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Editorial

The EU between Idealism and Realpolitik: EUDIMENSIONS confronts the 'Territoriality' Issue

James Scott and Henk van Houtum

As previously discussed in the EUDIMENSIONS editorial in Newsletter 2, the European Union is presently faced with important questions regarding its status as a political community. This has been highlighted in the media by the continued failure to ratify a constitution or to reach accord on immigration, foreign policy and other issues. The 2007 achievement of an EU of 27 member states after decades of geopolitical confrontation and closed borders was remarkable by any standard of measurement. We seem, however, to be losing sight of this fact. 'Enlargement fatigue', so pervasive in media discourses and public debates, appears to characterise a more general lack of orientation and, perhaps more seriously, enthusiasm with regard to the European project. The EU's achievement has also been partly overshadowed by the increasingly restrictive nature of the EU's external borders, lending support to the notion of a Fortress Europe with closed boundaries. This has in large part been conditioned by an increasing anti-immigrant slant to national policies and political discourses. Borders in Europe have begun to re-emerge as markers of sharp – to an extent civilisational – difference.

For long-time observers of the European Union these issues again highlight the very disjointed and contradictory consequences that the EU's development has had on national societies and interstate relations. On the one hand, there is general pragmatic (and, needless to say neoliberal) consensus on both sides of the external border that the social construction of co-development is a key to political stability, cultural understanding and economic prosperity. On the other hand, this more open climate of co-operation is often contrasted by clear signs of protectionism and a resurgence of national interests. The European Union promotes with its Neighbourhood Programme a



notion of post-national political community held together by a set of common values and practices. As mentioned above, however, 'Europessimism', anti-immigrant populism and a trend towards introspective anti-federalist sentiment, is increasingly informing political discourses both within member states and the EU's own legislative and executive organs.

Perhaps less evident to the popular media is the fact that the EU's crisis of identity and purpose is really one of territoriality (see Bialasiewicz et.al. 2005). This is not a minor issue and it is a worrying one. European Union gradually developed out of a spatial vision of economic, political and social development, a vision that in many ways has corresponded to Perroux's (1954) notion of Europe as an open society rather than a geographical project of 'self-defense'. However, since the 1990's, nation-states and nationally defined identities have reasserted themselves in European political debates (despite complaints of bureaucratic regulation from Brussels). The EU has faced a populist backlash against more inclusive notions of Europe, European identity and political community. While EU-Europe has always struggled with national particularisms and the territorial anxieties of its member states, it has until recently rarely succumbed to these pressures. Even if the EU's future institutional architecture has never been an object of consensus, the transcending of inner-European borders and the facilitation of cross-border exchange are largely seen as EU success stories. In fact, it is precisely the 'de-bordering' of a major part of Europe that has fed notions of the EU as a 'force for good in the world'. Central to the EU's identity is a new kind

of international political partnership that transcends traditional geopolitics and, with it, nationalism, chauvinism and militarism.

This could, however, be changing. Recent political debates within the EU's member states and new EU initiatives to promote co-operation beyond its borders indicate that the EU has begun to emphasise elements of territorial cohesion and control to the detriment of its visionary notions of political community. Instead of 'debordering', we might, ironically, be seeing a *consolidation* of state borders in order to provide the EU a sense of neo-Westphalian authority. Much of the impetus of the Lisbon Agenda and current structural policies lies in framing the EU-27 as a competitive and 'coherent' economic space within the global context. Incentives for cross-border co-operation and regional development that were generously disbursed up until the latest rounds of enlargement have now been drastically scaled down and the notion of co-development at the 'new' external borders rings rather hollow.

It can of course be argued that the idealistic project of a '*Europe sans rivages*' was at some point bound to reach its limits. The years directly before the EU's 2004 'big bang' enlargement can be seen as a high water mark in the political attempt to extend the 1980s and 1990s momentum of 'de-bordering'. Inspired perhaps by sporadic bursts of 'Europhoria', many observers predicted a transformation of national societies and the emergence of post-modern territorialities with fuzzy internal and external borders and multiple identities (Painter 2002). However, these scenarios have given way to the dictates of a new Realpolitik that shifts the

momentum of European construction from integration to security. Despite the obvious benefits of enlargement (the emergence of a EU-27 has had an overall positive economic and political effect and almost none of the negative impacts foreseen by Europessimists), the last two rounds of 2004 and 2007 have been particularly controversial.

