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 Dictaphone 10 and 64. The original audio recording has been archived at the University of Vienna, please contact [Phaidra](https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/): https://phaidra.univie.ac.at/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: 064\_Aura\_Termine

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: Aura

CS 2: Termine

This dialogue was recorded in 3 parts.

Part 1

CS 1: Citizen Science Experiment: ‘Talking Borders: from local expertise to global exchange’, 10thJuly 2018, 3 p.m. Vienna. We are using Dictaphone numbers 10 and 64, our usernames are Aura and…

CS 2: Termine.

CS 1: Aura. OK, let's start. Our topic is borders. In German we call it grenzen. But in German grenzen does not only mean border, it has several meanings. For example, you can translate it to limit. You can also say (unclear) what means to (unclear)and even (unclear) to exclude someone. What I think about borders. I think people think in limits. They are part of the human thinking. You can see border or limits are normal, maybe even necessary. They serves us to differentiate ourself as an individual or a group. They support to determine national areas, affiliation. However, to distinguish oneself from others can also determine a group affiliation across national or [00:02:00] area boundaries. For example musicians or students or politicians, Democrats or Communists, woman, man and so on. As much as I believe the borders are necessary or imminent for human thinking. I also believe that they present a danger, that they have a potential to (unclear) constraining. They do explode someone from others. There's also the risk that the value to the opposite for me or us. An example of what I mean and it reaches (unclear) danger and I will try to describe now. I was born and grew up in Vienna. But on the weekends and holidays, I spent my childhood in [00:03:19] together with my parents and my sisters in (unclear) in my grandparents’ house. We lived in a small village on the border with Hungary. There are no official border crossing but on the other side of the forest is our neighbour country. As a kid I never understood why for example, on a bicycle route, it was called 'There is no border'. I wandered what's on the other side. What's so bad about going on the other side. What is distinguishing us from those over there. I think  something different is the language but it cannot be the language because my [00:04:00] grandparents live in a Croatian-speaking village. They learnt Germany at school for later when they went to work in Vienna. And also in Hungary they are also speaking Croatian. And somebody put me on (unclear) Hungarian. Also whenever town speaks German, but it doesn't understand the older generation because they have so heavy dialect. And the same applies to other states of the Republic of Austria. We speak the same language, but I still do not understand everything, so it cannot be the language. What about the culture? What about the personal relationships? It has been working since I can remember Hungarian people in Burgenland, who build houses and live in Hungary. Nevertheless it was always talked about us and us. I know many Hungarian people, and I have more in common with some of them than with some people from Burgenland. So we had the same values. Also the Hungarian food or Hungarian religion or many traditions are very similar to ours. I also think that, yeah, I cannot understand every values or culture of Vienna or Burgenland or the other parts of Austria. Even in my family, I don't agree with some of them. So I think such [00:06:00] differences not only exist across borders. It's also in the old family, and also Burgenland is part of the Austria only since 1920 and when I think about this then (unclear) when I was born in another generation. I'm not a guy from Austria than I was a guy from Hungary. And the people from Austria or from Austrian point of view, I was not we, I was them or the others. And I think also borders are the problem. For example in Saarland in Germany some generations they are a part of France and some generations are a part of Germany. And often people work and move to other different states. In the former Yugoslavian Republic or Korean families were torn apart as wars and state divisions took place. [00:08:00] Nevertheless each generation had a national feeling or a we feeling. And I think a lot of time what's happening is that in Saarland or Burgenland people feel like Austrians and not like Hungarian or something else. In this national feeling is in addition with media and politics, education plays a very important role in this propaganda that you feel like an Austrian or Hungarian.  I don't want to call into question of nation states or the autonomy of the areas or cities, because I'm also glad to live in Vienna, and I'm happy that we are not governed by Tyrol or Berlin or something, but I want just to emphasise with these examples for me there's the thinking that should go beyond boundaries, both personal and of that of nations. The borders constrain us or exclude others from outside. In summary I would like to say that perhaps states [00:10:00] and borders safeguard national interest. Perhaps the individual also needs boundaries because the human brain is programmed to differentiate itself from others, or distinguish yours or mine. I'm also grateful and happy about the opportunities this country or city offers me, but I think it's something good and something bad. I try to get involved in the society with what I can. I also personally have my limits to be able to see myself as an individual. And also differentiate between myself and the other, sometimes also between us, for example, my friends and the other. Nevertheless for me it is random where someone is born and should not be our priority. I think after all we are all humans, and personally I do not feel that I'm attracted to an area but to people who are close to me or to people who are there for me or support me, for the others, at least, I try to feel something like respect, and at [00:12:08] least I try to feel respect almost limitless in Austria or in Germany.

