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Marie-Christine Fourny

NOTE DE L'ÉDITEUR

Translation: Brian Keogh

- 1 If one considers the many meanings of mobile border (cf introduction to this issue) – the movement of people and goods, the spatial dispersion of border functions, changing forms, as well as the instability of the reference frameworks used to define limit –, it expresses, in a metaphorical and synthetic way, the profound transformation that is occurring in the management of differentiation. This transformation involves the geographer because space no longer has the same status or same values in this management: territories continue to index identities, but the processes of control have moved away from their spatial limits. In this way, the mobile border represents less of a new spatial form of the border than a new relationship between space and the differentiation of societies. It therefore requires that space be understood as an operator with respect to action, through its different roles as support, tool, reference system or material in the construction of the relationship with the other, and that the spatial expressions of the border be examined in relation to these roles. It is within this conceptual framework that we propose to examine liminality as a special aspect of the border as it applies to alpine mountain areas¹.
- 2 Why liminality? From a heuristic standpoint, this “old” anthropological notion appears of two-fold interest. Among the many concepts used to express the mobile border, it represents a possible category that is rarely used. It characterises, particularly in geography, a space resulting from passage and transition. But it does not only consider the morphological dimension of an intermediate border zone: liminal space is that area where the relationship in a social structure is managed and where the social status of this relationship is determined. The concept of liminality thus facilitates understanding

of the dynamics between the spatial form of the border and the border function of space.

- 3 Given the analytical value of this notion, a certain number of situations may be better understood when they are examined through its prism. We will attempt to demonstrate this idea using the example of the Alps. This mountain range, which for a long time was used to incarnate the rationality of a border that was linear and fixed, is today confronted with the vision of an alpine wholeness, a unit with respect to both action and management. This has resulted in a particular tension between the transcending of state borders, the construction of a transnational entity and the definition of its distinction: on what space and using what limits do you determine and reference action postulating Alpine unity? This question is not new, as it was asked in different alpine states when the limits of a mountain policy were defined, then later within Europe. Today it is being addressed in the context of the creation of a macro-alpine region. The debate suggests the emergence of a new concept of the border, which we hypothesize is resulting from liminality. In order to compare the theoretical and methodological potential of liminality in analysing the mobile border and its operational character in the analysis of changes in limit, our study is organised in two parts. The first part discusses liminality, changing approaches, and their relevance in the analysis of mobile borders. The second part examines the notion of liminality in delimiting the Alps through the current debate on the macro-region.
- 4 The construction of liminality by anthropology: an intermediate state between otherness and norms
- 5 The origin of the term “liminality” is generally attributed to the anthropologist Arnold Van Gennep. Studying primitive societies, he identified the different categories of rituals that result in a change in social status, which he grouped together in a general category of “rites of passage” (Van Gennep, 1909). He identified a three-fold structure in which separation from the initial social group and incorporation into a new group frame or delimit the intermediate liminal phase. This corresponds to a phase of uncertainty, transition, imprecision, without any defined framework, and is thus sometimes dangerous.
- 6 This categorisation is interesting in that it examines the change in social status as a passage with its own temporality. It characterises an intermediate state between two stable, integrated and standardised positions, which is reflected in an absence of identity. Liminality is defined in terms of negatives, by referring to what it is not: neither child nor adult, neither man nor woman, neither sedentary nor nomadic, etc. It thus confers a status on this special situation of change that it proposes as a fundamental otherness. At the same time, it makes it possible to manage and control the uncertainty inherent in the acquisition of a new identity, and then to collectively signify final integration in a given group. It could thus be interpreted as a state that facilitates managing and controlling the transformation of social statuses and ensuring compliance with social norms. Liminality often has its own space, which in some ways circumscribes the absence of identity and holds it at a distance.
- 7 A number of geographical objects may be considered as liminal spaces: edges, borders, terraqueous zones, wasteland or no man’s land marking a spatial transition from one milieu to another, or margins or peripheries reflecting socio-spatial exteriority. Each one of these forms reveals a dialectic process between normative categories of identification and the recognition of a state that does not belong to any of them. But we

remain in a spatial morphology of transition and the “in-between” that does not reflect the way in which space may be deployed for the management of the passage between states.

- 8 The concept then moved away from classical anthropology and the rituals of exotic societies. In modern societies, it expresses the *communitas* (Turner, 1969), a temporary moment representing the opposite of the norm, or is used to characterise temporary socio-spatial relationships like pilgrimages or visits to the beach (Andrews and Roberts, 2012). Other types of social situation, particularly that of disability, have broadened its meaning by putting the accent on difference and the relationship with the norm (Murphy, 1987; Willett and Deegan, 2001). The question of otherness then becomes that of the incapacity of a normative system to produce new reference systems of identification.
- 9 The concept became further enriched through its use in postcolonial criticism of nationalism. Homi Bhabha (1994) defined liminality as a gap position that has a strategic value: its particular relationship with norms provides it with a capacity to subvert the norm. Although it reflects a transformation of identities, it is not a passage between standardised identities, but rather the social process of interactions by which identifications are reworked. Liminality is thus put forward as a state that enables self-construction, through hybridization, racial mixing and the rejection of imposed forms. The “neither One nor the Other” approach of earlier work became the “articulation of contradictory elements” (Bhabha, 1994). Uncertainty and the danger of the situation remain, because it leads to opposition to the norm. The liminality of Homi Bhabha does not contradict earlier values attributed to the term but it puts the accent on a complex process of differentiation and the genesis of new categories. In particular, it makes it possible to refute the method of constructing otherness, which defines it in terms of a fixity of the difference and a hierarchy of values. Thus liminality no longer represents a means for managing otherness at the service of the norm, nor the third space of sociological studies, but a state during which a process takes place. In this process, otherness is not placed *in a relationship* with a social or political institution but in the production of its reference systems.
- 10 Liminality as a concept in analysing the mobile border
- 11 How do you position liminality in the analysis of the mobile border and what contribution can this make? The concept does not only concern a type of space, either marginal or intermediate. By integrating different dimensions of the border, it reveals insights into meanings that are far from apparent in a modern context. In particular, it provides the border with a status of socio-technical network (Latour, 2005) by considering it as a collective entity associating objects, actors (migrant or border police), places and regulations. Although certain approaches may have been simplistic by considering liminality from a purely spatialist viewpoint (transition spaces) or purely sociological viewpoint (racial mixing, *communitas*, marginality), the concept first of all helps define a dynamic relationship with the norm.
- 12 Within the framework of a geographic approach, the concept can be used to examine the notion of border in the relationship between space and the norm. If we consider the border as a means, with spatial coordinates, of managing movement between territories with different norms, such as nation states, liminality can be used to describe the process of passage as a stage in itself. It thus relates less to racial mixing and hybridity than to forms of a-territoriality, like Foucault’s heterotopia. Integrating

the issue of time, it questions the formation of identities resulting from movement, whether this be relating to nomadism (Retaillé, 2005, 2011; Gagnol, 2005) or social interaction in transport systems (Cailly *et al.*, 2013).

- 13 It also raises questions about the normative reference systems of the relationship, and their dynamics and transformation in the relationship. In geopolitical terms, territories might thus be viewed as the effects of their relationships, and in epistemological terms we might consider the geographical categories as norms resulting from political and planning action (Debarbieux and Fourny, 2004). Construed in this way, liminality could be seen as part of a geography of mobile space, as developed by Denis Retaillé (2005, 2011; Retaillé, Walther and Pissot, 2012). Not because it is the border of mobile space², but because it gives a central role to the joint movement of meanings and reference systems defining places. Similarly, liminality makes the border a space where relations between parties are established and where, at the same time, through this process, the parties present are redefined.

