

Zeitschrift: Regio Basiliensis : Basler Zeitschrift für Geographie
Herausgeber: Geographisch-Ethnologische Gesellschaft Basel ; Geographisches Institut der Universität Basel
Band: 22 (1981)
Heft: 2-3

Artikel: The franco-italian borderland : sovereignty change and contemporary developments in the Alpes Maritimes
Autor: Minghi, Julian V.
DOI: <https://doi.org/10.5169/seals-1088861>

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The Franco-Italian Borderland: Sovereignty Change and Contemporary Developments in the Alpes Maritimes

JULIAN V. MINGHI

In 1947 Italy was forced to concede some 544 km² in the Alpes Maritimes to France under the terms of the Treaty of Peace following the Second World War. This territory consisted of a lightly populated system of upper alpine valleys – the Tinée, the Vésubie and most importantly Roya-Bévéra. A decade later, following major adjustments in the human occupation and organization of space in the border region, both in the exchanged area itself and in the adjoining territory, France and Italy became founder members of the European Community established by the historic Treaty of Rome of 1957. The post-war bitterness over the boundary shift and the disruption of the cultural landscape resulting from it diminished under the influence of this new agreement which made the two countries partners in a new cooperative venture whose goal was nothing less than complete economic and social integration and, ultimately, if we are to believe Article Five of the Treaty, to create from its member nations a United States of Europe. The conditions prevailing in the border region over the past generation contrast sharply, therefore, with the antagonism and disruption so characteristic of the first post-war decade.

This paper will first set out the major elements in the evolutionary background in the human landscape of this border region and will then examine the nature of the impact of the era of cooperation and integration. Specifically, the contemporary scene and future trends in the exchanged region are assessed in terms of: transportation developments, including rail, road and new transalpine routes; settlements; and tourism.

1 Boundary Change and the Borderland

One of the most persistent and fruitful areas of research in political geography has been the study of boundaries and borderlands. In particular studies have focussed on boundaries in terms of their changing nature as factors in shaping the structure and process of human activity in the borderland regions of the states they divide. (*Minghi 1963*). Within this literature has emerged an effective

Prof. Julian V. Minghi, Department of Geography, University of South Carolina, Columbia SC 29208, USA

approach to understanding boundaries as moulders of the human landscape in cases where the location of the actual line has been moved – where territory in the borderland has undergone a sovereignty change (*Minghi* 1967, *Kasperson* and *Minghi* 1969, p. 204–205).

In the case of the 1947 boundary change in the Alpes Maritimes, of crucial significance is a thorough understanding of the conditions under which Italian sovereignty was established in 1860 and of the development of the human landscape during the subsequent 87-year period, with special emphasis on those years at the end of the Italian era during which the preconditions for a boundary change became evident. *John House's* study of the Alpes Maritimes boundary change is a classic in this regard as it made its central focus the «localized results in the economy and social life of the frontier communities» (*House* 1959, p. 107). The research and field work for *House's* study were carried out a decade after the change so that the 1947 change was still «fresh» inasmuch as the short-term impact of partitioning of local communities was still evident and ten years was also sufficient time for longer-term trends to have emerged in moulding the border landscape.

With the emergence of Italian Unification, an international boundary had to be drawn in the Alpes Maritimes with France. The Treaty of Turin (1860) established a boundary between France and the Piedmont territory of the House of Savoy (The Sardinian Kingdom) that departed from the general principle established for boundaries in the Western Alps. Rather than following «the line of highest crests», the new boundary ran south of the crest line thus giving Italy control of the French glacis. Communes were partitioned with upland grazing lands and forest lands severed from their villages and adjacent arable land. Many head waters of the Vésubie and Tinée river systems were left in Italy. On the other hand, the French gained control of the middle Roya valley in the East while Italy controlled the upper Roya including the old feudal stronghold of Tende and the strategic Col de Tende, and remained in control of the lower Roya valley. In short, a mid 19th century strategic stalemate between the two states was carved into the landscape for 87 years.

Following the initial disturbance to the human geography of the frontier zone, the region moulded to the reality of this unusual boundary. Traditional alpine depopulation during this period was accentuated by the economic growth of the nearby Côte d'Azur and following the rise of Fascism in Italy. The period preceding the Second World War saw sharply increased military activity and authority further undermining the way of life in the frontier communities. The most significant event during this period was the completion in 1928 of a railway link from the Mediterranean through this region to the Po Valley. The line from Turin to Cuneo had been extended to Limone in 1889 and a tunnel under the Col de Tende was completed ten years later, but opposition from the French general staff and the enormous cost and engineering problems involved in constructing a railway through the Roya Valley had delayed completion of the link from Turin to Ventimiglia. By a spur joining at Breil, France also linked Nice directly into this routeway, which followed closely the old Route Royale, estab-

blished between Nice and Turin in 1780. In conjunction with the railway, Italy developed several hydro-electric power generating facilities on waters of the upper valleys gained on the French glacis in 1860.

