The New European Frontiers

The New European Frontiers:
Social and Spatial (Re)Integration Issues
in Multicultural and Border Regions

Edited by

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PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

This book provides a revisited selection of more than 80 papers/contributions presented during the International Conference on "(Re)Integration and Development Issues in Multicultural and Border Regions", organised by the Science and Research Centre of the University of Primorska as a regional IGU Commission on Political Geography Conference in September 2011 in Portorož (Slovenia).

The aim of the book is to give an assessment of past developments and conflict resolutions, an analysis of current situations and problems concerning spatial and social cross-border and inter-cultural integration/disintegration and an evaluation of the future trends and opportunities for understanding, co-operation and development within a broader European context.

Part I discusses general changes/processes between European "bounded" and "integrated" spaces and societies. It includes the introductory *Chapter One* with a presentation of the major issues related to both policies and processes of spatial and social (re)integration of border and multicultural regions on the European continuum between "unity" and "diversity", discussing in particular the rather controversial convergent and divergent territorial and societal developments; also, the case of the different and emblematic border situations in Slovenia. *Chapter Two* discusses the diverse ideological constructions of cultural homogeneity and pluralism based on a critical analysis of the process of transformation of European society from nation state to integrated system. *Chapter Three*, in contrast, approaches the notion of integration as a means of managing diversity, also discussing the contested contemporary meanings of this concept.

Part II presents and discusses several regional cases and issues, mostly related to the new European frontiers emerging from the creation of numerous new "inner" and "outer" EU borders and their impact on the development and (re)integration perspectives of historically or functionally inter-dependent multicultural regions. It focuses mainly on rapidly changing situations in Central-Eastern Europe, spreading from the Baltic area to the Balkans. *Chapter Four* discusses territorial regulations in cross-border proximity in the case of the Baltic-Barents boundary area, focusing in particular on the teaching of religion and civics. *Chapter Five*

presents the Polish-Russian borderland as both a physical and a mental barrier, setting local developments in a wider context of Russian and EU's foreign policy. *Chapter Six* introduces the Karaims of Poland as a religious-ethnic heritage of the old Polish republic in a modern, integrated political geographical space. *Chapter Seven* deepens the discussion concerningteachers' attitudes towards multiculturalism in the case of Slovenian multilingual border areas. *Chapter Eight* presents a special case of shifting territory, boundary and identity in the disputed Adriatic Slovenian-Croatian contact area. *Chapter Nine*, instead, presents some selected examples of language ideologies and speech practices in the local border and multicultural context of Istria. *Chapter Ten* deals with the new developments concerning the contested aspects of cross-border residential mobility in the Slovenian-Italian borderland, representing at the same time potentials for a functional (re)integration and a new hotbed of national tensions. *Chapter Eleven* also discusses the "Schengen effects" at EU's inner borders, this time in the case of both legal and illegal traffics across the Eastern Pyrenean corridor in La Jonquera area. *Chapter Twelve* presents the key demographic aspects in the Serbian border regions, representing a major factor that continues to limit the (re)integration perspectives of the studied areas. *Chapter Thirteen* further discusses multi-ethnicity as a controversial demographic issue of Southern Serbia. *Chapter Fourteen* presents the developments of higher education networking within the multi-ethnic context of the border region of Northern Vojvodina. Similarly, *Chapter Fifteen* introduces Transcarpathia as a multi-ethnic border region at the edge of the "Schengen Space". *Chapter Sixteen* concludes Part II with a presentation of the Romanian-Ukrainian borderland as a historically integrated region on the EU outskirts.

Part III returns back to some broader issues, focusing in particular on the future policies and directions related to social and spatial (re)integration potentials. *Chapter Seventeen* discusses the changing European language policies concerning minorities, regions and migrants. *Chapter Eighteen* goes deeper with its presentation of government policy implementations concerning minority-majority interests and inter-group relations within a reconstructed socio-legal framework. *Chapter Nineteen* discusses and presents an overview of some "good ideas" for studying both the past experiences and the future potentials of border regions. *Chapter Twenty* concludes the book with a general discussion on the shifting landscapes of border studies and the challenge of relational thinking, suggesting how borders have at the same time become elements of wider control, both in terms of physical and symbolic territorial (re)ordering.

