

Cross-border Governance: Inventing Regions in a Trans-national Multi-level Polity

From an esoteric subject of international relations and voluntarism-based initiatives, cross-border governance has turned in the last decade into a key expression of regionalism and of dynamics of change of territorial relations in Europe. Overcoming and blurring borders lies at the core of discourses on European integration aimed at erasing tariff and non-tariff barriers from the geography of European trade. Meanwhile, exchange across borders is becoming the generative matrix and the potential carrier of new concepts of development, such as the construction of new "economic integration zones." Promoting the emergence and institutionalisation of cross-border regions has thus become an important objective of European Union cohesion policy. Yet the more borders are crossed – for instance, through the process of eastern EU enlargement – the more they are reproduced along other dimensions: linguistic, cultural, symbolic, as well as along differentials in abilities and power. Accordingly, the meanings and facets of borders are changing, posing new challenges to spatial disciplines and policies.

This article presents a review of issues concerning cross-border regionalism and planning debated in geography and regional studies, with an emphasis on the challenges entailed by the socially constructed and "invented" character of cross-border regions and by the institutionalisation of cross-border governance.

1 Introduction

What are the different types of regional governance in cross-border regions? What are their typical constraints and potentials? And what is their effectiveness? As we ask ourselves these questions about governance in cross-border

regions, we face the fact that in an increasingly integrated Europe, defining border regions and the nature of borders is becoming a more complex task.

Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, 595) remind us that "the drawing of any given state border represents an arbitration, and a simplification, of complex geo-political, political and social struggles. It seldom, if ever, offers a coincidence of economy, polity and culture, but instead represents and often reifies a particular relationship between them that may prove either transitory or durable."

Identifying border regions becomes more of a challenge, paradoxically, as the identification with the state and its borders is blurred in socio-economic and political practices. As their quasi-natural identification with physical borders – as the gatekeepers of state sovereignty and of its social, economic and political institutions – is questioned, borders reveal their multifaceted nature. Identifying border regions hence requires consideration of their identity "by difference," along multidimensional lines. [1]

Rather than being trivialised by the relativisation of nation-state borders, by "the creation of an area without internal frontiers" (Treaty on EU-TEU, Article 2), and by the mainstreaming of cross-border co-operation in trans-national public policy programmes, issues related to border regions are gaining a new dimension.

Through these developments, cross-border regionalism has extended in the 1990s beyond mere issues of centre-periphery relationships and uneven development. In its everyday practice, cross-border regionalism reveals both an increase in opportunities for mobilisation and an increase in complexity. As if their borders would be reproduced internally along multiple lines, cross-border regions face new policy problems, while their scope for action spans boundaries between the dimension of international relations and that of local governance. Initiatives in cross-border governance are maturing, but at the same time face challenges typical of the transition from emergent and loosely-

coupled governance settings to more stabilised, institutionalised ones.

In this paper – in no more than a rhapsodic way – I propose a review the sources and challenges of experiences in cross-border governance in Europe along three interconnected dimensions: the political-economic dimension, the institutional dimension, the symbolic-cognitive dimension (see fig. 1).

As I will argue, these dimensions converge around a key challenge of institutionalisation. Cross-border governance is an institutional construct resulting from complex processes of co-evolution. In their current phase of institutionalisation, cross-border governance settings face a struggle that highlights the dialectics between path-dependency and path-shaping, between institution building and institutional design.

2 The Political-economic Dimension

2.1 The Changing Economy of Cross-border Regions

One of the challenging novelties of cross-border governance in an integrating Europe is the re-emergence and re-framing of the role of territoriality in the economy. This aspect is, in a way, only at first sight paradoxical, in light of the apparent loss in meaning of the form of territoriality attached to previously accepted views of borders.

The economy of border-regions has been a traditional subject of regional development theories. Different conditions for competitiveness and competition in border regions illustrate a special case of internal peripheries within developed industrial economies. This way of thinking, most notably, identified borders with external nation-state borders and with the friction provoked by different social and political systems, as well as barriers to trade. Such conditions, along with the strategic and – as more often the case – symbolic meaning of border areas for the politics of national sovereignty, structurally identifies border regions as net beneficiaries of transfers within nation-state welfare economies. Conversely, cross-border governance has emerged in latter times as a

policy alternative aimed at the reduction of core-periphery disparities through development of the endogenous potential of peripheral regions.

To what extent widely held views of border economies are still adequate in defining policy orientations, however, is a question which goes hand in hand with that of the changing definition of borders in an integrating Europe. The re-framing of the meaning of borders, in fact, radically changes views on the nature of border economies. In a prospectively "borderless" Europe conceived of "networks of regions," cross-border regions are put at the centre of a political-economic challenge as the rediscovery of the territorial embeddedness of economic systems merges with the need for active policies in constructing and sustaining territorial units of competition.

In this sense, border regions appear to be in transition. The meaning of borders is changing, and so is its role in defining the economies of border regions. In this process, however, the influence of borders persists, as do their potential negative and positive externalities.

On the one hand, structural economic effects of borders, as they are rooted in social and institutional practices, are often subject to high levels of resilience. This is emphasised by the fact that, along with the relativisation of borders as external constraints, the re-emergence of borders in the form of internal fault lines – i.e. of differences of an institutional, cultural, linguistic, ethnic or socio-political nature – becomes more apparent. Constraints such as the reduction and/or splitting of market building areas, the constraints and limitations to the diffusion of knowledge and inno-

vation, the presence of higher transaction costs, may thus continue to influence economic processes long after the demise of formal or physical borders. Thus, for instance, research on regional innovation systems has highlighted constraints to innovation even in cross-border settings sharing high potential levels of industrial integration. Innovative factors such as the integration in industrial network organisation and the diffusion and sharing of knowledge across borders are still highly influenced by the resistance emerging from the dominance of different governance systems (e.g. Hassink et al. 1995; Van Houtum 1998; Koschatzky 2000).

On the other hand, the meaning taken by borders is itself the result of the strategies and behaviours of political-economic actors and of the way they relate to the specifics of cross-border economies. Thus, for instance, the stigma of being peripheral may be internally reproduced, even within co-operative and consensual settings, as the cross-border region as an economic performance unit is built on reproducing the exploitation of internal price-cost differentials (e.g. Krätke 1999). Particularly in cross-border regions, as Anderson and O'Dowd (1999, 959) remind us, "regional unity may derive from the use of the border to exploit, legally and illegally, funding opportunities or differentials in wages, prices and institutional norms on either side of the border."

