

XXIst French-language Summer University

Territories, Borders, Co-operation, 2 - 21 September 2002 in Strasbourg (France)

Organised in conjunction with: The universities of Strasbourg : Marc-Bloch University, Humanities Departments ; Robert-Schuman University, Departments of Law and Political Science ; Louis-Pasteur University, Science Departments. With the support of the: French Ministry of Foreign Affairs ; Council of Europe ; Robert Bosch Stiftung ; Lower-Rhine General Council ; Regional Council of Alsace.

Overview

Transeuropéennes' 21st summer university was organised for the seven consecutive year in Strasbourg, bringing together 29 third-, fourth- or fifth-year students from virtually all the countries of the region. The University was intended for nationals of the following countries: Albania, Bosnia- Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Cyprus, Croatia, Greece, Macedonia, Romania, Serbia, Montenegro, Kosovo/a, Slovenia and Turkey. This year, only students from Cyprus and Slovenia were missing from the Strasbourg programme, as recruiting participants with a good command of French has proven to be increasingly difficult – as compared to the Englishlanguage summer universities (the summer university held in Macedonia was comprised of students from throughout the entire region). Like every year, recruitment was carried out on the basis of two types of criteria: academic criteria ensuring that the students chosen had high academic standards (recruitment was opened to fifth-year students in 2002) and came from diversified fields of study in order to foster interdisciplinarity; and civic criteria fostering the selection of students with longstanding involvement in the NGO sector in order to ensure the proliferation of the opinions expressed and to foster networking around the various projects and initiatives.

Pluridisciplinarity and didactic detours

For the first time, the six-year partnership between Transeuropéennes and the Marc-Bloch University for the social sciences was extended to include the Robert-Schuman University for law and political science, as well as the Louis-Pasteur University for science (including the geography department) – that is, to the Strasbourg university complex as a whole. This partnership promoting interdisciplinarity was marked by the participation of lecturers from the three universities on subjects related to the summer university's theme – each speaker drawing upon his or her particular field of expertise. This shift toward an expanded partnership makes it possible to envisage in the long term the setting up of other cooperation projects intended for the academic community in

South-East Europe, taking advantage of the full of scope of the fields and disciplines covered by these different universities.

Over the three-week session, the students showed a great deal of curiosity with regard to the diversity of approaches developed. Occasionally, the distancing effect offered by the summer-university programme proved somewhat tricky to manage. In effect, the disciplinary detour offered during the three-week session and the fieldwork-style exploration of the Strasbourg area and its border region as a zone of experimentation around the theme may have left some students with the impression that the subject dealt only with Franco-German co-operation or with urban planning, and that this set of examples and tools was not necessarily adaptable to the more volatile case of South-East Europe. This apparent ambiguity was dispelled on several occasions during the courses, workshops and documentary screenings, dealing more specifically with the region – though it was not easy to do so on all occasions. Indeed, despite the students' considerable open-mindedness, the usual patterns of gravitating toward people from their cultural region – if not indeed their own country – were far from absent during this summer university. Moreover, attitudes of ignorance or “voluntary” amnesia were very much in evidence over the course of the three-week session. Everyone – from the guest speakers to the participants and the organisers – had to make a painstaking and at times even very painful effort in order to open up the group.

Thematic overview for 2002: territories, borders, co-operation

What is a territory? Is it demarcated once and for all? Does it have an essence? Is it stable? Under what conditions and through what means does it change? Is it a determinate factor in defining borderlines?

The aim of this summer university was to show how a territory is shaped in keeping with the various issues underlying its qualification/ designation/ demarcation. Above all, the question of the degree of openness and closedness of its territory proves crucial when the various politics at play are examined. This makes it possible to show that a territory is not “essential” but is strongly determined through outside and human action. A territory is over-determined by what one does with it.

In this respect, public urban-planning policies are emblematic of how the shaping of a territory can be oriented around openness, movement and circulation. The same goes – although the repercussions are more serious or sometimes even more dramatic – for political actions, aiming at shoring up territorial claims in a nationalist context. The latter most often instrumentalise space by either stigmatising or reducing any circulation and by closing it off (places of remembrance, borders, checkpoints, partitions, ethnic cleansing and so on).

