

BETWEEN PAST EXPERIENCES AND FUTURE POTENTIALS: AN AGENDA FOR BORDER STUDIES IN CENTRAL-EASTERN EUROPE

Milan BUFON

Institute for Geographic Studies of the University of Primorska, 1 Garibaldijeva st., 6000 Koper, Slovenia, e-mail: milan.bufon@upr.si

Alexandru ILIEȘ*

University of Oradea, Department of Geography, Tourism and Territorial Planning – TSAC, 1 University St., 410087, Oradea, Romania/ University of Gdansk, Department of Geography and Regional Development, 4 Bazynskiego st., 80-952 Gdansk, Poland, e-mail: ilies@uoradea.ro

Abstract: The proposed study aims at highlight the existing selective experiments in literature and in authors' practice in the study of borders and border areas, and at the identification of common elements for defining the present and future potential. There are highlighted a series of theoretical experiences and practical researches, carried out by the geographers on border space, definitions and spatial determinations of the border and transboundary areas. For concrete examples there are presented and analyzed situations of border and cross-border areas in Central Europe and the examples are centered on the cases of Slovenia and Romania. In the same context there are presented the elements and mechanism generating border and cross-border territorial systems, with high degree of functionality by combining principles as that of uniformity, the functionality or integration, as well as their typology related to the cultural and economic components.

Key words: border, cross-border regions, Central Europe, Slovenia, Romania

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INTRODUCTION

Alongside the *border* as a markedly linear spatial and socio-political phenomenon that in the past played the role of political and strategic isoline, the new geographical term *border areas* gradually entered political geography; it became clear that the attention of political geographers should be turned toward research of broader geopolitical aspects of political decisions and interventions in an area of which the establishment and changing of political borders is so emblematic, as well as toward social and spatial effects that the borders in a given regional reality have. Thus from a spatial point of view, modern political geography studies borders because they indicate the territorial dimension of

* Corresponding author

political organisations and systems, while also affecting the formation of special border areas that do not only differ according to the nature of political border, but also continue transforming according to the changes in border location and the functional border dynamics (e.g. the border's high or low permeability, the attitude of border dwellers to cross-border contacts). The significance of the geography of border landscapes lies therefore particularly in the fact that it does not only analyse borders in the framework of political-strategic and political-historical studies, but sets them in a framework of research of processes within border regions and the social spaces defined therein.

Several authors have tried to define in more detail the new tasks of political geography in this field and the methodology of research in the *geography of border landscapes*, but most of the papers dealing with regional aspects of border areas or with effects of the borders in a social space, remain fairly heterogeneous both from the theoretical and methodological points of view. There are only a few comparative studies that could contribute to the discovery and definition of basic processes in border regions; in fact, the more researchers have delved into analyses of these regions, the more complex and intricate has become the network of factors, effects and processes marking the structure and the dynamics of the development of border areas. These are not only a result of the interaction of different cultural, social, economic and political factors and elements on an inter-state level, but they also express the relationship between the local community and the respective centre, as well as the actual relationship between the two local border communities in the so-called *cross-border regions*. In this article, we would like to present some past experiences and current issues, based on the research produced in Central-Eastern Europe in particular, as an area where borders have perhaps opened the greatest debate about both *divergence* and *convergence potentials* as well as *(re)integration processes* in its numerous 'contact' multicultural border regions (Bufon, 2006a and 2006b).

THEORY AND RESEARCH EXPERIENCES OF THE GEOGRAPHY OF BORDER LANDSCAPES

Several studies have pointed out that it is precisely the 'contact' multicultural border regions – in which the population from both sides of the border often display joint regional allegiance or a cognate ethnic and linguistic structure – representing the linking element that most effectively contributes to the development of cross-border relations and international integration. The individual border areas within these regions are on the one hand connected to the home country, while on the other, due to many affinities and functional ties with the neighbouring area, they represent a genuine zone of transition. These aspects of border regions have come to the fore of the European political interest through the consolidation of integration processes on the continent add many research projects were carried out in the last decades with the purpose of defining the basic elements and processes in cross-border inter-connection, and the effect exerted on such inter-connection by the circumstances of more or less open borders. *Propulsive and rejecting factors in cross-border cooperation* were ascertained, for example:

- the same (high) degree of development of industrial societies in border areas;
- a joint system of information, and knowledge of the language of the neighbouring country;
- a positive attitude towards neighbours and cross-border cooperation;
- lack of cross-border connections in transport infrastructure and communication;

- incongruent planning of cross-border areas;
- adjustment of the population to a closed-border situation.