CS 2: So to me the border it has a very familiar, like it's very familiar to me, because I grew up on the border with Slovenia, and in fact, I am part of the Slovenian minority in Italy. So, since I was born, I was little, I always with my family, we always travelled from Italy to Slovenia like on the regular basis and daily. So to me the border wasn't at the beginning when there was still like the physical border with these (unclear) that goes up and down there was like, I wouldn't call it a shock, because  I grew up with it, so I got to know it, but like police stop you at the border and said to you, 'give me your ID give me your (in Slovenian) which was a type of passport the people who lived on the border had. That was quite like it wasn't normal for me. And then when the border was taken down, and now you can pass it whatever you like or how many times you like it, now it's different. So as I said, I am part of [00:14:08] minority of Slovenian in Italy, and so I think I can I have a pretty good look of what's in Italy because I live there, and what's in Slovenia because I travel all the time to Slovenia. I got to know the two cultures in different ways and I can say they are totally opposite. They are not like you said before, that you said that in Hungary they're very similar to what you experience in Austria. I can say that the Slovenians and Italians are two different kinds of people. And exactly when you cross the border from Italy the streets become bigger. You have like newer things, taller buildings, and so on. And so the difference is not just like cultural. It's also you can see it right away that you're not anymore in Italy or you're not anymore in Slovenia. But as you said also, I think you said it in a really beautiful way. It's not like us and you or us and those, it's more like who we are as people. So I can see that why someone, like for nations the border is where it stops being who are we, and it starts being who are they. And I get why pretty much you are kind of afraid of the other, and so someone that it's not like you, that doesn't use your language, that has like different methods [00:16:10], it's different from you. I get it, why maybe you don't accept it. But as I said, well, I grew up with it. And so to me, it's not that explicit of a difference. But then when I'm in Slovenia, and I see Italian people and I see how they talk, how they present themselves, I don't like it, because they are very arrogant. They are very, I can I say, they're not very kind to the Slovenian people. And I think that when you are part of a nation, you feel like you're the best one. So when you go out far from the border, you will expect everyone will be on your side but it isn't necessary like that. So the Slovenian and Italian border is also quite torn apart because of the historical side, because Gorica and Triest where I live which is the border of Italy was from forever part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. So in reality Gorica and Triest shouldn't be part of Italy. They just have been there. And after the war it was taken by Italy. So there's also that expect, so the historical aspects which is difficult. And so the situation today, I think that the people [00:18:10] became much more open and much more like keen to know the different. So there's like a saying that says that, no the pope said it that today borders should not be borders so walls, but they should be bridges from one culture to another. So we shouldn't take the borders like the defence, but a way to connect with someone that is different from you. So you can learn something, get the knowledge that you don't have, you can get to experience like food, and see things that are different. And, yes, the border can become meeting point for people. It doesn't have to be difficult or something like that. So now the border where I live from Slovenia and Italy, it's very peaceful. It's nothing happening there. But I know that like between Slovenia and Croatia the border is a very conflicted area. There are walls and you can't easily pass. So I know that it's a very diverse topic, and it's not the same everywhere. Like, for example, in America Trump wants to build a wall between Mexico and the US. As he says he wants to take control of the situation, but maybe the fact is that you are also kind of afraid of the difference and you [00:20:10] don't want it to come to your nation. And yes, as I was saying, there are different types of borders. Other than the political border, which is like between nations. There's also the cultural border, the language border. Every border can be different. So to go to the first question, what the border means to me? I think that to me the border isn't a physical thing anymore. It's more like an invisible thing, that we know it's there, but you can feel it, but you can't see it. Because today people and the culture itself begin to accept it, at least where I come from and not so in general. So I don't think there is a border anymore. Obviously between like the political border but not the actual like [00:22:10] mental border there is no more. I see how Italians become more and more involved in the situation with Slovenia, and how Slovenia is becoming more and more involved with what is happening in Italy. There is this project going on for the best city in Europe, for like the European price and Gorica, which is the Italian city and Nova Gorica, which is the Slovenian City want to apply together to the European best city of Europe, like 2022.  So just that gives it away, what is the feeling in the air, so that there is cooperation differences, yes, but so much cooperation and so much positivity.

CS 1: We have to discuss it for 20 minutes.

CS 2: First of all you [00:24:10] write really well. That text that you wrote was very...

CS 1: Thank you but it is only Google Translator. In German it is much better.

CS 2: It is okay. So you said that you grew up on Austrian border with Hungary. So you travel to Hungary then, because you said that you didn't know what to expect from...

CS 1: Only with my parents when they go shopping.

CS 2: Yeah me too, me too. We go to buy things.

CS 1: I didn't know anything about (unclear), for example, I only see the people, the country Austria. Austria is a rich country. Hungary is a poor country.  But I'd never had any contact with a Hungarian guy. They always came to us to play football or to work.

CS 2: But it was like a physical border. Like you have to go there, and check, like, give them your ID.

CS 1: Yes.

CS 2: Okay, but you have some limits of times that you...