These speculative questions thus point to highly contemporary issues at work above all in the Balkans. The forced displacement of populations, as well as ethnic and cultural homogenisation, the cohabitation and recent, more flexible forms of association between new states, the principles of sovereignty and the refusal of any ingerence are all based upon territorial constructions or representations which generate borders. What is more, though NATO and Western Europe did intervene in the Balkans in an attempt to calm

conflicts which fed upon problems of territory, this was not without provoking contradictory and escalating territorial demands, inasmuch as the “Western” states as a whole – and particularly those belonging to the block of the European Union – in fact added new borders to what was already an extremely complex arrangement. Becoming aware of the reality of the Schengen border has left the people of the Balkans with the impression that they have been sidelined.

Whatever these national or ethno-national, cultural or social European and Balkanic borders, only the thorough-going intensification of co-operative endeavours will make it possible to get beyond the ruptures which are at work.

The city of Strasbourg – with its multiple urban territories, its conflictual history of territorial issues, its current status as a transborder and European city – as well as the territory of Alsace and the nearby German territory (including the cities of Kehl and Freiburg and the Land of Baden-Wurtemberg) are preferred fields for analysis and reflection for the students.

Moreover, Strasbourg-based European political actors – understood in the broadest sense of the term – including the Council of Europe and the European Human Rights Court, are potential interlocutors for the young generation from the Balkans.

Methodology and organisation

The working language of the summer university was French.

Interdisciplinarity, hands-on workshops and course work, fieldwork and meetings (with not-for-profit organisations, cultural life and local politics), bordercrossing and meetings on German territory: such were some of the key elements of a programme based upon the deep-seated intellectual and human involvement of speakers and students.

Students’ preliminary work

Before travelling to Strasbourg, each student was required to prepare a personal project retracing his or her personal experience or conception of borderlines. The project was to be presented within the course framework, then discussed with those present and commented upon by a specialist on borders from the Louis-Pasteur University. Several potent notions emerged from the students’ projects – often in contradiction with one another depending upon the chosen approach. All the approaches, however, highlighted the presence of borders within the students’ lives as well as the feelings of bitterness or worry to which they gave rise.

Borders seem above all to be experienced as a rupture. They are seen as the expression of an identity-based and inward-looking reaction to a fear of otherness. This rupture is also felt to be arbitrary – the outcome of complex and tragic political histories, often of utterly artificial movements, in no way corresponding to the aspirations of the society. As one participant pointed out ironically, it was impossible to be born and to die in one and the same country in the Balkans. A border is a moment that crystalises a possible formula of identity to reject all the other virtualities which account for the rich

complexity of the region.

But borders cannot be reduced to the outside edges of a country that some people cross with the tenacious impression of remaining within a single regional area. Participants underscored in fact that the invisible and interior borders are far more powerful. The very notion of “territory” was thus introduced by one young woman participant, who explained that she felt far safer in certain parts of her country than in others. The problem of minorities and their territories was also examined.

Borders are also apprehended as zones of friction, and consequently, of exchange. The proximity of a border is liable to generate exchanges of all kinds, including beneficial and stimulating ones. Thus, despite the genuine malaise she felt when she regularly had to cross a border for professional reasons, one woman participant drew attention to the true ambiguity of this feeling inasmuch as the border-crossing was a passage toward her family, and thus heralded “good news.” Metaphorically speaking, borders can be experienced as bridges.

Echoing the contributions and workshops which they followed over the course of this summer university, several students insisted on the notion of cooperation between the countries to facilitate border crossing. One student very astutely pointed out that traffickers of all kinds have already abolished the Balkans’ borders far more efficiently than any form of transborder co-operation. States ought to be able to do likewise within a legal framework. However, painful recent history still supposes major efforts if one is to overcome the ruptures – which is what gives meaning to such activities as this summer university.

