

COOPERATION AND CONFLICT IN BORDER AREAS

edited by

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This book belongs to what has been termed a "minor avalanche" of literature on frontier regions in Europe. It all started in the late sixties, when it became clear that the free flow of capitals, workers and shoppers across European boundaries had some characteristic and not altogether positive effects on border areas. A tension was building up between the dynamics of economic (and, in part, ecological) processes on the one side, and the statics of the legal, administrative and political "superstructure" on the other. It was earlier felt in the most developed areas of the "European backbone"; the Lotharingian strip along the Rhine axis, from Basel to Liege-Aachen to Groningen-Friesland. Wage differentials were moving masses of frontier commuters, living in one country and working in the other; price differentials in consumers goods fed the growth of commercial structures aimed at markets on the other side of the border; the development of urban and industrial structures required joint planning of towns and regions along the border, specially in the most densely settled areas. Chambers of commerce, manufacturers' associations, town councils, planning institutions had soon to face problems requiring the cooperation of their counterparts across the border. And soon they met the resistance of the legal-administrative systems; local technical problems escalated to general political problems. It became clear that

the further growth of these regions demanded the harmonization of laws, policies and plans. It demanded, in effect, the fatal step from the economic to the political integration of Europe. Border regions attracted wide attention as specimens, laboratory tests and show-cases of some of the central problems of European politics.

Not unexpectedly, the claims of frontier regions received a rather lame response from the EEC authorities, sticking strictly to the economic level. But their potential at the political and more general cultural level was quickly grasped by such bodies as the Council of European Townships and the Council of Europe.

Under their sponsorship, the word was passed from the "hard core" frontier regions along the "internal" borders to regions lying at the "external" frontiers with non-EEC states, and even to maritime regions; the cooperation across the borders of the Scandinavian countries was also included in the "problematic", and the ranks of "frontier regions" swelled accordingly. So the problems stemming from the incongruence of economic dynamics and organizational statics were supplemented by other problems, such as those of the unsatisfactory development rate of regions facing empty quarters or locked frontiers. At the same time, the original hard core of economic aspects was extended and enriched with other motives, of a more cultural and political nature. It was stressed that national frontiers kept divided what in earlier times had been unitary communities, and that many frontier communities had more in common with their neighbors across the borders than with other co-national regions. It was recalled that many frontier areas had suffered from nationalism - in terms of broken communities, cultural repression, and war destruction - more than other areas, and thus had firmer claims to redress. Finally it was

emphasized that frontier regions were in many cases areas of mixed and uncertain identity at the linguistic, cultural and national level. On the one hand this posed problems of protection and promotion of minorities, which, although strictly speaking an exquisitely internal question (since World War II), had clear implications in good-neighbours policies of European countries; on the other hand, the double or multiple cultural and linguistic identities of many border populations could be developed into a driving force to European unification and, more generally, of international integration.

Such themes threaded across a number of meetings at various levels of size, officiality and scholarship. They helped to pinpoint and codify the major issues; they provided a wealth of detailed analysis; they helped to raise the consciousness of frontier regions as a group, their mutual recognition, the exchange of experiences and support. Largely through the efforts of the Council of Europe, they built up the momentum that finally resulted, in 1981, in the Framework Convention on Trans-Frontier Cooperation.

This frame convention, although certainly much weaker than what the most ardent promoters of frontier regions expected, certainly opens an important door and introduces some remarkable new juridical principles in such matters.

All this activity produced also a sizeable amount of literature, as mentioned at the beginning. One early contribution was the volume 'Boundaries and Regions-Explorations in the Growth and Peace Potential of the Peripheries' edited by one of us in 1973 and based on the papers read at the conference on "Problems and Perspectives of Border Regions" held in Gorizia one year earlier. It remains one of the most wide-ranging and massive works on the subject, with a variety of focuses and targets, of disciplinary approaches and empirical objects, of levels of

discourse and even of languages.

What we present now, at a decade's distance, is a collection of papers presented at a second Gorizia conference (December 1979) organized by the Institute of International Sociology on the general theme "Boundaries, Regions and Transnational Integration". More specific topics for discussion were proposed:

A. Regionalism and federalism.

Regionalism is a modern version of classical federalism; the strengthening of local and regional communities is a basic condition of democracy and liberalism; in Europe, it is also an instrument for the weakening of the centralized nation-states and the growth of a more united Europe. Europe and the Regions have a common foe, and can develop only through mutual support. The Europe of the Regions is also a fascinating political project around which long-term efforts can be focused and mobilized.

