Talking Borders. From Local Expertise to Global Exchange - Citizen Science Experiment

(in the context of the Association for Borderlands Studies 2nd World Conference (10th to 14th July, 2018) - Border-Making and its Consequences: Interpreting Evidence from the "post-Colonial" and "post-Imperial" 20th Century): [www.abs2018world.com](http://www.abs2018world.com)

 Information on the set-up and execution of the experiment: [https://web.archive.org/web/20181121090817/https://www.univie.ac.at/talkingborders/](https://web.archive.org/web/20181121090817/https:/www.univie.ac.at/talkingborders/)

The interview was recorded on 10.07.2018 at the University of Vienna with Dictaphone68 and 26. The original audio recording has been archived at the University of Vienna, please contact [Phaidra](https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/): https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/

Filename of the recording: 026\_Weaselfie\_Idea

Profile of the interview participants: Border Scholar (BS): an academic researcher & Citizen Scientist (CS): a university student

During the experiment each participant was assigned a random user name to make sure that the discussion was conducted pseudonymously.

The real names of the interview participants are known, please contact the principal investigator for more information: [Machteld.venken@univie.ac.at](mailto:Machteld.venken@univie.ac.at) (www.machteldvenken.com)

The transcription was produced using Wreally’s transcription software (https://transcribe.wreally.com/)

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The transcript was finalised 29.11.208

This research was financed by the Austrian Science Fund (FWF) within its Top Citizen Science initiative. Grant number TCS 028 was titled ‘Talking Borders. From Local Expertise to Global Expertise` and ran from 01.04.2018 until 31.12.2018. The Principal Investigator was Priv.-Doz. Dr. habil. Machteld Venken. The core team consisted of Sabine Hartmann (digital humanities specialist and web designer), Manuel Neubauer and Enno Lindemann (research assistance), Stefanie März (digital café) and Mark Trafford (transcriptions and proofreading).

Wreally’s transcription software, given a conversation between two native speakers in a relatively quiet environment, is able to produce 90% accurate transcriptions of what was said. However, these discussions often took place between two non-native speakers in a noisy environment where often the Dictaphone wasn’t placed close enough to record clearly the conversation. The results were frequently incomprehensible. Thus, it was necessary to listen closely to the recordings in order to correct and shape the transcript that it be readable. The discussions between citizen scientists proved particularly challenging. The amount of background noise, the wildly varying levels of English, and indeed the lack of an older, more experienced border scholar to help shape the discussion, served as serious obstacles to the production of a satisfying text. Nevertheless, in spite of the occasional lacunae, as the speaker struggled to find the appropriate words or, indeed, external factors rendered their words inaudible, it was ultimately possible to capture an authentic exchange between people of different backgrounds discussing what borders meant to them. Meanwhile, I believe the dialogues between the border scholars and the citizen scholars constitute an invaluable resource for future study of this field. This is thanks to the range and breadth of areas discussed, the juxtaposition of backgrounds and levels of experience, and, perhaps most significantly, the sense that frequently both participants, as a result of this exchange, were coming to a new understanding of the subject of borders.

The aim of the transcription was to produce a readable, authentic record of the dialogues, to capture the voices of the participants, their rhythms and idiosyncrasies of speech. Thus their words are recorded as they were spoken, with the majority of grammatical and lexical errors, as well as any distinguishing verbal tics (‘so to speak’, ‘you know’, ‘like’, ‘let’s say’) included. Errors were only corrected in very extreme circumstances when a speaker was having serious difficulty in making himself understood. Where this was done, the added word is included within parentheses. E.g. ‘I had (gone) to the mountains.’ Wherever possible, though, mistakes have been left unchanged. It is to be hoped that the judicious use of punctuation throughout the transcriptions will aid the reader in deciphering the meaning of what was originally said.

Unfinished words or sentences that were begun but unfinished have been excised. Where a speaker went back to correct him or herself, the corrected version of the sentence is the one that has been recorded. Where speakers discussed practical matters, such as how to operate the Dictaphone, the time left to speak, and so on, has briefly summarised in parentheses. E.g. (they talk in German about what to do next). When the utterance constituted a noise intended to indicate consent, disagreement or surprise, this has been recorded accordingly. E.g. “Ummm, not really.” Utterances that did not interrupt the narration of the interviewee, but merely served to indicate, say, agreement, are not transcribed. Emotional, nonverbal expressions with a meaning are indicated between brackets. E.g. (laughs)

As might be expected, the participants frequently referred to a wide variety of places, local dishes, treaties, writers, etc. All realistic efforts have been made to track down these references. While practically all such references were identified in the BS-CS dialogues, it proved logistically impossible to do so to quite the same extent for the CS-CS dialogues, partly for the reasons outlined above and partly due to the amount of time available to produce the transcription. Still, even in the case of the CS-CS dialogues, approximately 80 % of these references have successfully been tracked down.

