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Lucie Filipova, *Erfüllte Hoffnung. Städtepartnerschaften als Instrument der deutsch-französischen Aussöhnung, 1950-2000*. Göttingen and Bristol: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015. 409 pp. Graphs, tables, bibliography, and index. 80.00€ (hb). ISBN 978-3-5251-0139-1

Review by Carine Germond, Norwegian University of Science and Technology.

City partnerships have been a cornerstone of Franco-German rapprochement since the Second World War. They symbolized, illustrated, and accompanied the process of reconciliation and transnational cooperation between the two former enemies, whose antagonism and conflicts wreaked havoc in Europe. “Twinships” between French and German towns were part of the broader parapublic underpinnings of Franco-German relations, which have been defined as “cross-border interactions by individual or collective actors belonging neither to the public world of state nor the private world of society.”^[1] Franco-German parapublic activities and connections also extend well beyond city partnerships to include extensive youth and educational exchanges, which together have been essential in knitting the “ties that bind” between the two peoples and providing popular support in both countries for Franco-German cooperation in post-war Europe.^[2] As such, Franco-German city partnerships are a fascinating subject of enquiry to explore bilateral encounters and practices.

Lucie Filipova’s monograph, a translation into German of a doctoral dissertation originally defended in 2013 at Charles University in Prague and published in Czech, investigates how Franco-German city partnerships developed over half a century. The study relies on extensive research in a wide range of archival sources (municipal, private, state, and city partnership committees), interviews, and a substantial corpus of secondary literature. She explores, in particular, the changing motives behind bilateral contacts at the local and municipal levels, and the influence of high politics on the cooperation between French and German towns. Filipova’s central argument, while not explicitly articulated, is implicit in the title of her monograph, namely that bilateral bottom-up contacts between citizens on both sides of the Rhine were instrumental in promoting and anchoring reconciliation between the former archenemies in the post-war era and thus fulfilled the expectations of their initiators.

The monograph is organized into seven sections. The first section embeds the study in the existing multidisciplinary research literature while the second section sets out the general framework of Franco-German cooperation at the local level. Each of the following five sections adopts a chronological approach and covers a roughly decade-long time span (1950–62, 1963–73, 1974–1981, 1982–89, and 1990–2000), which abides by a traditional periodization of bilateral relations according to seminal events (such as the signature of Elysée Treaty in 1963 or German reunification in 1989) and Franco-German couples, especially for the period after 1974. All five sections have the same design: after a summary overview of Franco-German relations, the author examines the evolution of Franco-German city partnerships by drawing upon a large corpus of quantitative data collected from archival documents and then turns her attention to specific case studies of cooperation between French and German (both West and East) towns to exemplify bilateral activities, practices, and accomplishments at the local and municipal levels. Together the chronological sections provide a detailed and comprehensive analysis of

the development of the Franco-German city partnership movement in the second half of the twentieth century.

Filipova's study makes a valuable contribution to the existing research literature in four ways. Firstly, the combined qualitative and quantitative analysis of Franco-German partnerships is a novel approach in a field where qualitative studies largely predominate. In particular, the numerous graphs and tables provide detailed and valuable insights into the changing nature, geography, and number of city partnerships over time and will be extremely useful for historians, researchers, or students. Secondly, contrary to most existing studies whose main focus is essentially on cooperation between French and West-German towns, Filipova's study includes in her analysis Franco-East-German contacts, which, though much more limited in scope, were nevertheless existent and important in the context of the Cold War. In this she clearly draws upon previous studies such as Ulrich Pfeil's seminal work on the asymmetrical Franco-West-East German triangular relationship.[3] Thirdly, the *longue durée* perspective of Filipova's study, which covers roughly fifty years of city partnerships across the Rhine, casts fresh light on continuities and ruptures. Finally, the detailed case studies of five city partnerships (Mainz-Dijon, Duisburg-Wismar-Calais, Kirek-Mauléon, Brombachtal-La Rivière de Corps, Bautzen-Dreux) provide new and detailed insights into individual and collective motives for twinning as well as the geographical, financial, demographical, political, or cultural constraints that influenced the development of bilateral activities and exchanges between municipalities. At the same time, the great wealth of detail and anecdotes comes at the expense of a broader reflection on the transnational contribution that these cross-border contacts made to the formation of a Europe from below, which the author takes as a point of departure, or the wider role of civil society in transnational cooperation in post-war Europe.

Whether the development of city partnerships as part and parcel of "Low Politics" followed that of "High Politics" (i.e., diplomatic relations) is a question that the author examines at length in each of the main chronological chapters of her study. This question appears restrictive at times. The author's conclusion that "overall, it is obvious that Franco-German city partnerships exhibited a distinct dynamic, which was supported by municipal policy, societal, and symbolic events" (p. 360) [4] is expected. Indeed, while contacts between citizens on both sides of the Rhine were, in part, facilitated by government agreements and policies, such as the cultural stipulations of the Elysée Treaty or institutions like the Franco-German Youth Office, others, like town twinings developed more autonomously, not least because they often rested on individual rather than state-sponsored initiatives.

This notwithstanding, the book provides a comprehensive and well-researched analysis of a still under-researched dimension of the relations between France and Germany. It makes a valuable contribution to refining our understanding of the role of city partnerships, as a form of cross-border cooperation, in reconciliation processes.

NOTES

[1] Ulrich Krotz, *Flying Tiger. International Relations Theory and the Politics of Advanced Weapons* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 34.

[2] Ulrich Krotz, "Ties that bind? The Parapublic Underpinnings of Franco-German Relations as Construction of International Value," Minda de Gunzburg Center for European Studies, Harvard University, Working paper 2.4 (2002), <http://aei.pitt.edu/9292/1/Krotz4.pdf>.

[3] Ulrich Pfeil, *Die „anderen“ deutsch-französischen Beziehungen. Die DDR und Frankreich, 1949-1990* (Köln: Böhlau Verlag, 2003).

[4] Reviewer's translation.

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