

LINGUISTIC BORDERS: LET'S KNOCK THEM DOWN

Pizzjoli, Turel and many others debate it inside

JANCAR: CENTRAL EUROPE IS A REAL ENTITY

Interviewed by Neva Zajc on page 14

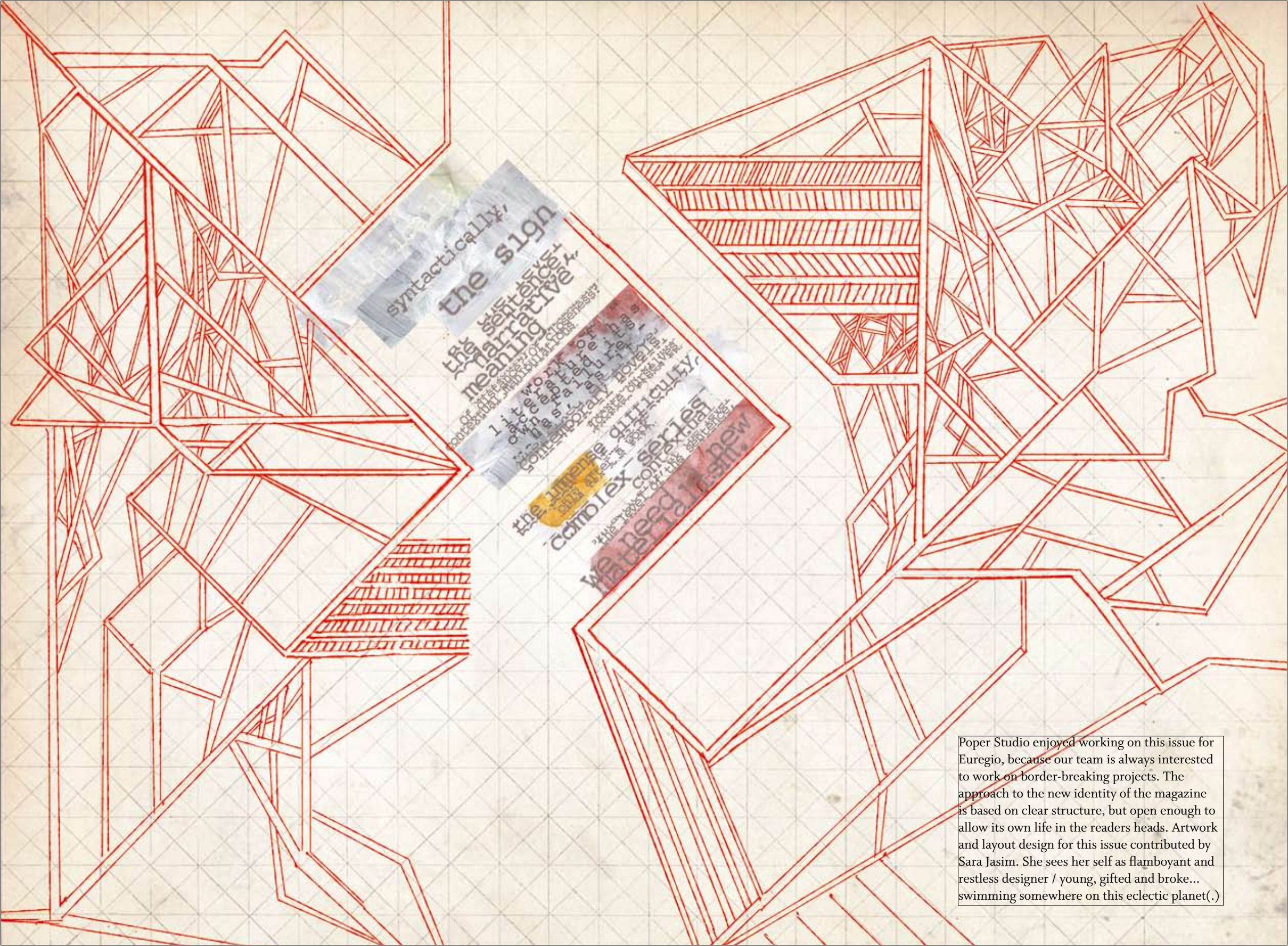
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LANGER: SHARED SENTIMENTS

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Poper Studio enjoyed working on this issue for Euregio, because our team is always interested to work on border-breaking projects. The approach to the new identity of the magazine is based on clear structure, but open enough to allow its own life in the readers heads. Artwork and layout design for this issue contributed by Sara Jasim. She sees her self as flamboyant and restless designer / young, gifted and broke... swimming somewhere on this eclectic planet(.)

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"CO'L CUL PER TERA"

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Get to know the languages of the Euroregion

In this number of EUREGIO you'll find a sticker linked to the central theme of the issue: that of the comprehension of the **language of others**.

On the sticker we've stuck a piece of the officially recognised languages that you can find in the current area of our future Euroregion. In every language were asking the same thing: **'što?'** (in Croatian), **'ce mût?'** (in Friulian), **'cosa?'** (in Italian), **'kaj?'** (in Slovene) and **'was?'** (in German). Every one of these expressions corresponds to a big **'WHAT?'** in English.

EUREGIO sets you the problem of how, even today, we're unable to communicate well between ourselves: O.K, so we use English, but daily communication for everyone is done through the language of the area; and therefore we're asking you to make an effort to learn the other's language.

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Enrico Maria Milič

The Final Frontier? Linguistic barriers are, probably, the last remaining boundary in our Euradriatic 'home'

The renewed version of 'EUREGIO', the magazine you're holding, slots into a public debate that began at least four years ago surrounding the creation of a Euroregion from the adjoining areas of the Austrian Land of Carinthia, two Croatian Counties, Istria and Primorsko-Goranska (literally 'Coast and Mountain'), the Italian Regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and the Veneto along with the whole of Slovenia.

8 Across the continent in recent history there are various definitions of what constitutes a Euroregion. In short, it is an institution in which Regions, Land or Counties and even bordering states,

hand over some of their administrative powers, as illustrated by Langer on page 63. Not by chance, the first task when putting out the magazine again was to actually ask ourselves the question: "How the devil can a Euroregion be of REAL use to the people living in it?!" Therefore we've made a real effort to understand what sort of powers this new institution might have at its disposal. To try to answer this question we've taken a set of life stories of citizens who live in border areas of different bits of Europe. Writing these accounts, like little stars on a blue flag, are authors who have taken it upon themselves to re-tell the tales as a minstrel might, sans bureaucratic jargon, sans economic and ac-

ademic theories, while trimming back explicitly political or ideological considerations to the bare bones. We've put together a range of examples relevant to our Euroregion through a dogged exercise in PR via the Internet, contacting journalists, writers and university researchers from a range of linguistic backgrounds across the continent and it's above all, on this network that the next two issues of 'EUREGIO' are based.

We've not only concentrated on telling how a Euroregion can lead to more efficient public services or economies. Two anthropologists, Rapport and Dawson, write that in an era of globalisation we should not think of the concept of 'home' in such narrow terms and that 'home' for them is the house, place, rituals, routines and communities of whoever lives 'there'. With this in mind we've investigated the rituals and values in our Euradriatic community. On page 14, Drago Jančar, interviewed by Neva Zajc, says that "the soul of Europe is its culture into which we have to integrate its customs". The great Slovene writer goes on to add, 'We must recognise the great European traditions: Christianity, Enlightenment and Socialism as well as the new cur-

rent trends towards openness with the rest of the world". Along with Jančar we have put together range of other voices - from business through to culture, both popular and high-brow and on to include the new immigrant communities that, to us, seem representative of the Euradriatic community and which, through interviews, tell what it means to live in this part of Europe and, in the mind's eye, together in a Euroregion.

The intentions of these Euroregional citizens is often, though obviously not always, in favour of the project. My interpretation is that many on our side want to make the common space a credible entity, not just a talking shop given that ours is an area at the cross-

roads of the continent. This in spite of data from various sources which indicates that these areas today are often at the margins of nation-states, or, in the case of a fully-fledged state such as Slovenia, on the sidelines in the international discourse. This is the thrust of the invitation of the Veneto entrepreneur, Andrea Tomat who on, page 36 states: "With North-eastern Italy in mind, the creation of a Euroregion obviously comes after the carrying out of reforms that lead towards fiscal federalism." adding "This is the new frame of reference and we must measure ourselves against it without delay."

In a future Euradria we would like its citizens to be able to communicate not just through English but also the 'standard' national languages, together with those spoken by the local linguistic minorities.

The main problem that many European citizens, speaking through this magazine, are shown to want to resolve is the language of 'Others'. This is a theme we've given over both to the cover of the magazine as well as the sticker that comes with it - and this is the thread running through many of the articles, starting on page 10 with Fabrizio Pizzioli. A neuroscientist from Trieste, he seeks to promote both cross-border labour opportunities and hopes for a European spirit of openness towards the world, going on to explain how citizens and institutions can establish their roles in building enviable multicultural environments. In an on-line debate, the designer Arlon Stok wonders whether equating the use of a language to a single linked national identity is really a legacy that we can honestly leave back the twentieth century? Maybe. Hopefully. If we could write and understand everyone as well as Milan Rakovac (page 68). If only we could all be as visionary as Ludwig Von Bruck (page 59). Certainly, we would like to believe and suggest that the future Euradria would be one in which its citizens, as well as being able to use English and promoting themselves in the world, would know how to 'inhabit' this chunk of Central Europe in its entirety, with the widespread use of the 'standard' national languages together with those of the local linguistic minorities.

Let me wish you an entertaining, stimulating and useful read. Please make good use of the sticker you'll find attached to the magazine which seeks to promote the learning of the Euradriatic languages as suggested by the magazine.

EMM is a journalist specialising in the design and creation of virtual communities and niche market magazines. He's the proud holder of an M.A in Social Anthropology and the happy (if stressed) father of Jan and Tadej.

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FROM THE MOUTHS OF BABES

"My daughter will learn Czech, right from the start, because we live a few metres from the border, because it is natural and logical, because to grow up bilingual represents a richness". The experience of a life on the border between Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic: adopting bilingualism as an education policy and an antidote to prejudice and non-communication

by Fabrizio Pizzioli ›

Neisse. Deserted nuclear plant

To reach Ostritz from the north, a few hundred metres from both Poland and the Czech Republic, you pass through Kunnerwitz, Hagenwerder, Schönau-Berzdorf an der Eigen and other anonymous and apparently uninhabited villages, where the pretty houses in a rural German style, are mixed with a touch of more functional Socialist post-war aesthetics.

Here you find huge council housing 'barracks' in the open countryside. But not only that. You can come upon a disused nuclear power plant flanked by the ordered blades of a wind farm - a sign of changing times. Further on, miles from anywhere, stands an inert monster as high as a ten-storey house, an industrial digger - that seems to belong in Fritz Lang's film 'Metropolis' - that, during the happy days of the DDR, excavated coal from underground. Or perhaps encounter an old Volkswagen van passing slowly through the village. Equipped with loudspeakers, to a melancholy musical accompaniment, blares out propaganda for the German National Party (NPD) - none other than the neo-Nazi party.

This corner of Germany is surreal for one who has not grown up here. It is a poor corner, one of the poorest of the poor former East Germany, a victim of the end of the coal era, like other regions in Europe such as the regions of Charleroi and Mons-Borinage in Belgium. As sometimes happens, the decay in the economic and socio-cultural fabric, along with its proximity to the border have encouraged the development of nationalistic, often extremist and sometimes racist sentiments. With 40% unemployment and two borders, the party of extreme right, the German heir to the concentration camps, this is not a hard area to make converts. "Germany for the Germans!"

caws the old-timer in the van to the apparently empty houses and Soviet-style blocks.

Landscapes change and borders do too, but the situation which one meets puts forward themes that are already familiar. Borders and national identity, a history of national and regional conflicts, World War II and cultural stereotypes; a history of misunderstandings and an ignorance of one another, together with a history of barriers such as language, the main agent in the construction and maintenance of identity, diversity and prejudice. I went to speak about this with Dr. Gellrich, in the heart of Ostritz, in a graceful Samaritan nunnery, less than ten metres from the river that separates Germany and Poland. Her name is Regina and she grew up, studied and worked in this border region of eastern Saxony behind the Iron Curtain, when in school she learned Russian and only Russian. She was not taught Czech or Polish. Regina tells me she loves the Czech Republic. "Why?" I ask. Her answer is simple and spontaneous: "Because I went there on holiday with my parents there - it being the only one, or one of the few states where you could go abroad without a third degree grilling by an officer of STASI!" This insight comes from personal experience, it's direct.

We are back in the '80s and Regina attends the school in Zittau, her town. In interactions with the Czechoslovakian neighbours, even just going to buy meat or get petrol, Regina feels uncomfortable, unable to speak a word of Czech. Yet everyone on the other side speaks German, at least a little, for business you understand. But that's not the point, she says. Language is not just communication: "a kilo of meat, a tankful of petrol." Language mediates and reflects stereotypes and prejudices that underlie an asymmetrical relationship:

Germany

Poland



Czech Republic

The Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa includes German districts, Polish and Czech towns and communities from the borderland of the river Neisse.

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"It's you (either Polish or Czechoslovakian) the poor neighbours (or worse)", "you that you must learn German." Hence the decision to attend an evening course in the Czech language learning with difficulty, but enough to allow, even knowing only a little, to "open a new world: people have begun to interact with me in a different way, to open doors, to be more friendly", she says. One discovers the value of language as an instrument for interaction and cooperation.

Shortly before the fall of the Wall in 1988, Regina gave birth to Susanna and thinks: "my daughter will learn Czech, right from the start, because we live a few metres from the border, because it is natural and logical, because to grow up bilingual represents a richness". It introduces a second important element: diversity and bilingualism as richness. At this time Czech is not taught in the schools or kindergartens, and it is a problem to learn it. But the solution can be found nearby, a few kilometres away. This is Regina's idea, to put Susanna in a Czechoslovakian kindergarten. She makes contacts, takes on the bureaucracy, clashes with the prejudices of those who blurt out a shocked "But WHY?" or those who tell her "you don't want to send your little one to THEM, do you?". Even the teachers are against it. But obviously the twenty years of holidays that have gone before are stronger than the nay-sayers. Susanna ends up attending the

nursery school across the borders at Hradek nad Nisou in Czechoslovakia where all three borders meet and close to her home in Zittau in Germany. The experience proves positive, and the little girl adapts quickly and is happy at the nursery. Thus was born the idea of a formal cooperation between the border regions, so that other children can repeat Susanna's experience.

At that time Regina has just finished a doctorate in mathematics with a thesis on 'Mathematical models of fluids dynamics' at Kennewitz and returns to Zittau, where they had promised her a permanent position. The Berlin Wall falls, however and Germany reunites, and many things change. Amongst the changes is the structure of the University of Zittau: there is now no place for Dr. Gellrich. Regina finds herself with a temporary job and her child at a nursery school that they want to close. She successfully leads the Parents' Association in the fight to keep it open. Enriched with this experience, she manages to get a job as administrator in a German non-governmental organisation called Children Care, which among its many projects, promotes cross-border cooperation. She is the contact with the authorities. Her daughter at that time is already attending the nursery across the border and Regina then decides to proceed with a model of cooperation based on her personal experience. She moves from Children Care to Pon-



Author of this story: Fabrizio Pizzioli

Fabrizio Pizzioli is a researcher at the Fonds National de la Recherche Scientifique (FNRS) at the Catholic University of Leuven in Belgium. He has spent 8 years working on language and cognition. He is currently studying the neural basis of language in adults, the learning of language in children and diseases of language. He is also concerned with cross-linguistic differences and learning in bilingual children.

tes, an agency that works to develop cross-border cooperation between the Czech Republic, Saxony and Poland in the field of education. It is interesting to note that the association - and the ideas - have arisen in a spontaneous, bottom-up fashion from the needs of individuals or small groups of individuals, a model that has subsequently found support and form in institutions and the Euroregion Neisse-Nisa-Nysa.

Regina's idea is to develop a transnational network of education in the triangle between Germany, Poland and the Czech Republic, starting from a model based on her own experience. It was decided to start with the kindergartens. "On the one hand we want to offer people the opportunity to enroll their children in kindergartens across the border and on the other to ensure that in the German kindergartens in the region there are two teachers present, one a German native speaker, the other speaking Czech (or Polish)" she says. They are also producing books and games for bilingual kindergartens, helping to organise meetings and language courses for parents, children's parties, holidays, and various other activities, where parents can get to meet 'the other half'. The project has developed so rapidly that Regina's second daughter, Juliane born in 1994, has been able to take advantage of new educational system.

Susanna is growing and about to start primary school, but there are no schools that can offer bilingual education. Thus was born then the idea of creating a more structured cooperation, not only limited to kindergartens but that would cover a child's entire education. They therefore organise schools where Czech and German (or Polish and German) children can attend together, and where the teaching and the lessons take place in both languages and the educational programmes are developed through mutual agreement. Some schools are equipped with dormitories, where the children stay during the week, returning home to their families at the weekend.