As material and formal-judicial borders tend to be blurred, the economic cohesion of a cross-border region appears to be more dependent on endogenous processes leading to the identification of common sets of interests and resources and on the building of a sense

of reciprocity based on their interdependence. In this sense, cross-border governance as an economic development strategy constructs its own political objects.

2.2 The Local Politics of Cross-border Regionalism

Cross-border governance can be viewed as a significant new space for regional initiatives. At the same time, cross-border initiatives represent concrete potential for bottom-up forms of trans-national policy. [2] All of this, while pointing to the potential of cross-border governance for local empowerment and democratisation, also places significant burdens on the prospects for local mobilisation and proactive initiative.

In the first place, it is important to notice that, as many experiences show, motivations for the engagement of local-regional polities in cross-border governance initiatives range widely between rooted opportunistic behaviours and emergent strategic attitudes. This may be observed by considering the main aims that play a role in addressing cross-border initiatives:

- access to funding;
- cost-benefit sharing;
- promotion of local assets;
- lobbying;
- positioning in international competition and intergovernmental relations;
- policy exchange and sharing of best-practices.

The balance between these factors is very much dependent on capacities of networking and coalition-building based on the identification or construction of common interests, and on their generalisation as the mission of an (emergent) cross-regional policy community. The motor is, usually, the improvement of the comparative economic advantage of the regions involved. Hence, a crucial dimension is the building of new cross-border alliances around concrete development initiatives. This entails important opportunities in terms of the potential for innovative outcomes and the development of bottom-up processes.

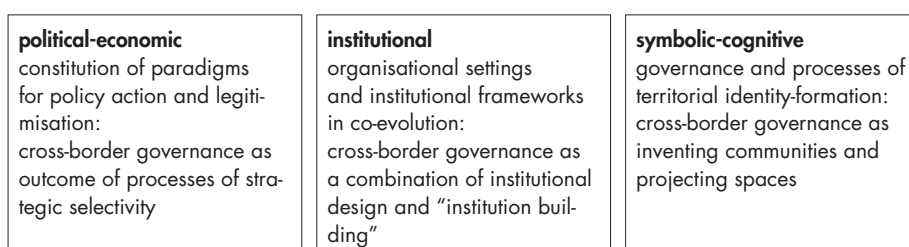


Fig. 1: Three interconnected dimensions in cross-border governance in Europe.

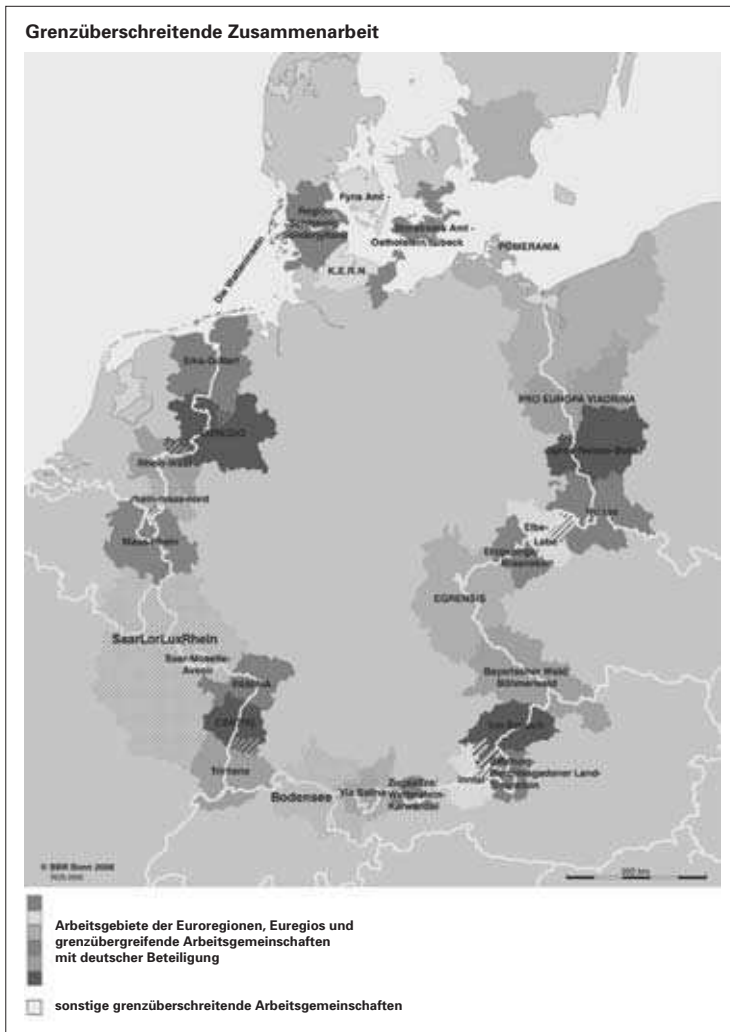


Fig. 2: An example of the proliferation of cross-border governance in Europe: cross-border cooperation initiatives at the German borders.

Source: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung

On the other hand, the low level of institutionalisation of cross-border initiatives makes their governance settings subject to peculiar threats, such as political opportunism, the strengthening of existing policy elites, and the consolidation of neo-corporatist patterns of relationships. In this sense, it is important to recall some relevant dimensions of coalition-building that are crucial for initiatives in cross-border governance (Church and Reid 1999):

- the nature and integrity of co-operation;
- the nature of strategies of mutual positioning and of power relationships among co-operating actors;
- the recognition of organisational diversity and the contribution offered to its valorisation;
- the forms of relations established between new and existing policy spaces and between new and existing forms of territoriality.

The formation of cross-border regions by means of negative integration – i.e. by the blurring of traditional borders – does not affect the factors leading to the persistence of these threats. Several of these factors can in fact be detected in some diffuse characteristics of cross-border initiatives:

- the prevalence of bureaucratic guidance and dominance of public-sector over private-sector involvement;
- the prevalence of state-led initiatives;
- the existence of trade-offs between local and supra-local interests;
- the existence of trade-offs between local and supra-local political commitments;
- and, finally, a prevailing emphasis on sectoral issues of economic performance, i.e. on distributive issues rather than on re-distributive and potentially identity shaping aspects.

It is hence important, in order to trace some of its major challenges, to raise some crucial questions about the nature of the local politics of cross-border governance:

- Are initiatives in cross-border co-operation stable enough for building effective forms of partnership?