In addition to these, several other spatial and social processes in the transformation of border areas and their adjustment to the frontier regime were tackled, as well as elements of functional interconnection of border areas and their spatial extent. All these empirical findings obtained on the example of different Central European border areas undoubtedly bore a part in the development of relatively early and consolidated concepts in setting up functional and regional-planning forms of cross-border integration, in which geography played an important role. On the basis of such concepts the *border areas* were defined as a special type of peripheral region in which both economic and social lives are directly influenced by the proximity of an international border.

This framework provided a ground for development of that section of geography of border landscapes which mainly concentrated on researching individual border areas, and contributed to the completion of a more empirical methodology that would perceive the border in an explicitly spatial – or more precisely – *zonal* sense. Naturally, within such frameworks different approaches and interpretations are possible, too: some researchers emphasised broader regional infrastructural or macroeconomic aspects of cross-border cooperation above all, others stressed the importance of small-scale cross-border exchange in the microeconomic, social and cultural spheres. In the former case, standard research methods of economic and regional analysis are most frequently employed, while in the latter we can often find qualitative-oriented works drawing especially on the findings of modern social and cultural geography.

System analyses conducted in the 1970s and 80s pointed out three main effects that the borders have on space (Strassoldo, 1982): *direct* (e.g., doubling of the functions of both border areas), *indirect* (e.g., economic benefits created by the contact between two different systems) and *induced* (e.g., development of infrastructure). Further, according to their degree of openness borders were classified into *permeable*, *rejecting* and *impermeable*. Of course, there are no completely closed or completely open borders; rather, near each border areas develop with a greater or smaller degree of openness. On the basis of the ‘openness/closeness’ relation and the dynamic/static character with regard to border areas, Strassoldo defined four types of border situation: *situation of border area* along an open and dynamic border, a “*border-bridge situation*” along an open yet static border, a “*no-man’s-land*” *situation* along a dynamic and closed border, and a “*situation of periphery*” along a static and closed border (Strassoldo, 1973).

But already in the mid-sixties, Prescott began laying great emphasis particularly on four problem groups that political geographers should take into account in their research into border landscapes (Prescott, 1965 and 1987):

- border as an element of cultural landscape, its character, course and transformations;
- characteristics and structure of border areas, regional differences and similarities between the two parts of border landscape; influence of political factors and the border on the development of separate regional forms in an originally uniform natural or cultural landscape;
- impact of the border on spatial and social organization of the border area population, directions of its spatial mobility in everyday life, perception and appraisal of the neighbouring environment as well as one’s own;

- relationship between the countries' centres and border areas, political decisions affecting the border's character, border regime and cross-border relationships.

In the same period, Minghi (1963) stressed the need for the political-geographic interest to be transferred from borders in conflict to "ordinary" border areas, and to concentrate on an in-depth study of the numerous aspects bearing influence on a harmonic co-existence of border populations. He later applied this concept to *House's model* of cross-border interactions (House, 1981), which put a great emphasis on contacts and exchanges between the two determinate border areas, and onto *Rokkan's model* of relationships between centres and peripheries in the process of political transformations of modern societies (Rokkan and Urwin, 1983). The first model established that while local cross-border exchanges cannot develop in a situation of borders in conflict or in countries with centralised state systems, they represent a greater part of cross-border interactions in "normal" international and domestic policy situations. The second model ascribed particular importance to regional movements in peripheral and most often also border areas, as well as to the role played by peripheral local communities and minorities in preserving their autochthonous settlement territory (cultural landscape), establishing cross-border contacts and limiting conflicts in case of division of this territory through the process of drawing borders. In short, modern research of border areas (Gallusser, 1994; Rumley and Minghi, 1991) has been dedicating much more attention to the *cultural aspects* of border areas, and consequently to the local spatial behaviour of the border population and issues related to their regional, ethnic and linguistic identities.

On the basis of the development of systems of cross-border relations with high functionality there is the free movement of people and the ease of penetration of state border barriers. In this context, the area examined can be identified with one or more of the four types of cross-border relations between contiguous states, proposed by Martinez (1994, 3-4): alienated (no relations); co-existent (minimum opening); interdependent (willingness between adjacent countries to establish cross-border network and partnership) and integrated (abolished economic and political barrier, free flow of goods and people) and developed by Timothy (1999, 185), by identifying five levels of cooperation and partnership: alienated; co-existence; cooperation (by initial efforts between adjacent jurisdictions to solve common problems, particularly in terms of illegal migration and resource utilization); collaboration (work together on development issues and agree to some degree of equity in their relationship) and integration (partnership without boundaries and both regions are functionally merged).

DEFINITIONS OF BORDER AREAS AND DETERMINING THEIR EXTENT

Parallel to the development of theoretical-methodological concepts, in the geography of border landscapes the need emerged for a more accurate definition of the very space along the border. Namely, the term *border area* is usually understood as the area within a determinate state in which influences of the proximity of a political border can be felt, while the term *border* or *cross-border region* denotes a space comprising the border areas on both sides of a border. As Perpillou already ascertained in the mid-sixties (Perpillou, 1966), some borders represent a geographical boundary between two countries, while around other borders small territorial units form within the neighbouring countries. Such a

border region is thus not just a landscape, a part of which happens to be a border, nor is it the sum of two separate border areas. And neither is it a wholly homogeneous unit, as the presence of a border itself translates as a fundamental discontinuity for such a space. The interconnection of such a region should therefore be sought particularly in functional relationships between the two border areas in question, which can develop on the basis of ordinary gravitational trends between urban and employment centres and their hinterlands due to the existence of certain *disparities* – mostly of an *economic nature* – or due to the existing *affinities* – mostly of a *cultural character* – between one side of the border and the other (Guichonnet and Raffestin, 1974; Ricq, 1970). Therefore, a border region as such is asserting itself as a combination of the *principle of functionality*, which originates in the adjustment of the border population and border economy to the given circumstances, and the *principle of homogeneity*, which derives from the fact that both border areas often share the affiliation to the same cultural landscape, while the border population is characterized by the same cultural features.

Aside from these terminological problems there is also the question of the very *delimitation* of border regions, as we can at the same time observe different possible variations based on institutional, functional, socio-cultural, and historical criteria. Although various international acts, upon adoption of bilateral agreements on the regulation of cross-border movement of goods and people, usually determine the border areas – for which special allowances are provided – as an area extending to a width of up to 25 km from the borderline, the actual extent of a border region can be quite different from the administrative or institutional one, and most of all much more differentiated (Biucchi and Godard, 1981; Ercmann, 1987). Romanian's exemple as an area extending to a with of up to 30 km is presented in figure 1 (Ilieș and al., 2010). Wherever there is a cultural affinity and economic inter-dependence between two border areas, the spatial extent of both above mentioned cross-border connections most often represents the basic core of a cross-border region. However, the limits of such areas differ greatly from one another according to the indicator of cross-border integration used, as these can be influenced by different factors ranging from the very administrative division of the border areas to the transport and other infrastructural, demographic, economic, and also cultural, historical and physical factors. In circumstances of economic disparity between the two border areas, for instance, small-scale exchanges in the fields of supply, work and leisure time activities are more apt to follow the current differences in exchange rates, inflation rate and purchasing power, and therefore hardly represent permanent predispositions of individual border areas for satisfying and developing various social, economic and spatial activities. All these cross-border transactions are rather unstable and can lead the subjects interested now to this, now to that side of the border. An entirely different situation exists regarding cultural and other basic social contacts that originate from the need of the border population to maintain traditional links within the framework of a common cultural and social space or a common regional identity, and are therefore characterized mostly by stability and persistence even in case of less open border regimes (Bufon, 1998a; Klemenčič and Bufon, 1994).

There are only a few cases of complete liberalization of border regimes in the world, but based on the integration processes so far, occurring most intensively on the European continent, it can be seen that the more the border

area is integrated and the lesser the barrier effect of political borders, the more the border regions begin to act according to ordinary functional-gravitational principles, as noticed already by Christaller in the case of southern German border areas. This type of development is especially noticeable in the border cities that had been severed by the border from their traditional hinterlands and are now regaining their former function within the border area, while twin cities are merging into new and wider urban centres. On the other hand, in many 'old' border areas the persistence of political division has contributed to the formation of separate social spaces, and even though the border's function as a barrier has already been eliminated (e.g., among the signatory states of the Schengen Agreement) and institutionalised cross-border regions have been established, no distinct cross-border social and spatial integration can be observed.

Thus in terms of (re)integration *typology* (Bufon, 1998b), border areas and border regions in Europe fall into three basic groups: the *western European*, the *central European* and the *eastern European*. Typical of the western European group is the presence of "old" borders, which either belong to the antecedent type or developed parallel to the historical regions in this area. In these environments relatively early forms of cross-border cooperation emerged as early as the sixties and seventies, and in the same period the first cross-border regions formed on institutional bases as well. These include individual regions and other administrative units from both sides of the border and endeavour to solve determinate functional and planning problems within these limits, while at the same time encouraging cross-border cooperation on a socio-cultural level, which is in these border regions usually underdeveloped. Also characteristic of this type of border region is the existence of individual administrative units of different rank conjoining into a cross-border interest network that could be defined as a "*region of regions*."

The second typological group of border areas and regions is most characteristic of central Europe. In this area historical regions often do not match the actual space regionalisation in the framework of individual states because numerous subsequent delimitation processes took place--especially following the two world wars in the last century--thus politically dividing the originally homogeneous historical regions into several units. The persistence of socio-cultural links among the border populations within such historical regions in most cases led to the spontaneous formation of cross-border regions. Consequently, these cross-border regions do not fit the administrative spaces, rather match the existing or historical cultural regions; also, they do not enjoy any special support from the local or state authorities, which at times even resent cross-border cooperation because of unresolved issues between the two states that were caused by the delimitation processes. Nevertheless, aside from interstate cooperation and openness, such types of border region also display a remarkably high level of social integration, which usually leads to the formation of special cross-border spatial systems that could be defined as "*regions within regions*."

The third and last type group is typical of Eastern Europe, where we have to deal with a combination of old and new borders in a space that has been traditionally less developed and sparsely populated. Most significantly, the communist regime after World War II magnified this originally unfavourable situation in the border areas of Eastern Europe by encouraging or causing the emigration of autochthonous populations and hindering the social and economic development of border areas in general. The areas marked by such

characteristics have, due to their own poor potentials, even in new circumstances – with the powerful ideological modification influences eliminated – very limited possibilities of creating advanced forms of cross-border cooperation and integration. Such border areas and the existing, often only nominal, cross-border regions, could therefore be defined as “*regions under reconstruction.*”

EXPLORING BORDER AREAS AND CROSS-BORDER REGIONS IN CENTRAL EUROPE

Research of both structure and processes related to border areas in Slovenia has quite a long record and has also produced a particular methodology which has been first applied in the case of the Gorizia cross-border region (Bufon, 1994 and 1995) and lately used also for a comprehensive “measurement” of the intensity of cross-border inter-dependence in all Slovene borderlands (Bufon, 2008a). This common approach includes first an analysis of the existing borders in the area and their mutual dependence, continuance in time, and spatial course with a special emphasis on the impacts that the new political delimitation had on the traditionally uniform regional reality and on the gradual development of models of cross-border exchange and cooperation. The *permeability* of the political border is of great significance and can be measured by means of typology and number of border crossings, as well as by the movement of cross-border passenger transport and possibly also freight transport by border sections and time periods. Further, it is important to analyse the *regional structure* of the border area and determine the degree of socio-economic accordance on regional and microregional levels, as well as to evaluate the processes of regional transformations in relation to the presence of a political border. Here, quantitative research methods of regional analysis are used; however, in case of border region studies the analysis covers the border area on the both sides of the border, for which purpose the statistical data must first be accordingly standardized, and the analysis must include a statistical test of the borderline impact on regional differentiation and transformation. Research of *socio-cultural* and *functional interconnection* of border populations and differences in the evaluation of one’s own as well as the neighbouring border area will eventually reveal the motivations for cross-border movement, its direction and intensity, as well as the extent of different functional and cultural cross-border areas in everyday and ordinary performance of spatially-relevant social activities of the border populations (Bufon, 1996b).

Such methodology enables a typological classification of a border area and its functions, as well as a spatial elaboration of the cross-border activities and thus an evaluation of both the extent of potentials for cross-border socio-cultural homogeneity and actual cross-border socio-economic connections. A statistical “standardization” of these data and the elaboration of particular indexes makes eventually possible also a comparison between different border areas and their “ranking” accordingly to individual indicators and to a synthetic “measure” of cross-border inter-connection. For instance, the use of such methodology indicated a persistent high degree of affinity between the border dwellers of the Gorizia border region in comparison not only to border areas in other parts of Slovenia (Bufon, 2008a), but also in comparison with well integrated border regions in northern and southern Switzerland (Leimgruber, 1981). This particular situation is evidently caused by the relative

“newness” of this border region and the post-WW Two partition of a previously long-lasting regional unit, but also by the socio-economic complementarity of the border areas, the presence of a spatially and socially active and multicultural population, and the potentials given by a single - even though politically divided - urban centre in its strict border zone. Analyses to date have shown that such border areas, based on socio-cultural affinity and socio-economic complementarity, offer a very good foundation for the creation or the re-construction of mutually integrated social spaces and for the development of advanced forms of cross-border cooperation.



Figure 1. Typology and structures of Romanian’s borderland (Ilies and al., 2010)

In the Romanian case, in order to determine a certain hierarchy or typology of the border areas, using models and practices attested by the geopolitical literature within other states as Austria (Lichtenberger, 2000), Slovenia (Bufon, 2004), Romania an Balkans Country (Ilies and Grama, 2010), Eastern’s EU countries (Topaloglou and al., 2010), our approach aims at obtaining a response concerning the optimum dimension of a border area with high degree of cross-border systemic interconnection. In this case we identified three variants (Ilies and al., 2010) (Figure 1): The border area determined by the administrative-territorial units equivalent to NUTS 3; The border area determined by the border and the parallel line to it placed at 30 km inside; The border area determined by the administrative-territorial units of the lowest rank (local actor; NUTS 5).

Within this context, was analysed counties (NUTS 3) and the municipalities, the cities and the communes (NUTS 5 or LAU 2) of Romania

(Figure 1), these being the main administrative-territorial units which offer analysis and report framework based on the law of the local public administration. This law emphasizes the importance of these structures in developing the cross-border cooperation strategies, stressing the fact that “*The local councils and the county councils of the administrative territorial units liminary to the border areas may conclude agreements of cross-border cooperation with the homologous authorities of the neighbouring countries, in accordance with the law*” (1st paragraph, article no.13, Law 215/2001).

The development of border areas depends on a series of factors, such as broad geopolitical circumstances and a different history of determinate sections of the border, interstate political and economic relations, border permeability, regional circumstances and the dynamics of socio-economic development in border areas, but also the predisposition of the border area population to maintain and strengthen cross-border links. From this angle the different sections of the border can be classified by their permeability, dominant functional elements and other typological elements. The research conducted so far involving Slovenia (Bufon, 1996c and 2002a; Klemenčič, 1976) has shown that international factors, such as the increase of economic exchange, tourist flow and transit transport, combined with regional factors primarily referring to the movement of people, goods and communications within border areas, encourage all-around development not only of individual transport corridors or border centres, but also of a wider border area. Different border areas along Slovene borders have in this way grown into functionally integrated border regions, although unlike other “Euroregions” they are not based on institutional but rather on spontaneous forms of cross-border integration, which are also of smaller territorial extent. One of their characteristic traits is a considerable influence of local factors, which originate more from a common territorial attachment than from current international-political and economic demands. Thus Slovene geography has discovered new dimensions of research in the application of socio-geographical methods in the study of spatial functions of border communities, especially ethnic and other regional communities (Klemenčič and Bufon, 1994).

Indeed, it is in exploring the spatial extent of certain relevant social activities near and over the border, and in defining spatial functions of border social groups that we recognize the main contribution of Slovene geography to the research of border areas. It has been stressed that border areas and the cross-border relationships taking place therein have great significance not only in the sphere of social and economic integration on interstate and interregional levels, but also in the preservation of cultural features and the strengthening of interethnic coexistence and integration (Bufon and Minghi, 2000; Bufon, 2002b). The element of border area is especially present where there are national minorities, and in Europe border areas with such characteristics are more the rule than exceptions. This is why it is possible to observe a marked predisposition for greater cross-border integration in all those Slovene border areas where members of autochthonous minorities or immigrant communities from the neighbouring areas populate at least one side of the border. This potential can then more or less effectively be modified by different territorial and regional orientations of these communities, which originate in the persistence and permeability of individual border sections, and also by the different degree of protection and development of minority communities in the

respective state systems. All this is opening a series of new aspects in border areas that are gaining increasingly more importance in the process of European (re)integration, eliminating traditional functions of political borders and laying the grounds for mutual understanding within the culturally diverse European space.

