Bridging the Divide?

Ethnic Identity and Transnational Consumption in a "European City"

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Abstract

In an effort to promote the free movement of people and capital, and to establish a supranational conception of identity that deemphasizes nationality and ethnicity as markers of difference, the European Union (EU) has pursued a specific policy agenda of "deterritorializing" its internal borders. Utilizing the urban area of Frankfurt an-der-Oder, Germany, and Słubice, Poland--two border cities divided only by the Oder River--as an ethnographic site, this paper examines the construction and performance of national and ethnic identities in the transnational context of the Polish-German border regions through the commonplace cultural interactions engendered by the deregulation of cross-border movements and consumption practices. By examining the everyday articulation and negotiation between different ethnicities and nationalities, this paper explores how residents of the Polish/German border regions employ different forms of ethnic, national and transnational identities, and how systems of ethnicity and nationality are reconfigured in response to the EU's expanding transnational institutions. In this way, Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice acts as a microcosm for demonstrating transformations that are occurring throughout Europe, by virtue of its location as a place where what it means to be "European" is negotiated and contested through everyday cross-border practices and interactions.

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Comment [ADA1]:

Introduction

The border crossing between Frankfurt an-der-Oder[1], Germany and Słubice, Poland

begins at the corner of *Karl-Marx-Straße* and *Rosa-Luxemburg-Straße*. After passing a

McDonald's, a casino, and a line of taxis waiting for people arriving from Poland, an eastward

traveler enters the border control checkpoint: cars and bicycles in the center, foot traffic on the

outside. At the checkpoint, everyone must present a passport or national identification card to

both the German and Polish border police. The queue is usually short, almost never more than

five minutes. For European Union (EU) citizens, this is an open border, and the check for them

is usually cursory, amounting to only a glance through a passport or at an ID card. For people

are carrying non-EU, "third country" passports, the check is more stringent, and its rigor often

depends on the traveler's country of origin. After exiting the border control, it is about a five-

minute walk over the bridge spanning the Oder River to the Polish side. On the left side

stretching parallel to the river, a line of taxis waits for people arriving from Germany. They are

cheaper if a passenger pays in Złoty instead of Euros, and the price can be negotiated in advance,

but sometimes only in Polish. On the right side, mini-buses take people to the local bazaar, a

little less than two kilometers away. After passing a white and red boundary marker (No. 490)

bearing Poland's crowned white eagle and crossing the street, the eastward traveler arrives at a

pedestrian zone, *ulica Jednosći Robotnicze* (United Workers Street), or the "*Zigaretten-Straße*"

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[1]   In local speech, Frankfurt an-der-Oder is usually referred to simply as "Frankfurt." When it is necessary to
distinguish it from the much larger Frankfurt am Main, the abbreviation "Frankfurt(Oder)" is utilized. For the
purposes of clarity, I use Frankfurt(Oder) throughout the remainder of this paper.

(Cigarette Street) in local slang, and is greeted by beer gardens, alcohol and cigarette shops, hair salons, and money exchanges.

Once one of the most tightly controlled borders in socialist Europe, the openness of today's Polish-German border stands in stark contrast to the nearly impassable boundary remembered by one border resident as "...something uncanny. First, there was the barbed wire, and then the *Grenzstreifen* (the forbidden border-zone). Every few minutes soldiers who guarded the border patrolled there" (Stokłosa 2003:356). Today, the Polish-German border is at the center of the European Union's projects of "integration" and "deterritorialization" as it endeavors to promote and expand its common "European" market through the free movement of people, goods, services, and capital.

Located about 80 kilometers east of Berlin, Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is a transnational urban area of just under 90,000 residents[2], and is situated at almost the exact midpoint of the Polish-German border. Towns located on the international borders of the EU are regularly described as the "laboratories" of European integration because cross-border contact and interaction is more intensive in these regions. As such, these cities are also locations where the EU has most vigorously pursued policies aimed at de-emphasizing national boundaries. This processes of deterritorialization has entailed an increased emphasis on regional initiatives with the ultimate goal of creating what Martinez (1994) calls "integrated borderlands," or border regions that have "no barriers to the flow of goods and people," and "enjoy a relationship of equality, trust and respect" (Donnan & Wilson 1999:51). To this end, the EU has created cross-border "Euroregions"[3] to help facilitate cultural and economic cooperation and integration

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[2] Frankfurt(Oder)'s population in 2001 was 70,308, while Słubice's population in 2000 was 17,737.
[3] Euroregions are cross-border regional institutions that the EU uses to assist in the administration of transnational regional funds and policies. Euroregions are not official governing bodies, but are instead voluntary associations of

between its member states, and has provided various regional funding initiatives (e.g.

INTERREG and PHARE) aimed specifically at transnational and interregional cooperation.   In

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, these initiatives have funded cultural events, educational activities,

infrastructure development, and economic investment, all of which endeavor to promote contact

and interaction between and among Polish and German citizens living in the border regions.

I experienced many of these projects firsthand while conducting five months of fieldwork

in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice during the summers of 2003 and 2004. I attended concerts, festivals,

and sporting events sponsored in part by the EU, and enjoyed parks and walking paths that EU

funds helped build and refurbish. I taught classes at the cities' cross-border university, Europa

University Viadrina/Collegium Polonicum, in a building constructed with EU funds, and even

lived in a students' apartment complex built with an EU grant. Indeed, the EU's projects are

almost ubiquitous in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice's urban space.

While living in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, I met a wide variety of individuals residing on

both sides of the border, including not only Poles and Germans, but also non-EU "third country"

citizens. Working in some combination of German, Polish and English (as is often typical in the

border regions), I conducted both structured interviews and informal conversations with residents

of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, but as is often the case with ethnographic research, many of my

findings are based on participating in the everyday social life of the cities and circulating with its

residents in the local, yet transnational space provided by its unique location.

