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**Milan BUFON\*****CROSS-BORDER POLICIES AND SPATIAL AND SOCIAL  
INTEGRATION: BETWEEN CHALLENGES AND PROBLEMS**

**Abstract:** The article is discussing both challenges and problems that emerge from an intensified cross-border integration, particularly in Europe, which is creating a sort of 'cross-border regionalism' that might be sought as a new constituent part of a complex, multi-level system of governance incorporating not only national, but also local/regional agents. Cross-border regionalism is thus not only a system of government, but also a system of 'grass-rooted' social and spatial (re)integration of borderlands. This process is closely related to the question of changing territoriality, preserving on the one hand the regional control and on the other hand re-acting societal and territorial co-dependence.

**Key words:** cross-border politics, spatial integration, Europe.

**1. INTRODUCTION**

Intensified 'diplomatic' activities of sub-national administrative units and the development of new interstate economic and political interactions are undoubtedly indicators of in-depth changes related to the very status and functions of state systems. The intensification of cross-border cooperation is usually associated with the process of increasing economic globalisation and social co-dependence, with cross-border cooperation being expected to contribute to the elimination of actual or potential conflicts in borderlands. In view of that, the so-called *cross-border regionalism* is envisaged to become a constituent part of a complex, multi-level system of governance incorporating not only national, but

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also local and regional agents. From the normative point of view, such transfer of power would demand from all the parties involved to reach a 'higher' level of international cooperation eventually leading to new forms of regional 'governance' carried out above or below the existing or prevailing 'national' practices. Despite the growing number of cross-border initiatives and connections mostly characteristic of the European area, one cannot really claim that from the institutional point of view there have been any major or in-depth changes related to (1) the very objectives of cross-border cooperation, (2) cross-border frameworks or systems, and (3) dynamics of the cooperation itself with regard to the traditional 'Westphalian' order. According to Scott (1999), cross-border regionalism is a system of regional forms of cross-border cooperation characterised by very heterogeneous institutional strategies as it is constituted through multilateral agreements relevant to not only individual national governments but also local administration and civil society; a system that may be based upon the European regional policy whose most noticeable forms of manifestation are the *Interreg* programme and the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).

These European policies undoubtedly resulted from positive outcomes of cross-border entities such as *Benelux*, a union operating at wider regional level, or *Euregio*, an association operating at lower regional level along the German-Dutch border. Within such a context, cross-border cooperation envisages the formation of special planning commissions usually composed of institutional 'administrators' of the parties involved, as well as representatives of different professional bodies, in particular local universities and other 'non-government' social organisations mostly from the economic and cultural fields. Cross-border regionalism thus proves to be not only *a system of government*, but also *a system of integration* of different interests and development visions that may have a more 'long-term' and 'sustainable' bases, thus *de facto* facilitating the (re)integration of borderlands, or that may be only a manifestation of short-term opportunism when it comes to obtaining European funding and to 'patching up' local budgets. In the case of *Interreg*, its major objectives are indeed economic cooperation, development of cross-border infrastructure and cooperation in the environmental field, yet the programme also takes into account social and cultural aspects of cross-border cooperation. Naturally, in different borderland situation emphases fall differently: along 'new' internal borders between the former 'western' and 'eastern' Europe, the emphasis is undoubtedly placed on 'harsh' cross-border infrastructural measures the aim of which is, first and foremost, to resurrect cross-border communication, while along 'old' internal borders within the EU 15 area substantial funding is mostly allocated to 'soft' integration at information and social levels and to better coordination of development planning and integration of functional measures (Marks and Hooghe, 2001). Even if joint cross-border social and spatial planning has recorded several notable achievements, such as the establishment of nature reserves and protected

areas and the development of cross-border transport infrastructure and cooperation between universities, it still remains underdeveloped as it is impeded by various administrative and decision-making procedures on both sides of the border on the one hand, and by different forms of local patriotism springing from historical 'conflict-burdened' motives or merely from pre-election calculations of local politicians on the other hand.