CONCLUSION

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 border or rather cross-border cooperation and in this framework the spatial function of national minorities is acquiring greater importance. 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 it of its potential regional role, then on the other hand the actual implementation of this role still very much depends on its institutionalization and wider social promotion. Research investigations in Central-Eastern 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 urbanized areas and also of national minorities, together with traditional cultural and social ties on the basis of consolidated former territorial units (Bufon, 1998c). This situation could be explained by the need for the local population to maintain the 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 is the probability for such a politically divided area to develop into an integrated border region. These new forms of cross-border regionalisms are of particular interest in Central-Eastern Europe, where they have not only 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 there are national minorities or historic cross-border regional communities present, and such areas are more a rule than exceptions not only in Central-Eastern Europe.

The geography of border landscapes with its social, cultural and political aspects has been gaining increasing importance in the process of the “humanization” of the traditional geographical approach to the issue of political and other social and cultural borders. In addition to the cross-border “macro” transactions between border communities, “micro” transactions on the level of border populations and border areas in providing for everyday vital necessities and for the transition from conflicting to harmonious forms of border character are now coming to the fore. Since many social and economic “micro” transactions are related to cultural links among the border populations, and since such links remain relatively stable even in cases of international political transformations, it is possible to observe the apparently paradoxical fact that the border areas with the greatest possibilities for development into a border region are those which have in the recent past overcome the greatest problems during

the process of division of formerly unified administrative, cultural and functional spaces. A second paradox is that demand for more intense and institutionalised cross-border cooperation is actually greater in “old” and peripheral border landscapes than in the “new” and urbanized ones where “spontaneous” functional cross-border relations are already well developed. A third paradox is found in the relationship between cross-border cooperation and inter-community communication. On the one hand the increasing cross-border cooperation helps to increase communication between border communities and thus to reduce social distances, providing greater opportunities for both socio-economic and socio-cultural integration. On the other hand cross-border cooperation and integration are challenging both the traditional peripheral condition of some border areas and the established coexistence practices between local and regional groups, which were typified by infrequent communication. As a reaction, new forms of micro-nationalism and other conservative attitudes of “self-preservation” may develop, typically connected with the peripheral status of these areas (Bufon, 2003).

These are additional aspects of the study of cross-border cooperation contributed by the post-modern geography of border landscapes. Still, these are just starting points that political geography should work in the effort to eventually tackle the issue of territorial behaviour of regional and local communities alongside the border and their cultural and spatial identities in greater depth; to extend the research interest from the functionally better connected areas to other border areas, and discover the reasons for weaker cross-border integration; to systemize and correspond research work on the newest and increasingly important ‘outer’ border sectors of the enlarged EU (Bufon, 2008b), as well as on other border sections; to verify the relationships between the social and spatial situations near political and various internal borders of EU member countries; to carefully reflect on the new role of European border areas from the standpoint of their political and economic geopolitical integration and the latter’s effect on internal regional development.

The experience of both Slovenian and European geography of borderlands shows, in fact, how important it is to European integration that a practicable form to its “unity in diversity” policy be found, not only in the EU core areas but also in the outposts of its enlargement strategies, and particularly in peripheries which are contact zones between cultural or historical environments and may represent spaces of potential social and political conflict (Bufon, 1996a and 2001). In fact, these challenges and the new European model will be tested and eventually become operative in the many European “contact” areas. It is not that 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, ethnic, and linguistic communities, and of 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 conceit and social behaviour based on the exclusion of “others” and “different” ones represented by the classical nationalism. We are thus turning back to “borders” and “territoriality”, two terms which reflect and claim again concrete observations of the “local spatial behaviour”. And these are all terms for which geographers in a re-integrated European continent are expected to provide new assessments.

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