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Conditions of divided towns development – an example of Guben and Gubin

Abstract: The article concerns about conditions of development of a peculiar small towns – Guben (German) and Gubin (Polish). Their situation is interesting with reference to their border location, as well as peripheral and divided and because of the geopolitical context of globalization and European integration where they have to deal with it in a common way. The main objective of this article was to discover the differences and similarities of two border towns as a base for their future socio-economic development and co-operation due to the new political situation and end of barriers, both institutional and legal. Spatial analyses focused on two towns – Guben and Gubin, nowadays divided by a Polish-German border, that before World War II used to be one unit. The temporal extent of the article refers to the period of 1995–2012, but some historical background was also showed. The applied methods and data sources were based on Polish and German statistics. The demographical and economic situation was analysed and showed a difficult and complex problems in both towns despite the fact that in details they differ from each other. Detailed analysis included: the population number, the births and deaths rates as well as migration balance. The economic and functional images of both towns are different and traffic at the border-crossing does not play a stimulant role. Due to the EU and Schengen Area enlargement in Guben and Gubin did not greatly stimulate the socio-economic situation. The representatives of both towns stated that common actions are a viable and the best solution to problems of both towns.

Keywords: border cities; frontier; small towns; socio-economic development

Introduction

Nowadays cities play a very important, stimulating role in the reorganization of European space where the East is becoming disintegrated, and the West endeavours to integration (Brzosko-Sermak, 2007; Jerczyński, 2002). a border is a strong factor that has an impact on many aspects of the nearby cities' development (Paasi, 2001). One should also be aware of the changing nature and the function of state borders in the advanced industrialized regions at the beginning of the 21st century (Andreas, 2003; Andreas, Biersteker, 2003; Andreas, Snyder, 2000) and the growing importance of cross-border regions and cross-border cooperation (Brzosko-Sermak,

2007). Political, as well as economical transformations and the access to the EU structures have caused that frontiers are no longer only barriers and they have gained a new function, i.e. integration (Chojnicki, 1999). Borders themselves can be both positive and negative factors for the local development (Brzosko-Sermak, 2007:84). Some researches point out that not all border regions can develop from political and economy periphery into the zones of international co-operation and synergy (Herbst, Olejniczak, Smętkowski, 2002). The strengths or weaknesses of border cities are determined not only by their location but also by the way they are governed (Brzosko-Sermak, 2007:84).

The interest in border cities like Guben and Gubin was based on the willingness to trace and compare their socio-economic situation as divided Polish-German border towns. The fact that border regions are changing their character from 'front lines' towards socio-economic 'contact zones' for neighbouring communities should be taken into account (Ratti, Reichman, 1993). One should also be aware of the changing nature and the function of state borders in the 'advanced industrialized regions of the world' in the eve of the 21st century (Andreas, 2003; Andreas, Biersteker, 2003; Andreas, Snyder, 2000) and the growing importance of cross-border regions and cross-border cooperation. This is what is gradually happening in the case of the studied towns as they are exceptional in their location, as well as peripheral and divided (Brzosko-Sermak, 2007). Peripheral – due to the closeness of the national border of Poland and Germany, and divided – due to the fact that the aforementioned border line split one urban tissue creating a twin-city Guben (German) and Gubin (Polish) in 1945. On the other hand, their situation is interesting with reference to the geopolitical context of globalization and European integration where they have to deal with it in a common way. The position of the studied towns has changed many times recently. The modifications mainly concern local policies and attitudes of citizens towards their neighbours.

The main objective of this article is to discover differences and similarities of two border towns as a base for their future socio-economic development and co-operation due to the new political situation and end of barriers, institutional and legal. The additional objective is to check whether this changing political situation is a factor of economic development of the cities or if its outcomes are too weak to make the vision of backwardness and recession less visible for them. It is also to understand and explain local patterns of the economic development in relation to active local governing.

