

Hybridizing postsocialist trajectories: an investigation into the biznes of the U.S. missile base in Rędzikowo and urbanization of villages in provincial Poland

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Abstract: By 2018, Rędzikowo—a post-industrial, garrison village in northern Poland—will host an US anti-ballistic interceptor base expected to protect the Western world from the escalating threat of missile attacks from the Middle East and Asia. Already, American militarization of the rural area is freezing local economic development in the name of global security and subverting the very principles of democracy, transparency and market economy it heralded during and immediately after the Cold War. The U.S.-Polish bilateral agreement has repositioned the Polish state in the northern province, undoing two decades of European Union policies aimed at the devolution of state power and agricultural development programs. It is funding rapid urbanization that is engulfing villages, subverting their political autonomy, rural agency, agrarian identity and postsocialist trajectory. This paper investigates Rędzikowians' contestation of the *biznes* (American-style business) accompanying American militarism, and their visions of an alternative postsocialist reality on the local level in contraposition to the militarization and urbanization of the agricultural lands surrounding their village. It questions whether postsocialism can account for these visible contradictory patterns of its reassemblage and reversal. If postsocialism does indeed continue to exist, we need to think about it not as following a trajectory toward market capitalism, but backing up, fast-forwarding, simultaneously canceling itself out, slowing down and then speeding up again in completely renewed and reassembled cycles of development. The collision, contestation and hybridization of multifarious postsocialist trajectories are the result of a constant struggle over space and territory by stakeholders on multiple scales.

Keywords: militarization, contestation, postsocialist trajectories, urban growth, rural identity

54.479°N 17.109°E: base, village, target

Rędzikowo, Eastern Europe's most strategic location to NATO and U.S. military's geopolitical interests, is 400 hectares of land located 161 kilometers west of Kaliningrad, 490 kilometers north of Warsaw, and 347 kilometers northeast of Berlin. It is "located ideally along the trajectory of flying enemy missiles flying from the Near East to the USA"¹. Its strategic significance was confirmed on August 20, 2008, when U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski signed the first bilateral agreement to build the American missile base and on July 3, 2010, U.S. Secretary of State Hillary Clinton and Sikorski oversaw the signing of the revamped version of the base by Deputy Foreign Minister Jacek Nader and U.S. Ambassador to Poland Lee Feinstein². By 2018, Rędzikowo is expected to host a permanent American missile interceptor site with SM-3 anti-ballistic missiles. In the event of a ballistic missile attack launched from Iran or North Korea headed toward Europe or the United States, those 400 hectares of land, equipped with proper military technology and infrastructure, would launch SM-3 missiles that would travel toward the atmosphere at 24,000kph—or 6.5km per second³—and intercept the target with over 130 megajoules of kinetic energy, the equivalent of a 10-ton truck traveling at 966kph⁴. The explosion in the sky would save millions of lives and

reassert Europe and the United States' global dominance. If the land parcel is not militarised, then it will continue to be the U.S. military's "gap in its anti-missile defences"⁵, the Achilles' heel in its otherwise all-encompassing, military force field in the atmosphere.



Map location of Rędzikowo in northern Poland. © Google Earth

Anticipation of being at the center of nuclear war is nothing new to the older generations of Rędzikowo villagers. Northern Poland may be little known to the Western reader, but it has been a focal point of Cold War politics, as it was one of the training grounds for the Soviet military. The post-industrial landscape is characterized by vast expanses of by-gone state farms (PGRs, or Soviet *sovkhozy*) and Soviet-era military lands, and the skeletons of socialist-era, post-industrial landscape similar to that of the rough rust belt of Pennsylvania or Ohio. It has Soviet-era military training grounds surrounded by rusting barb-wire, and deteriorating Soviet radar towers overlooking the Baltic Sea that were strategically built to protect the Soviet-bloc from the American threat during the Cold War. Aerial views of haphazardly scattered villages reveal perfectly straight, emergency landing strips cutting through forests that were built for Soviet aircraft and accessing agricultural production on the state farms in the province for export to Moscow. Vacation dunes along the Baltic Sea coast are overlooked by Soviet-era military towers, old training grounds for Soviet troops that once barred the public from accessing the pleasures of the beach. In the postsocialist era, the province has attempted to shed its militarized landscape by opening up those military spaces to eco-tourism and agricultural production, converting its landscape of war into a landscape of pleasure, respite and peace.



Soviet era tower overlooking Baltic Sea.
Photo taken by author. August 2009

Within the scope of history, the re-militarization of the province with the construction of the missile base in Rędzikowo against the contestation of the villagers demonstrates that the geopolitical destiny of coordinates trumps the self-actualization postsocialist trajectory of the local. The memory and function of Rędzikowo as a strategic geopolitical location that the locals have attempted to shed will be recreated in the new global power struggle. The locals reject the plan because it veers away from their vision of a new Rędzikowo that is open to a civilian, non-military airport, open to biodiversity and tourism, and in which the locals are their own individuals, not hosts to their foreign Masters, as they had been under Soviet control. Ironically, the Soviet landscape that American political prowess in the 1980s helped overthrow in that very region (Gdańsk, the central site of the Solidarity Movement) is being revitalized in a new, militarized landscape by the Americans against the potential threat of a new nuclear attack. America's equipping of post-Soviet peoples with democratic ideals and market economic mentalities two decades ago to determine their own postsocialist trajectories is being now circumvented by undemocratic, non-capitalist forms of authorizing development that have accompanied the preparation of the territory for the construction of the American base.

Rędzikowo has the misfortune of being at the center of politics of space, as its example shows how space trumps time and that the space's significance on a geopolitical scale trumps its everyday significance on a local scale of politics. This American base requires a reconstruction of Rędzikowians' postsocialist space, a total geographic upheaval of the local postsocialist development. Rędzikowo wants to shed its military history and function, but by misfortune of being along a certain set of geographic coordinates, it is again becoming remilitarized and veered off of its own postsocialist transition along a non-militarized path of development. The coordinates are more important than the people's lives who occupy them. This is not only a missile base; it is a full re-orientation of the Rędzikowo's position and function in the world. In this geographic upheaval, how do Rędzikowians rationalize this derailment of their postsocialist trajectory by the American military? Under what conditions do they accept or contest this radical transformation of their landscapes? How will their economic livelihoods be impacted? What territorial strategies do they implement to defend their village from the encroachment of urbanization and militarization?



Aerial view of Rędzikowo village and airstrip. © Google Earth

The Rędzikowo ripple effect and the politics of us/Them during ethnographic fieldwork

In 2008, 2009 and 2011, I conducted multi-sited, ethnographic fieldwork in an archipelago of villages 13 kilometers (8 miles) south of Rędzikowo. Although Rędzikowo was not a site of ethnographic investigation, the events at Rędzikowo rippled out into surrounding villages and became a common topic of discussion during interviews, informal discussions on the streets, local newspapers, gossip, political discussions around the kitchen table. Some informants once lived or worked in Rędzikowo or have friends and family living there who are directly affected by the missile base plans. Local coverage of Rędzikowo became a benchmark of villagers' opinions about Americans, which in turn, affected their treatment of me as a Polish-American ethnographer. I was born and raised in the city of Słupsk (pr. *Swoopsk*) near Rędzikowo before immigrating in 1991 to the United States where I became an American citizen and developed a slight American accent to my fluent Polish. Although I was an insider-outsider among my sample population, my self-ascribed primary identity during fieldwork investigation was as a doctoral student from the LSE in London.

Conversely, my informants who detected my accent were more interested in asking me about life in America, if I made a lot of money, rather than the questions I expected out of them regarding how as a young, Polish woman I chose doctoral studies in London over the traditional role of motherhood or migrant work. To them, my American identity was the primary characteristic of my identity, which produced a wide spectrum of their hypotheses about why I was *really* there and who had *really* sent me. One villager, an ex-Siberian prisoner, was convinced that I was a CIA agent sent to extract information out of her. Since she also viewed me as an insider, she verbally articulated her real answer and then told me to write her fake answer on the questionnaire for "Them". Other informants, and ex-Communist bureaucrat, made racist comments about the American presidency as being representative of American's downfall,

Americans being responsible for creating their “Negro” by enslaving them, American denial of the Native American genocide, and other false accusations (like making fun of Americans for holding nation-wide polls to choose the American President’s dog in the White House) that they might have heard of in the overwhelmingly anti-American, sensationalist media.

I found myself as an ethnographer in the war-zone of a nascent, anti-American rhetoric being formed and it became exceedingly difficult to respond to villagers’ knowledge claims about American life, politics and culture. What I experienced and observed was the formation of a local assemblage of knowledge about America that helped form anti-American territoriality, rhetoric, and formulation of boundaries of us/Them. As I needed their information for my ethnographic project, in return, they accessed my knowledge base about America, to add to their local knowledge about their future American neighbors down the street. More knowledge about Americans would allow them to better formulate their politics of local discourse, clarify the content of their local struggles and know their enemy and its weaknesses better. Knowledge is power in the struggle over the trajectories of transition. I became just as a strategic site of knowledge for their political objectives as they were to my educational objectives.

Attitudes toward the United States have certainly evolved for villagers since 1989 because villagers have been affected by different types of postsocialist transitions over time. It seemed odd to me that such an area of northern Poland that was a major site of the Solidarity Movement in the 1980s was exhibiting such territorial behavior and discourse against Americans; the people were not gleefully excited about all things American as I remember as a child living through the transition until 1991. Back then, villagers were grasping for all things American, whereas during fieldwork in 2009, they were picking, choosing, contesting, and blocking which parts of the postsocialist transition they want or reject, and an American missile base appears to be too much saturation of all things American. They were threatened by American encroachment and thus needed to establish firm boundaries between “us” and “Them” as a way of protecting their village territory. More so, their reactions demonstrated that postsocialist trajectories are locals’ vision of an actual future and define why that territory ought to be protected. While in 2009, Rędzikowo politics reverberated among the surrounding villages among Rędzikowo, I suspected it was peripheral effects of political territoriality forming. What compelled me to write about Rędzikowo is that during my most recent trip in October 2011, I was shocked at the development boom attributed to the preparation of the Rędzikowo base which has saturated the provincial landscape to such an extent that I think it will intensify leading up to the deployment of the SM-3 missiles in 2018 and onwards. By 2011, rural contestation of American intervention became not only a Rędzikowo issue, but a rural issue in the area given the urbanization that has complemented the plan of hosting American guests. The Rędzikowo transition began spilling over into other villages, physically altering their landscapes. Rędzikowo became not only a prospective missile base site; it also exemplifies the struggles of landscapes and territory between multiple transition models on different scales and with different actors involved.

