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Economic Development, (A)symmetries and Local Geopolitics: A New Approach to Studying Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe[1]

Margarita Castañer, Jarosław Jańczak and Javier Martín-Uceda*

Abstract

The article maps model(s) of cross-border cooperation in Europe by investigating the INTERREG program as a source of data to evaluate the intensity of collaboration and agency in the area. The authors view cross-border cooperation as an instrument for overcoming economic underdevelopment, often in the context of (a)symmetries. They also use a geopolitical approach to interpret their findings, despite the fact that these are local and regional relationships and are sometimes considered outside the regular purview of geopolitics. Qualitative and quantitative investigation of four internal borders in the European Union leads to several conclusions. First, the INTERREG program is the main instrument and source of funding for stimulating cross-border cooperation within the European Union. Second, when similar types of European cross-border projects are investigated, most of them reveal a concentration of project leaders and project partners on only one side of the border. This can be explained with administrative models revealing structural asymmetries as well as the rural/urban nature of the territorial units, uncovering an imbalance in potential on both sides of the border.

Introduction

The European Union is at a *defining moment* marked by a number of features, including the crisis of legitimacy. This is not a recent situation but it is definitely intensifying,[2] with more and more citizens feeling distant from a process of integration[3] that seems stripped of the ideas considered part of the *European normality*: peace, overcoming borders that arose from conflict, democratization,

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[2] Desmond Dinan, Neil Nugent and William Paterson, eds. *The European Union in Crisis* (London: Palgrave, 2017).

[3] Claudio Castro Quintas, "Assessing the Democratic Deficit in the EU: Towards a Participatory Approach," *RIPS* 14:1 (2015): 63–82.

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alternatives to a world of polarized superpowers, competitiveness with a *human face*. At the same time, borders (still) do matter in Europe and are often considered the most important components of political, economic and social processes there.[4] The continent's history is a (never-ending) process of border creation, border redefinition and border shifting, only recently supplemented by border erosion. Centuries of bordering,[5] visible in territorial conflicts, population resettlement, nation-state consolidation and the domination of Westphalian principles,[6] have been in many places replaced by de-bordering tendencies[7] together with the expansion of the European integration project,[8] especially as embodied in the European Communities and later in the European Union.[9] Fueled by neofunctional paradigms (especially – as understood in European integration studies – barrier elimination and a linear character),[10] continental unification processes seek to create a space of peace and stability by means of practical solutions, starting with facilitation of free trade and the creation of benefits in economic development.[11] Gradually, these paradigms spilled over into other fields of integration, including other *free flows*, but also *high politics,* and were covered with an institutional layer, often supranational in nature.[12]

At the same time borders very quickly became a part of these processes, playing a crucial role in European integration at several levels.[13] First, border erosion embodied the elimination of barriers in the European Union, enabling the creation of *common spaces* and free flows of people, goods, services and capital.[14] This was translated locally into the tenet of creating new development opportunities.[15] Second, borders became *laboratories of European integration* where the European

[4] Melina Pereira Savi, "How Borders Come to Matter? The Physicality of the Border in Gloria Anzaldúa's Borderlands/la Frontera," *Anu. Lit., Florianópolis* 20:2 (2015): 181–191.

[5] Alessandro Vitale, "Myths of Territory and External Borders in the EU's Contemporary Idea and Europe in the Middle Ages," *Acta Universitatis Lodzensis.Folia Geographica Socio-Oeconomica* 26 (2016): 63–80.

[6] Benno Teschke, "Theorizing the Westphalian System of States: International Relations from Absolutism to Capitalism," *European Journal of International Relations* 8:1 (2002): 5–48.

[7] Jarosław Jańczak, "Symmetries, Asymmetries and Cross-Border Cooperation on the German–Polish Border. Towards a New Model of (De)Bordering," *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* (2018): 509–527.

[8] Liam O'Dowd, "The Changing Significance of European Borders," *Regional and Federal Studies* 12:4 (2010): 13–36.

[9] Stephen Okhonmina, "States without Borders: Westphalia Territoriality under Threat," *Journal of Social Sciences* 24:3 (2010): 177–182.

[10] Ernst Haas, *Beyond the Nation State. Functionalism and International Organisation* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1964).

[11] Philippe C. Schmitter, "Ernst B. Haas and the Legacy of Neofunctionalism," *Journal of European Public Policy* 12:2 (2005): 255–272.

[12] Jürgen Bast, "Deepening Supranational Integration: Interstate Solidarity in EU Migration Law," *European Public Law* 22 (2016): 289–304.

[13] Annekatrin Niebuhr, "Spatial Effects of European Integration: Do Border Regions Benefit above Average?" *HWWA Discussion Paper* 307 (2004).

[14] Mirza Totić and Ibrahim Totić, "The Common Market: Paradigm of the Integration Processes within the European Community and the European Union," *Actual Problems of Economics* 11 (2013): 342–551.

[15] Rolf Bergs, "Cross-Border Cooperation, Regional Disparities and Integration of Markets in the EU," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 27:3 (2012): 345–363.

project was tested in everyday life on a manageable scale by *common Europeans*.[16] Third, they allowed social and cultural flows between European nations, cultures and languages, (re)creating *in-between spaces* through the exchange of ideas, solutions and understandings. At the same time, it quickly became apparent that political will and the functional disappearance of borders was not enough to accelerate these three tendencies and transform them into a sustainable process.[17] Cross-border cooperation (CBC) requires additional financial and institutional support as the divisive power of state borders has been much stronger than expected. The key initiative in creating that support was proposed and implemented by the European Union in the form of the INTERREG program.[18]

The aim of this article is to outline the model(s) of cross-border cooperation in Europe by investigating the INTERREG program as a source of data, evaluating its intensity and mapping the actors involved. The authors view cross-border cooperation as an instrument for overcoming economic underdevelopment, often in the context of (a)symmetries. They also use a geopolitical approach to interpret their findings,[19] despite the fact that these relationships are often local and regional, outside the regular purview of geopolitics.[20] They assume that the globalization process induces a rethinking of geographical scale,[21] strengthening the relationship between global and local arenas. Using that new rationale, regional and local actors become more active and play key roles in globalization.[22] On one hand, cities and regions create their networks, along with their own strategies to compete, and play a role in global relations.[23] On the other hand, individuals act on a local scale with geopolitical logics, with the idea of "controlling" territory.[24] That does not mean denying the state or even the global scale, the usual subjects of geopolitics, but rather proposing a similar approach to understand local and regional developments.[25]

This paper consists of six sections. After this introduction, the main theoretical considerations are outlined, followed by a short methodological debate. The studies of empirical findings are presented, and interpreted in the following two sections, before a brief conclusion is offered.

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[16] *Common Europeans* as category indicates *normal* citizens of the member states in contrast to the European Union's political elites and bureaucrats. Alberto Gasparini, "European Border Towns as Laboratories of Differentiated Integration," *ISIG Quarterly of International Sociology* 4 (1999–2000).

[17] Antoni Durà and Xavier Oliveras, "Recent Dynamics in European Cross-Border Cooperation: towards a New Period?" Paper presented during *Regional Studies Association Annual International Conference* (Brussels, 2010).

[18] Eduardo Medeiros, "Is there a Rise of the Territorial Dimension in the EU Cohesion Policy?" *Finisterrac* 51:103 (2016): 89–112.

[19] Joan Nogué and Joan Vicente, *Geopolítica, identidad y globalización* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2001).

