization' (LIUBIMAU 2011, p. 68). On one hand, this term signifies the realization of EU political and economic goals through planning infrastructures which change trans-border relations and, in this way, localize and reconfirm a distinct scalar hierarchy. On the other hand, it is the built environment which localizes the projects of various agents to instrumentalize the change of border regime and concomitant scalar reformatting (2011, p. 68). In this vein, trans-border infrastructural projects can be studied from the perspective of how a particular territorialized scalar formation establishes limits and possibilities for various activities in trans-border conditions, and of how these infrastructural trans-border projects actively rework this territorialized scalar formation. Furthermore, a trans-border project as a unit of analysis makes it possible to define the role of a state border regime and the usages of border areas it permits. In this sense, the state border is seen as a medium for obtaining various kinds of surplus, while trans-border mobility of different sorts is a way to embody and use this surplus (LIUBIMAU 2007). Localized configurations of uneven development and the intersection of different modes of scaling are crucial here, since in the cases of border areas all these configurations form the apparatus of urban transformations.

This differentiation between two meanings and modes of use of an architecture of Europeanization makes it possible to fruitfully differentiate between planned and contested trans-border space. First, it enables the depiction of the socio-spatial arrangements of a chosen location that are projected and controlled by professional planners and socio-cultural engineers. It makes it possible to work with the question of the specificity of planners' agency which emerges in trans-border conditions, and has to come to terms with the limits and possibilities established by a given state border regime. How do these professionals deal with the continuous socio-spatial change emerging out of

changing scalar formation and spatially grounded asymmetries? In the particular case of this article, research data was gathered from the activities and attitudes of individual players and entire institutions whose work relates to the analyzed site – the Zgorzelec Neisse Suburb. The idea was to make use of all kinds of texts which express these activities and projections: laws, public speeches and debates, press releases, articles in newspapers, petitions, etc. In addition, thirteen non-structured in-depth interviews with specialists in spatial planning and senior employees of the cultural sectors from both Goerlitz and Zgorzelec were conducted. The aim of those interviews was to reveal informants' stances toward the border conditions, and toward the border as a hindrance and an advantage for the development of the cities adjacent to it. The key conceptual questions structuring these interviews' scenarios were:

- What are the similarities and differences between the planning agendas on both sides of the Neisse River?
- How do urbanists and planners, through projecting infrastructure with trans-border meaning, come to terms with the locally articulated scalar formation?
- What kind of institutional frameworks for obtaining place-specific competitive advantages do they choose?
- What are the political and legal hindrances to doing so?

Such interviews made it possible to analyse professional scalar stances towards the analyzed projects. Therefore, the revitalization of the Neisse Suburb in Zgorzelec is taken here as an example of negotiations of meanings of the built environment within the practices and discourses of professional architects.

A useful discussion of potential gains and hindrances to study geographical scale both as structure and as process specifically with anthropological or qualitative methods can be found in Kacper POBŁOCKI (2013). In his argumentation, anthropology of scale is a study of modes of organization of space in everyday practices (2013, p. 185). However, POBŁOCKI's

discussion of the cases of such applications of anthropological methods – these are passages from the author's research in several Polish cities – suggests that in his operationalization, scale is operationalized as a level of organization of social, economic and political processes. This approach does make it possible to study scale as process, but it does not systematically include other ways of bounding space – such as national or regional – into interpretations and explanations of the 'urban' as a multiscalely determined process. In the following section I intend to show how qualitative methods allow the study of urbanization as a key strategic element of the wider process of uneven production of territories and of differences between territories. A similar perspective has been recently proposed as urban research from the 'decolonized perspective' (SCHWARZ and STREULE 2017).

### The Politics of Scale in the Revitalization of the Neisse Suburb

Zgorzelec acquired the status of a town only in 1945, when the Oder-Neisse line was established, and since that moment has been developing without an old town core (Fig. 1). In such a setting, the Zgorzelec Neisse Suburb is one of the few sections of the built environment currently associated with the historical old town of Goerlitz. Most of the buildings located there are from the nineteenth century, while there are also buildings from the sixteenth century, including the house of Jacob Boehme, which has been turned into museum. Up until 2005, the Neisse Suburb infrastructures were in very bad condition. However, its social meaning was radically reconfigured after Poland's accession to the EU and the re-opening of the Old Town Bridge in 2004 (Fig. 2, 3). This newly built bridge thus connected the Neisse Suburb on the eastern side of the river with the historical centre of



