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Theoretical framework of the cross-border space production – the case of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai



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1) Introduction

Recent transformations, both on a global level (globalisation of trade, social mutations linked to technological developments) and on a European level (construction of the European Union (EU), implementation of integration policies), tend to re-shape border regions even if they still remain entities that structure both space and society (Donnan and Wilson 2001). The modernisation of borders happens differently depending on context (balancing enhancement of security and exploiting economic opportunity). This complexity of borders is encompassed in the concept of ‘bordering’, defined as the on-going process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of border through political discourse and decision making, as well as cultural, educational and artistic representations and productions (Kolossoff *et al.* 2012). Two concepts are linked within it: de-bordering makes explicit the tendencies that mitigate the border effect while re-bordering shows the tendencies that reinforce border effects. In tandem with the opening and evolution of state borders, the borderlands have also restructured themselves, projecting themselves towards the outside world in order to develop partnerships with neighbouring territories and to jointly set up more or less institutionalised cross-border spaces. The phenomenon of globalisation, coupled with the process of political rescaling (Brenner 2004) – defined as the reconfiguration of state power which transfers some competencies towards other institutional levels, notably at the metropolitan one - have contributed to the growing importance of these cross-border regions insofar as they are dominant spaces, in which the economic and political stakes are high (Kolossoff *et al.* 2012).

The purpose of this article is to propose a reflection on the modes of production of cross-border spaces and to provide a method which enables to understand and analyse their dynamics of construction. Several terms are used in the literature to designate these spaces (border regions, border spaces, cross-border regions). These latter are generally defined as areas which have a border with strong economic and social interactions across it (Prescott 1987), but also common historical and cultural traditions (Kolossoff and Turovsky 1997). They are also described as spaces of hybridisation (Sohn 2013), of differing sizes and scales, whose properties vary in function of the degree of instrumentalization of the border as well as its nature and individual perceptions of it. This conceptual work does not aim to formulate a theory of borders (Brunet-Jailly 2005), or to be an exhaustive study, since the situations of cross-border regions are different and full of complexity (Ratti and Schuler 2013; Paasi 2011). The core of this exercise is, rather, a heuristic exploration, with limits. The idea is to confront the current scientific thinking on space and territory on one side, with the one on border on the other side in order to create an analytical grid of construction modes of cross-border spaces. The aim of this confrontation is thus to put the space in the heart of the debate on border studies, as well as to present a new approach - the most complete as possible - composed by theoretical elements but also practical ones (enabling an application of the model), to analyse the complex logics of structuration of cross-border spaces. For this, the scientific works of Henri Lefebvre on space (1974) provide a relevant and valuable input to start the reflection as they assert the

significance of the concept of space in the construction of the society. According to H. Lefebvre, every society produces its space. Space is thus conceived as a product of social, economic, political and cultural relations. It is also a means of production, a means of control, that is to say, of domination and power. In this sense, the production of space appears as a theoretical unity between geographical space, social space and mental space. Following this conception, the cross-border space is the result of interactions and retroactions, past and present, the product of all kinds of encounters: from material and financial planning to the networking of actors, from social relations to the definition of political strategies. The production of cross-border space is a complex reality because of the presence of a border which both separates and links different territorial systems. This production partakes of the dynamic of territorial reconfiguration and engenders new rationales of development and spatial practices. To understand the development of these particular spaces, the intent is to examine the processes at work in this construction. Our hypothesis is that the production of a cross-border space is the product of contextual factors which favour cross-border interactions on the one hand, and processes of de-bordering and cross-border integration on the other.

Guiding this theoretical reflection on the cross-border space production, a conceptual framework is presented in the first section in order to grasp cross-border dynamics in a systematic way. The two following sections will analyse the processes of bordering and cross-border integration which lead to the production of a cross-border space. In the final section this approach to the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai will be applied.

2) Formulation of the conceptual framework for the cross-border space production

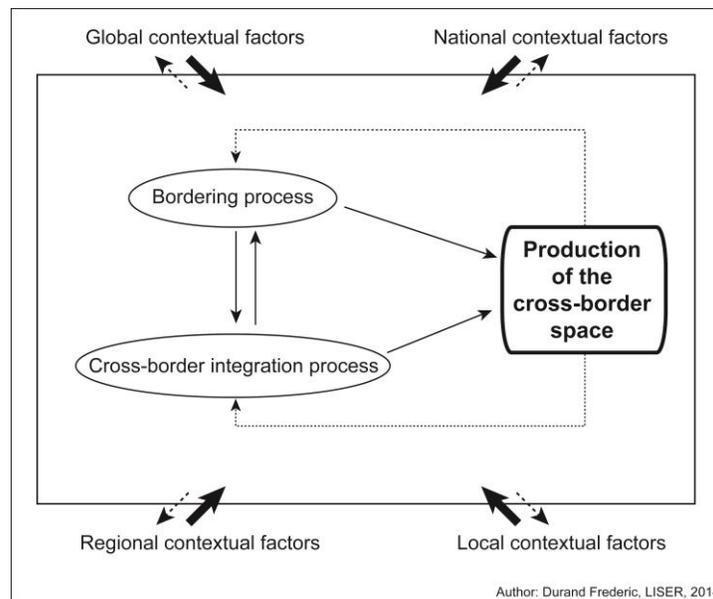
As mentioned by Blatter and Clement (2000), conceptual frameworks have to be developed to tackle the construction dynamics of cross-border regions and to enable international comparisons. In this perspective, numerous scientific works have been conducted in various cross-border regions (especially in Europe), implementing theoretical frameworks to study the territorial construction issue at the cross-border scale. For example, Schack (2000) depicts the multicontextual character of the border through a multilayer model. Each layer (social, legal, economic, political and cultural) illustrates different meanings of the border. Perkmann (2007) provides an analytical template - composed by three elements (political mobilization, governance building, and strategic unification) - which identifies different types of re-scaling strategies and scenarios that built the cross-border regions. As for Matthiessen (2004), the bi-national regional question of the Oresund Region is studied through the lens of the functional integration, mainly on the cross-border flows that frame the organization of this cross-border regions. However, in these studies, the focus is placed on either the nature of the border and its effects on the reconfiguration of border areas or on the cross-border integration process. Furthermore, the authors insist only on one dimension of the border or integration (typically favouring on functional or institutional dimensions). These models do not mobilize these two concepts together to address the issue of the cross-border space production. The ambition of this paper is thus to combine them into a more global approach, taking into account on one hand the role and impacts of border on the structuring and interactions between the border areas, and on the other hand the various dynamics in the construction of the cross-border space.

The conceptual framework used (Figure 1) aims to make clear the territorial construction process at work in cross-border spaces. According to this figure, the production of a cross-border space arises, on the one hand, from two processes (bordering and cross-border integration) which interact with each other. On the other hand, several contextual factors intervene and influence the dynamics and processes taking place within the cross-border space. Whether on global level (with globalisation), national level (through the rules established by state system) or on regional and local level (through the geographical characteristics of territories and societies), the contexts operate as structuring factors in the production of cross-border space. Indeed, they play an important

role in social and economic transformations, in territorial reconfigurations, but also in the perceptions and practices of individuals, that influence in return the cross-border space production. These contexts impact and frame the dynamic of bordering and the cross-border integration process. For example, the growth of international exchanges challenges the national framework, destabilizes local and regional territorial dynamics and generates processes of fragmentation and socio-spatial segregation. The construction of the EU allowed to open borders within Europe and to create a community space with common laws. Moreover, the construction of territory and the establishment of borders, as the perceptions, the practices of space or the strategies of each individual are determined by a series of local and regional factors such as historical events, sociocultural relationships induced, types of economic activities in place, political systems, but also by the physical elements such as location, topology, or the climate. In short, an unfavorable environment for cross-border cooperation (armed conflict, political and cultural tensions) will limit the opening of the border and the integration process, constraining the cross-border space production; while conversely, a set of contextual factors conducive to cooperation (pacified geopolitical situation, willingness of actors to cooperate, legislative and legal frameworks providing a spatial and institutional coordination) will enable exchanges to develop, and will promote the production a cross-border space.

This conceptual framework shows the unstable and protean character of cross-border space production. However, because of the complexity to consider theoretically the effects and the role of contextual factors in the production of cross-border space (Paasi 2011), given that these latter are numerous and their combinations very specific, in the following sections the choice is to delve further into the play of bordering and integration processes which are essential in the cross-border space production. Indeed, the border is at the heart of the cross-border system since it will determine the interactions and the realisation of a cross-border territorial project. On the other hand, cross-border integration seems to be the driving force of cross-border space production since it stimulates the dynamic of closer contact and forging links between territories. It thus drives a movement that produces change through the development of the flows and partnerships within the cross-border space. Later on the elements that make up this driving force will be analysed more extensively, but first of all the role of the border in the production of a cross-border space need to be investigated.

Figure 1. Conceptual framework of the cross-border space production



3) Bordering as keystone in the production of cross-border space

Despite current changes, territorial borders remain central in the organisation of society and the protection of special interest groups, whether in its geopolitical or daily aspects (Wilson and Donnan 2012). Indeed, they have acquired “a double meaning as state boundaries and as symbolic social and cultural lines of inclusion and difference, material and imagined, physical and cultural. They are based both on collective historical narratives and individual identity construction” (Kolossoff *et al.* 2012: 7). The multiple meanings and the complexity of its composition invite a questioning of the role of the border and of bordering in the production of cross-border space.

However, the use, form and perception of territorial border change according to the actors and individuals. Two main approaches stand out: the (geo)political and the societal ones. The first is linked to territorial sovereignty which is usually at the origin of border creation, whereas the second concerns the relations of individuals (as person, as economic actor...) to the border. Although this distinction remains classic, between the act of power and the human need, it is still pertinent for differentiating the processes at work in the production of cross-border space and understanding them.

The construction of a border materializes, from a (geo)political perspective, principally a process of territorialisation. This last is defined as a “*dynamic process whereby humans and their affairs are fixed territorially in space, by a range of actors but primarily by States*” (Agnew 2010: 745). Concretely, territorialisation constitutes a set of actions, techniques and information mechanisms which shape space in view of a territorial project (Debarbieux 2009). It can be seen as the implementation of the differentiation of space through the construction of a border. De facto, therefore, territorialisation and (re-)bordering are closely linked concepts. Borders are identified as the locus of state territoriality (Popescu 2008). Indeed, the territorial power (state, region, city) overseeing this spatial construction uses the border variously as an identity marker, with which it can unify, codify and establish its spatial imprint; as a symbol of its authority with which it imposes a control over society and filters the inflows and outflows; and as a guarantee of its sovereignty with which it gives legitimacy to its actions and anchors its territorial ambitions over the space. However, recent economic and social upheavals have forced states to reorganise institutions and renew their strategies. This renewal not only implies re-shaping the internal management of the territory, but also projecting oneself to the outside world by redefining the role of the border. Today, territorialisation is no longer confined to sovereign territory but aims to win over other spaces (international, cross-border, virtual) and networks (adhering to and seeking out a central position in political and economic networks). Furthermore, the will to attract flows (capital, material and immaterial goods) demands a redefinition of the regulations and a transformation of the border into a filtering system.

The societal approach to a border is different from the political one in a number of respects. To begin with, it is rather more ambiguous due to the variety of configurations and effects that a border engenders on individuals in terms of practices and perceptions, and it also stands in a different relation to it. Indeed, border is undergone by society because this latter is not at the root of its delineation. It has an important symbolic function as well as a strong psychological meaning (Donnan and Wilson 2001: 21). It is a marker of historical memory, an element that shapes and reinforces identities (Zhurzhenko 2011). Moreover, the border influences the territoriality of individuals who refer preferentially to the national space. It circumscribes a territory within which laws and rules regulate social relations implying for individuals both recognition of and adherence with the functioning of the territorial system. The border thus determines the space in which these social rules are in force and delimits the space of citizenship. In parallel to these aspects imposed by the presence of a border there are numerous individuals wishing to enjoy greater freedom of movement. This necessitates the lifting or reducing of barriers, opening borders to the circulation of goods, information and people and adapting transport means to this demand.

