



JSSE

[Journal of  
Social  
Science  
Education](#)

2021, Vol. 20(4) 01-28

Edited by:  
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Article

## Flags, crucifix, and language regimes: space-marking in three primary schools

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**Keywords:** transclusion, inclusion, school ethnography, belonging

- Multi-sited ethnographies allow for a cross-cultural qualitative reading of schooling spaces.
- Flags, crucifix and language regimes are sociocultural and political symbols that set the tone for narratives of belonging inside and outside of the classroom.
- Transclusion (Biesta 2019) provides a fruitful concept to dissect and interpret how authority over space, language and resources is shared in schooling communities.
- Drawing on Biesta's functions of education (qualification, socialization, subjectification), the three case studies give insights into the ways that space-marking indicates how schools prioritize one function of education over another.
- Central European schools exist within the complex history of the continent and must be locally contextualized to understand how the "ruinations" (Abu El-Haj 2020) of the myth of monoethnic (Poland), segregated migrant labor districts (Germany) or multicultural communities (Austria) play out in the everyday lives of schools.
- In the German-speaking schools, efforts were made to embrace diversity but the German language bias remained an uncontested site of power, achievement and discipline.
- At the Polish site, emphasis on homogeneity and competition favors passive learning settings and renders diverse student needs invisible.

**Purpose:** Against the backdrop of a global polycscape of inclusion, this paper investigates how three primary schools (Poland, Austria, Germany) mark entry halls and classrooms with state and religious symbolism and grant presence or absence of multilingualism.

**Design/methodology/approach:** This multi-sited school ethnography investigates how EU educational policy projects on social justice and inclusion are appropriated and negotiated in the spaces of three Central European schools (Abu El-Haj et al. 2017; Levinson, et al. 2018). I build on Gert Biesta's concept of "transclusion" (2019) to interpret how school spaces appropriate EU inclusion policies and create a shared sense of community and belonging.

**Research limitations:** Findings must be treated with caution as these are snapshots into the everyday life of three schools and cannot serve as general claims.

**Findings:** Monoethnic expressions of religious faith (cross), national symbolism (flag) and language regimes co-construct national narratives that draw a line between those who belong and those who do not. Strong national narratives, communicated through entry hall decorations and classroom practices, allow little space for peripheral identities, i.e. migrant students, to claim voice and participate in the classroom and other shared spaces (Poland). Where there is less overlap between entry hall and classroom discourses (Austria), on the other hand, students receive mixed messages when it comes to their acceptance as Austrians. Blank spaces (Germany) presume a possibility to create shared spaces of communication and decision-making that students playfully engage in. However, in both Germany and Austria the ambivalence around space-marking means that language regimes are the more prominent factor in drawing the demarcation line between insiders and outsiders.

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## 1 INTRODUCTION

“United in Diversity” has been the official motto of the European Union (EU) since 2000. It encapsulates the basic dilemma of preserving individuality while forming a bond between entities that share certain interests and values. Over the past 21 years the motto has come under significant pressure. While in 2004, the greatest ever expansion of the Union was celebrated as ten Central and Southern states joined the EU, a referendum was held in the United Kingdom in 2016 which led to the first exiting of a member state in 2020. Clearly, then, member states’ national politics can blur the vision of a common European identity. The sensitive balance between maintaining the core values of the Union while allowing for individual governments’ interpretation and appropriation of EU policies has led to great tensions in recent years. While some countries direct criticism at the European Union’s influence on national politics, being a member of the Union at the same time means profiting from development funds, programs and frameworks intended to create greater social and economic cohesion (e.g.: European Regional Development Fund ERDF).

As part of this agenda, the EU through the European Commission endorses a broad strategy for social justice and inclusion, as can be seen in the European Pillar of Social Rights or the Union of Equality. The latter functions as an umbrella term for initiatives that seek to mainstream equality in all EU policies through the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030, EU Roma Strategic Framework, LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025 and others. Within the sphere of education, inclusion and diversity are key concepts that the EU embraces as it monitors every member state’s education system through the Eurydice network (Education and Training Monitor), or supports refugees and migrants through the Commission Action Plan on third country individuals. While the Union has launched a strong policy web, however, we know little about the ground that these policies actually fall on. Stepping away from large-scale data crunching, I would like to propose a critical anthropological approach to education policy to investigate what the local conditions of entry halls and classrooms tell us about the impact these overarching EU policy projects (can) have. Grasping schools as places of ethnographic inquiry restores some of the complexity which is inherent to these crucial sites of primary socialization but is too often missed in the narrow accounts based on interview studies or quantitative mass surveys which dominate education research. Investigating local practices creates valuable insights into how EU policy projects actually land on the ground, how they become appropriated and shaped and where they might be missing local context in order to initiate meaningful change (Levinson, Winstead & Sutton 2018).

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**Suggested citation:**

Wagner, J. (2021): Flags, Crucifix, and Language Regimes: Space-Marking in Three Central European Primary Schools. *Journal of Social Science Education* 20 (4). <https://doi.org/10.11576/jsse-4517>

**Declaration of conflicts of interests:** none

To become united in diversity, we must pay attention to the ways that EU policies can be anchored within national discourses on disability and multiculturalism as co-constructing features of diverse societies, instead of being considered a top-down policy reach that threatens national sovereignty (Carney 2008, 65).

In this article, I analyze the entrance halls of three primary schools to show how semiotic markers map a sense of belonging and inclusion for their communities. I then juxtapose school entrance halls with classroom practices to describe how spatial marking sets the tone for some of the dilemmas observable in class: around claiming voice, recognizing individual identities and creating possibilities for meaningful participation.

## 2 METHODS

The ethnographic data for this paper were gathered successively at three mainstream, primary schools in Poland, Austria and Germany over a time period of 18 months between 2016 and 2018. First, I attended the fifth grade of a Polish “Szkoła Podstawowa,” then the fourth grade of an Austrian “Volksschule” and finally, the sixth grade of a German “Grundschule.” Access to each research site was negotiated and approved of by local education administrations. The schools were public institutions that did not receive any specific government support or presented a certain pedagogical tradition that was known to champion inclusion or diversity, such as Montessori pedagogy or democratic schooling projects. While the Polish school was a partner organization of my doctoral program, I individually recruited the Austrian and the German sites, adhering to the ethics protocol set under the European Commission Horizon 2020 H2020-MSCA-ITN-2015. I also conducted participant observations, document and artifact analysis, as well as interviews (Emerson, Fretz, & Shaw 2011; Brantlinger et al. 2005). Using Meuser and Nagel’s method of “expert interviews” (1991), I conducted semi-structured conversations with the vice-principal, the special educator and four teachers in Poland; the principal, the special educator, the teaching assistant and three teachers in Germany, and at the Austrian site I spoke with the principal, the special educator and two teachers. Data analysis of field notes and interviews was carried out through coding and content analysis (Erickson 2004).

