

4 Dialoguing Borders in the Post-Soviet Space through Citizen Science – Ukrainian Borderland Perspectives

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Introduction

In the context of the political transition of Eastern bloc states since the mid-1980s and the collapse of the Soviet Union in 1991 (Stokes 1993), the political borders of 18 newly independent states re-emerged. The formerly internal borders of the socialist republics in the Soviet Union became national state borders, and the Soviet satellite states gained independence (Kolosov and Więckowski 2018, 6). With the advent of a new global political order and advancing economic globalisation in the 1990s, the previously established understanding of fixed state borders was challenged. The interdisciplinary field of border studies underwent a reorientation, with a shift towards recognising state borders as the result of social processes and practices (Wille 2021, 107–108). Since then, post-Soviet state borders have ‘increasingly been understood as multifaceted social institutions rather than solely as formal political markers of sovereignty’ (Laine 2015, 29). In order to capture the experiences of local borderland inhabitants in post-communist Central and Eastern Europe (CEE), social and political scientists have conducted oral interviews (Stokłosa 2019; Józwiak 2020; Wylegała and Głowacka-Grajper 2020). Based on the premise that ‘after a generation’ the post-communist period ‘can be analysed in [its] own right and as a very particular historical conjuncture’ (Mark et al. 2019, 5), historians have started to include the transformation period in their analyses of the past (Ther 2016; Mark et al. 2019; von Puttkamer 2020), a process that initially started with historical debates on the revolutions of 1989 (Ther 2016, 14). With this chapter, we contribute to the growing body of transformation historiography with an innovative dialogical setting as part of a citizen science project focused on the local perspective of borderland inhabitants from the post-communist space in the contemporary nationalised and globalised world (Venken et al. 2019). Whereas oral history operates on the basis of a clearly defined division between an interviewer and an interviewee (Shopes 2011), our project created a setting free of navigated conversations and hierarchical structures, where ordinary people were encouraged to articulate multifaceted meanings of borders. These meanings are understood as the result of individual and collective memories, divergent perceptions of values, and different definitions of history, paired with symbolism and myth-making. The chapter demonstrates how

our project evoked meanings of borders that are constitutive for evaluating the transformation period historically (Stoklosa 2019, 15).

The innovative setting was created during the citizen science experiment 'Talking Borders. From Local Expertise to Global Exchange' at the Second World Conference of the Association for Borderlands Studies (ABS) in Vienna and Budapest in July 2018. Organised to mark the 100th anniversary of the dissolution of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy, 85 volunteers from all over the world participated. The cross-disciplinary experiment engaged citizen scientists (hereafter CSs) from universities¹ in borderlands throughout the ex-Habsburg region and international border scholars (hereafter BSs) in conversations triggered by the question 'What does a border mean to you?' The project moved away from the understanding of state borders as provoked and enabled by military, economic, and politically institutionalised interactions between neighbouring states (Kolosov 2015, p. 40). Instead, it is based on the assumption that if we want 'to understand contemporary borderings fully as social, political, and economic phenomena, we need to encompass, in a dialogical and epistemological manner, the gazes of differentially situated social agents' (Yuval-Davis et al. 2019, 160). This was reflected in the oral data the participants produced, comprising multifaceted historical, political, economic, and social perceptions on borders and everyday border practices.

Talking Borders was the first citizen science project to adopt the method of expert interviewing to induce digitally recorded peer-to-peer ('at eye level') conversations without the intervention of a professional oral historian.² Each conversation consisted of two monologues and one dialogue. In this chapter, we argue that citizen science is a useful approach to document how borderland inhabitants in the post-Soviet space communicate their perception of borders. We observed that a significant number of the conversations in 'Talking Borders' referenced the Soviet period and that interlocutors made use of master narratives. These master narratives are understood as 'pre-existent sociocultural forms of interpretations' (Bamberg 2005), as dominant meanings of historical, political, cultural, and social events that (re-)emerged in the aftermath of the Soviet hegemony in Central and Eastern European countries. They can be seen as part of what Sorin Antohi describes in *Narratives Unbound* as 'post-Communist Eastern European canonical debates in the field of historical studies' (2007, 12), which arose in the context of a new historical discourse that brought pre-Soviet narratives of suppressed national historiographies back to the table, introduced new post-communist histories, and re-evaluated the Soviet past (Antohi 2007, 12–13; Brunnbauer 2012, 493–494; Berger 2019, 35). In what follows, these master narratives will be referred to as post-Soviet narratives.