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municipal and local governments that can generally be considered civil society institutions. For a detailed
discussion of the "Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina," which includes Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, see Asher (2004).

National Boundaries and "European" Spaces

As places where one governing regime ends and another begins, border regions are locations where processes of governmentality are especially apparent. Foucault describes governmentality as the "ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of. . .[a] form of power, which has as its target population, as its principle form of knowledge political economy, and as its essential technical means apparatuses of security" (1991:102). In his discussion of governmentality, Foucault emphasizes the themes of security, territory, and population, each of which, as markers of the extremity of the state, borders have an important role in regulating (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999). As locations where individuals encounter the direct regulation of movement and are subjected to state scrutiny and surveillance, borders are locations where the practices of governmentality are experienced personally and firsthand, while the institution of the border regime, with its associated policing and security apparatuses, acts as an extremely potent symbol of state power.

By functioning to delineate populations and territories from one another, borders can be used as extremely strong markers of national or ethnic difference. However, local cross-border economic, cultural, and even political ties can act to subvert this division, often pulling individuals away from close identification with their nation-state of residence, and producing ambiguous transnational identities (Donnan and Wilson 1999:60, cf. Strassaldo 1982). By utilizing its supranational institutions and policies in an effort to encourage an overarching "European" identity that can encompass multiple ethnicities and nationalities, the EU is attempting to reconcile this ambiguity. Simultaneously, by working to establish this transnational identity, the EU also helps advance its goal of further economic and political

integration. In their regulatory function, borders are a hindrance to both these processes, leading

the EU to work toward reforming the practices of governmentality within its member states by

creating a supranational ensemble of laws, regulations, policies, and institutions that supersede

those of its member states[4] and are aimed at eliminating barriers to the free movement of people,

goods, and capital.

By pursuing policies that de-emphasize borders between nation-states, the EU endeavors

to eliminate the function of borders as transforming, "territorial" passages, where one moves

from the identity of a citizen to that of a foreigner (Berdahl 1999:4), and replace them with a

fluid transnational space in which an EU citizen may move from country to country while

remaining first and foremost a "European". The EU's policies of opening borders have

contributed significantly to the transformation of the Polish-German border from a tightly

regulated and difficult to cross barrier, to one in which crossing over the bridge between Poland

and Germany and through its border checkpoint is a regular (and sometimes daily) experience for

many of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice's residents. Although residents on both sides of the border can

now circulate freely, the cities' residents remain conscious of crossing between two separately

constructed spaces. As one of the dominant architectural features of the cities, the bridge is

symbolic of both "European" connection and national separation[5]. One local university student

remarked that there should be a marker at the center of the bridge that indicates where one

crosses "into the East." This student's use of the metaphorical "East" acknowledges the deep

historical and cultural divisions that were often also encompassed by the Polish-German border

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[4] As a requirement of EU membership, member states must implement the EU's entire body of laws and regulations, the *aquis-communitare,* and agree through treaty provisions that the requirements of the *aquis-communitare* supersede those of national law.

[5] According to a "mental map" survey of the urban area's residents, the Oder bridge is the third most identified feature in the cities, behind only the river itself and the *Oderturm*, the cities' only skyscraper (Garand 2002). The symbolism of bridges as mediums of connection is also utilized by the Euro paper currency, with the back of each Euro note featuring an evolving architectural style of bridge on each successively higher denomination.

(cf. Wolff 1994). Through forms of governmentality that promote cross-border integration and

cooperation, the EU programs and policies have alleviated some of these divisions while

aggregating others.

Within the Polish-German border regions, the commonplace cultural interactions

engendered by the deregulation of cross-border movements of people and goods create a context

in which the everyday articulation of different ethnicities and nationalities provide residents of

the border regions with multiple possibilities through which to express individual and collective

identities. These expressions of identity include both the ethnic and national identities of

"German" or "Polish," as well as an emerging and hybridized model of "European" identity that

complicates and challenges the historical construction and maintenance of political and cultural

boundaries between Poland and Germany.

"As a strategy of self-representation and a device of power," the process of

Europeanization "is fundamentally reorganizing territoriality and peoplehood, two principles of

group identification that have shaped modern European order" (Borneman & Fowler 1997:487).

As subjects living in a transnational space, residents of the Polish-German border regions

demonstrate practices that challenge the idea of ethnically-defined national territories while

simultaneously reinforcing and utilizing these territories as markers of difference. In an effort to

illuminate the dynamic and contested nature of the "European project," this essay will examine

how ethnic, national, and transnational identities are created, contested, and employed

strategically during the practices of cross-border consumption and cultural production in

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice. As an explicitly transnational location where the meanings of

"European" are subjected to daily negotiation and contestation through commonplace cross-

border practices and interactions, the experiences of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice's residents are

illustrative of transformations and accommodations that are occurring throughout Europe in the wake of the EU's continued expansion of its powers and institutions.

A Troubled History

Within Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, the history of the Polish-German border regions profoundly influences the construction of ethnic and national identities, making it useful to give a brief account of 20th century Polish-German relations here. Since Poland regained independence in 1918, the Polish-German border has been almost continuously, and sometimes violently, contested, beginning with two border wars: the Posnanian War of December 27, 1918 to June 28, 1919 and the Silesian War, which was fought sporadically during the summers of 1919-1922 (Davies 1982:394). On August 31, 1939, World War II began with a Nazi-staged attack by "Poles" on a radio station in the German border town of Gleiwitz (Gliwice), predicating the German invasion the next morning (Davies 1982:435). In 1945, the Allied negotiations at the Yalta and Potsdam Conferences redrew Poland's post-war borders. After the Soviet Union made clear its intention to annex the portions of Poland it had acquired in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, Poland's eastern border was moved to the Curzon line,[6] a loss of territory that was offset by moving Poland's western border at the Oder and Neiße rivers.

