

## **Editorial:**

### **Cross border cooperation and peripheral areas in Europe**

By Tomás Ponce DENTINHO\*

Borders and links are common to any system and the interaction occurring through them is essential to the existence of those systems (Chadwick, 1970). Territorial systems like countries, regions, towns and communities depend strongly on the structuring and channelling performances of their links borders. As argued by (Anderson *et al.*, 2003) there are cisergetic - both negative and positive - consequences of borders and links. In the location of activities, in the allocation of public facilities and related fiscal issues, in the flows of goods, services, people and capital and in the creation and enrichment of trust; all of them fundamental for economic development, especially in the case of borders associated with the peripheral territories.

Peripheral identities encompass many characteristics and interdependencies related to “a center”. Peripheries depend on the resource allocations established at the center, are characterized by more unfavorable social and working conditions, weaker institutions and reduced efficiency of governance systems, relatively low accessibility and connectivity, endowments with production factors and under-performing structures (Pascariu and Tiganasu, 2017); they also are less efficient in the use of territorial resources (Capello, Caragliu and Fratesi, 2018). In addition, border regions, especially in the case of external borders, are subject to specific risks and vulnerabilities generated by limited and irregular cross-border mobility, political risks, cultural barriers, security or environmental threats (Bobylev, Gadal, Kireyeu and Sergunin, 2020; Prokkola, 2019).

However, borders can change limits into opportunities. There is a vast literature highlighting how regional integration and cross-border cooperation can be capitalized in this respect (Nijkamp, 2020; Pascariu, GC, Kourtit, K. and Tiganasu, R., 2020). In the European context, where peripheral regions are also border regions, territorial cooperation is a source for institutional transformations and successful market and democratic reforms, a key tool for solving common challenges (economic, social, cultural, environmental), a challenge to create favorable conditions for welfare, growth, political stability and sustainable development, and for reducing disparities and dependence on the center. All this both in the case of internal borders, through the European cohesion policy and for external borders, within the European Neighborhood Policy or the Enlargement strategy. The efficiency of cross-border cooperation programs - in terms of growth, development,

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security, resilience - depends on a very complex set of factors equiring/demanding more politically and socio-culturally sensitive approaches (Bobylev, Gadal, Kireyeu and Sergunin, 2020; Prokkola, 2019). A key role has being played by the interest of regional actors for cooperation, mutual trust, formal and informal cross-border institutions, synergies between local, regional and national policies.

This volume tries to provide some light on the negative or positive effects of borders and the role of the cross-border cooperation along nine papers presented by geographical order. Firstly, it looks into the core of Europe, with a set of 28 border regions - the Greater Region around Luxembourg, the places bordering Lake Constanza and the Polish, Slovak and Czech borders. Secondly, it focuses on the Balkans, meaning Romania, Hungary and Kosovo. The last group of papers pays attention to what is happening in the Eastern European borders with Russia, Ukraine, the Caucasus and Turkey.

Regarding the borders within Europe, there are three interesting papers. A first one, authored by Sofia Gouveia, Leonida Correia and Patrícia Martins, studies the evolution of population in 28 NUTs III regions from 2001 to 2018, concluding that border regions experienced positive effects in the population share since EU integration, but the European integration aggravated the decline of more peripheral regions compared to the EU core regions. A second paper, written by Alina Felder, looks into cross border cooperation around Lake Constanza and the Grater Region, analyzing with semi-structured interviews the role of Interreg projects in connecting higher education institutions in those regions. The third contribution looks into the Polish, Slovak and Czech borders and the author Joanna Kurowska-Pysz shows that the quality and sustainability of cross border projects depends on shared knowledge.

The second group of papers has two contributions. On the one hand, Corina Tursie and Thomas Perrin look into three applications for the European Capital of Culture - Timisoara in Romania, Novi Sad in Serbia and Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg - and reveal the preoccupation for assuring a long-term legacy of the program expresseing different performance indicators. On the other hand, a second paper, authored by Urtak Hamiti, analyses a cross-border cooperation program between Kosovo, Macedonia, Albania and Montenegro and concludes that, despite some positive effects of the investments there, they did not achieve the goal of a more cohesive territory.

The third group of contributions focuses on the Eastern Borders of Europe. Caras Valeria Stefania tries to understand what factors influence the quality of governance looking into Azerbaijan, Armenia, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine, concluding that the level of income, democratic regime, polarization of elites, ethnic disaggregation and natural resources strongly influence governance. Edina Lilla Mészáros and Constantin Vasile Țoca look into the resilience in the case of Ukraine and conclude that besides trade agreements and cross-border cooperation projects it requires some conflict management. Also referring to Ukraine, Halyna Lytvyn and Andriy Tyushka make a governance diagnosis of the Carpathian

Euroregion disclosing the potential of interaction within a wider European area. Finally, Emrah Soylemez and Çiğdem Varol highlight the need of new governance practices in EU and Turkish border regions.

Thus, this special issue provides deep insights on various cases of cross-border cooperation, contributing to the deeper understanding, on the one hand, of the specific challenges of border regions, and, on the other hand, of the limits, opportunities and conditionalities for more efficient and successful cross-border cooperation programs, of interest to both academics and decision makers.

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