Given our interest in how the CSs uttered and dynamically exchanged such post-Soviet narratives, this chapter focuses on the relevant dialogues in conversations between CSs from the data set. We aim to answer the following questions in our analysis: (1) How did the CSs use post-Soviet narratives by means of dialogue moves?; (2) What dynamics did their dialogues display?; and (3) How can we interpret these dynamics?

Following Douglas Walton's typology of dialogue type theory, dialogue moves are understood as intentions in utterances expressed by interlocutors in conversations (Walton 1998; Macagno and Bigi 2017). The individual 'moves' in dialogical sequences are analysed to unfold the underlying dynamic structure. Given that 'all forms of narrative aim to make sense of experience and to construct meaning' (Prokkola 2014, 442), we show that analysing how post-Soviet narratives are used by individuals of post-Soviet societies identifies and deconstructs their significance.

We start by briefly defining citizen science and its role in the humanities and offering the reader a deeper insight into 'Talking Borders'. Following further explanation of the data, concepts, and methodology, we analyse the dialogue sequences. In a final step, we summarise the results of the analysis and delineate their relevance for border research and the historiography of the transformation period.

Citizen science in the humanities

Citizen science is a rapidly growing research concept aimed at the production and understanding of scientific knowledge through collaborations between the scientific community and citizens (Silvertown 2009, 467; Finke 2014; Bonney et al. 2014, 1436; Riesch and Potter 2014, 107). Around the globe, citizens, so-called citizen scientists, participate in projects by voluntarily conducting, collecting, and analysing scientific data for research purposes (Bonney et al. 2014, 1436). Mostly, these projects are organised by researchers, research institutions, and non-governmental organisations with varying scientific, educational, societal, and policy goals (Hecker et al. 2018c, 2). Citizen science provides space for various new perspectives and opportunities for scientific research. By enabling the collection and processing of data, citizens are more deeply involved in scientific processes and become potential bridge-builders for policymaking (Shirk and Bonney 2018, 42–44).

Most citizen science projects occur in the discipline of life sciences, but the method has spilled over into a variety of research areas such as medicine, engineering, social science, art, geography, and history (Hecker et al. 2018c, 4; Robinson et al. 2018, 33). In projects in the social sciences and humanities (SSH), citizens are incentivised to digitalise historical documents; to collect data for scientific purposes (López 2017; Tauginienė et al. 2020), such as handwritten letters, postcards, and manuscripts (Transcribing Europeana 1914–1918); to identify objects on old paintings (ARTigo); or to detect metal and share their discoveries with archaeologists (MEDEA). In a comparative corpus-based study of 344 papers, Tauginienė et al. identified that the skill set of CSs in SSH projects mainly encompassed 'compiling, organising, analysing and sharing sources', which 'included data collection, documentation (e.g. georeferencing, mapping, annotation and transcription of items), or recovering sites' (2020, 6). The 'Talking Borders' project took a different approach to using CSs' knowledge and skills.

Talking Borders

The project was initially co-designed with 24 CSs from Austria in the context of an undergraduate seminar at the University of Vienna. An expert-interview setting was created, in which 62 CSs and 23 BSs engaged in face-to-face conversations to discuss the question 'What does a border mean to you?' and recorded their interactions, which were subsequently transcribed. The CSs were bachelor students from universities in the border regions of the former Habsburg Empire, more specifically from Poland, Ukraine, Bosnia-Herzegovina, Serbia, Italy, Slovenia, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Romania, Austria, and Croatia. The BSs were participants at the ABS conference from Mexico, the United Kingdom, France, Poland, Finland, Italy, Germany, Hungary, Canada, Denmark, and the United States.³

The idea behind 'Talking Borders' was to amplify the notion of citizen science by pushing the boundaries of its conventional practice. The participants were expected not only to collect data for scientific purposes but also to produce this data. The key innovation was the focus on the production and compilation of data by volunteers through face-to-face social interactions, a common practice in oral history. In the same way as oral history is defined as 'collect[ing] memories and personal commentaries of historical significance through recorded interviews' and understood as 'both process (that is, the act of interviewing) and product (that is, the record that results from the interview)' (Shopes 2011, 451), 'Talking Borders' collected and recorded data of historical relevance. However, in contrast to the oral history methodology, a co-negotiated environment without hierarchical structures was designed, in which the participants acted as both interviewer and interviewee. In accordance with expert interviewing, a method that follows the simple principle of interlocutors interacting peer-to-peer ('at eye level'), the project allowed the participants to express their ideas freely: 'The expert interview is about placing the interlocutor neither in an interrogation-like nor in an artificially "non-directive", but rather in a communication situation that is as familiar to him as possible' (Pfadenhauer 2002, 118–121). Given that all the CSs were citizens of countries whose territories had formerly (partially) belonged to the Habsburg Empire and students enrolled at borderland universities, it was assumed that they were especially familiar with perceptions of borders and cross-border experiences. One CS, for example, was born in Austria, moved to the Czech Republic as a child, and later returned to Austria to study at the University of Vienna. Another CS, who grew up in Moldova and studied in Romania, had citizenship of both countries.

Data and concepts

The full data set of 'Talking Borders' encompasses a total of 43 conversations between two interlocutors. The conversations were split into three parts, all revolving around the preassigned question ('What does a border mean to you?'): two 20-minute monologues and one 20-minute dialogue. As a result, a total of

19 conversations between two CSs and 24 conversations between a BS and a CS were produced (one BS participated in two conversations). Due to issues regarding the recording process as well as missing consent forms, the final data set encompasses a total of 39 dialogues and 80 monologues. The language used was English. The conversations were transcribed using WReally's transcription software and revised by a professional reviewer. The first coding of the data by means of a three-level qualitative content analysis resulted in the extraction of 406 fragments, which were categorised as follows: Cold War (66), Habsburg (62), EU/Schengen (52), Transformation (Eastern Europe) (40), World Wars/20th Century (37), US/Mexico (36), Ethnicity/Identity (33), Defining Borders (23), (Post-) Colonialism (20), Religion (19), and Walls/Security (18).⁴ A closer examination revealed the dominance of references to the Soviet period, especially in the categories Cold War and Transformation (Eastern Europe). Considering that the dissolution of the Habsburg Empire was followed by more than four decades of Soviet influence and then a stagnant transformation process from communism to post-communism (Ther 2016 33–48), this dominance is understandable in retrospect. This encouraged us to undertake a second coding focusing exclusively on Soviet references. For that, the full data set of approximately 190,000 words with a set of 7,047 unique words was examined using frequency analysis and text normalisation techniques (Dicle and Dicle 2018, 379–386). It allowed us to identify, sort, and then group keywords into categories. A total of 24 unique keywords such as 'Iron Curtain', 'Soviet', 'communism', or 'Berlin Wall' were later allocated to one category: Soviet. The 'Soviet' category was represented in 30 conversations, of which 12 were between two CSs, and 18 between a CS and a BS. The interlocutors articulated post-Soviet narratives in 15 monologues and 15 dialogues. In most cases, these narratives were articulated by CSs, which may be due to the fact that they were all from countries formerly belonging to the Soviet Union or its satellite states: Ukraine, Poland, the Czech Republic, Hungary, and Romania. They were expressed in interactions with both BSs and CSs. Since the different meanings attributed to borders in post-Soviet borderlands have the potential to create tension, we were particularly interested in studying the use of post-Soviet narratives in dialogues between two interlocutors from these borderlands. This is why we chose to focus on analysing the dialogic use of post-Soviet narratives in eight dialogues between two CSs.

The concept of a master narrative is defined here as a social interpretation of events describing the 'heterogeneity of performed knowledges that are competing with one another, changing the question from what is true to what knowledge is being used for' (Bamberg 2005; Abbott 2008). Post-Soviet master narratives reflect notions that 'stem from ideological and economic considerations, differing value orientations and radically diverging interpretations of history' (Smoor 2017, 66). With the waning of the Soviet influence in 1991, Antohi offers the following description of the following years in historiography:

the possibility of defining and restoring historical truth, [resulted] in various revisionisms: a mythology of exhaustive archival research as a means of

uncovering long-suppressed histories and collective memories, and ultimately the unique, pure, ideology-free, (almost) metaphysical Truth; the plea for the making of the normative historical narrative that would replace both the national vulgate (crafted by the nineteenth-century Romantics, and radicalized by the inter-war conservatives and right wingers) and the (Communist) Party narrative of the nation's history, as well as its derivatives; [...] sub-disciplines perceived by some [...] historians as alternative to the previously unchallenged master narratives and more likely to successfully bridge the history and memory gap between the 'normal', 'organic' pre-1945 national history and the post-1989 perceived 'comeback' of that history's logic, sense, meaning, and dynamics.

(2007, xii–xiii)

Derived from this period of historiography, our interpretation of post-Soviet narratives encompasses both national historical discourse that was suppressed during the Soviet period and returned post communism, and economic, political, social, and cultural narratives that evolved from the Soviet occupation itself in opposition to the previously unchallenged communist narrative.

Methodology

Our method is based on Douglas Walton's dialogue type theory, which defines six different types of argumentative dialogues: persuasion, inquiry, discovery, negotiation, information-seeking, deliberation, and eristic.⁵ Argumentative dialogues are a 'normative framework in which there is an exchange of arguments between two speech partners reasoning together in turn-taking sequence aimed at a collective goal' (Walton 1998, 30). Accordingly, the arguments follow a collective goal, the specific purpose of the conversation, as well as several sub-goals pursued by the individual interlocutors, which are specific to the different types of dialogues. In other words, the intention of an argument (such as persuading the interlocutor) corresponds to the dialogical goal or sub-goal (persuade the other party) (Macagno and Bigi 2017, 150). However, Macagno and Bigi argue that the analysis of 'real' dialogues, which are understood as non-static dynamic processes of constructing meaning, requires a modified version of Walton's approach:

Real dialogues are not characterized by uniform moves, all pursuing the dialogical goal characterizing the interaction from the beginning. [...] The global communicative intention is co-constructed through individual 'dialogue moves' which can be of different nature. While the participants in a dialogue need to intend to engage in a specific joint activity, defined by the situational context, they interact by expressing their own individual communicative intentions that are then recognized and followed up or rejected by the interlocutor.

(2017, 150–151)

Table 4.1 Categories of the Dialogue Moves

Category	Code	Description of Category
Information sharing	IS	Dialogue moves aimed at retrieving and providing information
Persuasion	P	Dialogue moves aimed at persuading the interlocutor, leading him or her to accept a specific point of view
Deliberation	D	Dialogue moves aimed at making a decision
Negotiation	N	Dialogue moves aimed at solving a conflict of interests or goal, and making a joint decision satisfying the interest
Eristic	E	Dialogue moves aimed at reaching an accommodation in a dialogical relationship (e.g. defining roles and offices)

Source: Table 2 in Macagno and Bigi (2017, 155).

These 'dialogue moves' are generated based on Walton's typology and represent dialogical intentions (2017, 154). In Table 4.1, a version of that typology is reproduced. The list consists of five dialogical moves and their descriptions.

We adopted the concept of 'dialogue moves' to analyse the individual intentions of the interlocutors' utterances, that is, to define whether a CS's utterance aims at, for example, sharing knowledge or persuading the other party. In so doing we were able to identify the dynamic within the dialogues – i.e. how participants communicated and reacted to content – and detect dynamic patterns across the dialogues. We deconstructed the reasoning behind the use of post-Soviet narratives and decrypted their dynamic structure. In what follows, we will showcase this approach based on two CS-CS dialogues from our 'Soviet' category. While the two dynamic structures in the first sample are common in the CS-CS dialogues, the dynamic of the second sample is an exception to the rule.

Frequent patterns

The first dialogue of our analysis is found in an interaction between a CS studying at the Ivan Franko National University of Lviv in Ukraine (Priestar) and a CS from the Central European University in Hungary (Aspect).

ASPECT (IS₁): I think yes, without borders I think it will be chaos, because there's too many different people who can't live with each other, like with religion or something because they're different. I think we need borders to the same ethnic people on the same nationality can stay in only one place, not all around the world. And what do you think about this?

PRIESTAR (D₂): Yes, because in my country we have a periphery. Our eastern part is more eastern, and it goes to that Asian side, when our western part is going to the western side. [...] So it's very difficult to say we have a divided line border, because in Ukraine we don't have borders except natural, because

Dnieper River divides the western part from the eastern part. We don't have armed men or pick-ups, check zones on the other side of Dnieper River. So it's difficult.

In this sequence, Aspect argues for the necessity of state borders, proposing that people of the same ethnicity should be kept together, and asks for Priestar's opinion on that (IS₁). Priestar refutes this idea of 'ethnic nationalism' (Smith 1987; Yun 1990, 530–532) with reference to social and ethnic differences between Eastern and Western Ukraine, a widespread post-Soviet narrative that follows, according to Lodewijk Smoor, the geopolitical narrative of *East vs West* or, rather, *Russia vs the Western World* (2017, 67–68). Here, Eastern Ukraine displays characteristics that correlate with Russia's Slavic and Eurasian authoritarian values, whereas Western Ukraine leans towards the liberal values dominant in Western societies (von Löwis 2015, 100–101; Smoor 2017, 67–68). Priestar believes that Ukrainians are divided although they share the same national state borders. The differences between the East and the West are not manifested in an internal state border with 'armed men' and 'check zones'. In this way, Aspect's interpretation of a border as a physical object gives way to a broader understanding of the term in Priestar's response, namely as an internal Ukrainian divide. This interpretation corresponds with what von Hirschhausen et al. describe as a 'phantom border', a political or territorial border that, although institutionally dissolved, continues to shape the space and becomes visible, for instance, in architecture, demographic maps, or electoral statistics (2015, 18).

Priestar's dialogue move (D₂) aims at expressing an opinion on the interlocutor's proposed notion of borders. The CS used the post-Soviet narrative of *East/West divide Ukraine* to support the argument that citizens who are considered to be ethnically homogenous can be divided despite living within the same nation state. Interestingly, this dialogue move sparks interest:

ASPECT (IS₃): What do you think about, shall there be a border between eastern and western Ukraine? Or, like because you said they are separated. So, should it be two countries or stay the same, only one?

Priestar does not provide answers but instead introduces a deliberation move specifying the differences in language ('We don't speak in one language'), relationships ('We can't cooperate with each other so good'), and, at a later point in the dialogue, religion ('Eastern [Ukraine] is more Orthodox and Western [Ukraine] has a variety of Catholics') while at the same time emphasising that Ukrainians are 'more similar than not similar' and they are 'two sons of one mother, Ukrainian mother'. Priestar ends with the notion that these differences are 'quite good because we have a different point of view. We have different views for the future of Ukraine.'

The dynamic of this sequence (IS-D-IS-D) resembles a question-reply structure that was prominent in all eight dialogues, where each of the participants was interested in broadening their perspective by asking questions and eager to share

their knowledge. Both CSs consider the post-Soviet narratives to be factually correct, which is reflected in their deployment as supportive arguments in the first dialogue move (D₂) and becomes clearer in the second dialogue move, when Priestar describes the post-Soviet narrative in more detail.

The second sequence of this dialogue is connected to the interest previously sparked in Ukraine's nation-state borders in the East. Moving away from differences on a national level, here Aspect aims at retrieving information on the contemporary conflict with Russia.

ASPECT (IS₄) What about the conflict in Ukraine? Is it over?

PRIESTAR (D₅) It's frozen. It is a cold zone [...] You can't have war because it's bad for everyone, for European, for Russian and for Ukrainian participation. A disaster. But unfortunately, I don't think the conflict in Ukraine will be solved in another two years. It takes many years, many years of re-election in the Donbas region.

ASPECT (P₆) I think it's about border too. Because we can see that Russia just wanted its borders to be another way.

PRIESTAR (N₇) Yes, it wants to be returned, not to the Russian Empire. So, it wants to return to the borders of Soviet Union, but you know, the Soviet Union borders were about in the Carpathian region. They have participated in Hungarian territory. So, I don't think the plans of Russian government, plans of Russia of the people is good. Not only for Ukraine, but also not for the European Union, because we may conclude, Hungary has a perfect, Hungary has a good economy. And Austria has a more perfect one, and so on.

PRIESTAR (P₈) But as you go to the Eastern side of continent – Eurasia – you have no more professionals. You have less good roads, good services, good attitude to life.

ASPECT (N₉) So maybe there is a line between this border between East and West?

PRIESTAR (N₁₀) Yes, I think so.

ASPECT (D₁₁) Still after that many years, after that many years of socialism, communism.

In this sequence, two post-Soviet narratives are observed. Aspect offers a possible reason (P₆) for the Ukrainian-Russian border conflict that is evocative of the Western-influenced post-Soviet narrative, where it is argued that 'Russia tried to restore the Soviet Union' because it felt 'humiliated by Western powers and deserves its sphere of influence' and wanted 'to prevent a unipolar world dominated by the US' (Smoor 2017, 68). Priestar amplifies Aspect's idea by elaborating on this master narrative (N₇) to explain the Russian invasion of Ukraine and the annexation of Crimea. Subsequently, Priestar introduces a second post-Soviet narrative (P₈) to explain why these 'plans of the Russian government' (N₇) might be disadvantageous for the European Union: the successor states of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) have poorer economies. This post-Soviet narrative is grounded in observations of a stagnating economy in the Soviet Union since the 1970s and the related hopes for a prosperous future under capitalism (Pew Global

Attitudes Project 2009, 38; Ther 2016, 57–76). According to Priestar, the Soviet Union bordered the 'Carpathian region' in Hungary, and restoring its former borders could therefore lead to an economic downturn in the European Union today. Both interlocutors conclude that the former state border of the USSR still marks an economic and social boundary between the East and the West, corresponding to the world behind and beyond the Iron Curtain ($N_9 N_{10} D_{11}$).

The dynamic of this sequence (P-N-P-N-N), which is present in four dialogues, reveals the intention of the interlocutors to persuade each other until they agree, before moving on to the next topic. The process of persuasion is relatively short, which indicates that both interlocutors consider the post-Soviet narratives to be historical and political absolute truths. Whereas the first post-Soviet narrative is used to negotiate an argument ($P_6 N_7$), the second one is introduced to support the reasoning behind the first post-Soviet narrative (P_8).

Exceptional pattern

The second example is a dialogue between a CS from Poland (Frame) and a CS from Ukraine (Dragonfly), who study at universities on both sides of the contemporary Polish-Ukrainian state border, in Rzeszów and Lviv. After this commonality is discovered, the focus of the dialogue turns to Lviv's historical significance for contemporary Poland. The dialogue is dominated by one topic:

DRAGONFLY (IS_1) Why does Poland still think we are theirs? I mean we are now in Ukraine it is an independent country and you know, there was an accident recently, maybe, at the Warsaw airport. They reported that there was a banner that said 'Lviv is polskie miasto' (Lviv is a Polish city). What is that? Do you think that people actually want Lviv back?

FRAME (D_2) Yes, most of Poles want Lviv and Wolyn back to Poland. Lviv is the most important town for us.

The CSs discuss the historical significance of Lviv for contemporary Poland and Ukraine by drawing from the territorial fragmentation of their countries in the past.

FRAME (P_3) Very funny is that Lviv and Vilnius in Lithuania are more important to us than Szczecin and Wrocław that are in our country, and that Stalin gave us. We don't want that territory. Lviv, Kowno, Vilnius, these are very important for us, because Vilnius and Lviv were from the 10th century to World War in Poland. And in Lviv was a very important university that was one of oldest in Poland like in Vilnius. And a lot of Poles lived there.

DRAGONFLY (N_4) Actually I studied there. I am from that university. And I know that it's very important for your country. Was very important for your country.

FRAME (P_5) Our problem is that we do remember something, and we want that very important something be back to our country. And that is the problem.

DRAGONFLY (N_6) It's very interesting because actually you want, as I said, you want Lviv back but actually we have Podlasie, as you say, Podlasie, Chelm. [...] These were our territories, under Galicia, Halicz.

FRAME (P₇) We and Ukrainian people lived both there from ages. And that is why we think of it as our land. When Stalin created PRL (Polish People's Republic), we did not understand, and we did not agree to have Szczecin and Pomorze (Pomerania) that were taken from us in the late middle age. And we did not agree to give Kresy, Lviv and even Kiev to Russia who create in that place Ukraine. We think they are part of us, like brothers and sisters. It's very sad for us that we are not one country but two. So people in Poland are very sad because of that today.

DRAGONFLY (N₈) But there were living lots of Ukrainians too. So it is sad for us too. But we don't want them back now.

This sequence demonstrates the use of a post-Soviet narrative of Polish historiography, where Lviv is presented as an eternal Polish city. After the Second World War, Poland's state borders shifted westward and the country acquired new territories along the Oder-Neisse Line: Gdańsk, Wrocław, Szczecin, and Zielona Góra. In the East, it ceded about 180,000 km² of territory to the Soviet Union, including the cities of Vilnius, which was handed over to the Lithuanian Soviet Socialist Republic, and Lviv, which became part of the Ukrainian Soviet Socialist Republic (Borodziej 2010, 254–258). More than 750,000 Poles were relocated from Western Ukraine, of which 100,000 were from Lviv (Bräu 2016, 444). Frame presents Lviv as a Polish city that was forcefully taken away. George Grabowicz describes this phenomenon as post-war Poland's 'overarching psychological problem of conceptualising and coping with the loss of Lwów' (2000, 314).⁶ Frame deploys this post-Soviet narrative within the scope of a persuasive dialogue move, claiming that Lviv is a Polish city taken without the consent of the Polish state and should therefore be returned (P₃). Dragonfly's negotiation move to sympathise with Frame by acknowledging the historical importance of Lviv for Poland (N₄) is met by Frame's reiteration of his stance (P₅).