Fig. 1: Goerlitz-Zgorzelec



Fig. 2: Old Town Bridge, Zgorzelec 2008

Goerlitz on the western side. This project was not only a highly symbolic gesture in the course of Poland's accession to the EU and the growing intensiveness of trans-border cooperation in a town which had been divided, and sustained as divided, partially by the destruction of all of its seven bridges during World War II. It was equally a strategic investment into the built environment that significantly transformed the urban scale of Zgorzelec, of Goerlitz, and of both taken together as a European twin town in the new context of the enlarged EU (LIUBIMAU 2011).

In the most immediate way, these transformations supposed the symbolic reinvention and functional re-zoning of Daszynskiego Street in the Neisse suburb. As a result, the Neisse suburb came to be projected and used as a 'showcase directed to the outside', while cultural

industries, from museums and tourist shops to restaurants and bars, became the concrete driving force of this development. All the plans elaborated for the area were intended to give it a 'centre-making character' (Program Rewitalizacji 2004), while my interview partners from the Polish side of the Neisse River referred to Zgorzelec as 'naturally' deprived of a centre before the reopening of the Old Town Bridge.

It should be noted in this connection that the bridge is apparently one of the most persistent metaphors of trans-border cooperation in the European Union in general, and is widely used as a metaphor for branding firms, educational and cultural short-term and long-term projects, and initiatives in the specific context of Goerlitz-Zgorzelec as well. Historically, one of the first and strongest images of

connecting the two sides of the Neisse after 1989 was the project of an opera house over the river, which would also serve as a bridge. The director of the music theatre of Goerlitz, Wolf-Dieter Ludwig, first formulated this project in the early 1990s. This project is now referred to by players involved both in spatial planning and the cultural sector on both sides of the Neisse as a totally utopian and futurist one. Yet, it is possible to say that this strong and assertive imagery at least brought some attention to the former neglected Neisse suburb and caused the establishment of the NGO Euroopera in 1994, whose idea was to enhance German-Polish (and also Czech) cultural exchange. This change in perspective on this underused part of Zgorzelec was strengthened by the fact that one of the houses located there from 1599–1610 was the home of the German



Fig. 3: Old Town Bridge, Goerlitz 2008

philosopher and poet Jacob Boehme. Now this building has been turned into a museum of the philosopher, which possesses no authentic artefacts except the house itself (some artefacts can be found in Goerlitz), while the guide just narrates the biography and philosophy of the house's famous dweller. The office of Euroopera was and still is located in this building, while the organization itself was one which started discussions concerning the preservation and rehabilitation of the architectural heritage of the Neisse suburb.

The program of the revitalization of this area prepared for approval by the Zgorzelec City Administration in 2004 stresses that the Neisse suburb in Zgorzelec is un-capitalized and should be revitalized in order to make it compatible with the previously revitalized historical centre of Goerlitz (Program Rewitalizacji,

2004). Within this program of revitalization, the problems are identified as spatial (an old communication infrastructure), social (unclear property relations) and economic (the absence of a plan and structure for services and trade) (LIUBIMAU 2011, p. 63). Such a combination of problems to be addressed was presented as requiring a specific formula of rehabilitation. The aims posed were modernization of the technical infrastructure, which would enhance the activeness of investors and overall economic development in this area; the establishment of adequate property rights for both houses and land (i.e. the privatization of communal and state-owned buildings); a proper solution for transport (building parking facilities on one hand, and limiting car mobility on the other); the creation of attractive configurations of trade and services, which

would have a "centre making character"; and the liquidation of 'social pathologies', which would make the area safer (Program Rewitalizacji 2004). In the broader circumstances of urban development, the revitalization of the Neisse suburb (since it is a rather small and strategic – for trans-border dynamics – location) was planned first (for the years 2004–2006). The revitalization of Zgorzelec city centre (since it is a larger area, more diversified in terms of its functions) was planned for 2010–2020, while in all respects revitalization was considered as a continuous process (Program Rewitalizacji 2004).

Interestingly, the projection of the "centre making character" of the revitalized area stems from the division of a historically single urban unit (Fig. 4).