As a result of this westward territorial shift, about 1.5 million ethnic Poles were compelled to move west from behind the new Soviet-Polish frontier, while as many as 9 to 10 million ethnic Germans were forced to emigrate from Poland's "recovered" territories in the

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[6] This line was proposed by British Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon during the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920 and the post World War I peace negotiations (Davies 1982:504). It approximates the Nazi-Soviet demarcation line of 1939.

west[7] (deZayas 1979:58,89). Around 4.5 million ethnic Poles were resettled in these

"recovered" territories, principally from central Poland and the lands annexed by the Soviet

Union, while about 1 million residents were allowed to stay, provided their Polish ethnicity could

be verified (Gruchman, et al. 1959:136,144). Słubice was "founded" by resettled Poles in 1945

when the movement of the Polish-German border divided the eastern riverside quarter of

Frankfurt(Oder), then called Dammvorstadt, from the rest of the city.[8] With the movement of

the border, Słubice was transformed from an integral part of a regional center to a relatively

isolated small town of only about 15,000 residents. Both the historical city center and the train

station were located on the German side of the border. The train connection to Słubice was only

recently reestablished, and after leaving Frankfurt(Oder) most trains traveling east still bypass

the city. It is often more convenient for Słubice's residents to cross the border into

Frankfurt(Oder) to get a train connection to cities in Poland.

The contested nature of the Polish-German border contributed to post-World War II

border regimes that reified difference, especially nationalized ethnic difference, as a way to

consolidate and legitimize power over the new territorial arrangements (S. Anderson 2001,

Schultz 2003). With the exception of a brief period between 1972 and 1980, when the border

was opened to limited cross-border traffic, it was extremely difficult if not impossible for

average border residents to cross between Poland and Germany during the forty-five years from

1946 to 1991, when the border was opened to visa-free traffic. Schultz explains that Słubice

explicitly constructed its identity in opposition to Frankfurt(Oder), explaining, "[Słubice] wanted

never to share the urban history of Frankfurt(Oder). Słubice as border guard of the Polish

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[7] Due to the chaotic circumstances of this region at the end of World War II, the precise number of German expellees remains impossible to determine. Another 3.5 million ethnic Germans, the "Sudeten Deutsch," were forced to emigrate from Czechoslovakia.

[8] Słubice's name derives from a Slavic settlement in the Middle Ages called Śliwice, which the Piasts lost to Brandenburg in 1250 along with the rest of the Lubuska region (Urząd Miejski w Słubicach 2003:5).

'Regained Territories' built up her own history, rooted in the pioneer period after the last world war" (2002:53). Because it was unclear if Germany would accept the new border, the border served a dual purpose, both to keep Poles in and Germans out—out of their former homes, cities and territories. The ethnic opposition engendered by these cross-border oppositions further supported the strong ethno-nationalist identities that were already entrenched in Poland and Germany by the 19th century (cf. Davies 1982, Porter 2000, Snyder 2003).

While the post-war border was officially accepted by East Germany in 1950 by the Görlitz Treaty, only after West Germany and Poland signed the Warsaw Treaty in 1970, which normalized relations between the two countries, was permanent residence by the border regions' Polish settlers relatively assured. The subject was not put to rest until 1991, when Poland and Germany signed a border treaty and the Treaty on Good Neighborliness, Friendship and Cooperation. Nevertheless, the possibility that displaced Germans might file indemnity suits in Polish or European courts has not yet been completely ruled out, and in many ways the "recovered territories" remain a contested space. For example, in 2004, a group of expelled Germans began civil indemnity proceedings against Poland to seek reparations for lost property, an action that sparked an intense debate in Poland's legislature and eventually led to the *Sejm* (Poland's lower house) passing a resolution (328 to 0, with one abstention) on September 10, 2004 which denounced the claims as unlawful.

One of the motivations for creating a mono-ethnic Polish state was to help establish a more lasting peace in Europe by removing potentially problematic ethnic minorities in the hope of finally solving the problem of overlapping ethnic settlement patterns in the Polish-German border regions. This strategy was pursued throughout post-war Central and Eastern Europe. In addition to Germans and Poles, populations of Czechs, Slovaks, Lithuanians, Belarusians,

Ukrainians, and Magyars all experienced resettlement[9]. Because of the reification of an ethnic definition of the nation-state, in the case of Poland and Germany, the politically expedient territorial shift arranged at Yalta and Potsdam required a subsequent population shift, resulting in a reorganization not only of both countries' territorial compositions, but also the compositions and the geographic distributions of their populations. With the movement of the Polish-German border, native-born residents in the "recovered territories" were instantaneously converted to "minorities" with potentially subversive tendencies, which then required, at least in the eyes of the policymakers, their resettlement for the sake of stability (deZayas 1979:10). The forced emigration of Germans from Poland, and Poles from the Soviet Union, therefore stems from the same quest for stability that created the impetus for the integration projects that eventually led to the formation of the EU, a rather ironic situation as the EU now faces the very problems created by these policies fifty years ago.

Pursuing "Europe" in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice

Comaroff and Comaroff observe that "ethnicity has its origins in the asymmetric incorporation of structurally dissimilar groupings into a single political economy" (1992:54). This description fits the relationship between Poland and Germany within EU almost perfectly, where Germany remains a considerably more powerful economic and political power than Poland. For Poles and Germans living near the border, this asymmetry is very apparent in everyday experience, due to the high economic disparity that remains between the two sides. Dascher has calculated the real per capita GDP of the German border region as about four times

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[9] For an excellent summary and cartographic representation of these population shifts see Magocsi (2002)

that of the Polish border region (2003:11-14) even as both regions share endemic problems of high unemployment and economic malaise.

