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DIVIDED TWIN TOWNS AT RIVER BORDERS IN THE VISEGRAD COUNTRIES AND GERMANY

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ABSTRACT

The paper compares three divided twin towns at river borders: Komárno/Komárom (SK-HU), Cieszyn/Český Těšín (PL-CZ), and Görlitz/Zgorzelec (DE-PL). Our fundamental question is: are twin towns separated urban entities in a close neighbourhood, or do they represent reunited townscapes and local societies? First of all, we discuss the essential concepts concerning borders, transborder regions, twin towns and divided twin towns, based on papers by David Newman (2006), Tamás Hardi (2001), Helga Schultz (2003), Jan Buursnik (1994) and Christoph Waack (2000). The second part of the paper focuses on the process of integration. It focuses on subjects which determine the everyday actions of urban society. Firstly, we present the facts which frame everyday contact between people: history and topography. We make the claim that the river, the breadth of bridges and patterns of urban structure determine the manner and frequency of people's mobility. The natural topography of Komárno/Komárom makes social interaction between the two parts difficult. In the cases of other towns, it is less the river itself than the last hundred years of urban planning that creates disintegration in the townscapes. We also discuss language barriers, which are not separate from national identities. Ethnic relations and language barriers are the most important factors as to why two sides fail to integrate. The linguistic networks of national minorities (Hungarian in Komárno, Polish in Český Těšín or the new Polish minority in Görlitz) cannot operate effectively because of inter-ethnic stereotypes and spatial distances. Finally, we examine everyday interaction through a very simple but important research question: why people would visit the city on the other side of the river. The empirical results show that the interactions in twin towns are reduced mostly to non-personal actions: shopping or taking a walk. Summarising the results, we argue that divided twin towns are far from being integrated and "reunited" urban structures. From a sociological point of view, the borderlines and frontier zones of the present urban places more or less overlap the mental (ethnic and language) zones of their inhabitants, as well as the economic differences in both sections of the twin town.

Key words

border regions, culture heritage, minority studies, urban sociology, space and society, Central European studies

The concept in the title was not invented by the authors of this paper (See Jajesniak-Quast-Stoklosa 2000, Schultz 2003). It is a general notion that, in the process of EU enlargement, border towns should open up to one another. At the same time,

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the question arises how this opening process should be realized. The special example of a reunited Berlin shows us that the integration process is not simple (Kerékgyártó 2008). The integration process is even more complex in the case of divided twin towns on the German-Polish, Czech-Polish and Slovakian-Hungarian borders. Besides existing borders, the ethnic relationships and the topography at the various rivers have to be mentioned. The river itself can be a sharp barrier even in cities like Budapest or Prague (Csanádi et al. 2010).

Our fundamental question sounds like this: are twin towns separated urban entities in a close neighbourhood or do they represent reunited townscapes and local societies? In other words: has the integration process of twinning two towns actually created one singular town lying in two countries? The case of twin towns is interesting not only in the Central European region. Because of topography of twin towns, we may conclude that the opening process arises not a force of EU politics but from the need of inhabitants. But on the other hand, ethnic relationships can slow down integration. The laboratories of twin towns show us the contrasting factors of the opening process and isolation strategies in the new situation.

Looking for a special case of twin-town development, we will compare three twin towns without any pretence of completeness: Komárno/Komárom (SK-HU), Cieszyn/Český Těšín (PL-CZ), and Görlitz/Zgorzelec (DE-PL).<sup>4</sup> First of all the paper discusses the essential concepts concerning border, the transborder region, the twin town and the divided twin town, based on papers by David Newman (2006), Hardi Tamás (2001), Helga Schultz (2003), Jan Buursnik (1994) and Christoph Waack (2000). The second part of this paper focuses on the process of integration. We cannot study all levels of integration, like for example political cooperation, multinational economic structures or common urban infrastructures. Therefore, we focus on subjects which determine the everyday actions of urban society. Firstly, we present the facts which frame the everyday contacts of people: history and topography. The second part discusses language barriers, which are not separate from national identities. Finally, we examine everyday interaction through a very simple but important question: why people would visit the city on the other side of the river.

## CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

To conceive a notion of divided towns along borders, first the border itself should be investigated. Primarily, investigating borders appears to be the most popular theme in regional geography, social geography and settlement sociology, along with their own international periodicals like *Journal of Borders* or *Journal of Borderlands Studies*. Challenges arising from globalization fuel the growing interest in borders (Newman 2006: 144). The EU's enlargement process determines the political and economic globalization of our region; consequently the divided towns along borders have served as laboratories of integration for several social-geographical and sociological studies (Schutz 2005).

State borders – at least in Europe – are easily measurable entities, having been determined in international legal documents (Bruhács 1999: 81). An immediate question arises: what is the relationship between natural geography and political geography? The natural geographer, Friedrich Ratzel, claimed that natural borders usually belong to difficult terrain: deserts, seas, and high mountains (Ratzel 1897: 501). Political state organizations determine their borders accordingly. Although natural

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<sup>4</sup>As we write about both parts, we will give both names. In case of historical facts before 1920 and 1945 we will use the former official names: Teschen, Komárom and Görlitz.

borders seem to be a logical presumption, they can be applied to technologically poorly developed countries. The British colonial empire, for example, could expand by leaping across the most powerful natural barrier: the ocean. Impermeability, therefore, is a rather relative, variable condition; consequently different things have been considered natural borders in different eras and societies (Hardi 2001: 2).

Commonly, borders are deemed natural even when they separate different ethnic, religious and cultural groups. Peter Haggett (1979) differentiates three borders as such: subsequent boundaries, antecedent boundaries, and superimposed boundaries. The first two cases roughly cover demographic conditions: either in a way that the different ethnic groups have settled separately from one another in the first place; or in a way that they have adapted to an already present border or boundary (like a natural-topographical demarcation line, e.g. a mountain or a river). In the third case, however, the border occurs afterwards, regardless of the given conditions and changing cultural spheres. Divided border towns undoubtedly represent this type. This model fails, however, in that it ignores forced border transformation. As the forced border line will eventually behave as an antecedent boundary, the national state's language, educational system, religion, visual and architectural culture will mould the belonging border town into its own image.