B. Border regions.

A second aim of the conference was a reassessment of European border regions' predicament, in the light of the radically changed economic and political situations, both marked now by stagnation or outright recession. The intervening years, however, had seen also a remarkable growth of trans-frontier cooperation and the development of important institutions in this field. Among them, the organizations linking the alpine regions (ARGE-Alp, Alpe-Adria), for obvious reasons of particular interest to the Gorizia Institute, but also the maturing Frame Convention on Trans-Frontier Cooperation was an important topic.

C. Regions as trans-national actors.

A more scholarly interest was centered around the emergence of regions and of local authorities as actors in the international (or, more accurately, transna-

tional) relations. The trans-national activities of individuals, groups and non-governmental organizations had been for years the subject-matter of the "sociology of international relations"; in more recent times they had drawn the attention of political scientists as well. The discussion of the theoretical and methodological problems of this approach were a third goal of the conference.

D. The theory of boundaries.

One of the main goals of the first Gorizia conference had been the development of a sociological "theory of boundaries", a logical correlate of the "systems approach". Under criticism here is the conceptualization of groups, communities, organizations, in terms of "closed systems"; it is proposed to focus instead on system-environment relations (transactions), and to study the emergence and dynamics of systems from the point of view of boundary processes. Systems can then be classified according to their boundary-maintaining mechanisms ("definitions"), and boundary processes can be shown to be responsible for important social phenomena.

The response of the invited scholars, of course, did not match exactly to the organizer's philosophy. It turned out that the most interesting frontier issue, for many people, was one not explicitly outlined in the conference background paper: namely, the problems of linguistic and ethnic fringes in border areas. This seems to mirror a general concern, both in academic and in general political and cultural circles, for the minority question. The 70s had witnessed the emergence of the "unmeltable ethnics" in the USA, the re-awakening of the "Celtic fringe" in Europe, the recourse of some minorities to violence, the faltering assimilation processes, the reversal of minority's aim from non-discrimination to active maintenance of differences; minority rights had become, along with ecology, one preferred outlet

of the revolutionary spirits of the '68; cultural and linguistic pluralism also within nations had become a positive goal for political action, and sanctioned as such also by European bodies (Council of Europe resolution of 1981). The number of papers on these topics presented at the Gorizia Conference was such as to warrant their publication in a separate volume: B. De Marchi, A.M. Boileau (eds.), *Boundaries and Minorities in Western Europe*.

The papers published here can be grouped into three sections.

1. Cross-Border Interactions and Structures: Case Studies

It seemed advisable to open this collection with some empirical case studies that give the substance for the discussion put forward in the more theoretical contributions in the following two sections.

The essay by Giovanni Delli Zotti deals with the transnational relations of one specific frontier region Friuli-Venezia Giulia, and reflects nicely one component of the growth of the Alpe Adria trans-frontier region. It is also relevant, from a methodological and theoretical point of view, for its attempt to define, and classify systematically the actors of a transnational web of transaction. One major inspiration in this work comes, of course, from C.F. Alger, one of whose relevant essays is also to be found in this book. The technique employed has been the standard one in this type of research: content analysis of newspaper items (event-interactions). One of the most important findings is the great increase of the events over the period of time studied (1957-1977) and in particular the increase above the average of the relations with Yugoslav actors. The relations with these partners, that had been all but halted in the cold war years (1947-1955) seem today

to have reached a certain maturity. Further spectacular increases can hardly be expected unless major structural changes in the international context of these transfrontier relations does come to the fore. Among these foreseeable changes one could cite the full implementation of the "Osimo Agreements", between Italy and Yugoslavia, in a stagnant phase since their signature (1975); another is the political will of the concerned States to put into practice the already mentioned Framework Convention on Trans-frontier Cooperation of the Council of Europe.