- Are the incentives for cross-border co-operation sufficient for promoting innovative forms of collective action and for realising an effective concurrence of resources?
- Are the incentives for cross-border co-operation sufficient for building new coalitions and governance regimes?
- And, finally, are cross-border coalitions and governance regimes stable enough to address forms of institutionalisation that may grant them both autonomy and accountability?

This latter question converges to the issue of the democratic legitimacy of emergent cross-border governance setting. While overcoming borders may be viewed inherently as an act of democratisation, the democratic legitimacy of cross-border governance faces a dual contradiction. On the one hand, the exercise of formal democracy is traditionally tied to the exercise of territorial sovereignty; on the other hand, the exercise of substantive democracy is tied to forms of socio-political commitment and identification that seem to be challenged in communities without borders or with blurring borders. Cross-border governance, hence, entails its own challenge to democratic processes: a challenge that calls for innovative solutions while still being highly dependent on a wider system of institutional relationships.

2.3 The Political Economy of Cross-border Governance

Building cross-border governance as a regional community of interests is a social-constructive process that requires the development of concrete capacities of networking, co-operation and coalition building across differences. Voluntarism-driven mobilisation, however, is not sufficient in accounting for its emergence and for its prospects of success. The social-constructive dimension of cross-border regionalism may face its limits, unless it is embedded in a system of institutional incentives and legitimating mechanisms.

In order to understand the opportunities and constraints that face its emer-

gence, it is first necessary to place the local politics of cross-border governance in the context of an emerging political economy of governance.

In the field of governance studies, the flourishing of experiences in cross-border governance bears a paradigmatic meaning. The relativisation of borders, in fact, appears as an especially apparent manifestation of a more general relativisation process with regard to scales of governance (Perkmann and Sum 2002.) This can be traced back to the political-economic essence of rescaling processes in the nation-state.

The re-framing of the essence and meaning of sovereignty and territoriality of the state in the framework of globalisation and trans-nationalisation processes – as embodied by European integration – takes the features of a new politics of scale: the struggle for the creation of new policy spaces, backed by policy measures grounded on metaphors of scale relativisation within the policy discourse of European integration: for instance, the re-framing of state sovereignty implied in visions of a Europe of the Regions (Hooghe 1996), but also the idea of a space of flows (e.g. Hajer 2000; Richardson and Jensen 2000.)

Such an interpretation emerges in particular from regulationist interpretations of the changing political geography of governance in Europe as a part of broader processes shaping regulatory systems at different spatial scales (e.g. Swyngedouw 1997; Brenner 1999a, 1999b; Jessop 2000, 2002). Regionalist processes, accordingly, point to “the intricate social relations and interconnecting properties that may exist between the recent regional renaissance and the restructuring of the state” (MacLeod 2000, 221): they may be seen “as the effect of top-down policies to replace the imagined community at the national level with an imagined unit of competition at the regional level” (Lovering 1999, 392.)

Approaches to regionalisation and to the rescaling of territorial governance, in this view, express the need of nation-state structures to counter centrifugal phenomena defined by the development

of exit strategies by regions and cities in the face of the structural crisis of state-centred welfare economies. This occurs mainly through devising new patterns for mutual legitimisation in a multi-level polity: the state (national and local) as a governance actor shifts from the role of “authoritative allocation and regulation from above to the role of partner and mediator” (Kohler-Koch 1996, 371), enabling the local construction of spaces of competitiveness and co-operation.

Regional governance settings may thus be seen as the outcome of a shift in relational settings within the state polity, resulting from a dual process of strategic selectivity (Jessop 2000) occurring both at the level of state structures and at the level of local-regional polities. Ideal-typically, cross-border regionalism embodies the opportunity structure created for local initiatives from the loosening of jurisdictional boundaries and scales within a change in relationships between supra-national, national and sub-national authorities.

This clearly puts the development of local abilities and initiatives for self-centered cross-border development in strict relation with the framework conditions provided by the emergence of a European pattern of multi-level governance.

3 The Institutional Dimension

3.1 Cross-border Governance as an Institutional Project

The assumption of cross-border governance in the policy agenda is to a large extent a result of the constitution of a European trans-national discourse on spatial policy and planning.

Dealing with the internal differentials in socio-economic conditions and development potentials in Europe has formally entered the Community’s policy agenda with the formulation of the goal of economic and social cohesion in the Single European Act of 1986 and with the explicit focus on a territorial dimension of European integration policy in the TEU of 1992. [3]

As a policy approach embedded in the implementation of the Structural

Funds – the main tool of EU regional and cohesion policy – and as an innovative field for experimentation with the principle of subsidiarity (EC Treaty, Preamble and Article 5, ex 3b), the aim of enhancing the integration of peripheral regions and of the internal peripheries of Europe has become a constitutive element of the political-institutional project of the European Union. [4]

Nevertheless, the EU approach to cross-border governance is better understood when it is put on the historical background of previous European experiences in cross-border co-operation. In fact, Community programmes may be seen both as overlapping (and sometimes complementing) previous initiatives and as building on lessons from their experience (Perkmann 1999, 2002; Scott 2000.) Cross-border governance in Europe has developed historically in three distinct institutional and organisational domains:

- local co-operation initiatives (in particular those developed in North-western Europe at the German-Dutch-Belgian border);
- bi- or tri-party intergovernmental commissions (pioneered by the joint German-Dutch spatial planning commission established in the 1960s);
- and, finally, EU-sponsored cross-border initiatives and co-operation programmes, first introduced in 1990 with the creation of the Interreg Community Initiative under Article 10 of ERDF regulations. [5]

In the historical development of cross-border governance, EU initiatives have played a crucial role in introducing a transition from transient, instrumental governance arrangements to a progressive institutionalisation of experiences.