[20] Oriol Nel.lo, *Aquí no! Conflictes territorials a Catalunya* (Barcelona: Empúries, 2003); Peter Taylor, *Political Geography: World-Economy, Nation-State and Locality* (London: Longman, 1989).

[21] Peter Taylor and Colin Flint, *Geografía política: economía mundo, estado-nación y localidad* (Madrid: Trama, 2002).

[22] Joan Nogué and Joan Vicente, *Geopolítica,identidad y globalización* (Barcelona: Ariel, 2001).

[23] Saskia Sassen, *Cities in a World Economy* (Thousand Oaks: Pine Forge Press, cop. 2006).

[24] Philippe Subra, *Géopolitique locale. Territories, acteurs, conflits* (Paris: Armand Colin, 2016).

[25] Philippe Subra, *Géopolitique de l'aménagement de territoire* (París: Armand Colin, 2007).

Theoretical and Conceptual Considerations

As the authors of this article work in various disciplines, it is based on several theoretical considerations related to economic development, state sovereignty and geopolitical perspectives, as well as an (a)symmetry framework. These considerations are briefly presented in the following sections to provide readers with the perspectives used here for empirical study.

The INTERREG: Borders and Economic Development

The traditional underdevelopment of border regions, which suffered from both peripherality and remoteness from national centers, as well as isolation from the neighboring spaces on the other side of the border, was to be reversed (alongside border erosion in the European Union) by pushing these regions into (dynamic) economic progress using their border potential.[26] Numerous studies, especially recent ones, have been devoted to studying the interdependence between the de-bordering process, external financial support for cross-border cooperation, and regional development.[27] Most of them make the neofunctional claim that the elimination of barriers leads to better use of the economic potential of underdeveloped regions.[28] Many studies also stress, however, that border erosion is not a sufficient condition for progress – due to additional obstacles (mismatched language, culture, legal systems, etc.), these processes need to be enhanced and externally supported.[29]

Despite the fact that cross-border cooperation has been tolerated, supported or even initiated in many European states by national authorities (especially in Scandinavia or Franco-German relations), only the European integration processes has created the new quality here. This is true with regard to the financial and legal framework as well as the massive amount of participation in cross-border policies, reflected for example in one Euroregion encompassing all the continental borders.

Consequently, the European Union has been employing a set of instruments focused on cohesion policy, especially the INTERREG program. This has been especially relevant for regional policy due to the fact that, as declared by the European Commission, the European Union has 38 internal border regions (covering in practice all the internal borders), which represent 37.5 percent of

[26] Jarosław Jańczak, "Borders and Borderlands as a Source of Development Potential: Towards a New Paradigm in Europe," in *Studies of Economic and Social Processes. Society and Economy in the twenty-first Century*, ed. Jerzy Babiak (Środa Wlkp.- Poznań: The Great Poland University of Social and Economics, 2014–2015), 65–86.
[27] See, among others: Luis De Sousa, "Understanding European Cross-Border Cooperation: A Framework for Analysis" *Journal of European Integration* 6:12 (2012); Lina, Diana M. and Bedrule-Grigoruta, Maria Viorica, *Cross-Border Cooperation - A Tool for Regional Development in Europe* (March 2, 2009). Accessed August 10, 2018: https://ssrn.com/abstract=1351728
[28] Francisco José Calderón Vázquez, "Fronteras intraeuropeas, desactivación fronteriza, cooperación transfronteriza e instituciones: El caso de La Raya ibérica" *Estudios Fronterizos* 18:36 (2017); Liesbet Hooghe a and Michael Keating, "The Politics of European Union Regional Policy" *Journal of European Public Policy* 1:3 (1994).
[29] Eduardo Medeiros "Euro–Meso–Macro: The New Regions in Iberian and European Space." *Regional Studies* 47:8 (2016); Juan Manuel Trillo and Rubén Lois "La frontera como motivo de atracción: una breve mirada a las relaciones Galicia-Região Norte," *Geopolitica(s) Revista de estudios sobre espacio y poder* 2:1 (2011); Henk van Houtum and Anke Strüver "Borders, Strangers, Doors and Bridges," *Space and Polity* 6:2 (2002).

the EU population. Border regions are distinguished based on NUTS[30] three regions bordering a national limit. Consequently, INTERREG's main aim is to support cross-border development by reducing costs and overcoming other obstacles to development that result from the existence of a border. Moreover, all border regions are entitled (and take advantage of the opportunity) to use the INTERREG for more intensive cross-border cooperation.

The INTERREG Community Initiative was established in 1990 with several cross-border objectives: planning and applying common action plans, creating measures to increase common information, and creating institutional and administrative structures to consolidate cross-border cooperation.[31] Since that first edition of the initiative, five other programs have been developed, one for each multiannual financial framework.[32]

After 2000, the INTERREG initiative was integrated into structural funds until 2014, when it began to operate under its own regulations.[33] From the 1.1 billion ECUs that it had in 1990, the budget has now grown to more than 10.1 billion Euros, which is 2.8 percent of the Cohesion Policy budget.[34] It is divided into three strands, A, B and C. The first, A, is designed for cross-border cooperation programs between adjacent regions (NUTS 3).[35] It aims to establish cross-border social and economic centers through common development strategies and projects. The second, B, focuses on transnational cooperation and involves national, regional and local authorities to promote better integration through the formation of large groups of macro-regions. Finally, C is earmarked for interregional cooperation, building networks to develop good practices and facilitate the exchange and transfer of experiences throughout the entire European Union.[36] Projects developed within the INTERREG framework are related to challenges common to the majority of the local and regional partners, especially economic development, the environment, health, transportation, and social cohesion or research.

As already mentioned, INTERREG projects have been a key element of economic development in European borderland regions. Change in the meaning of borders in Europe, especially after the states where they are located entered the European Communities/Union, transforms borders into an opportunity for border administrative units. However, people still experience social cohesion difficulties and integration problems across the border in the majority of cases on the Old Continent. At the same time, issues of underdevelopment and asymmetry are supposed to be (at least partly) solved through the INTERREG initiative and the projects stemming from this program. Criticism of

[30] Common Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS)

[31] María Isabel Heredero de Pablos and Blanca Olmedillas Blanco, "Las fronteras Españolas en Europa: de INTERREG a la cooperación territorial Europea," *Investigaciones Regionales* 16 (2009): 191–215.

[32] Birte Wassenberg, Bernard Reitel, Jean Peyrony and Jean. Rubió, *Territorial Cooperation in Europe - A Historical Perspective* (Luxembourg: Publications Office of the European Union, 2015).

[33] Eduardo Medeiros, *Cross-Border Cooperation in EU Regional Policy: a Fair Deal?* (Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa, 2009).

[34] DG Regio. European Comission. (2018)

[35] Mission Operationelle Transfrontaliere. Accessed June 17, 2018: http://www.espaces-transfrontaliers.org/en/resources/european-programmes/cross-border-cooperation/cross-border-cooperation/

[36] *Comunicación De La Comisión Al Consejo Y Al Parlamento Europeo. Impulsar el crecimiento y la cohesión en las regiones fronterizas de la UE* (Brussels: European Commission, 2017), 1–18.

INTERREG, however, should not be forgotten. Numerous studies, especially those with a long-term perspective, claim that the relationship between INTERREG financial support and the degree of cooperation created,[37] as well as the dynamics of economic development, are not clear.[38]

Still, these considerations lead to the question: what type of project dominates the INTERREG "portfolio" in various regions of the European Union? And what does this structure mean for the development principle?