A process of de-bordering is then promoted. Its aim is to ease border crossings and to relax the pressure that borders exercise on society. The border is thus used as an interface allowing links to be forged on either side (with the attendant phenomena of repulsion and attraction). In this frame the societal approach is characterised by a reticular form (network structure of society and space of flows) and by movement (mobility of society). In certain circumstances, some individuals can invoke the need for borders with a view to security and protection (O'Dowd 2003: 25). A (re-)bordering process is then activated, in order to erect borders/barriers, to mark off closed living spaces by preserving them and differentiating them from others (like gated communities), or to exploit existing differentials between territories. In such a case, a stronger filtering system is put in place at the border.

Currently, the development of cross-border interactions, as well as the spatial effects produced by a border (convergence effects or divergence effects leading to accentuating inequalities), tend to question the logic of territorial power that led to the erection of borders and to a reconfiguration of territories. They are also shaking up socio-spatial practices and the perception of individuals, enlarging their territoriality at the cross-border frame (Spierings and van der Velde 2013; van der Velde 2000). Of course, both approaches have always been in play, but historically it was territorial power that regulated the societal dimension of the border (notably by exploiting its degree of permeability) and its territorial logic prevailed. Today, its dominance is challenged due to the networking of the world which connect people and places and bring them closer to each other, due to the opening of borders which allow greater economic and cultural exchanges, or simply due to the growth of mobility. A new cycle of territorialisation is emerging (Négrier 2009) even if states remain the major players in the production of space, imposing their choices with respect to border management, territorial construction and their control by means of the legislative and juridical system. However, following the transfer of competencies to institutional levels better suited to deal with these problems, certain actors, such as cities, are beginning to play a greater and greater role. State is no longer the sole arbiter of public policies and strategies to be implemented. Another dialogue is now established between state and local powers. This process of decentralisation has thus brought about multi-scalar dynamics which are distinct from the territorialisation process carried out by state power, making the production of cross-border space even more complex.

Though these two border approaches differ, one advocating a territorialised political logic, defending its sovereign space and urban centres (XXX 2014), the other highlighting a logic of social autonomy (Barel 1989) or mobility (Castells 1996), they are both produced in tandem. A confrontation appears between political territories and new territorialities that tends to reconsider the practices, uses and representations of space. These contradictory dynamics convey the need to cooperate both in the proximity and further away (through networks). "The challenge is to accept the existence of several spaces, coexisting in disorder and corresponding to different ways of being. [...] Territorial borders are constantly torn in a tension between need and surpassing. [...] We have moved from the principle of vertical hierarchical organization of territories, to one of inter-territoriality (principle of proximity)" (Lima 2009: 169). The challenges for the cross-border spaces production are therefore to articulate the two border approaches and to generate a cross-border dynamic that would transcend this confrontation and bring about a process of integration.

4) The process of integration as driving force for cross-border space production

Cross-border integration, an elusive concept

In the academic literature, the concept of integration is often treated in a compartmentalised way (economic, social, political), and it frequently appears linked to the interactions that have developed between territories, notably economic ones (Anderson and Wever 2003). The studies realised in this context often proposed gravitational or accessibility models in which a straightforward mathematical relation is assumed between the physical distance between areas and the volume or frequency of interactions between them. When applied to a cross-border context, these models emphasise the barrier effect produced by a border which distorts the results. Recent research has nevertheless demonstrated that spatial integration is not limited to interactions only but that phenomena of convergence and territorial homogenisation can also play a role in bringing territories on either side of a border in closer contact (De Boe *et al.* 1999; Alegria 2009). Following up on this work, A. Decoville *et al.* (2013) distinguish three models of cross-border integration: integration by specialisation, by polarisation and by osmosis. These results also bring to light some of the rationales at work in the integration process. The intensity and direction of cross-border exchanges seem to be correlated to existing differentials between territories (notably those concerning the labour and housing markets). In those cases in which cross-border relations are strongly asymmetrical, they produce an integration that maintains and even amplifies territorial disparities. In other cases of greater equilibrium territorial convergence tends to occur.

In addition, in the field of border studies, cross-border integration is generally presented in a rather linear and sequential manner. For example, the model designed by O. Martinez (1994) categorises border spaces from the perspective of economic interactions: *alienated borderlands*; *co-existent borderlands*; *interdependent borderlands*; *integrated borderlands*. Moreover, K.-J. Lundquist and M. Tripl (2009), in their work on innovative cross-border spaces, also propose such an approach using three stages: *weakly integrated*; *semi-integrated*; *strongly integrated*. These models conceive the cross-border integration as a process with a gradual approach. But these views do not, however, take possible changes into account (closing of a border, hardening of relations, loss of mutual confidence of actors) that could alter and even regress the dynamic of integration. Nor does such an approach consider the different potentials and degrees of integration between territories, or the volume and effective intensity of cross-border exchanges.

The analysis of cross-border integration remains a delicate question. Two examples can illustrate this observation: in a first case, the economic dynamism of a territory in terms of wealth and job creation would generate cross-border flows of workers and investors; in a second case, the complementary nature of the economic activities generates relations and exchanges between neighbouring territories. Both cases demonstrate cross-border interactions but their spatial logics are different. In the first case, a central area dominates a peripheral one; in the second case, two distinct territorial systems create synergy. Cross-border integration thus results as much from the symmetries and similarities between territories that make up a cross-border region as from the asymmetries and existing differentials on either side of a border.

Dimensions of cross-border integration

In order to overcome the ambiguities and misrecognition linked to the process of cross-border integration, in its functioning as much as in its intrinsic meaning, it is useful to deconstruct the concept in order to better specify its characteristics. To do this, several models have been relied on: the three approaches to cross-border interactions compiled by H. van Houtum (2000), the multi-dimensional aspects of borders realised by N. Hinfray (2010), and the types of spatial integration linked to the transborder urban temporalities of B. Reitel (2013). The cross-border integration is multidimensional by nature, but in order to study concretely this process, it needs to

shrink its complexity into different dimensions, which concentrate the main aspects of it. The result of this confrontation reveals four dimensions of cross-border integration (Table 1.):

The structural dimension presents the spatial characteristics of cross-border spaces (in terms of urbanisation, economic activities and social composition), thus allowing an analysis of complementarities and differences between territories, or on the dynamics of convergence or divergence, that is to say, towards tendencies of homogeneity or specialisation.

