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Those who like us live "on the margins" of the French space are naturally confronted with the border issue. With European integration, yesterday's "dead ends" have one by one opened up to the neighbouring territories and little by little the margins are becoming "centres".

Daily life in northern Lorraine has been cross-border for a long time. Our parents already crossed the border to fill the tanks of their cars or to win the iron ore on the other side. Since then things have sped up. The area of influence of Luxembourg has extended further into Belgium and France, and within a few years we have become cross-border metropolitan citizens, or "transpolitans", living in emerging metropolitan areas astride the old national borders. Here, in a cross-border urban area, Europe is not a meaningless word.

After years marked by deliberate policies on the part of the states and Europe, cross-border cooperation must now move up to a new dimension, one of practices, customs and citizens. This is a change from cooperation as exemplary to cooperation as the ordinary, from the laboratory of Europe to the day-to-day life of Europeans.

As a member of the MOT network, we advocate a new impetus for cross-border cooperation, requiring a change of view and the introduction of suitable instruments [refer to the article on this page], for it is undoubtedly on the margins that systems are reinvented.

Within the framework of the "operation of national interest" launched last October, we anticipate increased resources, the kick-off of negotiations on the issues of scope and governance, and the establishment of an Etablissement public d'aménagement (public development agency) in which the local elected representatives would play a full part. With regard to development and daily life, border areas today are excellent platforms of territorial innovation from which the French state should benefit in the context of the "big-bang of the territories" we are promised. The margins are an opportunity for France. Let us grasp it!

An "operation of national interest" announced in Lorraine

"The margins can become centres"

In many cross-border areas the word "border" is no longer really appropriate, given the extent to which spaces and behaviours are now shared.

In Lorraine, 70,000 persons cross the border every day to go to work. By doing so, Luxembourgers, Belgians and French generate competition between service and commercial centres and between tourist attractions, giving preference to one site or country or another according to prices or trends. The border becomes blurred, for better but also for worse, with increasing pressures on the French side, for example on natural spaces, housing or transport.

Local bodies and organisations in the area have already taken initiatives with the establishment of the *Association transfrontalière du Pôle européen de développement* (European development hub cross-border association) a decade ago, and such initiatives are now multiplying on the basis of practical actions, including a cross-border municipal council, hiking trails, nurseries and railway infrastructure, etc.

Today the rapid development of the Esch-Belval site in Luxembourg, with its planned 20,000 jobs and 5000 inhabitants on the border, no doubt has something to do with the explosion of recent initiatives:

- the announcement by the French president, visiting Lorraine in October, of an "operation of national interest" covering the sector,
- the planned launch early in 2010 of a European grouping of cross-border cooperation for Esch-Belval,
- the granting of the "Eco-cité" label to the Alzette-Belval cross-border eco-conurbation project, on 4 November 2009.



The Esch-Belval site, seen from France

The northern Lorraine urban planning and sustainable development Agency (AGAPE) is playing a central role in these cross-border issues. A technical decision-making aid and coordination instrument at the service of local authorities, the state and economic forces, in addition to these recent initiatives, it participates, for example, in a sustainable development monitoring unit, the SCOT (territorial cohesion plan), the Lela+ network (Luxembourg, Esch/Alzette, Longwy, Arlon, Thionville, Metz) as well as in European programmes.

The Agency also works for the introduction of suitable tools for improving knowledge of the daily life of the "transpolitans", elimination of tax disparities (as part of a joint initiative of the MOT and the AGAPE in 2010) and innovation in planning and urban development (intermunicipal and cross-border PLU (local urban development plan), PLH (local housing programme), cross-border urban transport plans, green plans, etc.).

"Borders and People" festival

During the 1st Borders and People festival in Thionville on 6 and 7 November 2009, Thionville town council and the Institut Pierre Werner organised three panel discussions on the topic of cross-border realities, which brought together the public, researchers, institutional and association representatives and politicians.

The discussions showed that cross-border cooperation is meaningful only if it is founded on real projects. This is the case in Europe, for example on issues of the environment (natural spaces, Baltic Sea) or of education (e.g. cooperation between Poland, Germany and the Czech Republic). It was mentioned several times that the Lisbon Treaty restated the importance of the European territorial cohesion objective, and through this the objective of cross-border cooperation. The ultimate aim of cross-border relations is "territorial

convergence", as opposed to simple management of flows likely to accentuate economic and social imbalances. In the case of the Greater Region, centred on Luxembourg, Romain Diederich, spatial planning director at the Luxembourg ministry of sustainable development and infrastructure, restated the objective of developing a polycentric metropolitan region so that growth benefits all the partners.

The question of the relevant actors in this cooperation was then asked. The importance of the coordination of a territory on a cross-border scale was highlighted here, and MOT director Dr. Hans-Günther Clev noted that the EGTC (European grouping of territorial cooperation) was a very good European instrument for this purpose, since it could include a wide range of partners, from state to municipal level.

Europe celebrates 20 years since the Berlin Wall fell

It was just a simple wall, but it cut Europe in two. In celebrating today the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall, the whole of Europe is also celebrating the birth of a new territory, a space coming together again in which the borders are gradually taking on a new meaning.

A changing Europe

Built in August 1961, the Berlin Wall was a physical manifestation of the Iron Curtain that fell across Europe in 1947, dividing it into two blocks. The collapse of the wall, some forty years later, opened the way to the reunification of Europe and the enlargement of the European Community.