The in-betweenness of postsocialist trajectories

Postsocialist ethnographers have stressed the importance of going beyond the construction of transition on the macro-level and instead studying “other transitions” of “everyday postsocialism” (Pavlovskaya 2004:54), of “alternative versions to the official version” (Müller 2007: 221) that strays from a focus on the transition to “ideal-type capitalism” to the

“larger process of globalization” acting upon the local (Dunn 2004:6). A focus on the local reveals that multiple transitions are “negotiated”, “contested” out of the “chaos and failures of transition” (Berdahl 1999: 232) and moving in multiple, sometimes contradictory trajectories spread across the geographical grid that sometimes jar-up against one another, linking-up or eliminating one another, giving the impression that transition is backing up, fast-forwarding, canceling out, etc. As Deleuze and Guattari (1987: 380) put it: “A path is always between two points, but the in-between has taken on all the consistency and enjoys both an autonomy and a direction of its own”. In this paper, I prefer to use trajectories instead of transitions even though both assume multiple variants of an original. Trajectories are more technical, and characterized by an assumption that there is nothing in particular being “transitioned into” but rather follows a more haphazard trajectory of change along a certain vision of a future that may not be in line with free market capitalism. The trajectory of postsocialism as heading toward further privatisation and democratic governance is overrated in Eastern Europe and in fact many ethnographers have already identified failed transition programs all across post-Soviet states in which local communities had to find their own solutions to the transition process, and thus, form their own unique transitions in nearly every documented post-Soviet state (Creed 2011; Ghodsee 2011; Humphrey 2002; Kideckel 2008; Mason 1996; Verdery 1996, 2003; and others). “Transition” is in the realm of the local and when the local comes under threat due to urbanization, American militarism, enhanced participation on the state in regional development, transitions enter into a site of contestation or hybridity. One example is Stark (1996) and Stark and Bruszt (1998) who use the term “recombinant property” to refer to multiple trajectories of property formation in post-socialist Hungary. Stark (1996) describes property formations on the enterprise level in Hungary which are neither fully public nor private, but combinations of both. Stark and Bruszt (1998:149) indicate that recombinant property is a form of generating value and also providing alternatives to the property transition. Rather than focusing on an interpretive approach that uses the market economy (i.e. private property, formal economy practices) as a benchmark of development, this example of Rędzikowo shows how a focus on the complexity and contradictions of “transition” bring into a life a completely alien process of development that may not coincide with Western understanding of Poland and post-Soviet transition. Rędzikowo demonstrates a split in a postsocialist trajectory toward greater militarization and intervention of the state in the development process.

This paper sheds light on the limitations of postsocialism as a theoretical framework that explains the transition processes undergoing on the local levels in Eastern Europe and argues for a more inclusive framework that includes scenarios in which postsocialist subjects have already adjusted their lifestyles (i.e. privatization of land) to the market economy and are being confronted with anti-democratic bilateral agreements, anti-market economy logic, and Western-style *biznes* that have taken their postsocialist landscape hostage and are barring the voices of democracy as well as the ebbs and flows of the market economy to give shape and character to the provincial landscape. A more inclusive redefinition of postsocialism to include this global-local encounter is necessary to help explain how certain trajectories of development complement the market economy logic whereas others, such as American militarization, contradict that continuum of logic postsocialist countries have been striving to obtain since 1989. When multiple transition(s) clash, they represent struggles over territory between local/regional/national scales as well as rural versus urban economic models in the provincial territory. Instead of interpreting transitions as simple trajectories in different directions as every village and city paves its own path, we need to think of transitions more as sites of contestation,

tension, and struggles on all scales and between scales, the rural versus urban, and exertion of territoriality over space that leads to different expressions of power and reassemblages over the everyday life. Transitions represent severe conflicts of interests, pluralism and expressions of power. How different transitions interact, counter-act, and hybridize is an under-studied phenomenon in post-Soviet states.

This paper provides a panoramic perspective of the multi-scalar debate about the missile base to demonstrate the lack of communication between the scales acting upon a single village space. First, I introduce Rędzikowo village and its history to highlight why it is strategic and to outline the demographic make-up and the trends that have been affecting the villagers leading up to the missile-base plan. Then, I briefly introduce the missile base plan of George W. Bush, show how it mainly played into a revival of Cold War rhetoric, and discuss the locals' first reactions and exposure to the base plan. A substantial portion of the paper is dedicated to explaining how exactly the village was impacted on a developmental level, and how its spatial geography is being reassembled by *biznes*. Next, it focuses on villagers' reactions when President Barack Obama scrapped the original base plan. Lastly, I return to my understanding of the developmental effects that have taken place since Słupsk received a compensation package—a reward for its acceptance of the revamped interceptor plan—from the Polish state. It concludes with questions for further research on the base as well as a discussion of how American militarism is transforming the trajectory of “postsocialism” in provincial Poland.

Rędzikowo's multiple landscapes, multiple histories

Rędzikowo (pop. 1500), about 3 kilometers outside of the city of Słupsk (pop. 100,000), is a garrison village located along the E28 highway linking Gdańsk and Berlin. Rędzikowo is a mosaic of multiple landscapes crammed into a small territory, revealing its history of occupation under multiple nationalities and historical eras. The oldest visible landscape is constituted of red-brick, early 20th century homes half-covered with dilapidated black and white timber framing from the German-era. Before the Second World War, parts of the province belonged to Germany. Rędzikowo (Ger. *Reitz*) was a large, private farm called a German Junker⁶ populated with German families who worked for the agricultural estate. The adjacent airport was used by the German Luftwaffe⁷ during the Second World War. Among the German-era homes stand pastel-covered, Soviet-era apartments that tower over the highway and block any view into the village from the road. Cracks between the apartments reveal single-frame shots of children playing on the skeletons of what was once a playground.

These identical sets of cement apartment blocks reveal a secondary landscape of Rędzikowo history. After the war, when the border changes of the Potsdam Conference in 1945 effected the annexation of the German territory by the Polish state, the mass resettlement (or ethnic cleansing) of the German population from the territory was immediately followed by the voluntary settlement of Polish war-survivors and the forced resettlement or repatriation of Ukrainian, Belorussian, Latvian, Lithuanian populations onto the new Polish territory. Reitz was renamed Rędzikowo. The airport controlled by the Red Army became a temporary refugee base for the State Repatriation Office (Państwowy Urząd Repatriacyjny; PUR) before refugees were resettled into the expelled Germans' homes by the Polish and Soviet authorities⁸. Immediately after the resettlement process, the German estate was collectivized by and converted into a Polish version of a Bolshevik-style state farm (i.e. Soviet *sovkhos*, or Polskie Gospodarstwo Rolne (PGR)) by the Russian Red Army, who occupied the PGRs in the province until 1951. The new

Slavic population became landless state farm workers and the redistribution of private German land to the peasants resulted in small allotment farms (*działki*) where locals carried out small-scale subsistence production of vegetables and fruits⁹ to supplement their incomes as workers on the PGR. The PGR workers were housed in Soviet-style apartment blocks, where many are today retiring and their very grandchildren are now playing on the playgrounds. The state farms were sites where workers were close to the gears of Soviet modernization of agriculture and industry in the region. When the Red Army left in 1951, the airstrip was called the 28 Pułku Lotnictwa Myśliwskiego and eventually became a training base for Soviet troops. It doubled as an important transportation hub for imports and exports between the U.S.S.R. and the provincial area crammed with state-farms as well as industrial and agricultural production. One informant recalled Soviet planes landing on state farm fields and dropping off modern agricultural machinery and picking up agricultural quotas for export to Moscow. Temporarily, the airstrip also served as a civilian airport for domestic flights. In 1979, due to the escalating Cold War, the U.S.S.R. invested in infrastructure on the base and used it primarily for military training operations. It is that military infrastructure that gives Rędzikowo its garrison landscape today¹⁰.

The postsocialist transition characterized by the privatization of land and recession of the Soviet state from the domain of public and private life brought about a tertiary landscape to Rędzikowo. While the military airport survived the immediate post-Cold War era, in 1999 the military airport in Rędzikowo was dismantled—300 civilian workers and 600 military personnel lost their jobs. Many military personnel retired in the village living off of military pensions. Walking toward the rear of the village, marked with a wall of pine trees, one encounters an old, rusty, deformed metal fence separating the residential era and the military zone. Hanging on it is a no-trespassing sign translated in English, Russian, Polish and German, referencing the above-mentioned history of its past and present inhabitants. Inside the military side is a cement airstrip surrounded by pine forests, and old military hangars open their dark mouths onto the airstrip, resembling ancient caves covered in overgrown trees and shrubs growing around the sea of cement. Underground are Cold-War era bomb shelters and the skeletons of barracks that have long been closed down with wood and nails. Overlooking the airstrip are four Soviet-era jets from 1947 and 1958 that belong to the Agencja Mienia Wojskowego (The Military Property Agency)¹¹. No sunny weather or flower growing between the airstrip cracks could cheer up the drab expanse of grey cement desert. When the European Union announced its allocation of 8 million Euro toward the redevelopment of airports for the 2007-2013 development program, villagers' hopes were sparked that the airstrip could be renovated and a small, domestic airport could be built with EU funds and outside investors¹². A small terminal would decrease the airport traffic to Gdańsk¹³ and would bring in tourists and investment. Before the announcement of the military base agreement, the village was looking past its military shadow and wanted renewal through the European model of development¹⁴.

Like most villages in the area, Rędzikowo is dying. Decaying state-farm infrastructure and smoke stacks covered with stork nests reveal the fall of industry and agricultural production and the lack of capital. In contrast to the bright, new, credit-purchased homes of the new middle class encroaching toward the village from the city of Słupsk, few German-era homes and Soviet-era apartment blocks are undergoing renovation, and are deteriorating with time. The elderly living on retirement cheques do not have enough money to fix their homes and grow their crops. Like most villages, it is plagued by high unemployment rates, an aging population, high poverty, alcoholism, and migrant labour that give the village a feeling of emptiness, stagnation, and somberness. Bright clothing drying on clothes lines shows some form of cyclical renewal, and

pattern of life. During warm months, the vegetables and flowers in the *działki* brighten up the landscape. The middle-aged workforce is out on migrant labour in Norway or other European countries, or they are alcoholics. Thick, rugged-edged streets cover what were once quaint cobble-stone roads—no sidewalks. Sometimes, a teenage girl walks by with a stroller. Spotted around the village are a family-operated convenience store stocked with alcohol, a post-office, a church, a closed-down bar and a community soldiers club on its last legs. In the early afternoon, many villagers are either eating their dinners or running daily errands in the city. The village of Rędzikowo belongs to the *gmina* (municipality) of Słupsk, meaning that that unlike villages in rural areas that belong to rural counties, Rędzikowo village and its neighboring villages are linked to the administrative, political, and financial rhythms of the city. Development and investment in Rędzikowo is always decided through the organs of the *gmina*, which clearly shows that there has not been much development in the village whatsoever geared toward the specific problems faced by that village. For example, with all the development projects needed for Rędzikowo, an American-style aqua-park is being built on village land. In recent years, the city of Słupsk has been expanding toward Rędzikowo, slowly filling the gap of agricultural land between them, and giving the village semi-peripheral characteristics, like a neighborhood, to the urban center. It appears that the next modernization phase of Rędzikowo will not come with investment specifically into the village, but rather that the village will become incorporated into the benefits of urban life as it becomes engulfed by the expanding city of Słupsk. Any type of investment specifically in Rędzikowo will be geared for either American guests or the urban population in Słupsk.