The situation is radically different in the North American area where cross-border cooperation is integrated in the system of interstate economic collaboration and has no far-reaching goals of social (re)integration. There is much more recent cooperation given that the first free-trade agreement between Canada and the USA (CUFTA) was signed in 1989, and in 1994 superseded by the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA) in order to include Mexico as well. The North American area is characterised by bigger systemic and social differences, while the border-related element is of a relatively low importance since there are only two border lines in North America, extremely distant from one another (Anderson and Gerber, 2008). The main objective of the bloc is therefore the 'liberalisation' of economic and trade exchange, even if the partner states also try to achieve results in the fields of not only joint management of water and energy resources and pollution, but also collaboration between universities and other public institutions where the most active agents are not federal or national bodies but 'local' communities directly interested in such collaboration (i.e. federal states and their administrative structures). With the latter being much bigger than their counterparts in Europe, the notion of 'cross-border cooperation', particularly in the case of sparsely populated areas in North America, covers a much larger territory than in the EU. In comparison with the situation in Europe, American 'local' communities (at least in the case of the USA) boast, as a rule, much greater autonomy so that from the point of view of functional cross-border cooperation federal states could play a much more important role than the majority of regions in Europe. The main obstacle is state restrictions in the field of free movement of people resulting from the fear of illegal immigration and new security measures introduced in the aftermath of terrorist attacks on the USA in September 2001 owing to which the 'internal' borders within the NAFTA system are very similar to 'external' borders of the EU system. Such restrictions not only pose a great hindrance to cross-border communication, but also impede the disentanglement of 'other' concrete functional cross-border problems; the EU would like to solve such problems through the use of instruments such as the *Interreg* programme or the *European Neighbourhood Policy* whose implementation has mostly been entrusted to local governments. In the North American area, the majority of functional cross-border problems is, by contrast, solved by federal agencies that joined forces in the tripartite Commission for Environmental Cooperation (CEC) or in the bilateral (American-Mexican) Border Environment Cooperation Commission

(BECC) on the one hand and by a number of NGOs dealing with individual aspects and problems of cross-border co-existence at local level on the other. Arizona-Sonora is the only association that could be regarded as a North American 'Euroregion' if one ignores the facts that it operates in a mostly sparsely populated desert area and that its two centres are as many as 355 miles apart (Gonzales, 2004).

The comparison of European and American cross-border 'policies' reveals that it is only in the European case that the issues related to cross-border integration and cooperation are increasingly addressed at the institutional level and therefore primarily a manifestation of *de facto* integration and cooperation of local and regional authorities financially supported by the 'joint' transnational institution, i.e. the EU. Similar incentives cannot be observed in the North American area where informal and non-government organisations and associations play a slightly more influential role and foster more flexible forms of cross-border cooperation. Both cases, however, do not exhibit more sustainable, in-depth and comprehensive forms of vertical (sectoral) and horizontal (spatial) (re)integration (Blatter, 2004). The EU does foster a myriad of cross-border incentives that however may be quite non-transparent and chaotic since in certain areas various 'Euroregions' tend to compose real 'matryoshkas' and that only rarely exhibit real coordination between not only the neighbours but also public and private interests within individual borderlands. Regional cross-border policies thus remain mostly administrative and bureaucratic in character, addressing real life and real needs of the borderland population only to a small extent.

## 2. EUROPEAN INSTRUMENTS FOR CROSS-BORDER POLICIES

Nevertheless, it is precisely these policies that can be regarded as one of the most visible elements of contemporary European 'reterritorialisation' and 'multi-level governance' composing an unprecedented 'network' of co-dependence between transnational macro-regional institutions, states, regions and local communities (Scott, 2002). Since the mid-1980s, individual 'national' politics in Europe have had to respond to the challenge of gradual 'Europeanisation' enabling regional and local communities to get in direct contact with transnational 'authorities' in Brussels. The so-called 'subsidiarity' became the guiding principle of reforms carried out since 1988 in accordance with the European structural policy. The principle of subsidiarity not only calls for a process of vertical coordination between individual decision-making levels, but also introduces non-government agents into the decision-making process itself. Thus it somehow 'breaks up' traditional hierarchical relations within individual

national systems and encourages the ‘regionalisation’ of social and spatial processes both at the top-down and bottom-up levels, which naturally may give rise to new potential conflicts. After 1989, these developments were further complicated by in-depth geopolitical transformations on the European map that on the one hand gave new momentum to tendencies for horizontal (re)integration of the continent, and on the other slowed down the process of vertical integration or federalisation of the European political system owing to not only a great number of new ‘national’ players (which however were mostly centralised in character) and increasing economic globalisation (giving rise to ‘global’ crises), but also unexpected internal conflicts such as the one in the territory of former Yugoslavia. The EU did not manage to provide a unanimous response to all these new challenges since its major members more and more explicitly promoted their own political and economic interests within ‘joint’ bodies.