At each site, I spent 100 hours as a participant observer of the final grade that students attended before transitioning to secondary education. I participated in class work, leisure time, field trips and extracurricular activities. The Polish school was the largest site, attended by 500 pupils who from 8am every day went through six periods of 45-minute teaching sessions. The Austrian site was the smallest, with roughly 200 children. Here, the fourth graders attended classes usually until 1 pm. About 250 children went to the German site which was an all-day school (8:15am-4pm). Besides writing field notes, I also penned analytical memos and kept a diary of questions and puzzling observations made inside and outside of the schools (DeWalt, DeWalt and Wayland, 2000). Much of what I observed inside the schools (multilingual classroom communities; government-sponsored lunch; religious installations) was connected to the national or local contexts within which the schools were situated, and so I also broadened my sphere of observation to describe the

schools' catchment area and the socio-political discourses in each country at the time of my ethnographic research (Erickson, 1984; Schultz, Jones-Walker and Chikkatur, 2008).

My approach to studying schools as places of symbolic space-marking was initially inspired by an obstacle I encountered: not every teacher allowed me to observe their lessons. Especially in Poland, I was regularly denied access to specific lessons because some teachers did not want to participate in my study. In Austria, similarly, teachers often greeted me with a somewhat impatient question about when my stay would finally be over. Educators at the German site, meanwhile, were generally enthusiastic about my visits and the principal even offered me the key to the building. As I began my ethnography in Poland, the experience of sitting in the entry hall and in empty corridors informed my approach to "seeing" school spaces (Geertz 1980; Wolcott 2008). I sketched scenes and compositions from the walls into my notebook while sitting - like a child who had disturbed the lesson one too many times - on a wooden bench outside of the classroom. During one of those waiting periods it occurred to me that the entry hall is a remarkable social space: the most prominent and theatrical place in the school. My expulsion from the classroom and my consequent withdrawal into less supervised areas of the school reinforced my impression of the entry hall as an inclusive space where one was safer from judgement than in a classroom, and where one could reside without having to meet particular criteria, such as being of a certain nationality, speaking a specific language, behaving and performing in certain ways. I wanted to decode this feeling, and so the focus of my ethnographic enquiry developed into mapping the symbolic landscape of schools. Several questions guided my observations: How and why do schools decorate their entrance halls in particular ways, and what functions do these displays serve in practice? On which local/national/historical knowledge did I need to draw in order to decode this space? What can we learn by reading the staging of these spaces of welcome - thresholds in both a literal and a symbolic sense - alongside the more enclosed space of classroom? To what extent, and how, does this space set the tone for engagement with each other and for enabling the participation of students labelled "Other"? I present my findings here to illuminate how ethnographic seeing helps us to map the ways in which historical and contemporary macro processes continue to impact the micro level of everyday school life (Abu El-Haj 2020). Through vignettes from the classrooms I offer "deeply contextualized descriptions of microscopic instances" (Geertz 1973, 21) which yield insights into what does and what does not constitute an emancipating educational space.

Conducting cross-cultural ethnographic research (Varenne 2008, 357) in Central Europe has enabled me to develop this inquiry based on a mental map of similarities and differences that I created while I was a "professional stranger in three fields" (Agar 2008), moving from one site to the next. George and Louise Spindler have described the "strange-familiar" paradigm of educational anthropologists, who study all-too-familiar school contexts but must still be able to question the foundations of schooling on which each school operates (2000; Erickson 1986). Being a teacher myself, I was able to perform this "strange-familiar" paradigm thanks to my immersion in one school after another:

juxtaposing the Polish, Austrian and German contexts, I was able to draw out certain characteristics of spaces and practices that I would not have been able to perceive had I only experienced one school system (Rockwell & Anderson-Levitt 2017). Taking a multi-sited approach hence enabled me to problematize the interplay of pedagogies, school culture and visual experience in the various schools (Marcus 1995; Hannerz 2003).

### 3 FROM INCLUSION TO TRANSLUSION

I borrow the quest for belonging in schooling spaces from Thea Abu El-Haj and other educational researchers who dissect “talk, texts, curriculum, and pedagogy” to show how and when the social fabric of belonging comes to the fore, positioning some students quasi-naturally at the core of the community while others remain “impossible subjects” (Abu El-Haj et al. 2017, 314). Reva Jaffe-Walter (2016), for example, investigated schooling spaces and their potential for democratic involvement, representation of minority groups, and meaning-making processes with regard to Muslim students in Danish schools, while Lisa Rosen-Rasmussen (2021) studied the shifting use of Danish school corridors from places of punishment to places of unconventional learning. Katarzyna Gawlicz and Marcin Starnawski’s research points to discriminatory symbolism that marginalizes religious, ethnic and LGBTQI minorities in Polish pre- and primary schools (2013) and Jelic, Biruski and Rabernjak (2020) explored the potential of school walls for physical space-marking of multiculturalism in Croatia. Hendrik Richter’s ethnographic research in Austria focused on the ways in which spatial divides mark students at the intersection of racialized difference and special needs as “Other” (2021). Tomasz Szkudlarek and Maria Mendel explored the symbolic dimensions of schooling and school spaces on a theoretical level. They focused on the role of “empty signifiers” in the production of social identities in schools (Szkudlarek 2007) and on how space claiming can be perceived as a political act in education (Szkudlarek 2013, Mendel 2019; 2018). In this article, I bring these perspectives together and focus on the way that national storytelling, as it competes with the European policyscape of inclusion and social justice, happens through the symbolism of entry halls and classroom decorations.