An application of liminality: the delimitation of an alpine macro-region

- 14 Let us attempt to test this interplay between border and norm in the analysis of an issue affecting a mountain region. To do this we propose to examine liminality through the prism of the creation of an alpine macro region. Using the concept for its analytical value in the current debate, we hypothesize that it represents a new representation of the limit of the Alpine Arc. The question of the limit of a mountain region in general, and of the alpine area in particular, is recurrent in that this “geographic object” remains, rather paradoxically, uncertain. While incontestably a physical reality, in the way one experiences it, in the biophysical effects of slope and altitude, it is indefinable as a natural object (Debarbieux and Rudaz³, 2010; Price, Lysenko and Gloersen, 2004). Mountain regions are, however, deployed in political and social rhetoric, and constructed by the action and the ideologies that inspire them. They represent “a geographic category of collective action and public policies” (Debarbieux and Rudaz, 2010).
- 15 The macro-region project currently being debated involves this process of co-construction between a project, conveying an ideology and spatial intentionality, and the definition of the space that is the object of this. It is a question of once again “making the Alps” from a transnational perspective. The operation brings into play the limit of a new alpine region as the supporting space for the project. It questions the dynamics of existing borders and the factors affecting the “mobility” of alpine borders. It also questions the norms, through the intentions of the project and the representations of mountain areas that are associated with it. We are therefore in a process of reinventing the mountain area and its limits, an endeavour for which recourse to the notion of liminality may prove relevant, given the preceding analysis.
- 16 The recognition of an alpine region, referenced to a mountain area and constructed politically around common and transborder orientations, took place gradually in the second half of the 20th century. From a spatial configuration point of view, three types of organisation may be identified. The first is that of transborder regional structures, such as working communities⁴ and, since 2006, the Alps-Mediterranean Euroregion. None of these regions, however, covers the entire Alpine Arc. Although the regions

develop links on both sides of the ridgeline and the national borders, they tend to divide up the mountain massif with respect to cooperation. A second type of organisation is represented by institutions that territorially bring together the entire Alpine Arc. They are essential in the current project since they constitute the pre-existing forms of regionalisation and fix the references for delimitation at the scale of Europe. The first institution is that of the Alpine Convention. This international treaty, ratified in 1991, links the alpine states with the European Union and defines the Alps as an ecosystem to be preserved, with an area of application close to that corresponding to the bio-physical limits of the mountain area (Church, 2011). A second area of cooperation has resulted from the European programme of interregional collaboration, Alpine Space. Defined on a regional base (NUTS 2), it covers a wide area including mountains, foothills, neighbouring valley areas and peripheral major urban centres. In addition to this cooperation based on zoning, a third type of structure is the network. Some network organisations only concern part of the Alps⁵, but many bring together the entire Alpine Arc⁶ (Debarbieux and Rudaz, 2010; Petite, 2011). They share the same action reference system, develop a common image, and organise collaboration on diverse topics, thus contributing to an institutionalisation of the Alps (Del Biaggio, 2009). These networks define a new type of territoriality where “the project no longer depends on local resources but on objects and expertise distributed in different areas [translation]” (Petite, 2011). The alpine macro-region, the latest organisational project currently being debated, puts forward a new configuration for action, in the form of the project relating to a given territory. Can this be seen as a new way of constructing or representing the limits of alpine space as a reference?