Juliane now attends one of these schools and I wanted to talk to her and to hear about her experience. Juliane is now a young girl and is full of enthusiasm for her magnificent school, her magnificent classmates, the magnificent Czech Republic and the wonderful language she is learning. Speaking with her you begin to realise that she is not simply learning a language other than her own, but is growing up in a multicultural environment, where she is learning to confront the differences. "Some of my friends who do not attend the 'mixed' school think that the Czechs are dangerous, bad, and a bunch of thieves; and the Czechs think that the Germans are closed and unable to come into contact with them. I don't like prejudice and I know that it's not like that." Juliane is now almost perfectly bilingual and it seems quite natural to her to live or work in the Czech Republic, if life should ever offer her the chance. This is not just some little thing in a region where unemployment is among the highest in Germany and she and her schoolmates will enjoy better job opportunities as a result of their training, born of this long-lasting transnational cooperation of which Regina is one of the architects. This highlights the last aspect of cooperation in the field of language and education, the socio-economic one. I ask Regina what she would like to achieve in the future, and of her dreams. "That this cultural cooperation project can sweep away cultural stereotypes that still imprison much of the population divided by the three borders". For example there is a very interesting project involving the Universities of Zittau, Liberec and Wroclaw. It seeks to allow young Germans in the region to choose to live and work in the Czech Republic - "So close and so similar in spirit to the former East Germany", rather than in faraway - and foreign - West Germany. Dreams of an administrator of the NGO Pontes, but also those of a mother who lived on the other side of the Iron Curtain and who spent her holidays in Czechoslovakia. X



Neisse. Abandoned industrial digger



NEIGHBOURS AREN'T STRANGERS

40 years of the history of borders in the life of the writer Drago Jančar, who doesn't believe in multiculturalism but DOES believe in culture "because by definition men of culture are curious, open and given to accepting the culture of others without renouncing their own"

by Neva Zajc ›

Drago Jančar was born in 1948 in Maribor, where he studied law and worked as a journalist (1971-1974). This was followed by a period as a freelance writer (1974-1978), and a dramaturge at "Viba Film" in Ljubljana. Since 1980, he has been the secretary and editor-in-chief of the 'Slovenska matica' publishing house. He has been awarded American, Austrian and British scholarships. Novels and short stories have been published in numerous languages. He often gives readings and lectures in prominent cultural centres around the world. He has won a number of awards, including the Prešeren Award (the highest Slovene recognition for achievements in culture), the European award for short fiction, the Herder Prize, and the Jean Améry Award for essay writing at the last year's Frankfurt Book Fair.



Q You were born in Maribor, a town lying along the Drava river, halfway between Vienna and the Adriatic. For 30 years, you have been living in Ljubljana, but you are still attached to Maribor and you often find yourself travelling to Trieste where your recent books have earned you a warm welcome.

How do the landscape and your mood change on your way to Trieste?

A I get very excited when I come to Trieste and see my novel 'Northern Lights' or 'Ringing in My Head' or the collection of short stories 'Joyce's Pupil' in bookshops. Now I feel more at home in Trieste than before. It's not that Trieste didn't feel like home before - since the 1970s, this diagonal between Maribor and Trieste, the old Central European route Vienna-Triest, has served as a link to a more open world. At the end of this road was a geographically open space, as well as a city characterized by cultural and political openness. At that time, I often met with Boris Pahor who wasn't as famous as today. Later I realised, and I hope that the inhabitants of Trieste won't find themselves offended, that Trieste, too, had its provincial dimensions man-

ifested not only in its aversion to Slovenes and other foreigners, but also in the fact that its cultural vibrancy was not as strong as that of Ljubljana. Despite this recognition of Trieste's darker sides, I still remember the journeys from Maribor through Ljubljana, the centre where I became recognised as a writer, to Trieste a sort of cross-section of life that then extends itself to many other European and American cities.

Q You have mentioned the Central European area. Is this not only a 'meteorological phenomenon' as it used to be called in the past?

A Central Europe (*Mittleuropa*) is no longer such an interesting notion as it was in the time when it was promoted by Claudio Magris, György Konrád and other intellectuals, as well as people living behind the so-called Iron Curtain. Yugoslavia wasn't situated behind the real Iron Curtain: in the mid-1960s, we were allowed to travel beyond its borders with our passports if they had not been taken away - as mine was - and so we lived in a fairly open world. The discussion on Central Europe and on how to transcend borders was an attempt to overcome the wire barriers between Czechoslovakia and Hungary, Czechoslovakia

and Austria, mine fields and guards. There existed a fairly closed world, and the discussion on Central Europe was an attempt to open the borders and space in order to get an area where cultures could function more freely and where - and now we come to meteorology and to something I've written elsewhere - people and ideas could move round the globe as the clouds float across the sky.

Q And so we've come to mobility. Now we are part of Europe, which is more important than Central Europe, as well as of a globalised world. Does mobility stand for rapid changes in the environment and the adaptation to new cultural patterns?

A Central Europe is not only a phenomenon from a certain historical moment, that is the 1980s, or a cultural phenomenon and a goal we had. It is first and foremost a geographical and historical notion. We share our history. We saw conflicts, as well as periods of good co-operation. We lived in the same countries, but then the borders started changing. I believe that Central Europe still exists. People who witnessed all these drastic historic

shifts and changes in borders lived differently to people elsewhere. This part of Europe is different, just as Mediterranean Europe differs from Northern Europe. The issues of globalisation, rapid changes and so on have strengthened my belief that first we have to show interest in our local characteristics and only then in establishing ties between large regional and national entities. At the same time, we also have to cherish memories of excellent things and catastrophes that this area has witnessed, which makes it interesting, original and special.

Q You are an advocate of storytelling, of stories that we give to one another, with the aim of getting to know one another better. Here's an example: your short story 'Joyce's Pupil', which has given the title to your entire book of short fiction, talks about Boris Furlan from Trieste.

A Precisely this story about Boris Furlan, Joyce's pupil, talks about the continual change of cultures and places he underwent: he moved from Ljubljana to Trieste, Zürich, and London, to return to



Drago Jančar. © Dare Cekeliš

Ljubljana, find himself in prison, and then moved to a village in the Gorenjska region. Furlan saw different ideological systems and states, he experienced Fascism, cherished hopes in Communism only to be disappointed ... He travelled around and experienced changes as only a few Europeans did. The writer often finds himself in the role of such an observer.

Q There is no end to conflicts. Why is it so difficult to foster dialogue between people, even between neighbours, why does xenophobia keep resurrecting itself in new forms?

A Neighbours are not strangers to one another. I spent half of my life in the vicinity of the Slovene-Austrian border where people used to live in harmony, share the same stories, fight together against the Turks, drought and grasshoppers, convene sessions in the town hall ... And then the divisions began. We were divided by culture, however paradoxical this may sound. Slovenes were justified in raising the issue of the rights of the Slovene language, in turning to our brothers in Prague or even in faraway Moscow. And so we grew apart, only to find ourselves in the 20th century that brought us national and ideological conflicts and new states. If misunderstandings still arise, they are caused by the past, by deep frustrations on both sides of the border. They thrive in Istria, Primorska and Trieste, as well as in northern part of Slovenia, in Maribor. Everywhere there are memories of the things that happened before, during and after war. Some people believe that these misunderstandings, which generate new conflicts and problems in communication, can be solved by forgetting the past and focusing on the future. On the contrary, we have to be familiar with these things, with all the tragic events, from the Trieste trials against the Slovenes to the killing of the *foibe* that happened after WWII. This will make our dialogue easier. Greater curiosity and openness are the preconditions for better understanding. I'd dare to say that they are more often found on the Slovene side. We are familiar with Italian history and culture, which is logical as theirs is an ancient culture, while Italians living along the border are not familiar with Slovene culture. Things have been getting better lately. To know the past, culture and interests of your neighbours is a fundamental thing.

Q Which most probably applies to new immigrants as well.



A In principle, this is the same story, yet we are afraid to face it as it is somehow material in nature. An increasing number of immigrants means increased pressure on public services. People who have lived here for long time and have paid taxes find it difficult to accept that. I would say that it will be easier to overcome cultural differences. Other issues will have to be solved by politics: how to integrate immigrants into society, how to ensure them access to public services without making the local population furious or bad-tempered.

Q You believe in intercultural dialogue, which is now on the agenda of European politicians. All of a sudden, culture matters.

A Brussels bureaucracy is often obsessed with a certain topic, at the moment its intercultural dialogue. Yet this is not a new topic. The idea emerged at least 15 or 20 years ago under the term 'multiculturalism'. In my opinion, we don't need multiculturalism or intercultural dialogue. What we need is culture since cultural people are, by definition, curious and open, and accept another culture without renouncing their own. By saying intercultural dialogue, we imply that there are two very different cultures, which might be indeed the case, but by saying so, we have addressed the subject from two separate sides. Cultural dialogue or dialogue on culture would be a better way of putting it.

Q When writing about European soul, you refer to Jacques Delors ... What kind of soul does Europe need?

A I quoted a passage in which Delors referred above all to culture. If it wants to become a living organism, Europe cannot only be a sum of interests, which it still is. New states that have joined Europe with enthusiasm, including Slovenia, are well aware that Europe is interested in new markets, and would like to enter that market and partake in progress and welfare. This is a good basis, which functions well, but it is not an organism that would survive major friction. Such a Europe can fall apart. The soul of Europe is culture, into which we should integrate its tradition. The latter encompasses Christianity, which was the first to establish Europe as a united area, the Enlightenment, which placed man, the citizen at its centre, as well as the achievements of the French Revolution, and even uncontaminated socialist achievements such as the welfare state and solidarity. All these elements make the history of Europe, its soul, which is, of course, also reflected in modern philosophical and artistic phenomena.

Q You claim that literature plays an important role in the sphere of culture. However, globalization has many side effects, from the spread of instant culture to reverence for internet and multimedia communication... How can literature compete with them?

A In my opinion, it no longer can and this battle has been lost. Literature will most probably survive in more elite circles. I can't imagine that literature with its abundance of stories, metaphors and associations would not survive, as it meets the needs of our deeper being, just like religion or certain social activities. Literature will no longer be the phenomenon that would change the world or had an impact on it as it did in the 20th century.

Q Do you believe that writing is a mission? How can a writer be socially engaged - you yourself differentiate between fiction writing and writing for newspapers or magazines - how can a writer make himself useful?

A I think it is enough to write stories or poems to be a useful person. Oscar Wilde once said that art is the most useless thing in the world. But paradoxically, he claims that without art people would lead more miserable lives. Without some form of art, they would not live at all. That's why literature matters. It cannot replace sermons or social solutions, what

it can do is to help man understand himself, the world, other stories with which he can juxtapose his own experience and the wealth of language. There's no need to be a socially engaged writer. I am one because that's my way of responding to things.

Q How do you view translation? On what does it depend?

A It will never be possible to translate everything into all languages. Well, technically yes, but who'd be interested in that? The pressure of minor Central European nations to win recognition has its limits. We can't expect that everyone knows all Slovene literature, just like we don't know the literature of others. Of course, we have to strive to have as much translated as possible. People are getting more curious. However, once the Slovene presidency to the EU is over, the increased interest in Slovenia will return to normal.

Q What is the descriptive desire that you mention in 'Joyce's Pupil' when Boris Furlan cannot describe a lamp owing to language problems? What does it stand for in your writing?

A This is a very important question. All at once, I realised that this is the motto of my writing, this wish to describe things, to label them with words; the lamp, relations between two people, the connection of love, social questions, nature. All at once, I became aware that the 'descriptive desire', as Furlan puts it, can be also found in my desire to write. In the story, Joyce tells his pupil to describe an oil lamp. Furlan says that he feels emptiness in his head, which turns into the central metaphor of the short story, as he will feel that same emptiness when sentenced to death at his trial in Ljubljana. This is a metaphor for the mystery of literature. Words, passionate descriptions, they're all stronger than the acts of saving the world even if writers can be socially engaged. Literature is stronger. Joyce left Trieste because of WWI; according to Furlan, he got scared, while Furlan, a Slovene from Trieste and an advocate of liberal values, stood up to Fascism, was sentenced, escaped to Ljubljana, came into conflict with Communism and was sentenced as an English spy... The emptiness in his head is the emptiness arising from saving the world. There was something he didn't understand. He was sure Joyce was a weirdo because of his descriptive desire. These are two principles that I leave open: setting the world to rights and describing it. X

ICE HOCKEY. THE PERFECT TEAMWORK MODEL?

The experience of Gregor Hager, a professional hockey player with KAC, the Klagenfurt team competing in a league covering Austria, Slovenia and Hungary

by Tadej Košmrlj >

Q Right now hockey is surely not the favourite sport in Klagenfurt, is it?

A No, certainly not. If nothing else, it's too hot now. And, of course, even in Carinthia hockey cannot compete with the European Football Championship.

Q This year has been proclaimed the European year of intercultural dialogue. The EBEL League is often mentioned as a good example of intercultural dialogue. Could you provide an example how teams from other countries have enriched the league if this is indeed the case?

A Of course it is. The most definite proof is that the number of spectators increased at all venues. It's

much more dramatic if the audience can also watch matches with foreign teams that are equal rivals to domestic ones. Of course, it's then that patriotism comes into play, which makes it even more interesting to play against Slovene or Hungarian teams.

Q Our newspapers often announce a match between the KAC and Olimpija as a local derby. Do you also see it that way?

A As a matter of fact, the real local derby is a match between Klagenfurt and Villach, but lately we do have other derbies as well: Villach - Jesenice and Klagenfurt - Olimpija. Carinthian newspapers also label them as derbies and I'd say they're do-



Gregor Hager. © Kac Klagenfurt

Gregor Hager is a Carinthian. Since childhood, he has been actively involved in 'the Reds' - as the hockey players of the KAC, the Klagenfurt hockey team currently playing in the EBEL (Austrian hockey league), are called. Though of Austrian nationality, he also has Slovene ancestors; there is a joke that each Carinthian has a parent of Slovene origin. Naturally, George Hager, a professional hockey player since 1999, lives in Klagenfurt. And even if the hockey season ended several weeks ago, he will stay in his hometown for at least another month, the reason being the European Football Championship.

ing the right thing. There is certain rivalry at work between these teams and, as a result, we can talk about local derbies. The spectators also consider them that way, which is good for hockey and the atmosphere.

Q Do you think that sport could set a good example and make people see that good co-operation could be also developed in other spheres?

A Sport can certainly set a good example for all kinds of spheres. The problem is that it is difficult to realise that in practice. But sport can teach us a lot of things.

Q Do you notice great differences between Slovenia and Austria once you have crossed the border?

A How can I put it? No longer. They have really become much smaller. They were very large a few years ago, just think of the infrastructure surrounding the Slovene towns that house hockey halls. In this sense, Slovenia is catching up with us. Most probably, it will invest lots of money in the following years, which is good. I have noticed that spectators and my team players have a much more positive attitude to Slovene towns as so many things have changed for the better.

Q What do you think about cross-border Euroregions?

A We can conclude with no doubt that such co-operation is a must in certain fields. For example, it would be fruitful in tourism and tourism marketing. It would go down well. We should just promote and sell it well, just think of the 'Alpe-Adria'

idea. I'd say that at the moment everyone tends his own garden and there's no co-operation. If they worked together instead of separately, the three regions would be much stronger. In comparison with other regions and cities, we're relatively small. Such co-operation bring us certain advantages.

Q I'm sure that your team members also come from abroad. How do you get along? Do they keep more to themselves?

A No, hockey is a team sport. You have to stick together, each player is part of the whole, and the more we are connected, the better we understand one another, the better our results will be at the end of the season. A good case in point is Olimpija from Ljubljana. In my opinion, it was their character that made them this year's best team in the league. They fought together and that was the main reason for their success.

Q These days, football has turned Klagenfurt in a multicultural town par excellence. Have you considered it that way even before?

A Yes, Klagenfurt has always been a multicultural town. Again, I'll give you an example from the field of sports. The EURO 2008 Championship is not the first big sporting event organized in our town. Each year, Klagenfurt plays host to a big beach volleyball tournament, as well as an Ironman Triathlon qualifying event. Thanks to these two important sporting events and to sportsmen that take part in them, Klagenfurt is famous as a multicultural town all around the world. X

Ljubljana train station. Photo published by Jason Gillyon on Flickr.com



Statue in Ljubljana. Photo published by Nathan Wind as Cochese on Flickr.com.

Slovene women: first in the Euroregion in quality of life in the workplace

by Annalisa Turel >

Female Slovenian workers enjoy the best conditions and are much better represented at a managerial level. Social research carried out at the International Institute of Sociology in Gorizia compares the female populations in Austria, Slovenia and Friuli Venezia Giulia (NE Italy) in the fields of economics and employment

Greater ease in finding work, less discrimination, a network of services that supports mothers. The women of Slovenia can count on the best working conditions and quality of life. This is what emerges from a doctoral thesis on the conditions enjoyed by women in the Euroregion. 'Gender inequalities and social conditions of employed women in the Alps-Adriatic region. A comparison between Carinthia, Friuli - Venezia Giulia and Slovenia' is the title of the work of Serena Fedel, carried out between Friuli Venezia Giulia, Slovenia and Carinthia, during a doctorate in transboundary policies in daily life, through the Institute of International Sociology in Gorizia together with a consortium of ten universities from Central and Eastern Europe.