A community with relatively easy cross-border access, Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is a site where "cultural confrontation, articulation. . .and penetration" create "struggles over the production of cultural meanings" in which ethnic and national identities are simultaneously constructed, employed and challenged (Berdahl 1999:9). Barth asserts that the maintenance of ethnic identity is most meaningful at its boundaries, since this is the location where inter-ethnic interaction is highest (1969:15-16). Because of a history that has linked the nation-state to ethnicity, this is especially true in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice where the extremely high level of ethnic homogeneity produced on both sides of the border (and in Poland and German generally)[10] after World War II have created a resilient ethnic border. Within this context, it is common for individuals living in both Frankfurt(Oder) and Słubice to use the generalized ethno-national categories of "Poles" and "Germans," as a heuristic shorthand with which to make comparative generalizations of perceived similarity and difference. This is also precisely the differentiation that the EU wishes to de-emphasize.

As a way to overcome these historical and ethno-national differences, in the Polish-German border regions, the EU has focused much of its practices of supranational governmentality on transnational cultural policies aimed at promoting cross-border interaction and cooperation. In Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, local politicians have demonstrated a relatively high commitment this "European" project, and a significant segment of the politics in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is caught up in negotiating these decisions. As an example of this commitment, during the summer of 2003 the city administrations of Frankfurt(Oder) and Słubice

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[10] According the CIA World Factbook (2003), 97.6% of Polish citizens identify as ethnically Polish, and 91.5% of German citizens identify as ethnically German.

undertook an ambitious project to promote integration between the cities through cross-border cultural tourism. The "Europagarden 2003," was a comprehensive urban renewal and cultural exchange project designed to enhance the cities' riverfront, to build a common "green" city center, and to improve the aesthetic and recreational quality of the cities (Słubice Municipal Government 2003). Funded by both EU regional funds (such as PHARE and INTERREG) and the municipal governments, the Europagarden can be considered both part of the EU's integration strategy and demonstrates a local enactment of the utopian vision the EU promotes of an "integrated" borderless Europe.

Lasting from May to October, the Europagarden 2003 implemented a multifaceted group of events, projects and festivals. Most of the Europagarden's cultural events took place on the Isle Ziegenwerder, a small island in the German side of the Oder River that was developed into a large park with several performance venues. From June through August, every Thursday through Sunday featured an event showcasing Europe's cultural and artistic diversity, including performances by musicians, films, theatre, fashion shows and art installations.

Many of these events were targeted at demystifying the border, and promoting cross-border contact. One event I attended is illustrative of this goal. Part of the "Jazz on the Oder" series, the evening opened with a *Kabarett* featuring Steffen Möller, a comedian who has lived in both Poland and Germany and whose performances present stories (using both German and Polish), about his experiences of cultural difference between Poland and Germany—an apt performer for the mixed Polish and German crowd from both sides of the border. The *Kabarett* was followed by a jazz concert showcasing Polish trumpeter Tomasz Stańko and German pianist Joachim Kühn. Both headliners in their own right, the performance of the Polish-German duo made a clear symbolic statement of support for Polish-German cooperation.

Other events were aimed at simply giving people a reason to cross the border and interact. For this purpose, two of the larger summer festivals, Johannisnacht (Summer Solstice, 21 July) and Oderfest (13-15 June) were held in Słubice. Several of the Oderfest's events concentrated on bringing people together through sporting competition, and included a boxing tournament, a tennis tournament, a chess tournament and a soccer tournament, in which residents of the two cities competed against one another and drew significant crowds of spectators.

To contribute to the long-term recreational and aesthetic quality of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, the Europagarden also built or refurbished nine parks—six in Frankfurt(Oder) and three in Słubice—and refinished the Słubice soccer stadium. By striving to improve Słubice and Frankfurt(Oder) both aesthetically and socially, the Europagarden embodies the utopian vision of the cities as transnational, inter-ethnic, and "European," by endeavoring to turn the two divided cities into a single integrated city that is a more "perfect" place to live.

One of the Europagarden's events, a twelve-day long series of art projects and seminars for local students, collectively called "Eden," made the examination of the utopian ideal its central theme. For example, one project, *"Eden Schildern"* (Eden Pictures), consisted of a series of photographs made by students, which were laminated and hung around the Isle Ziegenwerder on trees and lampposts. The pictures were all taken in Frankfurt(Oder) and Słubice, and the photographers were instructed to find the most beautiful thing in the ugliest area, or the ugliest thing in the most beautiful area. A caption was then added, usually in Polish and German, which played with Paradise/Eden and border themes such as, "*granice Ednu/die grenzen von Eden"* (the borders of Eden), "*Eden für jeden/Eden dla wszytkich"* (Eden for everyone), and "*wie kommt der Tod ins Paradies?/jak śmierć się dostaje do raju?"* (How does death come to paradise?). These themes are especially cogent for individuals experiencing the Polish/German

border on a daily basis. Not only do they underscore the difficulties of the border, such as multiple languages and cultural differences, they also observe that even in the transnational "paradise" of the EU old borders and differences persist.

While relatively successful in many of its goals, the Europagarden was not an unqualified achievement. Many residents complained that it was too expensive, with admission to most events costing between EUR 3 and EUR 12. These prices caused many people to opt for other entertainment, or at least to think twice about attending. In order to make up for the income disparity between Poland and Germany, there was a 50% discount in admission rates for Polish citizens, but this gesture may have been more derisive than helpful, as it inadvertently reinforced a subordinate status for Poles. Other residents argued that the project itself was a waste of investment funds, and that the cultural events did not achieve any real goals. Perhaps the largest problem for the Europagarden project was the cynical perception that it was organized principally as two separate projects which were then placed under one name to qualify for EU funding.