While EU policies (Union of Equality 2020) push for greater inclusion of minoritized students, Gert Biesta, challenges us to do better than to imagine inclusion as simply a one-way street in which those at the periphery are allowed to access the center. In *Obstinate Education* (2019), he raises questions concerning curriculum, pedagogy and democracy that help us challenge the way in which - and the ends to which - schools educate their students. Differentiating between three functions of education, Biesta introduces: qualification, socialization and subjectification (2019, 20). While education can be understood rather narrowly as teaching students skill sets and knowledge – “qualification” - it can also bring about socialization into established ways of being and doing, i.e. education as the process of inserting students in “existing cultural and socio-political ‘orders’” (Biesta, 2019, 47). Most interesting, however, is the possibility of

subjectification, which aims at bringing forward an individual who acts responsibly, based on reason and an ethical value set, in Biesta's words: "a subject of action and responsibility" (ibid.). The latter he deems the "ultimate educational interest" (21). Biesta encourages us to investigate schools as places where all three functions are fostered. Particularly fruitful in this inquiry are the concepts of "empowerment" and "emancipation." While "empowerment" refers to an individual who can claim voice and space within the order, "emancipation" aims at "dis-identification" (Biesta 2019, 48), at speaking back and in such a way as to be able to imagine and enact alternatives to the existing order. Both terms imply a possibility of movement within the social hierarchy of the school that I find particularly interesting, and it is here that Biesta's concept of transclusion comes into focus (2019, 97ff.). This concept is essentially a critique of the contemporary rhetoric around "inclusion" as the process of bringing those who reside at the periphery of welfare distribution, social services and privileges closer to the core, where assets become more accessible and a stronger sense of shared responsibilities, rights and possibilities can be realized (Ainscow, Booth, & Dyson 2005). Unfortunately, such a one-way understanding runs the risk of enforcing the hegemony and dominance of one norm and encourages assimilation of marginalized students in a way that is contradictory to the idea of valuing their diversity (Messiou 2017).

As an alternative to desegregation as a one-way street, Biesta proposes the concept of "transclusion" which he describes as "a double movement of 'moving position' and 'shifting terrain,'" whereby both insiders and outsiders get to act, communicate, define space, conversation, practices (2019, 97). The concept relies on the belief that each individual always has something to say or contribute: therefore, articulation of one's point of view and a say in decision-making are not attributes to be acquired or earned; rather, they exist *a priori* and so the social order should be configured in such a way that it creates possibilities for individuals to meaningfully articulate themselves and participate in this order (104). Second, such articulations must have the potential of "transforming the very field where positions can be held and taken" (2019, 97), which corresponds closely to the notion of emancipation. Applied to my data, transclusion becomes an operational concept. I use it to ask: who is represented in schooling spaces, whose voice is heard and whose articulations have the potential to challenge the very modes of communication and the positioning within the social hierarchy of the school?

#### 4 SPACE-MARKING IN SCHOOLS

In this section, I contextualize and present the entry halls of each of the three schools. The organization of the case studies follows a pattern: each is introduced by giving a socio-cultural and education political context to the research site to better draw out the presence and absence of particular space-markers, such as flags, crosses, student artwork, references to local or national institutions in the entry halls. Then, I juxtapose each entry hall display with the decorations of one exemplary classroom, drawing upon a field note illustrating a specific classroom incident to show how space-marking invites participation

and communication among the community. There are two themes that I discuss in each case study: firstly, the way that entry hall and classroom decorations create a congruent narrative – or not, and secondly, which language regimes (Coulmas 2005; Sonntag & Cardinal 2015) are enforced and how. I focus on the latter as language regimes are an important site of contestation through which belonging and achievement are communicated. I discuss how schools respond to the multilingualism that exists on their premises, looking at which measures were taken to control and hierarchize students on the one hand, and how, on the other hand, students performed “dis-identification” (Biesta 2019, 48) with the monolingual dominance presented to them.

#### **4.1 Poland – A Szkoła Podstawowa**

In 2019, Poland observed 30 years of independence from foreign intervention: the longest period of Polish sovereignty since the 18<sup>th</sup> century. The foundations of today’s Rzeczpospolita Polska, the Republic of Poland, were established in 1989 with the fall of Soviet-controlled state socialism and the establishment of a democratic political system. While the people of the fifth-largest country (38 million people) in the European Union identify themselves mostly as Polish (96.9%) and Roman Catholic (87.2%), interwar Poland has been described as a multiethnic state (Kamusella 2009) in which Poles (69%), Ukrainians (19%), Jews (9%), Belarussians (5%), Germans (2%) and others cohabitated (Tomaszewski 1985, 50 in Buchowski & Chlewinska 2012, 15). The rhetoric on the far-right of Poland as the “last bastion of white and Catholic Europe” (Taylor 2017) does not match up with its multicultural heritage. State-sponsored distortion of Polish history, however, was common under the Socialist regime that rendered diverse Polish identities invisible and undesirable (Grudzinska-Gross 2019). The fall of the Polish People’s Republic in 1989 and the accession of Poland to the European Union in 2004 framed a period of deep transformation in all areas of social and political life for the sake of establishing a liberal democracy and a market economy (see: Sachs 1994 on Shock Therapy). Reforms to the education system were part and parcel of these transformations. In 1999, the Ministry of Education implemented standardized testing at the end of all educational levels in Poland in order to increase comparability of testing results and training in international testing formats. The 2014 Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) report summarized that from 2003 to 2012 Poland increased its share of top performers and reduced its share of low performers in mathematics, achieving equal results with students from Canada, Finland and the Netherlands (OECD 2014, 4). However, studies also indicate that the system prioritizes the transfer of “knowledge using passive learning methods and preparing students by imposing ready-made solutions rather than supporting independent problem solving, critical thinking and creativity” (IBE 2015; European Commission 2016, 216).

As for multiculturalism and diversity, the dynamics of Poland’s accommodation of immigrants and refugees have been complex in recent years. When conflicts increased

between the Ukraine and Russia in 2014, the number of Ukrainian refugees rose significantly. Poland rejected to accept its quota of Syrian war refugees (7,200) that the EU had set for sharing humanitarian support more equally among member states in the wake of the 2015 refugee movement (Narkowicz 2018). On the other hand, in 2016, it granted 1.2 million work permits to Ukrainians which represented a migratory movement on an impressive scale (GUS 2017 in European Commission 2017, 229). In any case, the arrival of newcomers has had ramifications that extended to the education system. The European Commission's Education and Training Monitor remarks that the Polish system lacks knowledge and pedagogical skills to "help newly arrived migrant children integrate and to prevent them from dropping out of school" (2017, 229). While Polish education law plans to implement measures including Polish language lessons, individual support and teaching assistants, the Supreme Audit Office of Poland regrets that policy and implementation do not often intersect (European Commission 2017, 229; NIK 2015). The traditional view of Poland as a homogeneous cultural community (Cervinkova 2016) seems to be challenged by historical accounts and contemporary immigration numbers and work permits. However, favoring white Europeans over Muslim "Others," immigration is granted to those that have the phenotypical potential to blend into Polish society so that a conservative nationalistic rhetoric around Poland as well as approaches to diversity in schools remain unchallenged on the surface level.

