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DEFYING POLITICAL BOUNDARIES: TRANSBORDER TOURISM IN A REGIONAL CONTEXT

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ABSTRACT

Political boundaries have traditionally been considered barriers, or obstacles, to all kinds of communication and interaction. The end of the 20th century has seen a gradual de-functionalisation of many political boundaries and a subsequent increase in transborder cooperation. Among the economic sectors that benefit from such an opening of borders is tourism, particularly on a regional scale. This paper examines the specific case of Switzerland, a landlocked country with a long tradition of regional transborder collaboration. After a general introduction, four examples are presented to demonstrate the rich variety of local transborder attractions that are complementary to each other and thus help to create a system of regional tourism.

INTRODUCTION

“Representatives of the tourist industry on both sides of the border have demonstrated frustration at the border-traffic delays at both border crossings” (8, p. 27). This quote from a study on transborder relations between Mexico and the United States demonstrates the problems encountered by regional tourism in border areas. Indeed, na-

tional boundaries are to a large extent still viewed as a place where traffic flows can be interrupted and where both people and goods have to undergo regular or episodic checks. The boundary as an obstacle to free mobility continues to survive, despite numerous efforts to the contrary.

This paper does not contest the facts, rather its purpose is to present examples where transborder cooperation in tourism works to the benefit of both local/regional actors and tourists. Tourism in this context is understood not simply as linked to recreational activities by people coming from other parts of the world but includes any transborder activity which is not directly related to work, school or health services. Of course, the distinction between these activities is fluid; shopping trips may be undertaken after work or a patient to a dentist in the neighbouring country may visit the local cinema on the same trip. Bearing this in mind, certain interesting aspects of transborder tourism on a regional scale can be highlighted.

THE CHANGING ROLE OF STATE BOUNDARIES

An important change in the perception of boundaries has taken place in late 20th cen-

ture Europe and tourism has certainly played an important role in this process. While political boundaries had for a long time been considered as barriers, their dividing role has gradually been reduced, and they have lost part of their initial function. Guichonnet & Raffestin (4, p. 36) call this process defunctionalisation. The outcome of this change will be a certain degree of homogenisation, including loss of diversity, but it will also facilitate exchange and human intercourse. The five roles of political frontiers all change somewhat with defunctionalisation.

- The legal role, to mark the periphery of a state's jurisdiction, is likely to be the last of the five functions to disappear because sovereign states require a perimetre up to which laws and policies can be enforced.
 - The fiscal function relates to the protection of the national economy and the defence of the national market. Duties are collected on imports, in some rare cases also on exports, and further taxes can be added. Current processes have begun to abolish this barrier, but since it is one of the major sources of income, there may be some resistance from governments.
 - The purpose of the control function is the surveillance of goods and people crossing the border. It is with this function that a state can act beyond its territory, because immigration laws may encourage or discourage migration.
 - The military or defence function has lost much of its importance owing to the new technologies of warfare. However, border conflicts are still a reality in many parts of the world; hence, fortifying the boundary still seems to make sense. In recent times, drug traffic and illegal immigration have led to a reconsideration of this function.
- The ideological function for borders has lost much of its former importance. Under the impact of modern communication technology (especially Internet), the battle to ward off outside ideas has been lost. The 'Iron Curtain' did divide the world into two halves, but it did not succeed in shutting the socialist world completely off from the rest of the globe.

These functions are related to the growth of the nation-state since the 17th century. The role of this kind of state is increasingly being questioned, and as a consequence, boundaries are losing their importance. In Europe, this process began with the activities of the Council of Europe in 1949. It has continued during the years following various treaties on economic cooperation (e.g. Coal and Steel Community, Euratom, European Economic Community), particularly in terms of communal and regional transborder collaboration (2, 14). This has culminated in the signing of the Schengen treaty by members of the European Union (EU), whereby borders between member states can now be crossed freely without customs and immigration inspections. Whether this liberalisation will effectively promote tourism, however, remains to be seen. Increased mobility and affluence are probably more important influences on tourist movements than the absence of passport controls. A Dutch or a German family, for example, who desire to spend their holiday in Spain will go there whether or not they have to show their passports. Short-term tourism (e.g. day trips), on the other hand, may well receive a boost from freer transborder mobility.

TOURISM IN SWITZERLAND

Switzerland has often been associated with tourism, apart from banks, cheese, and

watches. Indeed, in terms of the national economy, international tourism is still of considerable importance, although its contribution to the trade balance varies over time and has even been diminishing gradually in recent years (Table 1). In 1990, 7.9 million foreign tourists spent at least one night in Switzerland. That number declined in 1992 to 7.5 million and in 1994, the figure was measured at 7.3 million. Despite this decline, tourism is still an important economic sector in Switzerland.

Occupying the central portion of the Alps, Switzerland is well-known among both summer and winter tourists. Mountain climbing, hiking, and water sports are popular during the summer, while the country's primary attractions in the winter are downhill and cross-country skiing. Increasingly, however, summer skiing on altitudes above 3000 meters has become popular, and the necessary infrastructure (i.e. cable-cars and ski-lifts) has been installed.

The principal tourist regions are all situated in the Alps or along the major lakes (see Figure 1). The Grisons, the Valais, central Switzerland, the Bernese Oberland, and Ticino accounted for approximately 60% of all bed nights in 1997 (31.98 million). Urban tourism is of relatively little importance, although Zurich as an economic and financial centre is particularly attractive to some types of tourists. The number of bed nights in Zurich in 1997 exceeded that of the popular Ticino mountain region, but this is essentially owing to business travel and convention tourism.

