

Jan Groenendijk

## Europeanization of Quotidian life in Human Geography's Perspective

Reflections on the SilBoSax Region (Silesia – Bohemia – Saxony)

The space for human action on the earth surface is what Human Geography is about. Scale of organization is a central concept. Flows of interaction (ideas, goods, messages, instructions, deals) connect on several levels of scale. Connectedness is increasing; hence globalisation is an important dynamic. And this is scaring, because we do not know the reach of influences that may approach our activities.

European institutionalisation as an answer is a defence against multiple centres of globalisation that encroach on our trade and industry, on our agriculture.

Half a century ago this defence started with the coordination of steel manufacturing. This must have been successful: there still is production of steel in the EU. And there is the Airbus. The EU clearly has developed as an important tool for policy making in the world-economy. In the operations of the WTO the EU acts as an entity. But globalisation is not reduced to the economy; in the cultural realm its influence is considerable. In that respect the EU or Europe at large has no clear domain.

The European Economic Community came to the rescue of the Nation State, which did no longer have the right scale for policy coordination (Milward 1992). By excluding costly policy competition between states, by creating a level playing field, fair competition, European states could survive and were able to influence economic power by some coordinated state power. This is known as negative integration: agreeing what is not allowed. Some positive integration is there as well: Common Agricultural Policy (European model of agriculture, saving landscapes and rural communities) and Regional Policy (compensating for concentration of economic development; commitment to regions).

With the concept of regions we are on the scale of quotidian life. Social science calls this ›place‹ (Paasi 2002). Place is where you live and work.

Place is linked to collective memory and social identity. It has temporal depth; the presence of the past is more to be found on the scale of place than on higher scales (Graham 1998).

But place is open to external influence. The local economy, with its local specific mix of trade and industry is economically tied to other scales. The local economy may be more vulnerable when concentrated in one (sub)-sector. Place has unique characteristics; it has a specific labour market and residential/consumer market. Policymaking may use this level to take responsibility for improvement; deliberate action for schooling and to enhance the attractiveness of a place.

Ideally place is home to entrepreneurs, local people taking initiative. The capacity to govern a place is greatly enhanced by the mutual cooperation of local entrepreneurs and administrative talent. All critically followed by an active citizenship. Together they may provide the right context for investment from elsewhere. This is known as the (local) growth machine (Logan et al. 1987) or local regime (Stoker et al 1994), if it has acquired certain stability over the years. A positive identity of place, shared among residents and active organisations, will greatly enhance regime formation. Identity of a place is a concept that may be grasped with some success on the level of localities. Even then one has to realise that those in power, normally to the profit of locals, will use such a construct deliberately. This is because place identity may be used to empower the local economy (place branding).

It is far more difficult to envisage European identity. Citizens in European countries do identify with certain values and other cultural constructs, but not necessarily the same. Nor will a listing of typical ›European values‹ easily exclude citizens elsewhere on the globe from adherence to them. Identity has to be used with care as it is and has been used for nation building. On such a level there can only be ›imagined communities‹ (Anderson 1983). Here the creation of identity is fully open to the (ab)-use of political power. Therefore, drawing a line excluding non-European areas (or including for that matter) is a difficult exercise. Such action is always directly related to the exercise of power. Quite clearly the close relations between the EEC and Turkey since the years sixty have been strongly influenced by the USA. Power is used in Turkey to impose western (not necessarily European) cultural traits throughout this state to enhance its

position for enclosure in the EU. In much the same way consideration of the Ukraine as part of the EU depends greatly on relations between EU and the Russian state. Borders are there where the reach of power ends.

The EU is strongly structured as an economic entity. Europeanization is first and foremost the influence of economic globalisation in its European version on quotidian life throughout the EU. Europeanization of quotidian life means awareness of scale dependencies. People in places must realise that trade and industry, and that establishments that provide for services to the public can only exist in the place where they live on condition that certain requirements in the local context are met. The labour- and consumer market, the infrastructure for their functioning must be present and remain adequate compared to other places on (at least) state or (better) European scale. Competition is a fact of daily life. It should remind people of the unique qualities of the place they identify themselves with. Not to take them for granted, but to strive for improvement.

The Lisbon strategy calls for even more local drive to improve conditions. Although in first instance on high scale comparing the EU economy with the USA, the strategy calls for places to qualify for new development, in line with their unique capacities. This should not enlarge the gap between places that easily adapt and others that do not. Regional policy of the EU should provide for assistance in case regions are clearly unable to do this all on their own.

Quotidian life on the Neisse, compared to other European places, poses severe problems. This place, when tested on its temporal depth, instantly reveals the traumatic remnants of huge displacements of people on the end of World War II. Instead of collective memory there are separate narratives on either side of the Neisse. People identify in quite different ways with Lower Silesia. And when young people allow for a new start, new identification, then the fact that many have left from the German side of the river does not help. The challenge that globalisation poses for this place is huge. Can Europeanization be any help? What opportunities open up?