### **Fieldnote October 2016**

In the entry hall of the school, I encounter a carefully composed installation. At its center there is a large, heavy, red flag onto which the image of the school's patron and the school's number are embroidered. The flagpole is topped with a silvery eagle wearing a crown, the national symbol of Poland. It is the middle of October and the national holiday of All Saints' Day - an important day in Poland on which families gather to pay respect to their deceased and place candles on their graves - is only a fortnight away. For this reason, in front of the flag stands a small stool covered with a dark blue cloth, onto which a wooden basket with seven grave candles has been placed. The candles and the school flag are flanked by a blue pinboard onto which an enlarged black-and-white photograph of the patron is pinned as well as "25 Lat" ("25 Years") in yellow letters, hinting at an important anniversary in the school's history. Behind the flag, a crest with the name of the city, the school's name and the school's number is framed on the wall, though nothing is situated higher than the flag in this ensemble. Looking around the entry hall, I spot nature-themed pictures and artwork, and display cases hold trophies, certificates, and students' paintings and projects. Facing away from the installation and toward the hallway from which the classrooms can be entered, a large dark blue pinboard offers information on the school and on individual classes. Two sentences in large white letters provide the heading: JESTEM



BARDZO WESOŁY BO JUŻ CHODZĘ DO SZKOŁY (I am very happy because I already go to school) and SUKCES TKWI W DĄZENIU DO CELU (Success lies in the pursuit of the goal). Names of students who have succeeded in competitions and brought honour to the school are published here. On a shelf above the pinboard, stuffed animals - lions dressed in blue police uniforms, with ties and hats - stand in line. They form a small army of police, watching over the entry hall: three very large lions backed up by six smaller ones in front. As I stroll down the entry hall, my eyes are caught by a poster. The United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child is framed and hangs between ceiling and the top of the door frame. I can hardly make out the sentences of the last paragraph.

In the school's entry hall, I encountered a striking combination of nationalism (in the form of the Polish flag and eagle), state authority (a group of lions in police uniforms), Catholicism (in the references to All Saints' Day) and internationalism (in the form of the UN Convention). Also present was the spectre of egalitarian uniformism: the socialist-realist aesthetic of the building itself was a relic of a policy project by the Polish People's Republic, called "Tysiąclecie" (1000). In order to honor the 1000<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Christian belief on Polish ground, 1000 schools were promised to be built in Poland, an infrastructural and ideological project that tied together the state and the Church (Wecowski 2015). The markers of Catholicism in the contemporary school, then, should be read in light of this: the candles on the table in the entrance hall may seem somewhat muted as a symbol of Catholicism, but they are enmeshed in a longer history of cultural politics and religious power. Socialism resided in the background – in the fabric of the building – yet a clear hierarchy was observable in the entry hall of the school: the flag, the eagle, the flowers and the candles dominated the space. The UN Convention, meanwhile, was tacked up for decoration but not referred to, and not integrated into any narrative in the display. While the dominant placement of symbolism around state, religion and police was placed on children's eye level, the UN Convention was hung up so high that it was not even readable for teachers. It was in line with the aesthetics of the hall, matching the height of the door frame but it was not to be actively decoded, referred to or in any way positioned as meaningful to the collective. The patriotic ensemble set the tone for the school and not the dry convention of rights and liberties of the child. Significance was also given to achievement and staging success through a public display of students' grades. Children were endorsed on the basis of social comparison and ranked according to the number they received on tests. While the PISA scores for Poland indicate that students outperform European neighbours (OECD 2014; Jakubowski 2015), the question remains whether the entry hall also encouraged students to develop independent problem solving and critical thinking skills (EC 2016).

Entering the classrooms of the Polish primary school, state and religious symbolism were displayed similarly to the installation that the entry hall offered. The religious education classroom, especially, demonstrated a heightened alliance between state and church. All tables were neatly arranged in three columns facing towards the front of the

room, and while I was sitting at the back of the classroom, a Catholic nun appeared and took a seat at the teacher's desk. Religious education was attended by every child in the class and only ten students in the entire school of 500 pupils opted against it.

### **Fieldnote November 2016**

The teacher's desk and blackboard, representing the stage at the front of the room, are set against a background of pictures and emblems. Centred above the blackboard, a big clock is the only gesture to secular rationalism that the scene displays. To the left of the clock, there is a wooden cross, a picture of Jesus, and a picture of Pope Cardinal Ratzinger: the more conservative predecessor to the erstwhile Pope Francis. To its right, we spot a nativity scene, another picture of a Biblical scene and a plastic flower. A map of Palestine greets the children as they pass in and out of the room. Differently colored rosaries hang from a pinboard, and there are bookshelves at the back of the room and neon lights above. The children recite passages of the Bible; today's topic is the rosary, its parts and their meaning. They do a test and finish the lesson by praying together.

While religious education is a subject in many curricula across Europe, the enmeshment of Catholicism in Polish education – inside and outside of the classroom – speaks to a strong ideological allegiance. Understanding education not only as a means to qualify and socialize students but to also enable them to imagine alternatives to the existing order, in Biesta's words (2019, 18), seems to be a challenging task in an environment that is marked this congruently. I wonder whether children who did not share the Catholic faith would have felt invited to speak up or even had an opportunity to openly dis-identify with the interpretations that might have been presented in class.

Multiculturalism was invisible at the school that I observed. Children studied foreign languages (English and German) but the school did not offer any classes in Ukrainian or Romani for the children whose first language was not Polish. The religious and linguistic diversity that did exist in small quantity was not openly invited into public space but appeared rather subdued (Pulinx, Van Avermaet & Agirdag 2017). In general, every classroom that I saw had the same order of tables and chairs, three columns facing forward, discouraging communication among pupils during class. Lessons directed focus firmly towards the front of the room where the teacher explained and instructed. Throughout my research stay I noticed that I had not heard the voice of the student who was pointed out by his teachers as Ukrainian. His family had recently arrived in Poland. Quiet and timid, the child only spoke when addressed by their teachers. A concept of Polish as a second language had not been introduced at the school yet and teachers gave support rather spontaneously. Another student who was labelled as having special social and emotional needs, on the other hand, was eager for attention from their classmates. The

student often interrupted the lesson by shouting answers out before being called on, joking around or making themselves heard in other ways. Punishment and exclusion from the classroom by teachers and a general dismissal of their ability to be beneficial to the classroom community underlined their mis-belonging to the school. The silences or disturbances of the two students that were marked as “Other” were instructive of their lack of voice and possibility to step into the shared space of communication (Schultz 2003; Li Li 2004; Biesta 2019, 48).