With reference to the objectives, the authors put the main research questions to find answers: what were the conditions and problems in the development of Guben and Gubin from mid-90s (are they similar or different in both countries?); how does socio-economic development (economy) change or influence the development of these border towns in both countries before and after the EU enlargement?

Spatial analyses focused on two towns – Guben and Gubin, nowadays divided by Polish-German border, that before World War II used to be one unit. The temporal extent of the article refers to the period of 1995–2012, but some historical background was also showed. Applied methods and data sources were based on Polish and German official statistics.

Historical and political conditioning

Guben was the oldest town of the Łużyce Dolne region, as it was founded in 1235. At that time and long afterwards, the town was developing as the only urban unit on the East side of the Lusatian Nysa river. Before World War II, Guben had more than 40 000 citizens that were maintaining/making a living from the production of the baize and hats.

The division of the town was made in 1945, due to the demarcation of the national border between Germany and Poland along the Lusatian Nysa. As a consequence of a new geopolitical order after World War II, German Guben and Polish Gubin experienced a complete exchange of the population. From that time the historic old town was the core of Polish Gubin and some labour suburbs on the West side of Lusatian Nysa had to succeed in creation of the self-sustaining German city of Guben. In 1960, there were several new housing complexes formed, as well as an industry plant that specialized in the production of chemical fibres. Due to these decisions there was a growth of population not only in Guben, but also in Gubin. This industry plant employed the labour from both cities. This first co-operation between those divided cities was possible because there was no need (in the 1972–1980 period) of any visa to cross the border at the river Lusatian Nysa. It was the time when cross-border social contacts were ascribed to a daily routine. The closing of Polish border in 1981 caused by the introduction of the martial law put an end to this co-operation between Guben and Gubin.

Great political changes in 1989, both in Poland and Germany that resulted in very serious socio-economic transformations in the following decade, improved the situation of both towns. The aperture of the border between Poland and Germany in 1990 gave a potential chance for new transborder co-operation (Bafol, 1999) and the enlargement of areas of influences for both studied towns.

Due to the fact that Eastern Länder in 1990 became part of the European Community, some institutional and legal barriers appeared in transborder co-operation between Guben and Gubin. Although local leaders took some common transborder actions, their importance was almost nonexistent in the socio-economic development of both cities. The turn of 20th and 21st centuries brought some changes in this matter. Some new and more comprehensive transborder co-operation actions were undertaken, mainly due to the involvement of the German side.

Additionally, on 1st May 2004 Poland joined the EU and on 21st December 2007 – the Schengen Agreement, which sustained institutional and legal barriers in transborder co-operation between two border cities. This situation gave ‘tools’ and opportunities for further transborder co-operation.

Demography

A border city Guben experienced a great loss of population after the Second World War. Due to demarcation of national border at the Lusatian Nysa river, the former city Guben was divided into German – Guben and Polish – Gubin. Both towns experienced a complete exchange of population. Nowadays Guben is a shrinking town with a population of slightly over 18,000 (Tab. 1.).

Tab. 1. Changes of population number of Guben (1939–2012)

Date		Population
17 May	1939	45,934
29 October	1946*	25,297
31 August	1950*	25,929
31 December	1964*	25,492
01 January	1971*	29,607
31 December	1981*	36,708
31 December	1990	30,791
31 December	2000	25,245
31 December	2005	21,089
31 December	2010	18,957
31 December	2012	18,166

* census results

Source: <http://www.guben-online.de> (15 January 2015)

The changes in population can serve as a 'barometer' of economic condition of the given town (Płaziak, 2004). Good organization, management, and the opportunities for the socio-economic development make the city attractive for its inhabitants and potential investors. However, Guben, partly due to the border location, and to serious economic problems (common for East German cities), had to struggle with economic recession and demographic problems. For many years there has been a steady downward tendency as far as the loss of population is concerned. In 2012 Guben had 18,166 citizens – a half of the level from 1981, the year of maximum number of population after the II World War.