Past rounds of accession to the EU have, of course, been subject to critical scrutiny for various geopolitical, economic and institutional reasons. With the opening of EU-Europe towards the 'East', however, a visceral sense of *fear* has been evoked that has played into the hands of nationalist and conservative political groups. Nationalist populism, already on the rise after the 2001 terrorist attacks on the US, has been strengthened by threat scenarios of an invasion of cheap labour and/or by islamophobic readings of a possible Turkish accession to the EU. These scenarios promote a feeling of unease and uncertainty and promote perceptions of a loss of control. Partly as a result of this, the 'reclamation' of national identity and sovereignty (never in any real danger within the EU context) and the emphasis of cultural-civilisational difference in defining what is and what is not 'European' have become mainstream political discourse. The EU's drive to re-define Europe is not a mere academic question, it has very real consequences for people and places. Cultural and economic anxieties as well as of a perceived loss of control over local affairs, national identity and sovereignty have been increasingly evoked in European debates. As a result, we are currently witnessing what might be termed a 're-bordering' of national-states within



the EU and, consequently, a heightened demand for more defensive borders (e.g. against irregular immigration) for the EU as a whole, including the instalment of a new common external border agency, Frontex. In addition, the EU is responding to its crisis of identity and purpose by establishing imperative categories of 'Europeaness' and European values while enforcing exclusionary borders at its outer confines.

One consequence of all this has been an exacerbation of anti-immigration sentiment and an emphasis on security issues that encumber relations with many neighbouring states, such as Ukraine, Moldova and Morocco. This has escalated up to the point that undocumented refugees who perish in attempts to enter the EU are now tacitly accepted as 'collateral damage'. Another consequence is that instead of a much-needed debate on the renewal of the EU (and Europe as whole), issues such as the territorial borders and definitive geographical definitions of the EU have tended to dominate political debates. Needless to say, this sharp increase in protectionism is clearly at odds with the wish to establish more intense cross-border relations with the new neighbours of the EU.

Accepting that a certain degree of institutional coherence and territorial anchoring are inevitable consequences of the EU's maturation we must also question whether a return to 'bordered' thinking is the only option available in the EU's quest for meaning. We appear to be witnessing a greater use of universalising EU-centric visions - cartographic and otherwise - of Europe as a geographically bounded



Figure 1: Representing Conflicting Territorialities: The EU Confronts its Regional Neighbourhood in the Baltic Sea Region as a Cooperative Space (Source: European Commission, inforegio website)

entity vis a vis other regional spaces. The territorial ambiguities expressed in Figure 1, a map of Baltic Sea Co-operation, are one example of this. The bulk of structural fund resources available for cross-border co-operation are targeted at the consolidation of the EU-27 (highlighted in dark green) and exclude non-EU neighbours (represented as light green areas) for the most part. However, the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument, funded through different institutional sources, does provide limited co-funding for the Eastern neighbours,

although much less than was previously the case. Thus, the 'neighbours' are both present and not present, not only in cartographic terms but also in terms of concrete project-oriented work.

To conclude, we do not believe that any central concept can capture the complexity and uniqueness of the **EU as a regional idea**. There is no 'central screenplay' that has been or is being followed in the making of the EU. Rather, it is the precise *absence* of a totalising political geographical model that has been so significant for the EU's evolution during the last decade. In

this respect, Balibar (2004) argues that an EU-centric vision of the world is necessary flawed since no European 'identity' can be opposed to others in the world and because there exist no absolute border lines between the historical and cultural territory of Europe and its surrounding spaces. Of course, the complexity of the EU's geopolitical bordering processes cannot be understood via a 'EU-centric' perspective alone. At the same time that that 'Neighbourhood' and 'privileged partnerships' are being promoted, several



neighbouring states are involved in internal struggles to assert national sovereignty and identity.