Resurrecting Star Wars in Russia's backyard

The concept of the anti-ballistic missile base originated in President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) or "Star Wars" in the 1980s. In 2002, it was picked up by President George W. Bush¹⁵ in response to the increasing missile arsenals in the Middle East and Asia. The Missile Defense Agency of the U.S. Department of Defense claims that, "While the end of the Cold War signaled a reduction in the likelihood of global nuclear conflict, one of the greatest threats facing the world today remains the increasing proliferation of ballistic missiles and weapons of mass destruction"¹⁶. According to the MDA, Iran has short-and medium-range missiles that could hit Israel and southern Europe¹⁷. On August 20, 2008, then U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice and Polish Foreign Minister Radosław Sikorski signed the first bilateral agreement to build the permanent missile base by 2012. The permanent U.S. missile base would hold about 200 military personnel¹⁸ who would oversee the PAC-3 missile seekers built by Boeing, which won a half-billion dollar contract to build them for Rędzikowo¹⁹. One hundred and thirty missile interceptors would be on ships²⁰ located at different sites that would attempt to stop the missiles at different stages of their flight. In Rędzikowo, there would be 10 interceptors in silos and in Czech Republic, there was to be a radar that would have been transported from the Kwajalein Stoll in the Marshall Islands by 2012²¹. The missile base, ready by 2012, would communicate with radars stationed in the Czech Republic as well as Alaska, California, Fylingdales (UK) and Greenland.

Immediately, the plan received a backlash from Russia. Konstantin Kosachyov, chairman of the foreign affairs committee in the Russian Parliament, feared that the base would be used to spy on Russia's military arsenals, and claimed that, "It is this kind of agreement, not the split between Russia and United States over the problem of South Ossetia, that may have a greater

impact on the growth in tensions in Russian-American relations”²². Russia’s discontent with the base located close to the Kaliningrad border sparked a media frenzy and Rędzikowo was immediately swarmed with international news teams spinning the story into a reignited Cold War between the United States and Russia. CNN reporter Zain Verjee stated that “Today, Russia still feels that this is their backyard” and “Residents wonder whether their future is hostage to stand-offs borne in the past”²³. Reuters reporter Barbara Sladkowska indicated that the base would “revive the arms race” and “stoke tensions with former overlord Russia”²⁴. Since the Cold War, both countries have reduced their missiles and nuclear arsenals, partly through the Strategic Offensive Reductions Treaty (SORT) in 2002, which was signed by George W. Bush and Vladimir Putin, capping the maximum number of warheads at 2,200 by 2012²⁵. Nevertheless, the missile base deal was signed on August 20, 2008, the day before the Russians had withdrawn from their armed conflict in Georgia. Lech Wałęsa stated that the Russian attack on Georgia represented the still continuing “old way of thinking” on the part of Russia toward its former satellite states²⁶ emphasizing its ability to exert military control on its ex-satellite states. There has been no greater objector to the U.S. missile base in Rędzikowo than Moscow, which interpreted the base as a threat to its military arsenals. While the United States officially denied the claims that the base was an offensive strategy against Russia, both Russia and the media hyperbolically claimed the contrary. Unlike during the Cold War where Rędzikowo was just another Soviet military site, during the re-ignited Cold War in the 2000s, Rędzikowo became the center of a dispute between two world superpowers.

Villagers’ fear of repeating history and politics of silence

Rędzikowo, an unimpressable village on the side of the road, became “the most strategic location in Poland”, and was immediately filled with international news teams who wanted to show the whole world how Rędzikowians live, what they look like, and what they will say about the Americans coming with a missile base²⁷. Tourists no longer drove by Rędzikowo along the highway, but stopped, took photographs, got back into their cars and left, without buying even a drink of water from the village, as some villagers grumbled²⁸. One report claimed that discussing the issue of the missile base with the residents was difficult, because the villagers all ran away at the sight of the journalists. An elderly woman explained, “Sir, when the journalists appear, everyone hides in their homes. We do not want to talk, because these talks will give us nothing and they will not change the decision of the government. We all want here peace. The die has been cast, and what will be, will be”²⁹. There is nothing more fearful than international lenses zooming in on the local, helicopters flying above the village airspace taking aerial shots and reporting on every detail. Local stories have shown how the media had twisted and spliced villagers’ original comments to mean something completely different, and locals have had to then answer to their fellow villagers for their comments on the national news³⁰. A female cashier from the village stated, “What is it to us? No one is going to ask us for our opinion. Authorities do not listen to people. Just like it was under the times of the army unit, it will be like that now, too”³¹. Another Rędzikowian explained, “Among themselves, everyone is against it. They are only afraid of strangers”³². Mariusz Chmiel, the Słupsk mayor (*wójt gminy*) interpreted the villagers’ silence in a negative light, citing this as their opportunity to speak to the world about their position, but living in irrational fear:

There are many people here still who are working for the military, or their blood-relatives are. They are scared, that they will offend someone. Many times we tried to forcibly convince someone, to go with us and to say something to the television. But no, fear is irrational. Even today someone told me, that he does not want to risk it, because they will take away his retirement cheques³³.

Rędzikowians' silence appears to be due to not only a fear of the national government for their political views, but also for the everyday repercussions of treatment by other villagers by crossing the boundaries of cleavages already filled with tension. Amplifying the voice of the Rędzikowo villagers exposes postsocialist subjects' world-views and how they narrate and reason this global-local encounter using local language and logic, deciding whether to align to its rhetoric of what constitutes global security. It focuses on the ways in which impending American militarization has already reassembled the trajectory of their postsocialist development. The discourse whereby villagers reject the American base highlights their independent vision of development, democracy, autonomy, community, and Poland's geopolitical position in the world, and questions whether such discourse is more aligned with sharing common goals with European Union citizens rather than engaging in the American geopolitical vision of northern Poland that at times is antithetical to that of the European Union.

The initial responses of locals to the bilateral agreement illustrates a confused and nervous village environment with diffuse fears and speculation over the impact of the base on their lives. Some Rędzikowians claim, however, that after the last military training sessions on the airstrip back in 1993, Americans began showing up more often, taking measurements and looking around. When the military airstrip was closed in 1999, then the surveying was more frequent around the airstrip³⁴. There was a clear lack of communication; neither the Polish state nor the U.S. military authorities took any effort to include the villagers in the bilateral agreements, negotiations or talks before the signing of the agreement. One frustrated middle-aged villager said "No one is explaining anything to us. No one is talking to us what it is, if it is bad. And we're not experts!"³⁵. Another Rędzikowian described that the villagers "grabbed their heads [in confusion] because who let them build a base neighboring such a [big] city"³⁶. A retired, ex-soldier Rędzikowian claimed that the village would be "like Westerplatte...Russian missiles will fly in from Kaliningrad within a minute and six seconds," referring to the dangers of military sites in close proximity to potential enemy military sites, as occurred with the outbreak of World War II when Germans attacked Poles in Westerplatte³⁷. Locals did not understand the strategy, the geopolitical logic behind placing a military target by such a large city, and why the Polish state had offered up the provincial urban center and their village. Reporter Agnieszka Hreczuk wrote, "The Premier is happy, the President too, and even most of their fellow citizens. Only Rędzikowians do not like the missile base which is being built under their nose. They feel cheated and humiliated. Not by Americans, but rather their own authorities"³⁸. Their panic demonstrated a general rift in discourse between the authorities and the locals, stirring confusion about the future and not including locals in the transfer of knowledge about the missile base plans.

Similarly, one male retiree from the village claimed that the deal was a "disaster", a "wake" marking the death of the village of Rędzikowo. While he claimed that he understood the economic benefits of oil or gas exploration, he could not comprehend the benefits of a missile base located 500 meters away from villagers' homes³⁹. His fear was both geographic and environmental. One villager said, "In the pamphlets, which we received, it was cleared up that in

the United States, the sphere of protection around the base is fourteen kilometers—Here it was only fourteen meters!”⁴⁰ The actual positioning of the base near the villagers sent the message to the locals that they were dispensable, that they did not need to be as protected from the unhealthy environment of the base as Americans. Although it is quite clear that there would also have been Americans located *on* the base, exposed to the same radioactive energy, the local logic was more vested in the locals’ insecurities and victimization. Similarly, a middle-aged woman reasoned, “It appears to me that when radar signals out, it harms. There are so many people dying of cancer”⁴¹. Her friend also indicated that the missile base will cause radioactive illnesses, inciting the memory of the nuclear-disaster of Chernobyl, which the locals continue to blame for the purportedly high prevalence of thyroid cancer in the province⁴². Others expressed fear of getting leukemia from radioactive waves and being exposed to toxins from missile gas; they expressed fear of American soldiers themselves⁴³. Historically, Rędzikowians have paid the price for militarization with their bodies which have been exposed to chemical tragedies, hard labour practices, fear and stress, and enclosure within closely monitored quarters. A postsocialist trajectory means moving away from the past and ensuring that it does not repeat.