Where it proved impossible to identify such a reference, or where the recording was incomprehensible or inaudible, it is marked (unclear). Where an unclear word was hesitantly understood by the transcriber, the word is included in parentheses with a question mark. E.g. (Tijuana?). One solution to these lacunae might be for the participants themselves to have access to these transcripts and fill in the gaps.

The software produced broadly reliable timestamps for the dialogues. In the case of the BS-CS dialogues, this is every five minutes, whereas in the case of the CS-CS dialogues, due to the greater uncertainty as to what was said, this is every two minutes. In a couple of examples, the timestamps generated by the software are not as accurate as might be desired, but they should still prove useful.

Finally, it is my wish that the reader of these transcripts finds them as illuminating and engaging as I did.

CS 1: Weaselfie

CS 2: Idea

CS 1: Citizen Science Experiment: ‘Talking Borders: from local expertise to global exchange’, 10thJuly 2018, 3 p.m. Vienna. We are using Dictaphone number 68 and 26, our user names are Weaselfie and Idea. Okay, so firstly I want to mention too that the concept of borders is something different for me, for my parents or my grandparents. Once for us the borders hardly concerned that this is a territory on which can was all of the citizens of this country. But today the borders is some kind of something different, it's kind of fluid borders. So I especially talk about Western borders on Poland. Poland is located in northeast area of Europe and this is a natural borders of European Union, you know. And the eastern border is totally different than eastern borders. So [00:02:00] when you leave the western border, and you come to Slovakia from Germany on the Czech Republic, it's not changing. Everything is the same, the roads, the buildings, the environment, and you feel like in your home. The borders are always opening, and we have a lot of possibility to do the journey. And I want to mention about 2004 since this date we are in the EU. So we have a lot of possibilities to start a journey in a European country. For example, I want to talk about the Schengen. This is a lot of possibility to exchange students, and we, for example, have a lot of money for the European. So we have a lot of possibility of the job, of the journey. And this is why the situation in Poland make that our country is always in development. But when you think about our voivodeship. In an empire of Austria-Hungarian it's called Galicia. But officially [00:04:00] name was Kingdom of Galicia and Lodomeria. So it was kind of the joke in our region that Galicia and Lodomeria, everyone said 'golicja' and 'glodomyria'. It means in Polish language that this is a length of hunger and everyone is naked. When you said that someone is naked in our country, it means that someone having no money and have the possibility to lives and appropriate issue to have a good life. So our land was really poor, and the poverty sometimes stay in our mind, you know, from our grandparents who can remember this time. And it makes that this possibilities from European Union give us a chance to develop our country more and more. But now you cannot spot any I think maybe some huge differences between our relationships. And I think in Slovakia in general public too. So I think that our young generation always called them. They are European, not only Polish people like [00:06:00] our grandparents. And if you say that you are European, every difference between the countries always disappeared. And you not try to compare everyone and everything. Everything is really better for us. But if you talking about our Eastern borders So this is really completely different situation. Because, from my point of view, I was in Ukraine. I think it was a sixth time. And one time it was I was in Odessa, and five times I was in L’viv. And when you are across the borders you have a gate and a lot of guardians. And you must look at the eyes of that guardian and you know, they check your luggage and it can be some troubles next to the border. And the situation would be totally different if the if Ukraine was in the European Union, but it's not, and some kind of the issue who took place [00:08:00] I think two years ago, like some protest maybe can change the situation, and situation of the Ukraine. But in Ukraine I think everything is changing too, like in Poland. For example, the roads in 2012 in Mundial, you know, like in Europe. Anyway, I really think that Ukraine today has opening borders too. And what I can say about the borders with Ukraine and Belorussia it always closed, but sometimes it makes it safety. For example, there are the issue of the refugee. We haven't got the problems with it, and I think our government sometimes is bad oriented with them, but they don't want to get to our country. It's not their destination, but I think our government should do something with this problem. Okay. And totally I disagree with their decision. But what we can do. What can I say is that we sometimes try to [00:10:00] help the Ukrainians from Donbas. They run away from the war with I think with the Russia, but it's not official version. But from the one side, I think, maybe, what does the borders means for me? I think on the west the borders. The borders of our possibility maybe can be (unclear) but on the west the borders is always real, and it means you have a gates, you have guardians. And you know I think that Ukraine dream about opening borders and from the summarizing I want to see something banality that I think we should build bridge not the walls. And I think it should be learning for everyone. I think, I don't know what I said, maybe it's time for your question.