Despite talk of a post-Westphalian and postmodern 'de-territorialisation' within Europe, the Hobbesian ghost of fear and determinism is still present in current day European geopolitics. Despite the fact that borders - at least in our critical academic perspectives - no longer seem to be solely understood as self-evident, inevitable or immutable, they are still being taken for granted. The EU's new territorial anxiety is part of a worrying trend and reflects the EU's inability to transcend national particularisms and Euroscepticism. In attempting to consolidate its 27 member political space, and in deference to state sovereignty, the EU is incorporating a tough stance on security and immigration issues, mirroring populist elements of European political debate. In effect, we seem to be witnessing a trend towards introspection and 'closure' that could re-confirm the EU's external borders as barriers.

EUDIMENSIONS Conference in Berlin, 9 October 2008: 'Civil Society and the European Neighbourhood'

Under the title 'The New EU Neighbourhood, Governance and Civil Society' our consortium organised a one-day conference at the European Information Centre (Europäisches Haus) in central Berlin. The purpose of this EUDIMENSIONS conference was not only to discuss results of the project within a wider academic context but also to provide different national and historical perspectives on 'civil society'. In his introductory presentation, the project coordinator, James Scott, offered a summary of central aspects of the EUDIMENSIONS project. This included some of the insights the project offers on the role of civil society in promoting new forms of co-operation between the EU and neighbouring states. Perhaps one of the most important results of EUDIMENSIONS

has been to highlight the ambiguous nature of the EU's influence on civil society interaction. While the EU is important as an agenda-setter that promotes local and regional cross-border co-operation, in practice EU policies tend to strengthen civil society 'elites' to the detriment of local civil society organisations and to centralise project management structures. In addition, the EU's increased focus on the securitisation of borders does little to empower civil society groups, on the contrary it makes practical co-operation all the more difficult and marginalises policy areas where civil society can play a vital role.

The next speaker, **Bo Stråth** of the European University Institute in Florence, commented on 'Europe's Borders in Cultural and in Political Terms'. Stråth argued that one must differentiate between the EU as a polity – which requires clear and fixed territorial borders to match its institutional set-up – and cultural borders which always must be open and fluid, subject to

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constant negotiation (see the editorial in this newsletter). Oftentimes, political and cultural interaction are hard to disentangle, and political dialogue between the EU and its neighbours must be tempered with a sensitivity to asynchronous processes of institutional change. Within this context, Stråth warned against totalising concepts of governance that instrumentalise rather than empower civil society. Given hegemonic neo-liberal agendas of liberalisation in Western countries and the limiting of space for real dissent and social critique they have brought with them, civil society must be wary of co-optation for political projects. Within a context of controlled political dialogue, civil society actors must continuously negotiate their independence while not overtly challenging interests that provide basic sources of funding. Stråth contrasted civil society's extraparlamentarian opposition of the 1960s and 1970s (questioning issues such as nuclear proliferation, nuclear energy and conscription) and the much more conformist role it plays today. For this reason, Stråth argued that the transfer

of civil society concepts from West to East is fundamentally problematic. Social society's role can be seen to promote social modernisation, among other things, through questioning political assumptions and creating new social agendas. At the same time, there is no question that civil society functions as a strategy of self-help, of helping communities adapt to government and market failure. In this case, civil society organisations can often function as partners, and not necessarily as opponents, of the state. As a result, more nuanced understandings of civil society should inform discussion of cross-border co-operation within the European Neighbourhood context.

Elena Belokurova of the European University at St. Petersburg followed with a discussion of Russian Perspectives on Civil Society and Social Change. As Ms. Belokurova explained, in the 1990s, new Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Russia were mostly created with humanitarian aid and technical assistance from the USA and EU countries. The US

were more active in supporting these organisations and their understandings of civil society, while the EU concentrated more on institution-building, state structures and principles of social partnership. The Russian state was largely unaware of the potential of civil society activism as it had to deal simultaneously with a number of pressing issues. At the regional and local levels, however, CSOs were often involved in problem-solving processes, particularly by addressing social problems that formal institutions were not able to deal with. The situation changed after 2000 when Vladimir Putin and his political team began to appropriate civil society discourses as part of their particular vision of nation-building. The President of the RF and other high-level officials thus began to refer to civil society in terms of civic institutions engaged in political decision-making and implementation processes and that would in turn earn state support. This political definition of civil society's role was 'justified' by the necessity of more effective solutions to the country's economic and social problems. By 2004, political framing of civil society promoted the notion of civil society as national communities of solidarity, which allowed for a differentiation between internally oriented (and 'genuine') CSOs and 'false' CSOs motivated by external agendas and Western funding. With this line of argumentation, state suppression of internationally active CSOs could be legitimated.