To a large extent, the EU approach to cross-border governance has developed on the basis of previous experience gained with the Eu(ro)regio model, based on the conduct of formal co-operation initiatives among local governments involving the constitution of formal institutional structures. In the course of time, the model of a local institutionalisation of cross-border co-operation has proved difficult for three related reasons:

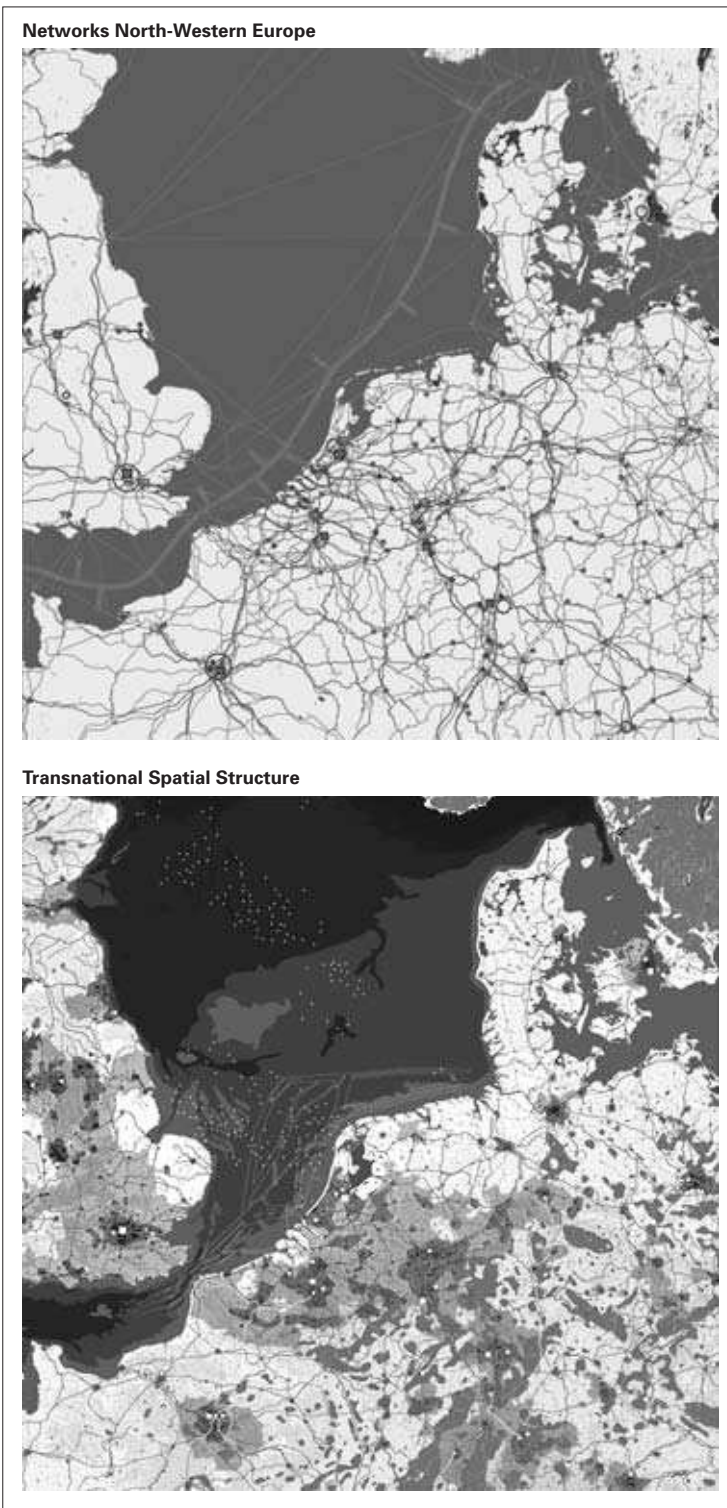


Fig. 3: A borderless Europe? Maps without state borders in the Dutch "Vijfde Nota over de Ruimtelijke Ordening" (2001).

Source: Ministerie van VROM, Rijksplanologische Dienst

- often, co-operation according to this model has forced local states to assume responsibilities and perform tasks and activities typically carried out by central states, highlighting a lack of organisational and institutional capacity;
- moreover, at least until the Madrid agreement of 1980, which defined a framework for public-law forms of co-

operation in Europe, locality-driven co-operation initiatives have been largely constrained by the persistence of distinct national formal-judicial frameworks;

- accordingly, the solution to such problems has often been the constitution of "twin associations" on each side of the border, adapting to the respective formal-judicial framework.

With the introduction of Interreg programmes in 1990 – in the framework of Community Initiatives promoted by the European Commission as part of the implementation of the Structural Funds – and with their evolution and extension in scope and approach, [6] the EU has progressively developed what has been defined as a strategy of multi-level institutionalisation (Scott 1999): an approach aimed at facilitating vertical as well as horizontal intergovernmental co-ordination at different levels. Interreg-related governance structures introduce a strong vertical line of relationships, involving almost all levels of territorial government (from national to sub-national and local) and embedded in the principles ruling the implementation of regional development programmes supported by the Structural Funds – in particular, the principles of partnership and complementation, which introduce a horizontal, civil society, and private sector-oriented dimension to subsidiarity. Within this multi-level approach, direct interregional linkages in establishing initiatives are emerging, while nation-states maintain an important mediating and gatekeeping role in cross-border co-operation. [7]

Unquestionably, the multi-level and multi-dimensional approach of EU programmes to the "enabling" of cross-border governance initiatives points toward a path to an institutionalisation respectful of differences. [8] In the face of its stated aims and ambitions, however, stand diffuse difficulties and constraints in their implementation. Cross-border studies have pointed to several critical aspects emerging from a decade of EU-supported programmes, so as to justify rather sombre assessments of their role as laboratories of European integration (Kramsch, *forthc.*). While significant achievements have been obtained – e.g. in enhancing closer inter-firm co-operation (Hassink et al. 1995; van Houtum 1998), in joint sectoral planning efforts (e.g. Bucken-Knapp and Schack 2001), and even in certain cases in political innovation, with the establishment of cross-border joint structures of representative democracy (Kramsch 2001) – actual cross-border

