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International, but not global: The Neisse urban area

The German-Czech-Polish border area, the so-called Neiße/Nisa/Nysa region, in the east of Germany or in the north of the Czech Republic and in the west of Poland was and is a border area with many changes and events. In the present case the three cities Zittau (approx. 25,000 inhabitants) on German side, Liberec (approx. 100,000 inhabitants) on Czech side and Bogatynia (approx. 26,000 inhabitants) on Polish side are more examined. Background of this selection is the presence of urban areas aside metropolitan areas close to the border and the peripheral situation of the three cities in its nation states. Thus would have to be suited Zittau, Liberec and Bogatynia to launch transnational relations, not to reduce totally but to fight at least the largest disadvantages of their peripheral position by a borderspreading co-operation. This against the background, that urban areas have much more creation possibilities than small rural municipalities.

On the basis of three borderspreading projects, the financially and politically promoted Neisse University, the privately committed "Seniorentreff Hirschfelde" and the to a large extent privately engaged project of the fire-brigades of Zittau (Germany) and Hrádek nad Nisou (Czech Republic) will be shown, which special network connections and information flows are predominate aside the central metropolitan areas. The emphasis of the investigation lay on social relations, not on an economical level. The case will be demonstrate whether the projects, which are planned independently of the citizens of the region by politicians, have more success or such, which are based on private commitment of the inhabitants of the cities, in order to overcome the national state borders and to arrange and/or live their own urban area.

It can be shown that there are very large efforts in the cities, primarily from private side to engage over the border. Not least the position in the center of Europe, but at the periphery of the nation states, plays an important role for the inhabitants of the three cities, since thereby only co-operation over the borders is an actual new positioning and definition of the cities as international urban areas aside the big metropolitan areas: Be international but not global. All borderspreading projects show that the people engage themselves above their national state borders and win with this work friendships and interest in the other countries and cities, to design a new central European urban area.