Such an effect of the division by the Oder-Neisse line (together with the absence of

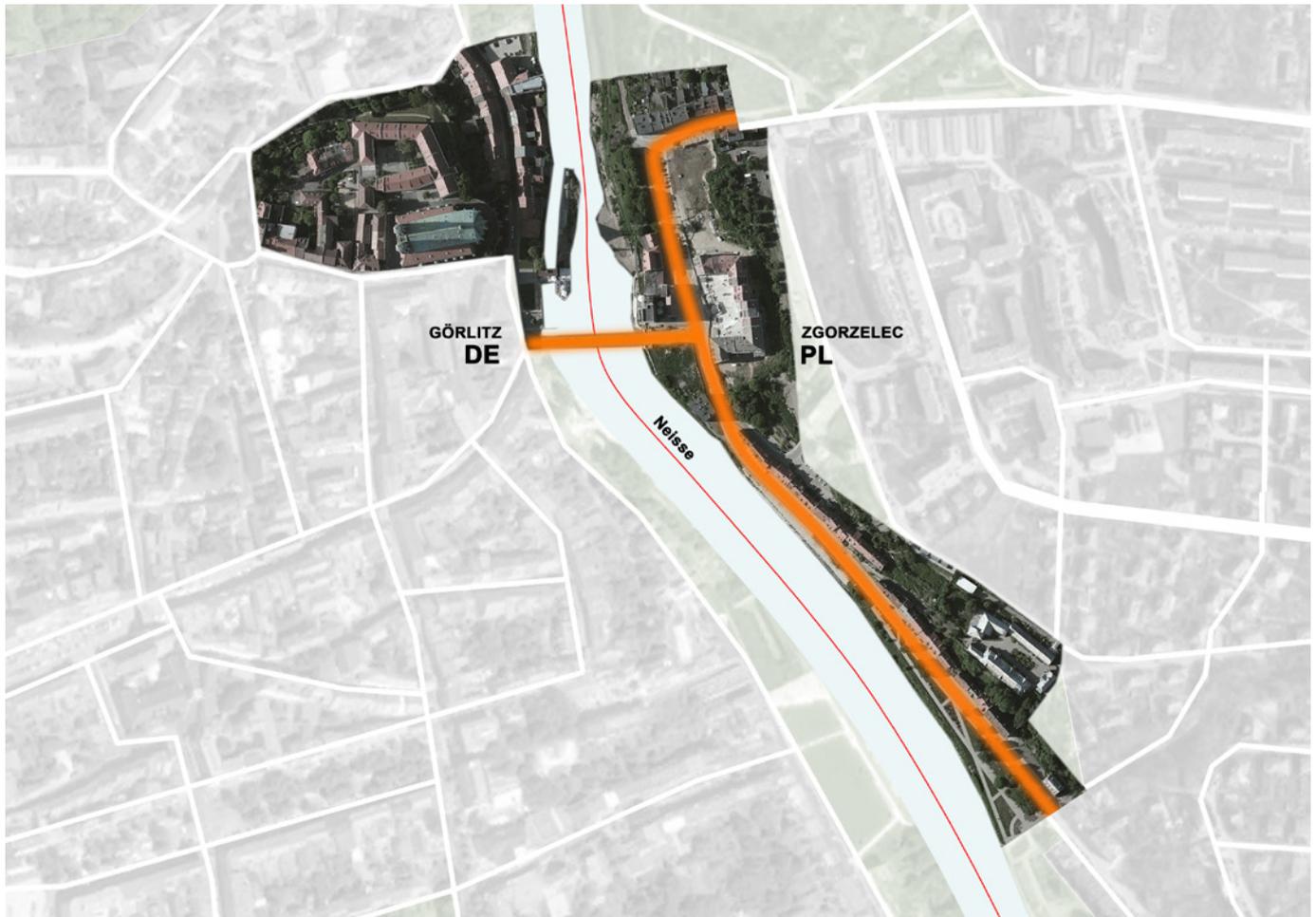


Fig. 4: Neisse Suburb, Zgorzelec 2008 (orange colour – Daszynskiego Street) (on the base of google map)

an indigenous Polish population of Zgorzelec) is now habitually used as an explanation for the troublesome urban culture of the town. As A.P., the organizer of the Medieval festival *Jakuby*, which takes place in the Neisse suburb, and the director of the Lusatian Museum (*Muzeum Luzyckie*) located in the same area of Zgorzelec says:

“There was a mistake made...Zgorzelec does not have a *natural* (S.L.) centre. Zgorzelec does not have a place which could have been called the centre. Here, all these streets are just to reach the border, to reach the city...which starts on the other side of the Neisse. It would be a good initiative to start regarding it (the Neisse suburb – S.L.), this suburb, as the centre, so people would come here, so people would be able to quietly and safely stroll here. To bring people here. This is the most important thing.”