2 The 1947 Boundary Change and Its Impact

By the Peace Treaty of 1947 France gained a total of almost 700 km² from five different locations along its border with Italy mainly by adjusting the boundary drawn in 1860 to conform more to a watershed and crestline basis. By far the largest adjustment was that made in the Alpes Maritimes where France gained complete control of her glacis including the Col de Tende and the towns of Tende and La Brigue, as well as an expansion of territory in the middle Roya further south, amounting to a total area of 544 km² and, at the time, an adult population of about 3000 inhabitants. Clearly France's long-expressed desire to annex this region and thus to rectify the «diplomatic blunder» of 1860 was given increased impetus by the events of the Second World War with Italy's early invasion and occupation of the Nice region. The end of hostilities left France in the position of a great power victor with the opportunity for action in borderland gains from Italy along the entire 488 kms from the Swiss tripoint to the Mediterranean. France did not, however, obtain everything she requested in the negotiations. For example, the Val d'Aosta remained in Italy, as did the towns of Bardonecchia in the Mont Thabor area, and Oulx in the Chaberton area. In the Alpes Maritimes, however, France was completely successful in her territorial demands.

Pre-war publications, including comments of civil officials such as an ex-mayor of Isola, a village whose lands were partially placed in Italy by the 1860 boundary, reflected a growing dissatisfaction in the French areas immediately adjacent to the boundary in the upper Tinée and Vésubie valleys (*Musso* 1930). A study by two French military officers made in 1945 systematically set out the justifications for a change citing «geographic and strategic realities» in the Tende and La Brigue area, and also suggesting that the entire Roya valley, including Ventimiglia, should become part of France as Italian occupation presented a «grave military threat» and also gave Italy control of the valley's routeway and hydro-power development (*Vésine* and *Baldensperger* 1945). This echoed an earlier work published in Rabat that claimed strong local support in Tende for France especially following the militarization of the frontier in 1936 and cited growing dissatisfaction with Fascism (*Maurice* 1944, p. 86). The counter arguments from the Italian side presented a different interpretation of the status and desires of the borderland's population in 1860, and were based on the economic development Italy had since invested in the region such as road improvements, the railway completion and hydro power generation (*Beltrutti* 1947, p. 36).

With the defeat of the Axis powers in 1945, France became the occupation force in the area. In 1946 and again in 1947 plebescites were held by France in the

zone between the 1860 boundary and the alpine crestline. Although there was much dispute over the reliability of the first, the second plebescite was carried out under international observation and is probably a reliable indicator of the mood of the adult population of the region. There had been much wartime destruction in the area, a change was desired and circumstances placed France in the advantageous position of running a monopoly campaign promising a bright future if the region switched allegiance to France. Of an overall vote of 2828, fully 92% (2603) opted for France, with Tende (95%) and La Brigue (96%) showing strongest support and even the traditionally Italian-speaking villages in the south of the region's middle Roya valley, Piène and Libre, voted about 2 to 1 for France. The region's fate was sealed and the Peace Treaty gave France the entire region.

All communes, with the exception of Tende, were partitioned by the new line and at the local level problems similar to those of 1860 had to be faced. The impact on transportation was fundamental. The railway which had suffered severe destruction seemed beyond repair and not surprisingly a 1953 commission report found it to be uneconomic to rebuild. Local chambers of commerce, both Italian and French, the regional interests and the national policy in Italy understandably were to rebuild but France, who now controlled the entire Roya valley from immediately above Fanghetto, less than 16 kms north of Ventimiglia, had no interest in cooperating on what was essentially an Italian transportation project.

The Col de Tende road now became an international crossing point and frontier police, customs and other services associated with cross-boundary traffic had to shift at both ends of the new boundary – in the north, each end of the road tunnel under the Col de Tende became the Italian and French controls points respectively, although the space restrictions of the terrain on the south side led France to transfer certain functions to the northbound exit from Tende 9 kms to the south. In the middle Roya, Fontan and St. Dalmas at the relic border terminated their boundary function and the villages of Piène and Fanghetto became the new border points for France and Italy respectively. Italian control posts were removed from the virtually uninhabited upper valleys of the Tinée and Vésubie systems as the new boundary withdrew to the crestline.

Problems faced by the partitioned communes were in several cases quite severe. The economy of an alpine community is dependent on an ecological balance between population and a variety of lands – arable land, olive groves, forest land and pasturage, and access to them. The adjoining communities of Olivetta San Michele and Piène were partitioned by the new boundary. The former, an Italian village now on the border, and the latter, an ex-Italian community now French, both suffered severe economic impact and consequent depopulation as the new boundary split their traditional lands. Further north, the community of La Brigue lost much of its summer pastures which remained in Italy while the adjoining Italian community of Realdo was severed from its spring and autumn pasturage. A Franco-Italian Conciliation Commission was set up in 1948 to investigate these severe local problems and suggested several adjustments to the

boundary. The Commission called upon a Swiss arbitrator who made recommendations for communal reallocations or at least for use of pasturage without sovereign possession, and for joint ownership of some woodlands.

Impartial, and in the best interests and with the support of the local communities, these recommendations seemed reasonable solution to the problems the new boundary posed at the local level. With some minor exceptions, however, such recommended adjustments, territorial or otherwise, were refused by France. During the first decade or so after the war, France, at least at the highest level of decision making, was, it seemed, not in the mood for concessions or even compromises along this new boundary.

Indeed, in the short-term positive effects of various policies to promote the frontier economy in the 1950s had been slight (*House* 1959, p. 131). The foundation, however, had been laid for closer future cooperation under the influence of the European Community whose advent in 1958 ended the immediate post-war period dominated by national interests and initiated a period in which a rising tide of regional sentiment was given increasing priority.

3 Routeways

The channels of circulation in the region follow the major valleys, the Tinée, Vésubie and the Roya-Bévéra (see Figure 1). These immature valleys tend to traverse the main geological trend-lines and hence each valley presents a succession of basins and gorges. They carry steep-graded turbulent streams down short courses from the alpine watershed to the Mediterranean. The consequent physical constraints have through history presented serious difficulties to transportation, with a minimum of access across interfluves and a series of barriers impeding movement within each valley.

31 Roads

The Tinée and Vésubie are tributaries of the Var and are accessed by the routes nationales 205 and 565 respectively from the main route up the Var Valley from Nice. The Roya, however, disgorges directly into the Mediterranean at Ventimiglia, and its valley carries the international route of the Col de Tende (1871 meters), one of the few pass routes through the Western Alps. This route (SS 20 in Italy and RN 204 in France) is now entirely French except for the small downstream portion left in Italy.

Although both Italy and France have improved the approaches to the road tunnel (3.2 kms at 1300 meters) under the Col de Tende, major portions of the Roya route, especially through the gorge sections, remain well below standards for its international role and the traffic volume carried. Its continued vulnerability was demonstrated, for example, on February 8, 1980, when a major landslide blocked the valley and destroyed several hundred meters of the RN 204 in

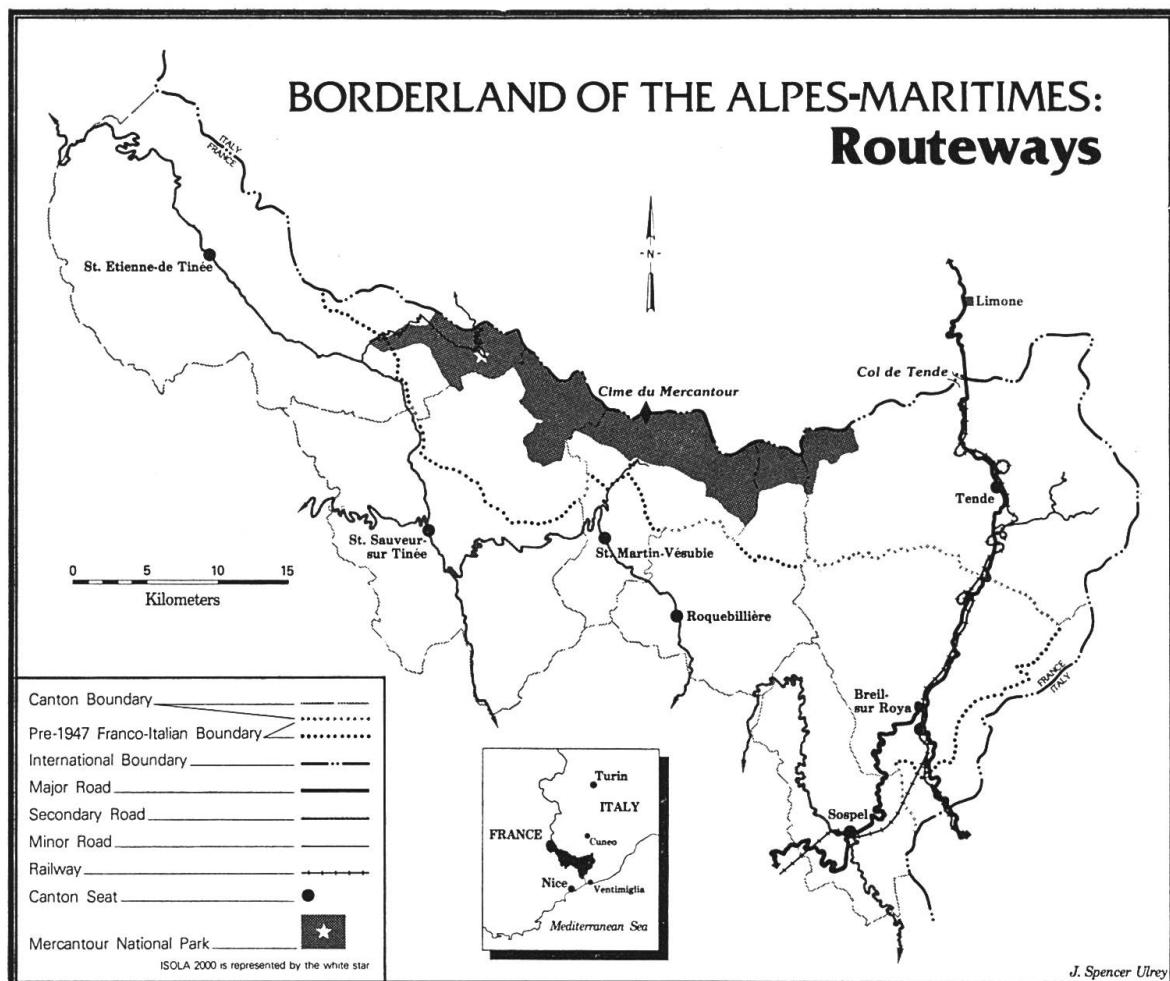


Fig. 1 Boundaries and routes

a gorge south of Breil just north of the boundary. Initial estimates put the re-opening date in June and only through a major concentration of effort and resources, including the diversion of the Roya and the moving of 6 000 tons of fill, was the road reopened only two months later on March 8th. Similarly, the access routes into the upper valleys of the Tinée and Vésubie remain unimproved and difficult, especially in winter conditions. These contrast sharply with the excellent route up the Var valley from Nice and with the newly-constructed roads to link the modern third-generation high altitude ski resorts to the existing network. Growing concern is being shown in France at the lack of implementation of a plan to improve these routes as congestion and hazards grow, and as Italy improves its competitive position in winter sports tourism.

France does possess direct access to the Roya valley by the old alignment of the Route Royale, the Nice-Turin mule and diligence route completed in 1780 under the ordinance of the House of Savoy. This difficult 64 km route runs northeast from Nice up the Paillon valley, over the Col de Braus (1002 meters) to Sospel in the Bévéra valley, and finally over the Col de Brouis (879 meters) to join the Roya route at Breil.

Plans are underway for upgrading the Royal route. Italy is committed to improving its 16 km section and France is to standardize the entire 37 kms of the RN 204 to a width of seven meters and will also further improve the approaches to the Tende Pass by eliminating some switchbacks on the Col and possibly using a new 8 km tunnel parallel to the railway route starting at the 1000 meter level near Vievola. The route carries a fairly high volume of commercial activity, some inter-Italian between the Riviera and Piedmont, and some more local but international, mostly lumber going north to Cuneo from the region. Private vehicle traffic is predominantly Italian of the semi-local variety linking the two border provinces of Imperia and Cuneo, although the winter months see a sharp increase in urbanites from Nice and other population centers along the Côte d'Azur crossing for day trips or short periods seeking the ski slopes of Limone and other south Piedmont resorts.

32 The Railway

By far the event of greatest significance in the region since the boundary change of 1947 was the reopening of the railway in October 1979, just over 50 years since it first opened and after a 34-year interruption of service. Italy had continued to pressure France on the matter and finally in 1970 both countries signed a convention which allowed work to begin, although the major reconstruction effort was spread over the final three years. The old line built at the technical capacity of the times had three spiral tunnels and literally dozens of tunnels and viaducts. It had been about 50% destroyed and the new line was built basically on the old alignment and road bed using or improving surviving facilities where possible. In all, 49 tunnels and 20 viaducts were renovated, including a totally rebuilt Scarassoui viaduct over the Roya. Of the total cost of 145 million francs, France's contribution was 16.7 million francs with Italy covering the remainder. As Swiss technology was extensively used, it seems ironic that the compromise proposals of the Swiss arbitrator regarding rural economic problems thirty years prior should have been rejected.

The system is basically a main stem up the Roya, linking Ventimiglia with Cuneo, including the first 20 kms in Italy and then a section of 47 kms through Breil and Tende to the Italian border at the Col de Tende tunnel (8.1 kms) exiting into Italy at Limone. In addition there is a 70 km spur to Nice at Breil which follows the old Route Royale including two tunnels of 5.9 kms and 3.9 kms. This all-French spur, in fact, had been reopened in 1960 thus giving Breil and the middle Roya a direct rail link only with Nice.

Although reconstruction of the Roya line included an electrification infrastructure, a problem exists in reaching a decision on the electrification system to be used as the French and Italian systems are not compatible. To enable «through» trains to operate from Ventimiglia, the Italian system would have to be adopted but the Nice spur would then be at a grave disadvantage. Hence the line is being operated by the use of diesel engines for freight and two-car autorail units for passenger trains. The main stem trains are operated by Italian

Ferrovie dello Stato (F.S.) personnel. French Société Nationale de Chemins de Fer (SNCF) units running from Nice to Cuneo are taken over by the F.S. at Breil whose station has changed from a dead-head function for two decades to an international junction with customs police and immigration. Indeed, the redesign of the Breil station won a French architectural prize in 1979.

It is too soon to measure the impact of this line and to predict its future role in the region, but clearly Italy having made the investment wants to use it to its capacity including electrification as soon as possible. While it will remain a line of modest capacity (single track, 420 ton per train limit with 20 mm/m grades), it could well serve as a high value traffic alternative to the other two congested Italian routes from Turin to Genova and to Savona. On the other hand France, whose policy for so long was to block reconstruction, seems unwilling or unable to take advantage of this new route. The Nice-Breil line by comparison to the main stem is now very inferior, with a 26 mm/m grade and a 250 ton per train limit and no electrification facilities or plans. Indeed by the State-SNCF convention the line falls into a «forbidden» category and hence should be closed! It is consequently the weak point in a Nice, Breil, Ventimiglia triangle and eventually, especially as Nice pushes forward in building a new port, one can see a major rail connection from the Côte d'Azur running through Ventimiglia and up the main stem, bypassing the Nice-Breil spur completely.

Passenger traffic is of three types: local, winter sports and through traffic. There is some daily and weekly commutation between the middle and upper Roya settlements and Ventimiglia and Nice although the few trains scheduled are not particularly encouraging for this activity, despite the pleas by local mayors to the Italian and French transport ministers during the reopening ceremonies in 1979, and to the FS and SNCF since.

