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**IN THE LABORATORY OF EUROPE:  
GOVERNING THE “EUROPE OF REGIONS” ON THE POLISH/GERMAN  
FRONTIER**

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Andrew D. Asher

Department of Anthropology,  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

European Union Center  
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign  
Champaign, IL  
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## **ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

Andrew D. Asher is a graduate student in the department of Anthropology at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign.

## ABSTRACT

In the aftermath of World War II, one of the primary motivations for creating the institutions that eventually evolved into the European Union (EU) was to ensure a more lasting peace in Europe by connecting, or "integrating," member nations in such a way that a resurgence of strong nationalism could not again lead to war. To this end, the EU has conceptualized Europe as a "Europe of Regions" through which it administers socioeconomic policies at the sub-national level through local governments. These regional policies are also meant explicitly to counteract potential nationalism among the EU's member nations. However, the governing structure of the EU itself privileges the sovereign nation-state, while the politics of the EU commonly fracture along national lines. Therefore, the EU creates tensions not only between the local regions and national governments, but also between the national and international governments. In this manner, local administrations can find themselves aligned with international institutions in opposition to their own national governments.

This paper explores the tension and competition of three levels of governance (local, national, and international), within the EU by utilizing the case of transnational regional institutions called "Euroregions" located along the Polish/German Border. Because they are a hybrid form of governmentality, these Euroregions are a location where the conflict between different levels of government are played out "on the ground" through policy initiatives and projects directed at "integrating" Poland and Germany at the local level, and demonstrate the reorientation of the conception of state sovereignty in a transnational context.

## I. Introduction

Within its institutions and political discourses, the European Union (EU) places particular emphasis on the conception of Europe as an assembly of distinct sub-national localities, each with its own particular identity, history, problems, and potential solutions. Through the administration of this “Europe of Regions,” the EU enacts its “principle of subsidiarity” and pursues the socioeconomic policy goals of “integration” and “convergence.” The principle of subsidiarity states that a given policy should be pursued at the lowest level of government possible for it to be effectively administered, whether this level is international, national, regional or local<sup>1</sup>. This principle drives the EU to pursue low-level institutional frameworks, and makes a significant portion of the EU’s governing project a process of allocating Europe’s territory in both physical and symbolic terms.

Utilizing the “Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina” as a case study, this paper examines the EU’s methods of regional governance in the transnational context of the Polish/German border, and the ways in which it interacts with regional histories and local administrations. Because they produce a hybrid form of governmentality, Euroregions are a location where the conflicts, tensions, and contradictions between local, national, and international levels of governance are demonstrated “on the ground” through policy initiatives and projects directed at “integrating” Poland and Germany.

Towns located directly on the international borders of the EU are regularly described as the “laboratories” of European integration. This is especially true of towns that are located on the current external borders of the EU such as the twin cities of Frankfurt an-der-Oder,<sup>2</sup> Germany and Słubice, Poland, the main urban center of the Viadrina Euroregion. Because cross-border contact and interaction is more intensive in border regions, these regions should theoretically also be the locations where EU “integration” and “convergence” are first observed, and should act as a leading indicator of the effectiveness of EU programs. For the EU, “integration” and “convergence” are encouraged and pursued by specific political agendas, and regional policy is one of the major mechanisms it utilizes for the redistribution of wealth.

Although they are accepted as Union goals, these terms are also extremely difficult to define and measure. For my purposes here, I define “integration” functionally in the terms of policy action. Therefore, I understand a movement towards “integration” to be the pursuit of any policy that promotes contact and interaction between people and groups across any international

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<sup>1</sup> Specifically, Article 9 Paragraph 3 of the draft EU constitution reads: “Under the principle of subsidiarity, in areas which do not fall within its exclusive competence the Union shall act only if and insofar as the objectives of the intended action cannot be sufficiently achieved by the Member States, either at central level or at regional and local level, but can rather, by reason of the scale or effects of the proposed action, be better achieved at Union level” (The European Convention 2003:12).

<sup>2</sup> Henceforth referred to simply as Frankfurt.

border shared among the EU members and accession countries. Increased “integration” can therefore take many forms, including cultural events, infrastructure projects, and investments.

The EU’s idea of “convergence” is somewhat more straightforward, and contains quantifiable terms. The Stability and Growth Pact of 1997 outlines the “convergence” criteria that a country must achieve in order 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<sup>3</sup>. These criteria focus on regulating inflation, interest rates and budgetary deficits. In practical terms, the convergence criteria should cause prices and wages to approximately equalize throughout the EU. This is especially important to the 2004 accession countries, which generally have prices and wages that are much lower than their EU counterparts.

## II. Europe’s Emerging Spatial Geometry

The implementation of regional policy within the EU is progressively creating a situation of “graduated sovereignty,” or,

a series of zones that are subjected to different kinds of governmentality and that vary in terms of the mix of disciplinary and civilizing regimes. These zones, which do not necessarily follow political borders, often contain ethnically marked class groupings, which in practice are subjected to regimes of rights and obligations that are different from those in other zones (Ong 1999:7).

The theory of “graduated sovereignty” outlined by Ong builds on the ideas of sovereignty and governmentality developed by Foucault (1991). Foucault defines governmentality as

the ensemble formed by the institutions, procedures, analyses and reflections, the calculations and tactics that allow the exercise of this very specific albeit complex 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).

Here, Foucault emphasizes the knowledge and practices that are needed to manage a state’s population, knowledge that is intricately related to the economics of a society (1991:104). For both Foucault and Ong, this conception of governmentality also encompasses an idea of sovereignty. Foucault observes that in the 16th century, the conception of sovereignty in Europe shifted from the exercise of power principally over territory and the subjects that reside on it, to a complex composed of people and things (such as customs, wealth, territory, resources, and

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<sup>3</sup> The convergence criteria are as follows: “[1] the ratio of government deficit to gross domestic product must not exceed 3%; [2] the ratio of government debt to gross domestic product must not exceed 60%; [3] there must be a sustainable degree of price stability and an average inflation rate, observed over a period of one year before the examination, which does not exceed by more than one and a half percentage points that of the three best performing Member States in terms of price stability; [4] there must be a long-term nominal interest rate which does not exceed by more than two percentage points that of the three best performing Member States in terms of price stability; [5] the normal fluctuation margins provided for by the exchange-rate mechanism on the European Monetary system must have been respected without severe tensions for at least the last two years before the examination” (The European Commission 2003).

means of subsistence) in relationship with one another (1991:93). Therefore, governmentality and sovereignty are concerned with both people and territory.

Giddens combines these ideas well, defining the “sovereign state” as a political organization that has the capacity, within a delimited territory or territories, to make laws and effectively sanction their upkeep; exert a monopoly over the disposal of the means of violence; control basic policies relating to the internal political or administrative form of government; and dispose the fruits of a national economy that are the basis of its revenue (1987:282).

Of particular importance to the EU is Giddens’s observation that “‘sovereignty’ only has meaning in the context of a reflexively regulated system larger than any one state,” and requires a system in which sovereign states agree to acknowledge the sovereignty of one another (1987:281-282). This reflexive system produces a situation that allows the sovereignty of a nation to be a negotiable quality. A sovereign state, by the very virtue of its sovereignty, can choose to give up some aspects of its sovereign power to another state, institution, or international organization.

In response to the challenges of globalization, the “graduating” of sovereignty has produced a situation “whereby even as the state maintains control over its territory, it is also willing in some cases to let corporate entities set the terms for constituting and regulating some domains” (Ong 1999:217). This is exactly what is happening during the EU’s process of integration. In order to join the EU, member states relinquish a portion of their national sovereignty to “pool” with the Union as a corporate body, in order to gain the advantages of the integrated continental market and its redistributive functions. In return, member nation-states agree to adopt the *acquis communautaire*, the approximately 80,000 pages of laws and regulations that govern the EU, and that the provisions of the EU will supersede the laws of the individual nation-state. Simultaneously, the EU’s regional policy allows the creation of zones of governmentality and quasi-governmentality that in some cases cross not only nationally determined borders of local or regional governance, but also international borders. The EU and its member nations thus divide the territory of member nation-states in different ways and at various levels of scale for the pursuit different policy goals. These goals may be interrelated, independent, or conflicting, and produce a variable geometry of territory, sovereignty, and governmentality depending on the level of scale being addressed.

### **III. Europe’s Institutions**

Even as it continues to gain governing power as a supranational organization, the EU continues to privilege the position of member nation-states when composing the membership of its principal governing institutions: the European Council, the Council of Ministers, the European Commission and the European Parliament,<sup>4</sup>. It is useful here to briefly examine the composition and function of each of these institutions.

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<sup>4</sup> For an extremely useful introduction to the structures and processes of EU see McCormick (2002 [1999])

At the highest level, the European Council is comprised of the elected heads of state of the member nations and has ultimate authority over the governance of the EU. However, while the European Council is responsible for the broad policy directions and political vision of the Union, the majority of actual policy decisions takes place in the Council of Ministers, which consists of ministers appointed from each member nation and has a variable membership depending on the policy topic being addressed.

Consulting with the Council of Ministers is the European Parliament, currently the only directly elected and arguably the least powerful of the governing bodies. The Parliament has limited co-decision and co-legislation powers, and approves members of the European Commission and the EU budget. Due to the position of the Parliament as the only institution directly elected by EU citizens, there is an ongoing debate regarding the apparent “democratic deficit” of the EU. Nevertheless, it is important to note that this democratic deficit also acts as a check on the independent action of EU and therefore also acts as a protection of national sovereignty.

Finally, the extremely important responsibility of agenda setting and the development of proposals for new laws is given to the members of the European Commission, made up of two representatives from “large” countries and one from “small” countries (Spain acts as the population baseline for large countries) who are appointed to five year terms. However, effective November 1, 2004, when the next Commission takes over its duties, the number of commissioners per member country will be reduced to one for all members. Including the staffs of the 23 *directorates-general* (equivalent to national ministries) under its administration, the European Commission is by far the largest of the EU institutions, and provides the day-to-day executive and bureaucratic functions of the EU.

Within these intuitions, almost all major policy decisions fracture along national lines, as is currently being demonstrated by the debate over the structure of the draft EU constitution, during which Poland and Spain have opposed changes to the voting system of the Council of Ministers defined by the Treaty of Nice<sup>5</sup>—changes that are supported primarily by France and Germany. The Nice voting system is specifically designed to continue protecting the interests of small countries by giving them more relative power than large countries, and has created a system that gives medium-sized countries (in terms of population), like Spain and Poland, the most power relative to their populations. For example, under these voting rules, Poland receives 27 votes compared to Germany’s 29, even though Germany has double Poland’s population. As a result, France and Germany have championed a more “democratic” system that more closely links votes to population figures, a suggestion the Poland and Spain interpret as an affront to their national sovereignty and political position within the EU.