The number of population changed also in Gubin, but differently than in Guben (Tab. 2.). First of all, Gubin was two times smaller and did not have such negative population tendency throughout the studied period of time (1995–2012). In the second part of 1990s, the number of population was growing until 1997, when it reached about 19 thousand citizens. In 1999 there was a serious drop in the number of population and next one can observe a systematic depopulation – but not so serious as that in Guben. In 2012 the population of Gubin was at the level of 17,019, that means the loss of population of about 10% in comparison to the year 1997 with maximum number of citizens. It is noteworthy that the accession of Poland to the EU in 2004 and to the Schengen Agreement in 2007 did not change anything in this trend.

Tab. 2. Changes of population of Gubin (1995–2012)

Date		Population
31 December	1995	18,672
31 December	2000	18,042
31 December	2005	17,055
31 December	2010	17,072
31 December	2012	17,019

Source: <http://www.stat.gov.pl> (15 January 2015)

The structure of the population of Gubin showed the domination of women during the whole studied period. Simultaneously to the loss of population from 1999, their share was growing. One can conclude that the aforementioned loss of population was mostly caused by an outflow of males, caused by deindustrialization. In this situation one can assume that women (...) will comprise a much larger portion of paid employees than they have in previous decades (Rosser, 1995: 235).

To sum up, although both towns do not have almost equal number of citizens and the first years of the studied period of time are marked with the differences between Guben and Gubin that refer to the changes in population, they have to struggle with the depopulation during the last years, which in Guben was more serious.

The loss of population is an extremely negative aspect for every urban unit. However, unfortunately it is quite a common process (Płaziak, 2005). Great cities also experience it due to the suburbanization. In the case of the analysed towns this process is not observed. The size, functions and social structure of these two towns do not give ground for the suburbanisation development.

There are four main factors that influence the actual growth/loss of population in the studied towns. The first two are the births rate and deaths, which generate natural growth/loss of population, and the next two are immigration and emigration.

The birth rate in Guben is oscillating at the same level of c.a. 5‰ through the 1995–2012. It is very stable but at the low level, that does not compensate the deaths rate at the level of c.a. 10‰. Therefore, the German town has to struggle with the natural loss of population at the level of c.a. minus 5–7‰. It is worth to mention that there is also a very dangerous trend of growing natural loss since 2001. These trends are very difficult to overcome due to a complex background which is both of social and economical nature. Guben is not a unique town in this field – such problems are observed in most towns in East Germany, especially those with border location.

The births rate in Gubin is higher than in Guben and oscillates at about 10‰. The falling tendency of this rate is slightly visible in the studied period of time because of alternate increases and decreases. As far as deaths rate is concerned, one can state that it oscillates at between –6.5‰ and –10‰, which is less than in Guben and suggests that Gubin population is younger. Up to 2000 the discussed rate was smaller, later it grew up, therefore the tendency is growing. As a result, between 1995 and 2002 there was a small natural growth with downward tendency, later there is an alternate natural growth and the loss of population with little dominance of this second option during last years.

To sum up, the demographic situation is more positive in Gubin, as far as the natural growth/loss and its components are concerned.

Data presenting migration show a more pessimistic view of demography in Guben. One can observe a stable immigration, at the level of c.a. 20‰ throughout the period of 1995–2012, and the emigration with changing tendencies. At the beginning of the studied period of time (1995–1997) the emigration level was stable. Later it grew up to 60‰ in 2001, next there was a downward tendency that is positive for future development of the town and can be perceived as a way of overcoming economic difficulties and growing attraction of this town among citizens. An adverse balance of migration in Guben is the most urgent problem to be solved.