Consumption, Hierarchy, and Travel in the "European City"

Given the EU's emphasis on policies that promote an unrestricted market, it is perhaps not surprising that in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice shopping and the consumption of goods and services are two of the foremost reasons for crossing the border in either direction. Shopping is a fundamental border activity (cf. Donnan and Wilson 1999, Thuen 1998, Wilson 1993, 1995), and according to a study by Schultz, it is by far the primary reason for cross-border trips by residents of border cities throughout Europe, but especially in Eastern Europe (2002:26). This ability to shop across the border was an advantage to living in the Polish-German border regions even

during the socialist era, when hard to find items were sometimes available in one country but not

the other (Dürrschmidt 2002:136). These items often found their way across the border through

personal networks even when it was closed to the general population. One Polish mother

described the border as "indispensable" to her during the 1980s, when a personal connection

with someone who was allowed to work in East Germany supplied her with powdered milk that

was unavailable in Poland (Dürrschmidt 2002:136). For many individuals living in

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, shopping is often *the* way they experience the border, and like Berdahl

(1999) describes in her ethnography of the border between East and West Germany, the

circulation of people and objects intrinsic to the practices of shopping and consuming across a

border provide important contexts for ascribing difference. Because the border between

Frankfurt(Oder) and Słubice is often perceived as an ethnic boundary, the distinctions and social

relations demonstrated through shopping frequently acquire ethnic dimensions, while the

commodities procured during this "ritual practice" are "used to constitute the complexity of

contemporary social relations" (Miller 1998:8).

     During my interviews and conversations in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, shopping was a

subject of tremendous discussion and debate, especially with regard to relative prices and the

best places to buy particular items. Some items are demonstrably cheaper or easier to obtain on

one side of the border. For example, gasoline is about 20% cheaper on the Polish side, leading to

long queues for automobiles at the border, especially on weekends and holidays. Cigarettes are

also cheaper on the Polish side, as are many grocery items, such as produce--most notably

strawberries and asparagus--and baked goods. Cosmetics are often cheaper on the German side,

while service products such as dentists, hair and beauty salons, restaurants, and "nightclubs"

featuring dancers and often prostitution, are almost always cheaper, and thus in greater

abundance on the Polish side. The daily exchange rate further influences purchasing choices,

and the carrying of two currencies is commonplace (and often a necessity), leading to a

prevalence of currency exchanges (*kantor*), especially on the Polish side. Because Poland is not

projected to adopt the Euro until at least 2007,[11] this division of currency is also an indicator of

difference, demonstrating in symbolic terms that Poland is not quite ready to join the unified

"Europe" represented by the common currency.

In addition to price, the quality and selection of goods are constantly debated. Seeking

bargains is one principal reason for crossing the border, and visiting the Polish bazaar to search

for cheap prices on a wide variety of items ranging from breads, meats, and cheeses, to bootleg

CDs and DVDs, to fake designer jeans, is a popular activity for many Germans. Trips between

the bridge and the bazaar (a distance of about 1.5 kilometers) are a significant source of revenue

for Słubice's oversized taxi service, a lobby that has reportedly blocked all attempts at creating a

unified public transit system between the towns.[12] The best place to purchase alcohol also varies

by the type and quality that is sought. Vodka is usually cheaper on the Polish side, while other

EU-produced spirits are often less expensive or easier to find on the German side. The

consumption of beer, a product that is strongly linked to local identity in both Germany and

Poland (cf. Asher 2003), is also divided by the border. Polish beer is cheaper and almost

exclusively served in Poland, while German beer is cheaper and almost exclusively served in

Germany (although both types are available in both countries).

The practices of cross-border consumption in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice facilitate not only

the construction and maintenance of national, ethnic, and class differences between border

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[11] This is the earliest date that Poland is projected to fulfill the debt to GDP ratio, interest rate, and inflation requirements of the 1997 Stability and Growth Pact that will allow it to participate in the third and final stage of the economic and monetary union (EMU), at which time the Euro currency is adopted for general use.
[12] Other Polish-German border cities, such as Görlitz-Zgorzelec, have successfully implemented integrated public transportation systems.

residents, but help to organize these differences into hierarchies of political and cultural value

(Appaduri 1986, Berdahl 1999, Bourdieu 1984[1979], Howes 1996). I was repeatedly told that

clerks in German stores often discriminate against Poles by following shoppers through the aisles

and treating them as potential thieves. Marek[13], a Pole who works in Słubice internet café,

described his experience: "Germans don't like Poles. They don't look happy to see me when I

go to McDonald's.[14] In shops they look at you like a thief." While many Germans reportedly

condescend to Poles in Germany, many Poles simultaneously judge some German consumers in

Poland as morally degenerate and occupying low social status, saying that the Germans who go

to the bars and nightclubs in Poland are too poor to afford the German versions, and only travel

to Poland so that they can afford to indulge.

Nevertheless, the provision of inexpensive domestic services (cooking, cleaning, haircuts,

prostitution) by Poles reinforces a perception of German superiority, as well as the status of

Poles as second class Europeans—the hired help in the "House of Europe." Or, as Bunzl argues

of cross-border Austrian sex tourism in Prague, these practices produce fields and discourses of

stratified neocolonial hierarchies between colonizing and colonized subjects (2000:89). In

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice this neocolonial hierarchy is expressed by the process of mapping the

producers of services as Polish and their consumers as German. It is the EU, and its emphasis on

the open market, that has created a transnational, cross-border space in which the consumption of

services is possible, and has enabled the development of these hierarchies. One wry Polish joke

perhaps sums up many Poles' view of their positioning in the EU best of all: "Once Poland joins

the EU every Pole will have a Mercedes. . .to wash."

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[13] In the interest of confidentiality, all names are pseudonyms.
[14] The only McDonald's in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is on the German side of the border.