TRANSBORDER TOURIST AREAS

Apart from 'ordinary' tourist resorts and regions, which are often situated inside a state

and hardly confronted with the problem of political boundaries, regions do exist where boundaries constitute an obstacle to the development of tourism (17, p. 143). Most obvious may be seaside resorts, where communication along the coast would otherwise be easy (e.g. along the French-Spanish border on both sides of the Pyrenees). Other examples include mountain regions where a skiing area may be shared by two or even three countries. Similarly, national parks may lie on either side of the boundary and, despite limited access, be of interest for transborder 'soft tourism' (e.g. hiking, animal watching). The existence of a barrier to communication may thus reduce the area's attractiveness and lower the economic potential that tourism undoubtedly offers.

One can argue that tourism development on one side of a boundary may have a spill-over effect on adjacent regions in the neighbouring country. If the boundary can be crossed freely, transborder tourism may develop to some extent, but if the boundary becomes defunctionalised, at least in part, a truly international tourist region will emerge. International parks may be a first step in this direction (see the examples in 18, p. 528). The road to such regional integration, however, is long because old border stereotypes have yet to be abolished. The *Regio-TriRhena* (the three-nation region around Basle, including parts of France, Germany and Switzerland), for example, has taken roughly one generation (25 to 30 years) to become what it is now—a leading tourism area in Western Europe. It is a painstaking process that demands a great deal of patience and goodwill.

Basle represents a formalized international conurbation with a variety of flows across the boundaries. Transborder tourist areas in the proper sense are usually less formally

organized. Cooperation is very much confined to certain domains (which may be of a technical nature), and the national authorities may or may not be involved. Such is the case of international 'ski arenas'. These are formed by agreements between skiing stations that are situated close to an international boundary and offer the customer not simply an 'up-and-down' arrangement on their own lifts but aim to heighten the experience by combining the lifts and funiculars of various stations on either side of the boundary. However, more formal arrangements may also be found on a smaller scale, such as when various regional tourist offices cooperate in order to promote a particular region that is divided by a state boundary.

The aim of this paper is to consider trans-border tourism on the boundaries of Switzerland at various scales (Figure 1) with particular reference to the defunctionalisation of traditional borders. As a landlocked country, Switzerland has a long tradition of transborder relations, including tourism. Four cases have been selected to demonstrate various degrees of regional cooperation between Switzerland and its neighbors. The first example, *Léman Sans Frontière* (Borderless Lake Geneva, L on Figure 1), demonstrates the extent of cooperation between regional authorities and tourist organisations in an effort to enhance the potential of a vast region marked by the presence of a central uniting element: Lake Geneva. The second case, *Lago Maggiore* (Lake Major, see M on Figure 1), demonstrates the potential of lakeside and waterborne tourism in a well-known, cross-border tourist area on the southern edge of the Alps. This example illustrates a case of competition rather than cooperation. The Samnaun-Ischgl, or Silvretta (S on Figure 1), region is an example of a small regional skiing area where the border has been reduced to a mere formality. Finally, a short reference to the

RegioTriRhena (B on Figure 1) examines the potential for cultural activities in a trans-border conurbation where the traditional role of frontiers has changed dramatically in recent years.

Léman Sans Frontière

Lake Geneva is one of the largest water surfaces within Europe. Situated at the interface of the Alps, the Swiss Plateau and the Jura Mountains, and characterised by a mild climate, it offers good opportunities for water-related tourism. In addition, its hinterland is rich in historical monuments (e.g. churches, monasteries, and castles) which appeal to tourists who are interested in cultural heritage, and other attractions of all kinds abound. Two major cities on the Swiss side, Geneva and Lausanne, and the smaller French towns, Evian and Thonon, add to the attractiveness of the area as they offer a variety of shopping and leisure opportunities (e.g. gambling in the Evian Casino). Alpine skiing areas are within easy reach as well. In all, the region's potential receiving capacity is estimated to be 15 million visitors per year.

In 1994, informal contacts between the regional development associations of Gruyères-Moléson (Fribourg, Switzerland) and Le Bouveret (Valais, Switzerland) started what was to become a remarkable bottom-up regional tourist operation. The managers of the two tourist boards decided to promote not only their own respective tourist offerings but to include information on the other place as well. The public responded positively to this exchange of information. As a consequence, the initiators decided to widen the range of partners and include other locations along Lake Geneva and its hinterland on both the Swiss and the French sides of the lake. The local tourist offices in both countries agreed to a joint

marketing effort to promote a wider range of attractions, which resulted in the formation of an association with 12 partners in 1995 (22, p. 11). This move was met with immediate success as is evident from the admission of four additional members into the group in 1996. In 1999, this success continues as membership is expected to increase to 28 partners (Figure 2 & Table 2), and the size of the region covered will have increased substantially. However, to ensure sound and efficient management, a maximum number of partners has been set at 30.

Of course, the association *Léman sans Frontière* cannot hope, and indeed it does not intend, to rival major tourist centres. Its focus is the combination and complementarity of, or synergy between, three regions: Lake Geneva, the Alps, and the Gruyère Valley. It is based on a local initiative and aims to promote local tourism within a wider regional context, hoping in this way to strengthen the local economies. From the outset, the association did not promote the whole range of tourist attractions among its partners but focused instead on the most important must-see attractions (Figure 2 and Table 2). The guiding principle was, and still is, to create a network in which tourists could visit one site after another with little effort. The attraction base had to be as diverse as possible in order to attract as many people as possible who could plan their local visits according to their various wishes. In addition, distances had to be short—the two most distant places are only about two hours driving time apart.