The aim of the research and fieldwork was to analyse the approach towards gender differences in the three areas. Jumping to the work's conclusions one discovers that Slovenia is without doubt the country where women find fewer obstacles in achieving their aims, especially economically and in the workplace. This, of course, without forgetting how these two aspects have a positive effect in the social and family spheres. But behind

"The feminist task is neither to glorify nor to discount the differences between men and women, but to challenge the adverse consequences of whatever differences there may be."

Christine Littleton cited in the first page of Serena Fedel's research.

"THE DIFFERENCES IN TREATMENT ARE THERE FOR ALL TO SEE"

2005

11% OF FEMALE WORKERS WERE PART-TIMERS: THE LOWEST RATE IN THE AREA (EUROSTAT, GENDER GAPS)

these conclusions there is a long piece of research that begins with the reasons that, today, produce the different outcomes, in Austria, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia. Amongst these, without doubt, is the socialist heritage of ex-Yugoslavia.

"The comparison between the three different realities - explains Serena Fedel - shows how Slovenia is more progressive in this sector, as a result of the country's socialist past. Even in the Constitution women are called upon to work like men. As a result an entire system has been created to help women to reconcile family and professional obligations through nursery schools to the provision of canteens. Without doubt therefore, over time, a greater sensitivity (to women's issues) has developed".

The Italian situation is very different. Even if there are differences, borne

out in the thesis, between what takes place in Italy as a whole and in Friuli Venezia Giulia in particular. If, at a Italian level, the number of women in work is far lower than in Slovenia,



Portrait. Published by salendron on Flickr.co

in Friuli Venezia Giulia the figures are much improved, even though a larger gap between the sexes still remains. The data, provided by Eurostat and this Italian Region's Statistical Almanac show a level of male unemployment at 2.6% whilst that for women stands at 5.8%, set against 10.1% at a national level. In Slovenia 6.1% of men are unemployed and 7% of women. In Austria the respective figures are 4.9% and 5.5%. The reasons lie in the strong influence of the Catholic Church in the separation of the roles within the family and the laws that continue to reflect the patriarchal tradition of the Italian family. The model according to which the woman takes care of the children has brought about a more limited provision of services. This affects the hours of the nurseries and schools which are largely incompatible with parents where both work full time. All this without looking at the terms of parental leave that guarantee only 30% of the salary.

The dissatisfaction of women regarding their position, both professionally and within the family, is also seen in the interviews carried out by Serena Fedel. The analysis of the various pieces of legislation and the practices in the various areas have been placed alongside fieldwork through a series of interviews with Austrian, Italian and Slovene women employed by the same banking group. "The results - says Fedel - confirmed my hypothesis and the first group of women interviewed stressed the absolute incompatibility of the care services with full-time work. The Slovene situation once again proved completely different, where the system of parental leave was much more generous and, because of this, women were much better represented at a managerial level". Even though some change in the old

"the thing is all quite open and above board... because it's women who have children and that's why they are discriminated against in the world of work, There are women who have children and manage to make a career for themselves but it's difficult and they have to fight harder to get where they are and then hold their position..."

family model, based on the working man and the housewife, was recorded, especially in the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, the changes were limited to the field of work, whilst less change was seen in the division of housework: the time dedicated to housework was decidedly imbalanced (between the sexes) as were the requests for parental leave which were rather only occasionally amongst the men.

The Austrian reality, and that of Carinthia in particular, presents yet another, different set of characteristics. Here part-time work represents a widespread option for women and mothers in particular, so as to reconcile the time needed for one's profession with that required for maternity. The possibility to go part-time, together with the generous parental leave given by employers allows women to risk leaving their careers or at least carry almost exclusively on their shoulders the responsibility for childcare and housework, but tends to increase the disparity in terms of pay (between the sexes). Female Austrian workers, in fact, can stay at home with the child until it is 30 months old and get a part-time post until the child reaches the age of seven.

REGION	MALE UNEMPLOYMENT	WOMEN UNEMPLOYMENT
Austria	4.9%	5.5%
Friuli Venezia Giulia	2.6%	5.8%
Slovenia	6.1%	7%

Serena Fedel's analysis goes into the details. The questionnaire given to 30 female workers in Austria, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia aims to analyse the family and working conditions and their opinions on sex equality policies. The questions therefore range from the level of satisfaction felt towards parental leave to that on the role given to women in their respective families, through to the level of satisfaction with the services provided by their employers. If the Austrian and Slovene women show that flexible working hours and the opportunities for leave represent the positive side of the equation, the female Italian workers' responses illustrate a series of difficulties. "Being a woman penalises you, inasmuch as

you can be as good as the men, but the men are preferred. Compared to a men you have more things to worry about: there's not only the work but also the children, the house... even if you put in the same effort, you risk coming out worse...", one reads in the interviews. Going on: "The differences in treatment are there for all to see", summing up with those who believe that "the thing is all quite open and above board... because it's women who have children and that's why they are discriminated against in the world of work. There are women who have children and manage to make a career for themselves but it's difficult and they have to fight harder to get where they are and then hold their position...". X

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42,5 %

OF SLOVENIAN CHILDREN UP TO THE AGE OF THREE ARE TAKEN CARE OF IN CHILDCARE FACILITIES; IN AUSTRIA THE SAME HOLDS TRUE FOR 13% AND IN ITALY FOR 6%



Jump in Kamien. Photo published by Susy Gipseer on Flickr.com

From the conclusions of the research: "As a conclusion I want to say that the administrations of all the three analyzed areas got committed to the promotion of gender equality and are aware of the problems of reconciliation that women face every day, as well as of the fields where they may still suffer discriminative behaviours in connection with their current of prospect family duties. As I have already said, if the European Union wants to become the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based society it cannot afford to renounce to women's skills and potentials, moreover it needs to encourage young couples to build up a family and have children, this is why on the one hand it has to be invested in family friendly measures, on the other hand reproductive work should be paid a higher social acknowledgment" (Fedel, S. 2007. 'Gender inequalities and social conditions of employed women in the Alps-Adriatic Region'. Downloadable from: www.pariopportunitafvg.it/documenti/SerenaFedel2007dissertation.pdf)



Theatre Verdi, Trieste. Photo published by David Salvatori on Flickr.com

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EURO-NOMAD

From the first degree in Gorizia to the doctorate from Klagenfurt, passing through Ljubljana and Trieste, a snapshot of Serena Fedel, at home in more than one university of the Alpe-Adria. Projects for the future? That her children will speak the languages of the area: Slovene and Italian, not forgetting English and German obviously...

by Annalisa Turel >



Author of this story: Annalisa Turel

Journalist with a degree in Public Relations she has worked for years with many Italian newspapers. Since January 2007 she has run GoriziaOggi (<http://goriziaoggi.typepad.com/>), a daily blog supplying information on the Isonzo, the territory on either side of the River Isonzo, running from Italy's border with Slovenia to the Adriatic.

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"My children will go to the bilingual nursery at Vermegliano, near Ronchi. At home we'll speak Italian but it's right that they should learn the languages spoken in the area from an early age, as much as it is that they learn German or English". This sums up the project for a future euroregional experience of Serena Fedel, a citizen of Alpe-Adria, who although a die-hard *bisiaca* (a speaker of the local Italian dialect), as she herself is at pains to point out, has lived for two years between Klagenfurt (in Austria), the Slovene capital Ljubljana, and Trieste.

After being awarded a degree in Public Relations with top marks from the University of Udine in 2002, Serena Fedel won a scholarship for a doctorate in Transboundary Politics in Daily Life: a creature born from the cooperation between the Institute of International Sociology of Gorizia and the Universities of Trieste, Udine, Klagenfurt, Maribor, Krakow, Budapest, Cluj Napoca, Bratislava and Catania.

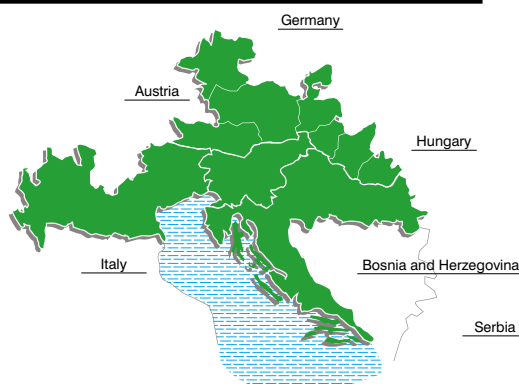
"It seemed interesting to me to develop a project linked to the area of Alpe-Adria. The theme came to me almost by chance through some publications I came across on a series of initiatives linked to the field of equal opportunities - she explains. I thought that a comparison between the conditions of women in Friuli Venezia Giulia, in Slovenia and in Carinthia could represent a new and still largely unexplored theme". The results of the project were, on one hand, a doctoral thesis 'Gender inequalities and social conditions of employed women in the Alps-Adriatic region. A comparison between Carinthia, Friuli Venezia Giulia and Slovenia', and, on the other, an intense life and work experience, gained at first hand in

the three areas. She also confirmed the conclusions reached in her thesis - that Slovenia offers the best living and work conditions for women and recounts how it would be in Ljubljana that, were she able, she would have stayed and lived.

"At the University of Klagenfurt there is a department dedicated to the promotion of Gender Studies, with a well-stocked library and, not of minor importance, my supervisor Professor Josef Langer. I did my first term of the doctorate there and, finding good working conditions, decided to stay on". But the life of Serena Fedel at that time wasn't only that of a student. Looking for alternate employment, more or less temporary, she worked as a barmaid and as a hostess at trade exhibitions - opportunities that on one hand allowed her to pay her way and on the other, 'live' the city and practice the language, getting to know people. In the meantime there was a thesis to carry forward, in particular an analysis of the professional conditions of women, using a series of interviews with female employees of a bank with branches in all three areas.

If fieldwork in the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia and in Austrian Carinthia could be completed fairly easily, the barrier of language was an issue in Slovenia. "I didn't speak Slovene" she explains, "and from my arrival in Klagenfurt I'd done courses, but obviously being behind a desk is not the same as learning directly in the real world. I thought it would be much more useful, obviously also with the research in mind, to go to Ljubljana". The publication of a competition for a scholarship from the Italian Foreign Ministry proved crucial. So Dr. Fedel moved, lock stock and barrel, to the Slovene capital to start a new adventure whilst keeping to the theme of an analysis of the con-

The Alps Adriatic Working Community includes the Hungarian counties of Baranya, Somogy, Vas and Zala, the Italian regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lombardy and Veneto, the Austrian Bundesländer of Burgenland, Carinthia, Styria and Upper Austria as well as Croatia and Slovenia.



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dition of women. So it was that in Ljubljana a new thread in her Euroregional experience was woven, leading her back to Italy, not in her own San Canzian on the River Isonzo but to Trieste.

"At first I got by using English but I soon realised that the courses I was following were insufficient. I was irritated that I was unable to understand everything, and it especially disturbed me that I had to have help to carry out the interviews necessary to complete the thesis. I carried on studying and after a few months I was finally able to speak and understand Slovene," she says. In the meantime however, her experience on a Ministry scholarship had come to an end, meaning she had to find paid work.

First came the experience as an assistant to Professor Langer at the University of Klagenfurt, but the distance between Ljubljana and the Carinthian capital was too great to com-

mute, even just for a few days a week. With too little money for a car, she began a search for a job in the place that would become her new home. Having to work within job quotas, given that at that time Slovenia had not yet entered the Schengen area, she decided to work to her strengths in order to carve for herself a place in the job market.

"In fact I was a student living in a foreign country - she explains - and my advantage was being able to speak Italian, whilst in the meantime, having picked up a good working knowledge of Slovene. It wasn't particularly difficult to find part time job in an import-export firm, one in fact managed by an Italian. This also allowed me to teach in some private schools". The experience gained allowed Serena to do a bit of 'insider trading' at a management software company, where she was able to pass herself off, so to speak, (given that she was one) as



Serena Fedel



a student needing to collect information to finish a doctoral thesis.

Even though Slovenia comes across, as it also does in her thesis, as a country where women enjoy the best working conditions, this does not mean that it is easy to find permanent work. Serena - who in the meantime was looking for a more secure position - came across an agency which seeks to place Slovene students in temporary jobs, positions reserved for those attending the University of Ljubljana. Serena decided therefore to follow two degrees at the same time, enrolling in a course for a degree in Political Science. Moving from job to job, in the meantime she finished the research and wrote up the thesis and finished the three year research doctorate, but wanted to stay in Ljubljana. "I didn't want to return to Klagenfurt even if there would probably have been good opportunities to carry out new research work at the University, paid for with EU Interreg funds. "I liked (and continue to like) Ljubljana, it has that touch of Balkan spirit that makes it a warmer place than Klagenfurt. In addition it is also welcoming, on a human scale but you breathe the cosmopolitan air of a European capital. Obviously I also made a lot of friends in my months there. The only thing I missed was being close to the sea".

The next step was to move on and look for a permanent job, this time not as a student, possibly in the area of Communication and Marketing. But the response was always the same: "At the moment we are not

looking for staff but we'll keep your file on our books." A series of C.V's returned to sender - it wasn't looking good.

Amongst the companies contacted however was a one in Trieste, the only one on the list and it was this one that replied, offering an eight month apprenticeship in the *Area di Ricerca*. "By coincidence the company was involved in connectivity and security policies for company networks and was looking to expand into Slovenia and this was why my curriculum made its way to the top of the pile. There I worked as an apprentice before finding a job in a company that works in electronic commerce, but the most important thing to me is that I've moved to Trieste. I've been living here for a year and I like it a lot, the people are more open and I've had a chance to catch up with old friends". But another move is on the cards, this time it would seem for good. Destination Cervignano (in the province of Udine) to work for a agricultural company.

"I would have happily stayed in Ljubljana. If I could- she reveals - I would choose to move there for good but my life has brought me back here and I'm happy about that. I'd do the whole thing again, making the same choices to end up exactly where I am today. And then there is balancing family and work time - returning to the theme of my doctoral thesis, which represents a problem here in Friuli Venezia Giulia: and that's why having as my boss the father of my children will prove a real advantage." x

SCHERIANI: THE AREA COVERED? LESS IMPORTANT THAN THE COMMON INITIATIVES UNDERTAKEN

The Deputy Mayor of
Koper - Capodistria throws
down the challenge: a single
Port Authority to take on
northern Europe

by Gianni Katonar >

Q Deputy Mayor, you've always lived close to the border with Italy. What has this demarcation line meant to you and your family?

A A border is always a border even though the one with Italy was always permeable. My father worked right up to his retirement in the shipyards at Muggia. Almost half of my relatives, after the post-war exodus of ethnic Italians from Yugoslavia moved to Trieste or its surroundings. The same went for our friends. Maintaining contacts was difficult. Locals could cross at the smaller border posts using the *lasciapassare* (a locally-valid passport). These however closed at a certain time so you were forced to make long detours to the international crossings to return home. One shouldn't forget either that at that time the border was heavily patrolled by the Yugoslav military and this made the climate tense. The entry of Slovenia into the Schengen area was a great moment for us and we felt a lot freer.

Q Could you lay out your point of view on how the Euroregion should function?

A Completing the regionalization of Slovenia should make the birth of a Euroregion easier. I believe that the Euroregion could represent a step forward on the road towards cooperation between adjoining regions but everything depends on what one seeks to include in the field of cooperation.

Q What geographical area should the Euroregion cover in the view of Koper - Capodistria?

A I don't have any firm ideas on the borders of the Euroregion. In my opinion it should include areas that share a common history, traditions and problems, but, to my eyes, the area covered is less important than the common initiatives that those involved can undertake.

Q The possible reservations against the birth of a Euroregion are often linked to a presumed risk of loss of sovereignty in one's own area. What is your view on this?



Alberto Scheriani

The sad reality of the division caused by the demarcation line between Italy and the then Yugoslavia had to be faced up to by the inhabitants of the hills above Muggia, between Triest and Koper - Capodistria. Villages such as Hrvatini - Crevatini, Kolomban - Colombano and Cerej - Cerei along with others, that even today hold a good proportion of Italian nationals, found themselves on the Yugoslav side of the border. One of the protagonists of the political and social life of Hrvatini is professor Alberto Scheriani. 43 years old with a degree in History from the University of Triest, he is the Headmaster of the Italian Middle School of the (Slovene) town of Izola - Isola. Deputy mayor of Koper - Capodistria (the municipality that includes Hrvatini), for many years he has been an important personality within the Italian community in Slovenia.

A I don't believe loss of sovereignty is a real risk. National borders will not be eliminated and the peoples' identity would be strengthened by the various joint initiatives. Doubts of this type are baseless.

Q We know that you are in constant contact with the neighbouring regions of Croatia and Italy. What cooperative ventures are already up and running with the various municipalities in Istria and Friuli Venezia Giulia?