Such a perspective on the Neisse suburb on the part of a professional working in the cultural sector should be triangulated with the perspective of spatial planning. An architect from the private sector, P.P., comments on attempts to find centre-making potential for this area in the following terms:

“The Neisse suburb is nothing special, just a street, a small one. From the point of view of city development one should build 20–30 hotels and pubs there. It is a good positive example, but it is not an opportunity for development, not something that Zgorzelec would not live without. Just a beautiful *showcase* (S.L.)”

And another architect, C.A., employed by the Zgorzelec municipality commented:

“Well, I want to say that the Neisse suburb and the old city of Goerlitz can be treated as a certain centre,

but rather a cultural, tourist centre. Well, because at this stage one should distinguish between two centres. The same is true in Goerlitz. ... That part of the city should function in a different manner, it should be a showcase *directed to the outside* (S.L.), since there is tourist movement. ... For sure, there should not be such a tightly defined centre for Zgorzelec and Goerlitz. I say, historically, it is a certain centre, because it was certainly here that Goerlitz-Zgorzelec emerged: in this area it was shaped, here the first buildings emerged, and so forth.”

These are the reactions of professionals, who are (or were) directly involved in the project of the revitalization, to my request to assess the potential of the Neisse suburb for the development of Zgorzelec, both in itself and in its relations with



Fig. 5: Neisse Suburb, Zgorzelec 2008

Goerlitz. They show that although the narrativization and branding of the rehabilitated built environment of the Neisse suburb as a certain urban and trans-national centre is dependent on professional focus and employer, the perception of it as a certain currency “directed to the outside” (i.e. to Goerlitz) remains stable. As another interview partner, Z. B., employed by the City Cultural Center (*Dom Kultury*) of Zgorzelec and engaged in various local cultural projects, comments on the course of the revitalization of Neisse suburb and its effects: “The German side is the magnet”. In this respect, it is possible to argue that the very term “showcase” becomes possible due to scalar reformatting. And it is the Old Town Bridge, as a material element of the built environment, that articulates this reformatting on the urban scale of both Zgorzelec and Goerlitz. Opportunities for questioning or contesting the notion of the centre of the trans-border urban unit(s) appear due to the changing scalar formation and change of

border regime, materially enacted in the urban fabric. In the most general terms, these changes are about the growing role of the EU as a mediator of cultural and infrastructural interplay between the two sides of the border (Fig. 5).

As was already suggested, the term “showcase” describing the Neisse suburb implies a meaning of the growing commodification of this area by means of turning it into a space of recreation, cultural consumption and tourist shopping. It has been already stressed too that this aspect is closely related to a hypothetical centre-making character of this suburb. After three months of living in Goerlitz-Zgorzelec, and designation and observations of loci where German and Polish inhabitants of the twin-town mix, I argue that it is precisely in the renovated part of the Neisse suburb in Zgorzelec – and equally in the shopping enclaves of both towns – where this mixture is best visible. Interviews both with experts and with inhabitants of Zgorzelec reconfirm this assertion, and

make possible the methodological triangulation of this data. As noted by K.K., who works in the Zgorzelec Tourist Information Office located right next to the Old Town Bridge, most of the Germans who cross this bridge do so in order to visit the restaurants or pubs situated in the Neisse suburb, Jacob Boehme’s House, or the City Cultural Center (*Dom Kultury*) which is located further on in Zgorzelec. The fact that, right after the last meters of the Old Town Bridge, Zgorzelec starts with the *Piwnica Staromiejska* restaurant and continues on Daszynskiego Street with more restaurants and pubs creates the effect (not only in cognitive, but also in social and cultural terms) of the continuation of Goerlitz on the Polish side. My interview partners from Zgorzelec were emphasizing that “it is now difficult to hear the Polish language there” and “there are less and less free tables there when you want to enter for coffee or beer”. Moreover, this effect – corroborated by my observations – halts when the row of restaurants, on the