Europe has thus not managed to shape a more harmonised spatial policy even if the issue has recently been discussed by competent European bodies and addressed by numerous expert studies. The latter mostly focus on urban systems, urban vs. rural relations, accessibility of development systems or structures, and natural and cultural heritage protection in the context of ‘sustainable’ environment protection and the unity-in-diversity paradigm. Such views favour not so much Christaller’s hierarchical spatial organisation as polycentric networks of urban regions, big cities and regions that no longer regard state borders as that utmost limit to which individual development projects, adopted at national level, still apply if they take into account peripheral and borderland areas at all. In 1999, this joint development effort resulted in the adoption of the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP), which consolidated the vision of the so-called trans-European freight ‘corridors’. The ESDP also promoted the establishment of the so-called ‘virtual’ regions ranging from ‘Euroregions’ to larger regional integrations such as the Baltic region, the Atlantic Arc and the EUROMED region.

All these regional cross-border entities received increased thematic and financial support in the last EU financial period (2007–2013) within the framework of the so-called ‘Objective 3’ dedicated to European territorial cooperation. The EU contribution to this Objective amounts to nearly € 8 billions allocated to as many as 53 cross-border cooperation programmes (which accounts for 74% of the entire funding) and to 13 areas of transnational and interregional cooperation (26% of the entire funding). The most important cohesion programme is most probably the *European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion* (ESPON). With cross-border integration often being hindered by national legislations and other administrative impediments, in 2006 the European Commission introduced a new legal instrument – *European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation* (EGTC) enabling the establishment of a cross-border legal entity in order to carry out cross-border programmes and projects. The

EGTC is allowed to form its own structure, to manage its own resources and to employ its own personnel. Potential EGTC members sign a convention and adopt a statute in line with the principle of the European legal order, while relevant national bodies have to approve their convention on cooperation, if appropriate, within three months. The EGTCs established so far provide common public services on the basis of already established 'Euroregions' or are re-established with the aim of building cross-border infrastructure, carrying out cross-border transport services and other social services, launching joint agencies in the fields of energy and environmental protection, developing bilingual information systems in borderlands, collaborating in the field of research and education, etc. (Hobbing, 2005) The majority of EGTCs has established administrative bodies the members of which are not only their founding parties, but also other stakeholders and NGOs.

The EGTC instrument is envisaged to facilitate the operation and establishment of new 'Euroregions' – entities that have proved to be the most efficient means for the promotion and implementation of European integration processes and policies in 'the field'. In addition, it is an expression of broader efforts to create a common (European) system of multi-level governance in the fields of spatial planning and regional development practices the aims of which are to assure solidarity and integration on the one hand and growth and competitiveness on the other. Designed as 'open', such a system places emphasis on the 'production' of spatial or organizational concepts, yet is not that well defined when it comes to concrete instructions and guidelines. Fairly undefined relations between society, economy and the environment are reflected in development visions that concomitantly stress the importance of dense economic networks, the sense of cultural heritage and European identity, and innovation capability. The 'system' of European spatial planning thus remains largely symbolic and constantly vacillates between 'functionality' of development practices and situations in the most 'innovative' parts of the EU 15, in particular the European 'centre' delimited by the *London–Paris–Milano–Munich–Hamburg* pentagon which the 'rest' of Europe should simply 'follow' (or even 'submit' itself to), and 'polycentricity' of various subsystems that should co-create the European area and society in an 'equal' (yet 'divided') manner (Faludi, 2000; Richardson and Jensen, 2000). This development 'dilemma' is undoubtedly a representative reflection on broader 'wavering' between the federal and confederate concepts of how to organise the EU: the former presupposes a more integrated, as well as more hierarchical and centralised order with the 'free market' regulating social and spatial development potentials in an 'open' and competitive European system, while the latter gives precedence to 'diversity' and the possibility of fairly large interventions of state 'regulators' in the planning and implementation of development policies. It is the latter that seems more in favour of cross-border policies since they are a result of complex multi-level 'regulation' and channel-