A Koper - Capodistria believes that good neighbourly relations should be a priority when seeking to promote projects in common at a European level. Much has already been achieved in the field of environmental protection and planning at a multilateral level through the various initiatives that we are taking part in. There are plenty of opportunities for bilateral meetings with the local councils of Triest, Muggia, San Dorligo della Valle - Dolina and elsewhere in Italy. On the Croatian side of the border we are in regular contact with the Istrian local councils.

Q Do you see the possibility of resolving shared problems in the local area by using the Euroregion and what are you currently doing in this field?

A We are trying to agree on the sorting of waste and its subsequent recycling with Triest. Everything that cannot be recycled would then go to be incinerated at Italian plants, as, on our side of the border we lack the necessary infrastructure. The

other issue currently under examination is that of water supplies. The water resources for Koper - Capodistria are running out and bringing in new ones would be extremely costly. We would also like to draw attention once again to our interest in linking the school networks. Finally, I cannot miss out the area of healthcare provision where a cross-border plan is being drawn up for both emergency services and treatment in the region's hospitals.

Q What are the prospects of economic cooperation through a new political entity such as the Euroregion?

A For Koper - Capodistria the integration of the ports of the upper Adriatic is of the utmost urgency to take on the competition offered by the large operators in Northern Europe. Defining strategies together could further allow the advantages that our maritime ports offer to come to the fore. I don't rule out that, with time, we might see a single port authority. Greater coordination is also possible in tourism, with a joint offer in the market towards third countries. This should be put forward whilst avoiding unnecessary competition and duplication in the itineraries and peculiarities of the various areas. Above all environmental protection and sustainable development should be the dominant theme. For example, there is no place for regassification plants in our area as tourism would be the main sector to suffer. X



Strasbourg

"... EUROWHAT?!?"

Living in France, working in Switzerland and shopping in Germany: when Europe is a routine

by Julius Franzot >

At Strasbourg the hotel is a long way off: two trams and then the bus. I exchange a few words with the people waiting alongside me.

"What do you think of the Euroregion Haut-Rhin?"

"Qu'est ça? Euro, euri... quoi?"

I show a distinguished-looking woman with a laptop bag in her hand the map printed off the website. "Nothing new - it's us and the surrounding countries. Is it a project?"

"It's been in existence since 1975 you know, it's when one lives in one country and works another, the airport of Basel-Mulhouse, and the 1975 Bonn Accords."

"Yes, yes, now I understand, here we've always cooperated with each other, there's no need for anything new, we're the same people speaking the same dialect, similar systems."

"The same dialects, dann darf ich auf Deutsch weiter reden?"

"Non, non, monsieur, c'est le Français que nous apprenons à l'école, aussitôt l'Anglais, un petit peu."

Here I am in a stronghold of the European Union, and the lady doesn't seem very enthusiastic, just six kilometres from the German border, and she doesn't speak the neighbours' language. Here I am full of enthusiasm for 'her' Euroregion, and she doesn't even know what it is.

Now I'm waiting next to a policeman.

"I'm here to do a story on the oldest of the Euroregions ..."

"And what's that? Let me guess... the Basque Countries!"

"Je régrette, we're actually in it, Haut-Rhin."

"In practice we always have been, we're a peaceful people, one of the richest areas in Europe with similar cultural roots. Do you know, my brother works in Basle for a chemical company, Novartis, do you know it? He earns the same as the Swiss, lives in France, pays taxes like a Frenchman and on Saturday does the supermarket run in Germany. This is the European reality, not the Euroregions!" I'll sleep on it.

On the opposite bank: Kehl

After three stops on the tram I get on a bus that leaves every 15 minutes for Kehl, across the Rhine in Germany. At the border there's an enormous French *Pharmacie* where many medicines cost less and the pharmacists are

less strict in their prescription requirements. A few yards away is the *Ponte d'Europa*, the railway station and the centre of Kehl. Five tobacconists' shops with their signs in French just across the border show me one of the attractions of the open borders. So far the Euroregion consists of pharmacies and cigarettes. Before my appointment in the headquarters of the Euro-offices I find I have some time to get a feel for the place.

Touristenpavillon: I go in and find tourist brochures covering both banks, the *Museumspass*, that for a modest fee allows the visitor into 140 museums in France, Switzerland and Germany, a quarterly magazine (€3.90) with the calendar of the main events in the three areas, the posters for the *Rheinfest*, a joint festival between Baden and Alsace in the Park of Two Countries, separated by the Rhine and linked by a footbridge.

"What do you think of the Euroregion?" "Eurogio, haben wir so was?" "Yes, yes! You've had it since 1975." "Komisch, I never knew! Do you know, here we're used to having French colleagues, a French pension and a German one, a relative that works in Switzerland, shops that prosper with the transborder trade, festivals sponsored by the local councils since way back, town-twinning - what do we need a Euroregion for? The Euro, Schengen, these are the things we need!"

The town centre fills with French housewives of various races, studying what's on offer and coming out the shops carrying large parcels.

The next stop is the AOK, Germany's biggest health insurance company. An employee invites me to sit down and we start. "What effect has the Euroregion had on your work?" "Was meinen Sie bitte, Euro... was? Wie war das noch mal?" She calls her boss: "Yes, you could say that it helps us in our dealings with the French: it's only a new name. For decades we've been dealing with requests for services in Strasbourg or in Switzerland. Certainly, once upon a time compensation was a problem when dealing with the Swiss, but not any more. A German ambulance could not enter France with its sirens blaring, now we can. Every transboundary worker has the right to seek treatment, even by a family doctor, wherever he or she sees fit and for a few years now Switzerland has evened up the assistance for acute cases. We work with an au-



Author of this story: Julius Franzot

Writer, translator and publicist with a degree in Pharmacy, he was a manager in the pharmaceuticals industry in Germany and Italy. Julius Franzot is bilingual (German and Italian) and was born in Trieste, from where he works in support of Mitteleuropa through culture and politics.

tomatic search for available hospital beds in all three regions. Is this what you mean by a Euroregion?"

The Press Office in the local council headquarters. The lady I speak to is polite but balks at the term 'Euroregion' saying that the press and politicians talk about it but one should really say 'Eurodistricts' adding that these consist of adjoining regions, similar in function to the Italian provinces or British and Irish counties that each have an employment office or Jobcentre, a local parliament and are made up of a number of constituent municipalities. The main role of these Eurodistricts, which are also well known in France, is to match up the supply of, and demand for, workers on either bank of the Rhine and smooth the paperwork involved in unemployment, health and other social services.

Still with an hour to kill before my appointment in the headquarters of the ever-

less obvious Euroregion. I spot an Estate Agent. "After an explosion in the prices around Strasbourg our French clientele with the means came here to look for a house. The prices in the areas along the border have increased but are now undergoing a consolidation. Most people were looking for detached family homes for their own use. We haven't been approached by any big investors".

The prices are in line with those in other German cities on the Rhine: a small detached house costs about €300.000, semi-detached ones will set you back a quarter of million while an apartment of 100m2 can be yours for €180.000. The day after, I compared the prices with those in Alsace and the differences I found were minimal.

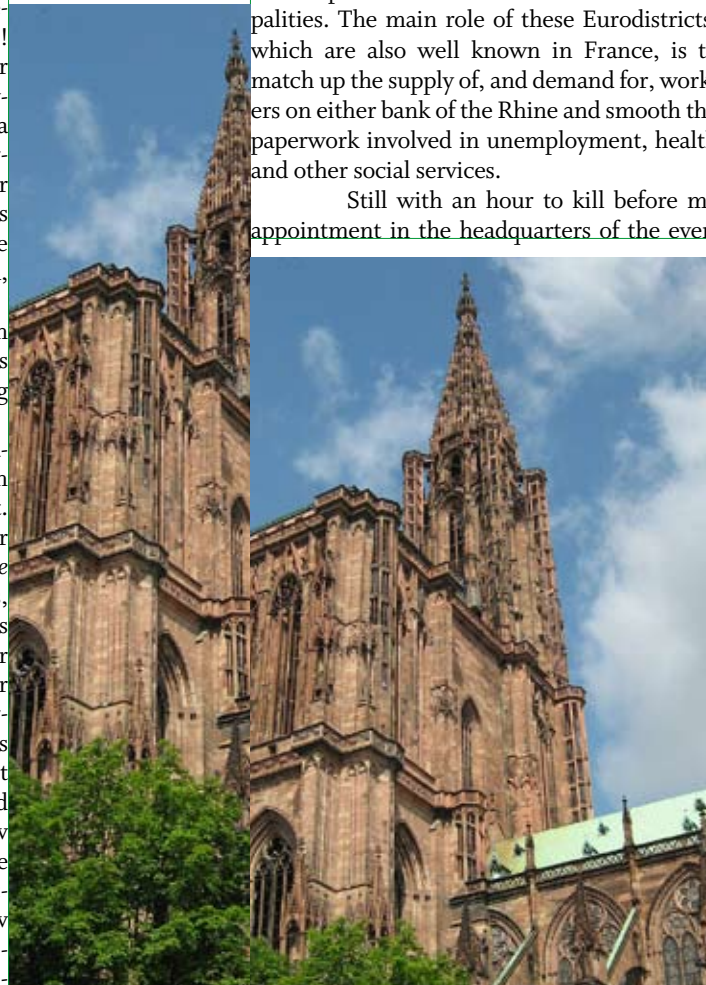
It's 1 pm and I sit at a table outside a café and smell the unmistakable odour of sewage. A cry from one of the workmen makes me jump: "Merde, les Fritz ont construit des égouts incroyables! Et ils disent que nous les Français ne savons pas travailler bien!". Two French repairmen hard at work amid the unappetising pong, the sighs of Germans on their lunch break and French housewives hunting for bargains.

At the Upper Rhine Conference

The H.Q of the Euroregion is in a small nineteenth century building in the middle of town. Occupying three rooms on the ground floor is INFOBEST, an office with the task of advising the citizens in their dealings with the Authorities, taxes, social issues and transboundary projects.

On the first floor, again in three rooms, is the secretariat of the German-French-Swiss Conference for the Upper Rhine, consisting of the only four paid employees of the Euroregion: a commissioner for each of the three countries and a secretary. I'm met by the German commissioner, Michael Frey.

"Before long the Euroregion will no longer have this name, which, in any case, was never official. It'll be called a 'Metropolitan Region'. We began cooperating at a local level in 1950 and in 1991 the 'Eurodistricts' were officially recognised and were made up of



Cathedral of Strasbourg

two coordinating bodies: the Commission (the regional, cantonal, provincial councillors and mayors) and the Conference, made up of four public appointees. The President is the Prefect of Karlsruhe (an administrator nominated by the President of the *Land*). The Secretariat is the executive body.”

“You don’t have a directly-elected Parliament: are you a judicial entity, as we call it, this Euroregion?”

“We have neither a directly-elected Parliament nor are we a judicial entity and neither do we have powers to pass legislation. We’re a body that deals with the problems that neighbours have, including the economy, science and civil society. We work on strategies to resolve these problems and if this includes legislative matters we propose them for the approval by the competent body: in Germany it’s the *Länder*, in France, the Parliament, and in Switzerland the various Cantons. Sometimes local proposals lead to changes in national laws, We’re a bottom up Euroregion: we act first, resolving problems by drawing up local agreements and then we look to the States for approval. First the concrete projects and then the structures. I don’t believe we’ll gain any further powers such as the ability to legislate as no one feels the need for it and we don’t have any influence over national legislation in States other than our own.”

“How do you finance your initiatives?”

“In the first instance using the INTERREG funds of the EU. We also help the local councils, businesses and associations when they are putting together the necessary documentation. Moreover we act as mediators between the Authorities in the different States.



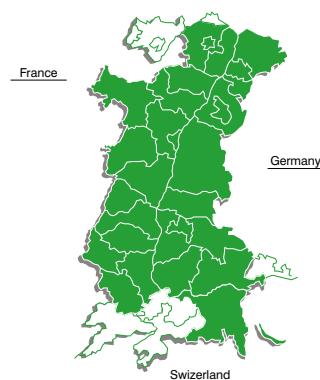
From left to right: Michael Frey, German commissioner of the Oberrhein Konferenz; Sylvia M. Müller-Wolf, coordinator of the Karlsruhe Employment Bureau; Julius Franzot, author

“Which are the main projects you are involved in?”

Sylvia Müller-Wolf, coordinator of the Karlsruhe Employment Bureau joins us and all three of us discuss the question.

“In 1986, when the stockpiles of the chemical company Sandoz in Basle caught fire, we realised that we needed to coordinate civil protection in the area. We organised an information and mutual aid network doing exercises together during which we saw the need to unify the procedures and understand each others’ languages - problems that we are resolving with a bilingual manual dealing with the issue. In 2007 a joint-owned fire-fighting ship was put in position, at anchor between Strasbourg and Kehl and equidistant from the two boats already available.”

“The ‘Health’ working group, founded in 1996, aims to rationalise structures to improve the services available and lower costs.



The German-French-Swiss Conference for the Upper Rhine includes parts of the German Länder Baden-Württemberg and Rheinland-Pfalz, the Alsace Region in France and the Swiss Cantons Basel-City, Basel-Land, Aargau, Jura und Solothurn.

Our main role is the coordination of the emergency health services, ensuring that we have information on all the available hospital beds in the three areas, arranged by specialisation and centres of excellence, which all the citizens have access to, regardless of where they come from. For programmed (rather than emergency) treatment we’re creating a telematic database that will show us the hospital beds and operating theatres available at that moment. In addition we are working to harmonise the health systems and anti-drug abuse policies.”

“In the case of programmed hospital treatment is it automatically referred to structures in one of the neighbouring States?”

“Not yet. For programmed hospital treatment you need to ask for the O.K from your local Health Trust, authorisation which you receive almost immediately.”

“Environmental protection includes a joint system to detect air pollution (financed with EU INTERREG III funds), and there’s an agreement on the maximum permitted levels of pollutants in drinking water, whilst an incinerator on French territory was closed down to safeguard a Natural Park. A commission is studying the key factors governing climate.”

There then follows a vociferous exchange on the fact that there are few opportunities to influence the nuclear programmes of the neighbours and reflections on the meagre budgets available for culture. The total annual funds for the exchange of theatrical works and shows is a mere € 33,000 which is split between the three States and distributed by a joint commission.

“But how do the citizens understand each other?”

“That’s a sore point. In all three countries the main obligatory foreign language is English. In Alsace there is still a good 40% of the population who speak a dialect of German, mostly the elderly: the youngsters speak their national tongue and, at least in France, at school, they choose what for them is the easiest option as a second language: Spanish. In another ten years the German-speaking minority in Alsace will be further reduced. There are bilateral projects to promote the learning of languages: a bilingual school manual, town-twinning (supported by the local councils), events, student exchanges and financial support for youngsters who do a work placement

in another country as well as cross-border meetings (financed to the tune of €20,000 a year by the EU). But today’s youth is too lazy to study another foreign language and there is still a long way to go.”

“We’ve got good results in the cooperation between businesses in key sectors in the area: research, high technology and tourism. With joint marketing we publicise the advantages of our area and in this way we promote the arrival of new businesses.”

“Cooperation on infrastructure is the oldest strand, beginning in 1949 with the Basle-Mulhouse airport. The entire region is served by the TGV (*Train à Grande Vitesse*) that connects the main European cities (I saw an excellent line running north-south but the east-west one is rudimentary and tied to that of the individual State concerned). Workers’ mobility is dependent on the local railway lines such as those that link Karlsruhe to Wissembourg and from southern Alsace, through Basle to Baden. We are also working on joint season-tickets. One problem is that the railway bridge on the Rhine (linking Paris and Stuttgart) has only one line. Doubling-up this line would cost money and so we’ve looked for solutions: in the Peace Treaty there is a list of works that Germany must do by way of war reparations. The second railway bridge on the Rhine at Strasbourg is one of the few works that remain to be done...”

I leave with the impression of having understood the reason why the ‘Euregio’ remains so little known amongst the citizenry: it is an obvious thing and takes place in the background, especially at a local level, without a real staff, it doesn’t legislate or publicise itself. We are dealing with regions that are economically and culturally rather homogenous, that have been working together ‘privately’ for centuries, to which the ‘Metropolitan Region’, has brought, above all, an all-pervading coordination and has opened up important labour markets.

I find myself at dinner in the garden of a Strasbourg restaurant together with some regular customers and take a place at their table.

Almost every one of them can tell me about a relative who has found work in Germany or Switzerland, of health insurance problems sorted out by INFOBEST in Kehl, but none of them links these small but decisive events with a supranational body, saying simply: “*Monsieur, l’Europe c’est ça!*” x

“OUR AREA IS NOW CENTRAL TO THE ENTIRE CONTINENT”

Andrea Tomat, president of the 'Lotto' sportswear company: “North-east Italy must obtain fiscal federalism and compete globally along with Slovenia and Carinthia”

by Matteo Negro >

Born in Udine, Andrea Tomat began his career in the Eaton Corporation and in 1987 started working for Lotto clothing company. In 1998, together with Adriano Sartor, he bought out the Stonefly company. In 1999, as the head of a consortium of entrepreneurs, he acquired the Lotto brand-name and became President and Director General of the company that has its headquarters in the Province of Treviso, in Veneto. Between 2004 and 2008 he was President of Unindustria Treviso (the local association of entrepreneurs) and since 2004 has been on the governing body of the Italian business body Confindustria, and, since 2005 President of the Fondazione Nord-Est (the North-east Foundation). In April 2008 he became the new President of the Italian national committee of the International Chamber of Commerce.