## **4.2 Austria – A Volksschule**

Once a vast and multi-ethnic state known as the Austro-Hungarian Empire, contemporary Austria with 9 million inhabitants has shrunk from being the third most populous country of the continent to being one of the smaller European Union member states. The “Anschluss,” the incorporation of Austria into the Nazi dictatorship of the Third Reich in 1938, marked a caesura in the history of the multi-ethnic state. Self-cleansed of its Jewish citizens, Roma and other minorities, the postwar years did not give rise to any serious grappling with the “rich migration history of Austria” (Herzog-Punzenberger 2003, 1121). Operating under a general amnesia regarding the fact that migration and multiethnicity have always been the bone and marrow of the country’s history (Rupnow 2017), the “monoethnic ideal state” was reinforced through extremely restrictive citizenship and property laws in the years after World War II (Herzog-Punzenberger 2003, 1121). Nonetheless, Austrian society continued to diversify along familiar routes and new pathways: in the first decades after the war half a million displaced persons returned to the country, and then from the 1970s the so-called guest worker policies attracted migrants from Southern Europe and Turkey in their hundreds of thousands. Conflicts as well as European Union mobility encouraged migration from the former countries of the Empire (Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, parts of Poland) and beyond (Syria, Somalia, Northern Africa) (Herzog-Punzenberger 2003; Rupnow 2017; Integration Report 2019). The urban centers around Austria are especially vivid examples of the past and present existence of this vast cultural diversity. Today, one in seven students has a parent who was born outside of Austria and in Vienna, one in four students speaks a language other than German at home (Gruber 2019, 147). Yet schooling and the language of educational performance form a strong point of contention. The German language remains the gatekeeper to accessing academic secondary education, as pupils must achieve the highest grades in German and Mathematics after only four years of primary education in order to receive a referral from their teachers. On the other end of the performance spectrum, we find more students with Turkish as a mother tongue in special needs schools than in general public education (Statistik Austria 2020). There is, furthermore, no higher predictor for school achievement in the Austrian education system than parents’ profession, which is why the Austrian national education report concludes

that “education is inherited” rather than acquired given the current structures, mechanisms and pedagogies (Vogtenhuber et al. 2012, 124).

### **Fieldnote March 2017**

In the midst of a neighborhood covered in high-rise buildings, I arrive at the school during morning break. On a green lawn with a playground, fenced off from the street, the children play and clamor. A group of teachers stands at the top of a flight of stairs, guarding the passageway from yard to school building, chatting and watching over the kids. A teacher rings a golden bell and the children quickly line up in pairs, meet their teachers at the bottom of the stairs and march one line after the other up the stairs and into the school building under the constant reminders of their teachers to keep quiet. I turn the corner of the street and make my way into the main entrance, where a rope hangs like a washing line between two walls. Along the rope, clothes pegs hold laminated triangular banners that each show a cartoon version of a child in traditional clothes underneath a word for welcome in the respective language. I can make out a number of different stereotypical images of ethnicities and below them, the word “Welcome” in languages including Japanese, French, I spot Arabic letters, and several more languages.

Classrooms for first and second graders are downstairs, while the older kids, grade three and four, climb up to their second-floor classrooms. Different posters cover parts of the walls and decorate the doors through which I need to pass to reach the principal’s office. On the way there, I encounter a poster in English celebrating diversity with the slogan: “We each are unique and beautiful but together we are a masterpiece.” The slogan heads a poster collage of many differently colored and decorated hands that are glued together to look like a big flower. On a large pinboard, I spot two big posters. The one on the left is sponsored by the Austrian Red Cross Youth. It depicts two blond children, above their heads we read the following quotation: “I want to speak German and my first language.” The poster on the right is supplied by the police. This time it is a bear in uniform who holds up a sign, saying: “Children Police.” Above the bear the poster is headed: “We are at the children’s police” and at the bottom a slogan reads: “For a safer and livable Austria.” I assume that this school has partnered with the police and prides itself on this collaboration that seeks to ensure a happy and safe country. As I approach the principal’s office, three photographs are

arranged around the door frame: the President of the country hangs highest, followed by the mayor of the region and the principal of the school.

In the entry hall of this school, the presence of diversity was primarily made visible through the decorative albeit stereotypical representation of a variety of languages. While there were slogans that embraced differences as something “beautiful” and posters that prominently advocated for bilingualism, a certain hierarchy of languages was also communicated. After all, it was German - first - that the children in the poster wanted to learn and then their native language. This made sense in the logic of the Austrian school system where achievement could only be demonstrated through German language use. The second poster of the police bear was a symbolic marker that raised a few questions: Was the “Kinderpolizei” – Children Police - represented by a teddy bear or a scary bear? The linguistic ambiguity of the term “children police” left me wondering whether we were thinking of a police made up of children as small police officers that enforced order among themselves or was it a part of the police that had specialized in the protection of children? In any way, effort had been made to connect the official state police as an authority over right and wrong with a toy that children would find familiar and associative with both protection and discipline. Advocating for peaceful coexistence among the inhabitants of Austria (“For a safer and livable Austria”), I was wondering whether every school in the city had a Children Police poster or just this one? The district was described by teachers as “housing the Austrian underclass,” ghettoized, and a place of ethnic diversity. Was the poster a pre-emptive measure at a school where children were assumed to become delinquent due to the neighborhood from which they came? The state/national symbolism was subtle yet present in the entrance hall. Space-marking was an interplay between diverse identities and hierarchical arrangement.

Whereas at the Polish site the entry hall and classroom narratives were strictly in line with one another, at the Austrian research site, they diverged. While the symbolism of the entry hall seemed to encourage students to recognize and embrace diversity, the classrooms were, in fact, marked similarly to those in Poland, with a blackboard at the front, a clock above, and a crucifix next to it. Religious symbolism seemed to be reserved for the intimacy of the classroom space rather than the common area of the entry hall. While religion was never a dominant topic in the classroom exchanges that I witnessed, an emphasis on being Austrian was clearly expressed. On one occasion, I overheard one girl consoling another on the way back to the classroom after recess.

### **Fieldnote March 2017**

While her friend cries, she turns to me to explain that the girl was bullied for being brown. The girl, who is of African origin, with long braided hair, sniffles and avoids eye contact with me. Without raising the issue with their teacher, the girls head to their seats as we arrive in the classroom and the lesson begins. The teacher calls out the names of students to come to the front and locate

geographical landmarks on a big map of the area. Rarely a child finds the river or the mountain that is asked for. One boy stands in front, his shoulders dropping forward, an embarrassed smile on his face. He asks: “What am I supposed to do now?” The teacher responds: “Shut your mouth and answer my question.” She turns to the class and scolds the children for not knowing the area better. She points out that in this class there are only two girls whose parents are both from Austria. The arms of the two girls in the middle front row shoot up to indicate that this is them. The teacher smiles at them, continuing that there is another girl who has one parent from Austria, pointing out this girl. “And the rest are from somewhere else so we are a colorful pile,” she says. As the class moves on to the topic of local cultural customs, they speak about “jodeln” – yodelling - a type of loud, communicative vocal expression that is traditional for the area. Basia gets up and imitates yodelling for the whole class.