ling to which the very presence of the state border as the principal element of social and spatial ‘discontinuity’ gives its proper sense and motivation, whereas in an ‘open’ system the ‘internal’ borders would be bereft of their importance. As a result, cross-border cooperation and integration ‘management’, ‘regulated’ by the *Interreg* programme and the EGTC instrument, is largely ‘bureaucratic’ in character and does not satisfy actual expectations of numerous ‘Euroregions’ and local communities, especially when ‘Eureregions’ and cross-border programmes are established only at formal level and with the aim of assuring part of the European funding to individual administration units in borderlands or even to central state-directed apparatuses ‘supervising’ them.

### 3. CREATING NEW ‘INSIDES AND OUTSIDES’?

Another relatively complex issue is the ‘management’ of EU external borders as addressed by the *European Neighbourhood Policy* (ENP). The aim of the ENP is to connect the tendency to ‘reaffirm’ the traditional function of the external border, i.e. the separation of the ‘EU system’ from the rest of the world even if only in the socio-political sphere, and the concomitant tendency to ‘overcome’ them and to establish ‘cross-border’ regions of socio-economic cooperation and integration. This troublesome relationship deteriorated after the 2004–2007 EU enlargement when ‘candidate’ states – located in the ‘in-between’ or ‘border’ Central and East European areas that during the transition period functioned as a spatial and social ‘filter’ between the EU and the ‘rest of the world’ – finally joined the ‘system’ and had to completely rearrange their control systems at their ‘external’ borders. The threat of a new Fortress Europe, which would cut off all cross-border ties at the EU ‘external’ borders, gave rise to many protests of local population, in particular along the Polish-Ukrainian, Slovak-Ukrainian and Hungarian-Ukrainian borders (Dimitrova, 2010). The reasons for complaining were not only trivial calculations of numerous minor and major traffickers and smugglers who emerged after the ‘liberalisation’ of border regimes within the former Eastern bloc, but also deeper motives of those who had not expected that the ‘deliverance’ from the undemocratic communist regime would subject them to the new ‘democratic’ discrimination between ‘true’ and ‘untrue’ Europeans. Such division would become even more absurd in many multicultural borderlands where the identification with the same nation or with the prevailing ethnic and linguistic group in the neighbouring country enabled members of the national minority to obtain double citizenship. Inequality in terms of possible cross-border movement would therefore create even greater disproportion between the potentials of *ethnos* and *demos* and lead to further political instrumentation and conflicts (Bufon, 2006a).

The European Commission responded to this issue at the end of 2006 by adopting not only the general principle *Everything but Institutions* applying to neighbouring states that are not envisaged to join the EU (even if the EU itself never clearly declared what its 'final' size was supposed to be), but also a new regulation according to which the EU external borders would be allowed to introduce special border regimes allowing the borderland population easier cross-border movement, naturally on condition that such a regime would be approved by the neighbouring state and defined by an adequate bilateral agreement. Concomitantly, the European Commission embarked on talks with EU 'neighbouring' states in order to reach necessary agreements related to the return of illegal immigrants. At the level EU-closer neighbourhood, such agreements were reached with Ukraine and Moldova; some member states reached special *ad hoc* bilateral agreements, as in the case of Italy and Libya, even if officially the EU does not recognise Libya as a state with sufficient level of democracy to 'entrust' it with the procedure of returning illegal migrants (allegedly, Libya subjects them to forced labour); whereas certain transition states, such as Morocco, do not intend to sign an agreement as they believe that such a procedure would incur huge expense. Slow development has also been characteristic of the vision of enlarged free zone market, which would economically tie the EU with its close neighbourhood states in the areas of eastern Europe and the Mediterranean, thus compensating for their full membership in the EU. Many a decision-maker in the EU would implement such a regime in the case of Turkey as well, a long-standing candidate for EU membership and as such an important player in the 'European' free zone market. In practice, the former *buffer zone* composed of candidate states from Central and Eastern Europe would now be relocated to the ENP area (Apap and Tchorbadjiyska, 2004).