The contribution by Vladimir Klemenčić and Ivo Piry is also based on the analysis of the relations in the Yugoslav-Italian border, with a special attention to local border traffic. This is based on the study of transactions, an aspect that was left out of the research by Delli Zotti, so that the two papers can be considered as mutually integrating. Event-interactions and transactions are, indeed, the two sides of the process level in the transnational (and international) relations. Here again the important finding is the great increase in the volume of the transactions. However, particularly in the case of the economic transactions, only major structural changes, possibly those envisaged above here, will bring more vitality to the process and lead beyond the present levels of economic cooperation.

The essay by Jean Revel-Mouroz on the US-Mexico border was certainly a little anomalous in a conference focused on European questions. But it outlined with such clarity and skill this very paradigmatic case that it was decided to include it in this book. We think it helps to highlight, by the virtues of the comparative method and the strong contrasts it raises, the peculiarities of the present European frontier problems and offers a scenario of one of the possible - if not desirable - developments in cross-border relations. At the Mexican-American

border the transactions have reached such an intensity that one can now speak of a fully mutually dependent transfrontier economy. The author presents, together with the figures that give the pulse of this booming transnational activity, also the socio-economic implications on the side of the labour, consumers and enterprises. Also the major changes occurred in the governmental policies of the two countries are analysed. These policies are aimed at the modification of certain adverse consequences of the transfrontier activity that emerged in particular on the Mexican side (growing dependency, illegal emigration).

While the last three contributions are mainly centered on the analysis either of event-interactions or transactions, the essay by Jean-Pierre Jardel is focused on the issue-areas, on the problems around which cooperation can develop, and the following paper, by Charles Ricq, is centered on the analysis of the institutions that are dedicating their efforts to the cooperation in transfrontier regions.

The transfrontier region "Alp-Azur", studied by Jardel, can be considered the western counterpart of the "Alpe-Adria" on the eastern side of the Alps. The growing awareness of the need for transfrontier cooperation in the Alpe-Azur has lead to several initiatives in the field of transport and communication. They seem to be facing, however, an "impasse" during the last few years. In this case too the Framework Convention, if correctly understood and employed, might enhance the process of cooperation, although France is a member state that has not, up to now, signed it. It will depend also on the decisions of the new French executive whether the Alp-Azur will develop into and exemplar of a viable transfrontier region or whether the border regions should separately find solutions to their problems.

Charles Ricq brings us, instead, in a transfrontier

region that can be cited as a model of what can be done in this field when political will and realism, or rather pragmatism, meet in trying to find viable solutions to common problems. The Geneva transfrontier region is in fact a long-dated reality, so that the institutional channels of cooperation are more developed than in other places. The author is thus able to provide us with an accurate analysis of the organisms of transfrontier cooperation and of the powers devoluted to them.

2. Regions and Frontiers in Western Europe: Political and Institutional Aspects

The following group of essays is characterized by the attempt to deal with the general problems of frontier regions in Western Europe, but from three very different points of view. Andrea Chiti-Battelli, a veteran fighter for European federalism, takes a rather dismal stock of the state of affairs concerning European unification. He indicates the nation-state as an outmoded (hot-air ballon) instrument to move towards higher levels of political integration. He clearly, and very provocatively, advocates a "Europe of the Regions" along the lines proposed in the last few years by such scholars as D. de Rougemont, G. Heraud and, - with reservations - S. Salvi. He stresses the necessity to devise the practical means to such a goal, and gives a good example by articulating very concretely a possible regional articulation of Western Europe.

For quite different reasons, an aura of pessimism on the perspectives of European regions, and from-tier regions in particular, transpires from the essay of Gommard van der Auwera, a senior official in Bruxelles, the many limitations and few possibilities of the European Communities' actions on the behalf

of frontier regions. He reminds us two sobering facts. First, the competence of the Communities is obviously restricted geographically to the territories of the member states, so that only the transfrontier regions that belong entirely to this area might eventually benefit of the European intervention. "External" frontier regions are thus left with their owns. Secondly the Communities are not equipped with tools for intervention in border regions. The Community Regional Policy, implemented by the two instruments of the European Regional Development Fund and the Regional Policy Committee (set up only in 1975), has been in fact created to reduce the socio-economic imbalances among the regions in the Community; and the border regions may, or may not, belong to less favoured areas. In other words, it is reiterated, the Community is concerned with border problems only to the extent that they are economic problems.