The functional dimension is linked to cross-border flows. In a general way, it represents all the exchanges and cross-border journeys linked to economic activity, to the socio-spatial practices that take part in the formation of a cross-border living area (Spierings and van der Velde 2013), and which range from tourism, leisure and shopping to residential mobility (Carpentier and Gerber 2009). It also expresses the connectedness of territories through communication networks.

The institutional dimension is characterised by cooperation, highlighting the networking of actors and their involvement in cross-border cooperation. Spatial as well as relational proximity (Lundquist and Tripl 2009) plays a vital role in the consolidation of cross-border partnerships. In addition, the institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation (Sohn *et al.* 2009), or the adoption and efficiency of public policies, constitute both fundamental and symbolic levers in the promotion and development of cross-border cooperation (Blatter 2004; Scott 2000; XXX 2013). This latter is, moreover, developed in a sequential manner (XXX 2012)¹, leading to the structuration of this collaboration with the setting-up of a mode of governance aimed at consolidating the territorial project.

Lastly, the ideational dimension regroups a variety of more subjective elements that are linked to individual and collective representations involved in the process of integration. Sharing the same social and political references, the sense of belonging to a cross-border living area, or identifying with common images and symbols play an important role since they testify to the impressions and opinions of populations faced with the changes involved in territorial construction. In parallel, the artistic, cultural or media productions bring other views on the border and the construction of a cross-border space (Amilhat-Szary 2012). In return they feed and influence individual and collective representations as well as socio-spatial practices. In addition, the ideational dimension takes also into account the perceptions of actors or people on the cross-border integration issue, and notably on the three other dimensions of the cross-border integration.

Table 1. Dimensions of cross-border integration²

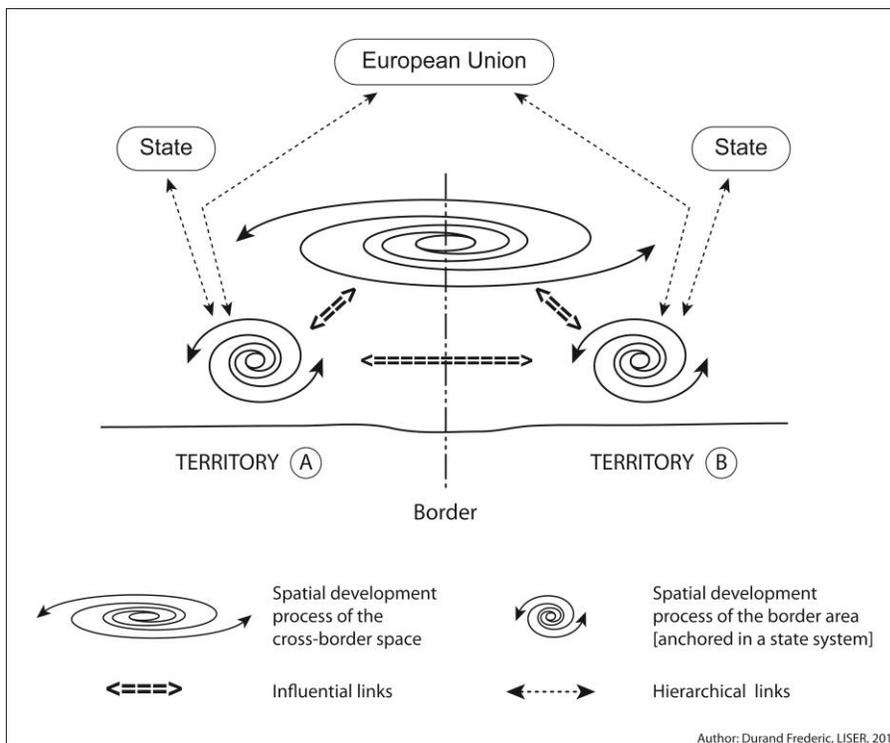
Dimensions	Actions	Explanations
Structural	Structuring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spatial and social composition • Dynamics of convergence or divergence of spatial development of territories
Functional	Exchange	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cross-border economic flows • Individual and collective spatial and social practices • Communication networks
Institutional	Organisation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Networking of actors (political, economic, civil society, cultural milieux) and setting up of cross-border collaborations • Willingness of actors to cooperate and define strategies and common projects • Cross-border planning and policies
Ideational	Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sharing of same cultural, social and political references • Adjustments of identities and sense of belonging to cross-border living area • Perceptions of actors/people

The deconstruction of the cross-border integration process enables to study separately a variety of phenomena related to it (their evolution, their intensity) grouped in four dimensions, and then, to combine them into a broader analysis in order to provide the most comprehensive picture of dynamics at work - sometimes convergent, sometimes opposite - within cross-border spaces. The distinction of the cross-border integration according to four dimensions makes it possible to unravel the complexity of this process to better grasp its mechanisms.

Taking these characteristics into account, cross-border integration has to redefine as a dynamic and multi-dimensional process of bringing territories closer together and strengthening of social bonds by lowering the barriers associated with border and by the development of cooperation between territorial systems. This process is also protean and impermanent: it is made up of diverse elements which develop independently of each other, following different rhythms and time-scales according to the geographical scale (Reitel 2013). Moreover, the impermanence of the process implies that integration does not necessarily represent progress or continuity. The changes at work (contextual factors, the elements making up the dimensions of this process) can engender a slowing down or a drop of the integration process. Nothing is fixed, nor established. Cross-border integration ceaselessly remains a perpetual and complex construction. This approach also takes into account of the integration potential of the cross-border space and reveals its specific characteristics (nature of the border, quantity and quality of cross-border exchanges, geopolitical and cultural context, political will for cooperation). Indeed, not every cross-border space can offer the same types and levels of integration. Within this framework cross-border integration appears as the result of dynamics at work within the territories making up the cross-border space, and it can only be unique and dependent on the political, economic, cultural and social particularities and characteristics of these territories.

In addition, as cross-border regions are made up of several territories with ties of dependency, whether institutionalised or not, to other spatial entities (region, state, EU), cross-border integration is also seen as a complementary process which superimposes on other processes already operating within border areas, without cancelling them. Indeed, the opening of the border has led to make more complex the organization and structuring of the border territories. The cross-border integration appears as an additional spatial dynamics process which completes the spatial development processes already at work in the border areas, which goes beyond the national and regional framework, and which covers the neighbouring territories located on both sides of a border. Studying cross-border integration needs to take into account both the fact that border areas are spaces that are already structured (with their own history, culture and identity) and anchored in a specific state system (with precise laws, rules and mechanisms, and with their own spatial dynamics); and to consider cross-border spaces as another level in which a new living area is constructed covering both sides of a border. As Figure 2 shows, two rationales of spatial development cohabit at two different scales, bringing with it problems at the level of the articulation of territories and their strategic orientations, producing conflicts of interest between actors who can end up competing with each other. Therefore, the question of cross-border integration posits numerous challenges since cross-border spaces constitute in-between spaces that straddle territorial systems that are sometimes very different, in which territorialities are entangled, and in which territorial reconfigurations can become a source of major political, economic or social tensions. Furthermore the two spatial development processes at work at the level of both the border area and across borders mutually influence each other and have an impact on the ways of designing territorial development: on one side, the economic, social and political situation of a border area will shape the orientations for spatial development of the cross-border space, while, at the same time, the cross-border question will inspire the territorial strategies formulated within border areas.

Figure 2. Transverse view of a cross-border space

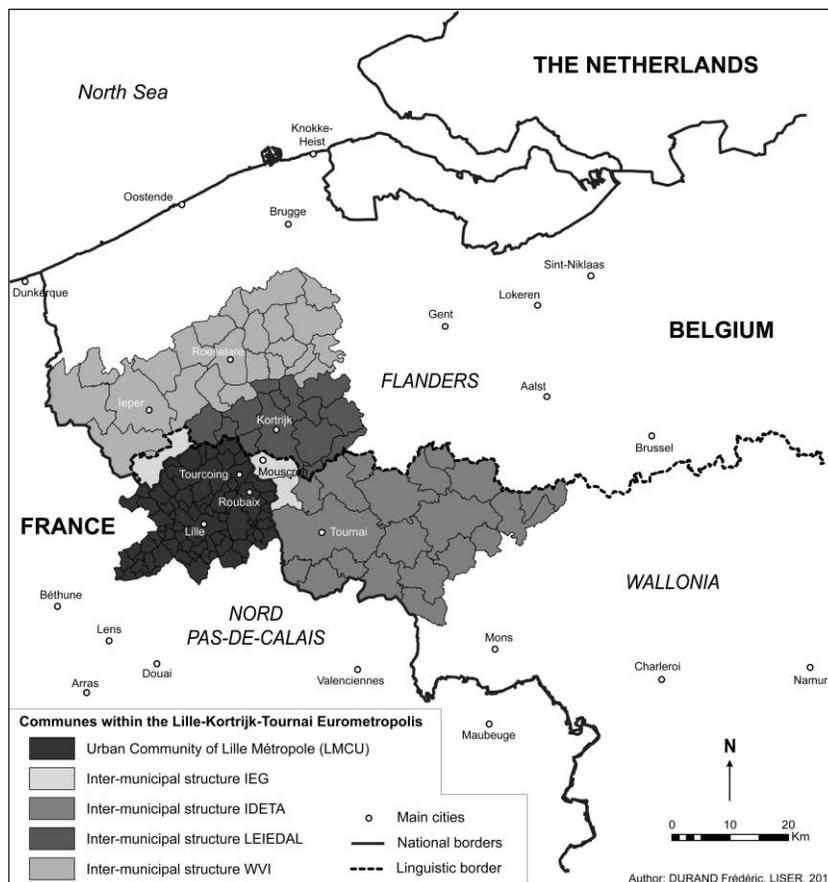


Because of the numerous tangles induced by cross-border integration mechanisms, the cross-border space production is a complex construction which tends to be carried out over the long term. It could be seen as the passage from border areas which are simply juxtaposed and have limited cross-border interactions, to the construction of a cross-border space (which superimposes on existing territories without making them disappear) characterised by a set of cross-border links of different kinds which tend to solder the territories and their populations closer together. It is a transition that implies to implement numerous changes, both for individuals and for actors, who have to articulate two interconnected dynamics together and redefine the management, organisation and development strategies of their territories in view of the production of a cross-border space.

5) The production of a cross-border metropolis: Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai

The objective of this last section is to apply the analytical grid of cross-border space production to the metropolitan area of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, situated along the Franco-Belgian border. The choice to study this region is explained primarily by the long tradition of exchanges and flows within this space and secondly by the recent political dynamics that aims to develop a European cross-border metropolis. Following the conceptual framework developed, three stages need to be analysed before evaluating cross-border space production: the contexts, the process of national border construction and the process of cross-border integration.

Figure 3. Map of the cross-border metropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai



A favourable context to the creation of a cross-border metropolis

The cross-border metropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai is the product of rather propitious contextual circumstances, which did not involve any major geopolitical border incidents. Indeed, regional/local contexts have shaped the continuous development of these territories: a comparable geography (at the physical level, where all of the areas making up the metropolitan area are located in the vast Northern European plain, as well as the human level, where the French and Belgian areas are both densely populated), a common history and culture and an economy based on the same industries: textiles, food and printing (DREAL *et al.* 2009). In addition, the EU promotes cross-border cooperation through juridical (instruments for management such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)), and political supports (Madrid Convention 1980, Maastricht Treaty, 1992). In accordance with EU policy, the Brussels agreement (signed in 2002) defines the terms for cross-border cooperation between territorial authorities and local public bodies. It gives a legal framework to cross-border cooperation actions. Furthermore, the UE provides a financial support to border territories. Thanks to INTERREG programs, Northern France, Wallonia and Flanders were able to develop many cross-border initiatives to favour economic, cultural and tourism partnerships but also to promote the sharing of competencies and public facilities. During the four INTERREG program periods (between 1991 and 2013), the EU has funded 542 cross-border projects for a total budget of € 258 million³.

From customs barriers to the free movement of goods and people

The Franco-Belgian territorial border, re-drawn many times following military campaigns, was finally fixed in the eighteenth century with the treaty of Utrecht in 1713. The stability of the border allowed both French and Belgian states to build up their structures following on their national revolutions (1789 and 1830 respectively) and led to a long and powerful process of territorialisation. This latter was characterised by protectionism, imposing heightened surveillance and control along the border and tariffs for entry and exit. The state border thus functioned like a customs barrier. In addition, this process of territorialisation also contributed to the strong national and regional identity formation on either side of the border, which was increased with the process of regionalisation, whether in France (initiated with the decentralisation laws of 1982) or in Belgium (with the language laws of 1932 and the move to federalism in 1970).

According to the societal approach, the border never constituted a major obstacle even if it was a customs barrier. From the nineteenth century, regular local migrations (chiefly Belgian workers) were observed. They were even increased when the Lille region and the mining basin of Nord Pas-de-Calais developed industrially (Rainhorn 2008)⁴. The end of the military conflict in 1945, associated with the construction of a European space, changed the border. Border crossing became easier thanks to a simplification of administrative procedures and the putting in place of computer tools to manage and control traffic. This movement of progressive lifting of customs barriers was ratified with the Schengen Agreement of 1985. The border checks were eliminated and the free movement of people was validated between Belgium and France (followed by goods in 1993). These new European laws thus led to a remarkable process of de-bordering. In practice, there is no longer any border⁵. However the cultural border remains and separates the French-speaking from the Flemish-speaking territories.

The multi-dimensional integration of the cross-border metropolitan area

Based on the analysis realised in the third section, four dimensions of cross-border integration at work in the metropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai will be treated in succession.

• *Structural dimension*

The metropolitan area under consideration is made up of several urban entities, of which the principal one is the conurbation comprising the cities of Lille, Roubaix and Tourcoing, extending on the Belgian side to Mouscron.

In addition, a cross-border urban development has also arisen along the Lys River between Armentières and Kortrijk including a series of twin cities (Comines, Wervik, Halluin/Menen). Within this polycentric cross-border urban system certain dynamics converge (population growth, GDP) but others show differences between French and Belgian territories, notably the number of young people (greater in France) and senior citizens (superior in Belgium), the unemployment rate (higher in the urban community of Lille), wages (higher in Belgium) and housing (smaller surface area and higher prices in France). The economic fabric seems also diverse, even if a common increase in service activities is observed on both sides of the border. Due to its size, Lille remains the principal centre of employment (ADU de Lille Métropole *et al.* 2012).

• *Functional dimension*

The dynamic of exchanges with this cross-border space is not new. It is linked to the labour market and is explained by the economic and social differentials existing between France and Belgium, especially since the economic crises in agriculture and the linen industry which affected the territories of Western Flanders very badly during the years 1845-1850 (Nagels 2002). In the nineteenth century, migration was primarily seasonal and related to agricultural work. When the textile and coal industries took off in the region, the migratory inflow of Belgian workers increased and took two specific forms: (1) Many Belgians settled in French cities; a population census of 1906 mentions 193,209 residents of Belgian origin (INSEE 2006). (2) A daily commute developed thanks to improved train transport and the attraction of French wages. The number of Belgians coming to work in France jumped from 25,000 in 1906 to 100,000 in 1929 (Lentacker 1973). In 1928, an agreement was signed between France and Belgium to introduce a border pass⁶. But the economic crisis of 1929 caused the number of Belgian border workers to drop, reaching 50,000 in 1936. This trend continued after 1945 when the textile industry in France slowed and the economic activity of Flanders grew. At the end of the 1970s, the number fell below 10,000 (INSEE 2006).

Today the border areas are relatively well-interconnected. The links between various urban centres in the Eurometropolis are principally served by four main motorways and two railway lines, one linking Lille with Kortrijk (stopping at Tourcoing and Mouscron) the other Lille with Tournai. 160,000 cross-border journeys are effected each day within the Eurometropolis (that is, about 80,000 people), of whom 3/5 travel from France to Belgium (Transitec 2011). A third of this traffic is linked to work or study, another third to shopping, whereas the remainder relate to leisure, visits and assistance. The main mode of travel remains the car, with 100,000 vehicles crossing the border each day. Moreover, traffic is on the rise (+24% between 1998 and 2007) (LMCU 2010). Numerous cross-border public transport services have been put in place to offer an alternative to the car, even if the former are rarely used (XXX 2013): only 6,000 users take the train and 1,000 people take the bus (Transitec 2011). Another cross-border flow exists within the metropolitan area and concerns residential mobility. They can be estimated using the residential attractiveness indicator which measures the number of residents who have the citizenship from the neighbouring country. In the case studied a significant difference can be observed between the territories: the Belgian areas attract more French people (3.7% of the population in 2000) than the other way round (0.3% of the population). This distribution seems to reinforce itself on the Belgian side, since in 2006, the level increased to 4.2% (ESPON 2010).

• *Institutional dimension*

Concerning the institutional dimension, three periods can be identified: the genesis period (1980s), the COPIT⁷ period (1991-2007) and the EGTC period (2008-today).

Since the 1980s, some political actors such as Pierre Mauroy had the ambition to shape a cross-border metropolis, getting the Belgian and French territories together around the conurbation of Lille. The objective of such a project was to reinforce and share the potentialities of each associated territory in order to be able to face contemporary challenges better and constitute an attractive and dynamic economic area of international stature. To achieve this, the political actors, following on informal contacts, decided in 1991 to create a cross-border structure: the COPIT.

From that pivotal date, a whole train of events was set in motion, strengthening the links between both sides of the border. The GROOTSTAD project launched in 1998 the first studies in order to formulate a strategy adapted to a cross-border framework. In 2002, the Brussels agreement enabled to shape the regional cross-border cooperation. In 2005, a Franco-Belgian parliamentary working group was set up to identify any legal obstacles to cross-border cooperation and to propose some solutions in various domains⁸. Their conclusion, submitted in 2007, resulted in the signing by fourteen partners⁹ of the “Declaration of intent for the creation of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis”. In 2008, the setting-up of the EGTC introduced a new phase in the structuring of cooperation by enlarging the number of actors involved in cross-border governance, especially with the inclusion of national actors. This new organisation has as nucleus a dedicated team (around ten employees) and receives more significant funding, notably for conducting strategic and prospective studies (Eurometropolis strategy 2020).