Such 'selective' or 'Eurocentric' practices spurred many authors (cf.: Weaver, 1997; Zielonka, 2006) to ponder over new (Western) European 'imperialism' interested in its external 'marginal' areas only if they could bring it economic profit or pose it a safety threat even if, owing to its internal split, the EU is not able to provide a unanimous and efficient response to it as it was the case in former Yugoslavia where the conflicts were somehow 'mitigated' only under 'external' American constraint. Such an 'imperialist' stance, if present, is apparently based on economic rather than military and strategic grounds and is supposed to count on comparative economic advantages arising from a large discrepancy in the development stage between the centre and the periphery within the system conceived in such a way. However, contemporary authors also highlight that in the long run the maintenance of diversity costs more than its abolishment (Marchetti, 2006), and so the EU has launched an assistance programme (ENPI with a budget of € 15 billions for the 2007–2013 period) within the ENP programme, which is in many ways modelled upon the regional policies developed within the EU. The combination of 'internal' and 'external'



regional policies thus creates a complex system of 'concentric circles' based on a bigger or smaller spatial distance from European development centres and on higher or lower degree of 'integration' in the EU system built upon not only the 'free market', but also the monetary union and the Schengen area. Owing to the special decision-making system based on the power and importance of individual member states, differentiation can also be observed within the EU system itself, e.g. between the EU 15 states and the new members and even between the EU 15 group itself (that is between the real 'engine' of the integration – the German-French connection, including the 'in-between' Benelux – and the other EU 15 states). The enlargement and deepening of the EU therefore also entails the spread and deepening of ideas and incentives launched and developed in the centre of this integration and then 'adopted' by other members. From such a point of view, European 'imperialism' is multifaceted, operating according to the system of 'soft' spread and implementation of certain 'values' and 'mechanisms' of co-dependence.

'Internal' and 'external' co-dependence, however, changes the nature and function of political borders, transforming them from 'separators' of social spaces into their 'integrators'. European 'cross-border' policies have thus expanded the classic, 'closed' linear concept of political border to an 'open', dynamic geographical area of cooperation and integration within which the standard enforcement of visa regime and strict border control would undoubtedly function as a highly disturbing element. What actually arises here is the old 'discussion' on which 'typology' of border regime contributes more to the elimination of potential cross-border conflicts: is it the 'open' border or the 'closed' border? By preventing communication between the populations on the both sides, the latter 'automatically' eliminates potential conflicts, while the former 'brings together' potentially quarrelsome sides and, by encouraging their co-dependence, turns them from 'enemies' into 'friends'. Naturally, the process of European integration should spur all stakeholders in the field of cross-border policies to choose the 'open option', with EU's attitude towards its 'external' borders being relatively 'softer' than USA's attitude towards its 'external' borders within the NAFTA association even if some EU members would prefer to employ American 'methods' owing to their calculations in the field of domestic policy, especially when it comes to the limitation of the 'invasion of foreigners', that is the 'threat' that has proven to be such an efficient generator of various populist stances in the 'old' and 'new' Europe (Kepka and Murphy, 2002).

Political interests of individual states in the preservation of the 'old' Westphalian (closed or state-centric) concepts are therefore not always in complete accordance with (open or integration-oriented) 'visions' and 'policies' of the EU or its 'joint' bodies. Within such a context, the 'reality' of European cross-border policies and practices along internal and external borders is inevitably fairly labile and contradictory, reflecting perpetual vacillation between not so

much the 'abstract' federal and confederate concepts of European organisation as the 'real' tendency to preserve and emphasise separate ethnic and national identities and positions on the one hand and the search for possible common European *demos*, as well as between historical 'memories' and concrete needs of the 'present'. These 'dilemmas' and development 'splits' are also related to the question of how to regard and manage different territorial and social dimensions recently addressed by several authors (e.g.: Anderson, 1996; Beck, 2007; Brenner, 1999) who pointed out the contradictory intertwining of various co-existing forms of territoriality and the changing relation between 'internal' and 'external' spaces in Europe.

#### 4. 'EUROREGIONS' AS NEW ACTORS OF CROSS-BORDER POLICIES

In any case, it can be argued that the European practices have recently made real progress as far as the development of cross-border policies is concerned, making them an integral part of the European integration 'system'. Cross-border cooperation, for which the abbreviation CBC is generally used, was 'born' and developed in the area of Benelux and western German borders as early as the 1950s and 1960s. The area also coined the term 'Euroregion', generally used today for institutionalised cross-border cooperation of borderland municipalities or administrative units 'managed' by special joint bodies such as a wider *assembly* and a narrower *presidency*, composed of elected representatives and local units, a *secretariat* for the execution of regular duties and special *working bodies* addressing common issues. The assembly and working bodies may also be composed of other stakeholders such as economic, professional and non-government organisations, as well as individuals who can contribute to the attainment of shared objectives.

Such a practice proved to be fairly innovative as all 'policies' with a cross-border dimension had traditionally been directed by the central authorities either on a unilateral or on a bi- or multilateral basis (in the case of special international agreements with other countries). It was only the initiative of the Council of Europe that gave a new, 'international' dimension to local communities and peripheral national authorities: by launching the *Interreg* programme, the EU somehow 'incorporated' such a dimension into its regional policy.

In practice, the initiative proved difficult to realise at legal level since legislations of individual countries did not make it possible, and so the majority of 'Euroregions' operated on the basis of agreements with a different level of formality. In most cases, two or more 'associations' of local communities integrated on the basis of internal legislative rules. Local communities obtained new options to formalize cross-border cooperation in 1980 when the Council of

Europe launched the *Madrid Convention*; the new instruments were first used by 'Euroregions' in Benelux and in the area between Benelux and Germany. In the course of time, there appeared the differentiation between *real Euroregions*, which incorporate all the above-mentioned elements for actual institutional cross-border cooperation and which had been officially established on the basis of the Madrid Convention, and *instrumental Euroregions*, which operate only to the extent necessary for obtaining and using funding from the *Interreg* programme. In the latter, the most active agents are usually various public and private 'agencies' operating separately on both sides of the border and specialised in lobbying and technical preparation of projects through which they finance their own operation. As a rule, 'instrumental Euroregions' boast no permanent joint bodies of cross-border management characteristic of the 'real Euroregion' (Bufon, 2006b).

Another element of differentiation between the two types of 'Euroregions' is territorial size as 'real Euroregions' usually cover a territory within which there develops functional cross-border co-dependence and real need for solving common issues, while 'instrumental Euroregions' are composed of *NUTS 3* that are, according to EU criteria, entitled to *Interreg* funding. In short: the former operate mostly in accordance with the *bottom up* approach the main aim of which is to solve a shared problem, the latter mostly employ the *top-down* approach the main aim of which is to obtain European funding. Another difference lays in the fact that in 'instrumental Euroregions' local communities, for which the *Interreg* programme has been designed, have no say in decision-making processes as decisions are mostly made on 'their behalf' by provincial or regional authorities within whose territory 'Euroregions' are located or even by central national apparatuses that 'take care' of the allocation of funding among individual regional authorities and individual project teams via 'political' (and anything but transparent) channels, that is via *ad hoc* established 'joint' management committees (Perkmann, 1999). Naturally, this contamination of the process of CBC with 'Eurocracy' and state bureaucracy, if not even with pronouncedly partial party-related interests, has harmed 'genuine' cross-border initiatives and needs arising at local level in many ways and in many places even prevented 'real Euroregions' from being established or submitted them to interests of 'instrumental Euroregions', which can rely upon increasing political and economic power of regional authorities.

In view of that, the time of establishment of a certain Euroregion plays a fairly important role in its functioning as it has been proved that the *Interreg* programme helps old 'Euroregions', on the basis of which the entire system of the implementation of cross-border policies described above had actually been created, to preserve their role in the complex multi-level system of management, while younger 'Euroregions' find it very difficult to adopt a fairly discernible or independent role or may not even be established at all. Another important factor

is the management structure in individual countries: e.g. in Germany, states are usually too big to be the main agent of cross-border integration, and so 'Euroregions' tend to be fairly efficient as they are not rivalled by other administrative units; moreover, as a federal republic, Germany is much more decentralized than neighbouring France where CBC is under greater control of the central authorities, and so 'Euroregions' along the German-French border are less developed than their counterparts along the German border with Benelux. Another question posed by Perkmann is related to the very objectives and results of CBC. In his opinion, they can be divided into the following three groups: (1) spread and implementation of European policies; (2) establishment of territorial coalitions that are otherwise instable; (3) creation of conditions for the emergence of new players in borderlands.

As mentioned-above, borderlands have been witnessing the development of new forms of horizontal and vertical co-dependence and co-management involving both European institutions and central or peripheral authorities and other stakeholders from two or more countries, which can entrust the management of cross-border policies to special joint bodies or 'Euroregions' in order to make it as efficient as possible. In short, 'Euroregions' are a very good manifestation of a new, multi-level European regional and integration policy within which, however, different relationships between co-dependence and co-management are anything but determined and stable, which naturally crucially affects the level of success of the 'Euroregions' themselves and the 'multi-level' management approach taken in order to strengthen cross-border territorial entities and their functions. If the realisation of European policies goes hand in hand with their regionalisation, such developments may be regarded as a more or less conscious attempt to lessen the influence of the state since the state still remains the main and most influential agent in the process of social and spatial planning. Even in the EU, the state remains the main bearer of spatial and social identity of the population (Paasi, 2002). Cultural diversity is most probably the most distinctive characteristic of our continent, with the prevalence of nation-states in this part of the world indicating that political representativeness in the region is mostly based on ethnic and linguistic differentiation of the European population. Inasmuch as the element of 'representativeness' is present in the process of the regionalisation of the European area, regions can take over from the state the function of new ideological 'containers' of the identity represented in a certain regional environment, which in turn takes over the status of dominant social group through regional political autonomy or self-government (Bufon, 2004).

'Cross-border policies' are most probably the most discernible manifestation of the new system of governance and planning gradually developed within the 'EU system'. This process of 'Europeanisation' of spatial and development policies has led to the emergence of new institutional structures and ties that

perforce 'transcend' state borders and 'annul' traditional hierarchy in the decision-making process. According to some authors (e.g. Castells, 1998), such developments bring about the formation of a new, postmodern socio-political 'network' structure or authority manifested in the system of the so-called 'multi-level governance' involving not only inter- and supra- but also sub-state dimensions. The first dimension is somehow personified by the European Council, the second by the European Commission and the European Parliament, and the third by different 'Euroregions' and cross-border associations of regions. Within such a context, the *Interreg* programme functions as an actual possibility of implementing multi-level, network governance, and can be regarded as a 'success story' of European integration policies 'in the field'. This project-oriented cross-border cooperation and integration is also a reflection of a typical 'European' practice that on the one hand brought about the boom of different pragmatic 'Eurocratic' agencies and committees, and on the other the realisation of new and unimagined development scenarios and 'visions' for the future. The latter are mostly a subject of the ESDP, which however has to constantly cope with various development and spatial regulations since the perspective of the 'open' European social and planning area is still divided into 'closed' national systems that get their 'meaning' in the very European principle of subsidiarity.

## 5. CONCLUSION

In any case, changes in the function and status of different territorial units and levels lead to changes in the function and status of their borders, which in today's Europe mostly move in the continuum between socio-cultural 'divergence' and socio-economic 'integration'. It is this relationship that gives rise to major problems with cross-border cooperation as in many places there arises a big discrepancy between expectations and needs of the local population and the practice of cross-border 'policies'. The two communities meeting the other one along the border are both spatially 'close' and socially 'apart': spatial 'closeness' is mostly dependent on the typology of the border regime, which can pose major or minor obstacles to cross-border movement, while social 'distance' depends on the level of socio-cultural homogeneity and better or worse functional integration of the borderland population and area. The term 'cross-border cooperation' itself presupposes that there exists a certain 'obstacle', that is the border, that has to be 'overcome', while the term 'social and spatial (re)integration' calls for complete removal of the 'obstacle' (Houtum and Struiver, 2002). In such a context, analysts of border situations and potentials of cross-border co-dependence have to consider both the symbolic and functional nature of this 'obstacle' since it can be established that it is precisely because

'internal borders' no longer function as functional 'obstacles' in the EU that they increasingly assume the role of 'symbolic', mental borders, which can be a real 'obstacle' to actual (re)integration of the border area and society. Borders therefore everywhere 'produce' environments of simultaneous potential opportunity or danger, contact or conflict, cooperation or competition, convergence or divergence. The feasibility of prevalence of one or the other option depends on time and place, while in some cases even both options can co-exist in one and the same area (Anderson and O'Dowd, 1999). Another problem, characteristic of Europe in particular, springs from the genesis of the border line itself since one and the same political border can be regarded as an object of historic 'victory' by one side and as an object of historic 'defeat' by the other; in addition, this perception may differ in state centres and the borderlands themselves where the very presence of national minorities can generate the existence of two contradictory views of the past that often have a crucial impact on the feasibility of cross-border communication and even social and spatial (re)integration in the 'present'.