#### **IV. The “Europe of Regions”**

The process of regionalization within the EU has also established a unique governing regime within which individual localities are capable of expressing themselves directly on the

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<sup>5</sup> The Treaty of Nice establishes the changes made to the EU’s governing structure in order to incorporate the ten accession countries. The treaty officially took effect February 1, 2003.

international level, and are sometimes enabled to bypass or subvert their respective national government or governments. In the case of governing structures that are concurrently sub-national and transnational entities, this represents a form of international administration in which an international governing body is empowered to work at the local level within national governments, rather than leaving the local enactment of international treaties solely to the administration of national governments themselves.

In most regions, the EU roughly follows already established regions of local governance to administer its regional policies<sup>6</sup>. However, in the case of cross-border regional policies, this system broke down due to the early EU's (and before it the European Community's) historical lack of cross-border institutions and bureaucracy for administering transnational regional funds and policies. To remedy this problem, cross-border "Euroregions" were established to help provide the necessary administrative frameworks and fill the new transnational space created by the EU. Four Euroregions were created along the Polish/German border: Nysa<sup>7</sup> (Neiße/Nisa) (1991), Pro Europa Viadrina (1993), Sprewa-Nysa-Bóbr (Spree-Neiße-Bober) (1993) and Pomerania (1995). Similar regions have also been established across the EU's internal borders.<sup>8</sup>

Euroregions are voluntary associations of municipal and local governments, but are not official governing bodies. Instead, they can be considered civil society institutions. Parkin explains that in the Polish/German context, "[Euroregions] frequently describe themselves as NGOs, and from the German point of view are based on cross-border 'agreements' (*Verabredungen*), not 'contracts' (*Verträge*)" (2002:16). Because Euroregions represent a group of affiliated local governments, they blur the boundaries between government and non-government and are legitimated primarily by brokering the relationship between their local member governments and the EU bureaucracy. Individual local governments located within a Euroregion's borders are free to opt out of the association, but by doing so they lose the influence the Euroregions exercise over the administration of EU regional policy. However, if too many local governments were to opt out, a Euroregion would cease to exist. Therefore, Euroregions work on the basis of a mutual acceptance of their legitimacy to act on behalf of a given region by both their member municipal governments and the EU.

Unlike nationally determined regions of local governance, which are represented to the European Commission and European Council by the Committee of the Regions (CoR)<sup>9</sup>,

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<sup>6</sup> For this purpose the EU utilizes the Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) system. NUTS administrative units generally correspond to national divisions of local governance (e.g. German *Länder*, French *Régions*, Spanish *Comunidades Autónomas*, Polish *Voivodships*, etc.).

<sup>7</sup> This region also includes some territory located in the Czech Republic.

<sup>8</sup> Some 115 regions now exist. For a full listing, see the Association of European Border Regions' website at <http://www.aebr.net/>.

<sup>9</sup> The Committee of the Regions is currently made up of 222 members and 222 alternates, and has no formal authority. Instead, it acts as a consulting body to the European Commission and European Council. CoR Representatives are appointed to four-year terms by individual national governments, and the way in which representatives are chosen varies by country. The Treaty of Nice (December, 2000) changes the maximum number of CoR members to 350 after

Euroregions have no formal representation within the EU government. Furthermore, there is no standard model for organizing a Euroregion, and they vary widely from region to region in their scope and purpose depending on local goals and the funding sources the EU makes available to a particular region. By utilizing these Euroregions, the EU outsources some of its administrative and executive functions to semi-public citizens' groups, a situation that often causes policy actions to occur in a legal gray area since Euroregions themselves have very little authority to make agreements legally binding or to enforce them once made.

This lack of a sufficient legal environment often results in a situation in which regions must work around, or at least without the explicit approval of, national legislatures, producing the requisite "little anarchy" many local trans-national bodies find necessary for cross-border cooperation to work (Schultz 2002:39). Poland even went so far as to authorize local administrations to act directly in the international arena. During the restructuring of its Voivodships in 1998, Poland empowered locally elected officials, or *Sejmiki* "to draw-up and implement regional development plans and to represent themselves directly in discussions with their European counterparts and the EU," (Levitas 1999:39). These actions, whether sanctioned or not, allow the bypassing of national administrations, and are enabled and encouraged by EU policy initiatives.

In general, the EU is empowered to act on one of two levels: the supranational or the sub-national. The concept of a "Europe of Regions" is also explicitly meant to act as a bulwark against a possible resurgence of nationalism or authoritarianism in one of the EU's individual member states (Parkin 2002:22). As a result, national politics are increasingly in competition with the EU's project of an integrated Europe. Although it is hardly revelatory to observe that the governing processes of the EU create tensions between national and international governing institutions, it is important to underscore that as the EU continues to pursue regional policies within member states, it is gradually intensifying this pressure, especially as the EU continues to gain the symbols and trappings of a nation-state. In a way that would make Hobsbawm and Ranger (1983) proud, the EU has been consciously "inventing" for Europe the traditions that normally characterize a nation (See Shore 2000:40-65). It has adopted an emblem and flag (the circle of twelve stars), a currency (the Euro), an anthem (the "Ode to Joy" from Beethoven's Ninth Symphony), a Europe Day (May 9, commemorating the anniversary of the Schuman Plan that integrated the regulation of French and German steel production in 1951, establishing the first institution of European integration), and perhaps most importantly, a European constitution-in-progress. Furthermore, the EU also has a supranational and theoretically merit-based civil service, which, like Anderson's (1983) "creole" administrators during the period of colonial nationalism, may be creating the territorial space for a new, supranational "imagined community" (See Shore:2000 125-146).