one hand, and the sequence of revitalized buildings on Daszynskiego Street, on the other, come to a stop. In delineating the zone of revitalization, A.P., from the Lusatian Museum, said it continues “to the point where paving stone stops and old asphalt starts”. On the basis of these observations, it is possible to say that the vast majority of those crossing the Old Town Bridge from the western side either do it in order to buy something (usually cigarettes) in one of the small shops, to visit a restaurant or bar, or (and this usually only concerns tourists with cameras moving in small groups of 3 to 7–10, and not inhabitants of Goerlitz) walk only to the point where it is clearly visible that further on there are no renovated buildings and no services which can be associated with leisure and tourism. This configuration reveals the spatially grounded direction of the local project of trans-border exchanges – people physically move just up to the point of the end of what is habitually considered as a tourist attraction or as a [built] environment for leisure. K.K. from Tourist Information accordingly emphasizes that, at this spot, people coming from Goerlitz go just up to the end of the renovated part of Daszynskiego Street, while if they are to visit some other part of Zgorzelec (as she supposes, “for shopping”) they usually cross another bridge (John Paul II Bridge), which is open not only for pedestrians and bikes, as is the Old Town Bridge, but also for cars. The fact that the Old Town Bridge is accessible only for pedestrians and bikes strengthens the effect of the continuation of the historical core of Goerlitz, where car mobility is limited, in Zgorzelec. Moreover, before Poland signed the Schengen agreement at the end of 2007 and there were still cabins with border police on the bridge, it was accessible only for EU citizens – the border guards there simply had no equipment to check the passports of non-EU citizens, who were just sent to the remaining border crossing on John Paul II Bridge.

The described re-emergence of the Neisse suburb is a case of a strategically re-used and therefore re-bounded built environment with the goal of making it

socially interchangeable with/fastened to the old city of Goerlitz. In addition to the activities of agents of spatial planning, the new usages and re-bounding of this space were significantly influenced by the Zgorzelec cultural sector. The most noteworthy example of these usages is the *Jakuby* festival (named after Jacob Boehme), which takes place in the Neisse suburb every year on the last weekend of August. To use the description of Z. B., through this festival “Zgorzelec and Goerlitz are sort of connected in a medieval fair”. The most crucial point of this festival is that it takes place at the same time as the *Altstadtfest* (Old City Celebration) in Goerlitz. According to the experts from both the German and Polish sides, the Goerlitz event attracts up to 100 000 visitors from outside and is one of the most important public celebrations in the whole region. Or as some of my interview partners claimed, in the whole of Germany as well. From the moment of the re-opening of the Old Town Bridge, during the period of the *Altstadtfest* Zgorzelec entrepreneurs, with assistance from the City Cultural Centre, would install open-air cafes in the Neisse Suburb to sell beer and food. The conception of the participation of Zgorzelec in the Goerlitz celebration changed substantially in the year 2007 when a young NGO activist, A.P. (from 2008, also director of the Lusatian Museum located in the Neisse suburb) started to organize the fair. A.P. says that the people who were organizing this celebration before him did not have any particular idea of what they were doing – the only purpose was to make money when there is a large mass of people in the area. In its current version, however, *Jakuby* is organized with the purpose of a stylistic connection to the *Altstadtfest* by performing it in an old medieval fashion: with old music, theatre and medieval costumes. In A.C.’s words, the idea is to also accentuate the Polish side of the Neisse within the celebration. In similar fashion, Z. B. from the City Cultural Centre says:

“*Altstadtfest* in Germany has been happening for... I don’t know, for many years. It is beautiful, this beautiful magnificent old city of Goerlitz

turns into such a medieval fair, a lot of people wearing costumes in the very city centre, in the surroundings of the Old Market Square. Now they have moved a little bit towards the commercial side. I do not like it much that they have installed some modern amusement parks, some modern attractions. I became fascinated with the historical part of it. And since, here, Daszynskiego Street gives us a little bit of too narrow a space to do it, fortunately we do not have this concern to make a commercial fair, and from the last year we are doing a historical fair.”