In particular, these geographic and environmental fears sprang from the collective fear of future resettlement of the villagers who had invested their entire lives in their homes⁴⁴, as referred to in the previous section. With the lack of communication and geographic intervention in their area, one middle-aged air force retiree complained about the nature of the sacrifice the locals would have to make without an equal return from the Polish state: “This has given us much harm and what is the worse, is that we will get nothing out of it. We will have to suffer every day with the neighbors of this missile base, and on the subject of whether or not the government will pay compensation, I doubt it, that the money would go to Rędzikowo”⁴⁵. Hers is a rather depressing take on the arrangement of power on the *gmina* level that often puts the needs of the urban center first and the village second. Upon his visit to Rędzikowo, Henry Obering from the Missile Defense Agency assured them that there would be no resettlements from the village⁴⁶. And of course, there were fears of Russia’s response to the base. Villagers were afraid that the missile base decision was too closely dated with the Russian-Georgia war in August 2008 and they feared that they too would become another Georgia⁴⁷. As one retired woman put it, “Because that what the Russians will do, NATO *cannot*,” referring to the abuse of human rights that has historically come with the territory of Russian invasion of the satellite states⁴⁸. The president of Słupsk, Maciej Kobyliński said that the Polish “soldiers, ex-soldiers, are accustomed not to aggravate the Russian bear”⁴⁹. The diffuse statements on record demonstrate general confusion about the logic of the base close to an urban area supplemented with fears about the environment, illnesses and potential prospects of resettlement. Rędzikowo exposes discourse against power, oppression, marginalization, subjection to radiation, lack of access to information, second class world citizens, etc.

By the time the U.S. Ambassador to Poland Victor Ashe visited Rędzikowo on November 25, 2008, the villagers had already organized. In the same fashion of greeting the news teams, everyone stayed inside, windows were closed, balconies were empty, neither children nor curious bystanders were visible. No one was outside following him, and there was total, awkward silence⁵⁰. Only a group of *gmina* government representatives and translators accompanied Ashe and another American officer. The Ambassador enquired about the rusting jets overlooking the airstrip, whether they were Polish, to which the translator flatly replied that they were Soviet jets. They stopped several meters later after the *gmina* representative pointed proudly to a monument villagers erected to honor those who died during Soviet military training.

Ashe turned to the American officer and in English mumbled that they [U.S. military] will need to relocate those monuments to where villagers will want them in the village to clear space for the base⁵¹. The tone of the conversation revealed the character of how the village space will be reconfigured by spatial necessities of the U.S. missile base: this was American territory now. Then, Ashe met with locals for an hour, answering questions about the site. Several local representatives surrounded by cameras nervously asked about their access to water in wells on the location of the airstrip and whether the base would bar their access to water, whether or not the United States would control the highway in front of the village, what would be the safety of children who go to school and whether or not they would live in danger and fear, what were the health risks of the base adjacent to the community⁵², as well as questions concerning the zoning of the area⁵³ which referred to the degree of flexibility the *gmina* would have in continuing its own development projects and granting land concessions for future investors. After the meeting, the villagers of Rędzikowo handed Victor Ashe a letter of protest which included the following statements:

We are deeply concerned about the threats which are coming to our region from all directions... You are probably aware that 90 percent of the residents object to the location of the facility, which means risks for Rędzikowo and the entire region of central Pomerania. At the same time, we hope the wishes and fears of the locals will at least be noticed by the powers-that-be on the American side.⁵⁴

In addition to shutting their doors to the U.S. Ambassador, the letter was the highest level of organization against the missile base that the villagers had accomplished. The letter received no comment from Ashe. Disapproval of the base in 2008 was at around 66% in Rędzikowo⁵⁵.

The villagers' treatment of Ashe was completely different from the reception of Poland's Prime Minister Donald Tusk received when he visited Rędzikowo. Women, men, children surrounded Tusk with questions, greetings, smiles, and welcomes, taking photographs, recording videos on their phones, and calling their friends and family to turn on the television and see them on television cameras⁵⁶. Tusk announced that the missile base would mean a radical expansion of investments and infrastructure in the *gmina* (not specifically the village of Rędzikowo)⁵⁷. Rather than invoking the past, Prime Minister Tusk promised the future, telling the villagers of Rędzikowo that the missile base would bring in local and regional development, as well as American investors⁵⁸. Furthermore, Tusk promised the *gmina* more administrative power in investment and development on nationally-held land administered by the national government⁵⁹. The missile base was advertised as a great chance for the region, for the American-supported development of infrastructure and culture. But locals were suspicious about the *biznes* of the missile base, referring to the *type* of development the base would bring into the region⁶⁰. Some speculated that the military base would decrease the value of agricultural property in the *gmina* and would lead to lower tourism, with doubts about whether or not investors would want to build in the *gmina* just because the base would have been there⁶¹. With an American base and the flexibility it requires on part of the locals, manufacturers are not confident in expanding large factories in the area, with fear that it would lead to closing down if the base wants to expand⁶². This was a land/space problem. Locals feared that the businesses that would benefit from the missile base would be American contractors rather than local, small, private businesses⁶³. During a meeting with the denizens of Rędzikowo and Słupsk, the villagers of Rędzikowo presented Tusk with their compensation requests which included the modernization of technical

infrastructure of the village, financial support for the village government so that it can invest more for the village (not the *gmina*), funds for a community center, funding for a road connecting Rędzikowo and Jezierzycze, financial help in the thermo-modernization of the Soviet-era apartment block buildings in the village, privatisation of allotment gardens rented by the villagers who used them but did not have enough money to privatize the gardens, and renovation of village monuments⁶⁴. Rędzikowo villagers admitted defeat and engaged in the preliminary negotiation process over compensation with the Polish state in return for the U.S. missile base. Concurrently, however, they saw an opportunity for them to realize their vision of postsocialist transition, and speed up their transition with the help of the national government, something which had up to this point been unsuccessful for their village with the municipal and county governments.

Even Słupsk mayor Mariusz Chmiel claimed, “I am shocked at the conditions under which we agreed to the installation of the missile base. This is not the happiest day for the Słupsk region. We lost terrain important for *gmina* development and that is why we will be asking from the government for help to realize our investment plans”⁶⁵. Chmiel was referring to the freezing of the terrain for its development and investment prospects; the missile base would literally freeze the land that would be necessary for the development of the *gmina*. First, Słupsk Wings Foundation (Fundacja Słupskie Skrzydła) which rented the airstrip in Rędzikowo for private pilots who taught flying lessons was forced to give up the airstrip when the bilateral agreement had been signed and even before any Americans arrived. The Polish Ministry of Defense (Ministerstwo Obrony Narodowej; MON) barred entry onto the airstrip even though the FSS wanted to prevent the airstrip from growing over with grass before the Americans arrived⁶⁶. In this case, the city of Słupsk lost local business on the now abandoned airstrip. Second, before the Americans displayed public interest in the base, the Rędzikowo airstrip had serious investors from Apollo Tyres, India’s largest tire producer, seeking to build a manufacturing plant on the airstrip and looking to hire between 2,500-4,000 Polish workers. But, since the agricultural property around the airstrip belonged to the state-operated Agricultural Property Agency (Agencja Nieruchomości Rolnych; ANR), the Indian investors had trouble getting the ANR in Warsaw to listen to their proposal, possibly because the U.S. missile base plan negotiations had begun⁶⁷. The proposal fell through, an outcome which was against the locals’ wishes who wanted building contracts, workplaces, and investment in the region⁶⁸. If this is the case (and it probably is given that a large manufacturer was desperately needed in the area), then the flows of globalization and the market economy were blocked by the geopolitical interests of the Polish state and American military. To the villagers of Rędzikowo, the increased interest in the state, barring development from taking place, is a red flag of militarization of the area. While globalization rolls back the power of the state and preserves the autonomy of the local, American militarization and *biznes* brings in the national state—Warsaw—to the frontier and asserts its own type of development, which, has its own spatial effects.

Meanwhile, during Prime Minister Tusk’s visit to Rędzikowo, protesters gathered in the village with white stickers plastered on their faces with black, typed, letters: “Once Moscow, today Washington” and “I have nothing to say” and “You sold us out”⁶⁹. The youth protesters were playing chess in pairs as a sign of protests⁷⁰, referencing pawns as the people of Rędzikowo. One announcer claimed “If 60% of Poles are against the base, what right do you, Premier, have to sign agreements in the United States?” and, “People living here have no influence at all”, referring to the loss of sovereignty⁷¹. The loss of sovereignty message was also found in a letter of protest written by two Solidarity movement activists, Ryszard Bugaj and

Senator Jan Rulewski (among others) and sent to the Słupsk *gmina*. It indicated that the missile base has divided the population, will complicate Poland's position in the international sphere, and that "Poles continue to feel the consequences of oppression and fight in the protection of freedom and independence. It has to be reminded to our friends [Americans] of the anniversary of August [referring to Solidarity strikes]. Gradually, we are amputating hard-won freedom"⁷². There were high emotions aimed against the anti-democratic way in which the bi-lateral agreement had been negotiated without a referendum. Five hundred demonstrators crowded into the town square in Słupsk—the provincial town in northern Poland just four kilometers away from Rędzikowo—where the youth protested against the "militarization" of the provincial area and demanded a referendum, declaring that the political decision was antidemocratic. Filip Irowski from the Stop War Initiative (*Inicjatywa Stop Wojne*) said, "We do not agree that the denizens of Słupsk and Rędzikowo [have] to bare their backs against terrorist attacks...so that the United States could more easily throw its rope around Iran"⁷³. Youth held up signs displaying "I will not be USA's military fodder" and "We don't want to be your missile shield" and "Your missile shield, our threat"⁷⁴. One protester stated that he did not agree with a missile base close to a city with a population of over 100,000 people. Missiles incited fear and placed serious limitations on the potential of agricultural production in the Słupsk *gmina* to which Rędzikowo belongs⁷⁵. There were numerous such small-scale demonstrations in Warsaw in 2008⁷⁶. Demonstrations in Poland were offshoots of the Polish anti-war movement fighting against Poland's military alliance with the United States in Iraq, protesting Afghanistan's and Poland's role as puppet to American geopolitical interests, with the missile base representing only the most recent assault on non-militarised development, democracy and hard-won sovereignty. These were expressions of helplessness, powerlessness and isolation from the decision-making process.



"Not for U\$A Shield", Słupsk. Photo taken by author. October 2011

The problem of space in the everyday workings of the missile base

Rędzikowians' major concern—based on pure speculation and information acquired from reporters and foreign surveyors—was the potential lack of integration of the missile base into the

everyday economic practices of the village. Would the American missile base resemble a gated community, an exclusionary and separate unit of activity that does not hold any stake in local development? In a more positive scenario for Rędzikowians, the missile base would buy their local products, requiring a reassemblage of the flow of goods in everyday village life. Reporters who had visited American military bases in Germany informed the locals that they were self-contained with their own schools, clinics, supermarkets, movie theaters, post-offices, banks, gas-stations, and fast food joints⁷⁷. A Rędzikowian kiosk manager claimed that “The Dutch and Germans were telling us, who was doing the surveying for the missile base. There is no counting on development because who in their right mind would build under a missile base”⁷⁸. He added that “They will build their own ghetto and will probably even move the fence”, meaning that the guests would “not even buy a kielbasa from us because they will be scared”. Similarly, another Rędzikowian stated, “They will not eat our bread, they will not even drink our water. They will have their own neighborhoods, schools and preschools”⁷⁹. Another predicted that one potential site of economic activity could be with the demand for fresh bread and pastries that can be supplied by locals⁸⁰. These speculations are actually ways that the villagers are calculating their economic potential and reassembling their businesses and economic lives to benefit from the missile base as much as possible, but it also demonstrates how little information about income generation projects was being communicated to the locals about the base, as well as the lack of education about economic opportunities that the local community could prepare ahead of time. The politics of confusion and uncertainty is certainly an important leveraging tool that limits potential contestation on the part of the villagers to any specific projects that had already been decided upon without their participation.