All participants, however, insisted on the difficulty of crossing the “Schengen” border, thwarting their desire for Europe, and insisted on the need for Western Europe to take up its responsibility for stimulating openness toward itself and the other.

Fieldwork in Strasbourg

The preliminary projects were followed up by a workgroup whose objective was to help the students discover the extent to which the logic of inner borders was at work in Strasbourg itself, by having them visit and investigate the various neighbourhoods of the urban agglomeration. For this purpose, five groups were formed, visiting the centre’s highly variegated urban settings, identified by the urban planners and geographers from the partner universities, their assigned task being to question the residents, take photographs of the sites, and to distinguish the various territories. For those students who were not familiar with the European Union, the social difficulties stood out far more visibly than the city’s internal territories. Their projects were displayed on the occasion of a cocktail offered by the deans of the city’s three universities.

This project comes in the wake of the journal *Transeuropéennes* issue #21 entitled “Linking the City,” co-edited with the Marc-Bloch University. It drew upon the central problematic dealt with in that issue: the city’s invisible borders and the segregated spaces, which question the very notion of a public sphere.

The diversity of courses and disciplines

Emphasis was placed on the pluridisciplinary nature of the courses offered to the

students. Geography, urban planning, philosophy, anthropology, history, sociology and law came together as the backdrop to the tools and approaches of the theme at issue. Considerable time and place was left to discussion between the speakers themselves. Generally speaking, courses were held in the morning.

Workshops, visits, meetings

Activities were divided between workshops, meetings, screenings of films and visits, and were generally held in the afternoons. Once again this year, the workshops were devoted to the Balkans in such a way that either the speakers followed up on what they did in their morning course or that the students presented the results of their work. Only the workshop on the territories of the city of Strasbourg dealt with a subject specific to the European Union. And there, too, links were established.

The meetings and visits were particularly rich. The Strasbourg Urban Community and the Town of Kehl received the students to present their “Twin Banks Garden” project, exemplary of local transborder cooperation. Academic co-operation, for instance, was discussed at length during the students’ visit to the University of Freiburg – member of the transborder co-operation network known as EUCOR (universities of the Upper-Rhine). Two major Strasbourg-based European institutions – the Council of Europe and the European Human Rights Court – hosted the participants for a presentation of their activities and a debate with top-level public decision makers. Furthermore, a high-ranking officer with the American forces in Europe came to discuss forms of military co-operation with Eastern Europe, as well as fielding a wide range of heated questions concerning the United States foreign policy.

The programme was further enriched through excursions and cultural visits throughout the Strasbourg area.

The aims of the summer universities

Democratisation and Knowledge: the issue of Training and Citizenship

Transeuropéennes’ and its partner-organisations’ goal, through the summer universities programme “Taking Action in South-East Europe: democracy building and the challenge of differences” is to provide an alternative form of training for young students and professionals from the Balkans region, destined to be the opinion-makers of tomorrow. It is based upon linking academic knowledge and a theoretical approach with issues of the city, citizenship, and a tangible understanding of various modes of co-existence.

The idea is to encourage future opinion-makers as well as trainers of trainers to be aware of what is at stake in their societies and in their regions, and to think through their role on the basis of a reflection on citizenship.

Such an undertaking requires that the summer universities set up by Transeuropéennes and its partner organisations continue to deepen their understanding of the society in which they are situated, at the same time allowing the students to distance themselves

from more traditional modes of learning, by incorporating into the three-week curriculum sessions for which they alone assume full responsibility (the workshops), as well as meetings with leaders from the cultural, associative, economic and local political communities, etc.

The academic institutions and the NGOs associated with *Transeuropéennes'* projects share a compartamentalised vision of knowledge and learning. This is particularly true as regards the Marc-Bloch University (Strasbourg), which, since 1996, has participated in *Transeuropéennes'* projects, as well as the Robert-Schuman and Louis-Pasteur Universities, which both expressed their intention to take part in the French-language summer university in 2002.