- 17 From an institutional point of view, it involves greater flexibility in the delimitation of areas, which is not without contradictions and ambiguities. The macro-regional approach was first introduced in the Baltic Sea region in 2009, then the Danube region. A dozen other projects are under consideration (Alfonsi 2012), reflecting the interest that the strategy has aroused. The alpine regions took this new possibility of cooperation on board relatively quickly. In May 2010, a declaration was signed by several Austrian, Swiss and German regions, which were later joined by French and Italian regions. This led in 2012 to the drafting of a text of common intention, which was then the subject of debate in each of the different countries, involving the regions, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA)⁷, the European Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Areas (AEM) and representatives of the States concerned. On 23 May 2013, a resolution “in favour of a macro-regional strategy for the Alps” was adopted by the European Parliament⁸.
- 18 The macro-region is in line with the search for a territorialized approach for European policies (Braun and Kovács, 2011, Dubois et al, 2009). It is not founded on spatial criteria or a priori homogeneity, but on common issues. The approach underlines the importance of defining a project in the form of a Macro-Regional Strategy (MRS) for which the field of application is that of the macro-region. It involves a scale of coordination, actors, programmes and projects from which new methods of governance are expected that will be more flexible and encourage a bottom-up organisational structure (Samecki, 2009). The macro-region does not therefore represent a new zone of specific programmes and aid. It does, however, call into question the idea of relevant divisions being founded on the principles of objective spatial organisation and the definition of a top-down framework for action with a view to encouraging approaches that are less normative, better integrated in the local context, and reflecting the

“nature and geography of development processes” (CPRM, 2010). We are therefore in a context of blurred limits, a variable geometry of action, where the shared objective defines the relevance of the area of intervention (Dühr, 2011, Stocchiero, 2010). In the context of a border issue, it may also be added that the macro-region would provide a way of managing relations with Europe’s neighbouring countries (Dubois et al, 2009, Bialasiewicz et al, 2012). For the Baltic and the Mediterranean regions in particular, it must be considered as an integral part of a new neighbourhood policy (Dubois et al., 2009), where what is at stake is the management of mobility between adjacent areas. At the European scale, it is thus in some ways the whole of the macro-region that forms a liminal space functioning as a mobile border.

- 19 In the Alps, the macro-regional strategy has given rise to a debate on the area of application, in other words, on the alpine macro-region, its identity and its extent. Although expertise (Gloersen et al., 2013) and discussions during different political meetings largely concern strategic orientations, the issues at stake, and the specific characteristics of the Alps, the question of delimitation is crucial. It thus occupied an important place in the discussion at the European Parliament concerning the “Resolution on a macro-regional strategy for the Alps” (23 May 2013). In the rhetoric heard on this occasion and in the platforms developed by the main actors of the project (CIPRA, AEM⁹, Alpine Convention), several arguments relate to the representation of a liminal zone.

Limits or liminality of the macro-region?

- 20 Public debate¹⁰ reveals two reference systems for the definition of the macro-region: the space defined by the Alpine Convention and the alpine space referred to in European programmes.
- 21 The Alpine Convention defines an undisputed norm, to the point that it no longer appears as a political construct but more as the recognition of something that is evident: “the Alpine Convention delimits the Alps, as common sense would tell you¹¹, as an area of around 190 000 km² and 14 million inhabitants [translation]”, asserts Werner Bätzing (Bätzing, 2011). Most political groups¹² underline the “importance of basing the contents of the strategy for the Alps on the Alpine Convention”, like the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE)¹³. This restriction reproduces the representation of a break between an internal alpine mountain zone and a peripheral zone that would be excluded. The macro-region is accepted on the condition that it “does not benefit the large cities of the peripheral areas”¹⁴ (European United Left/Nordic Green Left). The peripheral region is quite simply different: “*Ich bin auch davon überzeugt, dass sich eine Makrostrategie für die Alpen mit den Alpen beschäftigen muss, also mit den Herausforderungen der Berge, und nicht mit den Herausforderungen der pedoalpinen Gebiete. (...) das sind zwei unterschiedliche Dinge, die man nicht vermischen darf (...)*”¹⁵ (PPE group¹⁶). This position is also held by the EFD¹⁷ who believe that a specific policy for the Alps cannot be reconciled with one for the major cities: “*Io trovo che sia difficilmente compatibile una politica specifica per le Alpi e per la gente di montagna e che sposi, nello stesso tempo, le esigenze delle grandi città (...)*”¹⁸.
- 22 The proponents of an extensive macro-region integrating the peri-alpine cities find legitimacy in institutional delimitation. The AEM defends the fact that “one cannot stop at the mountainous part of an area without considering that a certain number of regional