Although Poland's accession to the EU on May 1, 2004 has largely deregulated cross-border trade and purchases (and even before this date individuals were rarely asked to declare purchased goods at the border checkpoint),[15] price differentials and the remaining border controls between Poland and Germany make the smuggling of goods and people by organized crime a lucrative business and a significant problem. The residents of Słubice consistently allude to this specter of mafia activity, and several of my respondents would regularly identify people they perceived as "Mafiosi" as we drank at sidewalk cafés in the evening. I was also informed that one Polish hotel near the river was operated by the "Bulgarian" mafia, who financed themselves with stolen cars (from Germany). Pawel, a Słubice resident who works in the university's administrative offices, told me that the best ways to make money in Słubice are to smuggle cigarettes or alcohol, to run a nightclub (i.e. prostitutes), or to be a *kantor* (who are perceived as having questionable business practices). He continued, saying, "these are the people who build the nice houses here." While it is unclear if organized crime is actually higher in Słubice than Frankfurt(Oder), the link between Poles, Poland, and crime acts to orient (and orientalize) Poland as not quite as "civilized" as Germany or the EU. A common joke, told on both sides of the border in different circumstances and to different effect, demonstrates this positioning: "What is the slogan of the Polish tourism office in Germany? Come to Poland, your car has already arrived."

Along with organized crime, the perceived threat of violence is a constant presence along the border. In 1991, after the border opened to visaless traffic, the first buses to cross the bridge from Poland were hit by stones in Frankfurt(Oder), an event that is commonly recalled in Poland as an example of German racism and discrimination. Muggings and assaults are also cited as a

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[15] As personal example of the "openness" of the border, I offer a brief illustration: one afternoon when I was crossing between Frankfurt(Oder) and Słubice and back, I purchased a carton of cigarettes in Poland as a favor for a friend's roommate—-an officer in the German border police.

fear, and friends on both sides of the border perpetually warned me of the dangers I could face,

especially when in Poland. I personally knew one German who was beaten-up in Słubice,

supposedly for fraternizing with Polish girls, and I was told about several "friends of friends"

who were robbed on the street in Słubice. While most of these stories are unverifiable, and many

are certainly of questionable reliability, the fact they are in constant circulation is significant, as

it ethnically maps Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice's social space in a way that marks Poles and Słubice

as less civilized and less safe than Germany and Frankfurt(Oder). Similar to the link between

colonial hierarchy and ethnic mapping observed by Kelleher (2003) in the borderlands between

Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland, the ethnic mapping of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice

again demonstrates a construction of neo-colonial hierarchy between Poland and Germany, a

hierarchy that is facilitated by the expansion of the EU and its governing policies and

institutions, even as the ostensible goal is to overcome these divisions.

However, one German I spoke with complicated the strict conception of the

colonized/colonizing binary of Polish/German relations. Invoking the experience of

Frankfurt(Oder)'s residents within Germany, he characterized his impression of their attitude

towards Poles by explaining, "West Germans look down on East Germans, East Germans look

down on Poles." Likewise, several of my respondents observed that Poles also have a superior

attitude toward Ukrainians. Oksana, a Ukrainian teaching at a Słubice secondary school,

described her experience in Poland, "Poles think it is the Promised Land [for Ukrainians]. . .

There *is* more money here than in Ukraine for my profession, [but] I'm not looking for a

Promised Land." Introducing additional ethnic and national groups into a binary German/Polish

hierarchy demonstrates the relationship of Europeanization to the EU's eastern expansion.

Wilson emphasizes that "European identity is about both *'being'* and *'becoming'* European"

(2000:139). Using this concept, "European-ness" and Europeanization can be represented as a

continuum between the "non-European" and "European," with countries located at different

points along the line depending on how fully they have accepted and internalized the institutions,

governing practices, and values of the EU.

In everyday terms, this hierarchy takes the form of differential mobility and access to

spaces. While Poles are allowed to travel freely throughout Germany and the EU, they are not

yet allowed to freely immigrate to Germany or most other EU member states for a "transition"

period of up to seven years.[16] Similarly, the EU required Poland to reintroduce visas for

Ukrainians on October 1, 2003, ending the bilateral policy of visa-free travel between the two

countries[17]. However, Poland provides these visas free of charge to Ukrainian citizens, and has

retained a comparatively liberal policy towards travel from Ukraine, while Germany forbids

Ukrainians from entering Germany without additional (and difficult to obtain) visas. For

Ukrainians living in Słubice, this bars them from the German half of the urban space, returning

the Słubice of their experience to its pre-1991 status as an isolated small town rather than an

integral part of a transnational "*Europastadt*" (European City).

Although Polish citizens can now cross the Polish-German border freely, and must be

treated in the same manner as all EU citizens, the border checkpoints between the two countries

will remain in place until the EU deems Poland's eastern border secure, and Poland can

implement the requirements of the Schengen Convention. In this way, the border checkpoint in

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice acts as a secondary barrier protecting the EU's core from the potential

threat of illegal immigration from countries further east (especially Ukraine), and as a regulator

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[16] In the case of Germany and the fourteen other pre-2004 EU members, a two-year transitional period on
immigration can be implemented, during which national measures constraining immigration can be applied
unilaterally by a current member state on a new member state. These policies will be reviewed after two years, but
may be applied for up to seven (European Commission 2002:6).
[17] Ukraine has maintained its visa-free policy towards Polish citizens.

of population flow that separates internal (EU citizen) from external (non-EU citizen) populations. Because its borders fulfill these roles for the EU, Poland is positioned as a state halfway between "European" and "non-European." The border checkpoint in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is therefore also a regular reminder that Poland and Germany are not yet quite equal within the EU, and functions to delineate "ethnically marked class grouping[s]" based on asymmetric power relations (Ong 1999:217).

As Borneman observes, liberty is increasingly measured by the ability to travel (1998:173). I would argue that this is especially true in a globalizing space such as the EU, which bases its core principles on the freedom of movement.[18] Therefore, restrictions on the freedom of movement in the EU create a hierarchy of social classes that are linked to ethnicity. While East Germans might be mapped as second-class Germans, they are still first-class "Europeans" enjoying full rights to freedom of movement within the EU. With their movement within the EU qualified for a "transition period," Poles are currently positioned as second-class "Europeans," but are moving toward first-class status. With no rights to movement in the EU, Ukrainians are positioned as third-class "Europeans" or excluded altogether. At the EU-wide level, Balibar argues that this exclusion of the citizens of non-EU "third countries" is creating an underclass of "foreign foreigners" who are "at the service of Europe" and is producing the effect of a developing "European apartheid" (2004:44).