• *Ideational dimension*

The ideational dimension of cross-border integration is evaluated through the representations of inhabitants and their impression of sharing common elements (cultural, linguistic and symbolic). Two surveys were conducted with local actors (politicians and municipal secretaries) to study their perceptions of the cross-border metropolis (TETRA 2000; 2001). The conclusions show that the visions of the cross-border metropolitan territory project are different on both sides of the border (French side: willingness to gradually reach the status of international metropolis, Belgian side: more nuanced perceptions). The results highlights some concerns from the Belgian stakeholders (fear of developing a strong Franco-Flemish axis for Walloon actors, lack of language recognition for Flemish actors). On the other hand, the sense of belonging of citizens to the cross-border metropolis is weak or non-existent (TETRA 2001: 61). Furthermore, no strong symbol of cross-border integration exists in the cross-border region, which provides a popular rallying point or something to identify with (such as the Øresund bridge or the one between Strasbourg and Kehl).

On the other hand, the ideational dimension can be grasped through other vectors such as cartographic production. Two cross-border maps have already been created, one by the inter-municipal structures on the business parks, another by the EGTC agency on the tourist facilities. Both highlight the Eurometropolis as being a cross-border space where some form of continuity appears. The national border is not left out but not emphasised either. These two maps, used as territorial marketing tools, demonstrate the serious intention of institutional actors of promoting a cross-border territory, communicating both its existence and its relevance.

The similar historical and cultural roots on both sides of the Franco-Belgian border facilitate collaboration and exchanges between the two populations but the linguistic barrier between French-speaking and Flemish-speaking zones tends to stiffen the perception of individuals as well as their spatial practices and their relations as neighbours, even if the impregnation of Flemish culture within this cross-border space, notably through the toponymy (Ryckeboer 2000), could be a unifying factor.

What form does the cross-border space production of Lille take?

The present production of the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai cross-border space benefits from a very favourable framework (promotion of cross-border cooperation on European, national and local levels) and is being realised around a stable border which is not closed while being permeable to exchanges. Even during the protectionist period, the border did not represent an obstacle, but actually stimulated the economic growth of the region (Lentacker 1973). It is a production rooted in the dynamic of Belgian cross-border workers. Though these movements have evolved, they are still current today albeit that certain aspects of the migratory journeys have changed to include not just work, but other kinds of cross-border traffic. Currently, the interactions within the Eurometropolis are not uni-directional (as in the cases of Luxembourg and Basel (Sohn *et al.* 2009)) and tend to describe this space according to a model of integration by osmosis (Decoville *et al.* 2013). In their typology of

European cross-border regions, Topaloglou *et al.* (2005) indeed define the cross-border region of Lille as being a *Cluster A*, that is, combining territories with strong economic ties and similar cultural and linguistic characteristics.

Moreover, cross-border cooperation in this region goes back a long way. It was already implemented by states to regulate the employment market at the beginning of the twentieth century, then at local level from the 1980s with the aim of setting up a cross-border metropolitan area. This historical depth reinforces the cross-border space production since, on the one hand, the movement of people has created and strengthened the ties between them, which in turn has brought the territories closer together; on the other hand, the actors in charge of making it happen can draw on past experience to consolidate cross-border cooperation.

Certain brakes remain in place, however, which impact directly on the cross-border space production and constrain its structuration. Indeed, despite the political progress made, the dynamics of cross-border cooperation have long been (and still are) stymied by differences in institutional structure between the two countries. In addition, border effects are noticeable at the demographic as well as linguistic and economic levels, even if certain measures tend to (re-)stitch certain social bonds between the inhabitants¹⁰ or seek greater complementarity between economic activities¹¹. Again, the process of territorial development on a regional level tends to take priority over cross-border dynamics. More projects are implemented for the former than the latter. This is understandable because the initiatives of political actors are primarily directed at the territories they represent and which give them their democratic legitimacy. Cross-border issues are certainly on the political agenda, they are just lower down. Nevertheless, the dynamics of cross-border cooperation has already led to institutionalize a cross-border space, whose main objective is to build a metropolis with European stature. The new strategy of the EGTC agency is to promote territorial development around three axes (socio-economic development, accessibility, and environment) so that a sustainable cross-border living area can be set up, recognised and used by its inhabitants.

6) Conclusion

The conceptualization of the cross-border space production suggests to address the cross-border issue from a new perspective. The theoretical model presented in this paper offers a comprehensive and feasible method, regardless of the contexts, to analyze and evaluate the building dynamic of cross-border spaces. In a context of military destabilization of the border, the production of cross-border space could be severely impacted and profoundly altered even destroyed, and can generate a process of disintegration of the territories (for example in Israel or in the Russia–Ukraine border). In a more peaceful context, as is the case with the Eurometropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, the cross-border space production is carried by the two linked processes which intervene simultaneously: first of all, a de-bordering one, which reduces the barrier effect of the border and make easier cross-border exchanges; and then a cross-border integration process, which drives the construction of a new space¹² that transcends state systems. However this construction dynamic varies with the nature and evolution of the border and according to the intensity and depth of the dimensions that make up the process of cross-border integration. Furthermore, the case study of Lille demonstrates that the cross-border space production has an evolutionary character since over the last hundred years an inversion of workflow is observed (nowadays, almost 28,000 people from the conurbation of Lille commute every day to Belgium), and a variety of cross-border interactions is appeared with some news practices (shopping, study, leisure, services). Thanks to the conceptual framework, the complexity and depth of the cross-border space production of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai appears clearly, mainly at the functional level and institutional level, and highlights the territorial shift engaged – on a long term - by political actors to build a European metropolitan region which bring together and interconnect the French, Walloon and Flemish territories.