authorities have a more extensive administrative area and often include, apart from foothill areas, major neighbouring river basins: this is the logic behind the mountain massif [translation]" (Evrard, 2009). This conception is also found in the approach of the Social Democrats (SD)¹⁹: *"Deve esserci il territorio premontano e magari anche la collaborazione con le città – che non sempre sono un punto di oppressione, possono essere magari dei livelli che si interfacciano con quelli territoriali"*²⁰. In an original summarising proposal, the CIPRA imagines a structural organisation in the form of an internal space and a peripheral space: "if, however, it is necessary to define an area of application for the MRS of the Alps, the CIPRA proposes a concentric model made up of a central alpine zone and an alpine cooperation space [translation]" (Cipra, 2013). The peripheral zone in this case is integrated in the strategy, without contravening, however, a fixist conception of the limits of these spaces.

- 23 It is the existence of these two legitimate areas that produces liminality. Indeed, although it adopts the principle of division, the limit of the Alpine Convention area is not sufficient to produce a binary opposition of the alpine/non-alpine form. At the same time, the urban character of the peripheral zone does not allow its integration in an area of alpine identity, but incorporation in the alpine administrative space, for which the functional relations provide it with a certain legitimacy. The result is therefore a zone of uncertainty with regard to identity, which is not characterised in intrinsic terms but is defined by reference to the Alps: the major cities are not non-alpine but, depending on the case, are extra-alpine, pedo-alpine or peri-alpine. This peripheral space is still perceived in terms of a type of threat, reproducing a city/mountain opposition that has existed since the 17th century. Thus in the relationship with border cities a risk of domination can be seen, since "extending the macro-region to a wider area could result in the extra-alpine region, with its metropolises and industrial centres, dominating the truly alpine region from the point of view of population size and economic power [translation]" (Greens and SD). Integration of this liminal space would put the identity of the Alps in danger: *«Se però l'idea della macroregione alpina viene trasformata in una somma di strumenti che servono alle economie che stanno a valle e a monte delle Alpi, ne cambia la natura e le Alpi diventerebbero una sorta di fastidio»* (SD)²¹; "the urban agglomerations offer job and education opportunities but entail the risk of partly transforming rural alpine areas into 'dormitories' (peri-urbanization) (Convention alpine, 2012). According to this logic: "it is only by showing they are united, in the sense used by the Alpine Convention, that the Alps can enter into discussion on an equal footing with the extra-alpine metropolitan areas to address questions relating to territorial development and the organisation of interactions. If, however, the Alps were delimited as "alpine space", in the broadest sense of the term, the only partners of the large cities would be towns and alpine territories of limited size, ill-prepared to face such competition [translation]" (Bätzing, 2011).
- 24 In the end, the Resolution adopted by the European Parliament reproduces a fixed limit. It establishes the strategic space in that of the Alpine Convention and excludes the urban area of the piedmont region²². Faced with this impasse, another approach looked at the actual notion of limit. Defining the macro-region as an area of collaboration, it enlarged both the meaning and the extent of a mountain liminal space.