A middle course between the spirited call to arms of Chiti-Battelli and the down-to-earth technicity of van der Auwera is taken by the study of Malcolm Anderson, a political scientist who is deeply interested in the process of European integration, but who also has a very keen eye for the many real difficulties, tensions and conflicts that beset this process. His paper weaves together a number of theoretical statements drawn from the literature on conflict, on international relations and on political sociology, and illustrates his thesis with a wide array of empirical cases. Conflict in border areas is shown to be related to phenomena like ethnonationalism, social dislocations resulting from spillover effects of economic activities on the other side of the boundary, and other economic/ecological phenomena, "excessive territorial defensiveness on the part of central government and bureaucracies", and others. Anderson stresses the continuing central role of the nation-state in human affairs, in Western Europe as

elsewhere (in opposition to earlier theories on his "demise") and the many weaknesses of the ethno-regional movements. He also reviews the various kinds of suspicions that cross-border cooperation provokes not only in the representatives of the nationalist-centralist tradition, but also in other politically important groups; and cites as an example the fears - which he deems fantastic - that the interregional organizations in the central and eastern Alps may be an instrument of Bavarian expansion toward the Adriatic. Another example is the fear that ethnic movements in border areas may grow into secessionist forces - also a quite unlikely development, except in a few cases. All considered, both the problems and the promises of frontier regions seem still of secondary importance if compared to the total situation in Europe; the problems of frontier regions have still to be adequately recognized, by the States, well before the instruments for their solutions are developed.

3. Societal Boundaries and Their Overcoming: Theoretical Models

The third group of essays is characterized by a prevailing theoretical orientation. Rune Johansson addresses himself to the one type of boundary conflict that M. Anderson explicitly excluded from his treatment, i.e. "classical" border disputes between nation states, such as were prevalent in Europe up to 1945. The case studies tackled by the Boundary Conflict Study Group at the department of history of Lund University are all related to German revanchism in the interwar period (East Prussia, Teschen, Hultschin, Eupen-Malmedy, Schleswig). But the main emphasis of the paper rather lies in the working out of the epistemological, methodological

and conceptual premises; an impressive number of theoretical models (many of whom derived from J. Galtung's work) are carefully outlined and discussed: theories of conflict, imperialism, minorities, violence, rank, center-periphery, mobilization, perception, polarization, etc.). It is a valiant effort to integrate historical and social-scientific interests, and the overall model developed by the Lund group, although awaiting further testing of its usefulness, seems very plausible. Johansson reports the advancements in an approach that was first presented by the group's coordinator, Sven Tägil, at the first Gorizia conference of 1972.

The same can be said of the next paper, where Franz Heigl brings to further heights of sophistication his theoretical reflections on borders. Among the many differences between the two papers, however, two stand out. Heigl's approach is basically spatial, not historical and it is unfortunate that, for technical reasons, his graphical models had to be left out. The second is its logical-deductive mode of reasoning, very well signaled by the translation of his statements into formal symbolisms of mathematical character; this contrasts nicely with the former group's methodological eclecticism. The comprehension of Heigl's paper is certainly not immediate, it has suffered from a drastic reduction of the original formalisms, that seemed wasted on a readership, like the one for which this volume is intended, probably not trained in that style of reasoning. In a highly personal universe of meanings Heigl deals with the spatial differentials in the distribution of infrastructures, populations and resources over space, the effects that on this distribution are likely to emerge subsequent to the imposition or change of boundaries and the different ways the authorities can control the adverse effects and manage border areas, with an eye - generally - towards both spatial equilibri-

um and security from external threats.

Niklas Luhmann recapitulates in a succinct statement the main points concerning territorial and social boundaries. "Boundaries not only separate, they also link"; they are a mechanism of system-environment transactions. In traditional societies, social boundaries usually coincided with territorial boundaries; the ones were a reflection of the others. They marked clearly - although with varying degrees of sharpness - the system from the non-system, "we" from "they". In modern society - which is in effect a world-society - the simple division into internal and external, marked by the territorial borders, is increasingly meaningless. They maintain their relevance for the maintenance of venerable political institutions, but are less and less relevant in many areas of social interaction. Some counter-trends can be noticed, pointing to a re-evaluation of territorial identifications; it is doubtful, however, that they can offset the dominant "reality" of modern "non-territorial" society organization. Luhmann's synthetic remarks may sound somewhat cryptic, due also to the difficulty of translating them into English, but they certainly make one wish to go back to his other essays on the boundaries of social systems.