Experts I interviewed in summer 2008 referred to *Jakuby* fair as a successful positive example of cultural cooperation between Zgorzelec and Goerlitz. It is again evident that this cultural exchange and extension of Goerlitz to Zgorzelec arises from the architectural reconstruction and *re-emergence* [within a new scalar formation] of the Neisse Suburb of Zgorzelec. As P.P. puts it, *Jakuby* is a good example of Polish-German cooperation within so-called soft cultural projects, yet this fair appeared only because the new street (Daszynskiego Street in the Neisse suburb) *appeared*. In this respect, *Jakuby* and the negotiated imagery of this fair within professional scalar stances (‘less commercial’, ‘more historical’, ‘more closely connected to the German celebration’, etc.) impacts on the functioning of the Neisse Suburb in the broader process of the rebounding of the Goerlitz and Zgorzelec border area. This event takes part in the process of performing the suburb as a place of leisure and a showcase “directed to the outside”. From this angle, it would be helpful to reframe it with reference to Bob JESSOP and Stijn OOSTERLYNCK’s understanding of the merging of economy and culture. According to them, mechanisms of this merging “select, retain, and reinforce specific imaginaries and thereby shape the concrete, contextualized, and contingent dynamics of a particular economy in its specific social and cultural settings as this changes over time”

(2008, p. 1168). In a way, compatible with the new paths of negotiations concerning the architectural and design details of the renovated Neisse suburb (LIUBIMAU 2011) and its functional place within the urban system of Zgorzelec/Goerlitz, the *Jakuby* festival is enabled by the change of the internal EU border regime. And this change, being a constitutive element of the remapping of Europe as a whole, is intensively supplemented by spatial planning projects (the Old Town Bridge and the related revitalization of the area adjacent to it).

In studies of the urban dimension of EU enlargement, it is possible to observe various complications of the understanding of what is the centre(s) of a trans-border urban unit(s), as well as of the understanding of what is successful cross-border cooperation on an urban scale (MATTHIESEN 2005; DUERRSCHMIDT 2008; MAKARO 2009). In the particular case of Zgorzelec and Goerlitz, this complication stems from differences in perceptions of the purpose of the public-private venture of the capitalization of the space of the Neisse Suburb by turning it into a [built] environment for leisure. The “showcase directed to the outside” character of the revitalized area cannot be properly understood without considering the wider and deeper scalar formation to which this area belongs. The first aspect of this formation is the strengthened role of the EU in terms of the funding available for infrastructural projects, such as the reconstructed Old Town Bridge. Another important aspect is the social meaning of the Goerlitz historical core, with its architectural heritage and its potential to be a tourist destination for elderly people from different parts of Germany. Almost all my interview partners from Zgorzelec made reference to the demographic problems of Goerlitz as something that hinders more intensive trans-border cooperation, while images of “empty streets, especially in the evening” or “grannies as the main population of Goerlitz” were used as the most popular visualizations of these demographic problems. Remarkably, in the specific regional constellation of Goerlitz as a former GDR

and border town (formerly, when the border was harder, located on the “edge”), this tendency is not assessed as a disadvantage.

As an architect and planner working at the city administration of Goerlitz, K.F., says:

“Yeah, if you hear that Goerlitz is attractive for older people, that does not mean there are no younger people who come to Goerlitz. What it means is that normally older people do not move so much. So, there are only a few cities in Germany which are appealing enough to attract such people. So the fact that old people come to Goerlitz reflects the high quality of living in the city. But this high quality of living is also good for younger people. Not only do older people generate jobs for younger people, but also it indicates that this is a nice city to live in.”

As D.M. from the city administration of Goerlitz says, when the media in Germany started to promote Goerlitz as a nice place for seniors to live, and when the town actually became a popular destination not only for elderly tourists, but also for retired Germans (mostly from the former FRG) who preferred to settle and live in the town, the Goerlitz municipality needed to react practically to this situation. This reaction meant primarily consulting and assistance (Senioren-Ratgeber 2007). Moreover, the independent research and consulting agency “Public Profits Sp. z.o.o.” from Poznan, which made a SWOT analysis of the advantages, disadvantages, and most appropriate future directions of cooperation between Zgorzelec and Goerlitz took this tendency equally seriously. One of the five strategic goals formulated for the next 25 years of the cooperation between the Polish and German sides of the Neisse is the goal for Goerlitz and Zgorzelec to become a regional centre of social services for seniors (Wspólna Strategia Rozwoju Europa-Miasta Zgorzelec-Goerlitz, 2006). In such a light, tourism and leisure industries with elderly people as the main target group should be considered as an inevitable element of the social meaning and functions of the historical core of

Goerlitz. As a result of the reconstruction of the Old Town Bridge and the revitalization of the Neisse suburb in Zgorzelec, this social meaning increasingly applies to the Polish side as well.