The liminal space of identity negotiation

- 25 The macro-regional initiative also takes into account the extension of a strategic approach to cover the entire Alpine Arc. The question then is whether the macro-region can play the role of actor and develop its autonomy in defining the project. In this relationship with the territory, the norm used to fix the limit disappears on account of the lack of an institutional framework to determine the criteria.
- 26 Consequently, definition of the territory is open, although it is not unanimous. As the European Commissioner responsible for regional policy, Pawel Samecki, remarked: *“there is no standard definition for a macro-region [...]”* (Samecki, 2009). Others have linked their definition to *“the same living area: maritime space, mountain massif, river basin [translation]”* (Alfonsi, 2012), in an attempt to underline that it is not a function of administrative or institutional divisions. Locally, this relational conception of macro-regional space is especially shared by the AEM²³, and defended by the SD group: *“Quarto e ultimo punto: il territorio, la delimitazione: io voterò contro il punto 5, perché penso che una delimitazione troppo stretta impedisca di cogliere le sinergie di un progetto di ampio respiro. Deve esserci il territorio premontano e magari anche la collaborazione con le città (...)”*²⁴. (SD).
- 27 This negotiation on the definition of the macro-region reveals the alpine mountain area as representative of the transition between protected natural areas and large cities. In the project to develop a macro-regional strategy, this relationship must be re-examined and constructed in a different way. Delimitation here is finally reduced to what it is: a social construct that functions as an operator during action, a performative representation, but not the limit of a space that pre-exists the action: *“They [the boundaries] function as a starting point for discussions, may clarify the understandings of the institutional actors that produce them and are needed as soon as one seeks to use quantitative evidence to support policy-development”* (Samecki, 2009).
- 28 The liminal form thus becomes more complex, coming closer to the meaning attributed to it by Homi Bhabba, in that interaction between metropolises and the Alps leads to reworking and renegotiating the definition of mountain areas. Beyond the definition of spaces, it is the reference system of the limit itself that is called into question, with attempts to characterise a situation of both interaction and differentiation.
- 29 Conclusion
- 30 The debate on the macro-region reveals a transformation in the representation of the border. Earlier delimitations of the alpine space, linear and fixed, are called into question, and provide signs of an emerging liminary alpine zone. There are two reasons that justify the liminal character of this zone. In a conception that relates to the theories of Van Gennep, the space bordering the area covered by the Alpine Convention is considered as non-alpine, having but a partial alpine identity, and threatening the alpine identity of the internal zone. Moreover, this space is the space under debate, both as an area that poses a problem and as an object that gives rise to the question of alpine identity. It is around the role of towns – within, outside, or in relation to the area – that the identity of the Alps is set to be reformulated in a debate among alpine actors who must define what brings them together to justify their demands. This dimension takes us back to Homi Bhabba’s idea of liminality. The formulation of what is common is linked to action: it is not essentialist in character, but more political, depending on spatial issues and the advantage of a collective approach. These two approaches to liminality are not contradictory. Liminal space bordering the Alps is born of the

confrontation between the logic underlying a project and two normative reference systems of the alpine limit, the eco-political reference system of the Alpine Convention and the techno-administrative system of the alpine space. Neither system is disappearing and neither is managing to lay the basis for the representation of a “strategic” space, which will not result from the Euclidian logic of regional divisions. From this point of view, recourse to the notion of liminality may have the advantage of enlarging the reference systems of the border and of allowing a rethink of the relations between territories, in terms other than those of confrontation between delimited areas or transformation of areas. Liminality sets out the relationship between territories in terms of interaction, not in a spatialist way through an area that is transitional or intermediate space, but in political construction, through debate on spatial reference systems: the border is merely an operator that is negotiable and negotiated. This representation of the border is not identified as such, which leads us to put forward the hypothesis that it would be interesting from an operational point of view to rework it to be included in the new reference systems of the border, and ultimately to make a contribution to a better understanding of “mobility” processes.

Figure 1. Borders and transborder cooperation

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NOTES

1. The issue of liminality in the analysis of borders in mountain areas has been a line of research pursued at Labex ITEM (*programme "Investissements d'avenir" Labex ITEM- ANR-10-LABX-50-01*).
2. Retaillé represents this in a very different manner, using the term "Horizont"