Cross-Border Cooperation and European Geopolitics at the Local Level: From Fracture to Suture?

The academic (like the non-academic) literature on borders – presenting the concept of border itself, border history, the present and future developments – is indeed enormous, especially that concentrating on geopolitical perspective.[39] The reflection on borders within the context of European integration and inside the European Union is similar.[40] Despite the original reason behind European integration being conflict prevention, the Union was also created in an attempt to limit the negative effects and the influence of borders on the continent. Consequently, integration results not only in policy coordination between states, it can also be seen as a gradual process of cession of state sovereignty to the common institutions, which in turn would deepen their democratic legitimacy. This is, in practice, a process of border *dissolution*.

Undoubtedly, between 1951 (when the European Coal and Steel Community united six countries) and the present, this approach has had its difficulties.[41] Especially recently, and opposed most understandings to the integration process, the reappearance or reinforcement of borders as an administrative and territorial reality (often with a strong ideological component, as seen during the immigration crisis that started in 2015[42]) is more and more noticeable.[43] In classic political geography,

[37] Patricia Garcia-Duran, Toni Mora and Montserrat Millet, "Measuring the Impact of EU Support for Crossborder Regional Cooperation," *Journal of Contemporary European Research* 7:3 (2011): 359.

[38] Eduardo Medeiros, *Cross-Border Cooperation in EU Regional Policy: a Fair Deal?* (Lisboa: Universidade de Lisboa, 2009), 24.

[39] Claude Raffestin, "Elements pour une théorie de la frontière," *Diogène* 34:134 (1986): 3–21; Michel Foucher, *Fronts et frontières. Un tour du monde géopolitique* (París: Fayard, 1991); James Anderson and Liam O'Dowd, "Borders, Border Regions and Territoriality: Contradictory Meanings, Changing Significance," *Regional Studies* 33:7 (1999): 593–604.

[40] James Anderson, Liam O'Dowd and Thomas. Wilson, *New Borders for a Changing Europe: Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance* (London: Frank Cass, 2003); Gerard Delanty, "Borders in a Changing Europe: Dynamics of Openness and Closure," *Comparative European Politics* 4 (2006): 183–202; Jean Baptiste Harguindéguy, *Frontière en Europe: un territoire? Coopération transfrontalière francoespagnole* (París: L'Harmattan, 2007); Francisco Letamendia, "Cooperación transfronteriza Europea: regulación historia y trabajo," *Documents d'Anàlisis Geogràfica* 56:1 (2010): 71–88.

[41] Anthony Cooper and Chris Perkins, "Borders and Status-Functions: An Institutional Approach to the Study of Borders," *European Journal of Social Theory* 15:1 (2012): 55–71.

[42] Stefania Panebianco, "The Mediterranean Migration Crisis: Border Control versus Humanitarian Approaches," *Global Affairs* 2:4 (2016): 441–445.

[43] Jarosław Jańczak, ed. *De-Bordering, Re-Bordering and Symbols on the European Boundaries* (Berlin: Logos Verlag, 2011).

the border was present in the form of an organic analogy: as the skin of the state, the fundamental indicator of its health and its expectations.[44] Leaving this analogy behind, it is true that the vitality of borders within the European Union is a symptom not so much of good health but rather the opposite, a symptom of wider problems that affect the very nature of the European project. In this sense, the cross-border policies of the Union are not *simple* territorial policies, but have an obvious geopolitical function: they transform spaces that have experienced fracture and have symbolized fragmentation into spaces that overcome this division and also symbolize the Union.[45] If borders serve as a visual representation of political fracture and its historical course, the European Union wants them to represent the suture as well.

The previous considerations about local geopolitics should also be reviewed here, with geopolitics understood as "political approach to social–spatial analysis," considering cross-border cooperation as a "tool for socio-spatial control."[46] Cross-border cooperation also connects local and continental dimensions of governance where, due to the model of multi-level governance, power is shared and regional actors become an element in the geopolitical strategies of state systems.[47] And at the supranational level, the EU – when supporting cross-border cooperation – describes harmonized spaces as being a part of the European project, placing its discourse within geopolitical logic.[48] Cross-border geopolitics, however, reveal tension between this EU narrative and states' interest in preserving territorial sovereignty.[49] Moreover, regions and cities play key roles in the construction of border areas and the de-bordering process[50]. European politics give sub-regional actors a chance to take part in the international scenario, and states try to benefit from it. The state becomes another geopolitical actor, with the necessary practices and instruments. After years of isolation caused by the *limit effect* of the

[44] Markus Pekmann, "Bulding Governance Institutions Across European Borders," *Regional Studies* 33:7 (1999): 657–667; Markus Pekmann, "Cross-Border Regions in Europe: Significance and Drivers of Regional Cross-Border Co-Operation," *European Urban and Regional Studies* 10 (2003): 153–171; Markus Pekmann, "Construction of New Territorial Scale: A Framework and Case Study of the EUREGIO Cross-Border Region," *Regional Studies* 41:2 (2007): 253–266; James Anderson; Liam. O'Dowd and Thomas Wilson, *New Borders for a Changing Europe: Cross-Border Cooperation and Governance* (London, Frank Cass, 2003); Jean Baptiste Harguindéguy, "Cross-Border Policy in Europe: Implementing INTERREG III – A, France-Spain," *Regional and Federal Studies* 17:3 (2007): 317–334; Xavier Oliveras,; Antoni Durà and Markus Pekmann, "Las regiones transfronterizas: balance de la regionalización de la cooperación transfronteriza en Europa (1958–2007)," *Documents d'Anàlisis Geogràfica* 56:1 (2010): 21–40.

[45] Jarosław Jańczak, "Integration De-scaled. Symbolic Manifestations of Cross-Border and European Integration in *Border Twin Towns*," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* (2018).

[46] Marcelo Lopes de Souza, "Urban Eco-Geopolitics," *City* 20:6 (2016): 779–799.

[47] Wojciech Kazanecki, *Géopolitique des regions. Linkage between French Geopolitics and Regional Governance* Conference paper, CEEISA Sixth Annual Conference "Global and Regional Governance – European Perspectives and Beyond" (2007).

[48] James Derrick Sidaway, "Rebuilding Bridges: A Critical Geopolitics of Iberian Transfrontier Cooperation in a European Context," *Environment and Planning D: Society and Space* 19:6 (2001).

[49] Gabriel Popescu, "The Conflicting Logics of Cross-Border Reterritorialization: Geopolitics of Euroregions in Eastern Europe, *Political Geography* 27 (2008): 434.

[50] Todd Hataley and Christian Leuprecht, "Determinants of Cross-Border Cooperation," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 33:3 (2018): 319.

border, the process of integration at European internal borders, the possibility of participating in international affairs for local and regional actors,[51] and specific policies like INTERREG create all the conditions for the development of CBC along the European borders.

Finally, it is appropriate to point out that this geopolitical perspective – in the historical moment of regression or, at least, a slowdown of the process of European integration and the reappearance of strong nationalist and statist forces – would appear especially suitable.