The regional aspect highlights another dimension of border concept. When a political border means a line without expansion on the map, then actual geographical processes do possess a tangible spatiality. Although rivers seem linear, natural formations still prove that they exist as a space delineated by a hydrographical system impossible to understand without the existence of the 'other side'. However, the spatial structure of social borders appears to be less palpable than hydrographical lines. Often, language borders, for example, cannot be described linearly. It is more about transitions, changing proportions, regional bilingualism, and mixed language identity. Today, South Slovakia is typically such a border region inhabited by Hungarians and Slovaks; nonetheless Teschen's vicinity has been as such historically (Hannan 1996; Szarka 2003; Mannová 2009). Town markets and catchment areas of services, as well as local marriage markets, migration and employment motivations, etc., also possess spatiality. That is why a border line has to be distinguished from a border region or border zone (Hansen 1983; Rechnitzer 1999; Martinez 1994; Veggeland 1997). The border zone is a complex system of economic, demographic and custom transitions. In many cases, the architectural heritage of the former state frameworks may describe the border zone. The common cultural heritage of the Czech-Polish borderland comprises the railway stations deriving from the K. u. K. era. The research of the border zones has become crucial in parallel with opening the borders. Presumably, the traversable borders promote the formation of border zones and fresh cooperation of formerly divided areas.

This has led us to the most often-investigated issue of border discourses: the dualities of "out-in", "open-closed", "us-them" (Newman 2006: 143). The last twenty years may be described as the process of opening up the borders in Central European region. So much the more because under state socialism the border situation meant an explicitly unilateral, introverted relation system with few crossing points (Tóth–Csatári 1983). Border stations played an important role in this model as exclusive points in that fundamentally closed world, having a peculiar local milieu: the presence of police and customs forces, along with emerging smuggling and corruption. All three towns were crossing points of international significance under socialism.<sup>5</sup> With border control easing up after 1990, the development prospects opened up for the formerly estranged borderland (Martinez 1994). Firstly, a parallel existence of two borderlands may occur without administrative exclusion but also

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<sup>5</sup> Note that this crossing function was not very new. The riverside towns used to be a 'ferry crossing' point as well.

without cooperation. Secondly, an intensive cooperation occurs but with the dominance of one party (e.g. processing, raw material production, employer-employee regions, town districts). Thirdly, both sides have approximately the same level of development and commitment to integration.

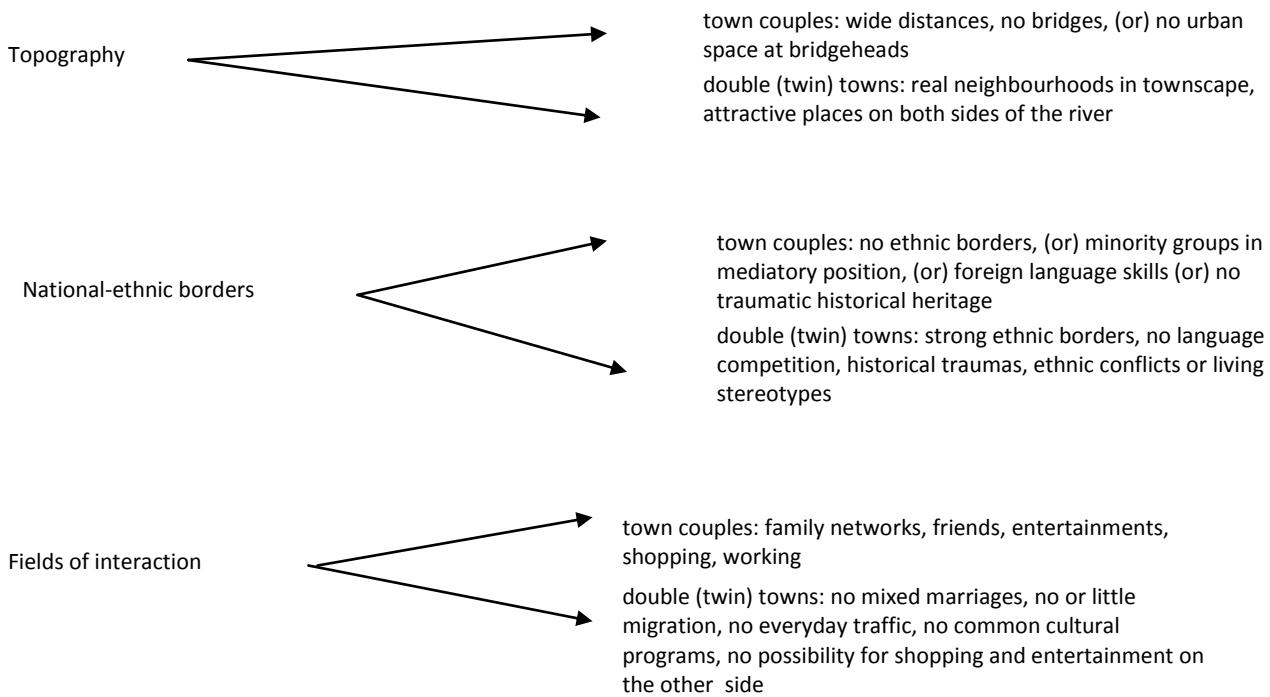
The question may arise too, why the separated regions should be interested in closer cooperation. It is not self-evident (Hardi 2001: 6). The dynamic part is interested in expanding beyond the border, while the weaker one often finds its interest in closing-in and market protection. The border is also an emotional line. Populations on the two sides will not necessarily want to cooperate; often, unresolved historical traumas and language incompetence impede the formation of a common town space. Finally, even in unified Europe, the national state's political elite might not find interest in merging border towns.

Numerous authors have attempted to translate the above concepts of border and border region into the special relations of border towns. All the more as there are nearly 60 twin towns along borders in Europe (Buursink 1994, Ehlers 2001, Joenniemi and Sergunin 2011, Schultz 2003, Waack 2000). Most of them lie by a river. Therefore, their crossing bridges provide their typical morphological feature. Towns divided in the 20th century comprise a separate group within twin towns. Almost all divided towns lie in the middle, eastern and southern parts of the continent (Schultz 2003: 9). In these cases, the new state border did not account for the integrity of the local urban space. In some extremes, the border cleaves the street, as in Valka/Valga (LV, EE), but usually the naturally given river line was taken as a basis. As the negative, often traumatic experience caused by border delineation is still not far away, historical remembrance represents a further disintegration factor. Therefore, opening the borders has not automatically brought about common urban spaces.

According to these border discourses, Jan Buursink (1994) differentiates town couples and double (twin) towns. Town couples comprise a closed system with detached spatial and social structures that only relate to the national state. Contrary, the double (twin) town has interest in cooperation. Many municipal services and developments, like flood protection, waste-water clearing, transport, retaining the workforce, attracting investments, or promoting tourism can be more easily realized in a common urban space. Another typology of Waack's (2000) adds that the opportunities for cooperation largely depend on the different powers of the twin towns. Great differences may occur on the two sides of the bridge depending on the general economic conditions of nation states. Based on documents of regional development, Waack defines three aspects: workplaces, that is, which sector is the leading employer; centricity, that is, what position the twin town holds in the national regional space structure; and permeability, the quality and character of the bridge connections between the two towns (Waack 2000: 60). The model has a great advantage, for it displays the question of morphological relation, so that the distance between the two towns – as for the number of bridges and their traffic – directly affects the degree of integration. Altogether however, neither Waack's, nor others' writings emphasize settlement morphology enough; albeit, in our consideration, settlement morphology is indeed the key issue in the formation of common urban spaces.

As shown, the integration process has very different interpretations. The definition of integration depends on questions of investigation. Because we want to understand everyday actions of urban life, after a short look at history, we have to understand the topographical situation where the interactions happen. Comparing twin towns to border regions, we can point out that the specific feature of twin towns is the physical neighbourhood. But this feature is relative and it will be narrowed down to the topographical middle: to the riverbanks. The riverbank assures the fundamental frame for everyday interactions; the bridges link together the townscape. The twin town needs real neighbourhood topography where the distances are passable

and where there are usable urban spaces at the bridge heads. The second important factor of integration is whether the border line overlaps the ethnic borders, and if yes, are there any strategies for handling the ethnic and language border. Therefore, in our theoretical model, we envisage the urban spaces primarily as zones comprised by ethnic groups. So much more, because the political borders made in 1920 and 1945 were a part of nation-state building and the social identification is not to become separate from ethnic relations (us/them). In the end, we search for answers as to why the twin towns' inhabitants visit the other side. In fact, we presume that in the past 20 years, stronger and weaker interactive fields have occurred between the ethnic zones which interweave the twin towns' everyday life from relatives and friends, to employment and shopping. Integrated society means here having relatives and friends from the other side and using entertainment, shopping and working possibilities.



## HISTORICAL FRAMEWORK

The important feature of a given town results from its historical heritage that developed at the beginnings of the 20th century. At that time, two of the towns in question belonged to the Austrian-Hungarian Monarchy, one to the powerful German Empire. In fact, none of them could be called 'a city' then, yet Görlitz, with its 90,000 inhabitants, definitely represented a wider urban area than Teschen and Komárom with population hardly over 20,000 (Haslinger Kreft et al. 2010: 8; Mácza 1992: 11; Siwek 2009: 45).

Let me highlight that until the era of industrialisation, no twin town existed on the other bank at either site. In the K. u. K. Monarchy towns, there was a railway station which affected the development of the other side (Számadó 2007: 60; Frühwirt

1973: 342),<sup>6</sup> whereas Görlitz had its railway station placed next to the historical town (see Wifried 1994). The first wave of modern urbanization had taken place on the territory between the historical town and railway-tracks (Bednarek 1991: 63). The build-up of a tran-sriver area started later, but because of the recession after the First World War most of the planned garden suburbs were never realized (Schmidt 1994: 120). It sounds strange, but if Görlitz had been divided after 1918, it would have developed in a more dynamic way. At least the history of divided Teschen and Komárom renders this hypothesis possible.

Both of them were already divided after the collapse of K.u.K Monarchy, parallel to the founding of new nation states. An essential difference between them is that in the case of Teschen both nation states (Poland and Czechoslovakia) valued the change of borders as territorial gains, while Hungary was definitely the loser of the new European system after 1920 (Pragenu 1976: 102; Kovács 2011: 107; Makowski et al. 2010: 45). At the same time, it has to be mentioned that the dividing of former Teschen to Cieszyn (PL) and Český Těšín (CSR) incurred bitter conflicts between Poland and Czechoslovakia not only in nationally but also at the local level.<sup>7</sup>

The new state borders forced the creation of new towns in the place of the former suburbs: (Komárom, HU and Český Těšín, ČSR). There were no differences between the regional politics of victorious Prague and defeated Budapest (Bierbauer 1941, Badurová et al. 2010: 173). The Hungarian political elite demonstrated the continuity of a historical state organism with this act. The new town of Komárom was founded to fill in the administrative role for the historical town which was the seat of a whole governmental region (*comitat*). The expansion of Český Těšín definitely had another message: it demonstrated independence from the other side. The architecture style was in both cases full of historical symbols as compensation for the uncertain historical identity of the new town.