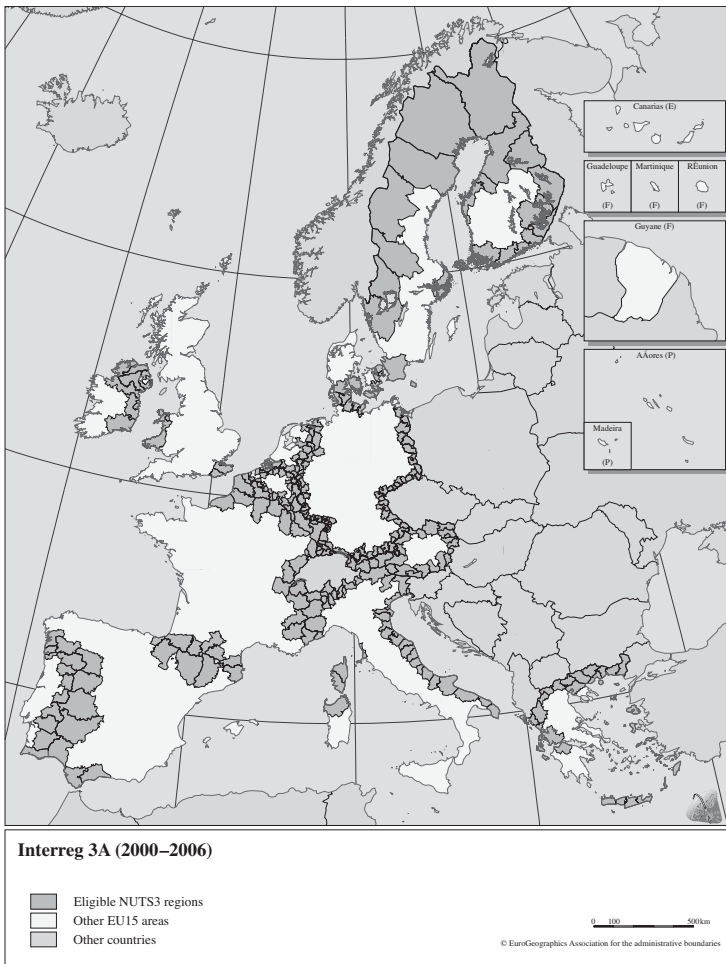


Fig. 4: EU-sponsored cross-border cooperation: the Community Initiative Interreg III A. Source: European Commission, DG Regional Policy

initiatives appear in many cases to consist of relatively thin and loosely related policy measures, only partially capable of addressing the EU's aim of cohesion (Scott 1999). Among the factors that may be mentioned in this regard are:

- a diffuse public-sector dominance in the conduct of cross-border affairs;
- the role played by administrative complexity and bureaucratic redundancy;
- the persistent dependence of local co-operation on exogenous incentives (both material and political).

While these factors may to a certain extent be referred to as youth diseases, such as the lack of local experience or the novelty of the tasks involved, further questions arise from consolidated experiences, which specifically point to more structural governance issues.

A first observation concerns the role of discrepancies in local autonomy that may still be found within Eu(ro)regios, depending on the prevalence of different patterns of state-periphery relationships. These may very much hamper initiatives, as different formal-legal systems endow actors with different competen-

cies and incentive structures for co-operative action. The dimension of international relations may still play an important role in overcoming such constraints, as well as the dependence on national competencies in key sectors of policy and regulation. A further constraint, however, may be introduced by inconsistencies between internal patterns of cohesion and the overlapping of rationales from other programmes. Paradoxically, for instance, dependence on national state authority and inputs within Interreg programmes may hamper the effectiveness of established practices of cross-border co-operation, such as in the case of Eu(ro)regios (Heddebaut 2001).

In some cases, the response to such problems has been an attempt at politicisation of cross-border regional councils with the adoption of forms of cross-border parliamentary democracy – such as the transformation of the Euroregional Council Maas-Rhein into a bicameral assembly respectively comprising political and non-governmental representatives – and the shift from private-law based management structures with limited consultative functions in compar-

ison with member states and the EU, to bodies based on public-law statutes (Kramsch 2001, forthc.).

Significantly, some of these experiences seem to reproduce, at a smaller scale, questions pertaining to more general dilemmas in re-constructing the legitimacy of European politics (e.g. Scharpf 1999; Schmitter 2000). In the first place, even in consolidated cross-border governance contexts, a question arises concerning their democratic accountability. This issue relates to the problematic nature of representation in cross-border regions. Furthermore, far from being a mere question of formal democratic institutions, the question of democratic accountability points to the constraints on the development of a political culture, and of corresponding political practices, authentically representative of a cross-border domain of policy-making. This issue would imply, for instance, the development of political-electoral commitments with policy problems referred to a joint cross-border political sphere, rather than split through the multiple and possibly competing commitments of separated political spheres (as represented, for example, by dependence on local and/or regional-national constituencies as well as by regional-national party affiliation). This latter aspect seems crucial, in particular, for the development of a real public domain of cross-border politics and, eventually, for the emergence of significant forms of socio-political identification with cross-border entities. To a certain degree, the issue amounts to the difficult question of how a cross-border polity may arise that is specifically connoted, but not distinct from the dimension of local politics, being instead capable of encompassing local politics within its arguments.

Not surprisingly, hence, a wide range of situations – between the two extremes of the dominance of existing administrative rationales and the constitution of new policy arenas – may be found within the actual diversity in patterns of institutionalisation of cross-border initiatives (e.g. Ratti and Reichman 1993; Schmitt-Egner 2000). [9] All in all, the picture that emerges points to the chal-

lenges to existing institutional-organisational forms, policies, processes and methods, and to the need for specific experimentation. What can generally be identified, nevertheless, is the complex entanglement of two factors that seem to challenge the likeliness of prospects of institutional convergence:

- the high context sensitivity of initiatives in cross-border governance;
- the importance of the positioning of cross-border initiatives within broader multi-level governance settings.

The prospects of local rooting and institutionalisation of cross-border governance initiatives are necessarily influenced by their relations with developments in other policy spaces, but are not separable from the development of an own socio-political dynamic, based on the mobilisation of local forms of preference and strategy formation.

As a consequence, in ideal-typical terms, two important considerations emerge with regard to the prospects of cross-border governance initiatives becoming effective policy spaces:

- the importance of their being embedded into broader multi-level patterns of relationships, from which they can derive formal (input-oriented) legitimisation and sustained political-institutional support;
- but also: the importance of their linkage with local normal practices, from which they can obtain substantive (output-oriented) legitimisation and the sources for a rooting in local forms of socio-political identification.

From these considerations, the challenge represented for cross-border governance by the need for institutional experimentation becomes even more evident.

3.2 Cross-border Governance as an Institutional Challenge

The nature of the institutional challenges that arise from a strategy of multi-level institutionalisation is well reflected in the interpretations of the nature of the European integration process proposed by multi-level governance scholars. In contrast to state-centric interpretations, the originality of the EU as a political-institutional construct is viewed in its being



Fig. 5: Shaping a common image for cross-border regions: examples from the Belgian-Dutch-German border.

characterised as “a single, territorially diverse polity encompassing sub-national, national, and supranational actors who pursue their goals across multiple arenas.” European integration, accordingly, may be conceived as “a polity-creating process” (Hooghe and Marks 2001a, 124), which actively contributes to reshaping arenas, actors and practices of territorial governance across multiple levels.