## **V. Pro Europa Viadrina**

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enlargement, but only 344 seats are currently allocated (Germany will receive 24 representatives and Poland 21). The Treaty of Nice also stipulates representatives to hold local or regional elected office or be politically accountable to an elected assembly (The European Commission 2003).

Established in 1993, the "Pro Europa Viadrina" Euroregion is situated on the central section of the Polish/German border and encompasses a land area of about 6000 km<sup>2</sup> in Poland and 4500 km<sup>2</sup> in Germany (Association of Polish Municipalities 2002:89). This area includes the Eastern part of the Brandenburg *Land* in Germany (specifically the two administrative districts of Markisch–Oderland and Oder–Spree), and the Lubuskie *Voivodship* in Poland. The twin cities of Słubice and Frankfurt an-der-Oder are located at the center of the Euroregion, about 80 km east of Berlin and 180 km west of Poznań. The Viadrina Euroregion contains 135 km of the 461 km long Polish/German border, and is located on the Rotterdam-Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow trade corridor, through which travels approximately 50% of German-Polish commercial traffic<sup>10</sup> (Euroregion "Pro Europa Viadrina" 2003). This location makes the Viadrina Euroregion extremely important to Polish/German, and therefore EU, integration in both practical and symbolic terms.

The organization of the Viadrina Euroregion demonstrates the difficulty in creating cross-border institutions, and the ways in which the capabilities of state bureaucracies are lagging significantly behind "on-the-ground" realities. For example, when the Viadrina Euroregion was established by an agreement between the German NGO, Verein Mittlere Oder (Central Oder) e.V. (a conglomerate of smaller associations, trade unions, administrative districts and municipal governments), the Association of Lubuskie Municipalities, and the Association of the Municipalities of Gorzów, there was no apparatus with which to register a transnational non-profit association, since the regulation of NGOs within the EU is the responsibility of member governments. Because EU policy prevents a single unified organization, all of the Euroregion's functional bodies and offices must be duplicated on each side of the border.

As one can imagine given these organizational conditions, the decision-making processes within the Viadrina Euroregion are very complex and not especially transparent to an outsider. Further complicating its administrative function is the fact that the Viadrina Euroregion's funding currently comes from two EU regional programs: INTERREG, for EU Members (Germany), and PHARE for candidate countries (Poland). Thus, the very funding targeted at cooperative cross-border projects comes from two separately administered sources. Coordinating these funds has been problematic not only in the Viadrina Euroregion, but also for the EU funding apparatus itself (Dascher 2003:41, see also European Commission 2000:7). This problem tends to intensify a fragmentary pressure with the Viadrina Euroregion, and impedes the ability for the offices on each side of the border to act in concert with one another.

## **VI. Funding the Regions**

Euroregions are funded from the EUR 10.44 billion set aside in 2000-2006 from the EU's structural funds for "community initiatives" directed at solving specific regional problems<sup>11</sup>.

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<sup>10</sup> This traffic is through the Frankfurt an-der-Oder-Świecko border checkpoint.

<sup>11</sup> The EU's various regional policy funds constitute about one third of the EU's total budgetary expenditures, or EUR 213 billion for 2000-2006. EUR 195 billion of this is allocated to the Structural Funds, and EUR 18 billion is allocated to the Cohesion Fund, which finances environmental and transportation infrastructure projects in four poorest EU countries (Ireland, Greece, Spain and Portugal). For a more detailed explanation of the complex allocation of these funds see the EU's regional policy website at [http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional\\_policy/index\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu.int/comm/regional_policy/index_en.htm).

The EU defines these problems as “transnational and interregional cooperation (INTERREG III), sustainable development of cities and declining urban areas (Urban II), rural development through local initiatives (Leader +), [and] combating inequalities and discrimination in access to the labor markets (Equal)” (Info regio 2003:2). Of these, The Viadrina Euroregion is only eligible for INTERREG funds.

The INTERREG program is further divided into three subcategories: A, B, and C. INTERREG Strand A applies to all border regions, and its “aim is to establish genuine cross-border zones of economic activity and devise joint strategies for spatial development” (Info regio 2003:8). INTERREG Strands B and C co-finance transnational and interregional cooperation projects. “Strand B seeks to improve the spatial planning of large areas while strand C promotes cooperation and experience exchanges among those involved in regional and local development projects” (Info regio 2003:8) Interreg B and C are aimed particularly at cooperation between member and non-member states.

In addition to INTERREG, the EU created the PHARE program after the collapse of state-sponsored socialism in Eastern Europe in 1989 to provide aid for economic development, and it is the primary financial instrument for pre-accession aid to central and Eastern European countries. Originally targeted only at Poland and Hungary, the program now includes 13 nations.<sup>12</sup> From 1995-1999, PHARE allocated approximately EUR 6.7 billion for a wide range of projects including infrastructure development, education, research, business development, agricultural reform, and environmental protection (Info regio 2003). For 2000-2006, PHARE has a budget of another EUR 10.9 billion, and now has only two primary goals: institution building and financing investment projects (Info regio 2003).

