

# „I want to talk with you“

Participatory governance for transition management  
with dialogue forums in cross-border double cities



BorderLabs CE Kick-off Conference  
Budapest | 13 November 2024

Sören Bollmann, City of Frankfurt (Oder)

# European Double City Frankfurt (Oder)-Słubice



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# Frankfurt (Oder) & Słubice

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- Together about 80.000 inhabitants
- Neighbours on both sides of River Oder, close to Berlin (90 km) and Poznań (160 km)
- European University Viadrina & Collegium Polonicum, about 5,000 students from more than 100 countries
- Since 2010 intense cooperation in fields like joint city planning, joint city infrastructure, cross-border traffic, education, cultural events, citizens' participation, tourism, joint disaster management
- Joint structures on political and administration level, Frankfurt-Słubice Cooperation Center
- Part of an informal European double cities network: Tornio-Haparanda (FI-SE), Valga-Valka (EE-LV), Cieszyn-Český Těšín (PL-CZ), Chaves-Verin (PT-ES), Gorizia-Nova Gorica (IT-SI)



# Double cities dialogue forums

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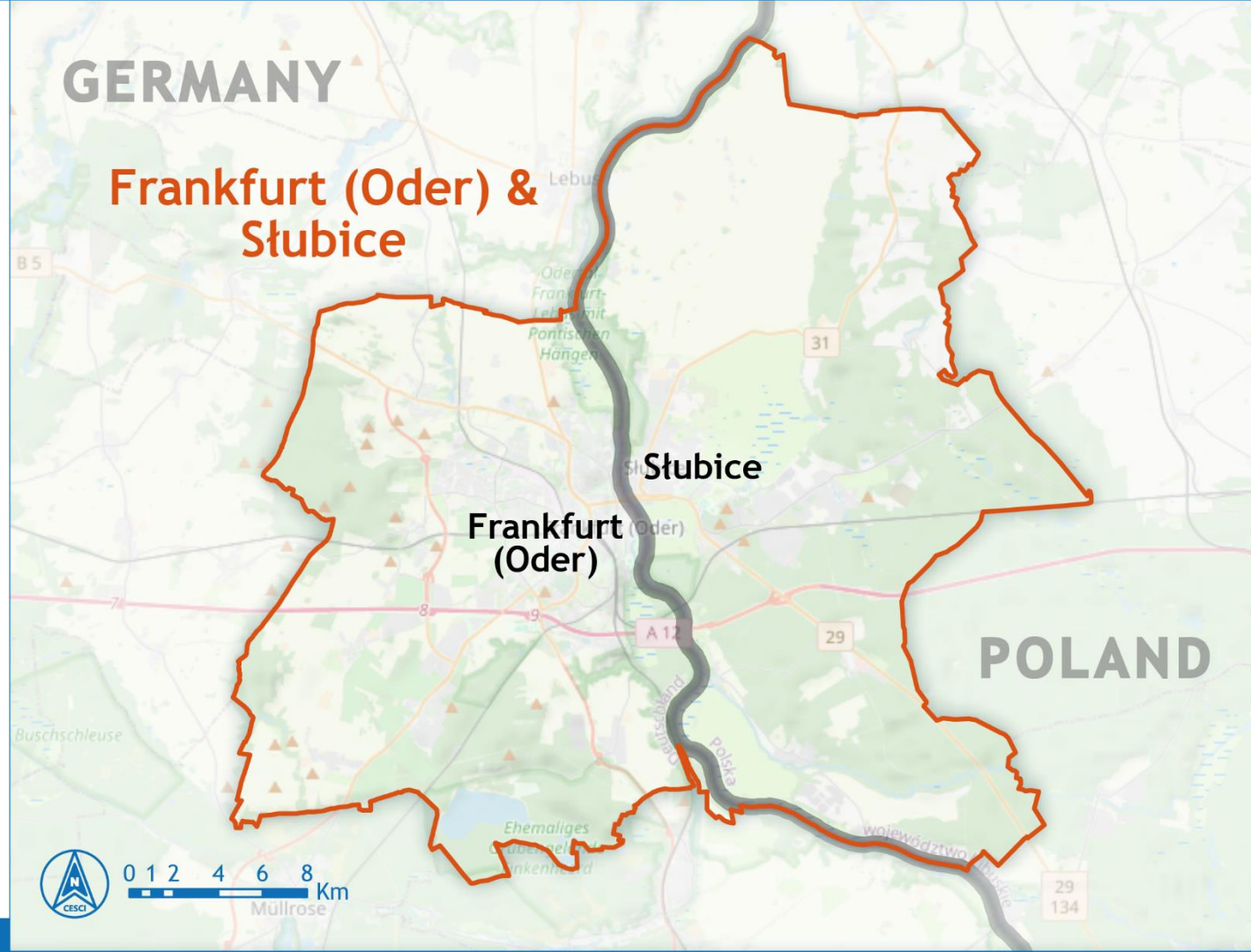
Frankfurt-Słubice Citizens' Picnic, September 2022

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## Pilot 2:

Participatory governance  
for transition management  
in cross-border twin-cities

Source: Esri, Navteq database



# Double cities dialogue forums

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- Reasoning
- Key ideas
- Planned activities
- Dialogue approach
- Expected outcomes



# Reasoning



- Perception of permanent crises
- Feeling of being overwhelmed, insecurity, fear
- Search for culprits, growing nationalism, but also increased personal engagement
- Perception, especially in border regions and double cities: European integration is being questioned
- Need for a dialogue that respectfully integrates different experiences and perspectives

# Key ideas



- Border regions and double cities are predestined for a dialogue, because here we have already learned to respect that there are (at least) two equally valid perspectives or truths
- Main topic of the dialogue: dealing with diversity as a source of insecurity and threat or of enrichment and a resource for solving common problems

# Planned activities



- 2024 scientific analysis of the state-of-the-art of dialogue formats and conception of the dialogue forums (European University Viadrina)
- spring 2025 and 2026 two dialogue forums in Frankfurt (Oder) - Słubice with participants from other double cities or border regions
- regional kick-off in Frankfurt (Oder) - Słubice, spring 2025
- two transfer activities to two other double cities or border regions in autumn 2025 and 2026
- scientific support and evaluation (European University Viadrina)

# Dialogue approach



- many formats possible: World Café, Open Space, use of artistic means, Citizens' conference, speed dating, storytelling
- as a specific format for the double cities, pioneering
- Key questions according to a resource-oriented approach (part I):
  - Which political or social changes have had the greatest impact on our lives?
  - How have such changes affected us and how have we used them?
  - Which losses and conflicts have occurred and still need to be resolved - or at least fully recognized?
  - Can anything positive be gained from such losses and conflicts?

# Expected outcomes

- Key questions according to a resource-oriented approach (part II):
  - Next major changes are already well under way - and what part are we playing in it?
  - What are the risks and opportunities, how are they linked and how do we deal with such challenges?
  - How do we wish to make the most out of what we have learned and gained in the past?
  - What will we be taking away with us? Which changes will we initiate ourselves?
  - What requires joint action and which aspects do we wish to tackle together?
- Impact on the further development of a joint European identity, on a shared democratic self-effectiveness and common integration activities of citizens in cross-border regions and double cities
- Contribution to joint identity in European double cities and border regions



## Double cities dialogue forums Frankfurt (Oder) & Słubice



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