Clearly, such an interpretation implies a relativisation of territorial jurisdictions as given policy arenas situated at established scales of political competencies. It is therefore not by chance that, more recently, multi-level governance studies have differentiated their approach to cover more general shifts in governing activity in jurisdictional as well as non-jurisdictional domains. Its classic question – the extent to which authority for a particular territory is being dispersed across multiple jurisdictions – has thus been extended to capture variation along further “horizontal” as well as “vertical” dimensions, such as:

- the extent to which decision-making has shifted away from formal authoritative institutions to public-private networks;
- the change in relationship between jurisdictional territories (e.g. mutually exclusivity or overlapping);
- the change in their scope and purpose (e.g. specialised or general purpose);
- the change in their statute and nature (e.g. stable or fluctuating). [10]

It is particularly interesting to point to

the embeddedness of cross-border governance in broader dynamics of change in territorial governance affecting the features of the spatial dimension of cities and regions and of their nexus with territorial jurisdictions. In this sense, institutionalised initiatives in cross-border governance may be seen as part of a growing array of experiences developing at a cross-border (national/international, involving bordering municipalities, regions or states) and trans-national level (involving networks of non-bordering municipalities, regions and states) with highly different levels of institutionalisation.

The question of whether or not this supports hypotheses such as that of an emerging neo-medieval political pattern of overlapping territorial jurisdictions, with different degrees of power and authority reflecting the emergence of a European multi-level polity, stresses the linkage of cross-border governance with the broader process of the rescaling of governance, which exhibits constructivist and strategically selective dimensions, as well as a dimension of institutional experimentation.

4 The Symbolic-cognitive Dimension

As a phenomenon that points to concrete practices in the relativisation of scale and borders, activism in cross-border governance raises the question of whether we are facing a secular decline in the significance of borders and territoriality (e.g. Ruggie 1993). This question becomes ever more intriguing as new trajectories of institutionalisation emerge in cross-border regions – on their part merging into broader institutionalisation processes – which paradoxically seem to point in the opposite direction. Do processes of multi-level institutionalisation in Europe multiply internal and softer, if less material, European borders?

Cross-border governance faces relativisation of borders in a dual, ambiguous way. We may observe this, on the one hand, in the nature of the differences that borders establish: in the fact that borders never create and define dif-



Fig. 6: Connecting European Regions: the logo adopted by DG Regional Policy for Interreg III makes use of the symbolism of bridges.

ferences in a clear, unambiguous or uncontested way. On the other hand, we may observe this in the fact that cross-border governance deals with the differences that borders create and define in a selective way. Borders, hence, rather than being eliminated through the blurring of their material or formal attributes, are changing in meaning, and are being shifted and rebuilt as new internal, cross-cutting and overlapping borders.

In any historical community, the significance of borders depends on the meaning of territoriality as an organising principle of social, economic and political life (e.g. Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). In an integrating Europe, cross-border regionalism may be viewed as part of a process of relativisation of scale, of which the most notable manifestation is the constitution of a geography of overlapping, experimental and often unstable territorial domains of governance and regulation. Cross-border governance appears as a result of processes of strategic selectivity that redefine the meaning of borders as historically determined institutional and socio-political constructs. Accordingly, the image of territoriality that supports governance initiatives in cross-border regions is a carrier of a political project. Visioning and sense-making become components of institution building practices, and the emergence of cross-border governance exhibits the practices of "inventing communities" (Anderson 1991) and "projecting spaces" (Liepitz 1994), as well as an increased importance of the politics of identity (Jessop 2000).

The self-deceiving and quasi natural character of territorial identity – not only as a community of interests, but quasi as a community of destiny – is thus another major challenge facing the institutionalisation of governance across borders. A sense of community might be seen as a precondition for cross-border regionalism. But the sense of a territorial community is anything but a "track" (Bagasco 1999) or – at best – an ideal reference for establishing concrete forms of collective action and stable patterns of governance. A region as a field of

forces, in this sense, is just an imagined community, and needs to be seen in light of the processes of its social construction.

This dimension of social construction is what geographers such as A. Paasi refer to when they talk about the institutionalisation of a region: a process that entails the establishment of a territorial unit in a spatial hierarchy of territorial consciousness, i.e. in the structures of inhabitants expectations (Paasi 1986; see also 1999, 2001). A region may assume the meaning of a common frame of knowledge and beliefs around past and future action, about the legitimate place of a political community in the world, and about its potential for empowerment and initiative. All of this entails the evocation of images and cultural symbols. But their contribution to a regional identity may be effective only if the economic, political, legal, cultural, etc. institutions of local society actively contribute to the reproduction of a regional consciousness.

This clearly represents a major challenge for the future of cross-border regions developing in a space comprised of open, informal and loosely-coupled forms of co-ordination and co-operation, as well as for the building of an interconnected and increasingly institutionalised European multi-level polity.

Notes

- [1] Anderson and O'Dowd (1999), for instance, list distinct kinds of relationships through which a territorial entity may express its difference with regard to its environment:
- with other regions in the same state;
 - with its central state institutions;
 - with the contiguous regions of the neighbouring state(s);
 - with its other regions;
 - with its central state institutions;
 - within a wider context of state relationships and trans-national forms of governance.

Each of these differences must be further evaluated with regard to specific dimensions of the relationship established, such as:

- relative economic wealth;
- political power;
- national loyalty(ies);
- cultural identity(ies).

[2] This aspect is certainly enhanced by its presence in the agenda of EU regional and cohesion policy, in line with the aim of Community programmes for border areas (in particular Interreg III) to complement themselves and realise a progressive integration with mainstream channels of intervention such as the Structural Funds. In the framework of Community programmes, therefore, cross-border initiatives may introduce an important compensation for a still dominant "vertical" conception of subsidiarity, which favours the development of intergovernmental linkages between domestic (national and sub-national) governments and supranational institutions, very much to the disadvantage of weaker local-regional polities.

[3] The TEU (Article 2) defines the role of cohesion in the framework of the EU's mission as the promotion of "economic and social progress that is balanced and sustainable, in particular through the creation of an area without internal frontiers, through the strengthening of economic and social cohesion and through the establishment of economic and monetary union."

[4] It is worth mentioning here that – according to neo-functional views of the European integration process – the introduction of a binding territorial dimension in the Treaties may be seen as a result of a spillover effect of developments in negative integration, ranging from the removal of internal trade barriers (the creation of the Single European Market) to the establishment of a common monetary policy (the European Monetary Union), and further to the need for a common regional policy and possibly a common spatial development policy to support it (as is being addressed, in a tentative way, by the European Spatial Development Perspective and the attempts to apply it).