Identifying Difference in Transnational Spaces

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[18] Indeed the EU's four fundamental "freedoms" are the free movement of people, capital, goods, and service.

While describing ethnic and national difference and hierarchy in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, my respondents also tacitly bring up the important issue of identification. Borders are a location where one can easily adopt or masquerade a different national or ethnic identity, and only during the ritual of passing through the border checkpoint must one declare a national citizenship. If the maintenance of ethnic identity is most meaningful at its boundaries (Barth 1969), then it also follows that borders are a location where moving fluidly between groups is easiest. In the North Irish village of "Ballybogoin," Kelleher observes that Catholics and Protestants utilize the process of "telling," a complex practice of reading strangers' bodies to determine their ethnicity (absent of overt phenotypical markers of ethnic difference) and assign them an identity within the local space (2003:11-13, 78). To produce this determination, Ballybogoin residents utilize a range of ethnically-mapped criteria including the movements of individuals through local spaces, language use, narratives of local history, mode of dress, and local consumption practices (2003:11-17, 72-83). Similarly, nearly every resident of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice with whom I spoke insisted to me that they could identify their opposite-side counterparts only by looking. Unfortunately, unlike Kelleher's consultants, none of the people I spoke with were able to explicitly describe the criteria they use to make this determination, but the process seemed to involve a complex set of national, ethnic, and class markers related to the cross-border practices of cultural production and consumption.[19] However, because each of these markers is strategically manageable and there are often situations on both sides of the border where it may be advantageous for individuals to purposefully use these markers to "blend in" with an ethnic group to which they do not belong, the process of "telling" in the transnational space of

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[19] This is a fruitful topic for additional research on cross-border group formation.

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is subject to constant negotiation, and therefore seems relatively

inaccurate and prone to error.

Nevertheless, in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, language, one of the fundamental markers of

modern conceptions of nationality (B. Anderson 1983), remains perhaps the most accurate and

obvious marker of difference and membership in an ethnic group (cf. Kelleher 2003:76-78).

Language proficiency is also one of the primary gatekeepers for fluidly functioning in the cities'

cross-border, transnational, Europeanized space. One of the first things an outsider notices in

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is the constant negotiation of language and the everyday necessity of

translation for, and the (at least superficial) accommodation of, monolingual "foreigners" from

across the border. Language acquisition in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is often a one-way street:

Poles are expected to learn German, while very few Germans learn more than a few words of

Polish. Germans I spoke with repeatedly justified this to me by the argument that Poles can gain

economically from learning German, while Germans have little to gain from learning Polish.

Schultz estimates that about 25% of Poles in Słubice have a command of German, while less

than 5% of Germans in Frankfurt(Oder) have a command of Polish (2002:17). Similarly, in the

entire Polish-German border region, only five German *Gymnasium* offer Polish as part of their

Abitur exams (Dascher 2003:39). Many Poles view this lack of interest in the Polish language as

a further example of German cultural arrogance and neo-colonial attitudes toward Poland.

The importance of linguistic competence in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, and in the EU

generally, has made language a consumptive domain. In Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, language

classes, tutors, and translators abound, as do "*tandem*" partnerships, a practice in which two

people meet regularly to "trade" language skills by teaching one another a different language

(usually German for Polish or German/Polish for English). However, at

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice's cross-border university, German remains the working language of classes and students. Nevertheless, it is not uncommon for conversations to be conducted in two or three languages simultaneously, usually in some combination of Polish, German, and English, depending on the group's composition and linguistic abilities (as is often the case at the European Commission (Shore 2000:188)). Students have dubbed the unique combination of Polish and German spoken casually at Europa University Viadrina/Collegium Polonicum as (from German) *Viadrinasprache*. One example of this language is the phrase "*na Hof*" meaning "on the courtyard of the dormitories," which combines a Polish preposition and a German noun (minus the Polish declension).

Despite the prevalence of multilingualism among the students in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, language continues to be an extremely contentious issue for many individuals, and contributes to the polarization of social groups. In social situations at the university, groups tend to fracture around language divisions, with Poles speaking Polish and Germans, German—a fact that is lamented by some and accepted by others. Krzysztof, a Polish graduate student, observed that he believes language deeply influences attitudes, and that given the countries' history of conflict, a third language is often better for Polish-German relations (usually English). Krzysztof expresses a common opinion among EU elites, who view the ability to speak multiple languages as a way for the next generation of transnational "Europeans"--a role the students at Europa University Viadrina/Collegium Polonicum are being explicitly educated to fulfill[20]--to supersede the ethnic and nationalist differences of monolingual individuals. Nevertheless, Krzysztof also emphasized the importance of maintaining an ethno-linguistic identity by criticizing some of his fellow students for denying their Polishness and becoming "more German than the Germans" as they

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[20] The Collegium Polonicum and Europa University Viadrina opened in 1991 with the specific goals of "[bridging] the 'East' and 'West,'" "break[ing] barriers and prejudices" between the two nations, and fostering a "common European conscience" (Słubice Municipal Government 2003).

move across the border to Frankfurt(Oder). Karl, German student living in Słubice told me (in a

mix of German and English) of the double bind he experienced after moving to Poland saying,

"[In Poland] I talk like normal. Some people say, 'you are in a foreign country, you shouldn't

speak German,' but I don't think it is foreign. I live here. Poles say I am *kurwa* (a whore)[21] for

it. Germans say I am *kurwa* for living here." By moving to Poland, Karl acts contrary to the

colonized/colonizer positioning of Poland vis-à-vis Germany, and reverses the hierarchal flow of

individuals from East to West. Likewise, by refusing to use Polish, he also embodies the

colonizer arriving from the West to exploit the East. In this manner, Karl is seen as a "whore" by

both sides, even as he is ostensibly enacting the European principle of free movement between

nations.