The considerations presented above provides the foundations for an analysis of cross-border spaces, not only *per se* and as the object of specific community policies, but also as territories that are especially innovative and indicative of the much more general logics of European unity and cohesion.[52] Consequently, a geopolitical reading of local cross-border cooperation is of great significance,[53] and the analysis of concrete projects (including the logic of action of the agents involved, the alliances and conflicts that arise among them – public and private, local, regional or local, of different political options) must also be taken into consideration. These projects reveal power relations at the local level, mapping the *de facto* domination of regions from one side of the border over their partners on the other. In this way – and INTERREG provides data for empirical analysis here – cross-border projects say a lot about power relations, not between states, but primarily between regions, including those not in conflict, but in a state of cooperation. Consequently, a question arises: What makes the position of some regions stronger? When trying to explore this issue, the authors decided to investigate one of the markers of diversified power apparent in cross-border cooperation: (a)symmetries.

(A)symmetries

This paper refers to the concepts of symmetry and asymmetry. They serve as a framework to understand the previously described tendencies. The wide range of literature referring to asymmetry, however, does little to conceptualize it. This literature includes security studies (asymmetric conflicts)[54] geography (development and economic relations),[55] international relations (elements of states' dominant position)[56] and anthropology (components of social hierarchies).[57] In the European Union's development policies, this concept is often applied to situations where the asymmetry is to be changed[58]

[51] Alexander Sergunin and Pertti Joenniemi, "Paradiplomacy as a Sustainable Development Strategy: The Case of Russia's Arctic Subnational Actors," *Eurasia Border Review* 4:2 (2014).
[52] Matteo Berzi, "The Cross-Border Reterritorialization Concept Revisited: the Territorialist Approach Applied to the Case of Cerdanya on the French-Spanish Border," *European Planning Studies* 25:3 (2017): 1–22.
[53] Béatrice Giblin, *Nouvelle géopolitique des régions françaises* (París: Fayard, 2005).
[54] Timothy L Thomas, "Deciphering Asymmetry's World Game," *Military Review* July-August (2001).
[55] Guichonnet Paul, Raffestin Claude, *Géographie des frontiers* (Paris: Presses Universitaires de France 1974)
[56] Robert Kupiecki, "The Poland-United States Security Relations in the Light of Asymmetry Theory," *Przegląd Strategiczny* 9 (2016): 31–48.
[57] Jutta Lauth Bacas and William Kavanagh, eds., *Border Encounters: Asymmetry and Proximity at Europe's Frontiers* (Oxford and New York: Berghahn Books, 2013).
[58] Bernard Reitel, "Asymétrie des formes et différentiels morphologiques dans l'agglomération transfrontalière de Bâle : des propriétés de ville-frontière?" in *Villes et Frontières,* eds. Bernard Reitel et al. (Paris: Economica, Anthropos, col. Villes, 2002), 84–98.

or overcome,[59] marking asymmetry as something negative, problematic or simply temporal. Sometimes, however, asymmetry is considered a precondition of cross-border cooperation, especially in cases of a neofunctional view of cross-border integration where asymmetric resources supplement each other.[60]

The question here, however, refers primarily to the very nature of (a)symmetries: the authors claim that further conceptualization is necessary. They propose distinguishing between a mismatch of both sides of the border with regard to structures (cultural, political, administrative, etc.) and resources (human, financial, etc.). Consequently, they categorize this mismatch as manifested within two dimensions: structural asymmetries and imbalanced potentials.

The former is linked to structural elements and describes different origins and models of organization of the units being compared. Thus, it pictures different mechanisms, procedures or schemes of management in neighboring border structures. Jussi Laine claims that "in sub-national cross-border contexts, the [structural] asymmetry is regularly manifested by differences in competences, central-local relations, budgetary cycles, administration hierarchies, the roles of elected officers and public servants, and by the extent of central government engagement."[61]

Imbalanced potentials, on the other hand, will be associated with different levels of resources, as manifested by GDP, development, human resources of the key actors involved in the cross-border processes, etc., on both sides of the border.

Both structural asymmetry and imbalance in potentials will be employed in this investigation to frame and interpret cross-border projects with regard to the elements being studied. To make use of this framework, it is necessary to mark (a)symmetries in cases being investigated with regard to these two dimensions. In each case, however, structural asymmetry can be high or low, as can imbalance in potentials. This results in a matrix of four possible model-situations in (a)symmetries. Moreover, how do these two concepts determine the structure of cross-border cooperation? Do more resources contribute to a more active approach? Do specific cultural-political models stimulate activity? In the first case, is it simply a higher level of GDP that makes partners from that side of the border more dynamic in taking the initiative and becoming project leaders? And in the second case, is there any specific model, e.g. based on decentralization, that may enhance involvement?

Conceptual Setting

The above considerations, in the framework of the article's aims, result in questions – as marked in previous sections – about: 1) the categorization of the cross-border projects supported by INTERREG in the context of their role in economic development; 2) the power relations of regions as revealed by the spatial distribution of INTERREG projects; and 3) the role of (a)symmetries in this

[59] Christophe Sohn, "El papel ambivalente de las fronteras en la construcción de las metrópolis transfronterizas en Europa. Los casos de Basilea, Ginebra y Luxemburgo," *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica* 56:1 (2010): 167–184.
[60] Jussi Laine, "Border Paradox: Striking a Balance between Access and Control in Asymmetrical Border Settings," *Eurasia Border Review* 3:1 (2012): 51–79.
[61] Ibid.

process. After merging the three perspectives presented above, the authors present the following hypotheses.

First of all, projects in thematic areas crucial for reducing the underdevelopment of border regions shall dominate in a cross-border cooperation "portfolio." Second, one could expect some of the regions (or more precisely actors from some of the regions) to be more eager and active in both creating and implementing projects than their neighbor regions. In asymmetric relationships (and in circumstances of de-bordering), this could lead to the domination of one region by another. At the same time, asymmetries on the regional level can be structured differently than at the state level for neighboring units. Finally, the authors assume that GDP is the main indicator of imbalance in potentials, and models of (de)centralization reveal the most important aspect of structural asymmetry. This is expected to translate into a more or less dominant position in cross-border cooperation.

Methodology and Case Selection

To answer these questions and to verify their hypotheses, the authors decided to combine various methodological approaches. As their work involves different territorial and academic fields, it expected, on the one hand, that different authors establish their own channels for information about and documentation of cross-border cooperation. On the other hand, formal structures and common content have been introduced to allow for analysis and comparison. The authors consequently searched and analyzed bibliographies and general documentation on cross-border cooperation in Europe with regard to specific European Union programs. They then prepared geographical, socio-economic and institutional profiles of all border territories covered by the common framework. Finally, empirical-statistical research was implemented. The research team searched for data on cross-border cooperation for all the investigated areas, using the INTERREG program, due to its nature and character as described in the previous sections. Because they are the main instrument of the European Union's cross-border policies, INTERREG projects seem to be an analytically convincing and academically reliable source of information, especially because of their dominant position on the CBC "market" in Europe. They also provide a more general picture of CBC cross-border cooperation in Europe. Due to the limitations of this analysis, the period 2007–2013 was chosen. It represents the most current and complete time slot with data available for analysis as projects from the next Multiannual Budgetary Framework, 2014–2020, are still being prepared and implemented.

To create a comprehensive picture of cross-border cooperation at the borders under investigation, statistical treatment of the data was needed to elaborate common databases that allow the use, mapping, joint analysis and comparative analysis of the cases. The quantitative approach was supplemented with qualitative methods, using fieldwork in the form of interviews. Data for each border was collected based on Operational Programs for the 2007–2013 period. Within the legal order of the European Union, INTERREG projects constitute public information that is available for interested individuals and institutions. Practically, however, it was often necessary to ask for data from several institutions, especially from national ministries responsible for development policies. This quantitative approach was supplemented by a qualitative one in the form of interviews conducted between July

2017 and March 2018. The interviews were semi-structured and addressed politicians, members of civil society, INTERREG project partners and academic scholars – three on the German-Polish border, four on the Portuguese-Spanish border and four on the Spanish-French border.

