



“Cross-border territories: Day-to-day Europe”



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Workshop 1 “Cross-border territories”

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- ❖ **Debate animated:** Jef VAN STAEYEN, Director of the COPIT (BE/FR)
- ❖ **Presentation of the framing memorandum**
Jef VAN STAEYEN, Director of the COPIT (BE/FR)
- ❖ **Project 1:** “From a reconversion concept to a cross-border metropolitan network” (FR-BE-LU)
Patrick BOUSCH, researcher, CEPS INSTEAD, Luxembourg (LU)
- ❖ **Project 2:** Centrope Project (Vienna, AU/Bratislava SL/ Győr HU/ Brno, CZ)
Dr Eugen ANTALOVSKY, director of Europa Forum Vienna (AU)
- ❖ **Project 3:** The cross-border statistical monitoring unit: France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation (FR-CH),
Dominique FREI, director of the Cantonal statistics office, Geneva (CH).
- ❖ **Presentation of the recommendations**
Jef VAN STAEYEN, Director of the COPIT (BE/FR)
- ❖ **Discussion with the floor**
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Introduction

Living areas, employment areas, functional urban areas or metropolitan areas, rural districts, etc. Such "lived spaces" do not fit in with established political and administrative processes. These spaces cross national borders, a process that European integration can only encourage. Reflecting the debate on the future of the Union, the challenge today is to know what cross-border territories we want to build for tomorrow. Are we moving towards simple free trade areas (free movement of persons, goods, services and capital) or towards genuine territories formed within defined perimeters, backed politically and managed technically by cross-border governance?

While the territorial (and in particular urban) dimension of the cohesion policy is asserted, and territorial cooperation is now one of the stated objectives of the cohesion policy, neither the objectives of this cooperation in terms of territorial development nor the territorial concepts that it uses (Euroregions, Eurodistricts, etc.) have been defined precisely at Community level. The economy (productive, residential) of cross-border territories also remains a field in which practically no research has been done. Concepts, typology and scales of cross-border territories... there is an urgent need to propose suitable methodologies and obtain recognition of the completely specific position that such territories occupy in the construction of Europe.

Outline definitions

What is a cross-border territory? There are several answers to this question, depending on the border concerned and the spatial scale of the territory. Nevertheless, from the perspective of territorial development, a “cross-border territory”, like any other territory, must satisfy several criteria which, even if they are not all obligatory markers in this attempted definition, contribute ideally to sketching the outline of this type of territory.

A cross-border territory is an inhabited space, which has cross-border functions, crossed by flows and relations, many driven by economic and social factors (e.g. home-work commuting; purchasing, education and leisure behaviour; cultural practices which may or may not be the result of cultural or linguistic proximity preceding the existence of the border; business; cooperation between public-sector actors). However, although the existence of at least a few of these practices is a necessary condition for the existence of a cross-border territory (no territory without inhabitants!), they often vary greatly, and the presence of the border and its effects may be “suffered” or even repressed.

The existence of cross-border functions is therefore not sufficient to determine the existence of a **cross-border territory, for this also depends on political construction and citizen acceptance**. In this case the territory can be the subject of a **political and institutional project, the scope of which will be determined when its project is defined**: a cross-border conurbation, a region in the centre of Europe, etc., which does not necessarily coincide with the different functional realities.

The existence of this cross-border territory, benefiting from an identifiable project if not yet an identity, also depends on its **ownership by the inhabitants and the socioeconomic actors, facilitated by communication by the public authorities** to this end, which highlights the cross-border functions which they can in certain cases experiment for themselves.

Without this political and eventually citizen project, there is just a space, not a cross-border territory. We do not share the presumption often implicit in the “Interreg world” that market forces or coordination of economic actors alone provide solutions in the absence of a political project (the territorial review of Öresund by the OECD, which seeks to justify “soft governance” while raising the question of the democratic deficit, is a good illustration of this debate).