World War II brought different changes of borders but eventually the 1920 status quo was reinstalled both in Teschen and Komárom (Pragenu 1976: 114; Bottoni 2011: 139). The 1945 peace treaty of Potsdam ordered a change in the German-Polish borderland to the Oder–Lausitzer Neisse (Odra–Nysa Łużycka) line. This act made Görlitz a divided twin town (see Jajesniak-Quast 2000).<sup>8</sup>

While the peace treaty after World War I could not assure the status quo because the vanquished states had not accepted it, the conclusion of Potsdam proved immovable. The reason for this was the presence of the Red Army which checked on the inviolability of the borders (Schmitt 2003: 203). The dictatorships of Central Europe strictly limited border crossings. The isolation was also manifested on maps, for example in tourist maps which would not show the other side of the twin town. Although the isolation was not steady in the period of 1945–1989, and the local elites could establish cooperation between twin towns, the main characteristic was separation (see Bottoni 2011; Opłowska 2011). The townscape integrated this separation deeply because the period of 1960–1980 represented a massive extension in both parts of twin towns with the typical elements of urban planning of their home country. At the end of this historical era, we have to mention that opening the borders after

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<sup>6</sup>As concerns Teschen, the one-time private-enterprise Kassa-Oderberg (now: Košice–Bohumín) railtrack traversing present Slovakia was built in 1869–1872 to establish a direct connection between the then East-Hungary and Silesia. Komárom got a railway station from Vienna in 1856, and it was extended to Budapest in 1884 (the name of the station was that time Újszörny). Nevertheless, the Budapest-Szob-Bratislava rail route remained the fastest link between Vienna and Budapest (Frisnyák 2010).

<sup>7</sup>The Košice–Bohumín rail track crossing Teschin was vital for the young Czechoslovakia, because otherwise the northern Slovakian towns could have been reached only with a great detour.

<sup>8</sup>Other divided border towns: Frankfurt am Oder/Słubice, Guben/Gubin and Forst/Zasieki.

1990 was not the same as in the case of Berlin. The engines of integration are not the national governments, nor the local authorities but the supranational EU funds which finance transnational projects (Joenniemi-Sergunin 2011).

## TOPOGRAPHY

Following our concept, we ask whether there was any prospect to create common urban spaces as morphological entities in the divided twin towns. We are not thinking about dominant functional spaces which attract people from the other side, like gastronomy, shopping, or entertainment zones. We mean frontier urban spaces where the urban life of both sides influences the milieu. We would show the spaces which form and limit the possibility of social integration of the divided towns. These spaces may develop only in the area of the river because of the topographical situation.

The relation between the river and town is one of the most important aspects of the twin towns. First of all, it is obvious that most historical structures do not expand along the river banks. The historical townscapes of the three twin towns seem to be solid fortifications above the banks. An open transit to the river existed only by means of bridges and ports. Behind the common ground structure, there are very important differences in details. The map of historical Görlitz shows a very obvious connection with the river. The bridgehead is one of the most important squares of the towns. The river itself is not very wide, so another space has been formed on the other bank, too. The railway moved its expansion to the south, so the historical bridgehead found itself in the half-periphery of the town. A modern bridge has been built, thanks to which Görlitz has occupied its suburb, what was latterly Zgorzelec. The historical bridge has lost its function. After its demolition during the Second World War, the historical bridge was not reconstructed until 2004. The bridgehead square on the Polish side had been wiped out totally. The socialist urban planning aimed to create a new centre as far as possible from the other side, which meant no connection with the river. In spite of the integration processes, Görlitz and Zgorzelec show a separate urban topography. Their centres lie far from each other. This distance is not a consequence of the natural fundamentals of the river valley (as the river is narrow and its water balance is relatively stable). The distance is more a result of socialist urban planning. Today, it is not realistic to establish a new centre along the river. Not least because such an idea would bring a negative effect in the ecological system of the townscape destroying green areas. Not even the aesthetic arguments are in favour of an intensive development. The real scenario for a common urban area could be a mixture of services (like cafés, bars) and spaces for recreation activities. The historical public gardens on the German side may benefit, while the price differences of services between Germany and Poland encourage the establishment of gastro-venues on the Polish river bank with a view to the historical townscape.

The most favourable topography for common urban spaces can be found in Český Těšín/Cieszyn. The bridgehead square (Zamkowa street) was in the historical town, not only a place for crossing the river but the foreground to the castle as well. Thus, it was the meeting point of a residential area and the burgher town. Yet, the other bank had mostly remained empty from structures until the age of railway. The railway was the first step towards crossing the river. Later, the buildings of the late 19th century had to accept the railway embankments, as a morphological fact. The strange reversing of the main street in the present Český Těšín is a result of both the river and railway station. The main road leading from the historical bridge had to turn nearly 90 degrees in order to get to the station (Hlavní street–Nádražní street). After 1918, the young independent border town, Český Těšín, developed an active building policy in the territory between the station and the river bank. But this area was too tight to accommodate the growing number of flats and public buildings. Thus, a “second new town” developed in the 1930s across the

railway embankments. The main square of Český Těšín (ČSA square), situated between the linear axes of the river and the railway embankment, cannot fulfil the function of a central area. Nevertheless, the main street from the bridgehead to the railway station has remained vital until today. This urban area of the main street goes directly to the bridge over the Olza/Olše. The bridge itself is only 50 metres long and it leads to the “entrance” of the inner town of Cieszyn. This closeness in topography of both centres offers an ideal starting point for creating a common urban central district.

A very different situation can be observed in Komárno/Komárom where the river Dunaj/Duna constitutes a very sharp border. As a matter of fact, to cross the bridge, one needs to cover eight times the distance of Český Těšín/Cieszyn, thus the idea of a common urban space is unrealistic. A further factor is that both the banks of Komárno and Komárom brim with industrial structures. The townscapes of the river banks make one feel as if one was in the outskirts of the twin towns. The railway station in Komárom and the dockyards in Komárno are very important economic fundaments of the towns, but they do not invite one for a walk. In order to cross the bridge between the twin towns, people use their cars in most cases. The heavy traffic spoils the idea of a pleasant promenade over the Dunaj/Duna.

Summarising our observations, we can point out that the twin towns’ relation to the river bank is very peculiar when seen from the point of view of urban planning. The historical towns used to occupy only one river bank, the other side was mostly only a suburb. The division of the urban area has created a new and unusual situation. For further investigations about social trends, we always have to take into consideration the proportions of the urban space and the river valley, the natural potential of river banks, and the heritage of urban planning of the last century which has undeniably isolated the river side.