Quite a similar situation can be noted in Gubin – the figures were different, but trends alike. Gubin has immigration at the average level of about 10‰, but before

2000 it was higher and after that there were years of alternate increases and decreases, but mostly below 10‰. The emigration, like in Guben was about two times higher than immigration, and approximated at the level of 10–26‰, with many fluctuations. The maximum rate of emigration occurred in 2001 and 2006 and later was characterized by a huge outflow of people from Gubin but with downward tendency with its minimum rate in 2012. Very similar changes occurred in Guben. After the accession of Poland to the EU, the tendency of emigration was growing. As a result, the migration balance in Gubin in 1995 was positive with predominance of immigration. During the following years the outflow of people outnumbered the inflow mostly between 2001 and 2003. When comparing 2011 to 2001, the migration balance was huge at the level of c.a. –20‰.

One can analyse the whole picture of demographic image of either of the cities in comparison to the balance of natural growth/loss and the balance of migration that gives a real growth/loss of population. The rate of real loss of population in Guben shows that the town has had very serious demographical problems, mostly due to huge emigration. The growing tendency of this rate up to 2001 was the cause of deepening recession in Guben. Since then the situation has not been improving and is still alarming together with the reference to the increasing tendency in the natural loss of population.

One can find many differences in the rate of real growth/loss of population in Gubin in comparison to Guben. Above all, during 1995–1998 the natural growth outnumbered the migration balance that resulted in a real growth that did not occur in Guben. Although Gubin profited from growth in population in the discussed period of time, the tendency was falling. Next years were characterized by the growing adverse balance of migration, like in Guben, that brought about the real loss of population. Up to 2004, both in Guben and Gubin the rates of real loss were decreasing, mostly because of smaller emigration. Yet, the data from the period after the EU enlargement present a serious incensement in the natural loss of population but mostly with respect to emigration, which resulted in a repeated decrease of real loss in population.

A population forecast for Guben shows that in 2030 the number of citizens will decrease about 30% and reach the level of 13,000 (www.lbv.brandenburg.de; *Mittelbereichsprofil Guben*, 2013).

The data showing a dwelling stock in the town seems to confirm the loss in population and economic problems of Guben. One can observe the increasing trend until 2000. Afterwards, a very serious real loss of population took place.

Every year the number of dwelling stock was reduced and finally in 2004 it reached the level of 10.6% in comparison to the year 2000. This situation has been quite common for many East Germany cities during the last years.

A different situation occurred in Gubin. Instead of the loss in dwelling stock like it was in Guben one could state a steady growth in this field, although both cities were experiencing the loss of population. This situation suggests that economic condition of Gubin is better. This is also a result of a younger, more mobile structure of citizens in Gubin with a strong demand for new dwelling stock or its shortage as it had occurred before.

Economy / functions of towns

To study the economy of a town and to find out its main functions, one has to look at data referring to the employment of citizens. It shows some specifics and specialization of every urban unit, as well as its weaknesses and potential fields for implementing changes (Hodson, 1995; Mayo, 1945).

Guben is an industrial city with additional functions, typical of border cities like: hotel trade (Gałasińska, Gałasiński, 2005) and gastronomy or wholesale, retail trade, repairs and other services, very common in most towns, like: education, welfare and social work. It is worth to mention that there is (...) a substantial potential for trade creation in Central Europe (...) with respect to both their intragroup relations and relations with outside world (Van Brabant, 1993:113). This situation could take place because (...) small-scale trading across international borders has developed into mass phenomenon in Central and Eastern Europe since the beginning of 1990s (Egbert, 2006: 347).

Although in 1990 both East Germany and Poland experienced a rapid industrial decline (McKinnon, 1993; Sachs, 1993) (...) that turned out *ex post facto* not to be internationally competitive (McKinnon, 1993:125) – manufacturing (section D) has still the highest share in the employment in town. As the only one it manifests an increasing tendency when comparing 2000 and 2005. In 2011 c.a. 2,000 people were employed in mining, manufacturing, energy and water supply, waste disposal and recycling industry.