The methodology used in this analysis was developed and tested in a previous research project focused on the Spanish-French[62] border and carried out by the APTA (Environment and Planning Analysis and Planning) research group.[63] Here it was used to create a database of three tables related to common, cross-border projects.[64] Using the geographic codes in the database, we employed cartographic analysis to help understand the results.

To sum up, both direct and indirect, as well qualitative and quantitative, sources have been used in the research. This combination was required due to the breadth and diversity of the field of study.

For this analysis, an empirical look was taken at specific borders in Europe. To create a diversified sample, the authors searched for cases representing varying lengths of European Union membership, location in various parts of the continent (and consequently various cultural-political legacies), and a wide spectrum of economic development. Given the statistical data available, four examples were selected: the borders between Portugal and Spain, Spain and France, Austria and Italy, and Germany and Poland[65] (Figure 1).

Consequently, the analysis tested cross-border spaces that affect seven European Union member states. These spaces and states have notable historical and contemporary differences; therefore, direct or immediate comparison is impossible unless standardized data – as offered by the INTERREG co-financed projects – is used. Using this data means that careful analysis of the extent to which the same starting intentions and – to a large extent – similar instruments provide similar or diverse results is methodologically and conceptually possible. Consequently, the research deals with the borders between the states listed above. To continue with the analysis, a short presentation of the chosen cases seems necessary to provide context.

The Portuguese-Spanish border is about 1,214 kilometers long and represents a legacy of great stability (despite the historic conflict around the town of Olivenza). However, geographical elements

[62] Jaume Feliu, Mateo Berzi, Joan Vicente, Mita Castañer and Rafel Llussà, "Análisis de los proyectos y actores transfronterizos españa-francia en el período 2007–2013, *Geographicalia* 63–64 (2013): 75–93.

[63] For more information and examples about the methodology: Jaume Feliu, Matteo Berzi, Joan Vicente, Mita Castañer and Rafel Llussà, "Analysis of Cross-Border Projects between France and Spain 2007–2013. Stakeholders and Territorial Impact," *European Journal of Geography* 4:4 (2013): 33–46.

[64] The information about each project was developed in the different table, such as the complete name, the leader, all the partners that take part in a project and funding. Each partner was assigned a geographic code. The first table contains general information, such as the name, the leader, the funding and the geographic code of cross-border projects. The second table holds information on all the partners participating in the projects, all the stakeholders and their geographic codes. The last table lists the territories where the projects have a direct impact (territorial unit where it was implemented, generalized to the NUTS3 level – the impact of the project is often more extend then the location of the project partner), also with the geographic code of each territory.

[65] For the last case, Germany-Poland, the data represents (due to the difficulties in receiving information from respective institutions) only the northern section of the border, including Mecklenburg-Vorpommern / Brandenburg – Zachodniopomorskie.

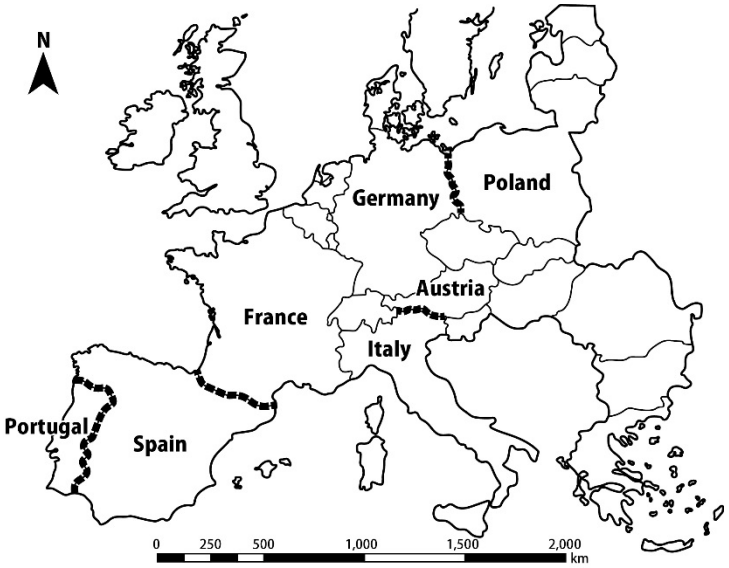


Figure 1: Studied INTERREG 2007–2013 Cross Border Project Areas

Source: The authors

facilitate real or potential conflicts, especially around the use of shared rivers (although it is clearly a matter of state-scale interactions). This area's common cultural heritage again explains the consolidation of cross-border exchange. Galicia and northern Portugal have become a functional space[66] with an articulated urban network that strengthens economic and social relationships.[67] Both states entered the European Communities in 1986 and required strong support for development. The southern and western regions of Spain are less advanced as measured by GDP per capita when compared to the rest of the country. At the same time, Spanish Galicia is the most advanced of all regions bordering Portugal. When comparing the development of the border regions, the differences are more visible in the north (in favor of Spanish provinces), and are more balanced in the central and southern regions, with a similar GDP per capita.[68] As a semi-federal state, Spain is more decentralized, with regional and local actors equipped with more powers than actors in Portugal, which is a unitary state.

The Spanish-French border, defined by the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659, is about 656 kilometers long with no major changes over the last 360 years, or virtually no relevant conflicts since then. However, particular geopolitical factors of a nationalist nature affect both sides, especially the

[66] Rubén Camilo Lois and Antón Carballo, "La frontera hispano-lusa en la actualidad : una visión geográfica," *Revista de Historiografía* 23 (2015): 191–214.

[67] Juan Manuel Trillo-Santamaría and Rubén Camilo Lois González, "La frontera como motivo de atracción: una breve mirada a las relaciones Galicia-Região Norte," *Geopolítica(s) - Revista de Estudios Sobre Espacio y Poder* 2:1 (2011): 109–134.

[68] All the statistical data in this section are based on the official information collected by the European Union, Eurostat, GDP at Regional Level. Accessed August 17, 2018: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php/GDP_at_regional_level#Regional_gross_domestic_product_.28GDP.29_per_inhabitant

Basque and Catalan independence movements[69]. It is also a border marked physically by the Pyrenees, with few spaces or elements of conflict, where the mountains are an unquestionable physical limit. In some areas, like the Mediterranean (Catalan Cross-border Area)[70]and Atlantic (Basque Country) ends of the border and La Cerdanya Valley in the central Pyrenees, interactions are easier. This has led to more consolidated and functional areas.[71] Cultural and historic links are also important and help to maintain cross-border relations between both sides. A common culture, language and history in these three areas also help maintain and develop relationships between both sides of the border.[72] After the fall of Franco's regime and Spain's entrance into the European Community in 1986, the exchange became more consolidated. At the regional level (as opposed to the state level), the Spanish side is more developed when comparing GDP, with higher levels between Basque Country and Aquitaine, and between Catalonia and Languedoc-Roussillon. Spain, as previously mentioned, is a semi-federal state, compared with centralized France.