The fact that several interview partners from Zgorzelec were talking about Daszynskiego Street as having only recently emerged should be interpreted as indicating that it has re-emerged due to a new scalar formation enabling this part of Zgorzelec to become socially and architecturally interchangeable with its western counterpart. An architect formerly employed by Zgorzelec City Council and currently running a private architectural firm, P.P., recollects:

“When I came here [to Zgorzelec – S.L.] and started to work for the administration in 1995, then the first project we made, I made, was the project of the revitalization. People were astonished. I made projects of houses. And they said: everything must be demolished there, there must be a beautiful park. This is what intelligent, wise people from Zgorzelec said.”

P.P. says that these people did not have an awareness that this “dirty street” could have some value. When I ask what the role of the Old Town Bridge project for the revitalization was, P.P. turns out to be the only one of the experts interviewed who is rather skeptical with regard to this injection into the existing built environment as the main catalyst for the activation of the degraded area:

“Yes, it was already known (*in 1995, that the Old Town Bridge would be reconstructed* – S.L.), but in Poland you know how it happens: tomorrow, the day after tomorrow... So plans concerning the construction of the bridge were going their way and plans concerning the revitalization were going their way.”

From this angle, the border regime should be seen as constituting a set of relations between different pieces of the built environment, which articulate a

reconfiguration of a wider scalar formation and hence become arenas for the selective uneven integration of two national contexts. We can conclude that the Neisse suburb was gentrified precisely due to the formation of a new scalar order initiated by the new border regime. In-depth interviews make it possible to trace how this change was depicted and interpreted in distinct professional scalar stances.

## Conclusion

The qualitative analysis of the practical meaning of the Old Town Bridge and of the restructuring of the Neisse Suburb in Zgorzelec presented in this paper shows that the juxtaposition of the terms bordering and scaling is fruitful for understanding urbanisation in the EU context. This understanding of urbanisation is seen from a new perspective when confronted with the broader complex selective processes of the re-bounding or re-scaling of space. This paper demonstrates that due to the change of border regime, a newly prevailing scalar formation is negotiated materially in the urban fabric. It causes new types of uses of space and the re-coding of practical meanings of already existing spatial configurations. Built environments become strategic localizations of the 'politics of scale' and material toolkits for new scale making in border conditions. The analysed *re-emergence* of the Neisse Suburb shows that it is helpful to construct and operationalize the meanings of the selective unification of border towns' infrastructures, and the way these meanings are negotiated in the discourses and practices of interview partners (specialists from the field of spatial planning and the cultural sector), as professional scalar stances. As analysis of the interviews shows, the meanings and uses of the analysed area are arenas for scalar interpretations and negotiations by state and non-state players. The arguments of this paper rest on the analysis of thirteen in-depth interviews conducted with professionals involved in the process of the re-emergence of the Neisse suburb. In this argumentation, the Neisse suburb is a newly emerged spatial unit (a "showcase

directed to the outside") of multi-scalar determination. It stems from the EU enlargement of 2004, from the EU funded rebuilding of the Old Town Bridge in 2005, from the attempts to affirm the normality of Zgorzelec and Poland in general by binding it to the Goerlitz old town core and hence by including it in an already existing and architecturally grounded mode of development. In this vein, the selective unification of border towns is an explicit scalar tendency. It works as a re-bounding of socio-geographical units and as establishing new meanings of these boundaries.

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**Резюме**

СЯРГЕЙ ЛЮБИМАЎ

**Соотношения между производством границ и производством масштабов в качественных городских исследованиях: Случай польско-немецкого транс-граничного проекта ревитализации**