The Viadrina Euroregion receives about 80% of its budget from EU funds, and the remaining 20% from co-financing by member municipal governments. From 1994 to 1999, the Viadrina Euroregion was allocated EUR 60 million from PHARE CBC for various projects, two of the most notable of which were the construction of the main building and student residences (EUR 6 million and EUR 4 million respectively) at the Collegium Polonicum, a cooperative cross-border college established by Adam Mickiewicz University in Poznań and the European University Viadrina in Frankfurt (Słubice Municipal Government 2003). Until 2006, the EU will make another EUR 96.21 million available to the Viadrina Euroregion through the INTERREG III program.<sup>13</sup>

From 1995 to 2000, over 800 small projects in the Viadrina Euroregion were subsidized by INTERREG funds (Euroregion “Pro Europa Viadrina” 2003). Additionally, EUR 2 million was received by the region from the PHARE CBC Small Projects Fund to undertake 302 individual “people-to-people” events and activities (Association of Polish Municipalities 2002:88). These projects target a very specific and fundamentally social goal--cross-border and cross-cultural integration--and according to members of the Viadrina Euroregions’s staff, these small projects also have the largest impact.

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<sup>12</sup> Albania, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Czech Republic, Estonia, Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Poland, Romania, Slovakia and Slovenia.

<sup>13</sup> After May 1, 2004, when Poland enters the EU, funding from PHARE will end.

Although the Viadrina Euroregion's internal organization acts as the gatekeeper for determining the feasibility and funding sources for most of the projects within its borders, its status as a voluntary association prevents it from holding an absolute monopoly on the lobbying of EU funds. In fact, Dascher observes that in Germany nearly all levels of government can and do participate in applying for EU funds, making the entire decision making process extremely complex at every stage from the EU down (2003:41). In order to negotiate this institutional melee, one side effect of EU regional funding has been the emergence of a growing market not only for the projects themselves, but also training seminars and classes explaining how to submit successful proposals to the EU.

## VII. Overcoming History

While intimately involved with the allocation of EU funds, the Viadrina Euroregion was not established to explicitly provide economic aid. Instead, one of the principal motivations for creating the Viadrina Euroregion was to provide the institutional frameworks for cooperation and to promote good neighborly relations between Germany and Poland against a backdrop of an unfavorable historical and political environment. The Viadrina Euroregion also adopted the goals of "strengthen[ing] the regional identity of [border] territories, create[ing] common perspectives for the future", and "promot[ing] the idea of united Europe and international cooperation" (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003).

For Euroregions, a conception of a common "culture" and history are often utilized as unifying and organizing principles. Likewise, the EU itself regularly emphasizes a pan-European identity and history that is non-nationalist and non-ethnic (or at least lacking in nationalist and ethnic politics). Shore observes that the EU favors a transnational interpretation of history to "combat nationalistic bias," and a historiography that "typically. . . represents the last three thousand years of European history as a kind of moral success story: a gradual 'coming together' in the shape of the European Community and its institutions" (Shore 2000:57). However, the local history of the Polish/German border is one of the most potentially divisive modern histories in all of Europe, and is frequently cited as a problem by residents on both sides of the border.

National borders are, of course, the markers that delineate where the sovereignty of one state ends, and one state begins. The placement of Polish/German border has been almost continuously contested in one way or another since Poland regained independence in 1918. From 1918-1921, six border wars were fought concurrently, two of which were with Germany: the Posnańian War<sup>14</sup> 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). After World War II, Poland's borders were renegotiated in 1945 by the "Big Three" allies (United States, Great Britain, and the Soviet Union), first at the Yalta Conference, which set Poland's eastern border approximately at the Nazi-Soviet demarcation line of 1939 (officially at the Curzon line of 1920<sup>15</sup>) after the Soviet Union made clear its intention to annex the portions of Poland it had acquired in the Ribbentrop-Molotov Pact, and then again at the Potsdam Conference, which set

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<sup>14</sup> This conflict included lands now located in the Viadrina Euroregion.

<sup>15</sup> 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).

its western border as the Oder (Odra) and Neiße (Nysa) rivers. Poland as a whole was thus shifted west of its pre-war position. In the west, this represented a gain of territory that no institution resembling a Polish government had controlled since the Piast dynasty some 700 years earlier.

As a result of these new borders, about 1.5 million Poles were compelled to move west from behind the Soviet-Polish frontier, while between 9 and 10 million Germans were forced to emigrate from the “recovered” territories<sup>16</sup> (deZayas 1979:58,89). 4.5 million Poles were then resettled in the recovered territories, mostly from central Poland and the lands annexed by the Soviet Union, while about 1 million residents of the recovered territories were allowed to stay, provided their Polish ethnicity could be verified (Gruchman et al 1959:144,136). As a general rule, all of these transfers were marked by brutality, and at least 1 million Germans died as a direct result of the expulsions, mostly during the winter of 1945 (deZayas 1979:103-104).

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. With the movement of the border, native-born residents were suddenly 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 therefore stems from the same quest for stability that created the impetus for the integration projects that eventually formed the EU, a rather ironic situation as the EU now faces the very problems created by these policies fifty years ago.

The history of the Polish/German border has contributed directly to two of the most derisive issues for EU integration addressed by the recent EU accession negotiations--the interrelated issues of immigration and property rights. While Germany worries that it will be flooded by employment-seeking Poles immediately following Poland’s accession on May 1, 2004 and the subsequent deregulation of the border, Poles that settled in western Poland after World War II have become increasingly fearful that Germans will return and attempt either to reclaim their lost properties through legal processes, or merely to take advantage of the relatively low prices of Polish land and buy properties outright. Additionally, Poland as a whole is concerned that German foreign investors will buy up property, especially agricultural lands. Concerns such as these led to concessions by both sides during the accession negotiations, which have significantly qualified the political and economic integration that the EU champions as two of its fundamental values: the free movement of people and the free movement of capital.