While the fourth graders studied local traditions, geographic features of the country and engaged in little performances on dialects and customs, the experiences of some of the students at this school remained quite invisible during this lesson. The welcoming signs in many languages that decorated the entry hall had created a sense of embracing linguistic diversity and the teddy-bear police could be genuinely interpreted as a sign of protection and justice. That sense of respect and the possibility for claiming space on behalf of one’s own feelings did not always carry over into the classroom. Some children experienced racist bullying in school, which they found difficult to raise with their teachers. For topics such as these, the teachers had told me, a designated lesson was reserved where children practiced non-aggressive behavior. Adding to the sense that some children’s experiences seemed to receive more attention and validation than others was the way that teachers oscillated between dividing the group along ethnic markers and pulling them back into a class community. While “Austrian” children received a special call-out by the teacher, she then referred to the whole class as a “colorful pile” in an attempt to create a shared sense of belonging. But why then distinguish the “Austrians” in the first place? Many of the children had been born in Austria, were able to talk in the local dialect as well as in standard German, and spoke yet another language at home. All three features made up their identity, which did not have to be any less Austrian than that of those whose grandparents had been already born in the country.

There was an ambiguous relationship, then, between the core and the periphery as some students became deliberately included in the community of Austrians through language, religion and citizenship, and others experienced that they were placed rather into a group of anonymous Other. On the one hand, the entry hall provided positive messages for its multilingual students. An emphasis on making children feel welcome by greeting them in many different languages as well as a poster advocating for language lessons in mother tongue and German seemed to embrace school as a place where more than one language belonged. Indeed, the school offered language classes in Bosnian, Serbian, Croatian and Turkish. On the other hand, German was strongly encouraged as

the language of instruction and communication throughout the regular school day. “We are not like the police standing behind children to scold them if they do not talk in German but we remind them,” one teacher explained to me. Besides regular classes in German and mother tongue language lessons, there were also support lessons for second language learners of German for which nearly all children qualified that I observed. In “pull-out” sessions, for which six names would be called out at random, students would head to the basement, oftentimes under protest. Being singled out from the rest of the class to practice extra German was not as desirable as staying with the group.

On multiple occasions the students’ poor test results in German were the source for great frustration on the part of the teachers. Lack of vocabulary and elegance in expressing oneself meant for many children that they failed and received bad grades. German was one of two subjects which counted toward the final recommendation for secondary education. The monolingual priority placed on German as the language of performance, instruction and play (Ellis, Gogolin & Clyne 2010) posed challenges for the rather heterogenous student population of the school. Looking at large-scale data on the Austrian education system, we know that only very few children with migrant experiences receive a referral to academic secondary schools, thereby demonstrating a paucity of upward social mobility (OECD 2016, 4). While the entry hall signaled equality among languages and cultural identities, classroom practices gestured towards one-way efforts to uplift students’ German language skills without leaving space for the linguistic diversity that existed in the class. The non-native speakers were indiscriminately referred to extra German lessons, while the ways in which they saw the world, via their own language systems, remained unaddressed.

### **4.3 Germany – A Grundschule**

Central European history was strongly shaped by German expansionist tyranny that resulted in two World Wars, ethnic cleansing and devastation of large parts of the continent. After the defeat of Nazi Germany and its allies, the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century saw a fundamental reshaping of country borders east to the Oder-Neisse river, accompanied by large inner-European refugee movements and resettlements. While former West Germany shared Austria’s path from former Nazi dictatorship to democracy within a few swift years after the end of WWII, the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) was governed under Socialist rule in a very similar fashion to that of the Polish People’s Republic. The territories of the two former Germanys continue to show significant socio-demographic differences when it comes to such aspects as income brackets, migrant populations, voting patterns and more. Zooming in on matters of cultural diversity, we note that former West Germany and Berlin are together home to 96 percent of all people with migrant backgrounds living within the contemporary German borders, amounting to one in five Germans with migrant experiences (Education in Germany 2018, 26). Today’s multiculturalism has its roots in the recruitment of foreign

labor in which both countries engaged. West Germany targeted Italy, Greece, Turkey and other Mediterranean countries from the late 1960s, while East Germany turned to Socialist brother countries, such as Cuba, Vietnam, Mozambique in the early 1980s (Piesche 2002). Before reunification in 1989, “191,000 foreign immigrants lived in the GDR, corresponding to 1.2 percent of the population” (Kemper 1997, 1771), debunking the myth of racial homogeneity behind the Iron Curtain. In both countries, children of migrant workers were viewed as an inconvenient “by-product”. For decades, children were segregated into “Ausländerklassen” foreigner classes where they would be educated in their native languages to quickly reintegrate into their countries of origin when labor contracts were terminated (Kiesel 2003). In the 1980s, pedagogical objectives changed and more integrative approaches were championed. However, the German language has always held a highly significant gate-keeper function to academic secondary education. Statistics from 2009 show that only four out of 100 students hold a migrant background in academic high schools, while lower qualifying schools, especially special schools for learning disabled are over-proportionally attended by students who do not speak German at home (Veith et al. 2009, 9; Kornman 2013, 72). The latest PISA testing results found that one in two migrant students is considered socio-economically disadvantaged and the performance gap of migrant students in relation to mother tongue speakers of German is 63 score points on the reading exam (OECD 2018, 1). At the intersection of class, language/minority culture and special needs children with migrant experiences hold a vulnerable position within the German education system.

### **Fieldnote April 2018**

As I enter the school’s campus and head toward the building right in front, I come to a halt. Nowhere can I make out a sign indicating where the official entrance to the school is. Indecisively, I stand in the middle of the yard: to my left is the school garden and a large basketball field, to my right and in front gray buildings in a strangely futuristic style. As I sit and wait, the little girl opposite me opens her lunchbox and says to herself, “I am hungry and I haven’t eating anything yet.” She wears a small leather jacket and a sparkling T-shirt covered with sequins of all colors. As she bites into her sandwich, I wish her: “Guten Appetit!” (Good Appetite!/ Enjoy your meal!) She smiles and says, “Thank you.” We started chatting, and I asked which class grade she attended. She described to me how to get to her classroom: “Well, you have to walk up the stairs and there is the classroom.” I ask how old she is. After hesitating a moment, she replies: “7.” “So you must be in first or second grade?” I replied. Shrugging her shoulders, she turns her attention back to the sandwich.