The remaining sections experienced a decrease in employment during most of studied period. The medium share was characteristic for sections H (hotels and restaurants), M (education), N (health and social work), O (other community, social and personal service activities), F (construction) and G (wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods). The lower share in employment appears in sections I, K and L, P, O. Such position of services connected with transport, storage and communication (section I) is surprising when taking border location of Guben into account. It suggests neglected potential of the town's economy. a similar low share in employment of the next section – K (real estate, renting and business activities) is more understandable when taking the loss of population and economic recession of the city under consideration.

The next group of sections, i.e. L (public administration and defence; compulsory social security), P (activities of households) and O (other community, social and personal service activities) in every town is an additional part of employment and does not have a great impact on their economy. The section in which employment in Guben cannot be found is financial intermediation (section J). This is due to the aforementioned border location and economic difficulties of the town, what results in a low position in the urban hierarchy and the simplicity of functions that this town serves.

Due to the availability of data, the economy and functions of Gubin have to be analyzed by entities of the National Official Business Register REGON¹ in sections

¹ National Official Business Register, REGON was established on ground of article 41 point 1 position 1 of the Law dated June 29th, 1995 on official statistics (Journal of Laws No 88, position 439, with amendments). REGON register is a continuously actualised set of information on subjects of national economy run as an IT system in the way of central database

by NACE. Although differences in data some comparisons in the economies of both towns can be stated.

Firstly, most of the sections experienced an increase of entities in the economy. One can conclude a stable economic development of Gubin. The most developed section (by the number of entities) is the G one (wholesale and retail trade; repair of motor vehicles, motorcycles and personal and household goods). It is understandable as Gubin takes the advantage of its border location in terms of lowering prices. The development of trade is a very common feature of those border cities.

The next vital section was K (real estate, renting and business activities). It is not surprising in comparison to the abovementioned growing number of dwelling stock in Gubin. The third position in number of entities of the national economy is occupied by sections: H (hotels and restaurants), M (education), N (health and social work) and O (other community, social and personal service activities). The first of them respectively is also typical of a border city when it services cross-border flows of people. The remaining sections are crucial for proper functioning of every urban unit. However, many other sections only mentioned above play an important role in Gubin. Entities from sections D (manufacturing), I (transport, storage and communication), F (construction) and J (financial intermediation) are slightly visible with reference to functions of the studied town but their presence fulfil the image of the economy of Gubin. The rest of sections generally do not play any role in the study case in question.

As an additional source of information, the author has used the data showing a structure of employment by economic sectors in Gubin. Most people are working in services and the domination of this sector is growing every year. At the same time, the share of employment in industry is shrinking. The agriculture sector plays a marginal role and stays more or less at the same level throughout the whole analysed period.

The economic and functional picture of both towns, however, based on difficult to compare data, is different. Guben is a more industrial town where 'border city functions' (trade, hotels, restaurants, transport) play rather secondary role. These functions are better developed in Gubin, as well as sections connected with the enlargement and the exchange of dwelling stock. What is more, manufacturing plays a marginal role in the town of Gubin.

Moreover, Guben is characterized by a dramatic imbalance between a high proportion of unemployment (25%) and a dramatic shortage of competencies in new knowledge-based economic sectors (high, middle and low tech) (Mayall, 1995; Teixeira, 1995). This imbalance is the result of continuous and heavy brain-drain processes since 1989 (Mattchiesen, 2005).

In Gubin, urban development, rooted in and contextualized by the neo-liberal "Big Bang" path of Polish transformation (L. Balcerowicz's Plan), impelled young inventive people to start anew in economics, politics, culture and similar realms, sometimes in the border region, and sometimes in other European cities and

and local databases. Entry into the REGON register is obligatory for all: legal persons, organizational units without the status of a legal person, natural persons running business activities (including private farms), local units of subjects mentioned above (http://www.stat.gov.pl/bip/regon_ENG_HTML.htm - 12.08.2007).

regions. Certainly, the unrestricted access to Structural Funds of the EU is helping to strengthen these tendencies (Mattchiesen, 2005).