The book provides a rich collection of theoretical interventions on border issues and a set of contextual case studies that illustrates the history and contemporary life on various internal and external border regions in Europe and also how ethnic, linguistic, functional and demographic dimensions have been embedded in the making of borders and in the recent proliferation of cross-border and (re)integration activities and policies. It offers a substantial and up-dated discussion and presentation of the new European "frontiers" related to complex and controversial social and spatial (re)integration issues in multicultural and border regions. It also represents a further inter-disciplinary approach of human geographers, social and political scientists and linguists to understand and interpret the current developments of the European "unity in diversity" paradigm, based on simultaneous and continuous processes of social and spatial convergence and divergence, changing territorialities and identities, in particular on the wider EU's "inner" and "outer" border regions.

These studies convincingly display the prominence of context in understanding the regional and local geo-histories and in making sense of the meanings of borders for social communities and wider societies. They also show how (re)integration potentials of border and multicultural regions are strongly dependent on the creation of a viable multi-level social and spatial planning and cooperation system, within which both "conflict-to-harmony" processes and "common cause" behaviours and practices may become effective and thus give a new role to local communities in the numerous borderlands across Europe.

The book offers both a synthesis of current theoretical-methodological approaches and an analysis of selected case-studies provided by internationally acknowledged scholars. We hope it represents a valuable instrument for researchers and students of social and spatial integration; in particular, for all those interested in deepening their knowledge concerning current developments in European border and multicultural regions and the (re)integration potentials thereof: human and political geographers, social anthropologists, social and political scientists, as well as linguists and language planners.

However, this book would not have been possible without the time, energy and enthusiasm of many people. First of all, we thank the numerous participants of the Portorož international conference and the Conference organising team, in particular Vesna Markelj and Ksenija Perković, both assistants at the Science and Research Centre of the University of Primorska in Koper (Slovenia), who have been intensively involved in helping the editors in the preparation of the initial drafts and the moulding of the content of the book, being also in constant contact

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PART I

BETWEEN BOUNDED AND INTEGRATED SPACES/SOCIETIES

CHAPTER ONE

SPATIAL AND SOCIAL (RE)INTEGRATION OF BORDER AND MULTICULTURAL REGIONS: CREATING UNITY IN DIVERSITY?

MILAN BUFON

Introduction

The European continent, the motherland of nationalism and the part of the world where political borders and different territorial and cultural identities are mostly interrelated, is now facing new challenges regarding how best to represent its different interests within one system. With the increase of international integration, European countries began to devote greater attention to the development problems of their border areas that needed help to undertake certain functions in the international integration process. The fostering of a more balanced regional development approach also resulted in a strengthening of regional characteristics, which the new model could no longer ignore. Regional characteristics in turn have always been preserved in Europe by persistent historical and cultural elements of ethnic and linguistic variety. Therefore, it is not surprising that the process of European integration based on the new regional development model was accompanied by a parallel process of ethnic or regional awakening (Bufon 2001). The key questions for contemporary European (though of course this is not limited to Europe) political geography are: how is the process summarised under the twin labels of social and functional convergence and how will cultural and political divergence affect the (re)integration perspectives of the numerous multicultural and border regions present in our continent.

The main characteristic of the post-war European integration process, as the converse model of nation-state exclusivism and centralisation, is represented by the fact that it first ploughed its way gradually and not without difficulties within politically stable states, where the process of

national emancipation – or, rather, of nation-building – was long over and had resulted in the formation of firmly established territorial states. The new development paradigm, based on networks of territorial interdependence, gives an important role to the construction of identities and territorially organised social cohesion. Additionally, all these regional systems of action are now placed more directly in confrontation with the international market, reducing the previous exclusive role of the state (Keating and Loughlin 1996). Globalisation also influences cultural patterns and modes of thought because, as a constant interactive process, it always seeks to break down the particular, the unique and the traditional to reconstruct them as a local response to a general set of systematic stimuli. This is the threat of the deterritorialisation of society and space. There is an increasing contrast between the principle of legitimising identity, which is still providing the basis of regional resurgence versus state centralism, and the principle of resistance identity, which is turned towards the maintenance of regional autonomy and diversity (Castells 2004).

The significance of place is usually related to individual subjects, drawing together the realms of nature, society and culture. On that basis, it becomes evident that place contributes not only to the understanding of self and identity but also to the constitution of collective identity through territorially based communities. Most often, the relationships of self and community to place are associated with difference, particularism and localism. This view is prominent both in anti-modernist nostalgia for traditional community and stable identities as well as in the postmodernist valorisation of context and diversity. Each is contrasted with the centre-less space of modernism in which difference is muted through homogenising and globalising tendencies, where place becomes mere location in space. Thus the association of place with particularism and ethnos and space with universalism and demos reflects the combination of two quite distinct philosophies (Casey 1997).