In the advent of enlargement, cross border economy has been possible for more than a decade already. When Utrecht geography students eight years ago started research on the Neisse border (we are in this region for 10 days every second year), expectations of border economy were based on experience on the USA-Mexican border, where cheap labour combines

with US entrepreneurial initiative. But East Germany experienced almost complete de-industrialisation, and displacement of trade and industry to the west. Transnational cooperation is established between places in West Germany and places in Poland rather than on the Eastern border of Germany. And although foreign investment in Western sections of Poland is higher than in Eastern areas (Cieslik 2005), investment in Warsaw is many times higher. Investment directly on the border is hardly found, as entrepreneurial initiative across border in East Germany is lacking. Even new infrastructure crossing the Neisse (the Hagenwerder-Radomierzyce bridge) did not as yet initiate industrial activities on the laid out industrial estates. Economic opportunities of the border with its huge wage difference remained in the sphere of bazaar economy, cheap cigarettes and personal services. Enlargement came with such strict rules for use of labour, that on the border there is less Polish labour than further west.

Identities are still quite separate; language problems are no help. Although Polish youngsters see opportunities across border, German youth does much less.

In 2003 The Enlarge-Net project, operated from Dresden had just started. It has been in operation for two years, finished 2005. Its purpose has been to clear the way for administrative cooperation between local/regional government in Silesia, Bohemia and Saxony. Quotidian life problems that have to be catered for by local government provided the subject matter: migration, cross border economy, infrastructure, environment and modernisation of administration. Our students evaluated how the start has been made. Work title: SilBoSax. They were impressed by the challenges that lay ahead of the poor administrators that had to manage each from different sides of the border. There just had been a water catastrophe on the Labe and Oder: how would you be able to coordinate help? The IHK Dresden has an impressive cross border network. But when you take a close look in Usti nad Labem and Wrocław, other local business-networks prevail. Usti is close to Dresden; sections of a motorway are there but will not connect soon. Administrations themselves greatly differ in task and authority. The Kraj level of authority was completely new.

Hopeful was that Polish local administrators turned out to be pragmatic and eager to take on this job of cooperation. From administrations and public servants in the Czech Republic there was much more hesitation.

From all these observations it is clear that there is not just one context to quotidian life, there are three in what at first look is one place. Some common use is made of the consumer market, few of cultural activities, and there is some administrative coordination. Clearly not only bridges have to be built – they have been in the Altstadt and Hagenwerder – they have to function in the flows of daily life. Again: what does Europeanisation mean in this situation?

Let me start at the higher scales. The challenges facing the EU are huge. The Constitutional Treaty and the Lisbon strategy are essential to positive Europeanisation throughout all EU's places.

But after the French and Dutch 'no' to the European Constitution we should admit that the Pontes this conference refers to are not only required bridging the Neisse. They are needed very much to bridge the huge gap that now reveals itself between the public at large and European politicians.

Both the Constitutional treaty and the Lisbon strategy are projects of re-scaling social relations in the EU. For the public at large the changes to be made, although they are no landslides, are scaring. This was especially clear in the liberalisation of services. There is little understanding that we need these European scale institutions to deal with globalisation.

These projects have to be realised in multi-level governance system of policy-coordination (Jessop 2005). More than ever place has a crucial role to play as the scale of quotidian life in these multi-scalar European projects.

Europeanization means securing economic opportunities for this part of the world. Globalisation requires this large-scale state-like authority to positively create conditions for trade and industry according to European model. At the same time it requires a multi-level governance to create localities where safe accommodation and adequate local context is to be found for investment (labour market, environment, a beneficial regime). On the scale of the SilBoSax region works on the road to this project goes on:

The Enlarge-Net results now in quite pragmatic projects taking advantage of unique properties of the area as well as addressing common problems. Unemployment and emigration are taken up in one project, cross-border operation of health and social services, joint regional development vision, strategic Environmental Impact assessment in regional planning.

For the joint marketing of tourism a tourist map and tourist atlas help attract tourists by presenting a complete survey of opportunities in the area. A Ski-Atlas will show opportunities on both sides of the mountainous border.

Locally several initiatives are around to help create a new identity for this place. Goerlitz/Zgorzelec has much to offer as one of the centres in this SilBoSax region. The plans for the Kulturhauptstadt 2010 (the Brückenpark etc.) are precisely what place branding stands for. But some Polish-German local regime formation is essential to reap the fruits of these investments.

The Gruenderzeit urban landscape and architecture may again cross the river, not so much reminding of the past but of a new grandeur, the identity for a new era. The main challenge is to share this magnificent place - which is already there, and ready for its revival - among a Polish-German citizenship.

## References

- Anderson, B.R.: *Imagined communities; reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism*. London 1986.
- Cieslik, A.: Location of foreign firms and national border effects. In: *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* vol. 96, 3 pp. 287–297, 2005.
- Graham, B.J.: *Modern Europe: place, culture and identity*. London 1998.
- Jessop, B.: The political economy of scale and European governance. In: *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie* vol. 96 Nr. 2, pp. 225–230, 2005.
- Logan, J.R. & H.L.Molotch: The city as a growth machine: toward a political economy of place. In: *American Journal of Sociology*, 1976.
- Logan, J.R. & H.L.Molotch: *Urban fortunes: the political economy of place*. Berkeley, University of California, 1987.
- Milward, A.S.: *The European rescue of the nation-state*. London 1992.
- Paasi, A.: Place and region: regional worlds and words. In: *Progress in Human Geography* 26, 6, pp. 802–811, 2002.
- Stoker, G, & K. Mossberger: Urban regime theory in comparative perspective. In: *Environment and Planning C: Government and Policy*, 1994.
- [http://enlarge-net.dresden.de/enlarge-net/index\\_html](http://enlarge-net.dresden.de/enlarge-net/index_html)