The 430-kilometer long border between Austria and Italy is neither an unstable nor a controversial frontier today but at the same time is rooted in a history of conflict. It took its present form after the end of the First World War when the German-speaking region of Tyrol was divided, leaving an Austrian minority south of the border in Italy. A site of irredentist tendencies, the region's high level of prosperity resulted in moderation of attitudes and intensive cooperation.[73] Additionally, both the attitudes and the cooperation accelerated together with Austria's entry into the European Union in 1995. The border is the result of wars and the history of the Austrian Empire, as well as the creation of Italy as a modern state in the nineteenth century. This common history is also an important part of the Italian side: the Bolzano province, Austrian cultural roots and the German language help to maintain exchanges and mutual interest. At the regional level, GDP is similar on both sides of the border, but referring to competences is more complicated. While Austria is a federal state, with competences shared between the national government and the states, Italy is a unitary state, in which regions have legislative powers but not all at the same level. Five regions, including Trentino-Alto Adige, have special status with more power than the rest of Italy's regions, even more than the Austrian states.

Finally, the border between Germany and Poland is currently about 456 kilometers long. In this case, the adverb *currently* is necessary, since it is one of the most unstable and tragic borders in the

[69] Klaus-Jürgen Nagel and Stephan Rixen, eds. *Catalonia in Spain and Europe. Is there a Way to Independence?* (Badan Baden: Nomos, 2015).

[70] Antoni Durà and Xavier Oliveras, "La cooperación territorial en el Arco Mediterráneo: una tipología de actores y temáticas," *Cooperación transfronteriza comparada: Catalunya, Galicia, País Vasco,* ed. José Luis de Castro, Framcisco Letamendía and Francesc Morata (Barcelona: Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus, 2010), 103–120.

[71] Juan Creuz Alberdi Collantes, "La cooperación municipal en el Bidasoa: de la acción local al consorcio internacional," *Lurralde: Investigación y Espacio* 29 (2006): 87–113; Matteo Berzi, "Cross-Border Cooperation and Local Development in the Pyrenees. The Case of Cerdanya," *European Journal of Geography* 4:4 (2013): 47–60; Mita Castañer, Jaume Feliu, "L'Eurodistricte Català Transfronterer. Un espai emergent sense marc administratiu," *Treballs de la Societat Catalana de Geografia* 74 (2012): 41–58.

[72] Mita Castañer, Jaume Feliu, Obdúlia Gutiérrez, "Llibre Blanc de l'Eurodistricte Català Transfronterer: creació de projecte i reestructuració territorial," *Documents d'anàlisi geogràfica* 57:2 (2011): 281–292.

[73] Günther Rautz, "South Tyrolean Autonomy as a Model for Coexistence between Ethnic Groups," in *Autonomies in Europe: Solutions and Challenges*, ed. Zoltán Kantor (Budapest: L'Harmattan 2014), 59–67.

continent's modern history.[74] This makes cooperation especially relevant and positions cross-border cooperation as a very important element of interstate relations, as well as continental processes, as manifested by the 2004 European Union's enlargement.[75] It is also important to remember the isolation that Poles and Germans living on the border experienced under communist rule (resulting in cultural and social alienation)[76] as well as significant differences in level of development between both states[77] reflected in a per capita GDP ratio of 1 to 4 in favor of Germany. At the regional level, however, this indicator is less striking. Germany represents a decentralized system resulting from a federal state model, while Poland is relatively centralized.

The set of cases presented here reveals various legacies of European borders and, consequently, a variety of types of borders currently within the EU. The cases represent territorial units from founding states of the European Communities (France and Germany), as well as expansions in 1986 (Spain and Portugal), 1995 (Austria) and 2004 (Poland). At the same time, they are located in the western, eastern, northern and southern parts of the continent and involve partners from the most economically developed member states, along with those of mid-range and low-level development. As such, these cases build a research environment where cross-border cooperation as revealed by INTERREG program can be tested, compared and generalized.

Empirical Results

With the methodology presented above, the authors began their empirical investigation. The 2007–2013 INTERREG projects were statistically analyzed and regularities of cross-border cooperation were mapped. The data is divided here into two parts for each of the tested borders. First, to understand the thematic concentration of cross-border initiatives supported by the European Union, projects and their typologies are studied. Then, to explore the aspect of local geopolitics visible in actors' agency, the spatial distribution of project leaders and partners is studied.

Project Typology

Analysis of the collected empirical material reveals interesting regularities with regard to dominant project types in the borders under investigation (Graph 1). The different circumstances of the investigated borders are reflected in diverse socioeconomic realities, but some of the results show

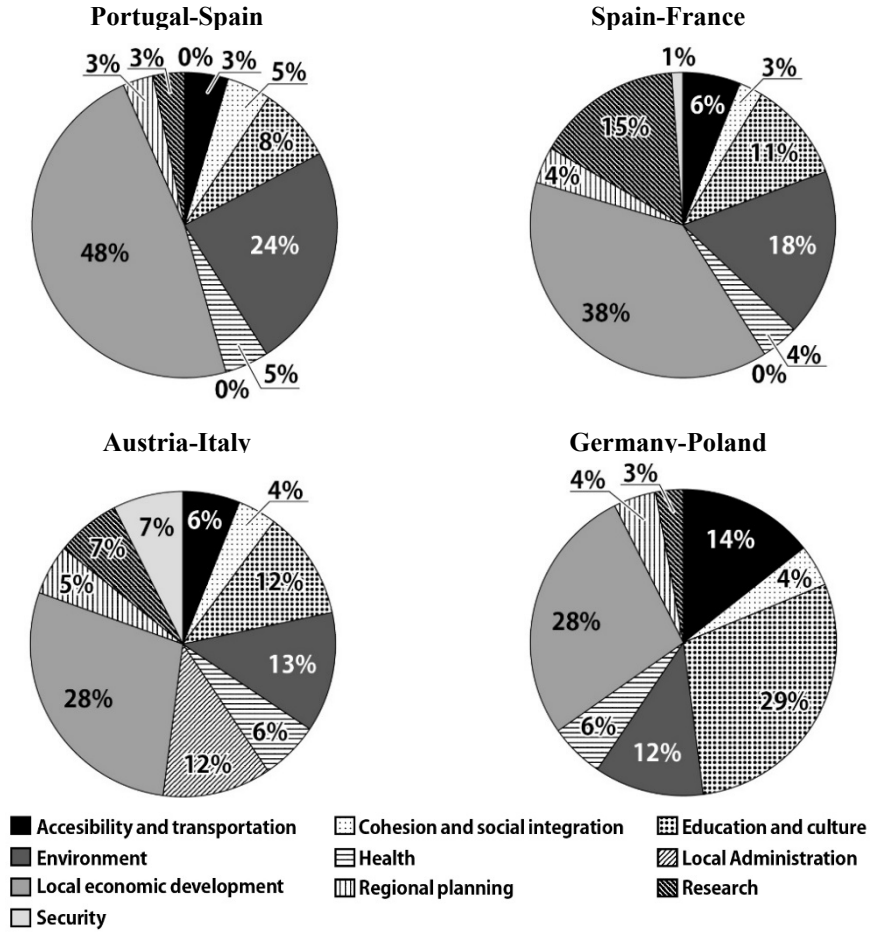
[74] Tomasz Kamusella, "The Twentieth Anniversary of the German - Polish Border Treaty of 1990: International Treaties and the Imagining of Poland's post-1945 Western Border," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 25:3–4 (2010): 120–143.

[75] Jarosław Jańczak, „Polityczne i społeczne konsekwencje członkostwa Polski w UE dla granicy i pogranicza zachodniego," in *Polska pięć lat w Unii Europejskiej*, ed. Stanisław Konopacki (Łódź: Ibidem, 2009), 151–168.

[76] Jarosław Jańczak, „Śląska transformacja z perspektywy obrzeży: Goerlitz-Zgorzelec i Cieszyn-Cesky Tesin jako laboratoria regionalnej integracji europejskiej," in *Śląsk – 10 lat członkostwa w Unii Europejskiej*, ed. Rafał Riedel (Racibórz-Wrocław: o-to.pl, 2014), 27–44.

[77] James Wesley Scott and Kimberly Collins, "Inducing Transboundary Regionalism in Asymmetric Situations: The case of the German-Polish Border," *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 12:1–2 (1997): 97–121.

common patterns. For this methodology, the authors created ten project categories and assigned each project to one of them: accessibility and transportation, cohesion and social integration, education and culture, environment, health, local administration, local economic development, regional planning, research, and security.



Graph 1: Project Typology in Borders under Investigation

Source: The authors

One of the main results of the analysis is that local economic development is the main type of project implemented on the investigated borders, except in the German-Polish program, where it is the second biggest, very near to the top category (education and culture). The second category, also in all the borderlands except the Polish-German border, is environment. This reflects the physical reality in the majority of European borderlands, which are generally natural and rural areas, with mountains or rivers as main elements in dividing countries. The two other main categories are culture and education in some areas, and accessibility and transportation in others. These results show that underdevelopment of border areas is still a dominant theme for cooperation and a focus of the European Union's support. At the same time, weak social, cultural and linguistic cohesion between communities from both sides

is relevant in the case of the borderland with the most difficult legacy, the German-Polish borderland. This results in a predominance of projects focusing on cohesion and social integration as well as education and culture in that border area. In addition, the shorter duration of EU membership means that accessibility and transportation projects are much more dominant compared to other cases, where such projects were more visible in previous INTERREG budgets. Consequently, both a difficult history and the length of access to European funds shape project portfolios differently in different border areas. Still, in all cases studied here, the INTERREG project can be seen as the key instrument in overcoming underdevelopment, despite the fact that the components of this underdevelopment are manifested differently in each case.

Project Leaders' Spatial Distribution

This analysis takes into account not only the type of project, but also the leading actors' location and the locations of all participating actors. The authors concentrated on this issue because leading actors in cross-border projects not only have more administrative responsibilities regarding project organization and management, they also represent more dynamic structures equipped with resources and representing (pro)active attitudes. All the INTERREG projects must have one leading actor and at least one other actor on the other side of the border.

Analysis of the actors who played roles in different projects was divided into two parts. The leading actors were studied first, then all the other involved parties. Second, the analysis accounted for all the partners in the project, not only the leaders. The following graphical presentation of the results shows the concentration of actors in territorial units on both sides of the border. The darker the color, the more actors are located in that specific area.

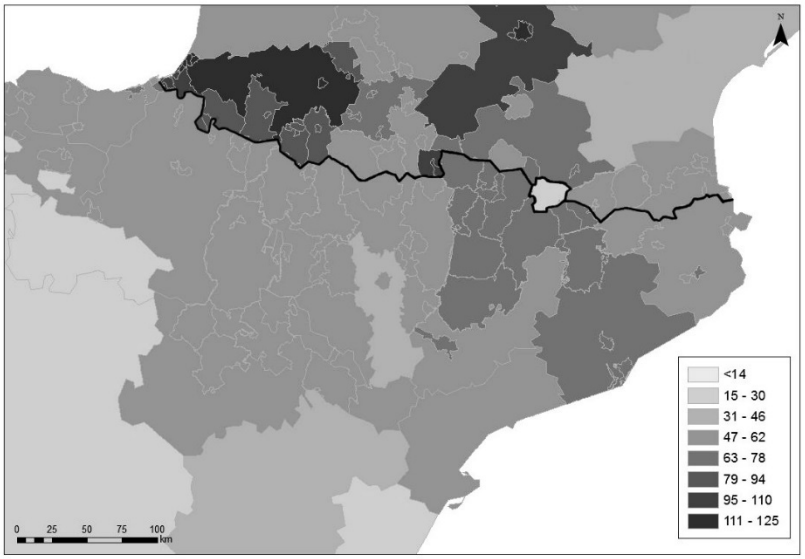
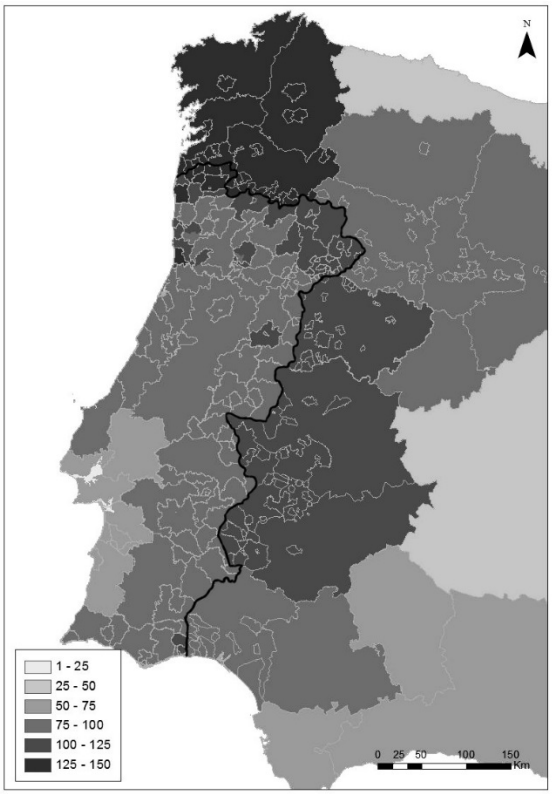


Figure 2: Location of Project Leaders along the Spanish-French Border

Source: The authors



A brief comparison of the situation pictured in Figures 2 through 5 shows that there is a common element: a concentration of leaders on one side, which can be seen along all of the borders. All four borders have one side with more leading actors than the other. This can be explained by unbalanced potentials (more leading actors as the result of more human/financial resources) or, alternatively, by structural asymmetries (more leading actors as the result of specific political-cultural solutions, especially more de-concentrated power). On both Spanish borders, the Spaniards lead more projects than the French or the Portuguese (Figure 2 and Figure 3). The same discrepancy is apparent for Germans compared to Poles (Figure 5) and Italians compared to Austrians (Figure 4).