For internal and external recognition and for its management, the cross-border territory must also be a **space monitored jointly on either side of the border**, where monitoring, in most cases at the service of the political project, will measure the effects of the border (differentials of all types, the resulting flows), but also consider the territory as a whole, summing the potentials on each side of the border.

Moreover, there are **several scales and several types of cross-border territory**: rural space, mountain range, valley, conurbation, metropolis, city network, Euroregion; different scales, juxtaposed and/or nested, may be relevant (living areas for local services, employment areas for transport, functional regions for higher-level services or economic development).

Lastly, the specific nature of cross-border territories should be noted. In contrast to territories located within a state, which may be subject to political and administrative boundary changes, the border of the state remains. Its effect can perhaps be attenuated, but not eliminated; its governance, not its government, is at stake. **A cross-border territory is a project space which, even when legally constituted, does not aim to administer the territory but rather to implement action programmes intended to meet the needs of the inhabitants.**

Observed problems

❖ **Difficulty of asserting the existence of the cross-border territory, of backing it politically, of making it work in a way that is democratic and shared by its inhabitants**

The following problems are observed:

- Lack of cross-border inter-municipality, and more generally inter-territoriality, which would attenuate the effects of the border and allow better management of a number of services.
- Democratic deficit of the cross-border political territory with regard to the inhabitants who do not elect their representatives; the territory is experienced as cross-border, through the practices of the populations and the socioeconomic actors, but in a diffuse, irregular, non-conceptualised manner which is not identified in any political way. The extent to which populations and socioeconomic actors want the emergence of a political cross-border territory is difficult to measure. The “right to a cross-border city and life”, to a “360° territory”, remains unformulated.
- Low level of communication to the inhabitants on the concepts of cross-border territory and territorial projects.
- Lack of perception of the higher-level common interests of territories.

❖ **Difficulty of communicating on the definition of cross-border territories and of obtaining recognition of their singularity and their role in the territorial development of the states concerned and in the construction of Europe**

The introductory attempt to define cross-border territories is a good illustration of the problems with which such spaces are confronted. How should they be defined, how can it be proved that they exist, and how can their singularity be made known in national and European systems ?

- The territorial dimension -districts, parks, conurbations, metropolitan areas, Euroregions- of the cross-border situation is taken into account only to a limited extent, and the emergence of their importance in national contexts is still very timid.
- At European level, the cross-border dimension of territories is given little attention, and often from the angle of networks rather than physical spaces. The topical dimension predominates in the European view of cross-border matters.

❖ **Difficulty of understanding the operation of cross-border territories and its consequences**

At local level, there are a few monographs on cross-border statistical monitoring, of uneven quality and uncertain linkage with a political project. The deficit of understanding of the cross-border operation of a territory (understanding focusing primarily on the differentials either side of the border, that of links and flows remaining highly inadequate) prevents the demonstration of the existence of a cross-border link, and thus of a cross-border territory, in a situation where the latter is required to prove that it exists, unlike a “normal” territory. This inadequate understanding also prevents the implementation of coherent public policies on the scale of the territory in many areas (border effects sometimes causing severe hardship—for example in the area of housing—

for resident border populations; inadequate knowledge of public facilities and services on either side of the border leading to deficiencies or duplication). Lastly, it significantly handicaps the implementation of a cross-border territory project for which monitoring of the "key indicators" must be at the core of its development.

At national and international levels : National authorities have not developed reference models for the statistical monitoring of cross-border territories. There is no "top-down" practice, no convergence of indicators, scales, periods and dates of statistical monitoring. This lack of an overall view of cross-border territories (at their different scales) prevents any comparison with other cross-border or "national" territories. Furthermore, the low level of networking of the few operational cross-border monitoring bodies is to be deplored. Consequently, this inadequate understanding means that these territories have too low a profile at national level and is a source of incalculable negative consequences relating to the unsuitability of the legislative and regulatory framework for their situation (town planning, taxes, housing, transport, health, environment, education, etc.).

At European level, one would think that the emergence of a Community statistics organisation would compensate for the inadequacies of the national systems, but the Eurostat system does not have a sufficiently sharp and uniform territorial grid (limited amount of local data, heterogeneity of NUTS on either side of borders), does not practice top-down methodology transfer in this area, nor does it, on its part, take account of local cross-border statistics experience.