В современных исследованиях всё чаще пространства вблизи государственных границ и транс-граничные условия концептуализируются и обсуждаются в перспективе подходов, где географические масштабы - это динамичные процессы, а не предзаданные структуры. Цель этой статьи - систематизировать концептуализации такого рода и оценить их потенциал для исследований специфически локализованного процесса урбанизации. Качественное исследование ревитализации Ныского предместья на польской стороне немецко-польского транс-граничного города Гёрлиц-Згожелец анализируется здесь в рамках аргумента о ключевой роли построенной среды в процессе изменения социально-географической масштабной формации в результате расширения ЕС и изменения режима функционирования данной государственной границы. Я описываю и интерпретирую черты Ныского предместья в Згожельце в качестве новой пространственной единицы, которая стала возможной в рамках более широкого масштабного режима ЕС-25. Интерпретируемый эмпирический материал взят из качественных интервью с игроками, вовлечёнными в пространственное планирование и в наиболее значимые для анализируемой пространственной единицы культурные проекты транс-граничной кооперации, а также из полевых наблюдений, сделанных в Гёрлице и Згожельце между 2007 и 2009 годами. Данная статья состоит из двух шагов. Первый шаг - это обзор существующих исследований процессов изменений масштабных формаций в регионах вблизи государственных границ. Здесь я реконструирую существующие попытки координировать и использовать термины „производства границ“ и „производства масштабов“ в отношении к эмпирическим реальностям пространств вблизи к границам ЕС. Я демонстрирую, что в таких исследованиях больше внимания должно уделяться значениям и функциям построенной среды, активизируемой в результате транс-граничных обменов. В качестве второго шага я представляю случай ревитализации Ныского предместья после расширения ЕС в 2004 году, а также развиваю методологическую категорию профессиональной масштабной позиции. Эта категория используется в качестве направляющего принципа в процессе сбора информации о социально-географическом изменении пространств вблизи государственных границ, а также в процессе интерпретации масштабов и логик практической интеграции построенной среды транс-граничных городов.

*Политика масштаба; ревитализация; построенная среда; профессиональная масштабная позиция; режим функционирования границы; масштабная формация; Гёрлиц-Згожелец*

**Résumé**

SIARHEI LIUBIMAU

**Mise en relation de la délimitation et de la mise à l'échelle dans la recherche urbaine qualitative: le cas d'un projet de revitalisation transfrontalier germano-polonais**

Dans les études récentes, les zones frontalières des états et les conditions de circulation transfrontalières sont de plus en plus souvent conceptualisées et discutées en partant d'approches d'échelles géographiques en tant que processus dynamiques, plutôt que comme des structures prédéfinies données. Le but de cet article est de systématiser ces conceptualisations existantes et d'évaluer leur potentiel afin d'étudier un processus d'urbanisation particulièrement localisé. L'étude de cas qualitative de la revitalisation de la banlieue de Neisse, du côté polonais de la ville frontalière germano-polonaise de Görlitz-Zgorzelec, est analysée dans le présent document, afin d'argumenter en faveur d'un rôle clé des environnements construits dans le processus de changement des formations scalaires socio-géographiques, induites par l'élargissement de l'UE et le changement du régime frontalier. Je décris et j'interprète les traits de la banlieue de Neisse de Zgorzelec comme une nouvelle unité spatiale, rendue possible par le régime scalaire plus large de l'UE des 25. Le matériel empirique interprété provient, d'une part, d'entretiens qualitatifs avec des acteurs impliqués dans l'aménagement spatial et dans des projets de coopération culturelle transfrontalière, cruciaux pour l'unité spatiale analysée et, d'autre part, des observations sur le terrain effectuées à Görlitz-Zgorzelec entre 2007 et 2009. Cet article comprend deux étapes. La première étape consiste en un aperçu des recherches existantes sur les processus de changements scalaires dans les régions frontalières. Ici, je reconstitue les tentatives existantes de coordination et d'application des termes de délimitation et de mise à l'échelle en rapport avec les réalités empiriques des zones frontalières de l'UE. Je démontre que dans ces études il faudrait accorder plus d'attention à la signification et aux fonctions des environnements bâtis, activés au cours des échanges transfrontaliers. Dans une deuxième étape, je présente une étude de cas de la revitalisation de la banlieue de Neisse après l'élargissement de l'UE en 2004 et je développe une catégorie méthodologique portant sur une attitude professionnelle scalaire. Cette catégorie est utilisée comme principe directeur pour recueillir des données sur les changements socio-géographiques dans les zones frontalières ainsi que pour interpréter les échelles et les logiques d'intégration pratique des environnements bâtis des villes transfrontalières.

*Politique d'échelle; revitalisation; environnement bâti; position scalaire professionnelle; régime des frontières; formation scalaire; Görlitz-Zgorzelec*