

DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-BORDER AREAS. STUDY CASES REVIEW

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Abstract:

The paper aims to review study cases found in the scientific literature concerning the development of cross-border areas in European Union and its neighbourhood. The introductory part of the paper is drawing few considerations about the cross-border areas. Further we identified in the specific literature relevant study cases that provide lessons learned, tools and models that can contribute to the development of the cross-border areas. The last part of the paper is focusing on an inquiry about how this lessons, learned, tools and models may be adapted in case of cross-border areas along the Romanian border with the EU Eastern Neighbourhood.

Key words: cross-border area, economic development, Eastern Neighbourhood

JEL classification: P48, R58

1. INTRODUCTION

The present paper is part of a larger research frame that has as objective to analyze in a multidisciplinary frame the economic development poles that are located in the border areas and to identify the way in which the viable development strategies can be applied in the cross-border context, therefore to propose a setting up of a new architecture for the cross-border areas development. As a step in this research we consider some relevant study cases that scientific literature provides about cross-border areas, inside the European Union Borders and at its borders with Eastern neighbours, in order to figure out lessons learned, tools and models that can contribute to the development of the cross-border areas. For the selected cases we considered, partly or entirely, few elements: the existence of historical encouraging/discouraging background, existence of written treaties/agreements, diplomatic exchanges at national level, partnership relations, financing framework, existence of a strategy, the involved actors (public administration, civil society, companies, universities), particularities that mark the cross-border area. We will use these elements in order to figure out a development frame for the cross-border areas along the Romanian border with the EU Eastern Neighbourhood, namely with Ukraine and Republic of Moldova.

2. FEW CONSIDERATIONS ABOUT CROSS-BORDER CONTEXT

If we think at the borders it is constructive to accept that their existence cannot be avoided, as a continuous element, the only changeable being the character and courses of borders, therefore, the Europe territorial limits will be temporary in terms of political relevance (Langer, 2012). A vivid example is the one of the borders and border regionals in the Central and Eastern part of Europe that faced many changes in the last decades. On the one side we have the free movement in the Schengen area but limited by the lack of trust in some Member States in terms of border control abilities and on the other side the problems that an open border brings – specific crimes, food security issues, environmental pollution issues, traffic, so on.

Beyond all these, the cooperation among local and regional authorities from the different sides of the border make tighter relations between regions and countries, making from Europe a place for meeting the diversities in many fields – economic, politic, institutional cultural or professional (Bohner, 2011). The governance of the cross-border regions cannot be approached in the traditional political or territorial sense, instead having the approach of networks among many public and private actors bringing together different social systems based on different system values

(Lepik, 2011), and therefore, the decisions are not depending so much on national level. That makes the cross-border regions in EU and its neighbourhood as forms of institutional building due to the demanding changes along the borders, involvement of different types of local governance and the interaction of multilevel governance networks – local, regional, European and even global (Lissandrello, 2004). The researches about the cross-border areas generally compare the living conditions on the both sides of a border and the relations across the border, with consideration of the political order of the two states, the geostrategic balance, the mode of historical establishment of the border, the degree of openness and permeability, emotional loadings (Langer, 2012). Sometimes the cross-border cooperation is not limited to involvement of border cities or regions only, but also growth centers, such as capital cities (Lepik, 2011).

An encouraging frame of cross-border cooperation at European level is the one of the legal instruments, which has two main sources: the Council of Europe and the European Union (Odendahl, 2011). The Council of Europe provides mainly three sets of instruments – conventions, recommendations and political declarations, all of them issued and/or adopted by the Committee of Ministers, to which it may be added some others that do not have immediate impact, such as decisions of the Committee of Ministers or activities that are promoting the cross-border cooperation in Europe. The instruments provided by the European Union are different than the ones that Council of Europe uses but are complementary, widening the legal frame of the cross-border cooperation. European Union focuses on technical and financial support of cross-border cooperation, both inside the EU borders and between EU and its Neighbours. Therefore there are funds and programmes – Cohesion and Regional Policy, European Neighbourhood Policy, Pre-Accession Policy. Relevant to be mentioned is the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation - EGTC (European Parliament and of the Council of European Union, 2006), that is a cooperation instrument at the EU level established for the creation of cooperative groups on its territory, invested with legal personality, in order to overcome the obstacles hindering territorial cooperation and the use of this instrument is optional. An EGTC must have members from at least two member states and members can include local or regional authorities, bodies governed by public law within the meaning of the second subparagraph of Article 1(9) of Directive 2004/18/EC, or Member States and the composition and powers should be described in a convention that is subject to approval by the member states with members in the body.

After these short getting through we should retain the reality of border existence and the always changing course and character of it, the network governance of the cross-border regions and the existence of a complex legal frame for cross-border cooperation in Europe as elements that are part of the cross-border cooperation context in Europe.

3. MODELS FOR DEVELOPMENT OF CROSS-BORDER AREAS

In the following we will go through some study cases found in the literature in order to identify lessons learned, tools and models that can contribute to the development of the cross-border areas. We made two groups of study cases – one formed by cases of cross-border cooperation inside the borders of European Union, between member states, and one formed by cases of cross-border cooperation at the borders of the European Union, between member states and neighbouring countries. Some of the cases we used in a previous paper as partnership and cooperation models examples in order to illustrate the challenges and the solutions that the partners identified aiming a good partnership in the benefit of all countries or regions involved (Slusarciuc, 2013).

3.1. Cross-border development cases inside the European Union borders

a. Polish-German border

Widely, one model of cooperation is the Polish-German cross-border mainly because the historical disadvantageous background deeply imprinted in the memory of the inhabitants from the cross-border area was overcome. There is a Polish-German cooperation treaty focused on three main areas: conservation activities, logistical activities concerning the establishment of consistent protection goals according to international agreements and planning of a coherent system for environmental management between the two countries (Degórski, 2008). The area benefited by the European funds through the INTERREG programme few lessons being important (Ciok & Raczyk, 2008), such as, a polarization is created by the cooperation programmes in the cross-border areas and a change in the structure of projects is recommended, with more focus on economic and social integration and less on infrastructure. There is relevant also the cooperation and networking between the capitals of the two countries, that consist of a deeper and complementary level of collaboration (Korcelli-Olejniczak, 2008). The support for the cross-border cooperation in this area comes from different levels: EU, national governments, regional authorities from both sides of the border, Euroregions and local administrations, therefore nowadays the Polish-German cross-border cooperation serve as a model for the regions at the Eastern border of EU, having similarities between this border and the Ukrainian-Polish one (Gorzela, 2006). A specific element that helped the neighbours at the border between Germany and Poland to become familiar with each other, eroded the language and cultural barriers and increased the regional consciousness may was the existence and good functioning of the Euroregions, as example Euroregion Pro Europa Viadrina (Yoder, 2003). Consequently, the region took the first steps in this direction through the promotion of common interests, common goals and common institutions.

b. Danish-German border (Malloy, 2010)

We found a study case that shows the contribution of national minorities to the building of a new frame for cooperation in the so considered 'old' Danish-German border region, transforming it into a „European 'cross-border regional space for politics'”. Today's border region covers the old Duchy of Slesvig (Danish) or Schleswig (German), meaning the area from the River Eider in today's Schleswig-Holstein in Germany to the River Kongeaen in today's Region Syddanmark in Denmark. The area had a changeable leadership during time until 1920 when a permanent division put an end to this state, establishing two national minorities, the German minority residing in southern Denmark and the Danish minority residing in northern Germany. Subsequently, it followed events and conflicts that broke the relationship between the two states, the rebuilding after 1945 of a cooperative relationship being a slow and difficult process. Early stages of cross-border development had a slow progress partly because of the almost diametrically opposed views and actions about the EU in the border region in the middle of 1990s, some opinions quoted in the same cited paper considering that "there is not one border/barrier but four, a structural (legal) one, a language one, a cultural one and an information one." Therefore, in the last part of 1990s there were political tensions augmented by economic ones, caused by uneven economic development between the two national economies across the border. Still, the actors from both sides of the border, meaning national minorities, changed this largely antagonistic situation and, throughout the 1990s and 2000s, rebuilt the border region through transforming it into a 'European' space for politics.