Participants and recruitment

The students enrolling in this summer university program all do so on their own initiative and represent only themselves regardless of the fact that they are originated from all the countries of the Balkan region. They are recruited independently of any institutions, through an informal network of teachers and researchers, media decision-makers and NGO administrators. They are chosen not only on the basis of their intellectual and language skills (or their professional experience, in the case of the journalists), but also in light of their commitment as citizens and their desire to establish lasting ties of cooperation amongst one another.

Pedagogical principles and speakers

An inter-disciplinary approach, bringing together academic research and field work (non-governmental organisations; European institutions; local cultural and political life; local, regional and cross-border media, depending on the circumstances) through a common foreign language (French in Strasbourg, English in the Balkans): such are the key ingredients of the programme, based upon the intense human and intellectual involvement of the teaching staff at the universities and partner organisations as well as the participants' unflagging motivation.

Following up on the summer universities

Throughout the summer university, students were encouraged to give thought to ways of pursuing collaboration with one another after returning home, either by setting up local *Transeuropéennes'* "bureaus," such as the one in Macedonia, established in late 1999, or on the basis of their own networking initiatives (communication/ debates by email, developing their respective projects, taking part in *Transeuropéennes* regional co-operation workshops, and future instructor-training workshops, making documentary films, editorial projects, and so on).

Speakers

Antoine BEYER, President of the organisation for the defence of the "Twin Banks Garden

project “Garten/ Jardin” (Strasbourg) ; *Henri BIGO*, Colonel with the United States Air Force, Deputy Political Advisor to the Commander, United States European Command (Stuttgart) ; *Yann DE BUYER*, Deputy Head of the Division of Field and Information Offices, Directorate General of Political Affairs, Council of Europe (Strasbourg) ; *Ivan COLOVIC*, Writer and Professor of ethnology (Belgrade) ; *Ghislaine GLASSON DESCHAUMES*, Executive Director of Transeuropéennes-RCE (Paris) ; *Christophe INGELS*, Programme Manager at Transeuropéennes-RCE (Paris) ; *Michael INGLEDOW*, Programme Advisor, Directorate of Youth and Sport, Council of Europe (Strasbourg) ; *Christine KUTNAR*, University of Freiburg ; *Claudia LUCIANI*, Head of Division, Directorate General of Political Affairs, Council of Europe (Strasbourg) ; *Hildegard MADER*, Correspondent for the network EUCOR, Director of the International Office of the Freiburg University ; *Christian MESTRE*, Professor of international law, President of the Robert-Schuman University (Strasbourg) ; *Jean-Yves MEUNIER*, in charge of the Twin Banks Garden project for the Urban Planning Department of the Strasbourg Urban Community ; *Daniel PAYOT*, Professor of philosophy, Marc-Bloch University (Strasbourg) ; *Jürgen RAUCH*, in charge of the Twin Banks Garden project for the local authority of Kehl ; *Bernard REITEL*, Assistant Professor, Associated Researcher at the Louis-Pasteur University, laboratory “Image et Ville” (Strasbourg) ; *Maurice SACHOT*, Professor in education sciences, director of the Philosophy, Linguistic, Computer Science and Education Department at the Marc-Bloch University (Strasbourg) ; *Marthe SCHWAB*, Town Councillor of Strasbourg ; *Svetlana SLAPSAK*, Professor of anthropology at the Institutum Studiorum Humanitatis (Ljubljana) ; *Christophe SOHN*, PhD Candidate at the laboratory Image et ville, Louis-Pasteur University (Strasbourg) ; *Léon STRAUSS*, Professor of contemporary history at the Institut d’Etudes Politiques (Strasbourg) ; *Alain TROCME*, Deputy Head Director, International Relation Department of the Strasbourg Urban Community ; *Jean-Pierre WORMS*, sociologist, National Scientific Research Centre, Secretary General of Transeuropéennes-RCE (Paris) ; *Stéphane YERASIMOS*, Professor of urbanism at the Paris VIII University.

The Partners

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Université Robert-Schuman ; President : Christian MESTRE.

Université Louis-Pasteur ; Faculté de géographie et d’aménagement ; President : Bernard CARRIERE ; Vice-President : Richard KLEINSMAGER.

Notes