## NATIONAL-ETHNIC BORDERS

This paper offers no room to discuss the concept of identity in its complexity; therefore the national-ethnic relations will be understood here in terms of language. Our short description focuses on overlapping national-language groups and political borders. The main question is whether there have been any interactions between the bearers of the national languages in the parts of twin towns; and if so, how they work.

The three locations represent three models. The most marked language border is found between Görlitz and Zgorzelec. The deportation and settlement processes after 1945 brought into existence separated language groups. The new Polish settlers coming from the regions far away from the German-Polish contact zones faced the German side not only as foreign but also as enemy. The knowledge of the language of the other part even today is not self-evident in this twin town (Kunert 2002: 10); 15.1% of the inhabitants of Zgorzelec declare that they understand German and can communicate in this language easily; 31.7% say that they understand it but can answer only simple questions; 34.9% know only few words or phrases and 18.3% do not know this language at all.<sup>9</sup> In Görlitz, the percentage of people who understand Polish is marginal, and very few people learn this language. It is easy to observe a correlation between the level of the German language mastery and the frequency of visits in Görlitz by the inhabitants of Zgorzelec, which results in the conclusion that this competence is still a barrier to trans-border

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<sup>9</sup> This data, so far unpublished, comes from the research project *Zgorzeleckie jakomiaści stopograniczne w opiniach jegomieszków*, carried out in Zgorzelec in 2010 by Kamilla Dolińska and Natalia Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak from the Institute of Sociology University of Wrocław.

activity here (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak 2011: 53). The same is not so obvious in the case of Germans coming to Poland, as there are quite a lot of people working in the shops or services of Zgorzelec who are at least communicative in German.

But it is not only linguistic barriers that divide the local societies. The anthropologist, Svenja Reinke studied the procedures of guides: "The guide stressed her local identity, as usual in this situation [...] after crossing the bridge, she began to speak in the third person: they are Catholic, they used the stones of imperial statues for road-building, the rehabilitation of urban places has just started but they take care of little gardens" (Reinke 2008: 10). The distinction of 'us and them' is not the only thing of interest here. The cognitive content of the speech expresses isolation as well; yet the feeling of distance is less a result of historical conflicts. The contemporary economic inequality between the two parts may play the most important role in it. The inhabitants of Görlitz associate Zgorzelec with the stereotypes typically ascribed to Poles by Germans: dangerous places, robberies, thefts, etc. As pointed out by Zbigniew Kurcz (2011: 258–259), this is why some people avoid going there or are even proud of not visiting the Polish part of the town at all. As for the attitude the inhabitants of Zgorzelec have towards their Görlitz neighbours, it is a mixture of indifference (53.5%) and liking (39.3%), and so this approach can thus be deemed 'warm indifference'. Germans are most often described as precise, cultural and being on time (Dębicki–Doliński 2011: 110, 115, 143). Kamilla Dolińska (2011: 76) notices that around 60–70% of the inhabitants of Zgorzelec when thinking of their Görlitz neighbours point at "the acceptance of a close presence, normality, the community of interests, neutrality and kindness". Additionally, about two-thirds of the people under examination exclude conflict and mutual negative attitude from the area of their experience.

The language-ethnic border between Cieszyn/Český Těšín is not like the one in Görlitz/Zgorzelec. The former Teschen at the turn of the century was a mixture of cultures. The regional identity of 'autochtons' included a special language code, named Silesian or Teschen Silesian, with elements from Czech, Polish, Slovak, German. The national school system and other institutions in the 20<sup>th</sup> century have done away with this multi-language identity (Hannan 1996, 1999; Luft 2009: 11). In spite of this, the Polish-Czech language border is traversable. First of all, no historical traumas hinder the relations. The local conflicts after 1918–19 seem to be not a historical but a present fact in the local identity (Makowski et al. 2010: 46). The National Socialist occupation and the deportation of Germans after 1945 led to a sort of 'coalition' of the two Slavic nationalities. Nowadays, although there have been some misunderstandings between both national groups that traditionally characterize that kind of relations, they are, generally speaking without any serious historical conflicts. Zygmunt Kłodnicki enumerates an extended list of stereotypes Poles have towards their neighbours across the river (they all were regarded as 'Czechs', no matter what type of ethnic identification was preferred in individual cases), gathered in Cieszyn and its surroundings. These include: *Pepiki, knedliki*, people who do not like Poles, speak an amusing language, cowards, keen on beer, cheerful. They are also bad drivers, mean and religiously indifferent. As for the positive characteristics, sometimes the Czech order and eagerness for sport was mentioned here (Kłodnicki 2012: 35–67). Generally speaking, these attributes are usually also ascribed to Czechs beyond the Český Těšín borderland. The difference is that here the characteristics of Czechs seem more negative than elsewhere in Poland.

The case of Cieszyn/Český Těšín is characterized by a natural language competence. The similarity of both Slavic languages makes it possible for people to understand each other in everyday situations. For its ethnic composition, Cieszyn is a homogenous town. The language competence (understanding of Czech) there derives from: (a) a regional language (dialect)

that, to some extent, tends to be used in both parts of the town; (b) different types of contact with Czechs (both in Polish and Czech part of the town) and with ethnic Poles living in Teschen Silesia. The situation is analogous for the inhabitants of Český Těšín. Moreover, the elder Czech generations have a socialization benefit, because in the times of Czechoslovakia they used to understand a foreign Slavic language (Siwek 2010; Sokolová et al. 1997). Additionally, Czechs get in contact with their neighbours' language because of the Polish minority living in the town and their right to have bilingual names of the streets or institutions. According to the 2001 census, the Polish minority in Český Těšín constituted 16.1% and was the most numerous in the town. The other most popular identification patterns present there include: Silesian, Moravian, Zaolziak, Slovak, Vietnamese and Romani. The language of communication of the Polish minority in Český Těšín depends on the situations. For example, the research on the pupils of the Gymnasium with Polish as a Teaching Language shows that it is the dialect that is used in communication between the members of the family, schoolmates or acquaintances (around 86–97%). Polish also dominates in conversations with the teachers, which is obvious in the case of this school. As for the pupils' mother tongue, it is usually Polish (50.2%), the dialect (45.4%) and Czech (20.1%) (Grabowska 2013: 265). Because of its multilingual habit, the Polish minority represents a contact zone between both parts of the twin towns.