Despite this less than favourable political climate, EUDIMENSIONS research undertaken in Russia's North-Western regions show that CSOs with established working ties to regional and local governments have continued to receive support in



spite of 'Western' funding. In terms of participation within the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), regional civil society organisations appear much less affected by political tensions at the federal level. Furthermore, in the Republic of Karelia the application of new NGO legislation is among the most liberal in Russia. This explains with the positive experience of the NGOs involvement into the effective solving of social problems on the level of decision-making as well as social policies implementation (on the input- and output stages). Therefore, for the EU neighbourhood policy towards Russia it is important to concentrate not on pure civil society building, but on solutions to social problems. It can be done with participation of the NGOs, what can finally also contribute to the strengthening of the Russian civil society.

Ayca Ergun (Middle East Technical University) offered Turkish perspectives on Civil Society and its role in social change. As she explained, the international

dimension of democratic consolidation and social development has radically changed the nature of civil society in Turkey. Civil society organisations previously based on the voluntary participation of their members and supporters have become professionalised and issue-oriented. Images and perceptions of the EU among the civil society actors are predominantly positive in cases where democratic consolidation, protection of civil and political rights, modernisation, and economic development are associated with Europe at large. Yet, Europe in general and the EU in particular are also criticised as being a 'non-coherent' entity that is 'full of contradictions', 'having potentials for crisis' and as a source of 'disappointment' in Turkey's accession process to the EU. Following this contribution, **Iwona Sagan** (University of Gdansk) demonstrated how ideas of civil society played a critical role in the contemporary history of Poland and in the process of post-socialist transformation. Her arguments are featured in a separate section of this newsletter.

Finnish-Russian co-operation in the Karelias was the subject of **Jussi Laine's** (University of Joensuu) discussion. Interaction across the Finnish-Russian border has developed rapidly since the border's opening after the collapse of the Soviet Union. Interestingly, while businesses had severe difficulties adapting to unfamiliar and unpredictable conditions, and the jurisdiction of governments were clearly demarcated by the political border *per se*, civil society organisations as well as individual citizens were less restricted from moving back and forth across the border and entering into transnational cooperative relationships. The more open conditions and increased interaction soon revealed differences between the two sides. In Finland, the formation of civil society has deep historical roots, and CSOs are perceived as conventional partners for the public sector. In Russia (and as mentioned by Elena Belokurova), civil society could not operate openly as a social force independent from state ideology until the collapse of communism. Thus civil society is learning its roles at the same time as Russian nation-(re)building and institutional transformation are taking place. The resulting and palpable asymmetry in the operational spaces of civil society have thus dictated the nature of interaction. Given their very pragmatic approach, Laine also argued that transnational CSO initiatives can be seen as drivers of bottom-up integration, most of which function fairly separately from the current EU policies and proposals. The role of the EU as a facilitator and promoter of transnational activity is seen by civil society actors in a positive light, yet the EU is also criticised



for overlooking practical public concerns while pursuing grand-scale objectives. Hence, it is still clearly the national agenda which sets out the priorities for civil society co-operation.

In the final session, **Wojciech Dąbrowski** (University of Gdansk) spoke of emerging patterns of Polish-Ukrainian Civil Society co-operation. Civil society organisations such as formally organised and institutionalised NGOs as well as more informally networked citizens's initiatives have indeed been instrumental in opening borders once hermetically sealed. At the same time, civil society has worked closely with state actors, the academic community and regional and local administrations in stimulating social and economic relations between the two countries. Although the introduction of the Schengen visa regime was not in the interest of Polish-Ukrainian relations as it sent a clear signal of exclusion to Ukraine, civil society has learned how to deal with tightening borders. Reasons for this are largely specific to the Polish-Ukrainian case: because of a common (if not harmonious) history, linguistic affinities and similar geopolitical interests but also because of sustained support civil social organisations.

