

Local Frontiers in Europe

by Keith Taylor

In the last quarter-century, the combination of rapid European economic integration and even more rapid economic globalization has exacerbated the divisions between the localities and regions of Europe. A map of the European Union which shows only the political-legal boundaries between the fifteen member states barely charts the real distinctions between the hundreds, even thousands, of significant territorial units in the EU.

The frontiers between these local units present great challenges to European integration. Indeed, integration has itself hardened, sometimes created, many of the divisions between localities in the EU. It has heightened levels of territorial *disintegration*, and has provoked - in some respects - an ever *stronger disunion* of the European peoples.

Despite progress in many areas of EU activity towards greater social cohesion, there are significant trends towards fragmentation. An emphasis on local and regional diversity, coupled with a recognition of the 'local frontiers' to integration, might help us to formulate a clearer picture of likely patterns of future political development. Rather than a federal or nation-state model, or even a 'Europe of the Regions', we might anticipate a more variegated, pluralistic and historically unique pan-European political system.

A frontier is not just a boundary demarcating distinct jurisdictions: it is a territorial zone between two or more societies and, often, economies. The term 'local frontiers' denotes the diversity of social, cultural, economic and political areas in Europe which do, or might, give rise to divisiveness, conflict, exclusion and resistance. Local frontiers can hinder an integration process if they threaten to produce patterns of development and isolation at odds with the dominant patterns of unification. The EU has to find ways to accommodate diversity and spatial difference other than central domination or 'internal colonialism'.

This problem has four key dimensions. First, the existence of fifteen different systems of sub-national government in the EU creates political, administrative and legal obstacles to integration since there is no uniform structure of sub-national policy-making or for the sub-national implementation of European legislation. In effect, thousands of local authorities in the EU compete with each other, on unequal terms, to increase their economic and political power.



Secondly, patterns of social inequality, which have always been territorially based, have assumed new spatial forms. Increasing social fragmentation, both urban and rural, in developed industrial society is characterized by high levels of social exclusion, marginalization and, at the other extreme, the territorial defensiveness of the socially privileged.

Thirdly, there has been a resurgence of specific local and regional economic systems in the EU. The dominant image is of the increasing size of economic operations and of growing centralization; in fact, there has been a highly marked economic decentralization towards individual localities and regions. Even large transnational corporations have become 'locally embedded' in particular geographical areas.

Fourthly, transnational linkages - political, social, cultural and economic - have increased dramatically, posing major problems for all levels of government and administration: from the local level to the supranational and global. These processes require us to redefine our notions of boundaries and frontiers,

for example, by using the idea of 'global-localization' to designate the complex new inter-relationships between the global and local scales of social, economic and political change.

These four dimensions offer a useful framework for the analysis of the local frontiers of European integration. It is the links between globalization, Europeanization and localization which form the essential parameters of this analysis. Three aspects are particularly significant.

First, the vertical disintegration of production and the new international division of labour with local and regional roots. Fordist mass production and mass consumption have given way to a greater diversity of localized and highly mobile markets. Even the largest global corporations have assumed a local character.

Secondly, the shift to a globalized economy, which has eroded not only the national basis of economic organization, but also the centralized nation-state as a dominant political form. Bureaucratic Keynesian welfare systems have been uprooted in the struggle for leaner and meaner capitalist competition, and there has been a corresponding growth in privatization and market-led reorganization of government.

Thirdly, the transformation of the 'local state'. Local government's key *was* that of a service provider, acting at the behest of central government. In the age of post-Fordism and global-localisation, it has to direct its attention towards issues of strategic economic management and the resolution of processes of social dislocation, especially those in major urban conurbations.

These changes - which open up new social, economic and political spaces - offer an opportunity for more localized forms of genuine democracy to emerge. Any genuine sense of democratic involvement needs to be nurtured at the local level, for it is here that the development of 'an ever closer union of the European peoples' is most likely to take root.

Keith Taylor is Subject Area Leader in Politics and International Relations at the University of Westminster. This is an edited version of a paper he gave to the CSD Seminar in January 1996.

