



HOKKAIDO UNIVERSITY

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Between Debordering and Rebordering Europe: Cross-Border Cooperation in the Øresund Region or the Danish-Swedish Border Region

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The paper analyses the cooperation between authorities, public institutions and private companies in the Swedish and Danish part of the Øresund region, and it shows how cross-border cooperation is an example of the political intention of debordering Europe.

The Øresund region comprises the eastern part of Denmark and the south-western part of Sweden, two countries in Scandinavia in the northern part of Europe. The region got its name from the narrow body of water, the Øresund, a sound that divides the two countries. Major cities in the region include the Danish capital, Copenhagen, and the third largest Swedish city, Malmö.

The paper establishes a theoretical framework for understanding the aims of cross-border cooperation. European history is the history of bordering through warfare. Bordering processes have shown their negative consequences throughout history, but since the formation of the European Communities in 1957, a debordering of Europe has been high on the agenda. The EU has made it possible to settle, work and study in other EU countries, and the Schengen agreement led to the removal of visual border control. Through exchange programs and extensive cross-border cooperation along all internal EU borders, citizens participate in removing mental borders as well.

Cross-border cooperation has gradually developed in Europe. The first Euroregion was founded in 1958 as a Dutch-German initiative. Since 1989, the EU has funded the Interreg programmes. Currently, Interreg IVA has a total budget of 7.8 billion Euros (2006 prices).

This paper describes how a long-term vision to integrate the Øresund region became possible with the decision to build the Øresund Bridge. When it opened in 2000, the bridge initiated an integration process. Today, 72,000 people cross the bridge every day as commuters, shoppers, and tourists.

Cross-border cooperation was prepared before the bridge opened. The Øresund Committee was established in 1993 by the mayors of Malmö and Copenhagen, and used Interreg to support integration. Several hundreds of projects have been carried out in the areas of leisure and sports, education and culture. The paper concentrates on two major initiatives, the development of an industrial life science cluster and the development of the Øresund science region.

Medicon Valley is a European life science cluster that spans the extended cross-border region of Øresund. It started as an EU funded Interreg project in 1996, but after three years it continued without funding. Today, it has almost 300 members that represent the full life science value chain in Medicon Valley. Although Medicon Valley developed out of already existing biotech firms in the region, the major drivers have developed or attracted suppliers, produced spin-off companies, and established R&D units and promoted cooperation with research institutions.

The Øresund University was established as an umbrella organization for cooperation between 14 full faculty universities, specialized universities, and university colleges in the cross-border region. Together, the participating institutions host 165,000 students, 6,000 PhD students, and 10,000 researchers.

The cross-border university and regional scientific cooperation has been evaluated by OECD, the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development with a successful outcome.

One of the results of university cooperation, the web portal Oresund.org – promoted under the label Øresund Campus – has the aim of enhancing free study mobility for students in the region.

The paper concludes that although there is evidence that the Øresund Bridge and cross-border cooperation have knitted the region more closely together, it is still too early to conclude that the increased interaction across the border has contributed to the development of a common identity. Much has been accomplished, but there is still some way to go before the differences created by the border can be reconciled.