c. Three Borders area – Austria, Italy, Slovenia (Janschitz & Kofler, 2006)

A case where the historical roots led to closed connections between three countries is the one of the cross-border area between Austria, Italy and Slovenia. Economic issues, political decision-making process and social patterns were the influencing factors for the communities on all the sides of the common borders, this being considered "a multicultural living space by virtue of a shared

history and material culture, as well as geographical proximity". All the three countries, as member states, assumed a common European identity and benefit by financing programmes as PHARE CBC and INTERREG, the financial framework helping various cross-border projects and activities. The first step of an institutionalized cooperation was made at the national level in 1978, through the Working Community Alpe-Adria organization that includes regions from more than the three countries (Austria, Croatia, Germany, Hungary, Italy, Slovenia and Switzerland). The aim was focused on economic development, traffic, tourism, water management, cultural relations and other related issues. The European funds created the context for specific projects: development of a cross-border cooperation plan for common marketing of cultural monuments and cultural events, design of common offers for recreation and touristic attractions, tourism development concept for the Three Borders Area that promotes a variety of cultural sites, social aspects and natural resources that united and divided the area in the past, the application of a coordinated bid for Olympic Winter Games 2006 with a common marketing view and many more.

d. Italo-Slovene border (Lipott, 2013)

The case of Italo-Slovene border is relevant due to the example of border twin towns Gorizia and Nova Goriza, located in the two states. Gorizia was home for three different communities – German, Italian and Slovene until 1918, later, in 1947, being founded Nova Goriza as a separate town on the other side of the border, in a different political and economic system. Due to relations and acquaintances, people cooperated on land property issues first and culture and sport later. In 1962, the Udine Accords set up new frame for cooperation on finding solutions to practical issues as drinking water supply, urban planning, roads, local traffic, environmental protection or mutual consultation. In 1990 it was signed the Transfrontier Pact, later named Collaboration Protocol, that added an organizational frame to already existing cooperation on economic basis and cooperation between municipalities. In 2002, the mayors of the two cities and the one of Sempeter-Vrtojba created "the three executives body" as an area of collaboration with regular meetings. The funds from INTERREG programme helped to run projects, a significant one being EureGo as a private law association of Slovenian and Italian local administrative bodies (59 Italian and 13 Slovenian). In 2010, the three municipalities mentioned earlier established the first European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation as mentioned in a previous section of this paper.

e. Slovenian-Croatian Border

This cross-border area has an interesting dynamic because both countries had history of open border and cross-border cooperation as parts of former Yugoslavia, the change later when Slovenia became member state of the EU in 2004 and of the Schengen area in the same year and a recent change again when Croatia became member state too in 2013. The cross-border trade, the petty trade, the visits from a country to other for consumption goods influenced significantly the economic cooperation between the two countries in the cross-border area. 1999 was the year when it was ratified a free trade agreement between the two countries that contributed at a large extent to the economic cooperation between the two states (Barbič, 2006). Officials realized that during the intermediate time, when the border between the two countries was not so open, the exports from Croatia to Slovenia declined because of the border rules change and despite the long and peaceful tradition along the border, these changes in status affected the economic relationships (Pavlakovich-Kochi & Stiperski, 2006). Before Croatia becoming member states both countries receive financial assistance for cross-border cooperation from EU through Slovenia-Croatia IPA Cross-border Programme', component of the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance that follows an INTERREG Community Initiative for the period 2000-2006, during which there were implemented cooperation projects in fields of economic and social development and sustainable management of the natural resources. The actual financing frame is through INTERREG programmes inside EU borders.

f. Hungarian-Croatian Border (Hajdu, 2006)