In the case of Germany and the fourteen other current EU members, a two-year transitional period on immigration will be implemented, during which national measures constraining immigration can be applied 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)--A point that is continually cited as unfair in Poland. Because of the potentially divisive nature of property rights, Poland requested an 18-year moratorium on land purchases for non-Polish EU citizens. After significant debate, Poland finally agreed to a transition period barring foreign land purchases for 12 years for agricultural land and 5 years for

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<sup>16</sup> Another 3.5 million, the “Sudeten Deutsch,” were forced to emigrate from Czechoslovakia.

secondary residences (European Commission 2002:14). Gaining these concessions further demonstrates how the histories of local regions influence, and are influenced by, the supranational policy decisions of the EU, as well as how geographically localized social and political groups can take on characteristics that make them actors not only locally, but also on international levels. Moreover, by insisting that these issues be negotiated, Poland and Germany explicitly demonstrate the retention of sovereignty by nation-states within the EU by qualifying the circumstances by which “foreign” EU citizens can own property (Poland) or by excluding “foreign” EU citizens from entering a nation-state’s territory and earning a living (Germany).

### **VIII. Two Cities**

Subice was “founded” in 1945 when the movement of the Polish border divided the eastern riverside quarter of Frankfurt, then called Dammvorstadt, from the rest of the city. 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 Lubuska (Urząd Miejski w Słubicach 2003:5). After the Germans were relocated across the border, the city was resettled by ethnic Poles. This divided history is incorporated into Słubice’s relatively new coat of arms (adopted in 1948), which is half white eagle, representing Poland, and half red cock, representing Frankfurt.

Both Frankfurt and Słubice were rebuilt and resettled virtually from scratch after 1945. In the last months of World War II, Frankfurt was designated a *Festung*, or fortress. These fortresses were designed to delay the Soviet advance as long as possible, and to potentially provide the basis for a German counterattack (Davies and Moorhouse 2003:16). Like most of the *Festungen* along the Oder River, such as Breslau (Wrocław) and Küstrin, Frankfurt was almost totally destroyed. By the war’s end, few civilians remained in the city. The resulting lack of roots is often cited as a major problem by residents and officials on both sides of the border.

Four general periods have characterized the post World War II Polish/German border regime. By 1946, the border was effectively sealed to the civilian population and it remained so until 1972. On January 1, 1972, the border was opened to limited cross border traffic, including some employment opportunities, but was closed again in October of 1980 as a response to the Solidarity movement in Poland (although not as rigidly as 1945). Finally, in 1991 the border was opened to visaless cross-border traffic. The border was officially accepted by East Germany in 1950 by the Görlitz Treaty, but not by West Germany until 1970 when the Warsaw Treaty normalized relations between the two countries. The subject was not finally put to rest until 1991 when the Border Treaty and the Treaty on Good Neighborhood were signed between Germany and Poland.

With relatively little contact across the border during the forty-five years between 1946 and 1991, the histories and identities of the two cities diverged. Following World War II, social campaigns pursued in both cities and of the border contributed to this divergence. Both Frankfurt and Słubice witnessed extensive socialization campaigns. Słubice also experienced a Polonisation campaign (which may actually have softened the socialization campaign) and after 1989, an additional desocialization campaign. The street names in the two cities bear evidence of these histories. In Frankfurt, Breite Straße became Rosa Luxemburg Straße, Riehe Straße became Karl Marx Straße and Wilhelm Platz became Platz der Republik. All streets in Słubice were given Polish names, and now such socialist classics as ulica 1 Maja and ulica Jedności

Robotnicze (United Workers), coexist incongruously with the socialist taboos of ulica Piłsudskiego (after Gen Piłsudski, who led the Polish army to victory over the Soviet Union in the Polish-Soviet War of 1919-1920), and ulica Konstytucji 3 Maja (after the constitution of 1791).

With the movement of the border, Słubice was changed 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 never reestablished, and after leaving Frankfurt trains traveling east bypass the city. It is often still more convenient for Słubice residents to cross the border into Frankfurt to get a train connection to cities in Poland. The movement of the border also introduced the Polish side to a new language and cultural norms that had not been part of the pre-war community.

Additionally, many of the settlers in the Lubuskie region were part of the *kresy*, or Poles that were from Poland's former eastern territories, and still considered these lands (now in Ukraine) to be their spiritual home (Parkin 2002:9). Initially, many Poles settling in western Poland assumed that their residence would be temporary, and made few efforts to establish emotional or physical permanence, often sending their children to live in central Poland (Davies and Moorhouse 2003:443). Only after 1970, was permanent residence relatively assured. However, the possibility that displaced Germans might file indemnity suits in Polish courts has not yet been completely ruled out, and in many ways the "recovered territories" remain a contested space.

Schultz explains the construction of Słubice in opposition to Frankfurt, "[Słubice] wanted never to share the urban history of Frankfurt. Słubice as border guard of the Polish 'Regained Territories' built up her own history, rooted in the pioneer period after the last world war" (Schultz 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. With the liberalizing of internal EU borders, the Polish/German border has now become increasingly important for protecting the EU's Eastern frontier from illegal traffic of both immigrants and goods. Although Poles can now cross relatively freely, the border checkpoint reinforces a perception of entering a foreign place and a place of different rights and privileges. It is thus a regular reminder that Poland is not quite considered part of the EU's European club, or to use Ong's (1990) terms, demonstrates an example of an "ethnically marked class grouping" based on asymmetric power relations.