Raimondo Strassoldo offers yet another analysis of the status of the boundary concept in sociological theory; he explicitly recalls the one he presented, with Renzo Gubert, in the book of proceedings of the earlier Gorizia conference. The present essay is perhaps less-wide-ranging and more compact than the earlier one; hopefully, it is also more informed and mature. The closed-system paradigm, an inheritance of Greek classical thought, should be discarded drastically from the social sciences, as it has been from the physical ones. It leads to platonic and utopian theories of society; what is worse, it legitimizes the nation state as the ultimate form of

societal organization, thus blocking the road to further evolution towards higher or at least different societal arrangements (such as envisioned by world federalists of various persuasions). In the history of sociological theories there are alternative views of social organization, such as the "cross-cutting of social circles" of Simmel and modern network theory; in neither cases boundaries play relevant roles. However, frontiers and boundaries are also a legitimate and, in some contexts, important objects of social and historical analysis. Their impact on social evolution has been emphasized by such authors as Turner, and Toynbee; some authors, like G. de Greef and L. Mayhew, have seen in the boundary processes one of the engines of social change. In conclusion, the boundary concept seems to be an interesting addition to the sociologist's kit of tools for the understanding of his immensely varied subject matter.

Chadwick F. Alger's essay weaves together and projects on a global scale, with a wealth of both conceptual and practical motives, all the basic themes of the conference. He criticizes the state-centered view that the nation states have succeeded to impress in the minds of ordinary people as well as in the most powerful international institutions; and it reminds vividly how, in fact, world society is characterized by the growth of interactions between non-governmental actors. But the growth of institutional world society is accompanied by what seems to be a retreat of people in the more intimate and secure context of the local community; a demand for decentralization and more local autonomy seems noticeable all over the world ("small is beautiful"); in the Third World, one hears ever more often the call for "decoupling" and for "self reliance". The two processes - toward world society and toward local community - are both important and positive; they

need to be related so that they can reinforce each other. Alger takes great pains in developing a practical model by which ordinary people and local groups can become active part of the transnational web of relations ("a world paradigm with local links"; "creating maps for world participation"; "local communities in future worlds"). His model for future worlds is certainly not simple; he anticipates criticisms pointing out some of the advantages it could have on the present, certainly not very satisfactory, state of affairs: 1) the weakening of the main centres of world power; 2) the fulfillment of the claims of local, regional minorities that are presently one of the main reasons of unrest and disorder in the world society; 3) the lessening of regional imbalances due to the polarization-emargination dualism; 4) the improving of the plight of border regions; 5) the preservation of local diversity and the possibility of more symmetrical relations between cultures; 6) the making of self-reliance a more realistic goal.

Alger is well aware, and not ashamed, of the danger of falling into Utopia. Since one of the basic features of utopian thinking is the negligence of the conditions of transition from the present to the future state, he is careful throughout to provide very concrete "rules of transformation", practical steps toward the preferred world vision. Two such prerequisites are: 1) norms establishing the right to equitable external exchange, and representation in decision making processes that affect local communities; 2) knowledge and competence that make it possible for local communities to evaluate and make decisions about external relationships. He has thus articulated, at the global level and with the sure hand of a seasoned scholar of international relations, all the tension towards the overcoming of national boundaries, the growth of local and regional

autonomies, and the strengthening of the trends toward world society.

Umberto Gori has been committed the task of drawing a conclusive note to the volume. He brings the attention of the reader back to the centrality of the concept of border and to its heuristic merits, in particular in the field of the social sciences, or sciences of the complexity.

We hope that this book will make a contribution, however modest, to the spread of the visions traced above, which lie at the basis of the Gorizia conference and of the work of the Institute of International Sociology.

Raimondo Strassoldo

Giovanni Delli Zotti

AVVISO

Il resto del testo è stato scritto da altri autori, e quindi non pubblicato in questo sito; salvo il capitolo di R. Strassoldo, *The boundary: a re-assessment*, che si trova nella sezione capitoli&articoli, categoria “confini e regioni di frontiera”.