The case of Hungary-Croatia cross-border area is one example of a cross-border area marked by various historic events, some of them even tragic, therefore the relationship between the two countries and the international interests marked the cross-border cooperation. Following the 1991 Yugoslavian war, in parallel with the internal changes in Hungarian political, economic and social life, the border crossing started to decline after 1990, Croatian market became risky for Ukrainian entrepreneurs, the only growing trade relations being the ones about gasoline and gun running. After that, the development of the two countries was different, Hungarian economy turning westward, fact that declined more the trade relationships with former Yugoslavia countries. Few years later the small border traffic started to develop, Croatian people crossing the frontier in order to buy consumer goods. The Croatian state started to revive, opening to the Hungarian Chambers of Commerce and Industry along the border that had initiatives of initiating representation agency in Croatia. On the other side, the national levels manifest desire of cooperation and potential for good cross-border cooperation and after 2013 the both countries EU membership status make the relation easier. The national levels is focused on cooperation on some specific issues: transportation infrastructure, utilization of Adria oil pipeline and the management of the Drava River, while at the local level the counties, cities and communities from both sides of the border have contacts with each other in the frame of cross-border projects in fields of tourism, environment, cooperative economy and intercommunity human resource development. The European funds played a good role in the enhancement of the cross-border cooperation between Hungary and Croatia through the IPA Cross-border Cooperation Programme and for the actual programming period there is the setup of Hungary-Croatia Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2014-2020.

g. Vienna-Bratislava metropolitan region (Jaško, 2008)

A relevant case is the one of the most closely located pair of capitals in the world - two cities that are administrative and economic centers for the two neighbourhood countries – Austria and Slovak Republic. The proximity was favouring the development of the cooperation between the two countries influencing significantly the relationship between different actors in the region. The cooperation was strategically built on few clear issues: the Vienna-Bratislava region intends to become a development pole of European significance, considering the concentration of human, scientific, cultural, technological and institutional potentials, the adequate transportation and communication interconnections to other development poles in Europe; the efforts are concentrated for building a residential, economic and cultural center for the upper and middle Danube line; the region aims to become one of the development centers in Central Europe, important issue in the frame of the accession of the four Visegrad countries (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland and Slovakia); the region targets to be an economic, cultural and information gateway to Austria and Slovakia. The accomplishment of these structured objectives can make a model area for cross-border development.

h. Eurometropolis Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai – metropolitan governance (Durand & Lamour, 2014)

The Eurometropolis is considered one of the pioneering spaces regarding the cross-border cooperation at metropolitan level. In 1991 the relations gained an official frame the relations official through a flexible and “informal” institution - the Conférence Permanente Intercommunale Transfrontalière (COPIT) and later, in 2008, it was created a new institution, a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The COPIT, as cross-border structure bringing together French and Belgian local authorities, had a limited scope for action and was quite dependent on central state funds. Still, the ground rules for cooperation were established also at national level through

agreements reached in the last 20 years that allowed the development of a local cross-border dynamic controlled by the state. For an improved governance and cooperation possibilities in 2000 started a series of ratifications of cooperation processes by the French and Belgian governments, therefore, in 2002 the two countries signed the Brussels Agreement, that allowed cross-border cooperation between the regional and local authorities and the local public bodies in the shared Franco-Belgian space. A year later the French CIADT (Interministerial committee for spatial planning and development) supported the setting up of a parliamentary working group. In 2007, their conclusions used as starting point for a cooperation project and for the signing of the "Declaration of intention for the creation of the Eurometropolis Lille–Kortrijk–Tournai" by the 14 founding members and in the next the creation of the Eurometropolis was officially recognized thanks to a French bylaw, which introduced all institutional levels, including states themselves, into cross-border governance. This case is relevant because multi-level governance seems best adapted to managing cross-border cooperation, due to involvement of numerous actors and the differences in power distribution on either side of the border. EGTC functions here as a flexible institutional structure that connects two systems of state powers.

i. Espace Mont-Blanc Project (Lissandrello, 2004)