These two views are also evident in discussions of building political community in the EU, in which both supporters and critics have been concerned with its apparent lack of a strong sense of identity and political community. Analysts have noted the EU's "democratic deficit", referring in part to the common view of its bureaucratic or rather Eurocratic origins and its relatively weak connections to the population of Europe. The EU has sought various ways to overcome this deficit, such as the implementation of the subsidiarity principle, which involves a vertically distributed sovereignty matching functions with the appropriate spatial scale of political community, but public indifference remains a concern. Often the debate on European political community follows a continuum

formed by the two poles of liberalism and communitarianism (Entrikin 2003). The first position emphasises rational planning and modernisation while the second stresses social attachments and belonging. On the one hand there are space economy and concerns with location and barriers to movement as reported in several publications of the European Commission, seeking a land with free flow of people and goods, which will necessarily produce a European citizenry with changeable and flexible identities and sparse connections to place and regional cultures. On the other hand, we find cultural pluralist models that consider ethnic, regional and national communities to be the locus of personal and group attachments and political identity. From this point of view, Europe is a composite of particularistic places and territories, usually associated with unassimilated cultures of various scales ranging from regions to nation-states (Smith 1995), a model that implies at best a confederal common future. From this perspective, a unified and integrated Europe becomes secondary to the goal of ethnic, regional or national autonomy.

Integration vs. Regionalisation: Creating European "Contact" Areas

Of course, the process of European integration also consists of creating a supranational common space or a sort of macro-region. In a way, the same process could be found during the national integration period, when internal regions of European countries were often more diverse than the countries were from one another. The problem is that a EU seeking common identity will have to provide both internal coherence and external closure, projecting thus nationalist ideology in European public life and integration (Calhoun 2003). The alternative is not a strictly unitary but rather overlapping social and political organisation on various scales, not necessarily bounded at the edges of nations or nation-states. We must also accept that states remain a major actor and that national governments have not only transferred power downwards but have also attempted to institutionalise competitive relations between major subnational administrative units as a means to position local and regional economies strategically within supranational, European and global circuits of capital. In this sense, central governments have attempted to retain control over major subnational political-economic spaces through the production of new regional scales of state spatial regulation.

After 1992, when the European Community took a further step toward economic unification, "integration" became the watchword in public debate over the "New Europe'. This discussion has revolved around the

different ways of retaining local and "national" competitiveness within a much enlarged "post-national" territory, but has also retained a basically economic approach, qualifying the term "integration" as the solution to problems set by the unification of markets and conditions of production. At the same time, there appeared a strong reassertion of "subnationalism" in Central-Eastern Europe, providing a territorial frame for many small nations, which also turned in bloody inter-ethnic wars and ethnic cleansing policies. But reassertion of subnationalism was not restricted to Central-Eastern Europe, as the cases of Scottish, Welsh or Catalan nationalism make clear, providing a clear contradiction between the re-emerging "pre-national" movements seeking further political fragmentation and cultural diversity and the process of creation of an integrated post-national Europe (Smith 1992).

The differences among these geographic conceptions become more apparent in the consideration of borders. In the market model, the internal borders of Europe disappear but an external border is erected in their stead. In the cultural pluralist model, the zones of inclusion and exclusion remain clear and are marked by places of strong cultural attachments. Europe's internal borders may change from time to time but generally they are strengthened or made increasingly impermeable; since internal borders provide an instrument for diversity, external borders become redundant. Once again one faces the dilemma implied in the opposition of ethnos and demos: boundaries help create diversity and common identity; their elimination risks the creation of a uniform, placeless world with weakly attached citizens. A possible solution to this situation is sought in the emergence of overlapping, differentiated places of attachment with relatively permeable boundaries: the regions.

As Keating and Loughlin argued in 1996, new types of regionalism and of region are the product of both decomposition and recomposition of the territorial framework of public life, consequent on changes in the state, the market and the international context. They noted how regions are not natural entities, but rather social constructions, in a given space, representing the confluence of various economic, social and political processes in territory (Keating and Loughlin 1996). From this perspective, the regional space could be simultaneously a territorial space, a functional space and a political space. But it should be also clear that there is no regional level of government in Europe and that regions remain in many parts of Europe an "invented" category, which plays only a sporadic and partial role in the continental architecture of politics. In some cases, powerful regions do emerge; in others, large cities may constitute themselves as social and spatial actors.