CS 2: Okay and let me try, so I think there are two main reasons for borders to exist, political and cultural. In political aspect I think it's practical to have smaller area because it's easier to organize it, and make it function in an economical way too. There are bigger countries, but they always have the inner borders because they're divided to regions and depending on how big that country is those regions are again divided into smaller areas, and smaller areas until they get to small enough area that can function on its own. But the world tends to connect, so I think that's why the small areas are connected into regions and then two countries and then countries are connected into some kind of unions like European Union or some other union. But these borders also exist because of culture, because they are trying to divide different cultures. So it would be easier for a certain nation to keep, to maintain their cultural heritage and their language. But these borders are actually quite relative, because near the border there's always a mixture of culture and languages. I know that near the border of Croatia and Slovenia people from the Croatian sides use Slovenian words, and next to the border with Serbia they often use [00:14:00] words from Serbian when they talk. And also there are different cultures inside one country. And if you want to consider dialects, languages, then different languages too. One woman from China told me that their dialects are so different. They really are like different languages and if someone from the north wanted to talk to someone from the south and they talked in their dialects, they wouldn't understand the thing each other. So they have to use Mandarin Chinese. And there's also a historical question. Borders always change. And there are some areas Croatia, that are now in Croatia that before weren't and there are some areas before were in Croatia and now are not. I know that at some point of history a part of Bosnia was Croatian, and also in medieval there was something like this mountain part of Croatia was actually Croatia in this northern region was considered Slovenian. And today that's the eastern part is considered Slovenian, and that's part was then the South Hungary, so it really changed a lot. And also some parts were under certain country, like the coast was under Italy so they had a big influence from Italy and they have lots of words from Italian in their speaking, in their language or dialect and this northern part was under Hungary and other Austria. So there's an interesting way the influences of those countries [00:16:00] shown in that area. I think it's very interesting that although we were very long time under Hungary, we actually have very little words that came from Hungarian in our language. And today our official language is cleaned from other languages. So there are not that many words from German, but the dialect that is spoken in that area has really a lot of words that came from Germany. They adopted a little bit, so it's not completely the same but there are still a lot of them. And since we are very close to Slovenia, there are also some similarities with Slovenian actually. The dialect is like a mixture of Slovenian and Croatian, so we can like partly understand each other. And also people tend to move. So in every country you can find like foreigners that came there, that live there now, but they weren't born there. And when they come, they tend to bring a part of their culture, their language, and then they spread their influence on people they know. So there's again like mixture culture. I think it's quite normal that cultures mix, develop and disappear and appear. And that was the case always in history. I know I think this northern part of Croatia, before Croatians came, in this part used to live Avars, and they had really strong and developed culture. But then came the Slavs and somehow this cultural just disappeared. And also on the Bulgarians they were actually and (unclear)[00:18:05] people like Hungarians, but when they came to this areas and [00:18:00] they found Slavics, they somehow became Slavic so their identity still exists. But it's a completely different identity that they're from the one they brought here. So I think that's quite normal. And in that way the borders are quite relative. Unfortunately many people take them too serious, and there were lots of wars because of the borders and there still are in Asia. In Saudi Arabia and Iran in Iraq, and that part is still lots of wars because of the borders. And in the 90s, there was the war between Croatia and Serbia because of the border, because that area that both Croatia and Serbia don't belong to them. In the end it was settled but there's still a big tension between the two countries, and there are still people in both countries that hate the whole nation on the other side of the border just because of that war. And I think that people should think about borders just less serious, especially because of this mixture of culture and of nationalities actually. Because they are people who are like part Croatian and part Serbian. And then they have to listen like their other people from their country. They talk how they hated the other country, and that they should all die. [00:20:00] I think it's really idiotic, and I think people should cherish more the others, and understand. And I think we can do that better now because of lots of media, but unfortunately medias also sometimes spread the wrong message, so yeah, I don't know what else to talk about. I thought it would be longer. But okay.