Tomat speaking at the Association of Entrepreneurs



Q What advantages do you see in the new Euroregional institution?

A The Euroregion is a project that, in the past, was called the Alpe Adria community, which was born, as we all know, well before the fall of the Berlin Wall and therefore in a context that is radically different from today. It is an idea that has found a new relevance, given the progressive expansion of the European Union and one that enjoys broad support from the Italian Regions of Veneto and Friuli Venezia Giulia and, I also believe, in Austria, Slovenia and Croatia. It is the new Europe of 27, and, more generally, the phenomenon of globalisation, that favour the creation of homogenous transboundary regions. These are, in any case, foreseen by Community regulations and are, in fact, the Euroregions. Particularly in this case, as for businesses, it poses the question of size and the identification of areas suitable for initiatives favouring territorial competitiveness.

Q As a North-east Italian businessman, what message would you like to put forward in this respect?

A At this point in time there's a widespread awareness that this area has assumed a new centrality for the Continent and a role as a node on at least three important European connecting routes (Corridors 5 and 1 and the **Autostrade del mare**, that is 'sea-motorways' in Italian). It is, above all, this geographical position that means

that these regions share the same needs and similar objectives. The Euroregion could, together with the respective national governments, help coordinate the investments that are being made in this field, and, of course, favour the institutional, economic and cultural relationships in this area.

Q Is the concept of territoriality still relevant in a globalised market?

A Yes, of course; even more so in a capitalism of people and territories such as that found in Italy, and especially in the North-east, along with the regions that may well go to make up the Euroregion. The internationalisation of businesses, and this is a crucial step for many sectors, should not be seen as an alternative to the identifying themselves as part of a local community and an industrial tradition that is profoundly our own. In fact this could actually become our brand in getting ourselves known and appreciated at a global level.



Lotto HQ in Irevignano near Treviso, Italy



Montebelluna. Photo published by Guido Andolfato on Flickr.com

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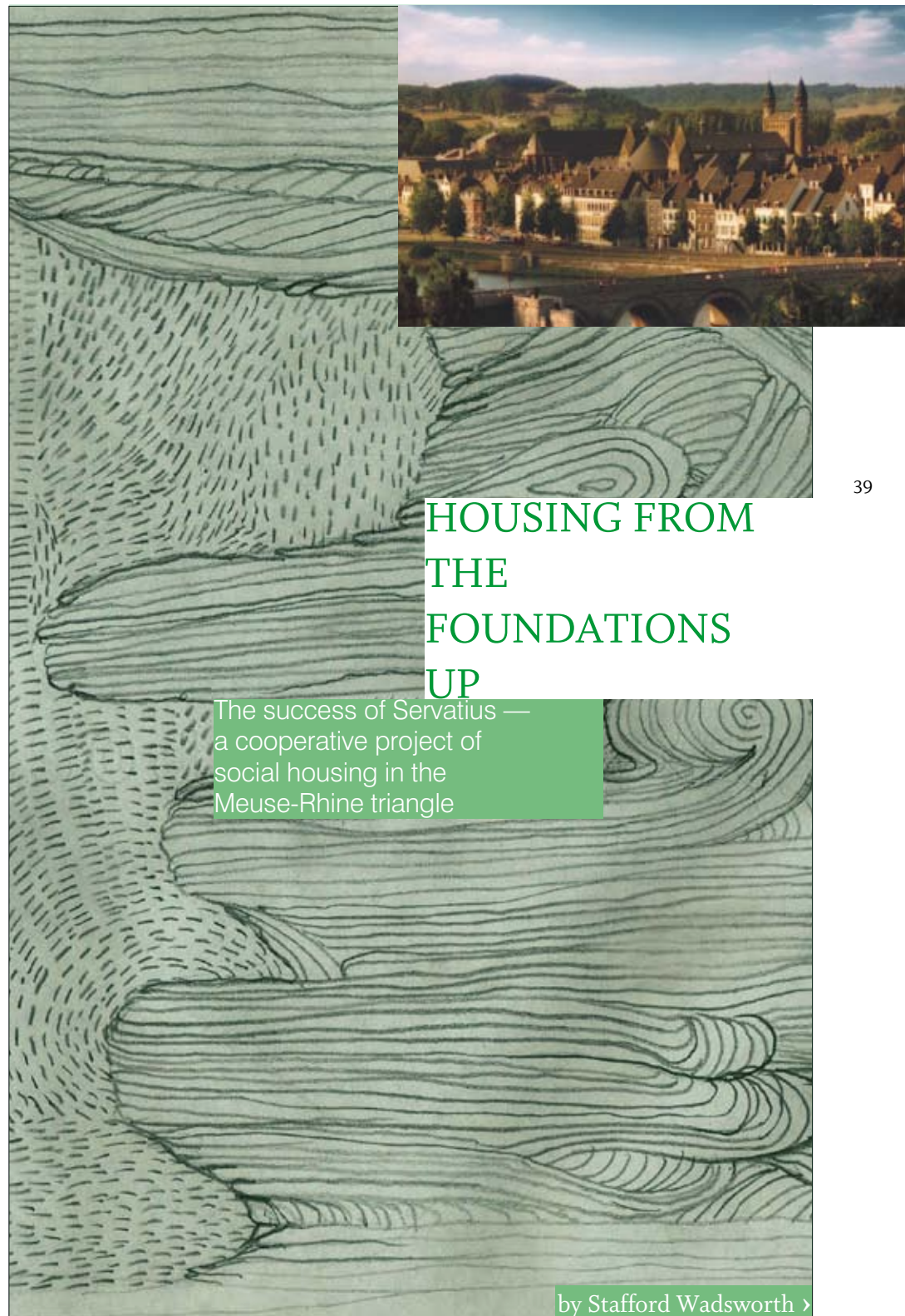
Q What impetus can a multicultural context supply to an entrepreneurial activity such as yours?

A Operating in a multilingual and multicultural context is an opportunity for everyone and each and every business and is present in the DNA of our production systems, accustomed as we are to always searching for new opportunities and partnerships in Europe and the world.

Q What behaviour would you like to see from the various nation States and from the Italians in particular when it comes to the delegation of certain powers to organisations such as the Euroregion?

A With North-Eastern Italy in mind, the creation of a Euroregion obviously comes after the carrying out of reforms that lead towards fiscal federalism. These would give the Region Veneto the powers and resources already enjoyed by the two autonomous Regions that also go to make up the area: Trentino - Alto Adige and Friuli - Venezia Giulia. A federal organisation, I'd like to emphasise, has always been the state of affairs in Austria as well as in Germany - and Slovenia is working towards a regionalised model. As I said in my recent address to the Assembly of Unindustria in Treviso, for whom I have just finished my term as President: a real and efficient federalism represents a precondition in North-east Italy to give life both to our (disadvantaged) interior and an effective metropolitan dimension. Through the construction of a European macroregion, this would allow us to link up with Carinthia, Slovenia, Istria and Dalmatia. In any case, this is the new frame of reference and we must measure ourselves against it without delay. X

The countryside of Montebelluna



HOUSING FROM THE FOUNDATIONS UP

The success of Servatius — a cooperative project of social housing in the Meuse-Rhine triangle

by Stafford Wadsworth >

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Meuse-Rhine, radiating out from the point where Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands meet, includes the Belgian provinces of Liège and Limburg and Belgium's German-speaking Region; the German Region of Aachen and the southern part of the Dutch province of Limburg.



Stereotypes

If you watch television, you may have encountered a British comedy series called 'Allo, Allo'. Although it takes place in WWII, with a motley crew of French, Germans and English, actually all of the actors are English and the effect and the laughs come from a focus on national stereotypes.

These clichés include: sexy French girls with their lecherous boss; Germans who march around stiffly and click their heels all the time; and Englishmen who always seem to have lost their way. Of course, it's all just good clean fun; but there is a grain of truth in the series, in the sense that one tends to view neighbours whom one doesn't know very well in terms of such clichés and stereotypes. They highlight those characteristics that stick out and seem different and, in some way, laughable.

It is probably fairly general in Europe to view other nations in this way, but there is an exception. This is formed by communities, belonging to different nations, whose long contact has made them familiar with one another, and has, perhaps, inclined people to take on characteristics that may belong to the area as a whole.

In general, people do not regard The Netherlands as the culinary center of the universe. However, in Maastricht, there are five Michelin-starred restaurants, four within walking distance of one another, and you'd have to look hard in France to find a comparable situation in a town with a population of just 120,000. Our contention here would be that the French/Belgian gastronomic tradition is at home in Maastricht too.

The historical context

One thousand years ago, actually on April 10, 1008, the first Prince-Bishop of the Principality of Liège –Notger – died. He left a heritage that would last for 800 years, or perhaps a thousand, as, in spirit at least, it survived the French Revolution. This heritage was the Principality itself, which took in what we now call the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion, with the Aachen Region of Germany as a close relation.

Although these areas are today distinct political units, their proximity and shared history seems to have led to an identity, which, although it draws on several cultures, encompasses a sense of fellow feeling. For example, although the Liégeois may be a little snippy about the Dutch, he will see the Maastrichtois essentially as close neighbors and, although in Hasselt and Maastricht, in Aachen and Eupen, there are differences in language, all these areas benefit from the use of the mutually-intelligible cross-border dialect (Lower Franconian).

In many respects, the Euroregions - with a shared heritage and permeable borders - offer the best opportunity of developing a tolerant European identity. The issue is: 'How can one put these Euroregions at the centre of European development and not at the periphery, which is where they are always to be found?' The path to this objective would lead to shared benefits, in an economic sense. Recently, there was a good example of this type of project in a housing project developed in Liège by the Maastricht Housing Association, Servatius.

The case in point

In 2004, Servatius started building 39 rental and 49 private housing units in the Sainte Marguerite area, that could be rented or bought by people from Maastricht or Liège.



Author of this story: Stafford Wadsworth

Stafford Wadsworth is an English Journalist who has been active in Meuse-Rhine, for more than 25 years. He has written for media in the French and German speaking parts of Meuse-Rhine and was editor-in-chief of Dutch Limburg's International Magazine for 10 years. His Meuse-Rhine Journal (<http://www.meuse-rhine.eu/>), an online, biweekly, business newsletter is now in its eighth year of publication.

The city was also building a further nine homes as part of a public housing project. Completion was scheduled for 2005. The City of Liège also played an important role in this development by upgrading the infrastructure, providing parking and landscaping the park, making the work a Liège project too. Following the refurbishment and upgrading of an important part of the city, Servatius received a watching brief to monitor the project after sale and rental. The initiative came from a request on the part of Liège.

At that time, Liège was emerging from the economic doldrums, thanks to the logistical assets of the region, and there was a great need for new housing, a field in which the city did not have a great deal of experience. Public housing had a bad name in the area. The Netherlands, on the other hand, has a different tradition in public housing

and builds for a range of income groups, including the middle-income range.

Social Housing Associations, like Servatius, manage 40 percent of the Dutch housing stock of 2.4 million units, making them obvious partners. In Maastricht, there was little movement from rental to purchase and projects took too long. Prices were high too, in a market on which increasing demands were being made by the elderly and by students. At the same time, an urgent need was growing within the expatriate employee community. It was a difficult situation. One solution was to view the entire Meuse-Rhine as the area of operations. The housing market in Liège is relatively stable and only 20 minutes from Maastricht. This provides the option for people, working in Maastricht, of remaining in Liège or moving back there.



Voorzide. Servatius apartments in Liège



Servatius wants to play a role within Meuse-Rhine as a whole. It had, at that time, a stock of 12,000 apartment units in Maastricht and Eijsden and was working with the Municipality of Visé and the villages of Basse-Meuse on new ideas. This area of cooperation with Liège is an interesting market with a population of 400,000.

Obstacles

There have, however, been obstacles to this cross-border development and in 2005 the Dutch Ministry of Transport, Planning and the Environment (VROM) demanded that the Servatius Housing Association give up its housing project in the Rue d' Hesbaye in Liège by the end of the year, or be subject to a penalty of € 2.6m. Servatius decided that the case should go to court and Leks Verzijlbergh, its President, pointed out that its activities in Liège were carried out by a Liège-based subsidiary, in keeping with the demand for transparent capital costs, based on current market conditions. The Ministry had contended that Servatius' activities in Liège were a form of Dutch state support.

In 2006, Servatius won the case against the Dutch Ministry (VROM). The issue was whether Servatius could build housing projects in nearby Belgium where the building costs were significantly lower. This was good news for Servatius, enabling it to complete its € 15m housing project in Liège.

What this story reveals is that there are cross-border economic needs and there are

parties able to meet them in Meuse-Rhine. There are needs, in terms of employment, housing, education and shopping; but we have chosen to focus on the main issue - housing. What sometimes gets in the way is national governmental policy.

Solutions

There are various cross-border cooperative agreements designed to promote cross-border cooperation, particularly in cultural and educational areas and there are EU structures intended to facilitate this type of activity. One important structure is formed by the European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs), which provides a legal framework for cross-border activity, provided that the National Government parties have signed the agreement.

(Recently (2007), at a meeting in Brussels, it was noted that the Dutch Government had not signed enabling legislation and this leads to a final point on cross-border cooperation.)

Clearly, there has to be an administrative infrastructure, to monitor cross-border activities in the same way that one has a parliament to monitor and approve, or disapprove, of legislation. However, monitoring at a national level, involves popular participation, where public interest reinforces the monitoring role.

In the case of Meuse-Rhine, the monitoring agency for the Euroregion is cast in the form of a Dutch 'Trust' or 'Foundation' [*Stichting*]. This is because of the administrative differences between the five sub-regions, all of which have differing legislative competencies. This Trust, which, in a sense, is the Meuse-Rhine's 'government', is made up largely of appointees, put there by public and other administrative bodies, without any democratic supervision. This means that there is no popular pressure to encourage members to take their participation seriously and this, in turn, leads to very low attendance at meetings and to a lack of public involvement or interest in the bodies concerned.

Surely, the next step in Euroregional development must be to add an element of popular participation and transparency to what is, after all, another level of government. This new level has the potential of providing great benefits to its cross-border constituents and also of introducing cross-border solidarity. This is the way to building a true European Union: not 'top-down' but 'bottom-up'. X



“I'M SLOVENE ...
NO, REALLY.
I AM!”

The story of Inacio Binchende, an 'afro-slovene' who divides his time between his businesses and appearing on TV as an African in national costume

by Neva Zajc >

Inacio Binchende was born in Mansôa, Guinea-Bissau. He came to Slovenia in 1986. Having become a Bachelor of Forest Science, he obtained an MA in Economics. He runs his own import business and has opened an affiliate in his homeland in order to facilitate economic co-operation with Guinea-Bissau. He gives presentations on his mother country in the African Centre in Slovenia. Inacio's anonymity came to an end when he started acting in Boris Koba's comedy 'Africa or On Our Own Land', which mocks a typical Slovene family. By accepting the role of Janez Belina (John White) in Koba's comedy series 'Poper' ('Pepper') produced by Televizija Koper-Capodistria, he has become famous right across Slovenia. He lives with a Slovene and has a 13-year-old son.



Inacio Binchende, known as Belina

Q What has brought you to Slovenia?

A My studies. In 1986, I won a Guinea-Bissau scholarship awarded within the programme of international co-operation with Yugoslavia. I graduated in forest science, and then obtained an MA in economics.

Q What did you know about Slovenia before your arrival?

A Nothing. I knew only a few things about Yugoslavia, mostly general data and some stuff about Tito. I started to get interested in it after I had received the scholarship.

Q What about the language?

A My Slovene lessons started in Ljubljana. For half a year, the foreign students were learning only the language.

Q What did you find most unusual, maybe even shocking, upon your arrival?

A My first stop was Belgrade where we were assigned to our universities. I came to Slovenia by train and was very surprised to see that everyone was wearing the same thing: jeans. That was not the case at home. When it was snowing, I didn't go to classes. When I saw piles of snow outside, I went back to sleep, being totally sure that people stayed at home in such weather.

Q When getting used to our lifestyle, what did you find most interesting and easy, and what most difficult?

A I had no trouble adapting myself. With my fellow countrymen living here, I didn't find it difficult to integrate myself into the society. It was unusual, though, that people would stare at me in the street. Until I got used to it, I often asked them what was wrong.

Q Has it ever happened to you that you witnessed intolerance because you were different?

A I can't remember any direct act of intolerance during the times of the ex Yugoslavia. Most probably the authorities didn't allow them, I can't say for sure. Some nasty things, however, did happen after Slovenia gained independence. I was physically attacked by a group of skinheads. Slovenia has been much more open lately, and so maybe it's getting less intolerant.