The only access to modernization of the village that the Rędzikowians were promised was what they would benefit from as “spill-over” from the modernized facilities intended for Americans. Upon his visit to Rędzikowo in October 2008, Henry Obering from the Missile Defense Agency informed villagers that they would be able to use the modernized water infrastructure that the Americans would bring to the missile base⁸¹ but did not divulge the specifics about who would build the water infrastructure, whether it would be built in the entire village, how much it would cost to access the water system and whether local jobs would be created. The more the missile base would resemble a gated community, the less of a stake it would have in local economic development⁸². It appears that many Rędzikowians would prefer a much more “open” military base, much like the Soviet type explained in the previous sections, in which their access to modernization and economic development was symbiotic and directly integrated into the economic cycles of the base rather than excluded from it. This is partly because the base is right on the terrain of the village. Mr. Chmiel explains the incredibly close neighbors:

The clearest point in Poland of vision is from the point of sitting. A bit further into the West is Rędzikowo village. To get there you have to walk up a path between spiky fencing. One of them is surrounding the military zone, the second is added for children’s safety, who walk to school. And Rędzikowo school is a reason for pride: pretty, spacious, modern. Even the capital would not be ashamed. Behind the school is the aqua park construction, the pride of the *gmina* and the biggest investment in the voivodship [province]. 30 million złoty. And farther is the old road, village homes, old folwark (German Junker) and apartment blocks from the old SHR—Plant Harvesting Enterprise (Spółdzielnia Hodowli Roślin). The mansion from the old *folwark* is occupied.

Everything else is in the plans. Investment did not come through yet. Even here people are skeptical⁸³.

A more integrated village with the missile base would include tearing down the fencing, and integrating children into the very modern schools that have been built with European Union funding. But opening up the gates of integration has proven difficult. According to Chmiel, “Every time, when we spoke to the American delegations, we heard, that they cannot do anything and [we were told] to turn to the Polish government with all of our propositions”⁸⁴. The Polish state as mediator between the village and the missile base means that there would be no direct communication between the very close neighbors. As mentioned in the previous section, Rędzikowians’ opinions about the national state were quite pessimistic. Rędzikowians’ negotiation and contestation with their neighbors would be obstructed by the politics of scale.

Given the lack of full-fledged negotiations between local, city, and national parties about the future of Rędzikowo, the Polish state had a full mandate to offer a compensation package that catered to its own preferences for development projects in the area to supplement the missile base. Specifically, it chose to favor urban rather than rural development, by giving power to the Słupsk *gmina*—rather than Rędzikowo village—to administer the execution of the compensation package. Rędzikowians were not direct beneficiaries of the monetary and land compensation, but would rather become *some* of the beneficiaries to the package that was to be handled by a complex network of government agencies located both on the *gmina*, *powiat* and voivoidship level that would distribute the package based on village, municipal, county and regional needs. From the view of the Polish state, the missile base would bring development not to Rędzikowo but to the *gmina* as a whole and in effect, completely ignore the direct needs of the village unit. Furthermore, it would completely disregard the urban/rural tensions of postsocialist development that touch upon rural agency, autonomy, and agrarian identity. Like most villages in the region, Rędzikowo has not only been suffering the collapse of agricultural production, post-industrialism, and demographic flight, but in addition, will have no administrative authority to negotiate for economic benefits in exchange for the missile base. Accelerating postsocialist transition for the urban area will spell death for the rural village.

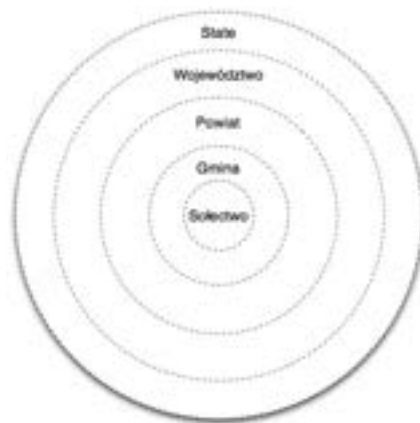


Figure 1. Administrative government structure in Poland

In the 2000s, both Słupsk and Rędzikowo needed serious economic investment. “Słupsk just a couple of years ago was associated mainly with fallen state farms (PGRs) and gigantic unemployment”⁸⁵ one report claimed in 2009, pointing to the trajectory of transformation in just several years. The province suffered a massive fall in the 1990s, when the state farms were liquidated and privatised, thousands of workers went unemployed, and unprivatised state farms were locked into the Polish state. Due to the massive unemployment, in 1997, the Słupsk Special Economic Zone (Słupska Specjalna Strefa Ekonomiczna; SSSE) was formed to deal with the high unemployment rate and fallen agriculture and industry by lowering property taxes and barriers to investment. There was a general push toward the rebranding of the fallen state farms into a factory and manufacturing hub. The SSSE’s renewal of the *gmina* promised a return to the region’s industrial prowess under socialism, when it was the place where people from other parts of Poland came to work and live in temporary worker housing. But the SSSE’s success rate was slow. By 2000, 24,000 people out of (under) 100,000 people living in the city were unemployed⁸⁶. In an interview in 2009, Chmiel claimed that what the Słupsk *gmina* was asking the Polish state for “expansion of communication in Słupsk and roads to Gdańsk, additional terrains for the economic sphere, business airport” but would not accept compensation: “We only want to reclaim what we lost due to the missile base”⁸⁷. The compensation package was provided by the Polish state because the area in the *gmina* for military purposes was frozen, and thus, obstructed any future flows of tax revenue into the *gmina* budget. As a *gmina* and a city, Słupsk is split between its interests as an urban area versus its interests as an administrative unit that consists of both the urban area and surrounding rural villages in the local government. The more that the *gmina* urbanizes and incorporates the villages into its urban landscape, the less of a discrepancy there would be between rural versus urban interests in the postsocialist trajectory. Negotiations over what the locals want in return from the Polish state for hosting the U.S. missile base in their neighborhoods often conflicted between what the city of Słupsk wanted for its developmental aspirations versus what the village of Rędzikowo wanted.

In the land compensation package, the SSSE received 18 hectares from the Agricultural Property Agency (Agencja Nieruchomości Rolnych; ANR) that belongs to the State Treasury (Skarb Państwa). Those 18 hectares of land were remnants of the socialist-era state farm that had not been privatised because there were no interested buyers. To deal with this problem present in many areas in the province, the State Treasury created the ANR to lock the property in state hands, and either put it out on auction when it needs additional revenue or sell it to interested buyers. A substantial amount of state land in the provinces is *still* blocked from investment because it continues to be the property of the national government. The SSSE received the 18 hectares to auction to potential investors who want to purchase the land, bring in development to the Słupsk economic zone, and more importantly, pay property taxes that will bring in revenue to the Słupsk *gmina*. Tax revenues for the *gmina* did not mean that *gmina* projects would specifically go to Rędzikowo, but rather to where the city of Słupsk would benefit most. Allocating land to the SSSE not only expanded the administrative reach of the *gmina*, but also the geographic reach of the urban area, helping the city of Słupsk expand outwards to the state-farm era agricultural expanses that separate the city and the villages, diminishing the agricultural and administrative space between them.

As of 2008, development was still in shambles and there were few visual effects on the landscape as agricultural farming and property questions were still being tweaked and zoned to make the space suitable for development of the U.S. missile base by 2012⁸⁸. By the end of 2008, the Słupsk *gmina* was in the top 30 growing counties in Poland, and Rędzikowo was one of the

most quickly developing villages in the *gmina*⁸⁹. By 2012, eight major investments were in the works in Rędzikowo from the SSSE by Norwegian, Polish, Canadian, and Swedish firms investing in plastic production factories, lightbulb production plant, wood logging operations, supermarket, transport services, metal production plant, and mechanical seals (gaskets, bearings)⁹⁰. Out of 50 investors beginning projects in the SSSE, 26 of those projects are going directly to Słupsk-Włynkówko, meaning that Włynkówko village five kilometers northwest of Słupsk along the road leading to Ustka is now receiving more development projects than Rędzikowo (as Włynkówko is becoming incorporated into the urban landscape of Słupsk), while Rędzikowo still remains for the most part a separate village within the *gmina* with its own separate projects. In contrast, Włynkówko is already hyphenated with Słupsk. This is the great irony of development for Rędzikowo: if it gives up its autonomy as a village, it can be incorporated into the urban landscape and reap more benefits of urbanization and modernization. If it operates like a village, then it will continue to suffer the urban/rural divisions and will not receive development projects designed by the Słupsk *gmina*.

While Słupsk is growing at an incredibly fast pace, a national business newspaper in Poland *Puls Biznesu* claims that counties all over Poland are faced with “financial paralysis” and the financial situation is worsening as the national state just passed a law that provides debt caps for local governments⁹¹. In the midst of national paralysis in 2012, as of April 2012 Słupsk is holding national rankings in the #1 and #2 spots in 2012 for best city and county by the Związek Powiatów Polskich [Association of Local Counties]. Kobylnica, a *gmina* incorporated into the urban landscape of Słupsk but which has decided to retain its local government position, remains #2 in the country for the best *gmina* by the same rankings⁹². Rapid urbanization of Słupsk is blurring the administrative boundaries that would normally separate villages from cities, but in turn is engulfing them. Urbanization and investment in the area of Słupsk is occurring more rapidly than any other place in the country in the midst of financial crisis all other local governments are experiencing in 2012. While others are encountering paralysis, Słupsk’s postsocialist transition is accelerating and engulfing the rural landscape due to the increased interest of the national state caused by the prospective missile base plans. The following sections explain more about this process.