I look around: something is missing. There is not a single sign or picture that indicates where we are. I find myself in almost blank space. Construction site banners hang in front of the building, covering the windows and leaving us sitting



in semi-darkness although the sun is shining outside: the school has been under renovation for over five years, the principal sighs. He feels frustrated and neglected by the city council. As we walk to the classroom in which I will be conducting my research, I spot many different flags, painted on paper, that decorate the walls. On another wall recipes for dishes are listed and yet another has carefully prepared overviews that students designed on the many different religions in the world: Christianity, Judaism, Islam, Buddhism. Information leaflets in both German and Arabic are fixed next to the entry doors to the classrooms. In the afternoon the classrooms are also used by the Qu'ran school. For the benefit of parents, the information leaflets lay out guidelines and rules on fasting during Ramadan and how this might impact students' performances in class, on respectful behaviour (such as not telling on each other) and potential sanctions.

None of the children, to my knowledge, spoke German as their first language. Everyone carried a story of migration in their bodies or in their families. While some kids had arrived in the country very recently as unattended refugee minors from Syria, others came from families that had lived in Germany for decades. While it used to be a multicultural school that included significant numbers of children for whom German was their mother tongue, today the school was described as having "tipped" from a diverse community to a mostly segregated institution. Except for four, all children in the class that I observed attended Islam lessons; 17 out of the 19 kids in the class received government funding for school lunches, and 15 percent of the school's pupils held a special educational needs status. We could see how this school was the product of migration policies that tried to contain so-called guest workers in specific quarters of the city (Kemper 1997). Historically this school was situated in a typical migrant district that continued a tradition of keeping foreign laborers together and of educating their children rudimentarily. In the 1970s, the intention had been that they would return to their countries of origin (Kiesel 2003; Roth 2002). At the very vulnerable intersection of poverty, migration and special needs status, this school operated under challenging conditions. A lack of exposure to German mainstream culture and a lack of native speakers of German - who could serve as role models for imitating language structures and vocabulary - left students at a structural disadvantage when it came to achieving higher performance levels.

At first, the symbolism observable in the spatial materiality of the German research site seemed rather thinly spread, with decorations on walls, art work and trophies in display cases noticeable by their absence. This was partly due to the fact that the school had been in a constant state of renovation. The gym had been closed for years, and students needed to go to nearby schools to do PE classes in the winter. All the subject-specific rooms for science, music or art lessons were closed and teachers had to bring utensils and materials into the general education classrooms. Not knowing how long this school would be a construction site for, educators probably did not put too much attention into decorating the spaces. A sense of disorganization was perceivable in the response of the first-grader

to my question she did not know which grade she was actually in. The lack of signs offering orientation for the students enforced the feel of a school building under construction that also subdued teachers' enthusiasm for working in the school spaces. Known as a predominantly Muslim migrant school, the space had been labelled in the district as a "Brennpunktschule," a "hotspot school" where violence, low test scores and families' extremely challenging socio-economic conditions intersected. The district council had intervened several years prior and turned the school into an all-day school with educator teams of teachers and assistants that worked together more flexibly with students on problem-solving skills and peaceful communication strategies.

What caught my attention in this school – in contrast to the dominant spatial marking I saw in Poland and Austria - was the way that educators and students embodied belonging to Muslim transnational communities rather than any specific national identity (Abu El-Haj & Bonet 2009). Students shared stories from visiting their families in Iraq or Lebanon, or remembered their lives back "home" in Syria or Palestine, areas of conflict that in some cases had left their families displaced and had brought them to Germany. Although religious symbolism was not allowed in German state institutions, discourses and personal attire spoke to the demographic of the district that was traditionally inhabited by migrant workers from Turkey and the Middle East. The class teacher, for example, a young woman born and raised in the city, sometimes wore a delicately calligraphed necklace that spelled "Allah" in Arabic, while one teacher-in-training wore a hijab; children occasionally argued in class about which mosque to attend and girls discussed during breaks whether they would want to cover their hair or not. Some teachers considered the presence of Islam on school premises problematic. To them, religious dress was irreconcilable with the mandate of separating state and religion. Other teachers voiced support for the trainee teacher, arguing that it was important the kids witnessed role models from their own community combining faith and professional life. Therefore, the school did not pursue a strict line of cultural assimilation but tried to capitalize on the cultural bond that educators and students needed to establish in order to teach in a relevant and meaningful way. Marking space in both German and Arabic, incorporating the cultural frame of reference of most students by referring to the changing phases of the moon as a way to teach astronomy and the relevance of the planets in the Islamic calendar, and allowing for open discussion on how the school wanted to observe Ramadan were all ways of sharing space and discourses that could be considered "transclusional." However, transclusion in a broader sense between German majority culture and the minority cultures that constituted the school's population was missing, since the former was underrepresented among the school's students. As a racially segregated minority school, "shifting terrain" and "moving one's positionality" (Biesta 2019, 97) took place, but it did so – ironically - in exclusion: at the very margin of society.

At the primary school in Germany, both Arabic and German were present in official artefacts (information leaflets) as well as personal attire (necklace). The fact that the students that I observed were overwhelmingly second language learners of German at

different stages of language acquisition contributed to an atmosphere of playfulness around German. While testing results only allowed for the judgement of being “right” or “wrong,” many of the children developed their own variation of German. Kids distorted their faces in a way that pulled words into exaggerated length, thereby cutting off word endings, dropping articles and bringing made-up sounds into the expression which made them look silly, in her opinion. In a narrow linguistic sense, this “language” was not correct German: case endings and conjugation of verbs were missing but the children used their own way of distorting the language to communicate. While some kids easily switched between standard German and their secret language depending on who they addressed, the newcomers to the country could not as easily distinguish the two. This gave rise to anger among the teachers. Some remarked that they did not want the kids to acquire “Türkendeutsch,” a type of ethno-dialect developed by German-Turkish youths that did not have a good reputation in the public, being marked as flawed, primitive and hyper-masculine (Tekin & Colliander 2010). Nonetheless, such language experiments can also be considered as rather democratic in the sense that children with special needs as well as very early learners of German could join in, twisting the language as they pleased and adding a few words from their mother tongues. I had the impression that students enjoyed the authority and creativity that came along with this experiment, where no one could be more wrong than the other because the language did not actually exist. Reading their game as an exercise of agency helps us to consider these students from a place of power when they were generally labelled as powerless due to statelessness, special needs, poverty and lack of language proficiency in the host countries (Sabaté-Dalmau 2018, 22). Nonetheless, German was at all times the normal and desired language (Ellis, Gogolin & Clyde 2010, 440) that teachers hoped to convey to their students. Other than in Austria, at this German site there were no native language classes offered. Teachers noted the absence of German native speakers in the classrooms, who might have modelled the language in ways that would be helpful for the rest of the class. Such German language scarcity created challenges for regular instruction, which teachers needed to scaffold with grammar structures and vocabulary. While the individual languages of the children seemed to have more space at the German site than the Austrian, the language of evaluation and power remained in the German-speaking realm. German ranked even higher than English as the newly arrived refugee children had to do extra German tasks while the others attended English lessons because German proficiency mattered more than a “foreign” language.