3. In this last study, there are elements of the debate between the mountain area as a scientific object and the mountain area as a social construct.
4. ARGE ALP, Alpes-Adriatique and COTRAO
5. Such as ARGE Alpenstädte or “RÉGIONALP” on the eastern Alps.
6. “Alliance dans les Alpes”, the “Réseau alpin de zones protégées” (Alparc), l’ISCAR (International Scientific Committee for Alpine Research) among others.
7. CIPRA: International Commission for the Protection of the Alps
8. <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?pubRef=-//EP//TEXT+TA+P7-TA-2013-0229+0+DOC+XML+V0//FR&language=FR>
9. Association des Elus de Montagne (European Association of Elected Representatives from Mountain Areas)
10. Tools used are those of parliamentary debate, motions for resolutions submitted by different groups to the European parliament, reports of actors’ seminars (Grenoble, Annecy, Innsbruck) held in 2012 and 2013, points of view made public by the AEM and CIPRA, in their publications and on their Internet site.
11. Underlining is by the author of the present article
12. Quotations by political groups have been extracted from the proceedings of the debate, reference CRE 23/05/2013 – 6, available at: <http://www.europarl.europa.eu/sides/getDoc.do?type=CRE&reference=20130523&secondRef=ITEM-006&language=FR&ring=P7-RC-2013-0190>
13. Motion for resolution presented by ALDE (Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe), 20/05/2013, document from European parliamentary session.
14. European United Left/Nordic Green Left
15. “I am convinced that a macro strategy for the Alps must deal with the Alps, that is to say the challenges presented by mountain areas, and not those of the piedmont areas, (...) – these are two distinct things that we must not confuse”.
16. Group of the European People’s Party
17. Groupe Europe libertés démocratie (Europe of Freedom and Democracy)
18. “I think that it is difficult to reconcile a policy that is specific to the Alps and the population of mountain areas with the requirements of large cities (...)”.
19. Progressive Alliance of Socialists and Democrats
20. “A piedmont zone is necessary and why not collaboration with urban zones – which are not always a source of oppression; on the contrary, they may be at the interface of different territorial levels”
21. “On the other hand, if the idea of the alpine macro region led to a set of tools useful to economies upstream and downstream of the Alps, its objective would be modified and the Alps would become in some ways a burden”.
22. “Point 5 indicates “that the geographic scope of the strategy for the Alps must focus on the area covered by the Alpine Convention, thus making a distinction with the extra-alpine region, with its larger cities and industrial centres” (European Parliament, 2013). The term “extra-alpine” clearly means “outside the Alps”.
23. “The underlying development logic of the mountain massif, (...) helps stimulate and balance local solidarity between “mountain, valley, city and piedmont” areas which is particularly evident in the Alps (80% of the alpine population live in towns) (...). The objective is to establish a framework for dialogue between the Alps and the neighbouring areas, with a view to helping create or adapt procedures aimed at ensuring a balance between the interests of mountain areas and their inhabitants and those of neighbouring zones (Evrard, 2009)
24. “Fourth and final point: the territory, the delimitation: I will vote against point 5, because I fear that a delimitation that is too narrow will prevent benefiting from the synergies of a long-term project. It is important to define a piedmont zone, and why not collaboration with the urban zones”?

RÉSUMÉS

This article examines the concept of liminality as it relates to the terms ‘border’ and ‘limit’. It shows that early anthropological approaches refer to liminal space as a means of managing the dynamic relationship with the norm in a social structure. In more recent analyses, liminality is used to demonstrate the way in which situations of otherness develop, in a complex interplay of power, place, and social and spatial norms. Analysis of the project to develop a macro-regional strategy for the Alps provides an illustration of this. Thus, the MRS project aims to unite an “Alps” space around common objectives. It raises the question of the alpine border, whether in the context of national borders to be crossed, the limit of the mountain area to be moved, or the area of the Alpine Arc to be defined. Representations that are found of the alpine limit lead us to conclude that a liminal alpine space can be constructed in both a cognitive and functional sense.

INDEX

Keywords : macro-region, liminality, border, alpine space, limit

AUTEUR

MARIE-CHRISTINE FOURNY

Université Grenoble Alpes, CRNS, PACTE