One of the principal contributions of this paper concerns the cross-border integration issue. Deconstructing this process allows to study it in a new way, analyzing every phenomenon that compose it. This approach enables to conceive cross-border integration as a variable geometry process, where each dimension is growing in parallel, with its own dynamics, disconnected from each other. However, the existing relationships and mutual influences between the four dimensions are not taken into account directly in the conceptual framework. Indeed, the evolution of a dimension can alter or otherwise enhance the development of another dimension of the cross-border integration. From a theoretical point of view, these relationships are not operating - even if they can be found indirectly through the analysis of each dimension - and obviously represents a limit of the model.

As H. Lefèvre already pointed out, a gap can exist between the production of space and society. In a cross-border context, alternative representations and divergent ideological or political positions multiply the readings of space, putting distance between the perceptions and practices of individuals and the materiality of the space. This generates different kinds of tension (individual, collective, community-based, political). The production of a cross-border space thus seems to be a process rife with contradictions and with ambivalent consequences: at one time integrating, because it takes new spatial and social interactions between populations into account, but at the same time disintegrating, since it destabilises the order established by territorial powers and entails a reconfiguration of territories.

In some ways the production of a cross-border space occurs at a period which can be defined by a state of hypertension (Lipovetsky and Charles 2004). This awareness of an era overtaken by the acceleration of societal mutations implies innovations and experimentations in order to find solutions to this hypertension and to manage both territories with their resources and individuals responsibly. The cross-border spaces production would then be a response to these transformations, to new relational perspectives (local and global) and spatial practices. The cross-border space production is thus a collective construction of a history, identity and territorial project. It constitutes a going beyond of traditional territorial and institutional forms through cooperation, hybridisation and invention, but also a revolution in the representations of people. Certainly, the cross-border space production is a strong example of contemporary territorial rearrangement in the state system, even if the cross-border institutions are currently too weak to change state territorial sovereignty (Popescu 2008). This reflection on the cross-border space production puts into perspective the relation between territory, inhabitants and sovereignty, which had previously benefited from prior historical evidence, since, in Europe at least, territories were under the authority of a state power which monopolised political, economic and social issues (Balibar 2005). In the European tradition, territories are inseparable from political and institutional sovereignty (territorial power) and are interdependent with the invention of border (established by the territorial power in question). These notions are all interconnected. They model the construction of the world as of society. Today, the networking of individuals, the technological means for communicating and travelling, all reduce time-distance and the need for rootedness in one place. The whole structuring process of space by society is questioned. The sovereignty principle of states is currently under pressure (Brunet-Jailly 2010). Indeed, the production of the cross-border space alters the codes, habits and reference points of individuals as well as the existing forces and balances of a space. It transcends the framework of the state and reconsiders the logic of territorialisation. With the production of cross-border space a new way of living spatial reality appears and blends with the one derived from history and associated with the dimension of the nation-state. This process of construction thus builds a hybrid and constantly changing space in which different views of the world, different levels of power, different strategies and practices, divergent interests, are all confronted with each other.

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Endnotes

¹ Cross-border cooperation is defined as a process that develops over long time and goes through four phases: exploratory phase / structuring phase / programming phase / adjustment phase.

² The term interaction, so often used in academic work on cross-border integration, has not been applied here to the description of the four dimensions, as it regroups actions or phenomena which are transversal to these dimensions. Other remark, there is no hierarchy between the four dimensions.

³ The number of cross-border projects and the total budget were calculated with data collected in Interreg program documents (covering the four periods: 1991-1994, 1995-1999, 2000-2006, and 2007-2013) from the website <http://www.interreg-fwvl.eu/fr>.

⁴ “The chamber of commerce of Tourcoing thus opposed in 1881 any measure aimed at limiting the work of foreigners, since the setting up of employment quotas for foreigners could do considerable harm to the profitability of businesses.” (Rainhorn 2008: 23)

⁵ The border posts are still visible but there are some projects of reconversion under way: <http://www.300ansdefrontiere.eu/index.php?page=page&pageID=36>

⁶ The modalities of border control for Belgian workers were fixed by the French administration after the Revolution of 1848. Several documents were required: passport, worker's booklet stamped with consular visa and certificate of earnings (Archives Départementales du Nord, 1848, série M administration générale et

économie, M 174-3). Yet the formalities changed over time: (i) they were relaxed between 1852 and 1858 (simple presentation of worker's booklet stamped with consular visa); (ii) a period of stricter measures between 1858 and 1874, following the attempt on Napoléon III, with an increase in administrative procedures, and paying a deposit of 2.50 francs (Archives Départementales du Nord, 1858, série M administration générale et économie, M 604-9) then again the re-establishment of a general passport regime in 1871 (Circulaire du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, 28 avril 1871); (iii) a period of general and complete opening of borders for foreigners between 1874 and 1914 (Circulaire du Ministère des Affaires étrangères, 26 mars 1874, 15 juillet 1874 et 26 août 1878); and lastly (iv) a period of regulation between 1917 and 1939 (to limit the number of cross-border workers), which, first of all, made an identity card compulsory and imposed a duty of registration for foreigners at 8.80 francs, before bringing in a border card in 1928 valid for two years and validated by a Belgian mayor, the employer and French employment inspection agency (Boutillier *et al.* 2002).

⁷ The '*Conférence Permanente Intercommunale Transfrontalière*' (COPIT) united five inter-municipal groupings: LEIEDAL (inter-municipal grouping for the regional development of Kortrijk), WVI (inter-municipal grouping for West Flanders, around Roeselare), IEG (inter-municipal grouping for studies and management, around Mouscron), IDETA (inter-municipal grouping for Economic Development and Planning, around Tournai) and LMCU (Lille Metropolis Urban Community).

⁸ Many fields have been covered by the Franco-Belgian Parliamentary working group: urbanism, spatial planning, transports, telecommunications, employment, tax, business development, water and environment, health and care, teaching, training, security.

⁹ <http://www.eurometropolis.eu/who-are-we/14-founding-institutions.html>

¹⁰ Multiple initiatives are organized: cross cultural events, providing a Franco-Dutch guide to learn and communicate with neighbors...

¹¹ For example, INNOV'EUROMETROPOLIS project is an initiative to develop a joint cross-border dynamics in the field of innovation.

¹² The cross-border spaces are flexible spaces, which may have a functional area different than an institutionalized perimeter.