Aqua line showing Słupsk's expansion toward Rędzikowo. © Google Earth

Sixty days of paralysis

Postsocialist transitions into the market economy do not occur seamlessly, but are rather sites of paralysis, contestation, and struggles for power and autonomy between scales of governance. Time becomes an important site of analysis for postsocialist transition. On September 17, 2009, President Barack Obama announced a reversal of the Bush missile defense system in Europe and called for a 60-day reassessment of Iran's threat-level and missile capabilities. To "reset" its relations with Moscow⁹³, Obama compromised America's geopolitical relations with Poland. In response to the break in policy, Lech Wałęsa pessimistically surmised that "The Americans have always only taken care of their own interests and they have used everyone else's"⁹⁴. National politics and history aside, the 60-day reassessment proved to be an important thaw for the villagers to express what they thought about the plan reversal and their own hopes for the development of the air-strip, a potential return to their vision of the region's postsocialist trajectory. Paralysis provided a loophole in time to regroup and clarify their vision in their old postsocialist trajectory.

Villagers at my fieldwork site who had already accepted the idea that the American missile base would arrive in 2012 blamed Polish authorities. "They wanted for America to give the missile base, in Rędzikowo and now they are saying that Poland made a fool of itself"⁹⁵, one informant complained. The reassessment stage exposed Poland's lack of agency in international politics. For locals, it demonstrated that the status of the missile base would be determined by external factors and that the *gmina*, Rędzikowians and surrounding villages would have to adapt and reassemble their economic lifestyles based upon decisions made on a different scale, based on external criteria that had nothing to do with the livelihoods on the local level. An American-decided postsocialist trajectory would leave locals with no authority to contest or negotiate—just the position of acceptance and adaptation.

On the contrary, Mayor Chmiel's response to the news was, "I am the happiest person on earth"⁹⁶. The *gmina* major added that he wanted to jumpstart plans for the civilian airport in Rędzikowo to make up for the "lost time" during the initial missile base plan that froze the territory⁹⁷. The missile base had frozen the old postsocialist trajectory, and now there was a possibility of renewal of the old path. The villagers of Rędzikowo too were absolutely thrilled at the reversal: "It is probably the best information that I have heard all year. Finally someone up there understood, that the base is not needed for anyone, that it brings with itself only aggression," one retired soldier said in Rędzikowo⁹⁸. "They no longer have to be afraid of American, Russian and Iranian missiles or terrorists. Now the issue of a civilian airport beside Słupsk is on the table," read one report⁹⁹. To them, the potential withdrawal of the base would put them back on the postsocialist trajectory of demilitarization of the village and its further transformation into a peaceful geographical site. Although a report did claim that some Rędzikowians were upset that there would be no income-generation opportunities from a service sector for American soldiers and their families, as well as potential harm to modernization of infrastructure and investment for Polish businesses in Rędzikowo¹⁰⁰, it was overshadowed by the reemergence of the old postsocialist trajectory toward a civilian airport on the airstrip. Chmiel said that, "For many years now on the [airport] unit is a rich infrastructure, which for many years is unnecessarily destroyed, but which could in fact be used for example for a cargo airport"¹⁰¹. A small civilian airport could bring back industrial activity that would economically strengthen the province¹⁰² as an exporter of its products rather than orienting the province into a service

economy for the U.S. missile base. The difference is important for determining the postsocialist trajectory: a civilian airport would incorporate the province further into global flows of commodities and subject its success to the global economy and competition, whereas a missile base would generate a service economy in the province that would respond to the demands of the missile base and would adapt to the missile base. The latter would be less sustainable for the province, because, as was demonstrated with the reassessment plan, the missile base acted independently of the province and was in no way subjected to its economic vitality, whereas the service economy would be wholly dependent on the status of the missile base. If the missile base would be shut down, the service economy around the missile base would fall.

The 60 days of paralysis was an opportunity for the *gmina* to reassess and clarify its old postsocialist trajectory and make a real push toward a civilian airport to fight for a more sustainable future. “We want to activate as soon as possible a small business-tourism airport, maybe in the beginning some small air-taxis. This is what is needed in our region. I hope that MON [Polish Ministry of Defense] can return us that territory”¹⁰³, said Chmiel. Locals were tired of driving two hours to the nearest domestic and international airport in Gdańsk. A civilian airport would bring in just as much development if not more to the Rędzikowo-Słupsk municipality area, just as it had to the Lech Wałęsa Airport in Gdańsk. But soon after, Chmiel stated that the *gmina* was in “a state of paralysis of neither right, nor left. MON will not give us the airport, but something must be done with it. Must it stay empty and ruined, waiting, until the Americans come, whenever that may be?”¹⁰⁴. Another government administrator stated “If we continue to be the main place, where the American base will stand, then we are expecting from the government further compensation”¹⁰⁵. Although the municipality had already received compensation during the initial stage of the base planning, it wanted a second compensation for the further paralysis stage, especially for potential plans for a state vocational university in the *gmina*¹⁰⁶. The *gmina* would surrender its autonomy over its postsocialist transition in return for increased national investment in the *gmina* development.

The compensation that the city had already received was final, and the city acted swiftly to invest the money and property in large-scale development projects that would be completed for local benefit whether the American missile base arrived or not. The compensation money was invested in the construction of a segment of a national highway that bypasses around the city of Słupsk, relieving the city of traffic¹⁰⁷. The *gmina* also sold land toward the construction of a school, wind turbines, and a rehabilitation and recreation center, all which were beginning the early stages of development. Polish construction firms were hired to carry out the project¹⁰⁸—a strategic move to bring in Polish rather than American contractors. With a boost in investment sponsored by the national government, the reversal of the missile base would have actually benefitted the *gmina* that wanted to expand naturally according to regional and global demand rather than having the territory frozen and waiting for Obama’s finalized decision.

Military vs. local discourse: security for whom?

Clashing postsocialist trajectories over a single space like Rędzikowo justify their visions based upon different registers of knowledge (i.e. language), criteria (in this case security), and scales. Although Rędzikowo shows the extreme version of virtually no serious negotiation between Rędzikowians and the American and Polish authorities, it demonstrates how postsocialist transition can become a territorial struggle between different interested groups in transforming any given territory in post-Soviet states. A quick comparison between this section

that surveys the Obama administration's military justification for the interceptor site and the above-mentioned Rędzikowians' discourse shows little to no overlap between the two. It is as if they were referring to two separate locations. Two radically different transitions competing for Rędzikowo's geography use radically different rationales and discourses for legitimating their claims.

In September 2009 Obama introduced the Amending Protocol of 2010 to the original U.S.-Poland Ballistic Missile Defense Agreement of 2008¹⁰⁹. The plan "now assesses that Iran's short-and medium-range ballistic missiles is developing more rapidly than previously projected, while the threat of potential Iranian intercontinental ballistic missile (ICBM) capabilities has been slower to develop than previously estimated"¹¹⁰. Obama's interceptor site is a simplified version of Bush's missile base. It includes only the missiles with American soldiers stationed to oversee the operations, rather than a complete missile base. There will be no movie theaters, fast food restaurants, American schools and supermarkets; rather, there will be a lifeless, highly-dangerous, missile interceptor base stationed with U.S. military. The interceptor site will host missile interceptors SM-3, Patriot and THAAD and initially no more than 500 military personnel from the U.S. military¹¹¹. The interceptor base spells even worse economic prospects for the village, because it minimizes the opportunities for even a service economy around the base. In return for hosting the missile interceptors, the U.S. will train its troops in Poland and will help strengthen Poland's air force¹¹² in the nearby port city of Ustka. The U.S. has not provided any compensation package to Rędzikowo or Słupsk *gmina* for the change of plans. While locals were expecting the American base by 2012, the new plan delays the construction of the base until 2015 and the deployment of the anti-ballistic missiles to 2018. While this more "flexible" approach is more cost-effective for the United States, it translates into six additional years of developmental paralysis for Rędzikowo. No official communication channels have been included in the site plans to bring in the locals' voices. Obama's plan created The Strategic Cooperation Consultative Group (SCCG) between the United States and Poland on the issue of the defense missile interceptor base. "The SCCG will be composed of senior representatives from the Department of State and Department of Defense in the United States, and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Ministry of National Defense in Poland"¹¹³ and will take care of all the technical issues surrounding the construction of the base, making space, etc. There are no local representatives of the village of Rędzikowo to the SCCG. Until the construction of the missile base, the Americans will continue to hold onto their 400 hectares on and around the location of the air-strip¹¹⁴. Article III of the amendment indicates that the base is the property of Poland and that the property question will be split in the following matter: buildings, and "non-relocatable structures and assemblies" will be the property of Poland while all moveable property is the property of the United States and their American contractors¹¹⁵. The United States will have "exclusive command and control over ballistic missile defense activities and operations on the Base" (Article IV, No.7) and may undertake construction of structure and infrastructure as it sees fit (Article V, No. 2)¹¹⁶. There is no indication of who will receive the infrastructural construction contracts, whether or not any of the promises made during the Bush plan (water infrastructure, no resettlements, etc.) will still apply. According to the amendment, "The base will have no-fly zone and limited no-fly zone in the airspace above the base" (Article V, No. 5)¹¹⁷, thus restricting any possibility of a civilian airport on the airstrip in Rędzikowo. No building of any infrastructure over 45 meters tall will be built near the base.

Security discourse about the interceptor base is as exclusionary as its neglect of incorporating locals into the negotiation of the economic development around the site. The

discourses are vetted in separate languages, logics, world-views, and assessments of what security means. Rędzikowians want economic security, and the security from being a military target. The United States and NATO want security for Europe. Some of the terminology used for the new plan included words such as “flexible”, “proven”, “cost-effective”, “adapt as threat evolves”, “upgraded gradually”, which meant that the United States wanted a more mobile, easier disassembly, more geographically dispersed missile defense on the global level, and thus that altered the type of missiles and function of the base, but the interceptors will still be there¹¹⁸. Security on the international scale trumps the local, and virtually no official communication channels have been opened for Rędzikowians to speak to American and Polish authorities about *their* security.

Biznes, Western consumerism and urbanization

After the missile base announcement in Rędzikowo, “investments under the missile base” (*inwestycje pod tarczę*) from Polish and international contractors rushed into Słupsk with Western-style malls, fast food restaurants, renovation of movie theaters, music halls, hotels, galleries, and public squares¹¹⁹. As one reporter put it, “All of Słupsk is covered in foil”¹²⁰. Long Island (U.S.)-based developer Polimeni International built an exclusive mall for its American customers with brand name stores like ZARA, Sephora, H&M, McDonalds, and KFC, many of which are available in Warsaw or Gdańsk, but not in provincial Poland. Skeptical Rędzikowians predicted that investments would be geared toward Western consumers rather than investments into the village itself. Expensive prices at Western stores render those commodities inaccessible and non-beneficial to Rędzikowians and many other family farmers and villagers who lead agrarian lifestyles. This is a facet of what Poles call *biznes*, the idea that American-style business is all for profit and disconnected from the everyday lives of the poor. My informants expressed more sympathy toward the poor, Chinese workers who produce these commodities being sold at high prices in the Słupsk malls rather than the identity markers (clothing, food, make-up) of Western consumerism. Few—if any—shop at these new, missile-base investments.