[5] In developing these approaches, it is also necessary to mention the role of intergovernmental or associative bodies such as the Council of Europe and its *Conférence Européenne des Ministres pour l'Aménagement du Territoire* (CEMAT) or the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

[6] Notoriously, the Interreg Community Initiative has gone through significant changes during its more than ten years of existence. Broadening in scope and meaning is reflected in the extension of its operational

strands throughout its three main stages of development:

Interreg I (1990–1994):

The Interreg Community Initiative, launched by the European Commission in 1990, was intended to prepare border areas for a Community without internal frontiers. The aim of the Regen Initiative launched in the same year was to help fill in some of the missing links in the trans-European networks for transport and energy distribution in the Objective 1 regions.

Interreg II (1994–1999):

Interreg II extended the approach of Interreg I and Regen to three distinct strands (with a total budget allocation of ECU 3,519 million (in 1996 prices), of which ECU 2,613 million were targeted to Objective 1 and 6 regions overall):

- Interreg II A (1994–1999): cross-border co-operation;
- Interreg II B (1994–1999): completion of energy networks;
- Interreg II C (1997–1999): co-operation in the area of regional planning, in particular in the management of water resources.

Interreg III (2000–2006):

Interreg III consists of 3 strands endowed with a total budget of 4,875 billion euro (in 1999 prices):

- Interreg III A: cross-border co-operation (50–80%) between adjacent regions aimed at developing cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies;
- Interreg III B: trans-national co-operation (14–44%) between national, regional and local authorities aimed at promoting better integration within the Union through the formation of large groups of European regions;
- Interreg III C: interregional co-operation (6%), aimed at improving the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments through large-scale information exchange, networking and sharing of experience.

[7] This multi-level institutionalisation strategy is expressed by the multidimensional principles that establish connections between the different strands of Interreg III and other areas of EU policy:

- convergent strategy formation and programming at cross-border and trans-national levels (including the possibility of admission of single-state initiatives if proven to have trans-national effects);
- extension of partnerships and bottom-up approaches;
- compatibility with mainstream interventions of the Structural Funds;
- integration within Europe-wide strategic

spatial frameworks (in particular the ESDP);

- strengthening of an integrated approach in implementing Community Initiatives (thanks to mutual substitutability rules between funds);
- co-ordination between Interreg and EU pre-accession funds and programmes for candidate EU Member countries.

[8] In addition, it should of course be mentioned that since the late 1990s, Community programmes have increasingly been addressing issues concerning the major internal “fault line” prospectively represented by the borders with Eastern European candidate countries: e.g. through the extension of eligibility for Interreg III B and C programmes to pre-accession countries, in addition to the provision of specific Community programmes such as the Phare Cross-Border Co-operation programme, as a counterpart to Interreg in cross-border regions involving eastern candidate countries.

[9] This is particularly apparent in the case of trans-national co-operation, in which consolidated models are less available and national political cultures relatively more influential. Janin-Rivolin (2000), for example, recognises three distinct patterns of co-operation within Interreg II C programmes (with variations between a more mono- or multi-thematic focus):

- traditional: Interreg II C as a means for addressing traditional issues of spatial planning;
- instrumental: Interreg II C as a co-operative framework in spatial planning covering more general policies;
- innovative: Interreg II C as a tool targeted to integrated strategic development.

Evaluations of the first experiences within the framework of Community Initiatives (Interreg II C) have furthermore shown the persistence of clear geographical divides in both organisational and substantial terms. The presence of a distinct southern versus a northern model may be identified – in formal-organisational terms – in the dominance of relationships typical of international diplomacy versus partnership-based steering and management modes, and – in substantive terms – in the prevalence in the former of distinctive features such as a tendency towards reproduction of existing elites within Community programmes rather than innovation of relational settings, a dominant proceduralist attitude in evaluating projects, a prevalence of regional distribution over territorial relevance criteria in the allocation of resources, and a diffuse lack of attitudes towards active implementation.

[10] Accordingly, the notion of multi-level governance has been tentatively extended to encompass two categories:

- the former related to phenomena of dispersion of authority to a limited number of non-overlapping jurisdictions at a limited number of territorial levels, redefining authority in relatively large and stable “governance” packages;
- the latter encompassing a more “lean and flexible [...] complex and fluid patchwork of innumerable, overlapping jurisdictions” being re-organised and, occasionally, weakly institutionalised in the form of new functionally specific jurisdictions, according to specific demands for governance (Hooghe and Marks 2001 b).

Relevant examples which may be brought for the second category of multi-level governance are:

- trans-national jurisdictions in cross-border conurbations in Europe (characterised by ad hoc, problem driven co-ordination through exchange programs and partnerships, with loose forms of institutionalisation, including routine meetings of regional government leaders and associations);
- institutionalised frontier governance such as between Belgium, Germany, and the Netherlands, according to the model of trans-national associations (e.g. Eu[ro]regio) connecting public and private actors at multiple levels through collaborative arrangements mediated by regional brokerage;
- governance settings supported by the European Commission, such as those provided by the Interreg Community Initiative, aimed at facilitating co-operation across the European Union’s internal and external borders along functionally specific institutional settings, overlapping sub-national jurisdictions, and even across non-contiguous territories;
- interactional settings between local governments and community associations (functional, overlapping and competitive jurisdictions, or special districts that complement or compete with traditional, multi-task local governments, featuring variable territorial boundaries, specialised tasks, varying forms of territorial boundaries and conditions for membership, and self-management, with an arbitrating or facilitating role for local policies).

References

- ANDERSON, B. (1991): *Invented Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. Verso, London.
- ANDERSON, J. and O’DOWD, L. (1999): *Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance*. *Regional Studies*, 33, 7, 593–604.