Komárno/Komárom represents a special case, because a Hungarian majority exists in both parts. However, this fact should not mean that the border would not have been changing the national relations until today. In 1920, the border divided the town with a near 90% Hungarian population; but today only 60% of the population of Komárno (SK) has a Hungarian nationality (Simon 2011: 89; Census SK 2001). Komárno is a bilingual cultural zone but this does not mean there is equality. The communication in administrative and economic life is dominated by the Slovak language. It is not rare that Hungarian businessmen hold conversations in Slovak, because their Hungarian register does not include special expressions (Szabó-Lanstyák 2011).<sup>10</sup> While the modern vocabulary is incomplete, the local dialect has preserved a lot of archaisms. This language habit means that the Hungarian people from Komárno are a bit different from Hungarians in Hungary (Vajda 2011). They bring their minority existence across the bridge, into a Hungarian-Hungarian context. The scholar András Vári (2002) held interviews with Hungarian labour workers coming from Slovakia to Hungary.<sup>11</sup> He pointed out that the Hungarians from Slovakia use Slovak words in situations where technical vocabulary needs to be used. Thus they cannot transfer their knowledge easily to Hungary.

## FIELDS OF INTERACTIONS

The integrated twin towns mean common interactions. Simplifying the problem, we should find the motivation for why people cross the bridge. Helga Schultz made certain in her study that this motivation is first of all to shop. Leisure time, visiting relatives and undertaking a job are other reasons (Schultz 2005: 24).<sup>12</sup> The four fields of interaction can be graded on the bases of stability. We suppose that visiting relatives is the most stable contact, while the others depend on market circumstances (Kovács 2008: 40).

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<sup>10</sup>The emancipation attempts of the Hungarian language, such as bilingual town names, signs, shop titles, or information on product packaging, has led to several political debates.

<sup>11</sup>These thoughts are based on András Vári's research in the twin towns of Esztergom – Párkány/Šturovo. Although there must be certain unexplored local features, presumably Komárno/Komárono's fundamental local ethnic relations present the same mental borders.

<sup>12</sup>Schutz does not mention this, but cultural cooperation may be crucial. She discusses this sphere as an issue of mutual historical remembrance and institutional cooperation.

Conspicuously, personal relations are not as stable as we might think. They depend on the nature of the border, on forced and voluntary migrations and on economic differences. The study about marriage strategies in Komárno/Komárom between the two world wars shows this clearly (Kovács 2011). The study pointed out that the division of urban space in 1920 had opened a new chapter in the history of marriage strategies as well. The number of marriages between Komárom/Komárno dropped in spite of the fact that there was no language border along the Danube. Furthermore, the ethnic groups in Komárno (Slovaks, Hungarian and Jews) followed a strong endogamy after 1920. The deportation of many Hungarians after 1945 stopped the tendency for a while. The special migration diaspora in Komárom – namely people born in Komárno but who moved out in 1945 – had many relatives in the Slovakian part of the town. This diaspora was very active in establishing cultural and economic cooperation after 1970 (Bottóni 2011: 158).

A bit similar is the situation in Cieszyn/Český Těšín where the initiation of basic contacts was facilitated by the existence of family ties. Furthermore, there were also the cultural and linguistic proximities, a relatively similar level of economic status as well as the inhabitants' historical memory of the common past of both parts of the town (which, however, tends to be recollected in negative aspects, too). There are countless examples of cooperation – both on a formal, institutional, social and family platform – between the inhabitants of Cieszyn and Český Těšín, which does not mean that this coexistence is free from difficulties (Rusek 2009: 273–278).

Neither of these factors took place in the case of Zgorzelec/Görlitz. Here, few family networks existed until 1989, with a low number of mixed marriages. Nowadays, a Polish diaspora has been forming because of migration from Poles to Görlitz. This migration could partly compensate for the depopulation of the German part of the towns by 20,000 persons since the reunification of the country, so Görlitz has today only 55,000 inhabitants (Stadt Görlitz 2009: 6). In Görlitz, there are a lot of flats available and their prices and/or standards are attractive for Poles. The migration of Poles has not always been accomplished because the blocks of flats often get demolished. The authorities of Görlitz have the opinion that it is more profitable to pull down these buildings than offer them to the Polish neighbours – as was pointed out by Z. Kurcz (2007: 94). Additionally, the town offers a more developed infrastructure and even Poles admit that the German part is much more beautiful than the Polish one. At the end of 2011, there were 3,000 Poles officially registered in Görlitz (tvp.pl) – about 5% of the town's population. One may expect that this immigration minority will cultivate familiar relationships with the Polish side for a long time. Besides, this type of diaspora minority has started forming a mixed population as well. Investigations show an increasing number of German-Polish mixed marriages; as for Görlitz, in 2006 the percentage of mixed Polish-German marriages was 7% (Opiłowska 2008: 11).

In spite of the mixed marriages and migration trends, generally “the inhabitants of Görlitz distance themselves from the Polish neighbours” writes Z. Kurcz (2011: 259). The materials that he has analysed indicate that this tendency dominates over aspirations towards creating a neighbourhood. Apparently, Germans mostly shop, use services or take walks in the Polish part of the town (83–95% of the inhabitants of Zgorzelec), while engaging in more interpersonal activities like going to a disco, meeting friends, participation in their Polish acquaintances' family celebrations or having common projects with Poles was reported by 10–20%, which means that the mutual contacts are quite shallow, and tend to fulfil rather practical needs (Dolińska 2011: 78–80). The percentage of Poles who go socializing in Görlitz is about 20–25% (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak 2011: 58) but very few pay visits to their family or acquaintances (Buczko 2009: 175). As revealed in another research, the inhabitants of Zgorzelec value

first of all the economic rather than social dimension of the cooperation, which thus seems to be treated instrumentally by them (Makaro 2011: 44).