The EMB Project started in 1991 together with the decision making forum – Conference Transfrontaliere du Mont-Blanc as an area to solve, in a cross-border cooperation frame, the issues of international environmental protection in a mountain area, with the benefits of the previous endeavours that international non-governmental organizations did. The financial help of INTERREG programmes boosted the project aims, involved the national decision makers from Switzerland, Italy and France, together with local administrations and international NGOs and put the label 'Espace' instead of 'Park'. Despite the accident with the Mont-Blanc Tunnel, the EMB Project pursued to develop a common understanding of the sustainable development concept based on tri-lateral relationships in a regional context. By now, under the label and platform of Espace Mont-Blanc¹ there were many joint projects for region development in fields as sustainable development, mountain agriculture, nature and landscape, integrated tourism and transport. It is a good case of cross-border cooperation and strategy among a nature object and the interests linked with it.

j. Centrepe Project (Swiatek, 2013)

Centrepe is a regional space created by a political project with the aim to promote the region as a competitive location in the Central Europe covering part from four European countries: Slovakia, Austria, Hungary and Czech Republic. It was initially funded by INTERREG funds as a joint initiative of the Austrian Federal Provinces of Vienna, Lower Austria and Burgenland, the Czech Region of South Moravia, the Slovak Regions of Bratislava and Trnava, the Hungarian Counties of Győr-Moson-Sopron and Vas as well as the Cities of Bratislava, Brno, Eisenstadt, Győr, Sopron, St. Pölten, Szombathely and Trnava. This cooperation project intended to create a multilateral and sustainable framework for the cooperation of local and regional authorities, public institutions and enterprises in the Central European Region. Specific goals consisted mainly in creating of polycentric cooperation framework which should allow all the partners to work jointly and more effectively on the cross border issues. The Centrepe Project had a preparatory phase (2002-2003) and 3 main phases: Centrepe I (2003-2006), Centrepe II (2006-2007) and Centrepe III (2008 and later), all of them benefited by EU funds through INTERREG and European Territorial Cooperation programmes. The relevance of this project for us consist in at least few aspects: high number of countries and partners involved, duration of the project and multi-phases planning approach.

¹ www.espace-mont-blanc.com/

3.2. Cross-border development cases at the Eastern border of the European Union

a. Hungary and the Eastern neighbours

The case of Eastern borders of Hungary is relevant to mention due to the cross-border cooperation approach through Euroregions that in some other areas is not necessarily efficient. The Eastern border of Hungary that overlap the Eastern border of EU is a short one along the Hungarian-Ukrainian border therefore is more significant to take in consideration the wider cooperation in the Carpathian basin, including Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Romania and Ukraine. In the actual context of geopolitical state of play, besides the historical fragmentation and the peripheral situation of the borders, in case of Ukraine border is in fact double bordered. The area, more or less, is on the Transcarpathia – region considered with high peripherality (Batt, 2002). That makes the Euroregions to play an important role due to flexibility in matters of territorial or regional governance (Branyi, 2006). The Carpathian Euroregion was the first of its kind in Central or Eastern Europe when founded in 1993, it was established along the EU's borders with former socialist states and it corresponds to a macroregion with peripheral status regarding all the states involved and the EU territoriality, meaning an assembly of socioeconomic peripheries. For strengthening the structure and to allow access to resources, the partner countries decided to give legal form to the Euroregion as Carpathian Foundation International, with the mission of the regional presence and cross-border role for itself, aiming to strengthen programming, organizational capacity and financial sustainability at regional level. They targeted two areas, promoting innovative initiatives and cross-border exchanges in community development, community resource mobilization and strengthening participative democracy and community organizing throughout the region². In order to accomplish their goals they attracted financial resources that further granted to local administrations or non-governmental organizations from the Carpathian Region. Nowadays they are not so active anymore but the financial frame is ensured by the cross-border cooperation programmes Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine and Poland-Ukraine-Belarus, for both 2007-2013 former programming period and 2014-2020 actual programming period.

b. Poland and Ukraine (Krok & Smętkowski, 2006)