Some pioneering work must nevertheless be welcomed : the ongoing Urban Audit covering the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation, not just the city of Geneva; consideration of the cross-border character of conurbations in EPSON study 1.4.3 "*study on urban functions*" (www.espon.eu).

Proposal for recommendations

❖ Knowledge and awareness

Monitoring of the operation of cross-border territories is fundamental for building a cross-border territorial project in phase with the forces in play, but also for developing public policies consistent with the reality of the problems with which these particular territories are confronted.

Here are a few recommendations in this area.

- Lay the foundations of genuine cross-border monitoring, initiated by politicians and reclaimed by them: linkage between cross-border territory projects and the work of the few existing cross-border monitoring units is sometimes inadequate. **Mobilise the know-how and infrastructures of the existing statistics institutions and encourage the dissemination of know-how by developing the networking of existing cross-border monitoring bodies,** but also the involvement of national statistics institutes and Eurostat in order to make up for this severe deficit and overcome the obstacles related to the specific features of each national statistics system. **Link cross-border monitoring at all scales:**

- local (conurbation, employment area, urban area, metropolitan area, rural territory, etc.)
- (Euro-) regional
- by border (for example French-Belgian)

- national (networking of national monitoring bodies)
- European (ESPON, Urban Audit, etc.).

In the short term, a project to develop within the framework of 2007-2013 EPSON priority II might consist in asking researchers to capitalise the monitoring experiments conducted on some European borders.

- **Use the basic statistical level, the municipality, and define a set of common indicators at European level.** The municipal level can be used to compile a reliable statistical base (which assembles all the municipal data), produce results of varying scope according to the topics examined, and provide feedback to the mayors of the municipalities concerned for communication on the “value” of their municipality in the overall cross-border mechanism. The indicators will be selected according to their essential contribution to the basic understanding of the operation of cross-border territories.

- Going beyond monitoring, develop applied research on the present operation of cross-border territories (their productive and residential economy; typology of the different border configurations in Europe; territorial overview of the potential of cross-border integration in attaining the Lisbon objectives; etc.).

- Take account of the cross-border dimension of territorial concepts of planning policies: metropolitan area cooperation (France), *Metropolregionen* (Germany), local agenda 21, etc.

❖ Mobilise knowledge for better action in the service of cross-border territories

- **Link cross-border monitoring and territorial and sectoral planning/regulation** (e.g. PDUs (urban travel plans) and PLHs (local housing plans) in France) **and amend the regulations governing a given public policy or plan according to results and statistical thresholds determined at cross-border level, rather than at strictly national level** (issue of national statistical bands).

- **Assert the need for cross-border territorial engineering tools to do this¹.**

❖ Raise awareness of cross-border territories and their role in the construction of Europe

- At local level, in order to develop their ownership by the populations, the socioeconomic actors and the public authorities, pacify sensitive borders, control border effects and enhance border potential, initiate a process of democratic governance of these territories.

- At the level of regions and states, among bodies whose policies have an impact on these territories: sectoral policies; planning policies which have to develop cross-border strategies (e.g. metropolitan cooperation); cohesion policy implementation by managing authorities, particularly cross-border programmes.

- At Community level: obtain recognition for the contribution of cross-border territories in European planning, in the ongoing political processes:

¹ E.g. the cross-border work conducted by town planning agencies and territorial engineering technical teams on the governance of cross-border territories, bringing together local authorities, regions, even states.

- strategic follow-up of the 2007-2013 cohesion policy (CSG, NSRF),
 - draft green paper on territorial cohesion (deadline spring 2008),
 - territorial Agenda (Leipzig, May 2007) and action programme (Azores, November 2007) implemented by the Union presidencies.
- Label the cross-border territories on different scales (Eurocities, Eurodistricts, Euroregions, etc.) to reinforce their identity and link them².

² Example of Pamina/Upper Rhine