The non-personal contact zones are the most common spaces in Komárno/Komárom, too. Some detailed investigation about the shopping habits in this twin town is available (Sikos-Tiner 2007). It is interesting that the number of little stores was equal in both towns, although Komárno has 34,000 inhabitants while Komárom has only 19,000 (Census SK 2011, KSH Helységnévtár 2013). Most stores are micro businesses owned by one person or a family. The differences may have a historical background. Namely, micro enterprises have been operating in a large number in Hungary since the late 1960s (Tamáska, 2012: 92). A further factor may be the income inequality. Komárom has traditionally had larger shopping power than Komárno. The only sector where Komárno shows up an advantage is with catering services like restaurants and pubs. The clients of those services often come from the Hungarian side of the twin town (Sikos–Tiner 2007: 109).

There is no doubt that the flourishing of restaurants goes back to the beer culture of the former Czechoslovakia. This cult appears in the relationship of Cieszyn/Český Těšín, too. However, on both sides of the border one can easily find a range of shops oriented to the customers from the other side of the Olza/Olše river. Poles traditionally head for the Czech pubs and restaurants, looking for certain items of food or medicine. A relatively new purpose for a visit to the Czech Republic is smoking marijuana, which has been de-penalized there. Czechs are first of all interested in household equipment (especially furniture), clothes, articles of food or things made of wicker. It is also customary to meet Czechs enjoying the beauty of the Cieszyn market square and the atmosphere of the coffee houses there (after the split of the city, its more attractive part was given to Poland). The structure of shopping is more or less constant; what changes is rather the trade intensity which reflects the relation between the two national currencies (in recent years it has favoured the Czechs).

Almost all inhabitants of Zgorzelec who go to Görlitz (82.3%) do it for commercial purposes. What is more, 40% of them visit local shops at least once a month (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak 2011: 57–58). A similar percentage of Germans and Poles visit shops at the other side of the border once a week. For Poles, the most attractive articles are clothes (e.g. shoes) or food, mostly due to their quality. When in Zgorzelec, Germans are interested in buying petrol, alcohol and cigarettes as well as using a variety of services (e.g. hairdressing, cosmetics). Germans have traditionally been more active than Poles in terms of the amount of money spent on the other side of the Nysa/Neisse River. On average, Poles spend about 177 euros a month in Görlitz, whereas Germans spend about 440 euros in Zgorzelec ([wiadomosci.onet.pl](http://wiadomosci.onet.pl)). This disproportion diminishes along with the difference in the economic potential of Poles and Germans, yet nowadays this factor still plays an important role. It is noteworthy that there are more and more people speaking the neighbour's language working in the shops of not only Zgorzelec but also Görlitz.

Apart from shopping, other reasons for Poles visiting Görlitz mainly include taking walks and enjoying the town's cultural institutions (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak 2011: 57–58). The latter can be associated with the idea of Zgorzelec being an uninteresting place to live – its inhabitants tend to treat it as ugly, 'incomplete' and thus unattractive (Galasińska–Rollo–Meinhof 2002: 117). Poles – regardless of the place of residence – generate a considerable part of the trade turnover in Görlitz. Their presence and activity is, however, unwelcomed by the local nationalists (also by their political wing), which leads to anti-Polish campaigns.

The reverse side of the consumption is income – the labour market and enterprises. The main question is how the border overwrites the neighbourhood of twin towns. Without the border, the historical town of Komárno, for example, should have

more economic power than its twin town Komárom, if only for its size. Due to the regional trends of national states, this disproportion is reversed. Komárno lies in the internal periphery of Slovakia, near to Bratislava but in the shade of the regional developing axis (Mezei 2008: 143; Hardi 2001: 28). On the other hand, Komárom lies in the most important axis point of Hungary: Budapest-Győr-Hegyeshalom and towards Vienna (Rechnitzer 1999). Multinational companies established businesses here soon after 1990. They attract people searching for a job, also from abroad. A very similar situation arises in the twin town of Šturovo-Esztergom, where the scholar András Vári studied the conditions of semi-migrant workers (Vári 2002). The paper describes the shaping of migrant work. It proves that the biggest international company of Esztergom wanted to solve the lack of workforce at first with the help of workers coming from East Hungary. Then they turned to the catchment region of the other side of the Danube only after unsuccessful trials of the internal recruitment.

In the other twin towns, Zgorzelec/Görlitz and Cieszyn/Český Těšín, Poles have looked for a job on the other side of the border. It is not for the unemployment rate only, but also for the more convenient procedures of setting up one's own business in Germany or the Czech Republic than in Poland. In administrative terms, Cieszyn is a part of the region of Upper Silesia but in terms of history, geography and economy it is, to a large extent, a separate body. This status was brought about in the 1990s, alongside the collapse of the local industry, when Cieszyn turned to tourism, trade and services such as culture or education. The traditionally strong local identity was further strengthened in 1999 when the town became the capital of the middle-level administrative unit (*powiat*). As pointed out by Halina Rusek, Český Těšín has lost the battle over its position in the region of the Czech part of the Teschen Silesia, and a variety of processes have contributed to the town's periphery. It is oriented to services, yet its economic status is difficult to describe (Rusek 2009: 270). The inhabitants of (not only) Cieszyn consider the transport infrastructure of Český Těšín attractive, since it offers easy train access to many Czech and Slovak destinations (including Prague, Žilina, Košice) and thus to Western and Southern Europe.

Görlitz, as an element of Germany's eastern borderland, is strongly peripheral. It has drastically depopulated, it suffers from a relatively high unemployment rate and those who decided to stay here are sometimes stereotyped as 'socially disabled'. The proximity of the border with Poland is sometimes associated with the proverbial 'middle of nowhere'. Zgorzelec's location by the border of Germany also has its drawbacks, since it can be associated with periphery – both in relation to Warsaw and Wrocław, the capital city of the Lower Urban region to which Zgorzelec belongs. However, generally speaking, the town's location is evaluated more positively than negatively by its inhabitants, especially by those who cross the border (e.g. to make use of Görlitz's municipal infrastructure and the transport possibilities it offers for people who head for Western Europe (Niedźwiecka-Iwańczak 2011: 64). The image of the town also profits from the good opinion that Poland's western borderland has as opposed to its eastern equivalent. It is noteworthy that both Zgorzelec and Cieszyn are located eastwards of their twin towns, which at least partly accounts for the direction of the traffic (westwards, i.e. off the Polish side).