So far, the main objective of the association has been to promote tourism in the Lake Geneva region rather than offer specific programmes and activities. This was achieved through participation in tourist fairs and various other exhibitions, the distribution of promotional bulletins to various

tourist organisations, and using informative place mats and dinner-table settings in restaurants. These were combined with an awareness building campaign sponsored by the partners and various firms, which included the creation of a web site in French, English and German. Furthermore, in 1998 the association employed five hostesses (three in 1997) who welcomed tourists at the various sites. This is a human element which must not be underrated and which appears to have quite a spin-off effect. Visitors are seen as human beings, responding positively to this kind of personal publicity which may induce them to visit other places within the network as well.

Since the association has now become consolidated, a further step is being taken for the near future—a *tourist pass*—to facilitate visits to the various locations by offering discounted prices. It is aimed above all at visitors staying in the hotels or parahotel facilities in the Lake Geneva region. Similarly, a *tourist card* is being considered, which will allow guests to accumulate points during their visits to the partner sites to redeem for a special gift (the nature of which, however, has yet to be determined) (13). Other enticements might include planned coach or coach and boat tours to specific places within the network.

What is exceptional about the *Léman Sans Frontière* programme is the fact that the national boundary has lost its significance in different ways. Thus, the Lake Geneva Navigation Company is a combined French-Swiss company (there may also be shareholders from other countries). The initiative for the network was started in Switzerland, but it covers a transborder region with a common denominator: Lake Geneva. By associating themselves on an international level, the localities united in the association can benefit from the European Union's In-

terreg II scheme, which aims to increase regional economic development. The Interreg programmes promote economic development in border regions, particularly in terms of transfrontier cooperation. Although it lies outside the EU, Switzerland participates actively in the programme (16).

The *Léman sans Frontière* scheme is recognised as an initiative that is attempting to raise the Lake Geneva region's tourist profile and the value attributed to its cultural heritage (23, p. 37), and as such it was selected to benefit from EU subsidies. The money obtained allowed the association to double its budget to about 500,000 Swiss francs, enabling it to become more efficient. This example demonstrates what can be achieved through local cooperation, once traditional border-restricted stereotypes are discarded and complementarity replaces competition. The key is to determine to use the endogenous potential and to thrive on synergies rather than react to differences. Certainly other tourist regions could learn and profit from this case.

The Lake Major Tourist Area

Situated at the southern rim of the Alps, Lake Major (Figure 3) is the lowest point in Switzerland (193 m) and one of the deepest lakes in the Alps (372 m). Only 20% of its 211 sq km lie on Swiss territory (Canton of Ticino); the remainder belongs to Italy (Varese Province in Lombardy Region to the east, Verbano-Cusio-Ossola and Novara Provinces in Piedmont Region to the west) where it is also known as Lake *Verbano*. Measuring 65 kms from north to south, but only 4.5 kms across, surrounded by mountains ranging between 1000 and 220 m above sea level, and characterised by a mild climate, it has become a very attractive tourist and retirement area, thanks to dramatic scenery and its mediterranean vegeta-

tion. The north-south orientation of the lake in a narrow valley favours the western (sunny) shore where well-known tourist resorts such as Locarno and Ascona (Switzerland), and Pallanza, Intra, and Stresa (Italy) have developed. On the eastern, or shady, side there are few places of interest for tourists. The best known location is Luino (Italy) where weekly markets attract tourists and shoppers from Ticino (Switzerland). The topography of the lake basin does not favour human settlements to a great extent, and it is fairly hostile to communication. The only railway line of significance (Switzerland - Domodossola - Milan) reaches the lake near Stresa; the line on the eastern shore is essentially of local importance. The roads wind along the lake shore, connecting villages and small towns situated on deltas at the openings of lateral valleys. It is no wonder that the easiest mode of transportation in the past has been lake navigation, and boat traffic is still important today. The company that provides the services is based in Italy, but serves the lake on both sides of the border. Of particular importance is the car ferry, which crosses the lake from Laveno to Intra. Apart from its spectacular scenery, the Lake Major region offers a considerable number of attractions to a variety of visitors: music festivals (Stresa), golf courses (Stresa, Verbania and others), flower exhibitions, parks and gardens (Pallanza, Borromeo Islands, Brissago Islands), the Locarno film festival, opportunities for hiking and nature observation, various kinds of water sports and fishing, skiing in winter (Cardada above Locarno, Mottarone above Stresa), and attractive markets (with the exception of Monday, there is a market every day somewhere along the lake)—to say nothing of the regional gastronomy.

Indeed, the political boundary cuts across a region where both sides have a lot in com-

mon, not just language and culture. The tourist potential could be a uniting factor. However, this has not yet been recognised, and despite good relations between the populations on both sides, no regional identity has emerged so far on which a common tourism policy can be based. So far, each side of the border functions on its own, developing tourism back-to-back rather than in cooperation. Tourism promotion is first and foremost nationally oriented. On the Swiss side of the border, the merger of one local and two regional tourist boards into one single board in 1998 may be a first move toward an improvement of the situation for negotiations in the future. However, so far transborder cooperation as has been achieved on Lake Geneva is nonexistent. While this may be regrettable, it seems that the need for such a move has simply not been realized yet.

Signs of change, however, have begun to appear. Recently, alternative tourist attractions and activities (e.g. vegetarian restaurants, ecological holiday camps, bird and animal watching, and children's holidays) in both the Swiss and the Italian regions timidly appeared together on one Internet website (24). However, as yet it is not focused on the Lake Major region; the few sites mentioned are situated in various parts of the Swiss, Italian and French Alps. Regionally more specific is the local initiative undertaken by the two communes of Luino (Italy) and Vira Gambarogno (Switzerland) in the summer of 1998 which may mark a turning point. The two towns decided upon a common exhibition devoted to the Russian prince and sculptor Pavel Trubezkoj (1866-1938, born in Intra, lived in Pallanza). Part of the exhibits were on show in Luino, part in Vira—a project sponsored by the European Union's Interreg II programme (5), similar to the Lake Geneva scheme. In this way, it is felt that the regional tradition of

sculpting and fresco painting might be revived. Similar activities are planned for 1999 to make the Gambarogno a meeting place of famous sculptors from all over the world.

