

International responses to complex emergencies, which can be regionally destabilizing, are often weakened by poor planning and insufficient data sharing. As diplomats, peacekeepers, human rights monitors, and relief agencies continue to wrestle with the challenge of implementing peace operations, relief deliveries, and even civil administrations in war-ravaged areas, they will need to rely more on new geographic information technologies and methodologies. For inevitable future complex emergencies, the issue will not be what GIS is capable of, but rather how it can be best applied to support effective collaborations before, during, and after responders deploy into the crisis zone.

Boundary Studies in the “Borderless World”

The arguments advanced by Newman and Pratt seem to be designed as a counterpoise to those of the “borderless” lobby. There is nothing inherently conservative in their approach, more a call for caution, and to resist the lure of arguments which are either overly sectoral or narrow, or merely fashionable. From their very different perspectives, the writers of this paper encounter common misunderstandings on a range of boundary issues. All too often, this is attributable to a partial, biased or subjective scrutiny of the issue to hand. It is hard, for example, to claim that the evolution of the European Union provides a model for borderless regions or blocs at a time when so many national or ethnic boundaries are being re-asserted. Similarly, the European model does not support a view of close co-operation based on an assertion of sovereignty. A surrender of sovereignty (partial as it may be) lies at the heart of the legal creature that is the European Union.

The Conference reinforced the view that boundary studies, properly defined, are inherently multi-disciplinary. One view or discipline may lead or dominate a particular project at any given time, but the function of the modern boundary goes well beyond the analytical reach of geographers, lawyers, political scientists and economists. This leads to a final consideration for Canada – how can we best emulate or continue to work with bodies such as the International Boundaries Research Unit at Durham, which have led the way in providing fora for responding to the contemporary challenges of one of the most basic instincts of our species – boundary-making.