During the winter months, the SNCF runs popular «ski specials» from Nice consisting of three two-car autorail units linked together. These trains operate three times weekly leaving Nice early in the morning and departing in the late afternoon from Limone. In fact Limone has now become the closest winter sports station by rail from Marseille and the long-term challenge to the less accessible French resorts of the Alpes Maritimes such as Valberg, Auron and Isola 2000 is clear.

The actual elapsed time of the one through train each way per day between Nice and Turin is lower than the 5½ to 6 hour schedule for the two trains per day each way running in the late 1930's! Nevertheless, even with changes of train in Breil and Cuneo the journey between the two old Savoy centers can be made more quickly than through Ventimiglia and Savona and hence this international traffic will pick up, especially after electrification is completed, although a 90 minute journey at 80 km/h between Nice and Turin foreseen by a Cuneo man of Commerce in 1973 still remains beyond belief.

The cultural landscape of the border region has undergone interesting effects as a result of the railway closing and reopening. The abandoned stations whose buildings had become post offices, schools, youth camps, government offices and

the like, are alive again and have been somewhat renovated. Aside from the impressive Breil Station, however, the other Roya valley stations function as little more than passenger platforms. As renewed centers of activity, however, they will provide a new pole of attraction for growth in settlements along the line and will challenge the highway orientation dominance of the past generation. Most, however, will still present a landscape mismatch between the size and grandeur of the building and the actual modest railway function with which it is associated. This is perhaps seen nowhere better than at St. Dalmas where the imposing station was built not only as the Italian border point but also as a destination for a frequent distinguished visitor, il Duce, who came to see his mistress in a nearby villa.

33 New Transalpine Routes

Aside from plans for improving existing routeways discussed above, the only serious proposal for a new transalpine route in the region is for the Mercantour tunnel. Various proposals have been made. They normally include both a rail and a road facility. This would provide a direct Nice-Turin link through the western part of the region following the Var, Vésubie and Boréon valleys through a 12.4 km tunnel (longer than the Mt. Blanc tunnel) and down the Gesso valley to Cuneo, a distance of 110 kms (*Fissore* 1976). With the successful reopening of the Tende railway, it seems unlikely that such a rail facility would be included although a modern highway might win French and Italian approval. Powerful Marseille interests, however, already concerned at the potential competition from the new port of Nice, are attempting to have a new link with Turin built further west and, therefore, an immediate decision is unlikely. There is no doubt, however, that a Mercantour road route would give direct access to the new national park and to established ski resorts such as Isola 2000 and thus would encourage improvements in the Col de la Lombarde summer tourist route.

4 Settlements

Mention already has been made of a most basic long-term impact on population centers in the region. The boundary shift removed some centers from functioning as border crossing points and created others (see Fig. 2). Fontan and St. Dalmas became relic crossing points while Fanghetto and Piène found themselves on the new border. Breil lost its role as railway junction and international crossing point but with the railway reopening has now regained it. To the north, the actual Col de Tende became the frontier but most of the functions are now located in Tende.

The Roya valley population actually doubled itself in the first half of the 19th century to over 14 000 inhabitants but has since consistently lost population through emigration with an especially large loss following the border change.