Q What about Slovenes? What do they know about others? Does it often happen that they don't know where Guinea-Bissau is located or which language is spoken there?

A People are different. And so they also differ in their knowledge of other countries. They don't really know a lot about them. When I mention my

homeland, they perceive it as anything but a real African country. It's a small country, indeed, slightly larger than Slovenia, and yet its population is smaller. Interestingly, we speak as many as 25 languages.

Q What do multilingualism and multiculturalism look like there?

A There are 23 ethnic groups in Guinea-Bissau, each possessing its own characteristics. The majority of them are of Bantu origin, yet they are very different. The situation is really diverse. Our languages are so different from one another that we don't understand each other. Our *lingua franca* are Creole and Portuguese.

Q Why did you decide to stay in Slovenia?

A I intended to go back after graduation. But then I got the opportunity to continue my studies at Master's level. Then arrived my son and so I stayed.

Q Guinea-Bissau is far from here. How often do you visit your relatives and homeland?

A At first, it was only rarely that I went home, now I go more and more often. My father and sister and brothers live there.

Q What do they think about your life in Europe?



A My sister has studied in Italy, so Europe is nothing special to her. My brothers have been keeping track of my life here and they know it's very different. Back at home, communication between people is much more direct. Here it's much more difficult to establish contacts. People are individualists. Africa is home to the collective spirit.

Q What habits have you kept?

A I haven't given up any good habit, I just practice them at home. Elsewhere I adapt myself to the Slovene environment. I've integrated myself well into the society, but I haven't become completely assimilated.

Q Does food count as a habit?

A It does, indeed. At home, I like to boil rice and fish, our national dish.

Q You have a son. What do you teach him?

A I often tell him about life in Guinea-Bissau, its people. I teach him to be aware of 'being different' and warn him that he will meet all kinds of people, some of whom might react to him differently. I'd like that certain remarks wouldn't hurt him. He has to think that his roots are not only in Slovenia but also in Africa.

Q Have you already taken him to your homeland?

A We are going there this year.

Q A few years ago, we could watch you on stage and TV. How did you make it there?

A I played an African in Boris Kobal's comedy. Nobody wanted to perform on stage, so Kobal offered the role to me. I found it interesting, so I accepted it. And then I kept working with him for his TV series.

Q What do you think about the name you were given - Janez Belina (John White)?

A I found it a good parody of an African dressed in traditional Slovene costume. And the idea behind this character was interesting. People are not used to an African in Slovene garb. Just think of my son. People ask him what he is, and he says he's a Slovene. And they tell him: "C'mon, stop joking!"

Q If you were asked about your identity, what would you say?

A I always say that I'm from Guinea-Bissau. I cannot lose or change the things I got from my childhood. Slovenia is my second homeland, I've been here for a long time. I feel well in both countries and see this as an advantage. X

IDENTITY'S ARCHIPELAGO

Life on the islands of Åland: a special place for autonomy, pacifism and cooperation. A territorial entity lying between Finland and Sweden and taken as model for the resolution of ethnic conflicts in Europe



Åland Islands. © Alessandro Gori

by Alessandro Gori >

Some years ago I visited the Åland Islands (pronounced: "Oland"; Ahvenanmaa is the name in Finnish), a small archipelago located in the Baltic Sea between Sweden and Finland.

The summer was very bright, as often happens so far north. Magnificent views of the islands of Kökar, or the smaller Källskär, across whose peaceful horizons the Swedish-speaking Finnish author Tove Jansson wrote some of her books.

But in addition to the landscapes, I was impressed to discover that the identity of Åland's inhabitants also comes through the realities on the islands, its autonomy, peace and disarmament.

The name of Åland had appeared as an example for a political solution in the negotiations (but then blocked) on the status of Kosovo, but also for the separatist republics within both Georgia (Abkhazia and South Ossetia) and Azerbaijan (Nagorno-Karabakh). This is not the first time that the archipelago

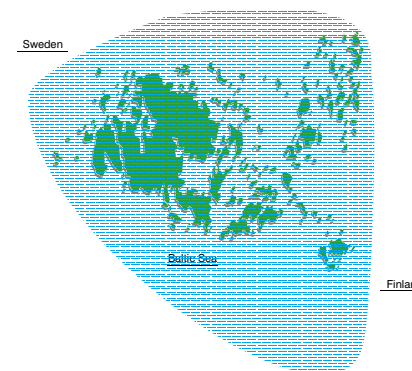
has been proposed as a model for solving inter-ethnic conflicts, or those between a majority and a minority within the same territory.

It is obvious that the conflicts that have broken out in recent years in Europe, especially those related to ethnicity, are extremely difficult to solve and present very complex issues. It is also true that the population of Åland is small: just 26,000 people, virtually all Swedish-speaking. Of these, 11,000 live in Mariehamn, the capital, with another 13,000 in the countryside and a further 2,000 on the islands. A mere 80 out of the 6,429 islands and islets that make up the archipelago are inhabited.

The example of Åland has, however, become a reference point for the provision of conditions that safeguard the cultural and linguistic rights of a homogeneous minority within the sovereignty of a state with a different majority.

The islands lie at the centre of a small Euroregion which also includes other coastal archipelagos belonging to Sweden and Finland.

The Åland Islands, consisting of more than 6,500 islands and skerries, is an autonomous, demilitarised, Swedish-speaking region of Finland in the Baltic Sea.



A bit of history

Belonging to the Kingdom of Sweden until the Napoleonic Wars of 1808-1809 when it passed to Russia, the Åland islands were integrated into the Grand Duchy of Finland, which at the time enjoyed a semi-autonomous status within the Czarist Empire. For the Russians they represented an important strategic bulwark in the Baltic and were manned as a outpost during the Crimean War. Following the Treaty of Paris (1856) the islands were subject to demilitarisation.

In December 1917, after the October Revolution, Finland became independent. For obvious political, linguistic and cultural reasons the islanders wished to opt for reunification with Sweden. Instead, they only wrested the status of autonomy from the Finnish Parliament in 1920, a status they considered inadequate.

The issue was settled in 1921 by the newly-formed League of Nations (the forerunner of the United Nations, the UN), whose Council decided in favour of a Finnish Åland. The islands, however, were granted very broad autonomy which guaranteed language rights and confirmed the area's demilitarisation and neutrality. As a result of the Autonomy Act (1922), revised twice (in 1951 and 1993), Åland enjoys one of the highest degrees of self-governance in Europe.

Autonomy

The Parliament, opened in 1978, is actually a small three-storey building in the capital Mariehamn. There sit the 40 members and visiting it you appreciate the almost family atmosphere that surrounds it. Stripped of any formalities and wearing a simple blue shirt, Roger Nordlund, now President of the Parliament and, at the time of my visit, Vice-Presi-

dent of the Government of Islands (the Landskapsstyrelse), said: "Finland handles foreign policy, criminal law, the courts, currency and a part of taxation, while we administer the share that goes to local communities. The Lagting, the Åland Parliament has jurisdiction over everything else. The archipelago also has a fixed representative in the Finnish Parliament and the name 'Åland' also appears on the (Finnish) passports of its inhabitants. The Act stipulates that the only official language is Swedish, although in the courts citizens can also submit their applications in Finnish."

The economy of the islands, which in 1954 got its own flag and has been issuing its own stamps since 1984, is based on the shipbuilding industry, trade and tourism. "Forestry is more important for Finland" adds Nordlund.

On 1st July 1999 a directive of the European Union (EU) came into force which saw the disappearance of duty-free areas, where it had been possible to buy all sorts of goods without paying VAT. One of the few exceptions to the ruling is Åland.

The giant ferries of the 'Viking' and 'Silja' shipping companies connecting Finland and Sweden, as well as the smallest company, 'Eckerö', are registered in Mariehamn. Traffic through Åland involving the enormous ships has greatly increased in recent years, from Stockholm to Turku, but also connecting the Swedish capital and Helsinki. Tallinn in Estonia is also now on the routes.

Ticket prices are low because most of the revenue, about 75%, comes from duty-free purchases on the ships. The focus is on alcohol which is expensive on the mainland. An overnight journey on one of these ferries, which in fact are genuine cruise ships with bars, clubs,

discos, and saunas, only confirms the Nordic reputation as hardened drinkers, especially weekends which witness scenes that hardly bear description.

"To preserve this condition a special protocol was signed with the EU, which cannot be modified by Brussels directives, so that the duty-free status remains in force even after 1999. It was too important to our economy. The Åland islands have thus acquired the status of a 'special territory' which remains excluded from the harmonisation of taxation rules. They have been able to maintain the duty-free, creating a de facto customs barrier to union with the rest of the EU that puts producers in the archipelago at a disadvantage. Clearly, however, the move seems worth it, a fact confirmed by referendum in which 74% of the islanders were in favour of entry into the EU.

"In the future I think we will depend increasingly on tourism, focusing mainly on quality", continues Nordlund. "As in other Nordic countries, the flagship of Åland is the natural environment, especially for cycling, fishing or camping, but the tourist season is very short and confined to the summer months. For the rest of the year the ferries are still needed, with a 'short stop-off' in the islands allowing them to retain their duty-free status."

On Åland, if the truth be told, ties with Finland are not so strong. Knowing only Finnish it would be impossible to get by, although in Helsinki there is bilingualism and although elsewhere in the country Swedish is the second official language, only 6% of the 5 million Finns have Swedish as their mother tongue. "We know we are Finnish citizens, but we are very close to Sweden, as far as linguistic and cultural issues are concerned. People here watch Swedish TV and read Swedish newspapers. In general relations with Finland are good, although on some occasions we have differing opinions, but this is a perfectly normal struggle between the centre and the periphery. With regard to monetary union, there is no advantage for us as long as Sweden remain outside the Euro-zone as an important slice of our trade is done with them." The inhabitants of Åland therefore look more towards Stockholm, although there is no doubt in anyone's mind that the current state of affairs represents the best option for them.

A substantial part of the taxes levied is spent on education, and to ensure that schools and shops survive even on the smaller islands which are at risk of total depopulation. In addition, one third of the islands' students continue their education in Finland, the rest go to Sweden. Most return home after com-



Author of this story: Alessandro Gori

Alessandro Gori (born in Udine, Italy in 1970) as an independent journalist has published photos and articles in ten different languages in daily newspapers and magazines in 15 countries on a wide range of themes. He specialises in the Balkans, the former Soviet Union, Northern Europe and Latin America.

pleting their studies, but many stay away. "In the 1950's everyone who left emigrated to Sweden. Some of their children, who came here on vacation in the summer, have decided to return." stresses Nordlund.

Given all the peculiarities of the archipelago, the law on residence is very strict. "I have lost my rights to live on Åland, although I was born there and still own my father's house there." confesses Erland Eklund, professor at the Swedish University of Social Sciences in Helsinki, "This happens if you live away from the islands for more than five years, as was the case with me.

Identity

In 1921 the demilitarization of Åland took place. No installations, activities or military personnel may be stationed on its territory, even exercises are not permitted, and the Finnish navy cannot enter the territorial waters around the islands. In addition, for many years young islanders have been exempt from military service if they have been resident on the islands since the age of 12.

After ten years of discussions on how to tackle the study of peace from both a theoretical and practical perspective, the 'Ålands Fredsinstitut' - the Åland Islands Peace Institute - was created in 1992.

The identity of the inhabitants of the archipelago, stimulated by the various peculiarities and helped by their own symbols, has strengthened over time. Today almost all the islanders consider themselves as simply inhabitants of Åland rather than Finnish or Swedish. "The local identity passes ever more frequently through aspects such as autonomy and neutrality." explains Sia Spiliopoulou Åkermark, Director of the Institute, speaking on the phone to me. With a Greek father and Swedish mother, she is an expert in international law.

"There is a certain pride in belonging to a demilitarised region" she continues. "You can see this from the way tourist attractions such as the fortress of Bomarsund, the Russian base built in 1852 and destroyed by the British and the French in the Crimean War, are

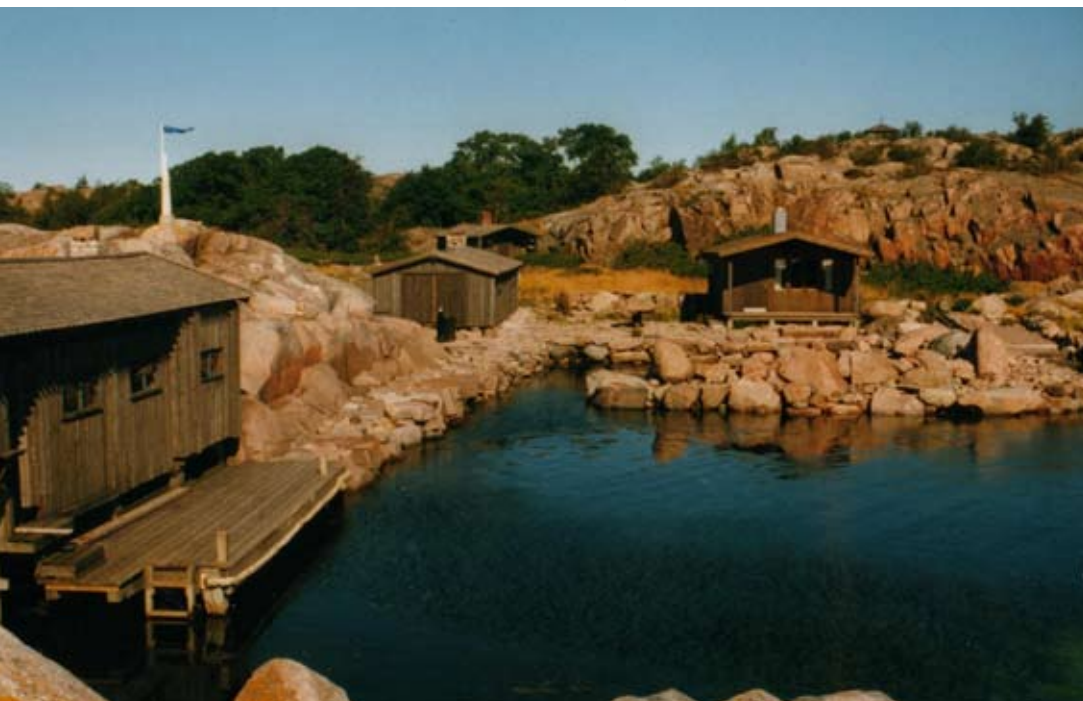
presented, emphasising that this was the last conflict fought on the islands."

The example of Åland for the resolution of conflicts should be set against the context in which its current status arose. "At the time of the Crimean War it was not easy, but all parties involved were open to compromise. Even in modern conflicts, an agreement can only be reached with this precondition."

The Institute is working on EU projects that promote Baltic cooperation, carrying out studies. These are often comparative and related to the archipelago's peculiarities such as demilitarisation, cooperation on security at European level, the rights and participation of minorities, autonomy - studies that it then publishes. It has also created a network of non-governmental organisations in the Baltic region, mostly in Lithuania, Belarus and the Russian territory of Kaliningrad, especially catering for young people and women in difficulty.

One of the current internal challenges involves immigration. "Until now the islands have remained ethnically homogeneous, but new inputs to the system are required. The average age of the population is rising and there is a need for young people, including foreigners, to come and live here, but decisions involving immigration are not in the hands of the local autonomous Parliament but are made by the Finnish state. Here as well there is a need for mediation."

The population does not know the legal details and conditions of the islands' autonomy but realises their uniqueness. "The system foresees "motors" that will always keep open the possibility of negotiations and discussions. The Governor is a representative of the Finnish state, but appointed on the advice of the President of the Parliament of Åland and there is also a joint delegation consisting of representatives of the two parties. The third level comes through the adherence to EU legislation." concludes the director. "The limits of autonomy are therefore continually re-negotiated, and this is one of the keys to the success of Åland."



LANGUAGE IN RHYME

26-year-old rap artist DJ Tubet engages in a linguistic search that knows no bounds, mixing his mother-tongue Friulian with Jamaican patois

by Oscar Puntel ›

Few imagine that behind a nickname redolent of the New York suburbs, lies the blameless Mauro Tubetti. Certainly, this local rapper is most definitely neither dissolute nor a daredevil. He has nothing of the cursed about him, unlike his American opposite numbers. Indeed he studies and experiments continuously. He dreams of being a teacher in the morning and a singer in the afternoon. Born in 1982, Dj Tubet mixes books, teaching and reggae rhythms, with the same ease that, on stage, leads him to weave rhymes, hip hop and patois (a variant of Jamaican English) with Friulian. A chameleon-like freestyler, when he hasn't got a microphone in hand he hangs out on the farm family in Nimis, north of Udine. It takes music to drag him out of the house. It is - he assures me - always the music that broadens his many horizons.



Mauro Tubetti

Q Dj Tubet, do you support the creation of a crossborder Euroregion?