CSOs, NGOs or Both? Comments on a Never-Ending Debate

During discussion at the Berlin seminar, the question was raised as to the significance of the term 'CSO', leading one participant to comment whether this referred to the Chicago Symphony Orchestra (the Cleveland Symphony Orchestra would not have been pleased

with this!). As is common in academia, much time is spent wrangling over definitions, and whether definitions of social phenomena should be 'exact' or relational. However, the conference indicated that we must clarify the EUDIMENSIONS position: in project reports both the terms non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and civil society organisations (CSOs) are used. While they are often coterminous they are not synonymous; the term NGOs specifically refers to registered non-profit organisations that promote issue-based agendas. The term CSO can include all forms of non-state organisations that represent organised forums of civic action and/or promote social objectives (e.g. NGOs, trade unions, faith-based organisations, organisations that represent the interest of ethnic groups, independent research institutes, charities, foundations, etc.). In the interviews carried out, representatives did differentiate between being 'NGOs' and 'CSO' whereby the term CSO was seen to be politically neutral and therefore easier to use. We have thus chosen a working definition of these organisations that does not emerge from the world of academia and its drive for discrete typologies but rather from that of actual practice. However, it must be mentioned that there is increasing pressure to drop the NGO term altogether. According to civil society activists: 'there is a growing movement within the 'non'-profit and 'non'-government sector to define itself in a more constructive, accurate way. Instead of being defined by 'non' words, organisations are suggesting new terminologies to describe the sector. The term 'civil society organisation' (CSO) has been used by a growing number of organizations, such as the Center for the Study of Global Governance. The term

'citizen sector organisation' (CSO) has also been advocated to describe the sector — as one of citizens, for citizens. This labels and positions the sector as its own entity, without relying on language used for the government or business sectors. However some have argued that this is not particularly helpful given that most NGOs are in fact funded by governments and business' (see: http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Non-governmental_organization).

National Perspectives on Civil Society and Social Change: The Case of Poland

Iwona Sagan, University of Gdansk

In the 1980s, the Solidarity movement arose as a network of nongovernmental organisations. The creation of independent institutions in a totalitarian system helped to limit state intervention into social life and finally dealt a deadly blow to the communist ideology that the state should control all spheres of social reality. The objectives of the Solidarity movement were primarily ethical. Reconstruction of national identity and dignity was considered to be the main mission of the movement. For the first time since the French Revolution, ethical values proved to be a powerful and successful incentive for civil society mobilisation against the state apparatus. These ethical values lost their meaning in Western democracies oriented toward the pragmatic politics of the welfare state. Therefore, while East European civil society movements were formulated as an ideological opposition to totalitarian control, West European civil society was a liberal project aimed to diversify the political



scene to limit, control and/or support the pragmatic state administration and protect civil liberties from state interference.

In 1989, after the collapse of the communist regime, Poland's ethical utopia had to be converted into a real system of institutions. In this new reality civil society could not be any longer only a collection of anti-state organisations. It had (or tried) to become an arena where different political orientations and the civic and state spheres could reach compromise. These necessary transformation created many difficulties and gave way to frustration and disappointment. Politically, these tensions were reflected in the return to power of post-communist parties and in a decrease in social activity and engagement.

The third sector's role in transforming governmentality in Poland is not supported by legislative and institutional regulations. There is still the unsolved legal problem of representation of organisations acting in non-governmental or civic sectors. In Poland, only trade unions have formally established criteria for their representation rights. Other organisations do not possess them and their roles in local or regional governance are practically limited to consultancy. A full partnership in decision-making processes requires clear legal procedures for the representation of all involved partners. However, in terms of the participation of civil society organisations, power-sharing and resources were not forthcoming. The sheer variety of competing notions of community governance in contemporary Poland reflects the lack of agreement over the role and relations between elected local government and citizens groups.