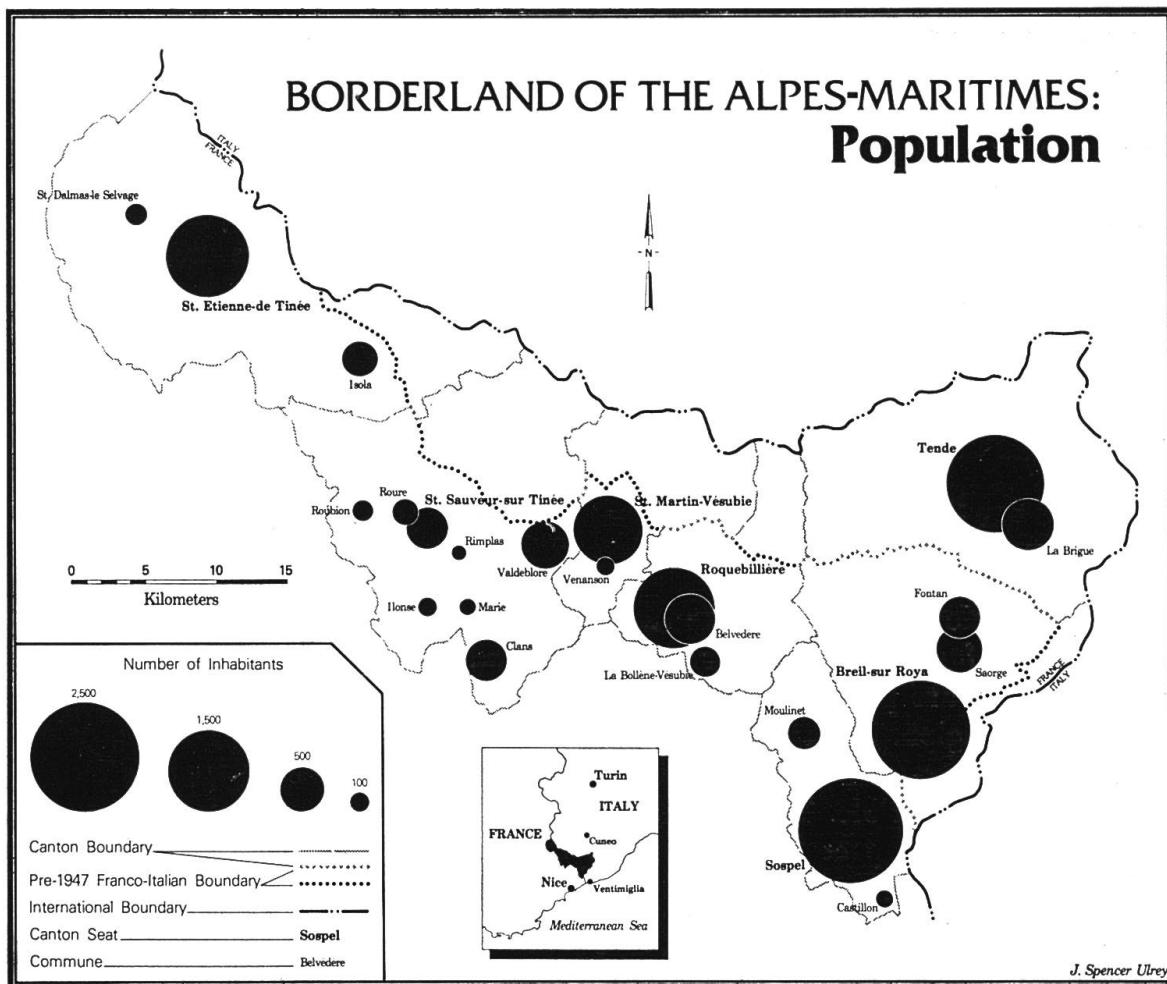


Fig. 2 Population in the French part

The «best equipped» locations to resist depopulation, however, are the central places while the small villages and dispersed rural locations lose more sharply (*Miège 1976 and 1978*). French programs to improve the quality of life in mountain regions have been inconsistent and with mixed results. Hence the rural landscape reflects a culture generally in decline. Yet more recently, over the past decade, the appearance of new second homes, especially in the La Brigue area and near Le Boréon and St. Martin-Vésubie seems to belie the population exodus. Clearly urbanites are investing in the recreational potential of the region and are important agents of change in the cultural landscape.

Towns and villages between the old and the new boundary changed hands from Italy to France and thus have sustained a basic transfer of sovereignty which has been absorbed into and is reflected by the townscapes in a variety of ways. In general as one would expect, there has been a deliberate attempt at de-Italianization. The memorial to the dead of the first World War is a common feature at or near the center of any French or Italian town. Artifacts of this past event which found both states in common cause one would expect to find undisturbed, as is the case in Tende and Piène for example. In Libre, however, a new plaque

has replaced the old Italian memorial, which is not only in French but the glorious dead have had first names translated into French and started fighting a year earlier, i. e. in 1914, not 1915! Street names have, of course, been changed and perhaps most dramatically one can see the sovereignty switch reflected directly in that cultural landscape feature common to all settlements and often most revealing in its characteristics, the graveyard. The graveyard at Tende, for example, exhibits a sudden and absolute change of language used on grave-stones from 1945 onwards, even in the same family crypt. Not surprisingly, after well over a generation of French culture, only relics of the former sovereignty survive. Yet ironically, the reopening of the railway may, for the Roya towns, give rise to a pattern of activity more reflecting the pre-war Italian pattern than the highway-orientation of the French era.

5 Tourism

Already mentioned above in the discussion of routeways and settlements, the satisfaction of man's desire for recreation and leisure, and public policies in response to it, are playing an ever-increasing role in shaping the cultural landscape in the region. In the high alpine valleys of the Vésubie and Tinée, coincident with the ex-Italian territory of the French glacis, the impact of tourism is most strongly visible. Two recent events with the greatest contemporary and potential future impact have been the construction of a remarkable «third-generation» ski resort with its base at the 2000 meter level in the Chastillon valley above Isola in the upper Tinée, and the decision of the French government to create the Mercantour National Park which occupies a vast area (70 000 hectares) including several valleys along the new crestline border with Italy.

51 Isola 2000

In the mid-1970's Arab-financed British interests developed a massive ski resort unique to the region in the Chastillon Valley above Isola with a base station instant «village» at 2000 meters, hence it's name, Isola 2000. It is a classic example of the integrated high altitude station, a veritable «paquebot des neiges» (*Miège* 1979, p. 263) made possible by technical advances in snow clearing, ski lifts, slope clearing, earth moving and modern heating. Situated in the center of the upper valley, the resort boasts over 6000 beds in three hotels and variety of condominiums, a wide range of retail and entertainment services within a heated arcade equal to a medium-sized town, and ski facilities utilizing the virgin slopes up to the 2810 meter level including 100 kms of runs serviced by 21 lifts with a total capacity of 15 000 skiers per hour. It's high altitude guarantees a long season. Indeed since opening, the resort has claimed the French snow depth record each year averaging 2 meters. The crucial problem of access was solved by building an elaborate 8 meter wide road started in 1972 connecting with Isola over 1200 meters below on the Tinée. The developers paid