- BAGNASCO, A. (1999): *Tracce di comunità. Il Mulino, Bologna.*
- BRENNER, N. (1999a): *Beyond State-centrism? Space, Territoriality, and Geographical Scale in Globalization Studies. Theory and Society, 28, 39–78.*
- BRENNER, N. (1999b): *Globalisation as Reterritorialisation: The Rescaling of Urban Governance in the European Union. Urban Studies, 36, 431–51.*
- BUCKEN-KNAPP, G. and SCHACK, M. (eds.) (2001): *Borders Matter: Transboundary Regions in Contemporary Europe. IFG, Aabenraa.*
- CHURCH, A. and REID, P. (1999): *Cross-border Co-operation, Institutionalization and Political Space across the English Channel. Regional Studies, 33, 7, 643–55.*
- HAJER, M.A. (2000): *Transnational Networks as Transnational Policy Discourse: Some Observations on the Politics of Spatial Development in Europe. In: SALET, W. and FALUDI, A. (eds.): The Revival of Strategic Spatial Planning. Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences, Amsterdam.*
- HASSINK, R., DANKBAAR, B. and CORVERS, F. (1995): *Technology Networking in Border Regions: Case Study of the Euregio Maas-Rhine. European Planning Studies, 3, 1, 63–83.*
- HEDDEBAUT, O. (2001): *The Northern Euroregion Transborder Space from 1991 to 2020: An Unknown Reality? Paper presented at the workshop Governance in Eu(ro)regions, University of Nijmegen, Nijmegen, 13 to 15 September 2001.*
- HOOOGHE, L. (ed.) (1996): *Cohesion Policy and European Integration: Building Multi-Level Governance. Clarendon Press, Oxford.*
- HOOOGHE, L. and MARKS, G. (2001 a): *Multi-level Governance and European Integration. Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham/Oxford.*
- HOOOGHE, L. and MARKS, G. (2001 b): *Types of Multi-level Governance: What, Where, Why? Paper presented at the conference "MultiLevel Governance: Interdisciplinary Perspectives," University of Sheffield, 28 to 30 June 2001.*
- JANIN-RIVOLIN, U. (2000): *Interreg e la cooperazione transnazionale per lo sviluppo del territorio comunitario. In: JANIN-RIVOLIN, U. (ed.): Le politiche territoriali dell'Unione Europea. Franco Angeli, Milano, 45–68.*
- JESSOP, B. (2000): *The Crisis of the National Spatio-temporal Fix and the Tendential Eco-*
- logical Dominance of Globalizing Capitalism. International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 24, 2, 323–360.*
- JESSOP, B. (2002): *The Political Economy of Scale. In: PERKMANN, M. and SUM, N.L. (eds.) (2002).*
- KOHLER-KOCH, B. (1996): *Catching up with Change: The Transformation of Governance in the European Union. Journal of European Public Policy, 3, 3, 359–380.*
- KOSCHATZKY, K. (2000): *A River is a River – Cross-Border Networking Between Baden and Alsace. European Planning Studies, 8, 4, 429–449.*
- KRAMSCH, O. (2001): *Navigating the Spaces of Kantian Reason: Notes on Cosmopolitical Governance within the Cross-border Euregios of the European Union. Geopolitics, 6, 2.*
- KRAMSCH, O. (forthc.): *The Temporalities of European Cross-border Governance: Euregios and the Ticklish Problem of Sense. Unpublished paper.*
- KRÄTKE, S. (1999): *Regional Integration or Fragmentation? The German-Polish Border. Regional Studies, 33, 7, 631–643.*
- LIEPITZ, A. (1994): *The National and the Regional: Their Autonomy vis-à-vis the Capitalist World Crisis. In: PALAN, R. and GILLS, B. (eds.): Transcending the State-Global Divide, Lynne Rienner, Boulder CO.*
- LOVERING J. (1999): *Theory led by Policy: The Inadequacies of the "New Regionalism" (Illustrated from the Case of Wales). International Journal of Urban and Regional Research, 23, 379–396.*
- MACLEOD, G. (2000): *The Learning Region in an Age of Austerity: Capitalizing on Knowledge, Entrepreneurialism and Reflexive Capitalism. Geoforum, 31, 219–236.*
- PAASI, A. (1986): *The Institutionalisation of Regions: A Theoretical Framework for Understanding the Emergence of Regions and the Constitution of Regional Identity. Fennia, 164, 105–146.*
- PAASI, A. (1999): *Boundaries, Social Practice and Discourse: The Finnish-Russian Border. Regional Studies, 33, 7, 669–680.*
- PAASI, A. (2001): *Europe as a Social Process and Discourse: Considerations of Place, Boundaries and Identity. European Urban and Regional Studies, 8, 1, 7–28.*
- PERKMANN, M. (1999): *Building Governance Institutions across European Borders. Regional Studies, 33, 7, 657–667.*
- PERKMANN, M. (2002): *Euroregions: Institutional Entrepreneurship in the European Union. In: PERKMANN, M. and SUM, N.L. (eds.) (2002).*
- PERKMANN, M. and SUM, N.L. (eds.) (2002): *Globalization, Regionalization and Cross-border Regions. Palgrave, Hampshire.*
- RATTI, R. and REICHMAN, S. (eds.) (1993): *Theory and Practice of Trans-border Cooperation. Helbing & Lichtenhahn, Basel.*
- RICHARDSON, T. and JENSEN, O.B. (2000): *Discourses of Mobility and Polycentric Development: A Contested View of European Spatial Planning. European Planning Studies, 8, 4, 504–520.*
- RUGGIE, J.G. (1993): *Territoriality and Beyond: Problematizing Modernity in International Relations. International Organization, 47, 1, 139–174.*
- SCHARPF, F.W. (1999): *Governing in Europe: Effective and Democratic? Oxford University Press, Oxford.*
- SCHMITTER, P.C. (2000): *How to Democratise the European Union... and Why Bother? Rowman and Littlefield, Lanham.*
- SCHMITT-EGNER, P. (2000): *Handbuch der Europäischen Regionalorganisationen. Akteure und Netzwerke des Transnationalen Regionalismus von A bis Z. Nomos, Baden-Baden.*
- SCOTT, J.W. (1999): *European and North American Contexts for Cross-border Regionalism. Regional Studies, 33, 7, 605–617.*
- SCOTT, J.W. (2000): *Euroregions, Governance and Transborder Cooperation in the EU. In: VAN DE VELDE, M. and VAN HOUTUM, H.*
- SWYNGEDOUW, E. (1997): Neither Global nor Local: Globalization and the Politics of Scale. In: COX, K.D., (ed.): Spaces of Globalization. Guilford, New York, 137–166.*
- VAN DE VELDE, M. and VAN HOUTUM, H. (eds.) (2000): *Borders, Regions and People. Pion, London.*
- VAN HOUTUM, H. (1998): *The Development of Cross-border Economic Relations. Center for Economic Research, Tilburg.*

Dr. Enrico Gualini
 AME Amsterdam Study Centre for the Metropolitan Environment
 University of Amsterdam
 Department of Geography and Planning
 Nieuwe Prinsengracht 130
 NL-1018 VZ Amsterdam
 egualini@fmg.uva.nl