

Session 34. Debordering and rebordering the Mountain areas / *Recompositions des frontières de et en régions de montagne*

Cristina DEL BIAGGIO, Department of Geography, University of Geneva (Switzerland) & Department of Regional Studies, University of Tampere (Finland): *Bordering the Alps: drawing a “new space of action” inside the Alpine Convention’s limits.*

In this paper, I will present some of the results of a 4-year research project carried out at the University of Geneva dealing with the regionalization process taking place in the Alps.

The contracting parties of the Alpine Convention in 1991, involved drawing a map of the Alpine region, politically recognized the Alps, for the first time, as a contiguous region with distinct environmental and cultural characteristics (Price, 1999). Thanks to the process of constitution and implementation of the Alpine Convention, it has been possible to render national borders more permeable. Some scholars argue that this event is part of a bigger process, in which the Alps are emerging as an area of collective action (see special issue of the *Journal of Alpine Research*, 92-2, 2009). In fact, inside the perimeter defined by the Alpine Convention, a large number of cross-border initiatives have been launched, mostly framed and funded by the INTERREG programmes. Thus, it is precisely inside the area sketched by the Alpine Convention that a new space of action has been created, with new actors emerging.

With the shrinking in importance of the national level, we are now observing a proliferation of new European regional entities (Deas and Lord, 2006). The Alpine region constituting one of them, probably one of the most institutionalized, notably thanks to the signature of the Alpine Convention. As a result, multiple actors drawn from different levels of governance are emerging simultaneously and reconfiguring the existing Alpine territorial framework, resulting in a complex governance system. In this paper, the focus will be on how civil society organisations, with the help of committed local actors (inhabitants, local representatives, researchers, managers of protected areas, and ecological associations) organised within networks, are bridging national boundaries to deal with issues of sustainable development.

Thus, the Alpine region can be considered a trans-border regions that, following McNeill, contributes to the shift from a one-dimensional map of Europe as having fixed borders to one in which scales of action are fluid (McNeill, 2004). But despite the capacity and skills of some key-actors to “jump scales” (Cox, 1998) and despite the willingness of networks of local actors to focus on more horizontal relations, the administrative, political and ideological structures of the networks and their members are not able to completely detach themselves from the administrative structures and borders. The Alpine case, as it will be presented, shows what Nahrath called a “great capacity of resistance of old administrative zoning” (Nahrath, 2009).

BRIT XI Mobile borders | Abstracts. Friday 9 September, Grenoble

Sylwia DOLZBLASZ, Institute of Geography and Regional Development, University of Wrocław:
From divided to shared spaces – the transition process in the Polish-Czech mountainous border area.

Mountain borders, by their very nature, tend to form a strong barrier between the neighbouring countries. Moreover, the spatial barrier is often reinforced by a functional barrier resulting mainly from the scarcity of infrastructural connections. The existence of strong political and administrative barriers between these countries deepens the marginal position of the mountain border area which lacks cooperation and connections between the actors from the regions divided by a state border. However, another scenario is also possible. The joint mountainous area divided by a state border develops a network of connections between various types of actors, which may result in the emergence of a trans-border region in the strict sense. Mountainous character of these areas do not create such strong barriers. In fact, it becomes an integrating factor, the element conditioning the development of connections and cooperation between the actors of the border region. A sine qua non for the development of such an optimistic scenario is significant reduction of the role of the state border as a barrier as well as favourable political conditions and joint / coherent development goals. The development of transborder tourism based on attractive natural conditions in the mountainous regions of the borderland also enhances the development of a transborder region.

The aim of this article is to analyse the change in the role of the state border in the mountainous parts of the Polish-Czech borderland. The paper also attempts at analysing the influence of the border and its changing character on the transformation process in the border areas, understood as a process of transforming separate border regions of both countries into a transborder region with a growing number and strength of transborder connections.