A I think it's a good thing. Even though the region represents a boundary from a formal and historical point of view, it cannot represent a limit from a cultural perspective, precisely because of a need that is inherent in people. Therefore a crossborder body, linking us with other regions close by is a dimension we need: we need something more fluid, going beyond the concept of the region alone. In this, Friuli starts with an advantage in having so many microcultures. It's a melting pot with many participants. It's historically based on an exchange.

Q What role does music have in all of this?

A The music already has in itself a Euroregional character. Think about when I do gigs. Singing in Jamaican English, Friulian and Italian. Take, reggae for example, which is riven by the cultural influences of the place, just so that it can be conveyed better, responding to the area in which it's performed. It's the most transboundary music genre of the lot. As regards current musical projects, I often have dealings with Slovenia, for concerts and other stuff - the country is a forerunner in alternative music and the top punk artists stop off in Udine only because they are performing in Ljubljana.

Q Why do you base your musical research on the Friulian language?

A Italian is my second language. I didn't learn it until I went to nursery school. In terms of identity, Friulano was my first cultural expression. I am proud of this. It's given me a greater open-mindedness, towards diversity elsewhere and recent studies show how being bilingual is a positive addition from a cognitive point of view.

Q You have a degree in social psychology, one in educational science and you're completing a third one in training science.

A I studied farming at high school. When I discovered Jung it brought me to psychology, but in my mind I wanted to be a teacher. So then I dedicated myself to studying education. I would like to teach in a primary or a high school.

Q You also sing?

A I'm working on the first album by 'R.Esistence in dub', in which I experiment with dub in Friulano. Reggae is a very radical musical genre but so far locally spoken dialects have only been experimented with in southern Italy. Now the new 'Dlh posse' album is due out. It's a live swing double CD with the 'Suingando quartet'. I'm also working on an a cappella project.

Q How do you manage to do everything? Where do you find the time?

A I can get by with little sleep and lead a very quiet life. I'm a vegetarian and I try to stay really thin. For the rest it, I rationalise my time. I go out only to perform and I live in this dimension. X

RETURNING HOME 'GROWN UP'

Rok Uršič, leading researcher and successful businessman explains his philosophy: "consistent support for worldwide initiatives." And admits "I partly contribute to lower European efficiency by saying that I'm proud that something was done in Slovenia"

by Vesna Humar >

Rok Uršič, Bachelor of Engineering Technology, is the 45-year-old founder, owner and CEO of the company Instrumentation Technologies that develops and designs specific technological solutions for particle accelerators, with its clients located on all continents with the exception of Africa. The company, which has shown record economic growth, employs 30 people and is located in the industrial zone of Solkan, a town adjacent to Nova Gorica, Slovenia.

Q What part does your company play in the global picture?

A The company has been present in the global market since its very establishment 10 years ago in a small room in Solkan. It developed from my vision that Solkan, a Slovene town bordering Italy, should become home to a company whose products and services would make it a world player. As soon as I graduated, I was attracted by the idea of being part of something transcending Slovene borders. This belief grew stronger when I started working in Trieste and later in the USA and Switzerland. My goal has always been to work in fields that have a global dimension. Globality is the essential element of our company, the foundation stone upon which our values, culture and, last but not least, the image of the firm are based.

Q You've described the beginnings of your company in terms of geography. Does the fact that you are located in Central Europe, in Slovenia, in a border region bear any special significance?

A Not directly. Perhaps it has to do with the Slovene habit of always repeating that we are small and cannot go big. But greatness is a matter of heart. I know from experience that we have all it takes to write an important story here.

Q As a global player, how do you differ in terms of organisation, recruitment policy, and ongoing education?

A What really counts is the fact that the majority of the employees are proud to work here. And another important fact: when it comes to technological development, Slovenia still lags behind other countries, and lower flexibility of the support environment can sometimes work to our disadvantage. But the other side of the coin is that we are highly differentiated in such an environment and, as a result, a magnet for new staff. We offer an ideal working climate to people who are dynamic and willing to accept new challenges and a certain amount of risk.

Q How far is Europe, in your opinion, from achieving its famous Lisbon goal of becoming the most dynamic and competitive knowledge-based society in the world?

A I believe there's nothing wrong with the goal itself, we just have problems realising it. Americans, for example, are much more agile decision-takers than Europeans. Perhaps that is due to the fact that they already are the United States, while we still have to become united. Being more agile, they make mistakes, but they also correct them more



Rok Uršič

rapidly. European and national structures should pay more attention to 'bottom-up' initiatives. Just by establishing the infrastructure that will facilitate co-operation between research and development, and industry, they will not make that happen. Besides, they should also support those breakthrough initiatives that boast global potential. Europe should adopt both approaches simultaneously. It should also develop a system of supporting those initiatives that cannot conveniently be pigeonholed at present. If someone had said ten years ago: "What the hell are you going to do with high tech in Solkan?" our story would have never begun. When the Slovene Prime Minister Janez Janša paid us a visit, we presented him a far-reaching initiative that doesn't only concern our company. His positive response and his immediate support for the project proved a positive experience for me.

Q Europe is characterized not only by strong national interests, but also by strong national nonsensical claims. Do the fields of knowledge and technology reach beyond the national or even continental?

A I have never separated knowledge from the emotional element that is always present in people, and part of this emotional element is national affiliation. I have to admit that I partly contribute to lower European efficiency by saying that I'm proud that something was done in Slovenia. The feeling, "Yes, this was done in Europe" comes only later. I'd say it's the other way round in the USA. On the one hand, such attitude towards nationality, which will not die out that soon, makes Europe slower, but on the other it has many advantages. X

BORDER IDENTITIES

In the Basque area on the borders between France and Spain: an anthropological fresco of the socio-cultural changes post-Schengen and the stiff resistance to communication brought about by cultural and linguistic barriers

by Zoe Bray >

"We no longer have the frontier blocking us. Now we can move around as freely as we want. But still, I don't feel we have stronger relations with people on the other side." Woman of Spanish nationality shopping on the French side.

"The frontier was once an obstacle; this is no longer the case. But now this is another challenge". Man of Spanish nationality, ex-customs officer and now employee of a gas station on the Spanish side.

"I feel we used to have much more in common with people on the other side. Young people for instance used to hang out with each other, go to the fiestas across the border, however difficult it was. But now... It's more each to one's own." Man of French nationality, mayor of the French Basque village of Arnéguy, and employee in a butcher's shop on the Spanish side.

"Even though we all live in the Basque Country, there is a lot that separates us from our neighbours in Spain. We have different tastes and ambitions. I feel this gap has got larger." Woman of French nationality, farmer in a neighbourhood of Arnéguy which, according to an old tradition, shares its parish with Valcarlos, the neighbouring village on the Spanish side.

These quotations come from conversations held in January 2007 with four inhabitants of the border between France and Spain in the Basque Country. These four inhabitants have lived a significant part of their life in the area, and all of them have in some way been affected by the opening up of the frontier.

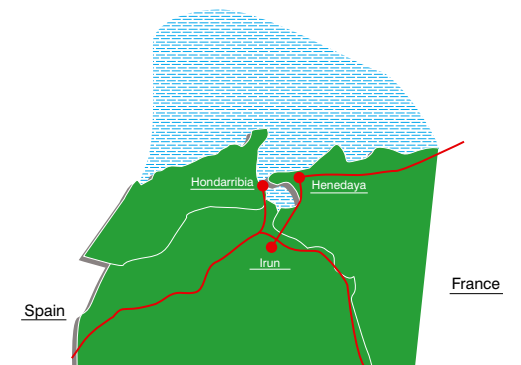
The Bidasoa-Txingudi consortium based in the Basque country is made up of the municipalities of Hondarribia, Irun in the Basque country (Spain) and Hendaya in the Department of the Atlantic Pyrenees (France).



Nive Arnéguy Valcarlos

As a result of the removal of border controls within the EU due to the Schengen agreement, many communities located in border zones have had to reassess their relationship with their neighbours across state frontiers. The Franco-Spanish border in the Basque Country is one of these cases, where numerous cross-frontier initiatives have been launched over the last decade. An increasing number of inhabitants now cross the frontier on a regular basis. In parallel, numerous economic changes have taken place, of which the steady urbanisation of the border is a consequence. All this means that traditional identities are altered with new emerging symbolic references.

We now ask ourselves whether we can find a corresponding opening up of local mentalities. The comments made by our four inhabitants indicate the contrary. While all of them are familiar with Basque, the language spoken on either side of the frontier, and with Spanish or French, the language



spoken across the frontier, and most of them have family and friends on both sides of the border, they do not confirm a further rapprochement with each other. The opening of the frontier in effect only means the dismantling of border controls. Free mobility across the frontier, and EU-funded projects designed to foster cross-frontier cooperation have, so far, had limited influence on encouraging further mutual identification between border inhabitants who place increasing emphasis on their own identity. The frontier remains an undeniable presence in ways of thinking and behaving.

Since 1999, the municipalities of Hendaye, Irun and neighbouring Hondarribia have joined forces to create the Bidasoa-Txingudi *consorcio*, named after the river and bay around which they are located and which here serves as the demarcation line between France and Spain. This *consorcio* enables the three municipalities to work together on social, cultural and economic projects to reflect the new realities of life of border inhabitants. Many of these projects have so far been mainly of a symbolic sort, organizing

cultural fairs, sports competitions, and publishing a new map featuring all three towns together. Even the name Bidasoa-Txingudi is now a commonly used term.

Further along the frontier to the east, in the mountainous region of the Basque country, the villages of Arnéguy and Valcarlos have more of a history of cooperation. Located only a hundred metres from each other and separated by a small river tucked in a narrow valley, farmers of the two villages have a centuries old tradition of sharing pastures for their animal herds. Valcarlos also traditionally shares its church with a neighbourhood of Arnéguy. Today, joint ventures are scarce, and no cooperation has been formalised. Currently, they are troubled by a project principally advocated by the region of Navarre, in which Valcarlos is located, to construct a motorway that would run through the valley. While most of the inhabitants of Arnéguy are against this, those of Valcarlos tend to favour it, disregarding its negative environmental impact, seeing in it an opportunity for easier access to Pamplona, the capital city of their region.



Valcarlos. Photo published by Ana y Paco Sancho on Flickr.com



Author of this story: Zoe Bray

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Arnéguy, on the other hand, which continues to see its administrative relations in the French Basque Country looks the other way, and thus does not see the advantages of such a motorway. We see then that despite sharing a common space, inhabitants of either side use and perceive it quite differently.

In Bidasoa-Txingudi, meanwhile, while we notice the increased flourishing of businesses designed to attract the customer from across the frontier, it is not clear whether relations go any further than this. A television director in Irun for instance remains disillusioned; after his failed attempt to set up cross-frontier broadcasting with a partnership in Hendaye, he concluded, 'cross-frontier cooperation just doesn't exist really'. In local schools, cross-frontier exchanges are encouraged by the *consorcio*, but remain limited. This is due not only to institutional complexities but also because many parents remain unconvinced about the importance of further links with the language and culture of their neighbours.

It is revealing to note that on the border in the Basque Country, the occasions when a strong feeling of togetherness could be sensed was in moments of contestation. For instance, the Spanish governmental project to increase the size of the airport of Hondarribia was hotly opposed by a majority of the local population. We witnessed the inhabitants of the three towns demonstrating together, collaborating around this common cause, irrespective of their cultural and national differences. Another 'other' had emerged in the form of the threat of an airport enlargement.

In the period since 1993 many people have lost jobs that were directly linked to the existence of the frontier, such as customs officers, employees in state administrations and businesses that catered to frontier traffic. Most of the border controls have been pulled down, and the main roads linking ei-

ther side of the frontier have been widened, adorned with new road signs indicating the name of the town and the European flag replacing any mention of state territory.

Today, new job opportunities are to be found in the services, tourist and property industry; new economies that have emerged but still in relation to the frontier. While border controls have disappeared, the frontier remains the demarcation of state control, and so with free trade and mobility new opportunities emerge. Many thought for instance that the *ventas*, so-called shops located by the demarcation line offering passers-by the last opportunity to buy national products, would disappear. Rather, *ventas* have become a great success, converted from modest shops into big commercial centres to which tourists flock, attracted by this last vestige of the frontier. Many local inhabitants now find employment in this highly lucrative business.

In Irun, the main town on the Spanish side, a large edifice has also been constructed over what until only recently was the train freight park where merchandise was inspected before crossing the frontier. This edifice is now an exhibition centre



View from one of the older bridges linking Arnéguy to Valcarlos

designed to host international commercial events. Another great change is in housing. In France, the relatively lower housing prices have encouraged the rapid construction of apartments which have for the most part been bought by people on the Spanish side. This has had the consequence of changing the demographics of the town of Hendaye, just a kilometre from Irun: Hendaye is now inhabited by a population of which just over 35% are of Spanish nationality (compared to 20% in 1999). Recently, another housing construction, managed by a Spanish business which only advertised its sales in Spain, provoked protest amongst Hendayans. They feel they are being overwhelmed by these new residents who still essentially live their social and cultural life on the Spanish side, where they also continue to have their jobs.

While border controls have disappeared, the beginning and end of a state territory remains visible in advertising panels, architecture and organisation of space. Modes of behaviour are different, as is even the way people perceive themselves as Basque. Although globalisation increasingly brings people to share more symbolic references and face similar concerns, their experiences remain translated by the particular institutional, political and cultural context in which they live. So the frontier remains in the mind. Identity exists in relation to an 'other'. In order to have a notion of self, it is necessary to identify something that is different from oneself. Today with globalisation we find ourselves increasingly in a world where people have various origins and life experiences, and speak more than one language, and therefore have more complex identities. However, with the human tendency to want to order things, the clear categories of 'us' and 'them' remain tempting.

Globalisation is the new context in which cooperation and openness are a challenge. It is also paradoxical that it is the offer of financial support, for instance from the European Union, which spurs local actors to co-operate. For example, it is only since early 2007 that other border towns in the Basque Country have finally launched into cross-frontier collaboration. The president of the syndicate of the valley of Baigorri,



Gas pump at Arnéguy

next to Arnéguy and Valcarlos, declared then that, "we have the tools for cooperation, we now have to learn how to use them", and recognised that "we will lose these funds if we do not organise ourselves in order to take advantage of them." In this case, collaboration does not seem to come as spontaneously as it does in situations of contestation and urgency.

Today, cross-frontier cooperation projects are increasingly tackling the urgent problem of the environment and social needs. Such a more inclusive and long-term cooperation is positive. But for any real *entente* to take place it is necessary for inhabitants not only to learn to solve problems together but to get to know each other. It is noteworthy that all the informants for this article were aged over forty, and spoke at least two languages well. Amongst the younger generation this local multi-lingual fluency is rarer. With this reduced means of communication, the risk of alienation *vis-à-vis* one's neighbour increases. It remains therefore to be seen how the younger generation of border inhabitants with their different linguistic capacities will construct their identity in this new context of so-called openness. X



Former building of Lloyd, now seat of the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trieste. Photo published by lele. rozza on Flickr.com

"WE ARE COSMOPOLITAN!"

The myth of a united Europe a century ago: the rise of Ludwig Von Bruck, founder of the Austrian Lloyd navigation company and lynchpin in the economic, cultural and social growth of the regions around the Upper Adriatic

by Patrick Karlsen >



Adriatic sea and Lošinj - Lussino - Lussin

60

The sea throws back shimmering golden reflections, millions of rustling ears in a field on fire.

This is the second afternoon in a row that Ludwig spends, one minute sitting, the next lying on a pier down in the port, next to a red-hot iron mooring bollard. His forehead and shirtless chest are pearly with sweat, his Nordic skin reddened but not satisfied by its exposure to the full, unequivocally Mediterranean sun.

He's trying to read an edition of Herder that his father, a bookbinder from the Rhineland, has made for him as a good luck token for his adventure. The prose is inherently knotty, and the reading made all the more tricky by the glaring whiteness of pages in the sunlight. But with his eyelids reduced to the narrowest slit, Ludwig stubbornly reads on.

Herder's history of philosophy is like an electric shock; and Ludwig realises this even though he's very young. Or perhaps precisely because he is so young he can feel the irresistible, dark charm of the pages. The fascination that comes with the words of prophets announcing an impending storm; when they are announcing the truth.

Ludwig reads about the Roman Empire, destroyed by its inability to hold together the different nations that made it up; punished for having repressed them, for having underestimated the strength of their development and not having understood that their cause was invincible. Superior, even holy, because it coincided with the idea of freedom.

Freedom and nationhood, merged together in a single myth, in a single poem. Herder, thinks Ludwig sarcastically, is perhaps the only contemporary thinker of our time. The only one to have developed a convincing idea on the direction taken by history here and now, in Europe at the beginning of the nineteenth century, and who understands what is driving its engine of progress.

Stretching, he rises to his feet. The stopover in Trieste will last until the flow of volunteers into his band of freedom fighters dries up. Ten days, perhaps a few more, split between the pier and 'This too a Philosophy of History', hand-stitched for him by his father. Then, God willing, he would have given his help to Greek rebellion. After centuries of anxious barbarism, Greece is calling to arms her spiritual children, scattered around the world. A nation to liberate, far away across a glittering sea in his mind's eye.