Following Poland's EU accession, the Polish/German border checkpoints will remain in place for the time being, and will act as a secondary bulwark to protect the EU's core from the potential threat of illegal immigration from countries further east (particularly Ukraine). Even though the Polish/German border checkpoints themselves are a tremendous hindrance to the EU's economic and political integration by acting as a literal barrier to trade and reinforcing the already prevalent perception of Poles as second-class EU citizens, leaving the Polish/German border controls in place is considered necessary since Poland's eastern border has been deemed insecure, and because Poland does not yet conform to requirements of the Schengen Convention's common visa procedures (another example of "pooled" sovereignty external to the EU).

Parkin points out that international borders and cross-border regions can be either locations where “symbols of state power” are demonstrated through “official scrutiny” or places where national borders can be de-emphasized (2002:5). Depending on the policies applied to it, a border region can either be utilized to keep people apart or bring them together, and the Polish/German border has been used in both ways. Obviously, the latter purpose is preferable to EU and Euroregion administrations, but this effort has been hindered by the concerns of national governments, making even the physical border itself a site where local and national policies compete.

## **IX. On the EU’s Cutting Edge**

Despite its divisive history, Frankfurt/Ślubice has also been a leader in cross-border integration efforts, and demonstrates a commitment by many local politicians to promoting integration, a situation that may or may not translate into support by the local populace. After the Polish/German border was opened to visaless traffic on the April 8, 1991, the mayors of Ślubice and Frankfurt followed up with a “common declaration” on April 16 in which they further agreed to pursue economic and cultural cooperation and exchange (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003). The Collegium Polonicum and Europa University Viadrina also opened in 1991, with the specific goals of “bridge[ing] the ‘East’ and ‘West,’ “break[ing] barriers and prejudices” between the two nations, and fostering a “common European conscience” (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003). The universities’ three thousand students are therefore literally being taught how to pursue an integrated Europe.

The “Common Declaration” of 1991 was formalized on May 18, 1993 when an agreement was reached between the two cities, mandating a meeting schedule between the mayors, formal cooperation between the town councils, and economic (common water supply, sewage, and energy) and cultural integration (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003). In 1997, Ślubice and Frankfurt also began developing a common urban development plan, the first transnational plan of its kind in the history of either country.

To date, the most extensive agreement in the integration project of Frankfurt/Ślubice was reached on July 5, 2000 with the adoption of the “Strategy Frankfurt(O)-Ślubice 2003”. Financed by both EU and local funds, the Strategy Frankfurt(O)-Ślubice 2003 is a comprehensive ecological and economic development and renovation project as well as a cultural exchange project (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003). Strategy Frankfurt(O)-Ślubice 2003 contains three main community events, the most ambitious of which is “The Europagarden 2003,” an urban renewal project to improve both sides of the Oder riverfront, to build a common “green” city center, and to improve the aesthetic and recreational quality of the cities (Ślubice Municipal Government 2003). Also included in Strategy 2003 are the XXIII International Days of The Modern Hanse (May 22-25, 2003), an international cultural festival in which 140 cities throughout Europe participate, and a joint 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary celebration for Frankfurt (12-14 July 2003).

The Europagarden 2003 is an archetypal example of the ways in which Euroregions function in concert with both local governments and other NGOs. The Europagarden 2003 is a multifaceted group of events, projects and festivals, lasting from May to October 2003. Most of

the Europagarden's cultural events took place on the Isle Ziegenwerder, a small island in the German side of the Oder that has been developed into a large park with several performance venues. From June through August, almost every weekend (and many weeknights) featured an event, including performances by musicians from throughout Europe, films, theatre, fashion shows and art installations. Many of these events were targeted simply at giving people a reason to cross the border. For this purpose, two of the larger summer festivals, Johannisnacht (Summer Solstice, 21 July) and Oderfest (13-15 June) were held in Słubice. Additionally, the Europagarden built or refurbished nine parks, six in Frankfurt and three in Słubice, and refinished the Słubice soccer stadium.

Although co-funded by the municipal governments, a large proportion of the funding for these events came directly from the EU and was initially administered by the Viadrina Euroregion. In turn, many smaller NGOs participated in organizing parts of the Europagarden such as a film festival of Polish and German student filmmakers, and a twelve-day long series of art projects and seminars for local youths, collectively called "Eden."

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

Throughout the planning of the "Strategy Frankfurt(O)-Słubice 2003's" events, the underlying theme is one of bringing the cities closer together despite their historical differences. These projects attempt to demonstrate that the cities are inextricably linked in both the past and the future, and that the EU represents an opportunity to return to this unification. However, within many of the celebrations themselves, participants tended to emphasize both their separateness and their cooperation simultaneously.

Both sides of the urban area of Frankfurt/Słubice are struggling with deciding what the twin cities should be and what they should become, especially as the expansion of the EU increases the pressure to for Frankfurt/Słubice demonstrate itself as a "*Europastadt*" (European city) and a model for the "new" Europe. Much of the local politics of Frankfurt/Słubice is caught up in negotiating these decisions, and the level of integration that should be pursued remains a matter that is up for debate. "Słubfurt," one local political action group that promotes the integration of Frankfurt/Słubice, derives its name from the combination of the two cities, and promotes its use as a name for the urban area. "Słubfurt" is of course a politically loaded term, and to use it for the Frankfurt/Słubice urban area is to make a political statement about the cities' future as an integrated Polish/German city. This is somewhat similar to many cities located in the "recovered territories," which have both Polish and German names. To use one name or another is to make a political statement about the past, and to lay a particular ethnic claim to a

city. Given the turbulent past of the Polish/German frontier, using a particular name can in some circumstances be cause for offence. Therefore, to use the name “Słubfurt” is to lay equal ethnic claims to both sides of city—a claim that does not always meet with approval by all residents.