The article presents the most important factors affecting the transformation process, such as: the change in the course of state borders, political factors (Polish-Czech relationships; change in the political system in Poland and the Czech Republic in the 90's), natural features. The pace of the transformation process in the Polish-Czech border region in recent years was mostly affected by Poland's and the Czech Republic's accession to the EU, which intensified transborder co-operation. The other key factor seems to be the riddance of internal borders within the Schengen Zone, which deeply affects the integration of the border regions in a positive way. Changes in spatial transborder planning were also considered.

Special attention was given to the changes in the tourist centre in the Jizera Mountains. Geopolitical changes and the development of the state border affected the function of the mountain settlement. It evolved from glassworks, forestry services, border guards and custom office premises, through borderland protection army station to finally become a significant transborder tourism centre. With the view to analysing the integration process in the borderland, a spatial analysis was carried out into the road and rail connections as well as tourist trails. In order to conduct a more in-depth analysis of the role of the border in local tourism, a tourist survey was conducted (e.g. national border perception, the „tourist routes” in relation to the course of the border).

In order to answer the question about the character of changes on the way „from divided to shared spaces” the paper focuses on its spatial aspect.

BRIT XI Mobile borders | Abstracts. Friday 9 September, Grenoble

Aline MOORE, Muséum national d'Histoire Naturelle, Paris: Re-imagining the Balkans: transboundary protected areas as vehicles for European integration?

This paper asks how the Balkans are being 're-imagined' through the establishment of transboundary protected areas, and what the influence of the EU is in shaping this process.

The establishment of Transboundary Protected Areas (TBPAs), or Peace Parks as they are sometimes known, has been an important trend in worldwide conservation over the past 20 years. TBPAs, ecological corridors and networks, and landscape or ecoregional approaches to conservation – which all necessitate cross-border cooperation – are heavily promoted by large conservation organisations such as the WWF and IUCN, reflecting the international outlook of these institutions as well as the phenomenon of the globalisation of conservation.

In the case of the Western Balkans, these large conservation organisations are joined by another 'international' actor – the European Union. Indeed, TBPA initiatives in this region are being carried out in the specific context of preparation for integration into the EU, and thus reflect the latter's concern with ensuring stability and security in the region¹. This naturally involves encouraging cross-border cooperation, but it also means harmonising policies – both environmental and other – in line with EU norms. The overarching influence of the EU thus raises several specific questions about transboundary conservation in the Balkans, especially in relation to the modes of governance associated with these initiatives and their role within a broader European political project: to what extent are TBPAs in the Balkans contributing to the expansion of European economic, political and social models? Does the 'Europeanisation' of these regions provide further evidence of the phenomenon of globalisation, or are cross-border Peace Parks vehicles for a new brand of (European) cosmopolitanism? And what does this mean for the way these projects are received by local communities?

These questions are addressed through a case study in the mountains spanning Northern Albania, Western Kosovo and North-Eastern Montenegro: the Balkans Peace Park Project or Prokletije / Bjeshkët e Nemuna transboundary project. Qualitative research following an anthropological approach (semi-directive interviews with a range of institutional actors) was carried out in the region in 2009 and is currently ongoing.

Two factors are particularly significant with regard to the Prokletije / Bjeshkët e Nemuna project: firstly, it has been chosen as a pilot area for the creation of LAGs (Local Action Groups), based on the EC Leader+ model¹, thus reflecting the influence of European modes of governance. Secondly, the region is populated mostly by ethnic Albanians who share a (largely) common natural and cultural heritage, and incorporates two countries – Albania and Kosovo – who see European integration as a viable route to regenerating their historical ties. TBPA initiatives in the region thus raise the issue of multiple constructions of territory (natural, ethnic, cultural, political...) and the redrawing of boundaries around a shared common heritage or good.

BRIT XI Mobile borders | Abstracts. Friday 9 September, Grenoble

André SUCHET, IGA, Université Joseph Fourier : La frontière gisement d'altérité, ou l'activation d'une limite géopolitique en ressource territoriale. Géographie du tourisme et Ailleurs de proximité en Pyrénées.