Nevertheless, the European integration process has deeply challenged the Westphalian system as an "organisation of the world into territorially exclusive, sovereign nation-states, each with an internal monopoly of legitimate violence" (Caporaso 1996, 34). Even though such an idealised model has never been completely realised in practice, it continues to dominate our thinking about polities and institutional change in the new millennium. In fact, the most far-reaching transformations beyond the Westphalian system have occurred in Europe, where integration is becoming embedded in a wider discourse on globalisation and regionalisation. The debate has been centred on two questions: first, does the EU still represent an inter-governmental regime dominated by the executives of the nation states or has it evolved beyond such a state-centred system, opening up the question of state-centric versus multi-level governance – a concept which is still linked to the notion of territoriality? This is particularly the case with borderlands and cross-border regions, the "front lines" of territorially demarcated modern states (Blatter 2003). These areas are being shaped by intensive socio-economic and socio-cultural interdependencies and have been helpful not only in respect to new and concrete integration forms between neighbouring states but also in removing the problem of the "other" within the EU space.

Current processes in European "contact" areas are increasingly influencing the shaping of people's personalities, making them multi-lingual and multi-cultural, despite the opposition of traditional "uni-national" political structures. With the abandonment of the old demands for boundary revision, pursued by various nationalistic myths, modern European societies are intensifying their efforts to increase cross-border cooperation; within this framework, the spatial function of national minorities and local communities in these borderlands is acquiring greater importance (Bufon 2005). Thus, if on the one hand it is true that the majority or dominant group, independently of its political attitude towards the minority, cannot deprive the latter of its potential regional role, then on the other hand the actual implementation of this role still very much depends on its institutionalisation and wider social promotion. Research investigations in Central European border areas have shown that the intensity of cross-border cooperation depends above all on the presence on both sides of the border of urbanised areas and also of national minorities, together with traditional cultural and social ties on the basis of consolidated former territorial units (Bufon 1998). This situation could be explained by the need for the local population to maintain its historical regional structure, which the various border changes destroyed, especially in the gravitational, economic, social and cultural senses. Paradoxically,

the greater the problems in the political division of a homogeneous administrative, cultural and economic region, the greater the probability for such a politically divided area to develop into an integrated border region, once sufficient conditions for cross-border relations are provided. These new forms of cross-border regionalism are of particular interest in Central Europe, where they not only have an important functional role in the implementation of social and economic integration at the inter-state and inter-regional levels, but also in the preservation of cultural features and the strengthening of inter-ethnic coexistence and cooperation. This is especially the case in those areas where national minorities, resulting from a political division of a common ethnic space, or historical cross-border regional communities, resulting from a political division of long-lasting historical regions, are present; it is not only in Central Europe that such areas are more the rule than the exception. In fact, the image of Europe as a continent of few "big" nations has been transforming (again) into a cultural and linguistic mosaic, where cultural contacts are normal rather than exceptional.

For this reason, minorities and local communities in the area examined perform the additional role of supporting regional development efforts as well as maintaining cross-border contacts and co-operation. Minority institutions, however, also have an important role in communicating with the majority environment, where inter-ethnic contacts are more common, offering the local population a multicultural and multilingual dimension. Therefore, areas of cultural and linguistic contact with sufficient protection for preserving minorities and their language play a special role. They no longer represent a potential or actual area of conflict between peoples and countries but have become areas of harmonious social mixture and coexistence (Klemenčič and Bufon 1994). Even in eastern-central Europe, where the formal elimination of political borders seems to be more difficult, they bring precious elements of both inter-ethnic and cross-border cooperation and (re)integration.

In fact, the "unity in diversity" European integration model will be tested and eventually become operative in the many European "contact" areas (Bufon 2006a). It is not so much a question of international contact and of organisation of functional economic, social and administration hindrances in cross-border traffic as it is a question of contact between different nations and ethnic and linguistic communities as well as the creation of actual rules for coexistence and preservation of cultural peculiarities. The elimination of these last "borders" will imply a definitely new idea of the traditional, ethnocentric approach and social behaviour based on the exclusion of "others" and "different" ones

represented by the classic nationalism. It will be necessary to realise that different ethnic, regional and linguistic identities exist among national identities and that the borders between them are anything but linear and definite, creating a very complex and "subdivided" social-cultural space, in which continuous trespasses and exchanges are common. In spite of this continuous "movement" on the edges – or, better, in the areas of cultural contact – cultural areas/landscapes are incredibly stable and offer a kind of "longue-durée" background to which eventual social spaces more or less consciously try to adapt.

In this context, the role of local or regional communities is brought to the fore in an increasingly specific way, not only in the preservation of their indigenous cultural space but also in the establishment of cross-border and trans-community contacts. In some cases of partitioned historical and multicultural regions, the limitation of conflicts has ended up by creating a new functional space (Ratti and Reichman 1993). Multicultural border regions are thus the major European laboratories for studying "old" and "new" borders in our continent. If the EU challenges nation-state projects from above, ethnic and regional conflicts challenge those projects from below. For this reason, territory and identity, in all their dimensions, still matter and deserve an appropriate governance of both convergent and divergent European social and spatial processes.

European Instruments for Cross-Border Policies

The intensification of cross-border cooperation is usually associated with the process of increasing economic globalisation and social co-dependence, with cross-border cooperation expected to contribute to the elimination of actual or potential conflicts in borderlands. In view of this, cross-border regionalism is envisaged to become a constituent part of a complex, multi-level system of governance incorporating not only national, but also local and regional agents. From the normative point of view, such transfer of power would demand all the parties involved to reach a higher level of international cooperation, eventually leading to new forms of regional governance carried out above or below the existing or prevailing national practices. According to Scott (1999), cross-border regionalism is a system of regional forms of cross-border cooperation characterised by very heterogeneous institutional strategies as it is constituted through multilateral agreements relevant not only to individual national governments but also to local administration and civil society. This system may be based upon the European regional policy, whose most

noticeable manifested forms are the Interreg programme and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

These European policies undoubtedly resulted from positive outcomes of cross-border entities such as Benelux, a union operating at wider regional level, or Euregio, an association operating at lower regional level along the German-Dutch border. Within such a context, cross-border cooperation envisages the formation of special planning commissions usually composed of institutional "administrators" of the parties involved as well as representatives of different professional bodies, in particular local universities and other "non-governmental" social organisations, mostly from the economic and cultural fields (Perkmann 1999). Cross-border regionalism thus proves to be not only a system of government but also a system of integration of different interests and development visions that may have a more "long-term" and "sustainable" basis, thus de facto facilitating the (re)integration of borderlands. On the other hand, this may be simply a manifestation of short-term opportunism in obtaining European funding or "patching up" local budgets. In the case of Interreg, its major objectives are indeed economic cooperation, development of cross-border infrastructure and cooperation in the environmental field.Nevertheless, the programme also takes into account social and cultural aspects of cross-border cooperation. Naturally, emphases fall differently in different borderland situations. Along "new" internal borders between the former "Western" and "Eastern" Europe, the emphasis is placed on "harsh" cross-border infrastructural measures to re-establish cross-border communication. In contrast, along "old" internal borders within the EU 15 area, substantial funding is mostly allocated to "soft" integration at information and social levels and to facilitate better coordination of development planning and functional measures (Marks and Hooghe 2001). Even if joint, cross-border social and spatial planning has recorded several notable achievements, such as the establishment of nature reserves and protected areas and the development of cross-border transport infrastructure and cooperation between universities, it remains underdeveloped. This may be due to its being impeded, on the one hand, by various administrative and decision-making procedures on both sides of the borderand, on the other, by different forms of local patriotism springing from historical "conflict-burdened" motives or merely from the pre-election calculations of local politicians.

The European case indicates that the issues related to cross-border integration and cooperation are increasingly addressed at the institutional level and therefore primarily a manifestation of de facto integration and cooperation of local and regional authorities financially supported by a

common transnational institution, i.e. the EU. However, the EU does foster a myriad of cross-border incentives that may be quite non-transparent and chaotic since, in certain areas, the various Euroregions neither provide for real coordination between the neighbouring areas nor between the public and private interests within individual borderlands. Regional cross-border policies thus remain mostly administrative and bureaucratic in character, only to a limited extent addressing real life and real needs of the borderland population. Nevertheless, it is precisely these policies that can be regarded as one of the most visible elements of contemporary European multi-level governance, composing an unprecedented network of co-dependence between transnational macro-regional institutions, states, regions and local communities (Scott 2002). Since the mid-1980s, individual "national" politics in Europe have had to respond to the challenge of gradual "Europeanisation", enabling regional and local communities to get in direct contact with transnational authorities in Brussels. In this way, so-called "subsidiarity" became the guiding principle of reforms carried out since 1988 in accordance with the European structural policy.

The principle of subsidiarity not only calls for a process of vertical coordination between individual decision-making levels but also introduces non-government agents into the decision-making process. Thus it somehow "breaks up" traditional hierarchical relations within individual national systems and encourages the "regionalisation" of social and spatial processes both at the top-down and bottom-up levels, which naturally may give rise to new potential conflicts. After 1989, these developments were further complicated by in-depth geopolitical transformations on the European map that, on the one hand, gave new momentum to tendencies for horizontal (re)integration of the continent and, on the other, slowed down the process of vertical integration or federalisation of the European political system. This was due to not only to a great number of new "national" players (which were, however, mostly centralised in character) and increasing economic globalisation (giving rise to "global" crises) but also to unexpected internal conflicts such those that occurred in some of the territories of former Yugoslavia. The EU did not manage to provide a unanimous response to all these new challenges since its major members were increasingly – and quite explicitly – promoting their own political and economic interests within the communitarian bodies.

In 2006, with cross-border integration often being hindered by national legislations and other administrative impediments, the European Commission introduced a new legal instrument.The European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) established a cross-border legal entity

empowered to carry out cross-border programmes and projects. The EGTC cooperative groups are allowed to develop their own structure, manage their own resources and employ their own personnel. Potential EGTC members sign a convention and adopt a statute in line with the principles of the European legal system; meanwhile, the relevant national bodies are obliged to approve their convention on cooperation, if appropriate, within three months. The EGTC cooperative groups established so far provide common public services based on already established Euroregions or are re-established with the aim of building cross-border infrastructure. To this end, they are engaged in providing cross-border transport services and other social services, launching joint agencies in the fields of energy and environmental protection, developing bilingual information systems in borderlands, collaborating in the field of research and education, etc. (Hobbing 2005). The majority of EGTC cooperative groups have established administrative bodies the members of which consist not only of their founding parties but also of other stakeholders and NGOs.

The EGTC instrument is envisaged to facilitate the operation and establishment of new Euroregions: entities that have proved to be the most efficient means for the promotion and implementation of European integration processes and grass roots policies. In addition, it is an expression of broader efforts to create a common (European) system of multi-level governance in the fields of spatial planning and regional development practices, the aims of which are to assure, on the one hand, solidarity and integration and, on the other, growth and competitiveness. This development dilemma is undoubtedly a representative reflection on a broader vacillation between federal and confederal concepts of how to organise the EU. The former presupposes a more integrated as well as more hierarchical and centralised order, with the "free market" regulating social and spatial development potentials in an open and competitive European system, while the latter gives precedence to diversity and the possibility of fairly large interventions by state regulators in the planning and implementation of development policies. It is the confederal approach that seems more in favour of cross-border policies since they are a result of complex multi-level regulation and channelling to which the very presence of the state border, as the principal element of social and spatial discontinuity, gives its proper sense and motivation. By contrast, under a more open system the internal borders would lose their significance. As a result, cross-border cooperation and integration management, regulated by the Interreg programme and the EGTC instrument, are largely bureaucratic in character and do not satisfy the expectations of the various Euroregions and local communities. This is especially the case when Euroregions and

cross-border programmes are established only at a formal level and with the aim of attracting European funding to individual administration units in borderland areas or even to the central state-directed apparatuses supervising them (Bufon 2011).

"Internal" and "external" co-dependence, however, changes the nature and function of political borders, transforming them from separators of social spaces into their integrators. European cross-border policies have thus expanded the classic, "closed" linear concept of the political border to an "open", dynamic geographical area of cooperation and integration within which the standard enforcement of visa regimes and strict border controls would undoubtedly function as a highly disturbing element. The "open" border concept brings together potentially quarrelsome sides and, by encouraging their co-dependence, turns them from potential "enemies" into "friends" or, at least, "partners". However, the political interests of individual states in the preservation of the old Westphalian (closed or state-centric) concepts are not always in complete accordance with (open or integration-oriented) visions and policies of the EU or its common bodies. Within such a context, the reality of European cross-border policies and practices along internal and external borders is inevitably fairly labile and contradictory. This reflects a perpetual vacillation, not so much between the "abstract" federal and confederate concepts of European organisation as within the "real" tendency on the one hand to preserve and emphasise separate ethnic and national identities and positionsand on the other to search for a possible common European demos. This vacillation also responds to (divided) historical memories and concrete (common) needs of the present. These dilemmas and development splits are also related to the question of how to regard and manage different territorial and social dimensions recently addressed by several authors (e.g.: Anderson 1996, Beck 2007, Brenner 1999) who problematised the contradictory intertwining of the various co-existing forms of territoriality and the changing relation between "internal" and "external" spaces and societies in Europe.