CS 1: Yes, at the beginning. But with Orban, they want to have the borders again, and also the people in the village they also want to have the borders  [00:26:10] again because they don't like the people from Hungary. They think they are criminals.

CS 2: Oh really?

CS 1: Yeah. I think that most of the older generation in the village are very arrogant. They think that Austria is much better than Hungary.

CS 2: Yes, superior than Hungary. Also Italians are like that, like 'we are more important than you'. It's not really nice when you come from like me, when you come from both sides, and you see how everyone is behaving. It should be a thing that the people on the border should work on it. It's true that like my parents they grew up with a strict border with Yugoslavia. So you also couldn't like, it was like on the other side there was someone different, but they had their reasons. I think it's all connected with history, because maybe the people that live in the village near the border with Hungary, they had some experiences that drove them apart from the thinking that we should go on the other side. And because where I live it was like that, it was full of tension and conflict till now. Because it wasn't really easy.

CS 1: And your parents feel like Italians or…

CS 2: That's [00:28:15] a question that we get a lot, because within my family we speak Slovenian, but I went to Italian University. I went to Italian schools and so on. I get this question a lot. What do you feel more Italian or more Slovenian? And I don't know how to respond to them, because I don't think I feel Slovenian because I don't live in a similar way like they live in Slovenia. I don't have this Slovenian culture. I like (unclear) because I went to Slovenia schools in Italy. We have our schools. It's like in South Tyrol. The Germans that they have German schools, but they are in Italy. So I learned like Slovenian authors, Slovenian grammar, I learn everything, but still I don't feel so much Slovenian because they are very different from what I am. But I don't speak the Italian in my family. I don't speak it so, but I think I feel more Italian than Slovenian. And I definitely have more things in common.

CS 1: Has something changed in the minds of the younger generation and the older generation, does it feel…?

CS 2: Yes, a lot. I think the first generations like my grandparents who were also Slovenian, and they were much more connected with their roots in Slovenia, because that was [00:30:15] like very important to them. But now, I don't want to say that the newer generation don't value the roots, but definitely there is less than it was before. So I think that if you ask my grandmother, she would say she is Slovenian, if you ask me, it is different. Do you on the Austrian border you have some minorities? There are some Hungarians that live in Austria or and how do they, you know?

CS 1: I think the people, the most of them it's okay, but I think they are different groups. And also we have (unclear) And it doesn't like them very much. Most of the younger generation came studying in Vienna. They work in Vienna. They have different view.

CS 2: Yeah, I saw that like where we are staying here in Leopold Stad, I think we are saying in Don Bosco, in the hotel there. That's just my opinion, but I think that's like a district. It's very diverse culturally, they are a lot of like Arabic people, A lot of Croatians [00:32:15], and they speak in Creation Arabic, there are lots of immigrants.

CS 1: It is a big city.

CS 2: What could we say now?

CS 1: I don't know anything about the Austrian border. I don't know anything about ...

CS 2: Me neither, I'm not very informed about it.

CS 1: I don't understand, why are our government has this few, because the problem with refugees is not only the problem of Italy or Greece. It is also our problem, the Europeans, and I don't understand, why we try to make borders again.

CS 2: I saw it. But now in Italy we have the new government. Our vice president of the government Matteo Salvini, he is very like against immigrants and so on. He wants to make some changes because now Italy was the first point where all the immigrants stopped, and he now wants to stop that. And so also Italy is moving I don't know what will happen, but also Italy is moving more to the fact that we are going to close borders, and I really [00:34:15] don't know. I get it that they're different from us but, yeah, still it's pretty... Also Hungary, it's very strict with borders, right?

CS 1: Yeah.

Part 2

CS 2: What do you think? You are for closed borders or open borders, controlled borders or not controlled borders?

CS 1: I am for open borders because I feel a part of Europe not only of Austria. And Bratislava is near to me. And Innsbruck is, I have nothing to do with people from Tyrol and (unclear). Bratislava and Budapest that's near to me. I am often in Germany, Hamburg, Amsterdam. So I think we should open the borders. I understand why my nation or the state (thinks) we have to have borders. I am for open borders.

CS 2: Me too because I can't imagine to have once again closed borders, like with Slovenia. Yeah, I can't imagine really but I am for controlled borders. I'm not saying like with the army or something like that but like minimum of control of the border within like policy or something like that. Because it happens that when there's no control, there is advantage [00:02:00] and it gets out of hands.

Part 3

CS 1: I grew up at the border of Austria and Hungary. My mum's side was communist and they don’t want them to go away. The government doesn’t like them to come and the Hungarian government people (didn’t) leave the country. There were these big fences. Like Eastern and Western Germany.

CS 2:  Yeah, like you couldn't pass it.

CS 1: The Austrian people are allowed to come to Hungary. But the Hungarian people from the Hungarian government aren’t allowed to come to (Austria).

CS 2: But this was when you were little.