CS 1: So it's time for our dialogue. Maybe you will talking about more about your religion in your country because you are a mixture of cultures, how to say it, and something more you can say about this?

CS 2: About the religion. Well, most of Croatians say they're Catholics, although they're not really but they say they are. And because of that they tend to have these closed minds so they don't really accept like the LGBTQ+ community. So I think that's also sad but there's not really a lot of different religions in Croatia. I honestly don't know anyone who's Jewish or Muslim. [00:22:00] I know we have the church that Russia and Serbia have.

CS 1: But I know what's going on and I think the situation in Bosnia is quite different like Croatia.

CS 2: I think they have more different religions because, there are actually a lot of Croatians and Serbians living there, and there were under the Ottoman Empire, so they have also lots of Muslims there. So yeah, I think they are. Well, I am actually never been to Bosnia, but I assume they are more willing to accept other religions than in Croatia, because they have a lot of different religions.

CS 1: Yes. The situation in Poland is it's really simple. I think more than 90% declare they are a Catholic so we haven't got I think religious problems. But not everyone are Catholic. I think many people it's an atheist or something else, and I think these problems don't depict us.

CS 1: Yes. I know. I think my whole family is registered as Catholic, but actually most of my family don't believe in anything or they believe something their own like not connected to church at all. So I think that many people that are registered as Catholics are actually not Catholics, but they're still the strong Catholic [00:24:00] community also, that propagandists like the no LGBTQ community.

CS 1: The situation of our families is I think similarly. We are Catholic and sometimes we go to the church or sometimes not. And we really cheer the LGBT and these people and I think it's okay.

CS 2: In my opinion, I think everyone should be free to live as they want, where they want, how they want. It is just important that they don't do any harm to anyone else. That's all.

CS 1: And how look the situation with marriages LGBT in Croatia. Because in Poland...

CS 2: I know it's stated that can be the marriage, marriage is between a man and a woman but I'm not sure if they are able to somehow have some kind of community. I'm not sure if that's entered the law yet.

CS 1: The same situation is in Poland. Person cannot be married together.

CS 2: But I think we got a bit off-topic, yeah.

CS 1: Yeah, true.

CS 2: Let's talk about borders.

CS 1: So which borders do you think in your country is the most safety or which one is not?

CS 2: I'm not really sure because I don't really travel a lot. This is actually my third time that I'm out of the country, but [00:26:00] I would guess that the safest is with Italy because we have the sea apart. I don't know I didn't have any problems when I went to Montenegro. So when I was facing like the border with Bosnia, there weren't any problems. I know that the Slovenian border, they really check people, all on the Croatian side, in the Slovenian side too. So you have to get twice out of the car, the bus, and they all check your ID. So they really take good care of security. Some people are frustrated by that but I think it's actually a good thing. They make sure that no one is kidnapped that no one is going by there. No one is smuggling something. So I think that's a good thing. I think that probably the border with Serbia is still really tense. Because, like I mentioned, there are still people from each side that hate the other side, which I think is has no rational basis, but okay. I really don't know about other borders. I heard that the border between Macedonia and Serbia has a fence to stop the refugees from passing. I'm not really sure what I think about that because I think we should help people but then if there are too much people coming, you can't take care of everyone. I don't know what is exactly the situation with Hungary, why they don't want them to go there. Because I heard that they just hunger in that little, people stay there, but maybe [00:28:00] someone make some trouble there. So I'm not sure about the situation there. But somehow putting on fences just seems like that would bring more tension and then it would develop more. And then there could be a war again and I don't really like that because I'm a pacifist so I'm not sure that's really a good idea.

CS 1: Maybe they want (unclear)

CS 2: What do you feel about fences?

CS 1: I think it's not a good solution. But you know Poland haven't got so many problems with refugees. We don't think about fences for now. But I think it's totally different situation in Hungary. Like they thought about something like that, and I think the borders between the USA and the Mexico, this could be the good example of defences. But I think it's better to help people and giving them the chance to develop yourself and try to find a job in their country, cannot build defences because it can make some war in the area [00:30:00]. I really prefer peace solutions there than building fences and walls for my opinion. So, do you have in Croatia some still closed borders? Like with Serbia? Is it a closed borders or not?

CS 2: I have no idea. I don't think that we have closed borders anywhere because we don't have a really problems with refugees. They usually just passed Croatia and wanted to stay there. Even Croatians don't want to stay there, that's why so many go to Germany.