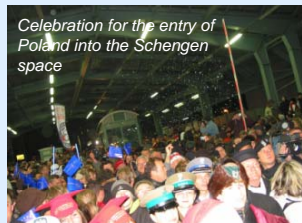
The Berlin Wall in 1986

In June 1985, the common market had already laid some foundations with the first Schengen Agreement between France, West Germany and the Benelux countries, ending border controls on goods. In 1995 the Schengen Convention came into force in seven countries (Belgium, France, Germany, Luxemburg, Netherlands, Portugal, and Spain) allowing persons of all nationalities to travel between these countries without border identity checks. In 2007, the European Union expanded to twenty-seven member countries and twenty-four of them applied the Schengen Convention (as has Switzerland since 2008).

Reconstituting cities

In 1961, the Berlin Wall physically divided the city of Berlin into East Berlin and West Berlin. It was the most striking symbol of this Europe cut in two. Following the dismantling of the Iron Curtain and the many changes that have come about since, other peoples in Eastern Europe have been able to re-establish neighbourly relations and many cities, like Berlin, have been reconfigured, or even "reunited". Here are a few examples*:

- Bratislava (Slovakia), previously backing onto the Iron Curtain, has continued its development on the Austrian side of the border, a few dozen kilometres from Vienna. The two cities are working towards the establishment of a twin city, by integrating their networks.



Celebration for the entry of Poland into the Schengen space

- Frankfurt (Oder) (Germany) and Słubice (Poland), long separated by a border that remained closed until the entry of Poland into the Schengen space (see photo), are now working towards the constitution of a cross-border conurbation.

- Since the 1960s, Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia) have developed major cultural projects, intended to overcome "the fracture of Europe". Today they are integrated in a common urban space where the cross-border square symbolises the reunification of the two towns.

Today these cities are sharing their experiences and their practices for better cooperation and integration (for example in the URBACT EGTC project, www.urbact.eu/egtc). Like Berlin, now a symbol of a reunified Europe, they are all "laboratories of change" for the construction of Europe. The meaning of the word "border" has thus definitely changed, from an "ideal form to be preserved", from the "domain", to the much richer one of a possible opening-up, an exchange and a "union".

* Further information at www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu: section "Resource centre">"Conurbations" - more than thirty cross-border conurbations in Europe are analysed (in English and French).

Press review

The regions are mobilising to save their funding, Localtis, 29 October 2009

"The regions of France and Europe are up in arms against a draft communication from Brussels which would plan to rationalise European funding after 2013 and restrict it to the poorest regions."

The Tyrol Euroregion sets up its cross-border administration, AFP, 29 October 2009

"The elected representatives of the three regions forming the historic Tyrol, shared between Austria and Italy, voted unanimously on Thursday to give this Euroregion a cross-border administrative structure [EGTC], at a congress of the three regional parliaments in Mezzocorona (Italy)."

Border workers getting hysterical, 20 Minutes - Strasbourg edition, 19 October 2009

"Even before opening time, a dozen people were waiting outside the Haguenau offices of AFAL, the Alsace-Lorraine border workers association. Since the beginning of the year the association has been overwhelmed. By mid-September the number of new members had reached the total for last year, some 6,000 persons."

The economic action of the cross-border region, Le Dauphiné libéré, 21 October 2009

"Migros, emblem of Switzerland, has once more made news by locating 60 jobs in the French border area."

Laboratory in Ur: a European response to Catalan livestock farming, L'Indépendant, 26 Oct. 2009

"The proposed construction of the future cross-border slaughterhouse in the village of Ur, Cerdagne, meets an economic need and will contribute to boosting meat processing in Pyrénées-Orientales."

In brief

The third protocol to the Madrid Outline Convention

Seven member states of the Council of Europe signed the third additional protocol to the European Outline Convention on transfrontier cooperation between territorial communities or authorities (the so-called Madrid Outline Convention) at the **ministerial meeting in Utrecht** on 17 November 2009. This protocol is open for signature by other members states of the Council of Europe signatories of the Madrid Outline Convention.

Since the **Madrid Outline Convention** in 1980 and its two additional protocols in 1995 and 1998, which have established a sound legal basis for cross-border cooperation in Europe, there have been a number of developments and there is a real need for harmonisation of the groupings formed. The third additional protocol, fully compatible with the European Community regulation on the EGTC, meets this need.

The protocol stipulates that "territorial communities or authorities and other bodies may set up a transfrontier cooperation body in the form of a **"Euroregional co-operation grouping"** (ECG) on the territory of the member states of the Council of Europe, parties to the protocol". The objective of the ECG shall be "to promote, support and develop, for the benefit of populations, transfrontier and interterritorial cooperation between its members in their common areas of competence and in keeping with the competences established under the national law of the states concerned". The ECG shall be a legal person, it shall have the right to its own budget, it may enter into contracts, hire staff...

The European ministers in Utrecht also signed the **"Utrecht Declaration** on good governance at local and regional level in turbulent times: the challenge of change".

Further info: www.coe.int/congress

Coming soon

"Europe, the Genius of the Cities"

30th national congress of French town planning agencies (FNAU) and 8th European biennial of towns and town planners

2-4 December 2009 in Nancy (France)

Workshop 15 "Border cities: new development hubs for Europe" is organised in partnership between the Dunkirk urban planning Agency and MOT. www.fnau-international.org

3rd French-Brazilian decentralised cooperation conference

3-4 December 2009 in Lyon (France)

The MOT will participate in this event, which will discuss cross-border cooperation issues in Brazil. www.rhonealpes.fr/477-.htm

For further information about events on cross-border cooperation: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu