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Are Cross-Border Urban Spaces European Integration Patterns at Local Level? Analysis of the Management of Urban Areas astride the "French Border"

Abstract

The border as a significant line of distinction was an important instrument of the construction of the French territory. Despite this, several cross-border agglomerations have emerged on this border. These urban spaces crossed by a border are not true urban systems: although there is a morphological continuity through the border, functional links, identities and spatial practices are more organized by the border than by the processes of the agglomeration. In the framework of European construction and the process of dismantling borders, new projects were initiated by the local public powers at agglomeration level thanks to EU incentives (Interreg programmes) with the agreement of the States. The aim of the article is to evaluate the degree of integration while distinguishing the spatial dimension (intensity of functional links, spatial practices) from the territorial dimension (intensity of cooperation and its degree of autonomy). In most cases, the territorial dimension depends on the degree of spatial integration. Furthermore, the cooperation is not most developed on borders that have been open for a long time. The elaboration of the project helps to build a territorial dimension which tries to overstep the border. The most successful projects depend on strategies shared by local communities for which the border appears more like a resource than a brake. This is especially due to the proximity between "local public powers" with extensive competences and the border. But it depends also on a strategy which tries to develop the local community in its own national territory.

Introduction

As peripheries of a State territory, border areas are under the control of some major State institutions, especially the military¹. In theory, states do not encourage urbanization on the borders which often appear as areas without major cities. But when border-towns do exist,

¹ Foucher M., 1986, *Fronts et frontières, un tour du monde géopolitique*, Paris: Fayard.

it is mainly due to the will of the states. In Western Europe, the urbanization process spreads sometimes across the State's boundary, and some cross-border urban spaces have emerged in the 20th century. These cross-border urban areas are now a disturbing contradiction: a territorial discontinuity separates built-up areas (morphological continuity) connected by functional links. The border introduces a perturbation in the organization of the urban area which turns out to be made up of separate parts.

In Western Europe, boundaries have faced several major changes in the last decades. In the European integration process, interactions between places and states of the European Union multiply. The barrier function of the State was abolished, and the *Interreg* program was introduced with the aim to transform these borders from lines of division into links. Projects were initiated by the public powers at local level. New urban planning projects and visions of a common future have been suggested which contribute to shape the consciousness of belonging to a cross-border urban area. The aim of this paper is to assess the extent of the integration process and to see what kind of relations is built between public powers at the local level. Are borders still playing a role as objects of affirmation and differentiation or are new territorialities emerging in these urban spaces? Do public powers help to bridge the borders by elaborating new patterns of integration?

We will compare cross-border urban spaces which are located on the "French border". France is an interesting case for three main reasons. First, it is considered a typical Nation-State: its national territory was built over a long time and borders were instruments of this construction². Second, the central State was an important element of the national identity which is considered as single and original. Third, France is one of the states which founded the European Economic Community and has been engaged for a long time in the integration process. The analysis takes thirteen urban spaces into account and will measure the intensity of integration considering different criteria (political interactions, legal shapes, citizenship participation, etc.).

² Nordman D., 1998, *Frontières de France. De l'espace au territoire XVIe – XIXe siècles*, Paris: Gallimard.

Stakes of Management in Urban Areas and in Cross-Border Regions

Cities and Urban Spaces on Borders

One of the aims of the State is to keep the coherence and the integrity of its territory³. The border appears not only as a political line, but also as a separation between systems of signs (language, rules, administrative grid, etc.), ideologies, identities, cultural behaviours and temporalities⁴. According to C. Raffestin⁵, the border is characterized by four main functions: manifestation, regulation, differentiation, relation. First, each border manifests a will of power: the territorial control expressed by the military power or by the importance of the civil power, and a weakening of the power beyond the border. Second, regulation means that the border operates like a switch which could be turned on or off. As the case may be, it serves either to join and articulate or to separate and take apart. Third, the establishment of the border produces economic, cultural, and political differences. Fourth, the contiguity of the territories allows for relations, which can be legal or illegal, consisting in the trade of products, but also taking the form of confrontation, experiments, circulation, etc.

The main border-cities were created long before the erection of boundaries (Lille, Strasbourg, Basle, Geneva, etc.). The urban growth in these cities depends mainly on the border's properties, but each one has its own spatial and temporal construction. The urbanization depends on contradictory factors which are not simultaneous in time: it spreads across the State's boundary, and cross-border urban areas have emerged in the 20th century. However, public management and urban planning policies are devised in each national territory and are still very different.

³ Anderson M., 1996, *Frontiers. Territory and State Formation in the Modern World*, Cambridge: Polity Press.

⁴ Raffestin C., 1980, *Pour une géographie du pouvoir*, Paris: Librairies techniques; Donnan H., Wilson T., 1999, *Borders: Frontiers of Identity, Nation and State*, Berg: Oxford.

⁵ Raffestin C., 1986, "Eléments pour une théorie de la frontière", *Diogène*, 134, pp.3-21.

The four functions described by C. Raffestin⁶ are used as an analysis grid to examine the relations between public authorities across the boundary. First, the border expresses the will of the power. Despite its morphological continuity, there is no planning frame at the urban area level. The planning is made by municipalities and follows mainly the centre and periphery pattern. In border cities, there is a real originality in planning because the border is considered a specific limit. The foreign municipalities or populations, even if they are contiguous, are not taken into account under the national rules of the neighbouring territory and have in theory no capacity to influence any projects. For this reason, the border was often considered an area of relegation for 'nuisance' facilities. For example, in Strasbourg, big industrial Estates, an incineration factory, and the harbour are located near the Rhine. In Basel, a psychiatric hospital and a prison are also located on the border. The urban planning is quite similar on both sides of the border, even if bigger cities have established more such facilities than suburban border towns did because of their size. On urban area level, even if built-up areas are contiguous, the area close to the border appears to be one of significant discontinuity regarding its use.

Second, the border is a line which underscores some sharp differences. This is particularly noticeable in the urban transport network. For example, some discontinuities still remain, especially in the collective transport networks⁷. In Basel and Geneva, the end stations of several tramway lines are located near the border. For a long time, there was no single tariff zone at the urban area level but only in each national part. Furthermore, many urban areas located on a major transport axis try to divert the international road traffic to bypass roads. For cross-border urban areas, this means that a section of the bypass road must be located in the neighbouring country. In that case, both countries must have the same vision concerning the organization of their transport network and the necessity of connecting. It is also necessary for them to consult and coordinate all projects. Third, there are few instances of the regulation function of the border (before 1993): the best-known of them is the realization of the Basle-Mulhouse Airport (Euroairport). But the border also plays a role of connection: the policy of border-cities can be influenced by the planning conceptions of the neighbouring

⁶ Raffestin C., *op. cit.*

country. In any cases, it appears that the border separates different cultures in management and urban policies, and that each power tries to assert and to mark its territory. Most of the relations, considered international, were controlled by the states and appeared temporarily in order to solve specific problems.

The border introduces a perturbation in the organization of the urban area that is made up of separate parts which are well connected with each other but do not work like an urban system. Local authorities do not have the same power and the same rules in each country, so solving of problems on the border or nearby always takes a long time⁸. No local authority is empowered to make plans for the whole urban area. However, in Western Europe, boundaries have undergone several major changes in the last decades.

Cross-Border Cooperation: The End of the Sovereignty Limits?

Since the 17th century, as a limit of sovereignty, the border has been revealing the territorial exclusivity of Nation-States. Many authors underline the ambivalent properties of the border: it is both a territorial discontinuity and a line which brings two territories in contact⁹. According to C. Arbaret-Schultz (et al.)¹⁰, a border is "a spatial object that brings distance in proximity". "It is simultaneously excluding and including"¹¹.

The cross-border cooperation aims at improving relations. Speaking about cross-border space means that the State is no longer the major political actor. Two authors have developed

⁷ Reitel B., 2001, "La frontière comme enjeu de la recomposition territoriale dans l'Union Européenne: les réseaux de circulation dans l'agglomération trinationale de Bâle", *Mosella*, 3, pp.259-271.

⁸ Marcou G., Jacquot H. (eds.), 1997, *L'urbanisme transfrontalier. Droits et pratiques*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

⁹ Anderson M., *op. cit.*; Foucher, M., *op. cit.*; Guichonnet P., Raffestin C., 1974, *Géographie des frontières*, Paris: PUF; Prescott J. R.V., 1978, *Boundaries and Frontiers*, London: Methuen ; Renard J.-P. (ed.), 1997, *Le géographe et les frontières*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

¹⁰ Arbaret-Schultz C. et al., "La frontière, un objet en mutation", *Espace-temps*, on internet <http://www.espacetemps.net/document842.html> (04/03/2007).

¹¹ Borneman J., 1992, *Belonging in the two Berlins. Kin, State, Nation*, Cambridge: CUP.

models of the evolution of cross-border spaces in time. O. Martinez¹² describes four types of interactions through the border: alienation, coexistence, interdependence, and integration. Furthermore, he develops the idea of "borderland milieus", meaning that each territory is organized by interactions through the border. R. Ratti¹³ presents a model with a similar time-evolution (from cut to open), but based on economic links more than on social interactions. Three situations are considered: barrier, filter, and contact.

In a globalized world, flow of goods and people is on the increase and interactions between places and states multiply. On the other hand, the process of European construction is transferring some powers from national states to the European Union, resulting in a system of shared sovereignty¹⁴. The EU has initiated different programmes to increase integration on several levels. Cross-border cooperation is a way to manage changes in borders' functions¹⁵. It consists of a partnership between actors on both sides of the border on regional or local levels. It is a way to structure and regulate the necessary overcoming of the border.

First principles of cross-border cooperation were formulated by the Council of Europe¹⁶. However, first real initiatives came from actors of the civil society or from public authorities on regional level in the heart of Western Europe, the highly urbanized areas close to the Rhine valley, after the creation of the Economic European Community (EEC). One of the first experiments, the Regio Basiliensis, took place between Germany, France, and Switzerland in an optimistic period of European construction¹⁷. The aim was to build new relations across a border which was considered a barrier preventing contacts between people who shared a common view of the future. For those reasons, new visions of a cross-border area were developed. The creation of cross-border regions was a kind of paradox. It was

¹² Martinez O., 1994, "The dynamics of border interaction. New approaches to border analysis", in Schofield C. (ed.), *Global Boundaries. World Boundaries*, London: Routledge.

¹³ Ratti R., 1992, *Théorie du développement des régions-frontières*, Fribourg: Centre de recherches en économie de l'espace de l'université de Fribourg.

¹⁴ Hooghe L., Marks G., 2001, *Multi-Level Governance and European integration*, Oxford: Rowman & Littlefield.

¹⁵ O'Dowd L., 2002, "Transnational integration and cross-border regions in the European Union", in Anderson J., O'Dowd L., Wilson T.-M. (eds.), *Transnational Democracy. Political Spaces and Border Crossings*, London: Routledge, pp.111-128.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁷ Guichonnet P., Raffestin C., *op. cit.*

supported by the states which wanted to control the process: they founded several organizations and were in charge of their management. But the creation of cross-border regions was also considered as an alternative to the "Europe of the States" and a way to build another frame for Europe. Another stage was reached by the creation of the Single Market (1993) and the implementation of the Schengen Agreement (1995). The function of the State as a barrier was abolished, and the *Interreg* program was developed in order to facilitate the emergence of new cross-border projects and to transform former lines of division into links.

Despite the general guidelines provided by the European Union, each State defines its own cross-border policy according to its political culture and history. In France, cross-border cooperation was controlled by the central State. The intergovernmental Commissions were for a long time the only institutions allowed by the French government to engage in cross-border cooperation¹⁸. But the law of decentralization (1982) resulted in new powers for regional and local authorities and opened new perspectives, even if legal possibilities were still restricted until the middle of the 1990s. France then adopted the Convention of Madrid (1980) and signed several agreements with all neighbouring states enabling the creation of new cross-border authorities to which municipalities or regional authorities could transfer some of their responsibilities.

Urban Areas Managed by Several Local Authorities

In Western Europe, the process of urbanization overcomes all territorial limits and especially the limits between local authorities¹⁹. Major urban areas have been divided, sometimes for decades, into several municipalities. Therefore, one hardly finds a single political authority in charge of a whole urban area. In other respects, however, a new step towards urbanization has been made: due to the metropolization process, populations and

¹⁸ Saez G., Leresche J.-P., Bassand, M., 1997, *Gouvernance métropolitaine et transfrontalière. Action publique territoriale*, Paris: L'Harmattan.

¹⁹ Giraut F., Vanier M., 2003, "Plaidoyer pour la complexité territoriale", in Debarbieux B., Vanier M., *Ces territorialités qui se dessinent*, La Tour d'Aigues: Ed. de l'Aube, pp.143-172.

major activities (especially management, research, etc.) are concentrating in large urban areas throughout the world²⁰.

At the same time, local governments and municipalities in charge of urban areas have integrated the globalization process as a component²¹. Two contradictory trends characterize the interactions between cities: cooperation and competition²². Cities need to improve their image and become well-known at the global level. Cooperation and the rise of interdependence seem to be an answer to the increasing complexity of management and to the gap between functional areas and political territories²³. New conceptions appear in public management in order to reach this aim²⁴. Governance consists in building new relations with private firms and other municipalities and in looking for management experiences in other cities of the world. It also consists in the emergence of a new political level or the articulation of existing authorities with the aim to plan the present and future organization of the whole urban area. EU has defined a polycentric and well-balanced spatial development plan (Spatial Development of the European Community, SDEC) which relies on "dynamic, attractive and competitive cities and urban areas"²⁵. This concerns especially the "gate-cities" which concentrate most economic, cultural, and scientific facilities and which connect Europe with other regions of the world. But the general orientation of urban policy is developed at the national level.

In all states, governments are trying to correct the distortion between political and functional areas. These corrections do not necessarily result in the creation of a new political territory. But in all cases, they do experiment with new systems of governance. Outside France, flexibility is considered a major means. The main impulse is given at the national level, but a substantial autonomy is left to the local or regional actors. There is no real harmonization at the national level. The approach remains experimental, but it helps in

²⁰ Leresche J.-P. et al., 1995, *Métropolisations: interdépendances mondiales et implications lémaniques*, Genève: Georg.

²¹ Ascher F., 1995, *Métapolis ou l'avenir des villes*, Paris: Odile Jacob.

²² Brunet R., 1997, *Territoires de France et d'Europe. Raisons de géographes*, Paris: Belin.

²³ Jouve B., Lefèvre C., 1999, *Villes, métropoles. Les nouveaux territoires du politique*, Paris: Anthropos.

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Saez G. et al., *op. cit.*

creating a collective consciousness at the urban area level²⁶. If the aims are similar in all European states, the means are not necessarily the same and vary according to the history of each political system.

Governance systems are challenging the classical political grid and oblige different political authorities to have more discussions and relations. The will is always to cross political boundaries, but the answer depends on the political culture of each country.

Cross-border urban spaces are facing problems of political integration: at local scale with the articulation between a functional area and the political systems; and at European scale with the dismantling of the border and new interactions between the states.

A Comparison of the Integration Process in Cross-Border Urban Areas

The specificities of cross-border urban areas and the way public authorities initiated new projects will be examined first. Then we will analyse the integration process in selected urban areas. Third, we will try to understand the way the border is used by public powers in these new times.

New Projects for Cross-Border Urban Areas

Definitions of town and urban area are quite different in each State. The GEOPOLIS Database²⁷ offers a homogeneous database on world level (more than 10000 inhabitants in an urban area). Due to this definition, 13 cross-border urban areas are located on the periphery of

²⁶ Jouve B., Lefèvre C., 2004, *Horizons métropolitains*, Lausanne: Presses Polytechniques et Universitaires romandes.

²⁷ Moriconi-Ebrard F., 1994, *Geopolis. Pour comparer les villes du monde*, Paris: Economica-Anthropos.

the French national territory, mostly in the North and the North-East. Three of them are located simultaneously on three borders²⁸. 4,4 million people live in these 13 urban areas (2,2 million in the French parts). This shows that the statistical reality of cross-border urban areas is often underestimated in each country.

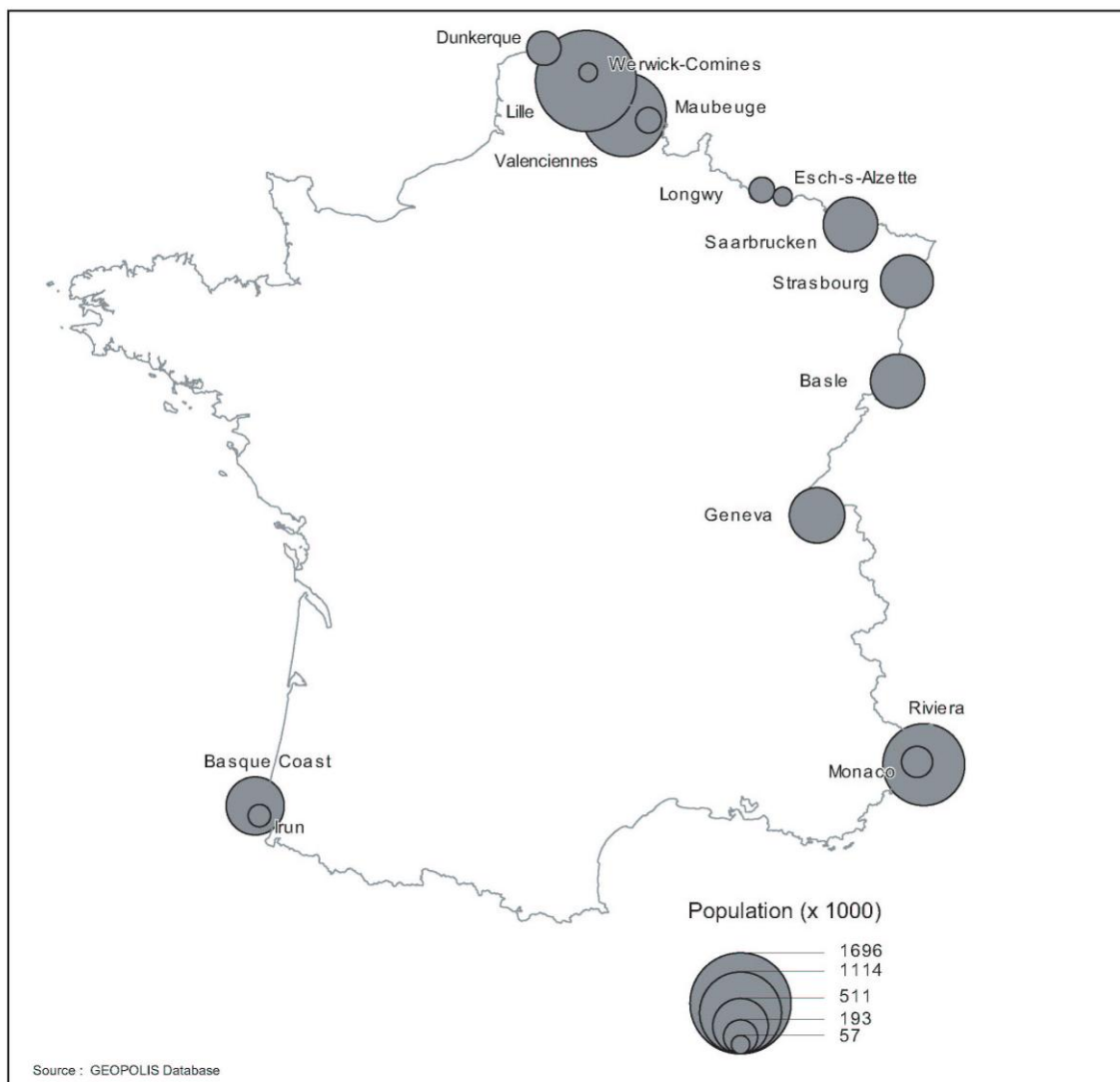


Figure 1 : Location and population of the main cross-border agglomerations of France (2000)

Cross-border urban areas cannot be considered as usual urban systems. The attraction of cities is disturbed by the border. Some inhabitants do not cross the border for symbolic

²⁸ Athus-Esch sur Alzette-Longwy (Pôle Européen de Développement), Bâle-Lorrach-Saint Louis (Agglomération trinationale de Bâle), Monaco-Menton-Ventimiglia.

reasons (barrier effect) because they do not understand the foreign system of signs²⁹. The behaviour of the people is shaped by the culture they acquired in their own national State³⁰. On the other hand, some traffic is generated by the differences: people are looking for goods and services, which they believe to be unaffordable on their own territory³¹. In fact, all urban spaces are polycentric areas in which centrality is given by the urban functions and identities are underlined by national borders. Crossing the border means to face another kind of urban atmosphere associated with a national image, even when cities have the same size on each side of the border. On the other hand, each political authority tries to reinforce its singularity in a process of continual confrontation through the border.

The *Interreg* programmes were initiated to increase cross-border relations. Space planning is one of the main issues covered by this programme. Several local authorities have elaborated master plans of spatial planning, especially in border-towns, where the stakes seem particularly high. The dismantling of the border is one of the main reasons for these initiatives. But each operation also has local reasons (economic crisis, geographic situation, etc.). For example, the crisis of the steel industry which emerged simultaneously in Luxembourg, Belgium and France at the beginning of the 1980s has caused the creation of the European Development Plan (*Plan Européen de Développement*, PED), the first master plan of the three-national urban areas along the borders. Several years before, a lack of land encouraged the Canton of Basel-Stadt and the Canton of Geneva to initiate cooperation with their foreign neighbours.

In the 1990s, in the whole Europe, initiatives were taken by local public authorities located on the border. The *Interreg* programmes were considered an opportunity to conceive new projects and to find financing in a new uncertain period brought on by the Single Act. The economy of the border areas was disturbed by the disappearance of controls, even if one

²⁹ Raffestin C., *op. cit.*

³⁰ Donnan H., Wilson T., 2005, *Culture and Power at the Edges of the State. National Support and Subversion in European Border Regions*, Münster: Lit vlg.

³¹ Bray Z., 2005, "New Frontiers in a Borderless Europe: The case of Bidasoa-Txingudi", in Donnan H., Wilson T. (eds.), *op. cit.*, pp.321- 347; Kostrubiec B., Loboda I., 2002, "Le fonctionnement des villes doublons de la frontière germano-polonaise", in Reitel B. et al., *Villes et frontières*, Paris: Economica-Anthropos, pp.37-50; Sandtner M., Eder S., 2000, "Staatsgrenzen in der Region Trirhena - Barriere oder Stimulus?", *Regio Basiliensis*, 1, pp.15-26.

thought that the dismantling of the border would bring new opportunities of economic development after a time of transition. The border areas would not be peripheral areas anymore but "inside the European territory". Furthermore, the effect was also symbolic: identities were blurred since many signs of the border vanished with their dismantling. The aim was then to imagine new visions and new plans of the future in a cross-border urban space, to build an urban area without barrier-effects. This means that the coexistence between the territories was replaced by a new kind of cooperation and that a new governance system had to be invented³².

In general, one collectivity plays a leading role and initiates projects. The extension of the area depends on the collectivities which participate in the projects. All the operations begin with negotiations between collectivities sharing the same interests. For these reasons, the extension of an area does not always adapt to morphological or functional areas. It depends more on the political will of border territories. In fact, in every urban area a different kind of solution is adopted. Rules and principles are not the same in each national territory: a new frame must be found to rule cross-border relations. The cooperation process is considered experimental. The association frame is the favourite one considering its flexibility. The partnership takes two components into account: the political one and the expert one. The balance between nationalities is respected as well as possible. Work committees are created and regular meetings are foreseen. Several documents are produced: the plans try to give the main directions of spatial planning of cross-border areas.

Different Kinds of Integration Process

Cross-border integration processes are analysed in the thirteen urban areas selected. On the Basque Coast and on the Riviera, two levels of urban areas are taken into account: a restricted area composed of towns located on the border and a large linear area along the coast (the urbanization process of the last twenty years). Thus, the analysis covers fifteen spatial units. The lack of existing databases encouraged us to build our own database by choosing

³² Martinez O., *op. cit.*

different criteria. The main source of information was the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT) (Cross-border operational mission). This organization was created by the French government in 1998 to provide local and regional authorities with advice concerning the development of cross-border projects. The organization collected a lot of documents about cross-border projects. The database was built by analysing these documents based on several criteria. Integration means that "interactions between places and territories are increasing and distances and discontinuity are disappearing"³³. Some of the criteria (6) are showing the reality of the cross-border urban space (the social interactions) and considering spatial integration; the others (6) are considering the intensity of political cooperation and are measuring territorial integration. For each urban area, a value is attributed to each criterion depending on the level of integration. For example, the longer the process of cooperation has been running, the higher is the value. The values are attributed by taking into account all urban areas. Some information was found in the statistics office (INSEE) or on the websites of the border-cities when such a website was available. Most of the information was given for the year 2004. The highest value is attributed when an autonomous urban area level exists, followed by interdependence, coexistence and ignorance according to the classification of O. Martinez³⁴. Each urban area has received 12 values divided into two types. Three levels of integration are considered: high, medium, and low. A comparison is made between territorial and spatial integration to see if there is a relation between the political will and the cross-border interactions.

Table 1: Criteria of Integration of "French" Cross-Border Urban Areas

INTEGRATION	Criterion	0	1	2	3
SPATIAL INTEGRATION (2004)	Spatial Organization (SI1)	no relations	asymetric	polycentric	polarized
	Commuters* (SI2)	none	low	medium	high
	Practices (SI3)	None	low	complementarity	interdependance

³³ Brunet R., *op. cit.*

³⁴ Martinez O., *op. cit.*

	Cross-border places (SI4)	None	1 ou 2	several	global entity considered
	Mutual identity (SI5)	Ignorance	conflicted	interdependance	shared
	Collective transport network (SI6)	None	1 line	connection	integration
TERRITORIAL INTEGRATION (2004)	Oldness of Cooperation (TI1)	beginning	less than 15 years	15 - 25 years	more than 25 years
	Name (TI2)	none	yes		
	Vision, strategy (TI3)	none	in progress	parts	global
	Management (TI4)	none	irregular meetings	association	political structure
	Resources (TI5)	none	cooperation between existing organizations	Structure with few autonomy	autonomous structure
	Realized projects (TI6)	none	technical	several projects, feasibility step	several projects, realization

* 1999

Sources: MOT, INSEE, websites and reports of the collectivities

The results show that in most cases, a correspondence exists between the two types of integration. However, in some cases, there is a difference between territorial and spatial integration.

Table 2: Values of the Criteria for each "French" Cross-Border Agglomeration

	Spatial Integration						Territorial integration					
	SI1	SI2	SI3	SI4	SI5	SI6	TI1	TI2	TI3	TI4	TI5	TI6
Dunkerque	1	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	2	1	1	1

Werwicq-Comines	1	2	3	2	3	1	1	0	0	0	0	3
Lille-Kortrijk-Mouscron	3	2	3	2	2	2	2	1	3	2	3	2
Valenciennes	1	1	2	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Maubeuge	1	1	2	1	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Longwy-Differdange-Aubenge	1	3	1	1	2	1	2	1	3	2	3	3
Esch sur A.-Villerupt	1	3	1	1	2	1	1	0	2	1	0	0
Saarbrücken-Forbach-Sarreguemines	2	3	2	1	1	2	2	0	2	2	1	3
Strasbourg-Kehl	1	2	2	2	1	1	2	0	2	1	1	3
Basle-Lörrach-Saint Louis	2	3	2	2	2	2	3	1	3	2	3	3
Geneva-Annemasse	2	3	3	2	2	2	3	0	3	1	2	3
Riviera	3	1	2	2	2	2	0	0	1	1	0	1
Monaco-Menton-Ventimiglia	1	3	2	2	2	2	1	0	1	1	0	1
Basque Coast	3	1	3	2	3	2	1	1	3	3	1	1
Irun-Fuentarrabia-Hendaye	3	1	3	2	3	2	1	1	3	3	1	3

Sources: MOT, INSEE, website and report of the collectivities

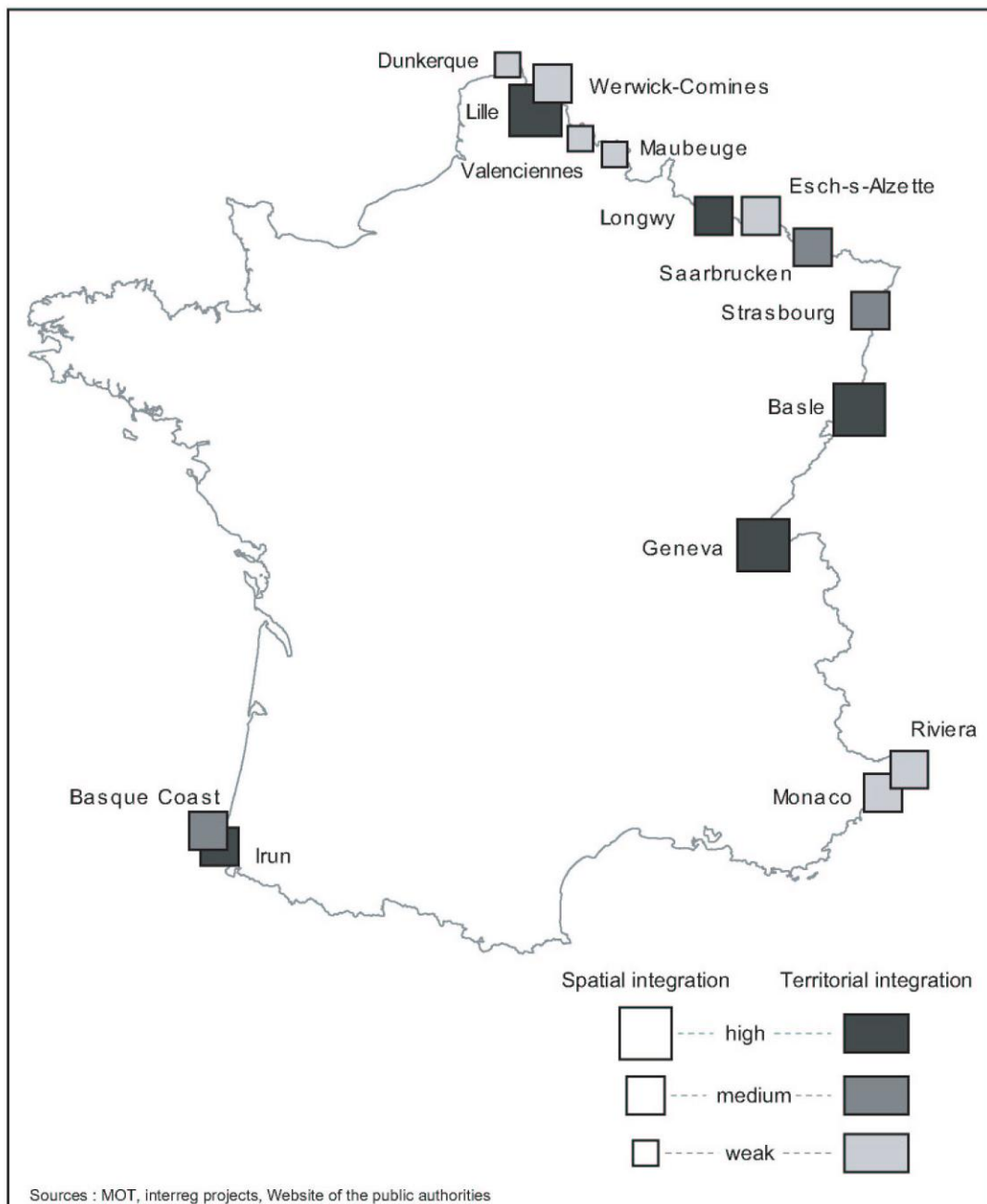


Figure 2 : Type of integration in the "french" cross-border agglomerations

Both urban areas whose main pole lies in Switzerland have the highest level of both kinds of integration, together with the French-Belgian urban area of Lille. In Geneva and Basle, it is due partly to the long duration of the process: the cooperation has begun in the 1960s and in the 1970s. It depends also on the political power. Both cities consider

themselves State-cities: their territory is highly urbanized and is surrounded by borders (inner and outer). The existence of a public power with very large competencies associated with the proximity of national borders (and inner borders) helps to build a partnership, i.e. strategies for overcoming borders. But even if one public power is playing a leading role, a shared vision must be developed. Although in Lille the cooperation began later than in Basle or in Geneva, the project has achieved a very high degree of integration. The Urban Community of Lille and four Belgian Political Territories joined together to create the project "Grootstad", which is considered to be one of the most interesting experiments in cross-border urban spaces.

The political will (on both sides of the border) is particularly visible on the French-Spanish border between Irun, Fuentarrabia and Hendaye³⁵ and in the European Pole of Development (*Pôle Européen de Développement Longwy* called PED)³⁶. In both cases, the territorial integration is higher than the spatial one. The existence of a Basque cross-border identity helps to build a real cross-border collectivity (*Consortio*). In the PED, it relies on the will of three states as well as the European Commission which considered this three-border area an experimental case in the 1980s.

In four urban areas, the cooperation process seems to be weak compared to the spatial integration. In fact, it began later than in the former cases and it is not very complex. Furthermore, the double cities of Comines and Wervicq are integrated in the "Grootstad" project and therefore have not developed a separate and readable approach of cross-border cooperation.

Three urban areas are in an intermediate state. Strasbourg and Saarbrücken began cooperation with operational projects (estate area, green area, etc.), but the political process, for instance, seems to be rather weak³⁷. The aim is not really to create a new cross-border identity but to use the opportunities given by the borders. On the Basque Coast, the political

³⁵ Bray Z., *op. cit.*

³⁶ Ait Oumeziane A., 2000, "Reconversion et construction d'un territoire transfrontalier: l'agglomération transfrontalière du Pôle européen de Développement des Trois-Frontières (Belgique-France-Luxembourg)", *Annales de géographie*, 611, pp.65-83.

³⁷ The French Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg and the German Kreis Ortenau signed a new partnership in November 2005, but the power of this institution remains very weak despite its initial ambition. This initiative was not included in the criteria.

process is more developed, the urban area has a global project, but the interactions are less important than originally assumed. The partnership consists in the cooperation between public powers and has no real autonomy compared to Basle or Lille.

On the Northern border, outside Lille, the integration process is very weak. The cross-border cooperation was for a long time considered more on a regional level and there was no interest to develop it on the local scale. On the Riviera, the consciousness of belonging to a cross-border space has begun to grow lately when local authorities realized that they could receive funding from the EU for building projects. The intensity of cooperation on the Basque Coast received an impulse a few years after the integration of Spain in the EEC: the end of the 1980s and the beginning of the 1990s were considered a stimulating time to cooperate.

A political frame and a cross-border autonomous process can only emerge when a political will exists with a common trust in the future and a real consciousness of the need to overstep the border and not only to eliminate it. The proximity to the border and the consciousness of the existence of several of its properties is very important for development of an integration process. In urban areas of the linear coast, the cooperation is always higher between partners located near the border than between authorities of the whole urban space. The policy of the supra-national power (the EU) helps to encourage all urban spaces to develop cross-border cooperation. Without these incentives, differences of integration between the urban areas would probably be higher. In fact, it seems that differences are more a matter of time than a matter of will. The characteristics of territorial integration will be now examined to understand the main reasons for cooperation. To do so, the frame of the four functions of borders from C. Raffestin will be used to analyse the management by public powers. Urban projects are one of the ways used by public authorities (municipalities) to mark their territory³⁸. But the stakes often concern the whole urban area. The urban project does not only express the will of the municipality, but it is inserted in the national frame of urban policy and has to comply with national rules concerning urban planning³⁹.

³⁸ Ascher F., 1997, "Territoires flous, intérêts collectifs multiples, contexte changeant: les nouveaux enjeux de la planification urbaine", in Saez G. et al., *Gouvernance métropolitaine et transfrontalière. Action publique territoriale, op. cit.*, pp.49-59.

³⁹ Jouve B., 2003, *La gouvernance urbaine en question*, Paris: Elsevier.

The New Cross-Border Governance System

Management at Two Levels

All European territories are subject to similar processes: European integration, globalization, increasing demand for local democracy, and need for a local identity⁴⁰. Location on the border brings in a special factor: the collectivity is daily confronted with a foreign country, its institutions, its way of life⁴¹. Cross-border cooperation means developing international relations, which have been highly regarded since the creation of the EU and can here develop constantly and regularly due to the geographical proximity. It is a way for cross-border cooperation to legitimize its own proper power.

Cross-border cooperation compels collectivities to organize new relations within their own national State: it is a way to harmonize their points of view before they face foreign authorities. The system of management has two levels of organization, one being active in each national territory (local level), and the other in the international area (urban area level). On the first level, a collectivity plays a leading role in cross-border relations through a spokesperson. Its leading role was progressively built in the course of the cross-border process rather than really anticipated. They need human, technical, and financial resources (statistical and planning offices, lawyers, etc.) to reach their goal, resources not necessarily under their control.

On the second level, a system of management proceeds from official cross-border cooperation which, however, also reflects implicit power relations. The cross-border relations appear to be unbalanced because of the difference in size and power between the collectivities. The Metropolis⁴² concentrates the resources, which is not the case of other collectivities. But the border also restores some balance, since all collectivities are treated as equal partners, regardless of their small size or economic weakness. They can offer much

⁴⁰ Anderson J., 2002, *New Borders for a Changing Europe: Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance*, London: Franck Ross.

⁴¹ Donnan H., Wilson T., *op. cit.*

⁴² Communauté Urbaine de Strasbourg, Communauté Urbaine de Lille, Stadtverband Saarbrücken, Canton de Genève, Kanton Basel-Stadt.

more than local resources by mobilizing resources at different levels in their own national system.

Incentives of the European Union achieve their purpose of developing cross-border cooperation and transforming the border into an interdependence line⁴³. Local authorities are aware that the main differences concern cultural and legal aspects and devote part of their energy to understanding the functioning of the territorial system on the other side. Furthermore, cultural confrontation gives them a special identity which is a trump card in the competition between territories on a global or European scale. The border makes manifest the power relations between collectivities in the very attempt to regulate them by cross-border cooperation.

Border as Resource: The Strategy of the Border-Cities

The border-cities, except the largest ones, were all facing the same challenge: the border was a difficulty but it also offered protection and opportunities. A political and economic centrality is established through the location on the border which is also a strong element of identity. On one side, it restrained some traffic, the border-town being the last centre for people who did not want to cross the boundary. On the other side, due to the existence of differences (rules, taxes, etc.), a specific commercial offer existed and attracted people from neighbouring countries.

The dismantling of European borders leads to the breakdown of this organization. The restraining function of the border is blurred, and the inhabitants of the whole urban area can now be considered as potential consumers. The border is not a barrier anymore and it can not underline national identity. Border-cities react by using the changes in a positive way. They reinforce their centrality, carrying out a strong urban planning policy. To reach this aim, they develop a contradictory policy: they assert their affiliation to the whole urban space, but at the same time they construct an image based on the differences represented by the border. They are examples of hybridity using the advantages of both territorial systems.

The case of Kehl, the German suburb of Strasbourg, is highly representative. Since the end of World War II, Kehl has been known by the population of Strasbourg for its

⁴³ Martinez O., *op. cit.*

commercial centre offering products which are unobtainable or more expensive in France. Just across the Rhine, Strasbourg is famous for its European institutions. Kehl used this European image in the 1990s to become the seat of cross-border institutions (Euro-Institut, Infobest, etc.). On the other hand, Kehl built green areas along the rivers to underline its German "green" reputation (by preserving nature in the city and its Rhine surroundings). The *Landesgartenschau*, a garden and art festival organized by Kehl and Strasbourg in 2004 was a way to reinforce its centrality and its image⁴⁴. The border is erased (the continuity of the urban space is stressed), but on the other side, differences are maintained: Kehl is a place near Strasbourg, in its suburban area, but with German identity.

In the urban area of Basle, the German cities of Weil am Rhein and Lörrach, and the French cities of Huningue and Saint-Louis followed a similar strategy. They are using the image of contemporary architecture and culture of Basle to build their own city's project. For instance, Saint-Louis created a new museum of art in an old factory and established relations with museums in Paris and also the nearer museums of Basle. In the French suburb of Geneva, an estate area was created in the 1990s and tried to attract investors by promoting the nearness of Geneva and its international image by using French financial resources of the collectivities⁴⁵.

The border-cities exploit two functions of the border: difference and regulation. In a way, the ambivalence of the border is considered a resource. All the city councils argue the same way: as part of the urban area, they can apply for European funds, and as collectivities in their own State, they can claim that they are a showcase. But in all cases, the strategy of the suburban border-cities depends on the orientation of the main authority.

Border as Relation: A New Visibility

Building a cross border urban area is one of the strategic orientations of public powers and this requires cooperation. But the orientations are not the same in all urban areas: the strategies, the means allocated, the relations between collectivities are the results of a complex

⁴⁴ Krieger M., 2004, *Le jardin des deux-rives. La genèse du projet transfrontalier entre Kehl et Strasbourg*, Strasbourg: Association Garten/Jardin.

⁴⁵ Moullé F., 2002, "L'agglomération transfrontalière genevoise: acteurs, stratégies et fonctions internationales", in Reitel B. et al., *Villes et frontières*, Paris: Economica-Anthropos, pp.114-123.

history. It all depends on the way in which each national State and national territory were built up (in time and in space) and on relations between states. It is also the result of a confrontation between several national systems (political and cultural) and of the relations developed between "local" public authorities (tab. 3).

Cross-border cooperation is a way to strengthen their participation in a global competition, for three reasons. First, it is an addition to its size and to its visibility: this is mainly the case for metropolis. This area has more diversity than the city itself. Second, it helps to build an international and European image. A cross-border urban area means urban spaces in several countries and the resulting knowledge and experience of several national systems. Third, the urban area is easy to find on a map of Europe because there are very few large cities located on its boundaries. A flexible system of governance worked out in partnership was developed. It was based on projects and visions of urban planning and relied on good will. But the need to create a more definite structure that could be recognized by public authorities and by the population in each State became apparent. Political collectivities do not develop the same strategy with their neighbouring and foreign public authorities.

Conclusion

The *Interreg* programmes open financial opportunities to cooperation. Cross-border cooperation has become inevitable at local level and follows more or less the same pattern: collectivities are developing visions and projects which contribute to shape the consciousness of belonging to a cross-border urban area. Cross-border relations are not a simple component of little significance in international relations between neighbouring states, but they are the expression of real proximity links between foreign collectivities separated by a boundary. The increasing cooperation manifests the assertion of public power at the local level and points to a transfer of the interest of national states from their own boundaries to the outside borders of the European Union. Therefore, the cross-border governance system which developed consists in regulation and combines balance, flexibility, and mutual recognition. Decisions concerning the projects are made in common and each authority has the duty to translate it into its own national system. The process sometimes takes a long time and requires mutual

trust and knowledge of the foreign political system. The flexibility appears in the weak degree of institutionalization of the governance system. The process, however, also testifies to the fragility of the system. Institutionalization is a way to secure the perpetuation of the process in time and to give shape to a new territory. The governance system also has a strategic dimension: the collectivities have to imagine a common future and to look ahead for harmonization, cooperation and complementarity. This goal also forces them to think about their own territories and identities.

Cross-border cooperation is more and more made possible because a shared perception of the border exists: opportunities brought by the properties of the border must be exploited, relations must be fostered. Frontier belongs to the identity of these places⁴⁶. Cooperation requires equality between the different public authorities: in the cross-border process, suburban border cities have in theory the same powers as metropolitan authorities. Collectivities try to legitimize their actions in this way and to affirm themselves within the national political system. The metropolitan authorities take advantage of their cross-border image at international level to show that they occupy an original position and that they have experience in complex public management.

There are some incidental differences between the processes observed in the selected urban areas. Even if the integration process is apparently growing in all urban areas, it seems that only few of them have developed a global strategy. Some of them are of a metropolis size and use their resources to build these strategies. Switzerland does not belong to the EU, but the process of integration is very high in Basel and in Geneva. This shows that integration across a border is a matter of time, a matter of will, and that it depends on the proximity between public powers and the border as well as on a shared consciousness between territories located across the borders.

⁴⁶ ISIG, 2003, *Cross-border cooperation in the Balkan-Danube Area. An analysis of Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats*, Strasbourg: Council of Europe.

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