CS 1: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. This is the same like in Poland. This is not their destination.

CS 2: Yes, think that's very sad because we need the young stay in our country to make it better, but that's not the topic.

CS 1: Once time I was in Armenia from (unclear) and we talk of borders and of some different issue, but if you say about borders, they have I think four borders. One is with Russia and it’s opening. And one is with Azerbaijan. It is so kind of the border like between their Korea [00:32:00] North Korea and South Korea.

CS 1: They have a lot of army, and the area between the countries is always watched, and it's really dangerous for people who want to cross them because you can be dead, if you want cross them. And every one of these borders have a weapon and you can be dead if you. This is because the wars in 90s. You know that and I think in Poland the situation is really better. We haven't got the closed borders, we have only borders when we have to be checked, but I think it's not so huge problem like in Armenia where the borders are closed. And when you say about empire Austro-Hungarian, and the area of the Croatia, maybe, you know some historical [00:34:00] facts or some events or what your grandparents say something about some interesting things. How was in Habsburg Empire in the area of Croatia? Because in my opinion Galicia where I now live, everyone said that it was the most poverty area. And you know, I try to explain how they called it.

CS 2: I think it depends on the ruler, but I know that for example Maria Teresia and (unclear) they actually tried to improve Croatia, they made several great reforms, like the school reform and about villagers that they should be free, have their own land to work on, and there was a religion reform to accept everyone. So I think it wasn't actually that bad and I'm from Varazdin and Maria Theresia actually really tries to develop Verazdin. Unfortunately there was a fire in 1776. Before that it was like the capital of Croatia. [00:36:00] Actually the reason some people say that Austria tries to make the influence of Zagreb smaller, so they put the capital in Verazdin, but then there was a fire so they had no choice and they returned the capital to Zagreb. But I'm not sure how accurate that is. I think that people in Croatia, the thing they hated the most is that language that people were forced to speak in German. And I think that's the primary reason why they try to go out from the Habsburg monarchy. Also the Hungary was making pressure for Hungarian, but it never caught up. I know that in 19th century, don't know exactly the year they burnt the Hungarian flag when the emperor came to Zagreb. So that's like students playing the Hungarian flag, so they were all like expelled from the university, and they had to go to Vienna to continue their studies or somewhere else, but mostly they went to Vienna. But it's also a good thing for Croatians, many of them who could afford studying, could go easily to Vienna, and their continue their studies, and then they would come back, and they knew much more than they would learn in Croatia. So I think it had many positive effects on Croatia that we were in Habsburg Monarch. I think everything has its positive and negative effects, but I [00:38:00] think it actually wasn't that bad. That's my opinion. I didn't live in that time. So who knows what some people would say from past time?

CS 1: From the history I know that in an area of Galicia we have the biggest poverty but we was the most free people, we have our government and the university next to us. So, you know, it was a very bad influence and good influence. So

CS 2: I know Croatia was always fighting for their own government. I don't know if maybe at some point indeed had it, but it actually wasn't completely on its own. So there was all this like fight, because Hungary wanted to have the rule over that area so. But that's why they also invested in the roads to develop so the Hungarians could easier come to the coast, and also Austrians so they built wrong. So that's also a positive thing from that period. But I think at that point of time the borders were also really relative between the countries that were in Habsburg Monarch. And I think it was easier to move from each other, especially someone from Austria wanted to move somewhere else, they even influence them to move somewhere, so they could spread the Austrian influence. And they did that from Hungary to

CS 1: So maybe [00:40:00] we can compare the empire of Austria-Hungary to today Schengen?

CS 2: Everything is comparable!

CS 1: What we can say more about the borders? (they discuss the time they have left and agree to each give a concluding speech) So the border is not, it's not only that environment borders like mountains or rivers and borders of the countries. I think it's rather something like a political borders. They are really important, some cultural borders and really just borders. I think they always win with the borders, which someone [00:42:00] try to create on the map, and someone who took the pencil and try to figure some borders of country. And if people haven't got the borders which they think is the borders of their religion, political borders and culture. It always makes the world. Do you think like me?

CS 2: I think that's not always religious and the culture and borders match each other. But I do think that it's important to maintain the borders as we have them, because it's also part of our culture. It's a part of human culture to have borders to divide people in some way, so we can better organise them. So I think we should maintain the borders, like we have them but not close them. So people still can pass the border and move to another country if they don't like their culture or something and they think that another country will be better for them.