## CONCLUSION

The paper is based on investigations of other studies. This fact did not make a comparison easy. The different scholars use different theoretic framework and different measuring methods. Not least, the results depend very much on the year of the survey. The opening process of the border controls creates a fundamental difference within a short time; the shopping activity depends on the exchange rate; the industrial parks offer workplaces in very variable numbers. In spite of this, there are some common features in twin towns.

- The breadth of the bridge and the urban structure determine the manner and frequency of people's mobility. However, it was rare to ask about the topography of the space in which this migration is realized. We are certain that the natural topography of Komárno/Komárom make any social interaction between the both parts difficult. In the other cases, it is less the river itself than the last hundred years of urban planning that creates disintegration in the townscapes.
- The interactions in twin towns are reduced mostly to non-personal actions: shopping or taking a walk.
- For the above reason, the question had to be posed as to whether people need common urban spaces at all. From a sociological point of view we can say that the borderlines and frontier zones of the present urban places represent the mental (ethnic and language) zones of their inhabitants more or less, as well as the economic differences of both sides of the twin towns.

To summarise, it could be said that none of the twin towns represent an integrated micro-social milieu. Thus, the three places can be placed within the typology of Jan Buursink between town couples and double (twin) towns. The ethnic relations and the language barriers are the most important factors as to why both sides cannot integrate. The linguistic bridges of national minorities (Hungarian in Komárno, Polish in Český Těšín or the new Polish minority in Görlitz) cannot work flawlessly because of inter-ethnic stereotypes and spatial distances. These minority groups suffer from a cultural pressure inasmuch as their bilingual competence may become a drawback.

Our own suggestion is that the integration process should pay more attention to fundamental facts like historical heritage, topography, language borders or economic background. An efficient integration process has to accept those fundaments. The barriers between both sides are not to be taken away. At the same time, a frontier zone between twin towns also exists today and it can be further developed along the riverbank area. An efficient urban planning of the river zone as a common green zone is the key action not only for the townscape but an important step for the integration of local societies, as well.

## FIGURES

Fig.1. River, bridges, historical town, railway and green zones in the topography of divided twin towns. The dimension of the Danube at Komárom/Komárno is not in relation to the other cases. The green zones and rivers function today mostly as barriers but careful landscape planning may develop common parks and relaxation zones for populations from both sides of the twin towns.

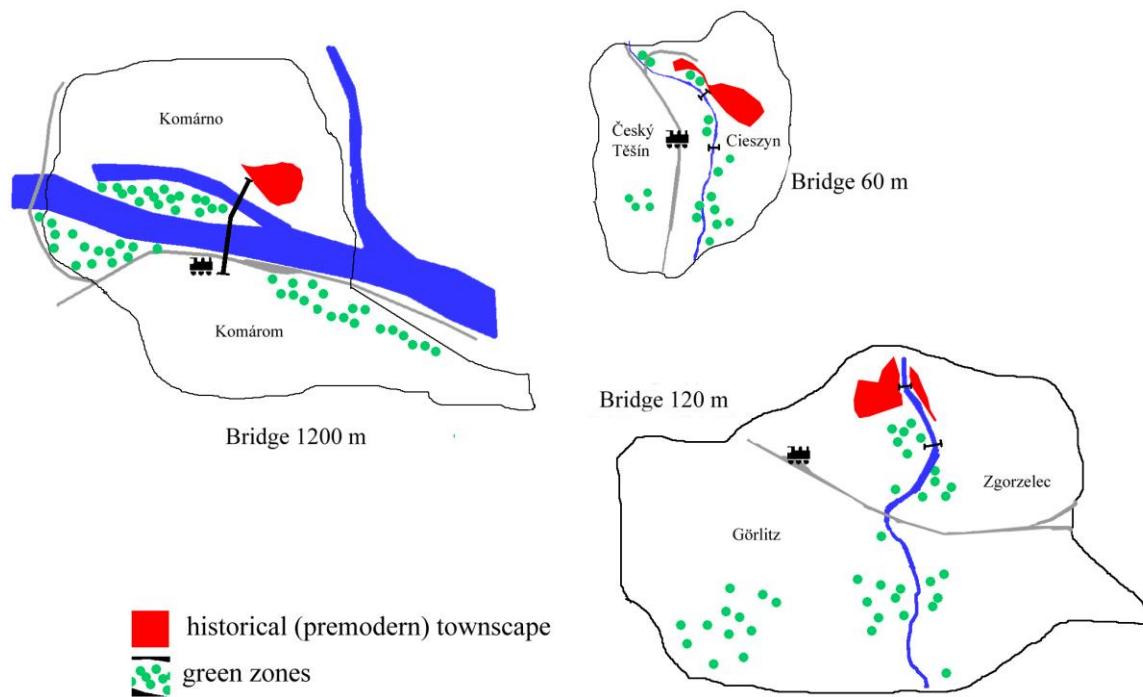


Fig.2.The bridge of Český Těšín/Cieszyn has no characteristic form. It looks as if it could be part of the street line. In fact, it is a vital contact between the two sides.



Fig.3.The rebuilt bridge (2003/2004) of Görlitz/Zgorzelec is a perfect solution for historical landscape rehabilitation. The reunited old town district is a bit apart from the everyday life of both twin towns. It offers space mostly for tourist and cultural activities.



Fig.4.The bridge of Komárno/Komárom is a standalone unit in the townscape. It takes 10–15 minutes to cross it above a dockyard, Elisabeth-island, the Danube and railway station. However the lively traffic (generated mostly by local cars) makes this “promenade” less attractive.



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