The migration of people at Guben-Gubin border crossing was changing throughout the studied period of time (1990–2012), but the share of Poles was c.a. $\frac{1}{3}$. Although the rest of data was collected as a movement of foreigners without specification of nationality, one can say that the majority of them could be Germans. This conclusion can be drawn on the basis of an assumption that Guben is a rather small cross-border town situated in some distance from highways and transit roads that could attract other foreigners. Hence, its importance is mostly local. A low level (3–4,5 mln) of cross-border movement characterizes the years 1990–1992.

Until the year 2000, the traffic was at the level of 11–12 mln people and later it slightly dropped, to the level of c.a. 3 mln of people with a lower contribution of Poles. The last few years show that the EU enlargement in 2004 with the accession of Poland to the Schengen Treaty did not increase the number of people willing to cross the border just in Guben-Gubin.

As far as co-operation in the field of infrastructure is concerned, Guben and Gubin sustain some co-operation in terms of fire brigades, the police, hospitals and some clubs. Yet, these actions are not very visible in the socio-economic development of both cities. The most successful and visible outcome of transborder co-operation is a common sewage treatment plant located in Gubin. Additionally, each city has a modern wastewater treatment with a biological stage. There is no cooperation in public transport between the discussed cities. In Guben, the town and suburban transport is a property of district countries, while in Gubin it has been privatized. One of the difficulties in introducing common public transport is the only border crossing in the town centre – others are located outside the urban area. Additionally, there is no direct connection with any highway from either of the cities. A railway station is only in Guben. Due to the recent closure of a railway station in Gubin there is no rail connection between the two towns.

Conclusion

The main issue discussed in the present article was the problem concerning the conditions and problems of the development of Guben and Gubin. The demographical situation of both towns is unfavourable and in many aspects similar. The population number, the births and deaths rates, as well as migration balance differ slightly in both towns. However, some trends are very similar. Gubin is smaller than Guben and did not experience such depopulation since the mid-90s. Yet, both towns have been struggling with the depopulation during recent years, which seems to be more serious in Guben. Gubin, on the other hand, has had a higher birth rate and lower death rate after 1995. That makes Gubin's demographic situation a little bit better. Referring to migration, both towns have been experiencing negative nets. The situation in Gubin is more serious. The rate of real loss of population shows more pessimistic vision of the future for Guben.

Both towns differ much from each other as far as dwelling stock is concerned. Guben experienced a serious decrease of dwellings after 2000, due to its demographic and economic problems, whereas Gubin – a systematic growth. Guben is still

more industrialized in comparison to Gubin, where 'border city functions' (trade, hotels, restaurants and transport) play greater role. On the other hand, these functions are well developed simultaneously with sections connected with enlargement or exchange of dwelling stock in Gubin. Both towns have to deal with a difficult situation in the job market and social conditions. Although Guben experienced huge deindustrialization, the unemployment is a more serious problem for Gubin.

The economic and functional images of both towns are different. Guben is still more industrialized. On the other hand, 'border functions' are better developed in Gubin, as well as sections connected with the enlargement and the exchange of dwelling stock. But manufacturing does not matter in the actual development of Gubin.

Traffic at Guben-Gubin border crossing was changing since 1995. However, among the registered people there was a majority of Germans that eagerly used services in Gubin and went shopping there. During the 1990s there was a large cross-border movement which decreased seriously due to equalising of process on both sides of Nysa after 2000.

To sum up, after the change of geopolitical situation, i.e. the EU and Schengen Area enlargement, neither in Guben nor Gubin the socio-economic situation was improved. Many difficult and complex problems are not solved, although some improvements in infrastructure and education were made. In Guben and Gubin the local patterns of economic development connected with transborder co-operation differ from each other as far as inter- and intra-relations are concerned. Surprisingly, the representatives of both towns stated that common actions are a viable and the best solution to problems of both towns – maybe because they are the only solution.

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