ISOLA 2000: ORIGIN OF FRENCH AND INTERNATIONAL WINTER VISITORS

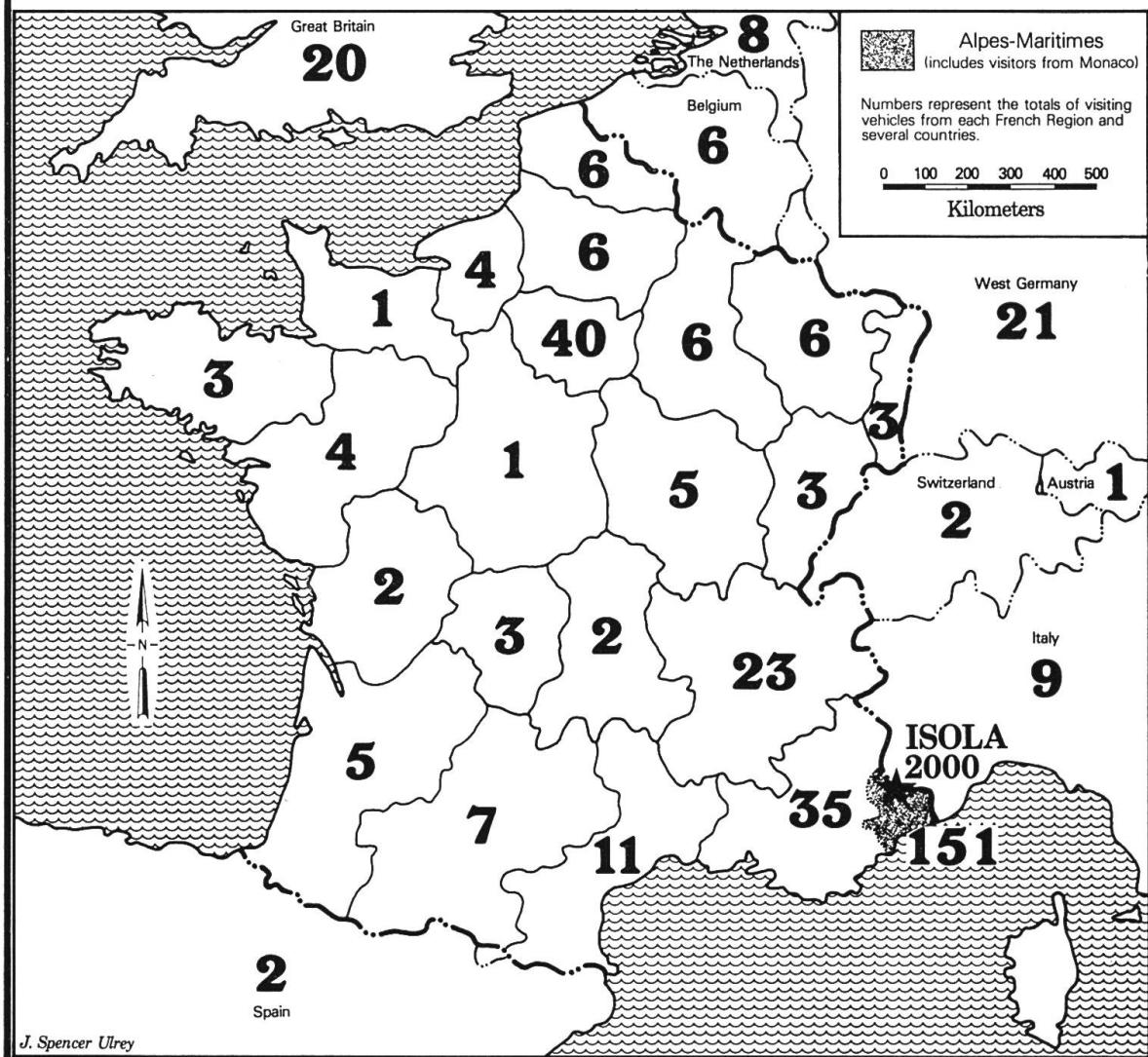


Fig. 3 Based on a survey by the author of registration plates of vehicles parked at Isola 2000, March 18, 1980. French figures, recorded by Department, are aggregated by Region.

less than 10% of the 23 million francs for this 17 km road, with the remaining investment coming mainly from the State and also from the Department and the local commune. Following completion it was designated a Department Route. This substantial state support for foreign private development has caused considerable reaction and raised questions about such investments being in tune with general national alpine policy (*Delon 1979*, p. 49). Despite the elaborate precautions against extremes of nature, the high alpine location tends to create extraordinarily costly problems entailing public expenditure. For example, avalanches in the winter of 1977-78 buried 300 meters of the road under 12

meters of snow and in the Spring of 1980 an unusually heavy snow fall collapsed power lines leaving the resort with only emergency facilities for over 48 hours.

Of the condominium renters in 1978, 70% were essentially «local» from the Côte d'Azur and about 75% of the owners were French although not surprisingly the largest group of foreign owners was British (8.6%). In a survey by the author made in March 1980 it was found that private vehicles present came from 59 of France's 95 departments, and from eight countries which accounted for fully 18.3% of the total (see Fig. 3). Vehicles from the Alpes-Maritimes department and Monaco accounted for 46% of the French total, with an additional 10.7% from the rest of the region of Provence-Côte d'Azur. Despite this «local» and foreign preponderance, the pattern also shows a strong national attraction with all 21 regions of France represented.