In a second attempt, Dragonfly changes strategy and introduces a dialogue move that aims at reaching a consensus by rebutting Frame's argument with the same logic (N₆). Dragonfly refers to the transfer of the Podkarpacie and Chełm regions to Poland after the Second World War, areas that Ukrainians considered their ethnic territories (Fiń 2019, 291). However, Frame objects to Dragonfly's statement by explaining that the new state borders were imposed on Poland and the state holds no responsibility for the annexation of the aforementioned territories. Frame even exaggerates this claim by suggesting that 'even Kiev' was forcefully taken from Poland (P₇), a city that did not belong to Poland in the interwar period (Magocsi 2010, 626–651). This, again, is met by Dragonfly's indirect attempt to find solutions that satisfy both interlocutors while emphasising the Ukrainian position (N₈): 'It is sad for us too.'

In this sequence, Frame uses the post-Soviet narrative about Lviv in persuasive moves aimed at expressing and imposing an opinion upon Dragonfly (P₃ P₅ P₇). The rest of the dialogue follows a similar dynamic. Frame continues to introduce explanations in support of the post-Soviet narrative ('Yes, but Lviv is one of few things that we most want to be returned'; 'In our minds there is something like

envy and very strong remembering, [...] our country or old country with its old borders, that's what we want'; 'We don't identify Ukraine as another country or culture, but we think they are Poles and Russian people who only were mixed with some people from another country, like Kazakhstan, like Lithuania and Germany'), and Dragonfly attempts to understand Frame's arguments ('Yes, but we don't want your territory now. So why is this question on your mind?'; 'Why was it so?'; 'Now this banner,⁷ for example, [...] why did it appear recently?'), and eventually introduces a dialogue move aimed at persuading ('But as you see it now, Lviv is mostly a Ukrainian town. So it's natural that it's part of Ukraine. So Poland shouldn't be so obsessed about Lviv now, and I mean, nowadays, because most people are Ukrainians'). The conversation ends as follows:

FRAME (P₉) Our problem is that we never forgive some events that took place in the past.

DRAGONFLY (D₁₀) Yes, and it is reflected now, it has a huge influence. History has a huge influence on the future and on our relationships and other things between two countries.

Dragonfly's last dialogue move emphasises the dissimilarity between the two interlocutors. In contrast to Frame, who acts in accordance with emotions attributed to an imagined community ('we never forgive some events'), Dragonfly chooses to zoom out of the topic and reflect on the interaction itself, evaluating Frame's stance as strongly influenced by symbolic events of the past.

The dynamic of this sequence (P-N-P-N) presents a case where a post-Soviet narrative from Polish historiography is not used to support arguments. Unlike the first example, two interlocutors with opposing viewpoints meet, and the post-Soviet narrative itself becomes the object of the discussion. Frame's predominant use of persuasion moves to legitimise the narrative indicates a deeply rooted personal identification with its content. The fact that Dragonfly, as a Ukrainian citizen, mirrors the 'counterpart' within the post-Soviet narrative might explain Frame's persistence. On the other hand, Dragonfly's predominant use of negotiation and information-seeking moves reveal a less biased approach to the legacy of Lviv. Dragonfly's choice of dialogue moves shows an awareness of the impact of the post-Soviet narrative and a willingness to learn and understand Frame's position, a strategy that is challenged but not overruled by Frame.

Conclusion

With the aim of contributing to the emerging field of transformation historiography, this chapter investigated which – and how – border perspectives are articulated in peer-to-peer conversations between borderland inhabitants. The citizen science project 'Talking Borders' created a setting in which borderland inhabitants communicated their understanding of borders as 'experts' and were empowered to share their experiences, fears, concerns, and hopes for change. The analysis demonstrated which post-Soviet narratives CSs consider relevant in

today's post-Soviet societies, how CSs used these post-Soviet narratives, and what conclusions we can draw from that.

The two dynamics displayed in the first dialogue are IS-D-IS-D and P-N-P-N-N. The first pattern shows that the CSs were mainly interested in sharing information with and retrieving expertise and opinions from their interlocutors. This indicates a high level of motivation to learn and broaden one's own intellectual horizon. The second pattern, P-N-P-N-N, shows that CSs aimed at persuading their interlocutors until they reached a consensus, before moving on to the next topic. However, the sequence of alternating persuasive moves remained short, suggesting that the CSs shared broadly the same outlook on a discussed topic or else chose to compromise (negotiation moves) for the sake of a consensus rather than pursuing a persuasion strategy. This implies either that they were not as confident about their articulated expertise as they initially seemed or that they aimed at avoiding potential conflicts.

The pattern displayed in the second dialogue is an exception in our collection. It shows one CS driven by personal interest and not willing to compromise and another aiming at understanding through negotiation: P-N-P-N. Despite the fact that the two interlocutors had very different conceptions of the same post-Soviet narrative, the CS from Ukraine took the opportunity to demonstrate openness for dialogue and understanding while respectfully disagreeing with the CS from Poland.