Problems in the Kingdom of Rights

by Nicolás López Calera

For two-thirds of the world's population, human rights do not exist. In the developed countries, they have only been partly realized: the complex bureaucratic structures of the democratic states make the full realization of fundamental rights and liberties impossible.

The problematic nature of human rights is, however, not only existential; it is also constitutive. The fundamental reason for this is the self-centredness of human beings and social groups. This self-centredness expresses a general tendency of human existence, namely, to 'be more'. This tendency has two aims. The first is common to all living beings: to 'be more' tomorrow: this is equivalent to the tendency to survive. The second - peculiar to humans - is to realize all the ontological and existential possibilities of human beings.

The second aim has three forms: to 'have more' (to have things); to 'have more power' (to 'have' human beings); and to 'know more' (to dominate nature and human beings through understanding them). These tendencies would be positive if human beings lived in isolation. But they don't. They live in society. Self-centred human nature produces conflicts because these fundamental tendencies are insatiable. They are so because the available goods - limited in quality and quantity - cannot satisfy the complex and numerous needs of human beings. In human life there is unavoidable conflict.

There is, therefore, a need to make human conflicts reasonable so that they do not lead to 'bellum omnium contra omnes'. Hobbes wrote that 'Pax est quaerenda', peace has to be wanted. Despite the self-centredness of human nature, human beings seek a 'certain' peace. But absolute peace does not and will never exist. Peace is always an unfinished and endless process.

Another problem inherent in human rights is their dialectical character. The world of human rights

is full of unresolvable contradictions.

First, there are contradictions which emerge because of the obvious necessity of 'identifying human identity', that is, determining what makes human beings human. Human rights can only exist on the basis of a definition of 'human identity' as an ensemble of values, interests and possibilities



without which human beings cannot be understood as being human. Yet history shows that 'to be a human being' according to one philosophical or political ideology is, for another, 'not to be a human being'. There are radically different conceptions of the human being: *homo homini lupus* (Hobbes); *homo amicus homini* (Aristotle); or the *bon sauvage* (Rousseau). It is clear that a universal consensus on human identity cannot be achieved.

Secondly, there are contradictions which emerge because of the simultaneously relative and absolute character of human rights. Human rights are absolute in so far as they express requirements in relation to the essence of all human beings. But this absolute character is limited by the human need to live in society. Absolute liberty for one

person is negation of liberty for another. Total liberty for wolves is death for sheep. Consequently, it is difficult to harmonize fundamental rights when all rights tend to be absolute and, at the same time, must be limited so that everybody can enjoy them.

There are three common examples of the contradictions of human rights arising from the absence of such a hierarchy. First, the contradiction between two rights with the same content, but with different holders: my right to live and your right to live. Secondly, the contradiction between two rights with different contents and different holders: my right to be informed and your right to privacy. Thirdly, the contradiction between two rights with a different or identical content, one of which belongs to an individual and the other to a collective being: my right to be informed and the right of the state to secrecy.

Inadequate legal protection is a third obstacle to the realization of human rights. For human rights to be realized fully the following must obtain: first, constitutional legal norms that codify human rights (and which express a social democratic consensus about the generic nature of rights). Secondly, concrete legal norms which develop these codified basic rights. Rules that guarantee the judicial defence and protection of rights are especially important. However, one must be aware of the risk of excessive legal regulation, which can limit rights. Thirdly, the democratic rule of law, that is, a state whose legislature, judiciary and executive power enjoy a high level of legitimacy.

Finally, there is an important precondition of the legal protection of human rights: equality, or, at least, an economic and cultural levelling-up for all citizens. Economic and cultural underdevelopment is a global attack on all human rights: it makes impossible the existence of those rights and liberties which human dignity demands.

Nicolás López Calera is Head of the Departamento de Filosofía del Derecho, Moral y Política at the University of Granada. This is an edited version of a paper he gave to the CSD Seminar in January 1996.