Such local initiatives may pave the way to collaboration on a broader regional scale, and maybe the example of Lake Geneva could find an application in the context of Lake Major. An effort to mount a transborder guide or leaflet is likely to pay off in the future because it would stress the area's common tourist potential. Such a move could be a stepping stone towards a regional cross-border identity. The extent to which the emerging organisation on transborder collaboration, the *Regio Insubrica* (Insubrian Region—cooperation between Ticino Canton in Switzerland and Como, Varese, and Verbano-Cusio-Ossola provinces in Italy) (20), can contribute to increased cooperation in the tourist sector, which currently seems to survive on competition rather than complementarity, remains to be seen.

The Skiing Area of Samnaun-Ischgl (Silvretta)

Although many tourist areas are located well inside a country, some find themselves close to, or even right on, the border abutting other tourist areas beyond. A well-known Swiss example is Zermatt in the Valais with its landmark, the Matterhorn. While such regions were first developed inwardly on a national scale only, the opening of the boundaries after World War II and the increasing mobility of tourists have facilitated the gradual emergence of transborder regional tourism. After a few initial steps, massive investment in infrastructure, the increasing demand for skiing, and the gradual disappearance of distrust between cross-frontier neighbours have finally led to the

growth of local initiatives promoting activities across the border, as in the case of Lake Geneva mentioned earlier.

Another of these areas is the Silvretta region (Figure 4), situated on the Swiss-Austrian border and centred on the two villages of Samnaun (Switzerland) and Ischgl (Austria). The area is best known for skiing but also offers good opportunities for hiking in summer. Because of its remoteness, especially in winter, Samnaun was placed outside the jurisdiction of Swiss customs in 1892. As a consequence of this administrative measure, it offers duty-free shopping, and is in fact the only duty-free zone in Switzerland. Shops are open seven days a week all year round (apart from four public holidays), a factor that constitutes an additional element of its attractiveness and contributes significantly to the community's economy.

An additional feature is the region's status as an international skiing area, which means that skiers can use the various lifts and cable-cars as well as the skiing slopes on either side of the boundary at their leisure. Skiers do not have to bother with border controls, although tourists have to carry a passport or identity card with them if they cross into the neighbouring country. Transborder skiing is facilitated by a special regional season ticket that includes all transport installations in the area (the Silvretta pass). A special reduction is offered to skiers who lodge in the local hotels. Such transborder skiing areas exist in at least two more places along the Swiss border: Zermatt-Cervinia (Italy-Switzerland) and Porte de Soleil (France-Switzerland). Cross-border skiing areas have been made possible by peaceful regional coexistence and by bilateral agreements between border control authorities.

For people visiting the region in winter, the Samnaun-Ischgl skiing arena offers 41 lifts and cable-cars, giving access to 200 kilometres of prepared slopes, and it guarantees good snow conditions throughout winter (25). The main skiing area lies between 2000 and 2872 meters above sea level, enabling visitors to ski from the end of November until the beginning of May. In addition, cross-country skiing is possible on three tracks totaling 48 kilometres. Cooperation between the two sides of the border began in 1977 when the first cable-car was constructed, and it has been intensified since then. In concrete terms this means that both communes are joint owners of the installations (cable-cars and ski-lifts). The latest innovation in this domain was the 1998 inauguration of the world's first double-decker cable-car, providing space for 180 passengers who thus gain easy access to a vast skiing area.

The increasing popularity of this area is not only demonstrated by the continuous investment in new and improved transportation facilities, which is also a matter of prestige and competition in a tight market, but also by the growth of visitor numbers to the area, as can be seen from the number of bed nights spent in the area (Table 3). It should be noted that the number of guests in summer tends to fluctuate a great deal owing to the weather situation. Winter is the real tourist season with constant weather and snow conditions.

The Silvretta skiing arena may not be the most prestigious tourist area in the Alps, but its transborder character certainly adds appeal for the tourist, even if the fact that Samnaun is a duty-free zone makes transborder tourism easier than in a 'conventional' border area. Without doubt, the effort undertaken by Samnaun and Ischgl has been successful and has allowed the two re-

sorts to operate independent of outside assistance. In fact, despite the initiatives on transboundary cooperation taken in the last 20 years, they have not asked for funds from the European Union's Interreg programme. It seems that for the time being their position is strong enough that they need not tap this financial source in order to promote regional transborder tourism.

This concept of independence can be demonstrated further by mentioning additional programmes of international collaboration. In the 'three countries' corner', Samnaun cooperates with the Austrian resort of Nauders as well as two Swiss and two Italian resorts in the field of summer tourism. The 'three countries' hikers pass' is valid for seven different cable cars in the region.

On a different scale, the Samnaun-Ischgl area is a member of the "Star Club" which includes two resorts in Austria (Soelden and Silvretta Nova Hochmontafon) and three in Switzerland (Savognin and Lenzerheide-Valbella in the Grisons and Saas-Fe in the Valais). This is "the new way to have skiing enjoyment with snow as a sure thing! The International Skipass guarantees you a lot of snow, with 6 Holiday star ski regions situated 1000 till (sic) 3550 m above sea level with 800 km of ski runs and 178 cableways and ski lifts" (26, n.p.). Clearly, this package goes beyond what we would call regional transborder tourism, but it demonstrates the extent to which the various resorts in the Alps profit from the idea of cross-border complementarity.