## 5 ANALYSIS

In relation to the notion of inclusion in particular, Biesta’s concept of “transclusionion” becomes relevant once more as a way to probe questions regarding the democratic nature of schools. Building on Jacques Rancière’s work, Biesta highlights that democracy and inclusion are closely intertwined as only those who have access to the arena of debate can effectively voice their opinion and participate in moments of decision-making. “Inclusion”, as established earlier, brings with it a potential pitfall: the possible

assumption that some are already within a state of democratic awareness and enlightenment that others need to move towards. Hence to circumvent this pitfall, Biesta argues for transclausal moments holding the potential of “redistribution and redefinition of identities, places and spaces” in such a way as to affect all “identities and subject positions” (Ibid.). This is a very intriguing thought when looking at school spaces, as it raises a number of questions. Who is actually addressed through installations and space-marking, and who is it that gets to voice opposition? How do these encounters and moments of grappling with the existing order impact the way that majority culture sees itself? In the sense of inclusion as desegregating students with special needs or migration background, all three sites were certainly inclusive mainstream schools. However, inclusion took place on the basis of very specific rules that rarely allowed for redistributing or redefining identities. In my study, I got to see that inclusion was successful as long as nobody disrupted the lesson plan (Poland); students silently disappeared into the basement to receive extra support (Austria); and all efforts that were undertaken in the German example actually had taken place after the school became ostracized in the district as a “hot spot school” which ethnic German parents strictly avoided (Germany). All three schools disciplined their students into adhering to the order within which they had fixed positions that were not - or only in very few instances - negotiable.

Although each school marked its spaces in unique ways, certain symbols were staged in entrance halls and classrooms across country borders. Flags, religions and languages were highly emotive and disciplinary markers that endorsed identities in accordance with majority culture, faith and language, while “Others” were rendered invisible or subdued. To be able to read and interpret the semiotic absences and presences in schooling spaces, the Central European context of my three research sites provided an instructive background to the studies that I present here. While the fate of all three countries was highly intertwined throughout the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this turbulent past played out very differently for Poland, Austria and Germany, impacting each country’s sense of self and its specific national narrative. Looking at school spaces, we glimpse facets of this past that seem to be foregrounded and those that are backgrounded to tell a specific narrative of nation and community within the school. This way schools offer students a frame for making sense of their own identities, of their belonging or (dis-)belonging in the collective imaginary on display (Abu El-Haj et al 2017; Bernstein & Solomon 1999). Schools are powerful state institutions that have the potential to “draw students into dominant projects of nationalism” (Levinson & Foley 1996, 1). Looking at these entrance hall installations, the symbolism on display rarely encouraged debate or allowed for wiggling room in which challenging questions could be asked or a given order reconfigured. In Austria, the symbolism of the entry hall held a promise of multilingualism and diversity, also embraced with slogans and posters visible in the common areas. This promise was not always kept in the classroom. Here, Catholicism, German-language rules and “being Austrian” by heritage were co-constructed as an impermeable norm. On the other hand,

symbolically blank spaces (Germany) in the entry hall and the classrooms resembled a peculiar canvas against which vastly diverse student identities could mark shared spaces through native languages, language experiments and cultural references. Nonetheless, the invisible dominance of German as the language of instruction and performance remained uncontested, just as in the Austrian context. In Poland, the tightly coherent overlap of national and religious symbolism between the entry hall and classroom practices enforced a moral rigidity that placed Others either outside of the narrative of belonging or rendered them invisible subjects. These three schools serve as mirrors of the historical and local dilemmas that are typical for Central Europe's "interethnic, intergroup, interstate and interregional" landscape (Buchowski & Cervinkova 2015, 3): the struggle over territorial space-marking and dominance over cultural, socio-linguistic "Others". The monocultural and monolingual ideal remains a powerful myth that education systems across Central Europe perpetuate (Gogolin 2002; Herzog-Punzenberger 2003).

## 6 CONCLUDING REMARKS

With the ethnographic way of seeing (Wolcott 2008) I aimed to bring to the fore the political dimension that underlies the designing of schooling spaces. There is no such things as decontextualized installations in a public institution where respect for state authority and discipline are part of the socialization process (e.g.: police lions and bears) and the curriculum. I brought schooling spaces into conversation with the norms and values of the outside world as they reach into schools and classrooms through flags, crucifixes and language rules that would not make any sense if they were not powerful representatives of local and historical traditions (Eisenhart 2001; Rubin & Cervinkova 2020).

I propose to draw deliberate attention to the smaller and the bigger details of the space that seeks to develop an "educated person" (Levinson & Holland 1996) which might help us to better understand where subjectification falls flat and education gets buried under passive consumptions of transmitted knowledges. Where assimilation and hierarchies mute critical debate around shared space, we should pay attention to symbols that set the tone for human interactions. If schools are to be a place of emancipation (Biesta 2019, 48), space needs to hold gaps for individual expression, for contesting the very terrain of engagement and for imagining alternatives to the order at hand.

Lastly, transclusion serves as a valuable lens through which we can examine how countries actually implement and interpret EU policies on inclusion and social justice. It exposes the way that educational institutions continue to fall back on traditions of segregating minority students and uphold a certain hierarchy of language, state religion and citizenship, even if schools have become more inclusive.

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#### ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am deeply grateful for the supervision, guidance and professional grounding in educational anthropology that I have received from Prof. Hana Cervinkova throughout my doctoral studies and far beyond. I am indebted to the schools, their educators and students, who have patiently shared their time and spaces with me. I also thank Dr. Juliet D. Golden for literature recommendations and discussions as well as Dr. Sarah L. Wood for helping me find my threads and words. First ideas for this piece came to mind in conversations with James, thank you. Last, I am grateful to Prof. Michael Schratz and Prof. Christian Kraler at the Department of Teacher Education and School Research at the University of Innsbruck.

This work was supported by European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under the Marie-Sklodowska-Curie grant agreement number 676452. This

paper is an outcome of a doctoral study that was conducted within the ‘European Doctorate of Teacher Education – EDiTE’ project.

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