The dialogues between two CSs represent the most vivid of all the conversations recorded within the 'Talking Borders' project. This created a dynamic that is unique in records of oral sources: the desire to reach a consensus, despite opposing or similar conceptions of the same topic. To that end, the CSs demonstrated a willingness to expand their knowledge and understand where different positions and, in this case, notions of post-Soviet narratives, derived from. This is where 'Talking Borders' assumed an applied dimension, prompting us

to discover, and promote, those mechanisms which enable borders to be opened, reducing the frictions and tensions of socially constructed difference. This is the desire to "overcome" borders through re-imagining them as places where people can meet, to overcome the social construction of spatial fixation.

(Newman 2003, 23)

Especially in the age of digitalisation and disinformation, competing master narratives harbouring territorial claims provide a fertile ground for conflict, exacerbating the polarisation of societies in borderlands. The use of citizen science methodology in 'Talking Borders' not only highlighted the presence of master narratives and the contested notions associated with them in borderland regions in CEE but also revealed what a dialogic encounter can achieve. In the case of our exceptional sample, creating a setting where two borderland inhabitants with conflicting narratives had to confront each other's ideas and interact with each other may have prompted an awareness of different positions and even contributed

to deconstructing the post-Soviet narrative. The fact that Dragonfly ended the conversation with the revelation that history impacts notions in the present, interfering with our understanding and recognition of each other as individuals and states (D₁₀), supports such claims. This realisation could potentially enhance methodologies in border studies, encouraging researchers to apply citizen science as an approach that connects borderland inhabitants with controversial notions of (state) borders in the post-Soviet space.

CSs deployed post-Soviet narratives predominantly in dialogue moves that aimed at making or supporting a claim (deliberation), persuading the interlocutor (persuasion), and providing an argument leading to a consensus (negotiation). In introducing these three moves, the CSs demonstrated a high level of confidence in their expertise. In particular, the deployment of deliberation and persuasion moves emphasises the credibility and importance assigned to post-Soviet narratives. This suggests that they continue to be deeply embedded in the social identities of post-Soviet countries (Kuzio 2002, 246–247; Kolosov and Sebestov 2015, 198–199). Since the CSs did not make direct connections between the post-Soviet narratives and their personal lived experiences, we cannot determine whether they identified with the content of these master narratives. We do know, however, that their comments reproduce the symbolism and myth-making of their (borderland) communities. The dispute between contemporary Poland and Ukraine over Lviv, for instance, is ever-present in the public realm (Zhurzhenko 2011, 75–78; Liebich and Mishlovska 2014). And the controversy over the Ukrainian-Polish border is no exception in post-communist CEE. In Moldova, the Russian-backed *de facto* state of Transnistria has been a region of conflict since the early 1990s (Baban 2015, 3), underpinned by an anti-Romanian narrative (Osipov and Vasilevich 2019, 11–12). A more recent example is the annexation of Crimea in 2014, a process that was accompanied by master narratives reflecting, among other things, political interpretations of Crimea's historical significance as the birthplace of the Slavic peoples (Golczewski 2018, 44–47).

Notes

- 1 University of Vienna (Austria), Central European University (Hungary), Komenský School in Vienna (Czechia), University of Rzeszów (Poland), Ivan Franko Lviv National University (Ukraine), University of Cluj (Romania), University of Zagreb and University of Zadar (Croatia), Komenský School in Vienna (Slovakia), University of Novi Sad (Serbia), University of Ljubljana (Slovenia), University of Trieste (Italy), University of Sarajevo (Bosnia).
- 2 On citizen science projects using oral history methodology, see Hecker et al. (2018d, 453–462).
- 3 Project website: <https://www.univie.ac.at/talkingborders/project.php>.
- 4 Additional categories: Personal, Recent Events, and Others.
- 5 This model was developed in collaboration with Erik Krabbe. See Van Eemeren et al. (2014, 406–407).
- 6 On Lviv as a site of Polish-Ukrainian reconciliation, see Zhurzhenko (2011, 63–84).
- 7 Due to tensions, the number of protests in Poland and Ukraine has risen since 2015 (Friedman and Colibasanu 2018). Dragonfly is probably referring to a banner from

a protest in Warsaw prior to the 'Talking Borders' experiment. Far-right nationalists march annually to mark Poland's National Independence Day on 11 November. Tens of thousands of nationalists took part in the 2017 protest, holding banners saying 'Pure Poland, white Poland' and 'Refugees get out' (The Guardian 2017; BBC 2018).

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