Nevertheless, borderlands have recently witnessed the development of new forms of horizontal and vertical co-dependence and co-management involving both European institutions and central or peripheral authorities and other stakeholders from two or more countries, which can entrust the management of cross-border policies to special joint bodies or Euroregions in order to make it as efficient as possible. In short, Euroregions are a very good manifestation of a new, multi-level European regional and integration policy within which, however, different relationships between co-dependence and co-management are anything but determined and

stable.This crucially affects the success of the Euroregions themselves as well as the "multi-level" management approach taken in order to strengthen cross-border territorial entities and their functions. If the realisation of European policies goes hand in hand with their regionalisation, such developments may be regarded as a more or less conscious attempt to lessen the influence of the state, which remains the main and most influential agent in the process of social and spatial planning. Even in the EU, the state remains the main bearer of the spatial and social identity of the population (Paasi 2002). Cultural diversity is most probably the most distinctive characteristic of our continent: the continuing prevalence of nation-states in this part of the world indicates that political representativeness in the region is mostly based on an ethnic and linguistic differentiation of the European population. Considering that the element of "representativeness" is present in the process of the regionalisation of the European area, regions can take over from the state the function of new ideological "containers" of the identity represented in a certain regional environment, which in turn inherits the status of dominant social group through regional political autonomy or self-government mechanisms.

Cross-border policies are most probably the most tangible manifestation of the new system of governance and planning gradually developed within the EU system. This process of "Europeanisation" of spatial and development policies has led to the emergence of new institutional structures and ties that perforce transcend state borders and challenge traditional hierarchy in the decision-making process. According to some authors (e.g. Castells 1998), such developments bring about the formation of a new, postmodern socio-political network structure or authority manifested in the system of the so-called multi-level governance involving not only inter- and supra- but also sub-state dimensions. The first dimension is somehow personified by the European Council, the second by the European Commission and the European Parliament and the third by different Euroregions and cross-border regional associations. Within such a context, the Interreg programme functions as an actual possibility of implementing multi-level, network governance and can be regarded as a "success story" of European integration policies "on the ground". But this project-oriented cross-border cooperation and integration is also a reflection of a typical "Eurocratic" practice that has, on the one hand, unleashed aproliferation of different pragmatic agencies and committees and, on the other, the realisation of new development scenarios and visions for the future. The latter, however, have to cope with various development and spatial regulations since the perspective of

the"open" European social and planning area is still divided into "closed" national systems that rely on the European principle of subsidiarity to secure their validity.

Integration Processes in Multicultural and Border Regions: Towards a Reconstruction of Social Spaces

In any case, changes in the function and status of different territorial units and levels lead to changes in the function and status of their borders, which in today's Europe mostly move in the continuum between socio-cultural "divergence" and socio-economic "convergence". This relationship gives rise to major problems with cross-border cooperation since in many places there may appear a significant discrepancy between the expectations and needs of the local population and the practice of cross-border policies. The two communities meeting the other one along the border are potentially both spatially close and socially apart. Spatial "closeness" is mostly dependent on the typology of the border regime, which can pose major or minor obstacles to cross-border movement. Social "distance", on the other hand, depends on the level of socio-cultural homogeneity and the degree of functional integration of the borderland population and area. The term "cross-border cooperation" itself presupposes that there exists a certain "obstacle" consisting in the border that has to be "overcome". On the other hand, the term "social and spatial (re)integration" implies a complete removal of the "obstacle" (Houtum and Struever 2002). In such a context, analysts of border situations and cross-border co-dependence potentials have to consider both the symbolic and functional nature of this "obstacle". It can be established that it is precisely because internal borders no longer function as real "obstacles" in the EU that they increasingly assume the role of "symbolic", mental borders, which can, again, become concrete "obstacles" to an actual (re)integration of both the border area and wider society.