Therefore, in order to be accepted in a new community, it is often advantageous to

strategically utilize the markers and characteristics of a different nationality or ethnicity,

depending on the social situation. Within the transnational context of the EU, this "situational

ethnicity" (A. Cohen 1974, R. Cohen 1978), is an especially useful tool for achieving social and

political gains. In her analysis of Polish immigrants in Berlin, Morawska observes that one of

the principal distinctions between immigrant communities is their level of engagement with the

culture of their new communities (2003). Contrasting the "*trudna polskość*" (difficult

Polishness) of those who fail to assimilate and thus become torn between Poland and Germany

(or the EU), with the "pragmatic Europeans" who engage with German language and culture,

Morawska argues that these groups exhibit generational, educational, and class differences, with

the "Europeans" tending to be younger, better educated, and of a higher socioeconomic class

(2003:176,179). Similar distinctions are typical of the processes of Europeanization not only in

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[21] Literally meaning "a whore," *kurwa* is one of the strongest expletives one can use in Polish, and is often used both as an adjective and a noun in a similar way as "fucker" in English.

Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, but also across the EU generally,[22] demonstrating the continued

importance of ethnic and national identifications even within a transnational "European" space.

Conclusions

      In Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, a recurring theme among the cities' residents is the

perception that the two cities are collectively undergoing an "identity crisis" as they try to decide

what it means to be a "*Europastadt*." This is a "crisis" provoked by the EU's conscious projects

of deterritorialization and integration, which, through the opening of borders, promote a

sometimes-uncomfortable confrontation between individuals interacting in everyday domains of

practice. By resolving these confrontations, residents of the Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice can enact

both the identity of the ethnically defined nation-state and the hybridized identity of a

"European" citizen. These identities are not necessarily mutually exclusive, but instead are

negotiated and contested through the practices and social situations in which they are performed.

      Given the divisive and potentially explosive history of the Polish-German border, a

history that has been characterized by confrontations and negotiations between asymmetric

power relations that reinforce ethnic identification and division, the level of integration and

cross-border contact that has been achieved, despite its many problems and conflicts, is a

powerful example of the ability of normalizing processes of the EU's methods of

governmentality to overcome national differences. Within Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, the

deregulation of cross-border movements for people, goods, services and capital mandated by the

EU has created (at least for EU citizens) a functionally "transnational" space in which

individuals can circulate freely across national borders. Indeed, during one three-month period

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[22] In Poland, these distinctions parallel conceptions of the transition from socialism to capitalism, which frequently consider older, less educated, working-class individuals to be less capable of adapting to the market economy (cf. Dunn 1999, 2004, Asher 2003).

when I tracked my own cross-border movements, I crossed over the bridge and through the border checkpoint 144 times. Although many people living in Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice cross the border with similar frequency, many cross only rarely, and the average seems to be somewhere in-between (cf. Schultz 2002:21). Other individuals, such as Słubice's Ukrainian residents and other "third-country" residents of both sides of the border, are prohibited from crossing altogether, limited by their status as non-EU citizens. Thus, the border crossing remains a strong node of territoriality even amidst the "deterritorialized" space of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice, and the border continues to regulate and demarcate ethnic and national identities, even as its de-emphasis within the EU enables the formation of hybrid, transnational, "European" identities.

As a location where what it means to be "European" is negotiated and contested through everyday cross-border practices and interactions, I see the transnational space of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice as a microcosm for transformations that are occurring throughout Europe in response to the expansion of the EU's powers and institutions. Through the cross-border consumption practices of its residents, Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice also demonstrates how confrontations and articulations between asymmetrical power relations within the EU continue to create and reinforce hierarchical, sometimes neo-colonial, relationships, and national and ethnic divisions.

Such relationships are reinforced by a qualitative difference in cities' appearances, especially in the commercial centers, where Frankfurt(Oder) has had the advantage of post-1989 modernization projects, financed largely by West Germany. As a result, Frankfurt(Oder) appears as less "socialist," more affluent, and more "modern," than Słubice, making it easy for Frankfurt(Oder) to project Słubice as "inferior in space and behind in time" (Borneman 1998:110), a projection that is supported by the EU's presentation of accession for Poland (and

the other Eastern European candidate countries) as choice for democracy and the free market and against state-sponsored socialism, and move away from the Soviet Bloc in both temporal and spatial terms.

The EU's borders are both locations where nationalist and ethnic differences are most easily reinforced and where an individual can most easily inhabit the hybrid transnational space of the "European." As residents of Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice demonstrate new transnational identities that complicate and challenge the idea of ethnically and territorially defined nation-states, their strategic use of ethnicity as they circulate in these territories illustrates the sustained importance of nation-states, and the ethno-national identities associated with these nation-states, as markers of difference. Therefore, while the EU's transnational institutions and governing practices create new conduits for expressing identity, they simultaneously reinforce its internal differences. If a hybridized "European" identity is to exist as a long-term continental identity, as the EU is pursuing through its policy actions, it must find ways to encompass multiple and competing nationalities and ethnicities rather than supersede them, and must develop a "tolerance for contradictions, plurality, and the juggling of cultures" (Rosaldo 1989:216). This conception of European identity as in constant flux articulates well with the EU's self-conception as a perpetual "work in progress," in which "no one waits for Europe to exist, one builds it every day" (Abeles 2000:38). If the EU and the creation of a "European identity" are "works in progress," then Frankfurt(Oder)/Słubice is one location where the work is being done, as are scores of locales throughout "Europe," each of which present not only unique dilemmas and challenges for the EU to incorporate, but also variable expressions of what being "European" means (cf. Pagden 2002, Malmbourg & Strath 2002).

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