The impact on Isola has been remarkable. It's population had declined from over one thousand at the turn of the century to 223 in 1968. Since it has virtually doubled its population and tripled its tax base. The 500 jobs provided directly at Isola 2000 together with all the other economic benefits have allowed the old alpine village to restore its own patrimony and to invest in its youth by refurbishing its 12th Century church and building a sports complex. This example of alpine rebirth provides a tempting model for similar developments for both montagnards and financiers in other similar locations. The establishment of the new Mercantour National Park, however, may well foreclose any such possibility.

52 Mercantour National Park

As early as 1947, the general council of the Alpes-Maritimes adopted a motion to create a park in the ex-Italian Böréon area to protect the alpine flora and fauna. Later a national hunting preserve was created and in 1979 it was designated the sixth French national park (see Fig. 1). Despite heavy state investment to revitalize the local economy in the «peripheral zone» around the Park, there has been consistent and broad-based opposition to the Park, not only from fishing and hunting interests but also out of fear that it will be detrimental to development. The French Ministry of Environment has consequently taken care to appoint local leaders to the Park's administrative council, including the mayor of Tende who was subsequently elected in 1980 to the presidency of the Permanent Commission, the executive organ of the new Park. Few recreational facilities have been developed and it is likely that vehicular access will be limited, and mining, hydro-power works, hunting and lumbering will be banned, although there is discussion of a special clause which would allow a ten-year period for further ski development.

In what must rank as a particularly appropriate and highly symbolic agreement, France and Italy will very likely combine the Mercantour with the long-established Valdieri hunting preserve on the Italian glacis into an international park.

6 Conclusion

In 1973 Louis Reboud wrote that the establishment of a truly integrated Franco-Italian frontier development zone would not be possible by the year 2000 because, even though Italy was making advances in regional government, France was still far too overcentralized (Reboud 1973, p 119). The reorganization plans of the Mitterand government may prove Reboud overly pessimistic. Recent developments in the borderland of the Alpes Maritimes are in sharp contrast with the confrontation and conflict tradition of the region, and they bring the promise of a future in which the potential for a borderland to function as a «meeting-place» for mutual benefit to local communities and «as a launching pad for international co-operation» (House 1980, p. 457), may be realized.

LA RÉGION FRONTIÈRE DES ALPES MARITIMES

En 1947, après la seconde guerre mondiale, une modification de la frontière franco-italienne dans les Alpes Maritimes a donné à la France un territoire additionnel de 544 km², qui était italien depuis 1860. Ce territoire comprend les vallées supérieures du système Roya-Bévéra, de la Tinée et de la Vésubie. A court terme, ce changement de souveraineté a entraîné d'importantes transformations du paysage humanisé dans la région frontalière, notamment dans le territoire cédé. Le souvenir de la guerre et le ressentiment s'évanouissant, l'Italie et la France, en tant que pays membres fondateurs de la CEE, reprisent des relations, qui ont laissé leur empreinte sur la région frontalière. Le présent travail étudie ces effets, fait le bilan de la situation actuelle et présume l'évolution future dans le territoire cédé, en portant son intérêt aux voies de communication (rail, route, nouvelles transversales alpines), à l'habitat et au tourisme.

A long terme, le paysage humanisé de la région étudiée se transformera surtout à cause de facteurs extra-régionaux (interférence accrue France-Italie, croissance des régions Côte-d'Azur et Imperia/Cuneo). La région frontalière garde cependant l'empreinte de la période italienne, ce qui donne à cette région un caractère culturel particulier.

DIE GRENZREGION DER FRANZÖSISCH-ITALIENISCHEN MEERALPEN

Nach dem 2. Weltkrieg trat 1947 Italien in den Alpes Maritimes ein 544 km² großes Gebiet an Frankreich ab, das es seit 1860 besessen hatte. Es umfasst die oberen Talteile des Roya-Bévéra-Systems, des Tinée und des Vésubie. Kurzfristig ergaben sich aus diesem Souveränitätswechsel bedeutende Anpassungen in der Gestaltung der Kulturlandschaft der Grenzregion, besonders im abgetretenen Gebiet. In dem Maße wie die Erinnerung an den Krieg und die Verbitterung über die territoriale Abtretung verblassten, haben Frankreich und Italien als Gründungsmitglieder der EG in den letzten 20 Jahren engere Beziehungen zueinander aufgenommen, die sich auch auf die Grenzregionen auswirken. Die vorliegende Arbeit untersucht diese Auswirkungen und versucht, neben der gegenwärtigen Situation auch die künftige Entwicklung im abgetretenen Gebiet abzuschätzen. Besondere Beachtung gilt den Verkehrswegen (Bahn, Strasse, neue Alpentransversalen), den Siedlungen und dem Tourismus.

Langfristig gesehen wird sich die Kulturlandschaft des untersuchten Raumes vor allem auf Grund extra-regionaler Faktoren verändern (verstärkte Integration Frankreich-Italien, Wachstum der Regionen Côte d'Azur und Imperia/Cuneo). Die Grenzregion ist aber weiterhin durch Relikte aus der Zeit italienischer Herrschaft geprägt, die diesem Gebiet eine charakteristische kulturelle Eigenart verleihen.

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