While the initial missile base plan has been altered, the Western stores are now catering to a different clientele—the Polish migrant workers from the province who work temporarily in Western European countries, are familiar with those brands, and have the currency to purchase Western goods. Polish migrant workers who invest their earnings into plots of ex-state farm land and build brand-new, modernized houses on them are becoming the new middle class that is contributing to the urban growth of Słupsk and the geographic spread of the city into the village lands. Emerging forms of class stratification represent a shift in the service economy: Polish migrant workers who perform service sector jobs in Western European countries are the rising middle class in Poland who employ poor, non-migrant Poles to perform service sector jobs for them (usually construction related). This is another site where urbanization of Słupsk is leading to a reassemblage of labour relations between neighbors, friends, fellow-villagers, acquaintances, etc. and situates them in totally different economic relations between themselves, and connects them more into the economic rhythms and hierarchization of labour that come with its urban population. Western malls only strengthen Polish migrant workers’ economic presence in Słupsk by connecting them more with the Western lifestyle, while villagers like Rędzikowians are not benefiting from the malls, nor are they happy with the new emerging class hierarchies. Urbanization, however, has its benefits. In 2011, unemployment dropped from 24,000 to 10,000 in Słupsk¹²¹. Today, there are about 14,000 firms in the city, with the biggest investments being

fisheries, truck manufacturers, plastic-wrapping company, car window production, logistics and transport, metal and plastics production, bus manufacturing, and installation of wind turbine farms in the Słupsk *gmina*¹²².

Militarization and blocking globalization

American militarism has introduced a new arrangement of space, access to that space, and redefinition of what that space ought to look like to establish a military landscape. Słupsk's urban boom contradicts the idea of the "invisible hand" of the free market economy because every investor must receive not only permission from the Słupsk *gmina* that received land compensation from the national government's MON, but every investment project is accepted or rejected based on upon the criteria established by the U.S. military of a controllable military landscape. From the center point of the base no building over 20 meters high can be built within a radius out to 2,350 meters, and no building over 70 meters high can be built within a radius of 3,850 meters¹²³. Specifically, this rules out wind-turbines, which are mushrooming all around other peripheries of Słupsk on ex-state farms as the city invests in green, renewable energy for its denizens¹²⁴. As the American military decides which investment can and cannot take place, it is partaking in this form of development cleansing of the area of any form of production that could pose a security risk to the Rędzikowo area. Investment is not responding to the ebbs and flows of market economy, but rather through the filter of international security. American influence leads to a certain veneer of development that contributes to the militarization of the entire Słupsk area.

Potential investment in the Rędzikowo-Słupsk area is constrained first by the availability of MON land in *gmina* possession and secondly by the security clearance of the American military. While the focus of the SSSE economic zone is to bring in as many manufacturing jobs as possible to the zone¹²⁵, the clearance process is inefficient. "Permission" has to be granted through two separate governments. Due to the security sensitivities of the U.S. missile base, companies barred from any investment in the SSSE in Rędzikowo are alcohol, titanium and fuel producers¹²⁶. Other manufacturing jobs are also pending security clearance. In August 2011, there was an unnamed Canadian company wanting to build a production plant for manufacturing mechanical ship-parts that is pending American approval to begin construction on a fifteen hundred hectare property and will be employing metal-workers¹²⁷. A Polish company producing LED-lightbulbs is seeking permission, another company wants to set up a supermarket branch, and a foreign company hopes to set up manufacturing of truck parts in Rędzikowo¹²⁸. To acquire more MON land, Słupsk must apply for MON land to increase the SSSE by 80 hectares¹²⁹, an administrative process that requires political negotiation and further delays in development. Lastly, the process of how to invest in the SSSE lacks transparency. On the SSSE website, there are no public offerings of land in Rędzikowo for investors or for home-owners¹³⁰. Development contracts are granted behind closed doors.

It would be unfair to state that the Rędzikowians have not benefitted at all from this inefficient development-militarization process. In November 2011, the Polish state had allotted 1.2 million złoty for the thermo-modernization of the Soviet-era apartment blocks in Rędzikowo which it had received from the Swedish International Development Cooperation Agency (SIDA)¹³¹. Rędzikowians would not have enough money collectively to carry out such a project in the Soviet apartment blocks. All funding for the thermo-modernization project was held by the contractors and thus villagers did not have the opportunity to participate in the project plans¹³². On the outskirts leading up to the city, Rędzikowo has received new sports stadiums, a

rehabilitation center, a bowling center and aqua park¹³³. By late 2011, MON allocated more land to SSSE to sell land to investors who want to build on the land connecting Słupsk and Rędzikowo¹³⁴. Soon enough, the gap between the city and the village will certainly be patched up by the development projects on the village's periphery and the urban sprawl of the city.

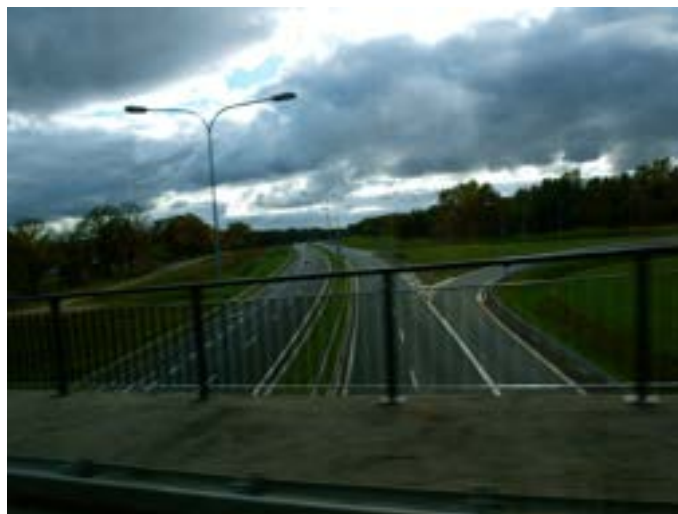
For the most part, however, Rędzikowo proper is frozen in time. It is being hugged by an outer veneer of urbanization described above, while its inside is barren, waiting for the U.S. military base. Słupsk has to build around the projected interceptor site, creating a "peninsula" of development around the village in paralysis. One reporter stated that "for the next eight years the airport in Rędzikowo will be a desert"¹³⁵. Another wrote, "There will be neither an airport, nor any other investments on the base terrain in Rędzikowo. If there is anything that will stand there, it will be missiles"¹³⁶. Referring to the absurdity of asking the U.S. military for permission to construct a sidewalk connecting the village to the newly-constructed, modern school for children who commute by foot, Chmiel claimed that, "On the terrain of the base nothing can be built...The *gmina* wanted to acquire the road on the western side of the terrain of the future base, but Americans did not allow it. Finally we reached an agreement with the usage of a sidewalk that leads from the military neighborhood to the school"¹³⁷. The sidewalk has sparked an outcry among the locals because it demonstrates just how much the U.S. military has control over the entire infrastructure of the village and Rędzikowians' access to modern facilities, even though the Polish state is the private property owner of the interceptor site and the U.S. military is only in possession of the moveable military equipment. It also shows the influence of the U.S. military overstepping its boundaries and injecting its militarism into the everyday.

As Rędzikowians need to now seek permission from the U.S. military to build a sidewalk in the village, they are aware that a new scale of the everyday has entered their lives. Everyday development in Rędzikowo is now contextualized in the framework of international security. This collapsed scale between the local and international is interestingly used the other way around. For example, in October 2011, when I drove by the infamous sidewalk with my driver, he complained about the incident and vented his frustration, remarking that while Poland is making sacrifices to defend U.S. geopolitical interests, America will not allow Poland into its Visa Waiver Program (VWP) in which Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Latvia, Estonia, Lithuania, Slovenia are all included. Locals are keenly aware that the scale politics go only one way: the Americans control the everyday of Rędzikowians' lives while Poland as a country cannot even get the United States to open up tourist visas for Polish citizens. But when the Americans do come, my driver proudly said with an elevated voice, the base could make Słupsk an economic center in the region, next to Gdańsk¹³⁸. Thus, to him, there are regional benefits of allowing Rędzikowo to be frozen in time and completely subjugated to American militarism.

Reconfiguring postsocialism: Reversal of two decades of devolution of state power

On October 29, 2010, Polish President Bronisław Komorowski arrived in Słupsk to cut the ribbon on the 435 million złoty highway constructed from Rędzikowo and around the city of Słupsk that was funded by the National Road Fund (Krajowy Fundusz Drogowy) and constructed by Polish firms Strabag i Wakoż, and Arcadius¹³⁹. Since the missile base announcement, several roads in Słupsk *powiat* (county) that have normally been funded by European Union grants and *powiat* or *gmina* revenues, have become converted into national state projects. Through its compensation package to Słupsk, Warsaw made a grand return to the province with a big development boom and taking control of expensive road projects. In addition to the militarization and urbanization process, the Polish national government has

become more intimately connected in the nationalization process through development. As part of the compensation package, the road connecting the city of Słupsk and the port city of Ustka along the Baltic Coast was transformed into a *national* road, which meant that its badly-needed renovation would be taken off of the burden of the Słupsk *powiat* and would be paved, renovated and paid for by the Polish state government agency, the Generalna Dyrekcja Dróg Krajowych i Autostrad (GDDKiA)¹⁴⁰. On an administrative level, nationalization of roads and the construction of them gives the national government more decision-making power not only in the construction of the highways but positions the national state as a stake-holder in the urbanization process and encroaching on the autonomy of *gmina* and *powiat* governments.