The 2008 European Conference of the Association of Borderland Studies 'Cultural Production and Negotiation of Border': Kirkenes, 11-13 September 2008

Johan Schimanski and James Scott

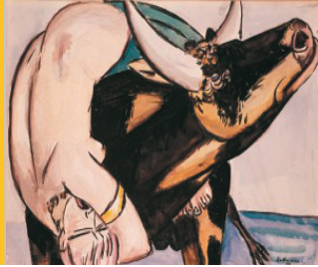
This remarkable conference was held in Norway, in Kirkenes and included a field trip to the border city of Nikel and to cultural sites on both sides of the border, along with a visit to the Borderlands Museum in Kirkenes. The organisers were the University of Tromsø and the Barents Institute (Kirkenes). Plenary speakers were: David Newman (Ben-Gurion University, Israel), Mieke Bal (University of Amsterdam) and Einar Niemi (History, University of Tromsø, Norway). This interdisciplinary conference indeed crossed the often rather fortified academic divide between 'border studies' in the social sciences and the more cultural-historical understandings of borders developed in the humanities. The conference was

also timely, coming at a time when the limits of 'border empiricism' have become painfully evident and the social and human consequences of borders are becoming evermore apparent. Through stimulating a dialogue between critical border studies, geopolitics, history, economics and cultural studies the 2008 ABS European conference examined the ways in which cultural practices employ discursive and semiotic strategies in order to imagine and negotiate the border in its social and historical context. Central to discussion was the role of culture in subjective interactions with the border by border-crossers and by border-zone dwellers. The conference thus aimed to place cultural processes of bordering in historical contexts and show the role of cultural memory in the formation of borderscapes.

The venue of the conference, the Norwegian border city of Kirkenes, was also remarkable; the Norwegian-Russian-Finnish borderlands are characterised by a layered, complex border history – as well as by pressing social and environmental



The orthodox church at Boris Gleb (Russia) and Kirkenes (Norway)



problems. More generally, the Arctic is an area in which the borders of the environment and of energy production are being shifted and are changing the geographical, historical and imaginative sense of place and space. This region offers many possibilities for different cultural identities and ways of life, and is of significance today as a political and cultural hot spot of 'Western'-Russian relations within the Arctic and Sub-Arctic context.

The papers presented at the conference reflected its interdisciplinary and experimental nature and provided several cross-cutting perspectives on border studies, including:

- cultural border practices and sociological concepts of cultural belonging
- historical processes of cultural border-marking and negotiation
- economic and political importance of cultural borderings and border zone culture
- discursive, narrative, and symbolic strategies in border culture and border poetics



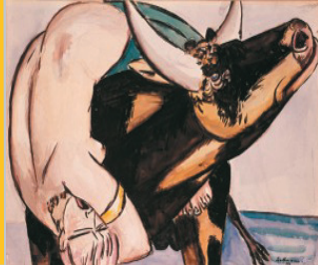
Russian-Norwegian street signs remind us of the borderlands context, the role of the Red Army in liberating the town during World War II and, most recently, of the increasing number of Russian visitors to this Norwegian town.

- the cultural turn in socio-geographical border studies
- cultural practice and social agency in border regions
- Kantian 'borderology' in a cultural frame

- culture as a source of critical perspectives on borders, justice and exclusion
- psychoanalytic understandings of cultural articulation of border subjectivity
- reflexivity in cultural border discourses and policy
- gender in the cultural production of borders
- the role of media as place of border dialogue
- external and internal borders in culturally mediated migration narratives
- new forms of art in the cultural negotiation of borders
- cultural borderscapes and historical memory
- border festivals, border art projects, border museums and border tourism
- Arctic and Sub-Arctic borders
- the cultural history of the Norwegian-Russian-Finnish borderland



Downtown Kirkenes



During the conference, a field trip to Boris Gleb and Nikel on the Russian side of the borderlands provided direct impressions of the complex cultural, economic and political landscape of the regions. In the next newsletter we will return to Kirkenes and the fascinating world of border landscapes and provide a more in-depth investigation into artistic representations of borders and their ability to stimulate cross-cultural understanding.

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Report from the EUDIMENSIONS Local Seminar in Lviv

Iwona Sagan

The fourth and the final EUDIMENSIONS local seminar organised by the Department of Economic Geography of the University of Gdansk took place in Lviv, Ukraine, on 10 July 2008. The meeting was hosted by the EUDIMENSIONS Gdansk team together with the Lviv Academy of Commerce at the Lviv Centre for Scientific, Technical and Economic Information. Over fifty participants met to discuss patterns of bilateral Polish – Ukrainian relations and to understand the present and future of Polish – Ukrainian cross – border co-operation and role of

governments, European Union policy, local and regional governments and civil society in developing this co-operation. The following conclusions could be drawn from some fourteen presentations that addressed three levels of interaction: national, regional and local.

In terms of Poland's and Ukraine's bilateral relations in general:

1. The role of history, which in terms of Polish – Ukrainian relations has largely been a barrier to understanding between the two nations. Universities and scientific institutions on both sides of the border (including some represented at the seminar, such as the Central – Eastern Europe Institute in Lublin and the Institute of European Integration of National Ivan Franko University) have been actively working at historical reconciliation. Rediscovering and re-examining history has proven to be a potential resource that highlights the multicultural richness of both countries. Examples of this are 'sentimental tourism' and new migration and mobility patterns (primarily from Ukraine to Poland) stimulated by the historical ties of both countries.

2. The necessity of reformulating government policies still strongly focused on geopolitics as if Cold-war imperial politics had not ceased to exist. Devotion to 'bloc' orientations, whether towards the 'West' or the 'East', does not promote appreciation of local fundamentals for economic development nor does it promote strong international alliances and policies of good neighbourliness.

3. The border is a zone, which functions both as a 'meeting point' and a 'no man's

land'. Co-operation between the two countries has flourished since 1991 but with EU accession in 2004 and particularly after the introduction of the Schengen regime the 'remoteness' of Poland, eastern Poland especially, has greatly increased. This is compounded by a lack of border crossings.

At the level of regions, prospects for as well as the barriers to better cross-border co-operation were discussed as well. Some of the observations of participants included:

1. Exploring possibilities of common regional initiatives using the European Union for support and through the establishment of Euroregions, Centers of Cross-border Co-operation or Special Economic Zones. The regional level of co-operation is of strategic importance and the strongly supported by the EU dimension of territorial integration.

2. An important problem, both regionally and locally is that of cross-border mobility, which still has not been dealt with satisfactorily. There is disagreement on the establishment of special border zones to allow easier crossing for local residents and while Poland and Ukraine insist on a 50 km-wide border zone, the EU appears to desire a the more modest alternative of 30 km. This issue is central to the maintenance and strengthening of social and economic relations in the border regions.

Finally, regarding the local level, the following issues were discussed:

1. Local government is one from the most important actors in terms of local development



and cross-border co-operation initiatives. It seems as well that local governments need more autonomy in cross-border policy and are not appreciated at the level of formal politics as a major link in this co-operation. At the same time, there exist a whole set of European programmes and initiatives, such as the European Cities Union, that are not being used by cities in the border region.

2. It can be confirmed that the second most important player in local cross-border co-operation are civil society organisations, who are indeed an endogenous strategic resource. On the whole, there are very close links between local governments and civil society, oftentimes the key players are the same individuals. Their role in local



development and their ability to mobilise citizens must be supported more effectively by formal institutions. Here again, more judicious means of support from national sources and especially from the EU would be necessary to maintain the momentum of civil society activity in the Polish-Ukrainian border region.

In concluding the local seminar, the Polish and Ukrainian organisers observed that, although far from what it can potentially achieve, Polish – Ukrainian cross-border co-operation can serve as a European model of transformation from conflict – and its historical memories of enmity – to good neighbourly relations and co-operation. These optimistic conclusions are supported by observed tendencies of change on the both sides of the border. Confirmation of significance of these very local initiatives of social and political dialogue was also provided by this very seminar, characterised by an atmosphere of open discussion, critical reflection and a desire for deeper binational integration.

Varia

RESOLUTION of the International Conference of the Member States of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the European Union (EU) on co-operation in the field of higher professional education.

On the 17th-20th of November 2008, the **International Conference of the Member States of the Barents Euro-Arctic Council (BEAC) and the European Union (EU) on co-operation in the field of higher professional education** took place at Petrozavodsk State University, the Republic of Karelia, the Russian Federation.

The facilitators of the Conference were: the Federal Agency on Education, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Russian Federation, the Barents Euro-Arctic Council and Petrozavodsk State University (PetrSU). Participants from both educational and research institutions of the Russian cities Arkhangelsk, Murmansk, Moscow, St. Petersburg, Syktyvkar, Petrozavodsk, Kostomuksha, Sortavala and Apatity as well as participants from Finland, Sweden, and Norway took part in the conference. More than 40 educational and research institutions of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region, the representatives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the RF, the Federal Agency on Education of the RF, the Council of the Federation and the State Duma of the RF, the European Commission Delegation to Russia, and



the representatives of the regional public authorities of the Republic of Karelia and Murmansk Region took part in the conference.

The conference afforded the following opportunities to the participants:

- the exchange of international co-operation experience among the higher educational and research institutions;
- the receipt of up-to-date information on working donor programmes and funds;
- the discussion of new initiatives for sustainable development of the BEAR, through the broadening of bilateral and multilateral co-operation among the educational and research institutions of the Russian and European North, within the framework of the Bologna Declaration.

The Conference Programme consisted of the Plenary Session (first day), 2 Thematic Sections (second day), and 3 Round Tables (third day). The third day of the conference was devoted to the exchange of international co-operation experience and to the discussion of specific project ideas, proposals, and initiatives for strengthening co-operation in the future. More than 400 people participated in the conference – 114 registered participants, about 50 employees of educational and research organisations of Petrozavodsk and more than 240 students from different faculties of Petrozavodsk State University. Most of the reports presented at the conference will be posted on the web-page: <http://bearptz.petsu.ru> as well as other conference documents and materials after the conference.

Conference announcement

ABORNE Conference on 'How is Africa Transforming Border Studies?' *Hosted by the School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, 10-14 September 2009*

The African Borderlands Research Network – ABORNE (<http://www.aborne.org/>) – is an interdisciplinary network of over 70 academic researchers and institutions in Europe, Africa and North America. Its members are from all disciplines of the social sciences, with an emphasis on anthropology and history. They share a long-term interest in all aspects of international borders and transboundary phenomena in Africa. The emphasis is largely on borderlands as physical spaces and social spheres, but the network is also concerned with regional flows of people and goods as well as economic processes that may be located at some distance from the geographical border. From April 2009, ABORNE will be funded by the European Science Foundation as an ESF networking programme. ABORNE will hold its third annual meeting at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, South Africa, from 10-14 September 2009. Papers are invited from scholars of African borderlands and borders at all levels. Financial support is available for participants.

We invite paper submissions on the following themes, but also welcome other related topics:

1. Conceptual frameworks for borderland research in Africa and the world
2. Boundaries and borderlands in a comparative perspective: methodologies and theoretical insights

3. The meaning of 'national' borders in pre-, post-, multi- or trans-national societies
4. Borderlands and cross-border economies
5. Borderlands and cross-border politics
6. Mobility across fixed and mobile borders
7. Borders in African philosophies
8. Inserting the history into borders and borderlands into history
9. Representations of borders and border crossing in cultural production
10. Borders, identity and borderland identities

Within this wide range of themes, we are seeking papers with the following characteristics:

- Papers that are conceptual in nature;
- Papers that seek to relate African fieldwork data to larger bodies of (theoretical) work;
- Papers that are explicitly comparative in focus. Titles and abstracts are due by 30 April, 2009. To apply, please send the following information to both David Coplan (david.coplan@wits.ac.za) and Tara Polzer (tara.polzer@wits.ac.za):
- Name
- Institutional affiliation
- Contact Details (email and phone)
- Abstract (150-200 words)
- Whether you are already a member of ABORNE
- Whether you wish to become a member of ABORNE

For more information please contact David Coplan (David.Coplan@wits.ac.za), Tara Polzer (Tara.Polzer@wits.ac.za) or Wolfgang Zeller (wolfgang.zeller@helsinki.fi) or see www.aborne.org.