The RegioTriRhena

The city (and canton) of Basle finds itself in a unique situation. Located in the northwest corner of Switzerland, it borders both France and Germany, while on the Swiss side it lies adjacent to three cantons which, under the

Swiss Constitution, are regional states of their own. Since World War II, the town has spread out not only beyond its cantonal borders but also across the international boundary. Together with the suburbs on the Swiss side, the French town of St-Louis and the German towns of Weil/Rh and Lörrach and their respective suburbs, the area constitutes a large international conurbation of more than 500,000 inhabitants (12). Despite the area's political separation, Basle is the unchallenged centre for many activities (e.g. work, shopping, cultural activities), except for ordinary medical care (due to national health services) and most aspects of schooling (7).

Basle has always been a town oriented towards the north (France and Germany) rather than the south (the rest of Switzerland). The Rhine River valley was (and still is) a natural corridor for trade, whereas the Jura Mountains to the south were an obstacle—both physically and mentally. Good relations with the people in Alsatia (France) and Baden (Germany) are a part of the city's tradition, and they are reflected in the composition of its population as well as in the local dialect.

The Second World War interrupted contacts across the state boundary, but after 1945 they were soon established again; the feeling of regional identity had not suffered. The foundation of the private association, *Regio Basiliensis*, in 1963, which included private individuals as well as private and public institutions, launched a gradual process of formal regional cooperation. This led to the creation of further transborder organisations along the upper Rhine valley as far as Frankfurt (Figure 5). No doubt, the common language in the trans-frontier Basle region (an Alemannic dialect) fuelled the sense of togetherness, despite the presence of two official languages—French and German (1, 9).

To this may be added the comparative advantages of the subregions Alsatia and Baden within the conurbation for certain varieties of goods as well as for their respective cuisines. They are a sort of natural hinterland for Basle, to say nothing of the numerous opportunities for outdoor leisure activities (e.g. pleasure driving, hiking, fishing, and mushrooming). The differences in price and salary levels are largely responsible for intense transborder contacts. For example, border commuters from Alsatia and Baden work in Switzerland, and shoppers carefully watch the prices and exchange rates as well as the variety of goods available in the shops.

In 1997, the name *RegioTriRhena* replaced the former ambiguous term, *Regio Basiliensis*, recognizing both the association and the region. This change of name was more than just terminological correctness, it reflects the progress that has been made over the past 35 years in transborder relations and cooperation. The region extends between Swiss Jura and the towns of Comar in France and Freiburg in Germany (Figure 5) and is inhabited by about 2.1 million people.

The domain of cultural tourism in a polarized transborder region has to be emphasised. It is not international tourism according to the traditional definition of the word but includes first and foremost short-range leisure activities, particularly in areas of culture (e.g. music, theatre, museums). This is largely a result of the centrality of Basle within the international conurbation, but in reality this pattern exists because of the rich cultural heritage of the three subregions of the *RegioTriRhena*. In her review of cultural activities, Schäfer (15) lists a wide range of projects that represent either long-term or unique initiatives which have been taken on a bilateral or trilateral level. The domains concerned include museums

and galleries, music, film and video art, literature and libraries, and the media. Activities are partly organized by public institutions; the principal actors, however, are private groups. There are a number of associations with specific transborder objectives where the *Regio Basiliensis* has served as a catalyst for development. In 1984, for instance, a *Regio* cultural foundation began its activities. Similarly, in 1985 an association, Friends of Alsatia, was founded in Basle, and considerably older is the Johann Wolfgang von Goethe-Foundation (1931). Similarly, in Alsatia and in Baden there are *Regio* associations and various groups backed by the regional economic circles also supporting cultural activities. Needless to say, membership of such associations is international. For example, the Geographical-Ethnological Society of Basle (founded in 1923) is firmly rooted within the transboundary region, and since its foundation in 1959, its journal *Regio Basiliensis*, after which the private association was named, regularly contains articles by authors from the three countries within the region about issues of regional importance. The journal is unique in that it is truly a transborder regional geographical journal.

What has been said here about transborder activities in the *RegioTriRhena* can only be of a qualitative nature, since there are no statistical data to support such claims. In fact, it is virtually impossible to know how many people utilise facilities and belong to societies across the boundary. Certainly, the attractiveness of Basle can be confirmed, albeit in very general terms only. As Schäfer (15, p. 8) put it,

Basle is the unequivocal cultural centre for the inhabitants in north-western Switzerland, but also for those of Alemannic upper Alsatia (apart from the young cultural cen-

tre in Mulhouse) who visit Basle more frequently than Strasbourg. Equally, many people from Freiburg and the surrounding German area use the cultural offer in Basle very often. Visits of Swiss to cultural events in Alsatia or Baden, on the other hand, are rather rare.

The potential exists and the political conditions (freedom to cross the border) are excellent, but the people must decide themselves to what extent they wish to make use of cross-border facilities.

As is the case with *Léman Sans Frontière*, the *RegioTriRhena* has also benefitted from the European Union's Interreg programmes (6). Apart from various environmental, information, training, and transportation projects, a number of tourist and tourism-related projects were supported, including marketing, holiday passes for young people, and the restoration of an abandoned medieval abbey in the Jura Mountains west of Basle, which is to become a European cultural meeting point.

CONCLUSION

The four examples used in this paper were chosen to represent different spatial scales: the vast region where individual localities as well as a whole region can profit from transborder cooperation (or where very little has been achieved so far), and the small region where cooperation between two communes has succeeded in creating a tight network of transborder leisure opportunities. Informal transborder cooperation is practiced in the case of Samnaun where the barrier effects of the European Union-Swiss boundary do not exist. The examples also show that there is considerable interest in transborder regional tourist issues at a high political level, as can

be seen from participation in the European Union's Interreg I and II programmes.

What can be learnt from such initiatives? First and foremost, they demonstrate that peaceful cooperation and coexistence on political boundaries are possible. Just as "peaceful daily commuter flows...are the fortunate result of pacification and conviviality" (21, p. 4), transborder shopping trips (10, 11) and tourism are powerful instruments in promoting coexistence despite boundaries. These movements act as means to reduce the "borders in the mind" (3), to bring people together, to profit from diversity, and to work towards peace.

Second, cooperation across boundaries can help avoid parallel development that normally takes place when borders separate neighbouring societies from each other. The Borderless Lake Geneva and Samnaun examples have demonstrated the synergy effect of joint promotion and marketing on a purely private level. The *RegioTriRhena* case shows how regional cross-border cooperation can be done between a central place and its hinterland supported by public bodies at various levels of administration. The common interest and feeling of regional identity have thus been placed above the centrifugal forces, which in so many cases result in negative international relations. While economic benefits may result from such coordinated activities, the psychological effects on the populations concerned are probably more important. This may effectively work to reduce the rift between neighbours and contribute to more sustainable evaluations and uses of tourist resources on either side of the border, thus preventing, or at least diminishing, regional disparities which might give rise to jealousy and discord (19, p. 55).

A third lesson to be learned concerns the time-factor; achieving concrete results requires patience and perseverance—qualities that have all but been forgotten in an era when immediate results are required. Prejudices and stereotypes (effects of borders as barriers) cannot be eliminated within a few years but may require the time-span of a whole generation. Compared to the term that a politician spends in office, this is much too long, but from the perspective of the political history of humankind, it is

nothing. Which temporal perspective are shall we favour?

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Figure 1

Natural Regions (thick lines) and Cantons (thin lines) of Switzerland
And Locations of the Study Areas

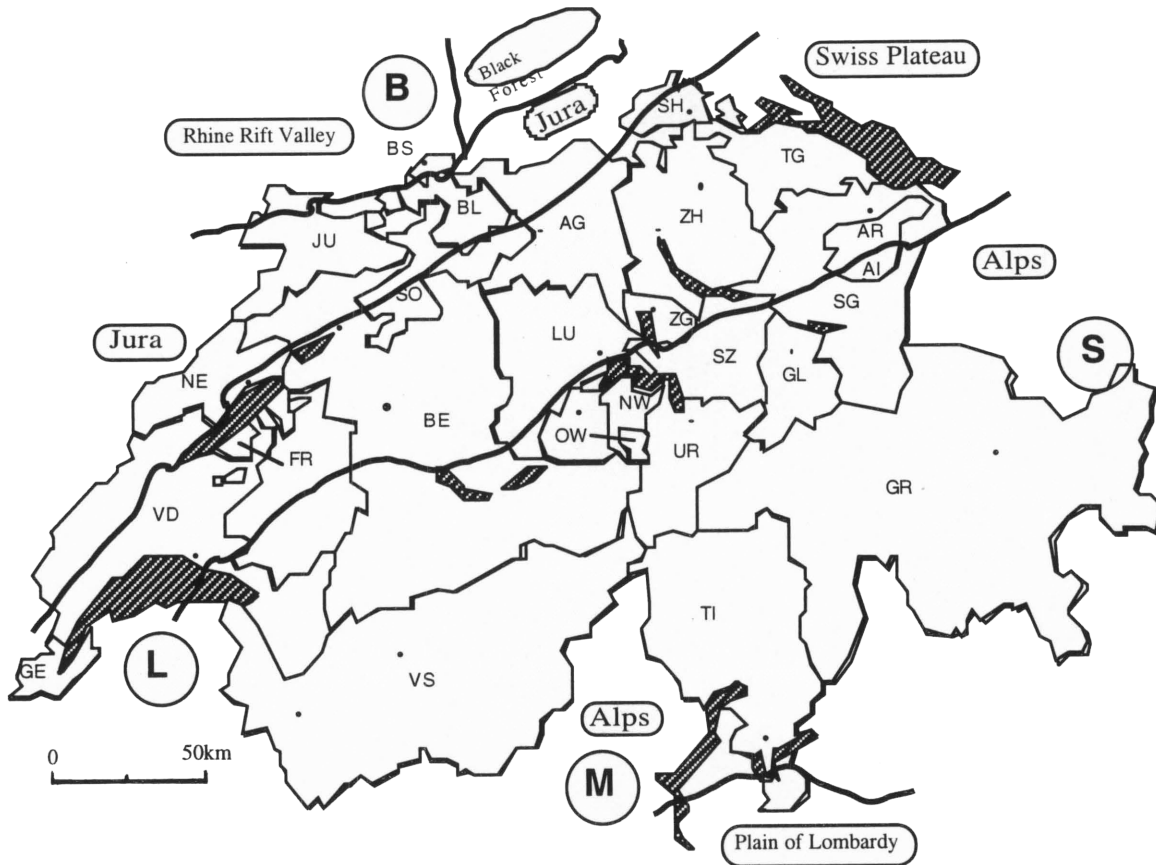


Figure 2

Léman sans Frontière: the Region and its Attractions
(Courtesy P. Crausaz; for the explanation of the figures, cf. Table 2)

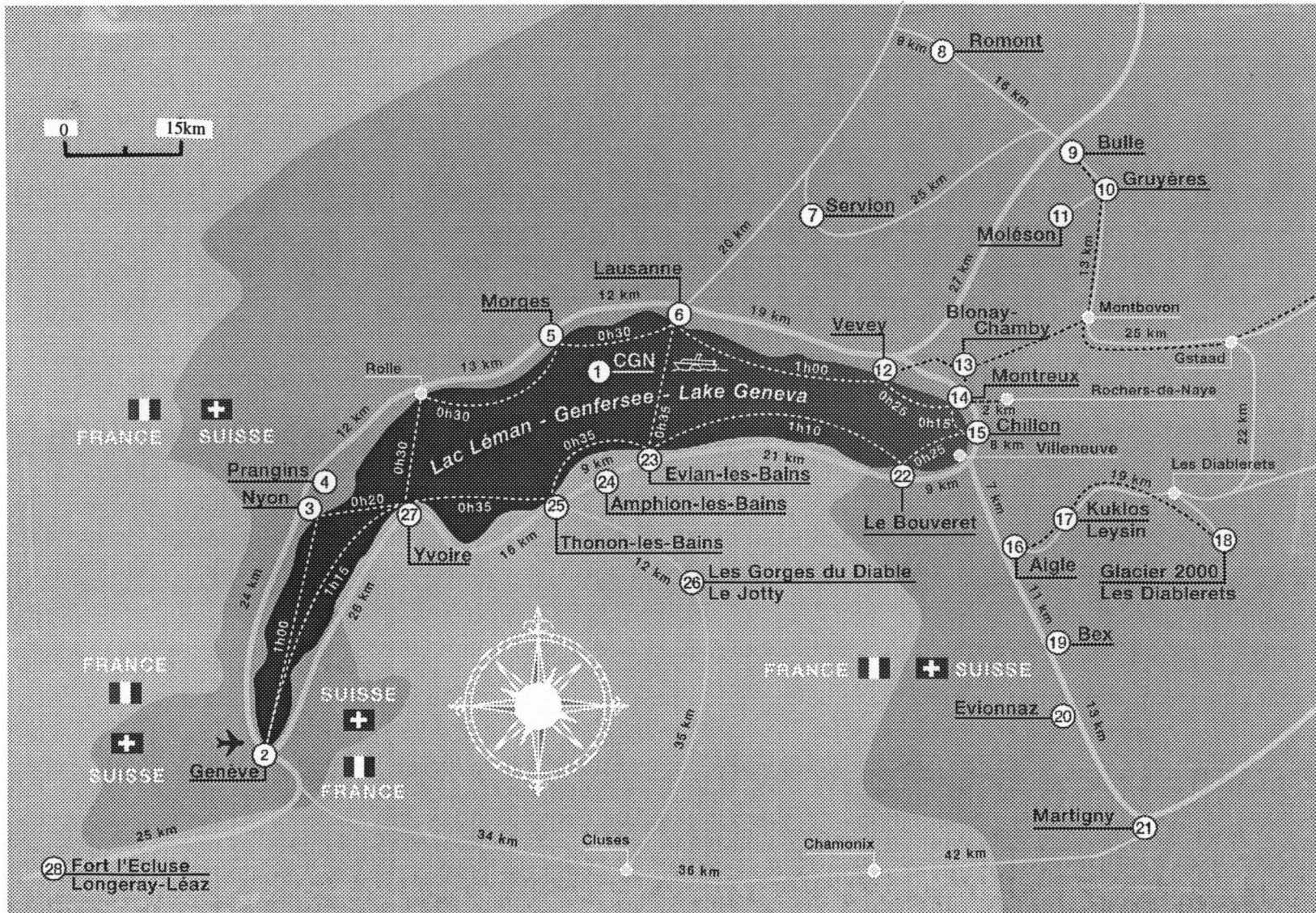


Figure 3

The Lake Major Area



Figure 4

The Silvretta or Samnaun-Ischgl Skiing Arena
(showing a selection of the various lifts and cable-cars)