Thus, borders everywhere produce environments simultaneously presenting opportunity or danger, contact or conflict, cooperation or competition, convergence or divergence. The feasible prevalence of one or the other option depends on time and place; in some cases, both options can co-exist in the same area (Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). Another problem, characteristic of the European situation, springs from the genesis of the border line itself. This is because the same political border can be simultaneously regarded as an object of historic "victory" by one side and as an object of historic "defeat" by the other. In addition, this perception

may differ between state centres and in the borderland areas themselves, where the presence of national minorities can generate the existence of two contradictory views of the past that often have a crucial impact on the feasibility of cross-border communication and even social and spatial (re)integration in the present.

When discussing the level of cross-border co-dependence or integration, it would make sense to compare this level with those related to the co-dependence or integration between the borderland in question and nearby areas within the same state system, as well as to observe changes in these various spatial and social forms of integration through time. In such manner, one can test the hypothesis that traditionally connected regions, partitioned by the political border during a more recent nation-states formation period, tend to be better connected or more co-dependent than traditionally separated borderlands (Bufon and Minghi 2000). That is especially the case with the various historically multicultural regions in central and eastern Europe, which represent not only a great capacity for functional (re)integration but also a relatively high potential for conflicts owing to divergent historical "memory" and, consequently, underdeveloped forms of institutional cross-border integration. Underdeveloped forms of institutional – that is to say social and political – cross-border integration can also be met in a number of "old" borderlands in Western Europe due to a centralised form of state organisation. Such borderlands also typically foster underdeveloped ties of functional cross-border cooperation whose existence is otherwise facilitated by social and cultural affinities on the one hand and social and economic disparities on the other. With the latter diminishing, social and cultural affinities along EU "internal" borders play an increasingly important role in the EU; along "external" borders, the main drive of cross-border interactions usually consist of social and economic disparities (Bufon 2006b). Below, we will discuss transformations in convergent/divergent cross-border processes in the case of Slovenia.

Slovenia represents a good example of the above-mentioned changes in both its border status and borderland function thus comprising one of the most typical and well-documented border or "contact" areas in Europe. In order to "measure" the effects of European integration processes on the intensity of cross-border cohesion, we conducted a telephone survey over two separate periods, covering all of the Slovenian border areas. The first was carried out in 2007, some months after Slovenia's admission to the Schengen area.The process was repeated in 2010 (for a more complete presentation of the compared results, see Bufon 2013). In the first part of the survey, we tried to assess the impact of this event on the people's

expectations regarding perceived changes in the level of cross-border cohesion. It is interesting to note that between 2007 and 2010 the border areas with Italy and Austria that were previously better functionally integrated showed a decline in "positively" oriented respondents (from over 48% to around 33%).On the other hand, the only area that witnessed an increase in terms of positive future general development expectations was the Slovene-Hungarian borderland, which represented the "iron-curtain" border type until the events of 1991. Slightly more "optimistic"– or, more precisely, less "pessimistic"– views were held by the population living along the border with Croatia. In this area, which previously comprised an administrative border during the former Yugoslavian period but then became an external EU border, the percentage of respondents who believed that cross-border ties would deteriorate fell from over 52% in 2007 to around 39% in 2010.

According to respondents' perceptions, functional (re)integration following Slovenia's admission to the Schengen zone has been particularly pronounced in the Italian-Slovene borderland. Here the greatest positive changes were perceived not only in the "classic" area of shopping opportunities (as noticed by about 48% of the respondents) but even more in terms of cross-border work opportunities (51%), study (57%), real estate purchases (49%), the fostering of personal contacts (43%) and attendance of cultural events (33%). In the Austrian-Slovene borderland, respondents emphasised positive changes in the fields of cross-border shopping, work and study (between 48% and 53%).At the same time, respondents in the Hungarian-Slovene borderland found the greatest positive changes in the cross-border cooperation between municipalities (62%), fostering personal contacts (43%) and attendance of cultural events (37%).

The importance of cultural cohesion for the development of (re)integration potentials is confirmed by the high percentage of people living in Slovene border areas that are fluent speakers of the neighbouring country's language. As many as 90% of respondents along the border with Italy, 85% of those living along the border with Austria, 57% of those living along the border with Hungary and all respondents in the Slovene-Croatian borderland are able to speak and/or understand their neighbours' tongue. Around 41% of respondents living along the border with Italy are regular watchers of Italian TV programmes while cross-border TV followers counted around 30% of respondents along the border with Croatia, around 22% of respondents along the border with Austria and 11% of respondents along the border with Hungary. Another interesting aspect of the issue was the comparison of the results of the two surveys as