The boundaries, as limits between states, can be treated as territorial resource, or a minima, as multi-scalar resource more or less territorialized (Amilhat-Szary, 2004). Indeed, both by structural and cyclical factors (economy, state or regional regulations, political and religious situations, local conditions ...), a differential between two countries generates a set of legal and illegal dynamics (Gasperini, 1996; Guillot, 2009; Velasco-Graciet, 1998, 2006). In times of peace, there is mobility of labor, smuggling or other traffic and consumption of duty-free. When prostitution is authorized on one side of the border, it grows up and sometimes it even supports the economy of a region. Otherwise, in times of conflict, we think of the exodus of refugees and smuggling of people. Wars, dictatorships, revolutions, ethnic or religious conflicts... so many situations that motivate the move. Closed borders, are often more important to cross. This sometimes brings up the paradox that the more difficult a border is to overcome, the more reasons there are to cross it.

Thus, economic borders, security or defensive planning, political, religious or ideological limits, between states were well-documented. From another perspective this work studies the border rather as a source of symbolic and geo-cultural otherness. The other side of the border is not neutral. Borders represent a source of otherness. Therefore, the border becomes a fundamental resource of the tourism phenomenon. Indeed, for most authors, tourism is motivated by the search for an Elsewhere that compensates for a daily Here. This Elsewhere can be exotic and distant (Bachimon, 1990; Cousin & Réau, 2009; Staszak, 2008), or it can be a proximal Elsewhere (Bourdeau, 2003; Piolle, 1993; Urbain, 2002).

With the goal of supporting, or, at least, debating this hypothesis, this study offers a set of empirical data and fieldwork in the Pyrenees at the border between France and Spain.

Anton GOSAR, University of Primorska, Slovenia: The cross-border brick-laying concept in the Alpen-Adriatic Region

The paper focuses on the development of tourism, in accordance with the principles of sustainability in the Dreilaendereck area of Austria, Italy and Slovenia. In the Alpen-Adria region where Slovenia, Austria and Italy join their borders the term "sustainable development" is understood as a direction towards economic co-operation, disregarding the borders and former political disputes. The Dreilaendereck (The Three-Border Area) alpine environment is characterized by several mountain ridges (The Julian Alps, The Karawanken, The Carnian Alps, The Gailtaler Alps) intermountain basins and valleys, as well as rivers and lakes (Faaker See, Woerther See, Lake Bled). But the most striking fact is that within an area of less than one-thousand square kilometers world's three major languages and cultures meet: the Romance (Italian), Germanic (Austrian) and Slavic (Slovenian). The provinces of Krain and Primorska in Slovenia, Carinthia in Austria and Friuli-Venetia Giulia in Italy, being the administrative frame for the area, have agreed to place a bid for the Winter Olympic Games. The named facts and the fact that the area is, in sense of tourism, relatively underdeveloped has provoked the following research.

Through the concept of "bricklaying" the existing tourist attractions are glued together into one single tourist product. Several topical packages combining the natural and cultural elements of the area, and disregarding the state-borders, have been put together. The major idea was not to expand existing tourist infrastructure or produce new tourist attractions. Instead, the projects

BRIT XI Mobile borders | Abstracts. Friday 9 September, Grenoble

points out the uniqueness of the area in its natural and cultural frame. The paper registers the existing supply in the area of all three countries. Through protected natural and cultural heritage sites, like within the Triglav National Park, through the winter sport enthusiast's hidden destination, like Planica (world's skijumping record) and Kranjska gora (World Cup alpine skiing), through the white-waters (Isonzo) and the Hemingway's battlegrounds of WW 1 (Caporetto), and through the outstanding features of the cultural performances (Kuffenstechen - Štehvance) and the regional cuisines of the three cultures the transborder region could become recognizable within the European Alpine bow as a new and unique tourist destination. The fact that this is an area where bilingualism in different combinations existed for centuries and where the exchange of goods always linked people has produced a unique transborder regional co-operation. Several proposed packages, like the Europeus Sine Finibus program (mountaineering cross-border mountaineering), visiting cultural heritage sites, e.g. Terra Mystica) and the White Waters Experience (Bovec), are already operational. Several others, like the All-round Ski-Pass, the WW1 Trail program and the Multi-Cultural Educational program are in their final stage of preparation and should go on stage soon.