Two decades ago Ukraine was the second largest trade partner of Poland in the Eastern Europe after Russia and the economic change was based on industrial centers in central Poland and Eastern Ukraine. It looked like Ukraine is on the path that Poland was fifteen years earlier, the similarities, mainly in socioeconomic and administrative area, being a starting point for cooperation and knowledge transfer. The situation is fundamentally changed now, considering the military conflict with Russia from the Ukrainian Eastern side. The progress that Poland made and the economic breakdown in Ukraine, caused by the war, increased the gap between the two countries. Even if few years after the Poland accession to European Union the cross-border cooperation was disappointing as far as concern the impact in the regional development, in case of this border also the existence of European funds give an impulse through the projects financed by Joint Operational Programme having as priorities increasing competitiveness of the border area and improving the quality of life³. Moreover, a good opportunity for cross-border cooperation between Poland and Ukraine was the organization of the final tournament UEFA 2012 that put together resources in the aim of economic development of the countries. Despite the sudden change in the political, economic and social frame in Ukraine and considering that the Western part of Ukraine is not directly affected by the military actions the cooperation at the border is still running, even if not to a high rate.

² Carpathian Foundation International, carpathianfoundation.eu

³ Cross-border Cooperation Programme Poland - Belarus - Ukraine 2007-2013, <http://www.pl-by-ua.eu>

c. Romania and Republic of Moldova (Marcu, 2011)

Romania and Moldova are countries with a common history and a common geography at a certain time, sharing the same identity, culture and traditions. The length of the border between these two countries is covered by three euroregions that, in a cross-border frame, contribute in different manners to the communities development and relations among people living on the border. Therefore, after the political changes of 2009, euroregions have played an important role in the Europeanization of the Romania-Moldova border area. The more recent events make the common border between Romania and Moldova a relevant tool for mobilizing EU resources, in terms of legal frame, funds and governance network, in order to develop institutions, infrastructure, and local human resources.

4. CONCLUSIONS AND REMARKS ABOUT THE ROMANIAN BORDERS

In the context of accepting the existence of borders, as a continuous element, the only changeable being the character and courses of borders, we considered some relevant study cases that scientific literature provides about cross-border areas, inside the European Union Borders and at its borders with Eastern neighbours, in order to figure out lessons learned, tools and models that can contribute to the development of the cross-border areas with the observance of some elements: the existence of historical encouraging/discouraging background, existence of written treaties/agreements, diplomatic exchanges at national level, partnership relations, financing framework, existence of a strategy, the involved actors (public administration, civil society, companies, universities), particularities that mark the cross-border area. No matter the case studied, one of the core elements that are compulsory for a healthy development of the cross-border areas is the cooperation among local and regional authorities from the different sides of the border in many fields – economic, politic, institutional cultural or professional, becoming forms of institutional building due to the demanding changes along the borders, involvement of different types of local governance and the interaction of multilevel governance networks – local, regional, European and even global. The wider the cooperation network is, including enterprises, universities, non-governmental organizations, the better the results are, enforced by the existence of the legal frame at European level.

Going through the selected models some relevant lessons can be useful for the approaches Romania can have to its borders. An important step is the signature or update of the national agreements between states that can be complemented by local or regional agreements, making use of the legal European frame (example, for the borders Romania-Hungary and Romania-Bulgaria). Moreover, for all the borders the already existing euroregions frame can be reinforced with real actions and active networks. The historical stories that bring together the communities can be used better and the old conflicts can be reconciled in a structured way, maybe with a constructive involvement of the relational potential that the minorities from the border communities have. A strategic approach can make a better use of the natural settings building cooperation around it (example, the setting of the Carpathian area in the North cross-border area between Romania and Ukraine) or the urban settings – closed border pair towns/cities (example, Giurgiu, Romania - Ruse, Bulgaria), potential metropolitan areas (example, Iasi, Romania - Chisinau, Republic of Moldova or Suceava-Botosani, Romania – Cernivtsi, Ukraine). As far as financial aspects, the existence of already third generation of EU cross-border programmes that finance projects for development of all Romanian borders with neighbours is an opportunity that can be exploited more efficient thinking complementary projects that cover all the areas and projects that are continuing other successful previous initiatives.

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