Hiding behind a load of carob beans, Ludwig gets rid of his trousers and dives into the water.

But the Greek project was not to God's liking, it would seem. The political refugees returning from there (some as stowaways, some, the lucky ones on rafts, that, nine times out of ten, get smashed on some Dalmatian reef) tell of indiscriminate massacres, cynical agreements between the powers and idealists sent to the slaughterhouse.

The last batch of volunteers fails to materialise and so Ludwig does not leave but decides to stay on in Trieste and thus becomes 'von Bruck'.

Since then there's been no nation to free - but a lot of prose and poetry. He is immediately employed by an insurance agency, a sector then undergoing very strong expansion. The boy is up to the job, alert and self-confident. Ten years later and he is already the director of that agency. Ten years later still and he's the main organizer and founder of the Austrian insurance company Lloyd, as well as the chairman of its board of directors. Another ten years pass and Lloyd has turned into one of the most powerful trade and navigation companies in Europe, going from three ships initially to twenty and each day transporting tons of people, goods and mail throughout the Mediterranean, from Greece to Egypt and Turkey, expanding to open agencies in Calcutta, Bombay, Ceylon, Singapore and Canton.

Now, Lloyd is the most significant economic hub of the Hapsburg monarchy. From within, its managers develop the idea of a 'natural' link between the Middle East and the area of central Europe through the agency of Lloyd, via Trieste.

On May 12th 1847, in what had now become his city, von Bruck delivers a speech at the tenth anniversary of the company's foundation before the annual general meeting of the shareholders. The central concepts are 'pragmatism', 'confidence' and 'progress'.

It has not always gone so smoothly. During the first two years of commercial activity debts are about to destroy his plaything and the company only saved thanks to the generous help of the state.

A reluctant intervention, which indicates an overall relationship between the government of Vienna and Lloyd which is more than a little stormy and radically contradictory.

The whole of the Hapsburg monarchy's foreign economic and trade policy is frozen in the framework developed by Metternich in the 1820s to restore an order which had been shocked by the meteor Napoleon. It is a policy which states that it is based on the principle of balance within Europe, but in reality pursues nothing more than the existing status quo.

Vienna, the pivot of this Continental iceberg, stays on its feet thanks to the Austrian props in place in the West: in northern Italy - Lombardy and the Veneto. Liberalism and nationalism are genuine threats and 'blasphemies' that the palace of ice looks on as potentially fatal.

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BOOKS ON THE DESK

Perhaps because he had read Herder, perhaps because as a romantic boy he believed passionately in his message, von Bruck realizes that his 'child', his company of the restoration has no future; that beneath the surface of the continent huge forces are about to be unleashed, spurred on by liberal and nationalist 'blasphemies.' And those who are orchestrating these forces in Italy and Germany are merely dust-devils, flashpoints for a potentially far more destructive hurricane directed at European peace and the survival of the monarchy.

Von Bruck knows that wheels as large as these, once in motion, crush everything in their path. Of course, one should not go along with these ideas. What you must do is run ahead of them and channel them into a vision that is equally, if not more, grandiose and ambitious. How clever.

Vienna must understand that, for her, the West is now a lost cause, that Lombardy and the Veneto are lost, and that it is imperative that she look to the East, ridding herself of her Metternich straitjacket and riding the wave of capitalism and free trade. To do this she already has a branch that knows how to take up the weapon of trade as well being able to look eastward. Lloyd.

And if in Vienna immobility reigns, then one must go there and shake things up. If the centre does not respond, the periphery will occupy it and become the centre in its turn. If the State reacts confusedly, with projects at odds with your own, take the State in hand and bend it to your will.

In 1849 von Bruck was appointed Minister for Trade.

Early in July 1847, Richard Cobden, leader of the British liberals, is visiting Trieste. An official banquet is organised in his honour. And of course, the master of ceremonies can only be von Bruck himself.

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With a phlegmatic calm, but conscious of having the eyes of the government fixed upon him, von Bruck delivers a speech in favor of free trade and prudent only in its form.

Immediately after he finishes speaking he gives the floor to Francesco Dall'Ongaro, a young and fairly successful playwright in Venice and along the coast who harbours nationalist ideas and sympathies. He hopes that Italy will join a commercial league, a prelude to policy of aggregation that would include Trieste. Von Bruck stops him halfway through his speech. He rises to his feet and thunders: "We are cosmopolitan, we have nothing to do with Italian nationality or German for that matter! Our nation is Trieste."

Total confusion breaks out and the diners are now split into two parties. A punch-up is only narrowly avoided. A shocked Richard Cobden acts as peacemaker.

Speaking out that day in a nervous atmosphere that encourages open challenges is von Bruck. But also Ludwig.

To von Bruck one must not touch Trieste. In the architecture of his plan, breaking the territorial continuity between the city and Central Europe is like removing the card, without which the whole castle will tumble down.

But within him he remains Ludwig, the boy who wanted to leave for Greece in the name of the freedom of nations. Why "Yes!" to Greece, why "Yes!" to Germany but "Yes, but only in part, without Trieste"? Is Trieste not predominantly an Italian city ethnically? Is it not



that powerhouse of Italians that has pushed him to learn the local dialect and sign himself "Carlo Lodovico" in his private papers?

The inconsistency is obvious. Thence comes the perfect twist, the intellectual kidney-punch that makes him cry out: "Triest is a nation". To preserve in its autonomy, like all the others.

A city-nation itself, with, in addition, a very special role.

The point is that the European markets are expanding, fuelled by a solid and demanding middle class. There are increasingly wide mouths needing to be filled with raw materials from the East, and the channel between these two worlds is the sea that, by its very name, lies in the middle: the Mediterranean. With a port that works as an exchange valve: Trieste.

For von Bruck the middle class, divided vertically by nationality, resting in fact on a shared horizontal plane, which is that of its consumption and daily requirements.

He looks beyond this, he looks ahead.

In addition to any national peculiarities, he sees a society of producers and consumers united in the same needs, but not only this - even sharing the same values and lifestyle, in the fundamentals of a material and spiritual civilization. He looks forward, because it seems clear that the physical and cultural environment in which this civilization expresses itself is in power, and, God willing, right across the continent.

The vision of von Bruck, in a word, a united Europe.

And the only hope that the Viennese Empire has to escape the fate of Rome is to drive civil and economic growth in its component nations to its maximum. Certainly not by ignoring them or setting one against the other, but by harmonising them in a pragmatic goal - associating them with a future of shared development.

Only in this way, will Austria remain the centre of a peaceful and confederate Europe, that Ludwig von Bruck has always called: *Mitteleuropa*.

But the project was only to God's liking a century later. Perhaps... X

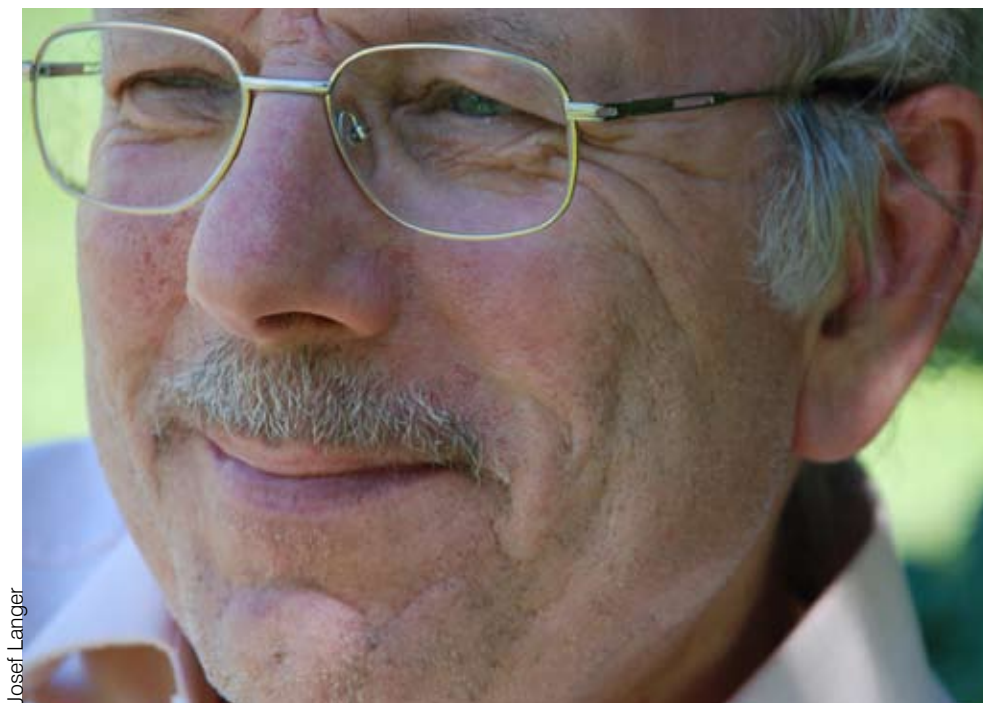
Author of this story: Patrick Karlsen
He is a PhD student of contemporary history at the University of Trieste researching on the relationship between the Italian Communist Party and the border of the northern Adriatic. An essayist and poet, he writes for many regional and national titles in Italy.

ATTACHMENTS ACROSS BORDERS: MERELY ENRICHMENT

"To feel attached to the cultures and people across the border and to remember our common history can enrich our identity as Italians, Austrians or Slovenes", explains Josef Langer, a sociologist based in Klagenfurt (Carinthia), who sees Euroregions as a completely new supranational reality. He adds that the much more serious risk is to get lost in the numerous commercialised and pseudo-political identities offered by the forces of globalisation

by Enrico Maria Milič >

Josef Langer is a sociologist working at the Institute of Sociology at the Alpen-Adria University of Klagenfurt. He specialises in theories of globalisation, identity and interculturalism. He has widely researched the social processes surrounding EU integration and has written extensively on these topics.



Josef Langer

Q Many think that the new EU legislation on European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) should form the legal framework for the construction of a Euroregion covering Slovenia, Southern Austria, North-eastern Italy and North-western Croatia. According to the relevant regulation, pre-existing political and administrative bodies (Regions, Land, States and Provinces) should jointly contribute some of their administrative powers to this crossborder Euroregion. How do you think this new institution could challenge the perception of the roles of the Nation-States in our society?

A The EGTC offers a complete new definition of state border: I mean it represents a change from a national to a supranational reality. The 'genetic code' of EU institutions which requires a 'pooling of sovereignty' is being applied for the first time to the borders of Member States. This legislation provides an instrument for the common management, use and administration of a set of strictly defined and agreed matters. Whereas the Interregs and other previous EU cross-border instruments were conventional in the sense that independent organizations from different states cooperated, the EGTC has the potential to create

a single supranational organisation for administering the border - from a line of control and distinction the border moves to become a place of common utilisation. Its implementation would mean a complete negation of the nation state in an important element of its identity - the outer boundary. However, for the time being I do not see any attempt in the Alps-Adriatic space to use the EGTC in such a manner. The new cross-border projects for the 2007-2013 period seem to continue in conventional patterns of inter-state cooperation and refer to the EGTC, if at all, only rhetorically.

Q Do you think that a Euroregional identity could be considered more relevant compared to the discourses of identity offered by Nation-States?

A The supportive attitude towards cross-border cooperation which we observe in today's *Zeitgeist*, the ever-growing cross-border business activities together with EU funding of cross-border cooperation, stimulates awareness of what is going on in the territories across national borders amongst significant numbers of people. The recognition and realisation of cross-border opportunities bind people together, creating a feeling of community on the basis of mutual advantage. In the Alps-Adriatic territories there is

an additional factor for creating community and this is centuries of common history prior to WWI. For the people between the Alps and Adriatic the time of their separation into nation states is much shorter than that of being together in the past. Hapsburg rule left many constructions and buildings in these territories which can create a feeling of communality even amongst those who are not historically involved. Demonstrating an Alps-Adriatic cross-border identity could be seen as a 'soft' asset for building relations and developing common projects.

However, as I indicated before, we live in an era of multiple identities and, even more, of Western individualism and the dominance of particular interests connected with it. In this precarious situation for all collective identities the conflict between regional cross-border identity and a national identity such as Italian or Slovene need not be feared. In fact, my personal opinion is a feeling of attachment to the cultures and peoples across the borders and remembering our common history can enrich our identities as Italians, Austrians or Slovenes. Moreover, collective identities are also linked to material conditions, and here the Nation State is still more competitive than cross-border situations. Today

I see no antagonism between the cross-border identity and the national identity, at least not in the Alps-Adriatic area.

The much greater risk, in my opinion, is getting lost in the numerous commercialised and pseudo-political identities offered by the forces of globalisation. Let us not forget, that in certain contemporary social milieus identifying with the logo of arbitrary global brands is more significant than identifying with a territory, culture or nation.

Q Some people see a national language as the primary indicator of one's identity. What do you think should be the languages used and taught in the contexts of the Euroregional area to support cross-border cooperation, both in the public and private sectors?

A Personally I consider knowledge of a foreign language as an advantage. However, I am sceptical about obligatory foreign language learning. Nevertheless, for the Alps-Adriatic area the learning of the languages of this area should be encouraged and the necessary organisational opportunities (education, exchanges, etc.) created. I do not think that knowing a foreign language can negatively affect one's identity. X



University of Klagenfurt



OBERRHEINKONFERENZ / CONFÉRENCE DU RHIN SUPÉRIEUR

www.oberrheinkonferenz.org

Created in 1975 as an Intergovernmental Commission between Germany, France and Switzerland, Oberrhein is made up of a Tripartite Commission and an Intergovernmental Conference, which meets together twice a year, alternating the venue depending on which country holds the presidency. There are 9 working groups active in specific areas: environment, political economy, education and training, mutual assistance in the case of disasters, culture, health, planning, youth policy and regional transport policy. The working groups have the power to set up groups of experts and there is also a common Secretariat.



EUROREGION MAAS-RIJN / MASS-RHEIN / MEUSE RHIN

www.euregio-mr.org

Created in 1976 as a community working between Germany, Belgium and the Netherlands, since 1991 it has been a Foundation governed by Dutch law. The decision-making institution is the presidency, composed of 20 members of regions, assisted by a Secretariat and four committees, dealing with specific areas including: 1) economic policy, tourism, technology and the labour market; 2) nature, environment and transport policy; 3) youth policies, culture, education and identity; and 4) health, social policies and security. There is also a consultation body, or Eurocouncil, consisting of two chambers, the first made up of political representatives and the second of representatives of local associations.

ALPE-ADRIA / ALPEN-ADRIA / ALPE- JADRAN / ALPOK-ADRIA



www.alpeadria.org

Established in 1978, this Working Community is currently composed of 13 members: the Hungarian counties of Baranya, Somogy, Vas and Zala, the Italian regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia, Lombardy and Veneto, the Austrian Bundesländer of Burgenland, Carinthia, Styria and Upper Austria as well as Croatia and Slovenia. The objectives and programmes to be implemented are decided by the Plenary Assembly of Presidents of the Executive Bodies. The Committee presidency is composed of the representative who holds the presidency, a representative of the former presidency and one from the next in line, and acts as liaison between the Plenary Assembly and the Commission Executive, which is the body coordinating the Plenary Assembly. The bulk of the work is done in the project groups and groups of experts. Finally, there is a Secretariat and Alpe-Adria has offices in all the member regions.

LANDSKAPET ÅLAND / AHVENANMAAN MAAKUNTA



www.aland.ax

An archipelago, situated in the Baltic Sea under the sovereignty of Finland, the Åland Islands enjoy extensive autonomy and are a demilitarized zone, whose only official language is Swedish. This status is guaranteed by the autonomy of Åland, issued by the Finnish parliament, and based on international treaties. The special status is based on a decision taken by the League of Nations in 1921 and reaffirmed in the Treaty of Accession of Finland to the European Union. It is a Member of the Nordic Council, has a parliamentary form of government, as well as, its own national flag and its own police force.

EUROREGION NEISSE-NISA-NYSA

www.neisse-nisa-nysa.com



Founded in 1991, it lies at the heart of Europe between Germany, the Czech Republic and Poland. Established with the creation of an association of local authorities, it has as its most important body the Council, which decides, manages and monitors activities. To support this body there operates a Council of the Presidency, a common Secretariat as well as groups of experts. The working groups operate in the following areas: regional road and rail links, the local economy, cross-border tourism, environment and forests, emergency management, health, the protection of historical monuments, statistics, inter-library loans and education.



BIDASOA-TXINGUDI MUGAZ GAIN- DIKO PARTZUERGOAREN / CONSORCIO TRANSFRONTERIZO / CONSORCIO TRANSFRONTALIER

www.bidasoa-txingudi.com

Established in 1998 in the area of the Basque Country between Spain and France as an association of local authorities with a legal status of a public body, the Consortium, made up of the municipalities of Hondarribia, Irun and Hendaya from either side of the border, is directed by a General Council consisting of mayors and representatives of the municipalities. To support this body there operates a Management Committee and Labour Commissions which deal with culture, sports, social welfare, the Basque language and heritage, as well as education and tourism.