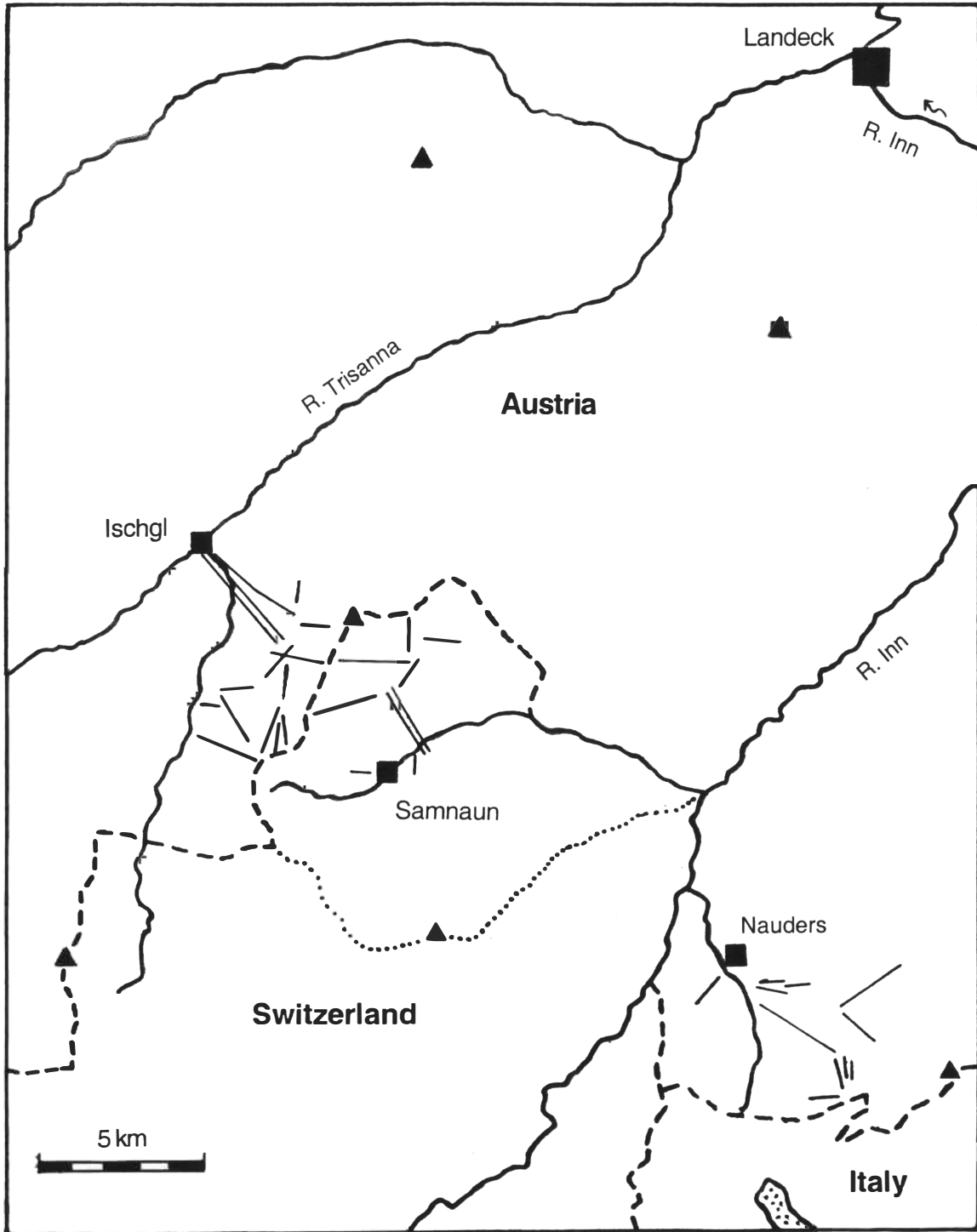


Figure 5

The Transborder Regions of the Rhine Rift Valley
(CH: Switzerland; D: Germany; F: France)

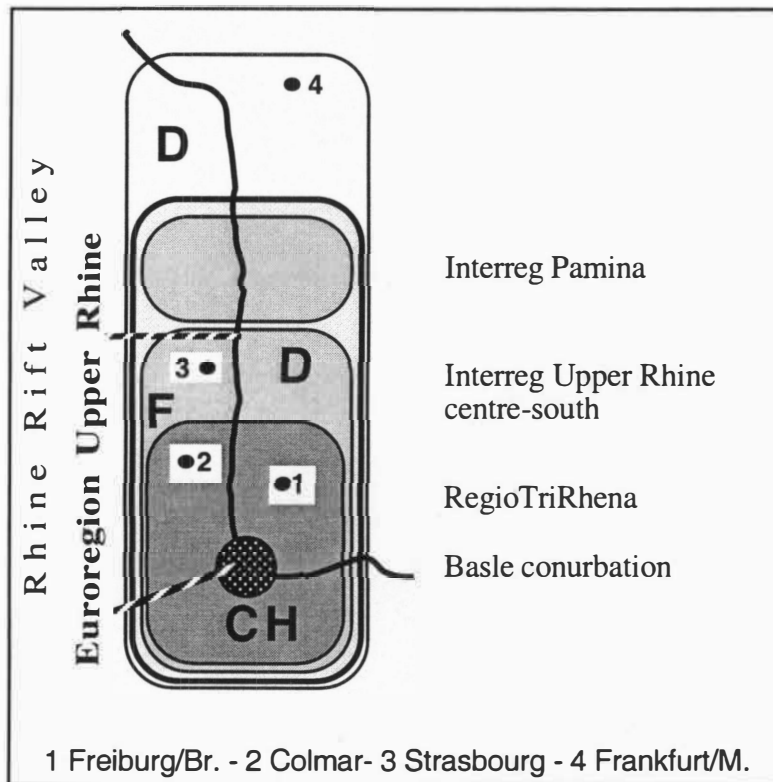


Table 1

Trade Balance of Switzerland, 1980-1995 (in million Swiss Francs)

Category	1980	1985	1990	1995
Commodities	-11,791	-9,500	-9,968	1,030
Tourism	1,542	2,257	2,136	2,412
Other services	5,504	9,429	10,912	12,797
Work and capital	5,750	12,171	12,150	13,868
Transfer payments	-1,910	-1,982	-3,236	-4,796
Trade balance	-905	12,375	11,995	25,310
<i>Tourism % of Services</i>	<i>21.9</i>	<i>19.3</i>	<i>16.4</i>	<i>15.9</i>

Source: Zahlenspiegel der Schweiz/Miroir Statistique de la Suisse.

Table 2

The Partners of Léman sans Frontière (Figure 1)

Nr.	Partner	Nr.	Partner
1	Lake Geneva Navigation Company	15	Chillon castle
2	Geneva, historic and international city	16	Aigle Castle (Vine & wine museum)
3	Lake Geneva Museum, Nyon	17	Kuklus revolving restaurant, Leysin
4	Swiss National Museum, Prangin	18	Diablerets Glacier 3000
5	Military Museum, Morges	19	Bex salt mines
6	Olympic Museum Lausanne	20	Evionnaz labyrith
7	Servion Zoo	21	Gianadda Museum, Martigny
8	Stained Glass Museum, Romont	22	Miniature steam railways, Le Bouveret
9	Gruyère Museum, Bulle	23	Water Gardens, Evian
10	Gruyères medieval city and castle	24	Amphion spa and mineral waters (Evian)
11	Moléson Mountain	25	Ripaille castle, Thonon
12	Swiss Photo Museum, Vevey	26	Devil's Bridge Gorge
13	Blonay Railway Museum	27	Yvoire medieval city
14	Crystal Panorama Express (railway)	28	Fort L'Ecluse castle

Table 3

Accommodation in Samnaun-Ischgl, 1994-1998
 (Summer season: first Sunday in May until last Friday in November)

Year	Summer	Winter
1994/95	50,059	199,462
1995/96	46,761	210,196
1996/97	44,487	216,883
1997/98	50,334	244,505
1998	49,786	

Source: Samnaun Tourist Office, personal communication.