National highway opened by President Komorowski in Słupsk. Photo by author. October 2011

Through the compensation package for the interceptor base, the government has jump-started a reversal of the devolution of power that has mostly come with the territory of Poland's entrance into the European Union and the break-down of the national state. In this instance, we see a reversal of the process, with the national state making a come-back through the form of compensation into the province. Modern highways, the first of their types in provincial Poland, will surely cloud the privatization of state property and urbanization of Słupsk with nationalization of roads, reversing the process of devolution of state power into local governments and increasing the surveillance of the national state at the frontier. This is a postsocialist trajectory that appears to be, in some respects, in reversal toward greater national government interference that has been rolled back since 1989, while simultaneously expediting urbanization and development of Słupsk. From an aerial perspective, while the MON national government is freeing up ex-state farm land in national governments' grasp on the frontier to the Słupsk *gmina* and *powiat*, for further urban development, it is *nationalizing* roads that had previously been devolved into *gmina* and *powiat* authority. As certain facets of the landscapes appear to become more privatized, following a postsocialist trajectory toward a market economy, other facets of the landscape like roads are backtracking through greater interference of the national state in province affairs. Both processes are occurring simultaneously and are politically intertwined, thus subverting any singular trajectory outlook on the transition process.

Rędzikowo as the eye of the storm and the end of the village

Postsocialist trajectories are struggles over space, territory and power. Whoever has control over land has control over the postsocialist trajectory and generates winners and losers, integrators and integrated. While frozen Rędzikowo remains the quiet eye of the storm until 2018, all of the villages around it are undergoing radical spatial, economic, social, and demographic transformation. The compensation package awarded to Słupsk from the Polish state in return for the missile base jumpstarted a new postsocialist trajectory of urbanization for the city and its surrounding villages that has not followed a free market capitalism model. Rather, it is a controlled postsocialist trajectory by the national government, which controls the floodgates for the spatial growth of urbanization, and also the U.S. military, which controls the make-up of the urbanizing landscape based upon its criteria of international security. Multiple power-struggles over space to expand different postsocialist trajectories emerge between village-national government, village-city, city-national government, city-U.S. military, and village-U.S. military. This “breaking down and reconstitution of spatial scales” from the rural to the urbanized landscape is an example of the “contemporary intensification of globalization” (Soja 2000: 200), although in this case, it takes the form of American and national state intervention in the reconfiguration of space and networks in the postsocialist landscapes.

At the moment, the urbanization of Słupsk follows a distinct cycle: the missile base plans in Rędzikowo created a compensation package to the city to jumpstart investment by freeing up MON land for the city. The city acquires investment and expands toward the villages, generating more growth and demand for land. Concurrently, national investment in roads makes Słupsk more accessible and transportation more efficient, increasing trade and generating more demand. More investment feeds more business, and generates tax revenue for the city, which then applies for more state land, which it then sells to investors, and it expands geographically. In March 2012, the SSSE will expand by 430 hectares (80 of which will be in Rędzikowo) as well as 37 hectares in Słupsk and nine hectares in Ustka, which will contribute to engulfing more villages in between the expanding urban areas¹⁴¹. As long as the investment continues, the city will expand into the countryside.



Słupsk neighborhoods expanding into the countryside.

Photo taken by author. October 2011

While villages have not yet been incorporated into the actual city, they are acquiring urban characteristics (i.e. shopping for groceries in the city, visiting city doctors, etc.). Although many people are moving into the village, they are not acquiring rural and agrarian characteristics, but are rather urbanizing the rural by continuing their urban lifestyles. Villages are becoming transformed from sites of production to sites of leisure. Słupsk expands toward the villages, and the urban population begins to construct new suburban homes on the outskirts of the villages, slowly bridging the lifestyles between the rural and urban, engulfing village economic activity into the urban space. A comparison of national statistics from the Central Statistical Department (Główny Urząd Statystyczny) reveal a less dramatic urbanization of villages with 38.2% of Poles living in villages in 2002, and 40.6% in 2011¹⁴². Observations from my fieldwork sites reveal a much more dramatic developmental upsurge than 2%—a possible result of the accelerated development in the province. Furthermore, urbanization of villages closest to the city creates a secondary urbanization process of smaller villages and rural colonies (*kolonia*) around larger, urbanized villages. This rural urbanization is becoming a common trend in Poland's northernmost province, as expanding large villages due to urban growth engulf smaller villages and colonies, leading to over 30 name changes of villages across the province in 2012¹⁴³. This urbanization trend of large villages, smaller villages and colonies then results in the city giving villages the options to relinquish their autonomy and fully integrate administratively into the city.



Urban middle class moving into ex-state farm lands on the outskirts of a village. Sign states, “Allotment plots for sale”.

Photo taken by author. October 2011

Słupsk has already engulfed several small villages, merging the rural-urban divide and converting them into small “neighborhoods” on the periphery of the city. To the untrained eye, Kobylnica village has no identifiable markers of being distinct from Słupsk, as it is fully integrated into the urban landscape. Kobylnica, however, is a wholly separate *gmina* from Słupsk. When presented with the option of administrative integration, Kobylnica villagers rejected the proposition because the tax revenues from the sprawl-like malls and huge supermarkets in Kobylnica (that provides a lower property rate than the city) bring in tax revenue

into the *gmina* which then distributes revenue through projects and programs directed specifically toward rural villages in the administrative unit. If Kobylnica *gmina* would have integrated into Słupsk *gmina*, then the city would receive all revenue and would prioritize projects and programs for the urban population, leaving the rural population secondary. Kobylnica's choice to remain a *gmina* was a local victory for the rural population around Słupsk. In this case, the village benefits from the urban landscape, but does not become incorporated into the urban administration. Similarly, along the national highway now linking Słupsk and Ustka, urbanization is bridging the rural landscape between them so rapidly that locals claim that in several years' time a Słupsk-Ustka joint city will emerge. Słupsk is already giving villages in the midst of this urbanization the choice to integrate, but many are following the Kobylnica precedent. While Rędzikowo is frozen in postsocialist transformation, villages around it are urbanizing at an unprecedented rate, but also struggling to preserve their village administrative autonomy even though their rural landscapes are becoming overturned by the whirlwinds of urbanization.



Kobylnica and Słupsk landscape merge. Shopping center belongs to Kobylnica while Soviet-era apartment blocks belong to Słupsk. Photo taken by author. October 2011

Whose transition is it?: Local struggles over the postsocialist trajectory

Transitions are sites of multi-scalar power struggles over territory. When ethnographers write about transition, we ought to be asking, “whose transition is it?”. Globalization, American militarization, EU-funding and the Polish state all bring forth their unique developmental models and subsequent spatial effects on the local and all compete in various alliances to control the trajectory of postsocialism in provincial Poland. Thus, at the heart of the U.S. missile base controversy in Rędzikowo is a matrix of political struggles over which postsocialist trajectory the province ought to take. In Rędzikowo, the villagers want a postsocialism that embraces EU-funded projects, tourism, civilian airports and global manufacturing jobs, while the Polish state allied with the U.S. military embraces a controlled, militarised, landscape, ruled over by American interests and an increased relationship with the state. In some respects, this politicised

landscape mirrors the Cold-War landscape the villagers lived in under socialism, with both the military and the state located at the frontier and dominating its every development pattern. Since Poland's entry into the European Union in 2004, the province has rolled back the power of the state through devolution of power and increased focus on non-military development. Based on their reactions to the base, it is clear that villagers wanted to follow a locally-defined, EU-funded development path, one filled with aqua parks, schools, wind-turbines, etc. rather than a large-scale boom funded by the Polish state and filtered by the U.S. military. Instead, today postsocialist subjects not only have to get comfortable with becoming representative of postsocialist citizens, EU citizens, but also *global* citizens, and have to adjust their comforts to what the global—meaning the U.S.—requires of them with NATO support.

The development around the U.S. missile base requires the observer to reconsider everything they know about postsocialism and its gradual trajectory toward privatisation. The case of Słupsk *gmina* demonstrates a complete reassembly of postsocialism, of nationalisation and privatisation being simultaneously accelerated, control over roads and selling of private land is being swapped between the local and national governments, reversing *and* accelerating devolution of power. From an aerial view, the local is becoming national, the unprivatised is becoming privatised. If postsocialism does indeed continue to exist, we need to think about it as backing up, fast-forwarding, simultaneously canceling itself out, slowing down and then speeding up again in a completely renewed cycle of development. Transition is not a one-way street but rather a series of intersections, u-turns, accelerating lanes and traffic jams. As Janusz Palikot, political leader of the left-leaning, liberal Palikot's Movement in Poland claimed:

After twenty years of capitalism, I know that capitalism is the same deception like socialism. Something new needs to be tried. Capitalism has not given us any responsibility, nor solidarity, nor trustworthiness, nor workplaces, nor any appropriately high wages. We are more than ever more conflicted and uncertain about ourselves. This needs to change.¹⁴⁴

The case of Rędzikowo shows what happens when multiple trajectories clash, with different power-holders and interests at stake. They do not speak the same discourse, have little connection between themselves, pass little information between one another, and yet they both want to reconfigure the geographic landscape of the airstrip. A platform of discourse for multiple victims of transitions has yet to be established in Poland. Rędzikowo shows how locals' vision for transition and development into the market economy through the European Union programs or a civilian airport dramatically differ from the vision of the state in its political collaboration with the U.S. military and infusing of state-based infrastructural projects (not decided by the invisible hand of the market). Two separate visions for transitions collide. Villages are becoming part of the urban landscape, requiring new, spatially reconfigured forms of social justice (Harvey 2009) in the urban zone. Voices of marginalized groups will have to readjust to this rural-urban "hybrid geography" (Whatmore 2002), with new sets of networks and actors that can represent their voices and interests, and thus form a hybridized transition from the rural and urban transition trajectories. The engulfed rural area will have to convince the urbanites that they hold similar interests in their contestation of American geopolitical visions for Rędzikowo.

Rędzikowo illustrates how American militarization imports its unique style of development, with its own American contractors, freezing of entire villages, not including locals in the negotiation process, and being uncompromising to the demands of globalization and

investment. While the United States stood by Poland's fight for democracy and open market economy, its practices acquiring the missile base in Poland have been wholly undemocratic, ignorant of locals' objections, and antithetical to the market economy demand to invest on or near its future missile base. The focus of this paper has been to show what happens to people's voices and their landscapes in the "build-up" to a certain developmental point in postsocialist transition, regarding the U.S. missile interceptor base to be built in Rędzikowo in 2018. For ethnographers, this freezing of development should raise some questions about the process of transformation in postsocialist sites. How are these trajectories of postsocialism decided, who decides, and is it done so democratically? By which categories do locals define democracy and by which standards do they reject or accept modernization? Under which categories have they defined their inequality? The U.S. missile base has brought out the discourse about what democratic governance means under postsocialism, whose interests are benefited, whose interests are at stake, and what accomplishments of postsocialism have been reversed.

¹ (Kamiński 2009)

² ("Hillary Clinton oversees" 2010; U.S. Department of State 2010)

³ ("Q&A: US missile defence" 2009)

⁴ (Raytheon 2011)

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