When discussing the level of cross-border co-dependence or integration 'measurable' with several indicators (Bufon, 2008b), it would make sense to compare this level with those related to the co-dependence or integration between the borderland in question and nearby areas within the same state system, as well as to observe changes in these various spatial and social forms of integration through time. In such a manner one can test the hypothesis that traditionally connected historical regions 'split' by the political border resulting from the formation of nation-states tend to be better connected or more co-dependent than traditionally separated borderlands. That is especially the case in various historically multicultural regions in Central and Eastern Europe exhibiting not only a great capacity for functional (re)integration, but also a relatively high degree of potential conflicts owing to divergent historical 'memory' and, consequently, underdeveloped forms of institutional cross-border integration. Underdeveloped forms of institutional, that is to say social and political cross-border integration can also be met in a number of 'old' borderlands in western Europe due to a centralised form of state organisation; such borderlands usually also foster underdeveloped ties of functional cross-border cooperation, whose existence is otherwise facilitated by social and cultural affinities on the one hand and social and economic disparities on the other. With the latter diminishing, social and cultural affinities along EU 'internal' borders play an increasingly important role in the EU. Along 'external' borders, the main 'drive' of cross-border interactions is usually social and economic disparities as it is evident especially in the case of the American-Mexican border.

The issues of borders and cross-border (re)integration are therefore closely related to the question of changing territoriality, which is characterised by the

tendency to preserve social control within state 'property' on the one hand and by the tendency to (re)activate 'suppressed' social and spatial co-dependence at regional level on the other. Changes in the function of political borders and the (re)activation of old and new forms of territorial co-dependence are a result of the simultaneous processes of de-territorialisation and re-territorialisation allegedly caused by globalisation which is believed to weaken the traditionally exclusivist or 'closed' nature of state systems and to intensify cross-border as well as wider international co-dependence (Berezin and Schain, 2003). Globalisation therefore exhibits the tendency not only to do away with political or any other borders and to shape a new, completely 'open' social space, in which both history and geography would make no sense as such processes can be partly monitored only in the economic field, but also to reconstruct the existing social spaces where along traditional horizontal political borders there also exist other, vertical levels of social and spatial organisation that can be integrated only through a new, multi-level system of governance. Classic interstate relations are therefore integrated into macro-regional systems, while deconcentration of political and economic relations facilitates the formation of inter-regional and cross-border ties primarily based on existing local potentials, yet not immune to broader geopolitical and geostrategic influences.

Certain authors (Anderson, 1996) saw in this deconstruction of the European state-centric system, resulting from supra- and sub-state challenges, the threat of regression to the pre-modern, feudal era, with the fragmentation of unitary and federal states creating a new *Europe of region*. In such a 'neo-feudal' system, borders would make no sense at all owing to the prevailing complex system of various authorities whose areas of competence would intertwine and overlap, while classic one-dimensional identity would be replaced by multiple identities, with people identifying themselves not only with national, but also regional and macro-regional or global territorial and social dimensions. This potential of multiple, 'discreet' identity is, naturally, related above all to functional organisation of society and space, that is to *demos* rather than *ethnos* since in the course of time the latter exhibits much greater stability and regenerative capacity (Bufon, 2008a). The *Europe of states* is thus challenged and strengthened at the same time by both the *Europe of regions* and the *Europe of nations* since they both would like to assert themselves and develop by modelling themselves upon the unitary state that, however, differs from the classic 'model' in its greater international integration and co-dependence. Last but not least, both 'visions' have their starting point and their 'goal' in borders no matter how we understand them since it is through borders that they define their 'exclusivity' and assert their 'network' character in the international arena. It is on the competence to 'channel' integration processes in borderlands that both the current and future forms of our society and its development perspective will depend.

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