## **X. The Periphery’s Center**

Frankfurt/Słubice’s physical location causes additional struggles for significance within the national imaginations of the two cities’ respective countries, a placement that may help push the region further toward a European identity. In spatial terms, the Viadrina Euroregion, and Frankfurt/Słubice especially, can paradoxically be both central and peripheral depending on the particular context. While its location is at the geographic heart of the expanded European Union, the Viadrina Euroregion is also located a long distance from densely populated and well developed industrial and economic areas (Krätke 1996:8). Lubuskie’s population density is only about half of Poland’s average, while Brandenburg’s is only about one third of Germany’s average (Dascher 2003:6). Recorded unemployment is similarly high on both sides of the border: 17.4% in the German Border region in 2000 and 19.5% in the Polish border region. However, the real unemployment figure, that is, the number of people willing to work in the labor force if a job were available, may be as high as 30% on both sides of the border (Dascher 2003:26-27).

In the Berlin-Brandenburg regional hierarchy (the region of Berlin is encircled by Brandenburg), East Brandenburg is considered part of the periphery, outside of the metropolitan area and its surrounding industrial areas (the so-called “bacon belt”) (Krätke 1996:11). Indeed, although Frankfurt/Słubice is located on the important Rotterdam-Berlin-Warsaw-Moscow trade corridor, development may bypass the area, as the metropolitan areas of both Berlin and Poznań pull people and industry away from Frankfurt/Słubice (Krätke 1996:12). One East Berliner who now works in Słubice summed up the region’s perceived location well by saying that while he was growing up, “Frankfurt was like the USSR. We only looked west.”

Moving west continues to be a theme among the residents of Frankfurt/ Słubice. Frankfurt has experienced an 18% population decline since 1990, mostly for destinations in the more prosperous western regions of Germany. Over the same period, Słubice’s population has remained basically stable, perhaps due to the opportunities afforded by the access to the border. Additionally, it is extremely common for individuals on both sides of the border to make the 1 to 1.5 hour commute to Berlin regularly for work, both legal and illegal, further contributing to a transience of the population.

While border towns may be peripheral in national terms, they are simultaneously extremely important to the border regions that are central to the EU’s international policy goals. “Strong and fairly autonomous cross-border regions” can become centers “by combining their hinterlands as a Euroregion and placing its headquarters in a double town” (Parkin 2002:21). Since Euroregions are the focus of EU regional policies, they thus become the avant-garde of the EU’s integration process.

Although both the Polish and German halves of the Viadrina Euroregion share a location at the EU’s center and their national peripheries, there are significant divisions within the region itself, and the economic disparity between the two sides presents a very real problem. “Convergence” between the two sides is a long way off, and there is currently a sharp divide in

incomes between Poland and Germany. Dascher calculates that the nominal per capita GDP in the German border region is 4 to 5 times the Polish side (EUR 3965 in Lubuskie, and EUR 16,082 in Brandenburg) (2003:10-11). Even once this is corrected for the transfer payments West Germany makes to East Germany (amounting to about 1/3 of the total consumption and investment of East Germany) and the greater purchasing power of the Polish Złoty relative to the Euro, the corrected average GDP per capita is still approximately four times higher on the German side (Dascher 2003:11-14). This represents a tremendous income inequality, and makes it extremely easy to associate class distinctions with the two halves of the Viadrina Euroregion, an association that places the Polish side in a subordinate position, and again confirms the perception of many Poles of being second-class European citizens.

## **XI. Conclusion**

The EU recognizes border regions to be especially salient locations where integration is both most vigorously opposed and most obviously pursued. Through its special attention to border regions in its regional policy, the EU is actively and specifically pursuing integration in these regions. Within the Euroregions, the conceptions of “New Europe” and “Old Europe” meet, and the EU’s dilemma of resolving its vision for the future with the reality of the present is experienced in the daily interactions of its residents. They are also a location where the EU exercises its principle of “subsidiarity” and experiments with programs to promote “integration.” In short, they are a location where the “work in progress” that characterizes the Union’s governing structure is worked out. This location truly makes the Euroregions live up to their place as the “laboratories of Europe.”

As demonstrated by the Viadrina Euroregion, by virtue of its regional policy, the EU requires a reorientation of a state’s governing apparatus as well as the cooperation of a tremendous number of governments, each with different levels of jurisdiction. Consequently, the developing spatial map of Europe demonstrates a variable geometry of governmentality and sovereignty across many levels, often based on the policy initiative at hand. Due to measurement procedures that emphasize national boundaries, regionalization in the EU is also taking on increasingly class and ethnic undertones. These divisions are apparent even in the operation of institutions such as the Euroregions that are designed explicitly to counteract these polarities.

Because they encompass territory on both sides of the Polish/German border, the administrative function that these Euroregions provide for the EU creates a situation leading to intersecting, overlapping and sometimes conflicting areas of governance, as well as projects and programs that act across political borders. Therefore, in order to accomplish administrative goals, cooperation and integration between levels of government are a necessity, and require the “pooling” and “graduating” of sovereignty. Simultaneously, as different governments and agendas intersect and conflict, EU policy often ends in a compromise that protects some aspects of a given member nation-state’s sovereignty, as demonstrated by the qualification and renegotiation of the Union’s major precepts of the free movement of people and capital during the recent accession negotiations in order to alleviate the perceived threats to Poland and Germany’s respective sovereignties.

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