Figure 3: Location of Project Leaders on the Spanish-Portuguese Border

Source: The authors

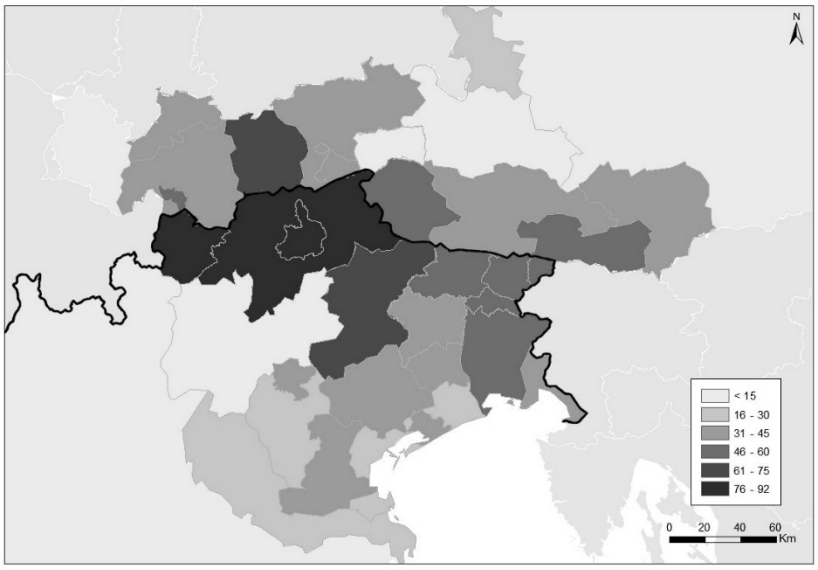


Figure 4: Location of Project Leaders along the Italian-Austrian Border

Source: The authors

Consequently, the differences between countries in terms of administrative structures and political decentralization could be key elements and structural asymmetry the main explanation for the dominance of one side of the border over the other in terms of the number of leaders. Spain and Germany are more decentralized than France, Portugal and Poland. The Trentino Region in Italy has special powers compared with the other border regions in Italy and Austria. Significant differences in competences, especially at the regional and local levels, reveal structural asymmetry between partners that can explain the concentration of leading partners at specific parts of the border.

When looking for unbalanced potentials, no regularity became apparent. However, the authors identified one additional factor that they had not taken into consideration when designing their research: regional typology. Rural and urban areas have different capacities to lead projects, as we can see in the maps. Szczecin, Poland (Figure 5) or Zaragoza, Barcelona and the Basque urban corridor on the Spanish-French border (Figure 2) exemplify how urban spaces often have more capacity to lead projects, in contrast to rural areas. Generally, in areas that are more rural or in the absence of an important urban center, the regional administration becomes the main leader. Differences in potentials thus serve as an explanation here but not in the form of measuring GDP at the regional level. They do suffice, however, when including rural/urban character in scaled-down form.

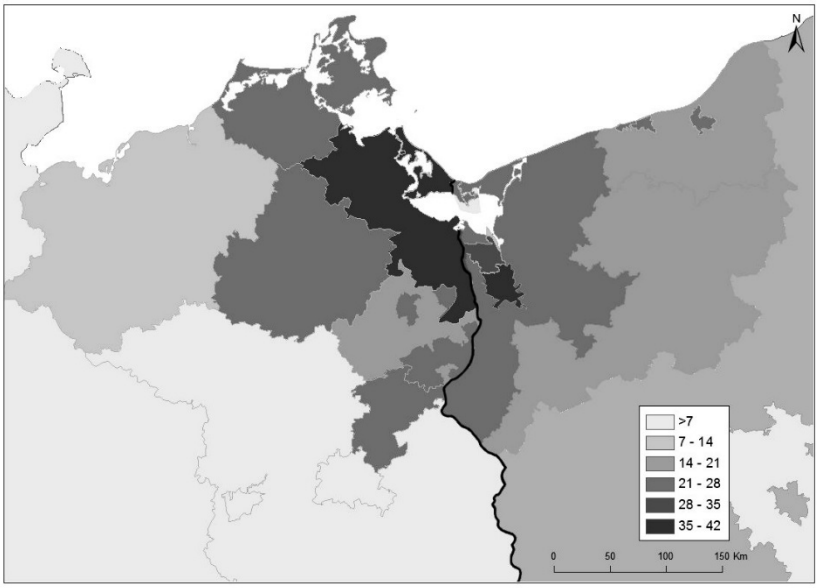


Figure 5: Project Leaders along the Polish-German Border

Source: The authors

These considerations allow us to analyze the number and spatial location of project partners.

Project Partners' Spatial Distribution

Another aspect to analyze is the joint participation of all actors, whether or not they are project leaders. Here again, the authors identified interesting regularities. Again, relationships marked by

dominance of one side of the border are common to all the investigated borderlands.

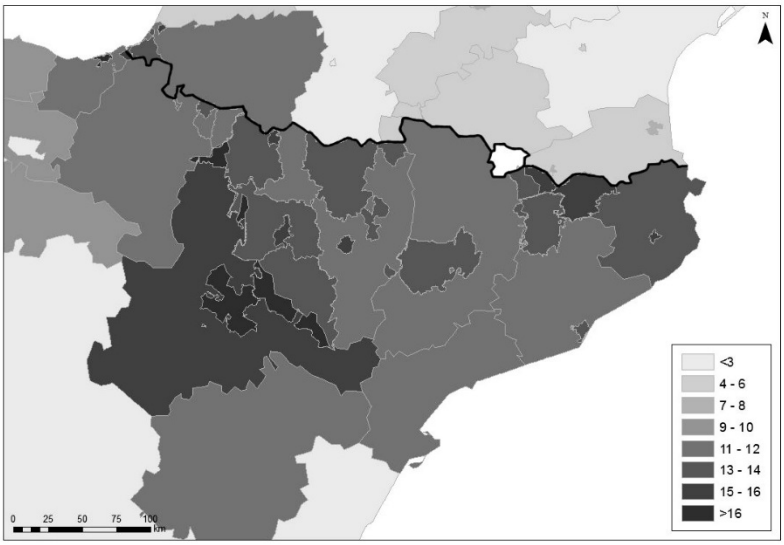
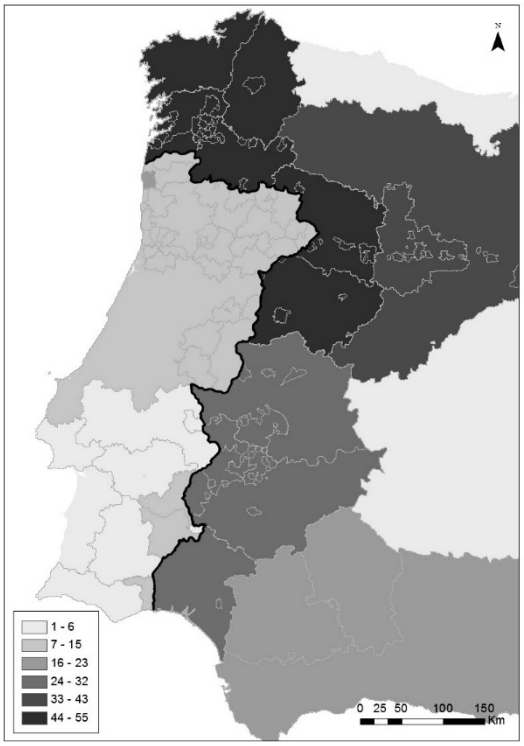


Figure 6: Project Partner Distribution along the Spanish-French Border

Source: The authors



With the exception of the Spanish-French border (Figure 6), in the remaining border areas the countries with more partner leaders also have more project partners. Again, urban spaces have more capacity to take part in projects. Here the situation is even clearer than on the project leaders' maps. Regional actors are the main partners in the more rural spaces, as seen on the Portuguese-Spanish (Figure 7) or Austrian-Italian borders (Figure 8).[78]

In three cases, the more active side of the border was clearly marked not only with the presence of leaders, but also with a concentration of partners (Figure 7, Figure 8, Figure 9).

Figure 7: Project Partner Distribution along the Spanish-Portuguese Border

Source: The authors

[78] Additionally when comparing project partners distribution to the population one can see that the population density is similar on both sides of the border (Austrain-Italian, German-Polish cases) or is more lower on the more dense region (Spainish border regions) – all the data based on the official information collected by the European

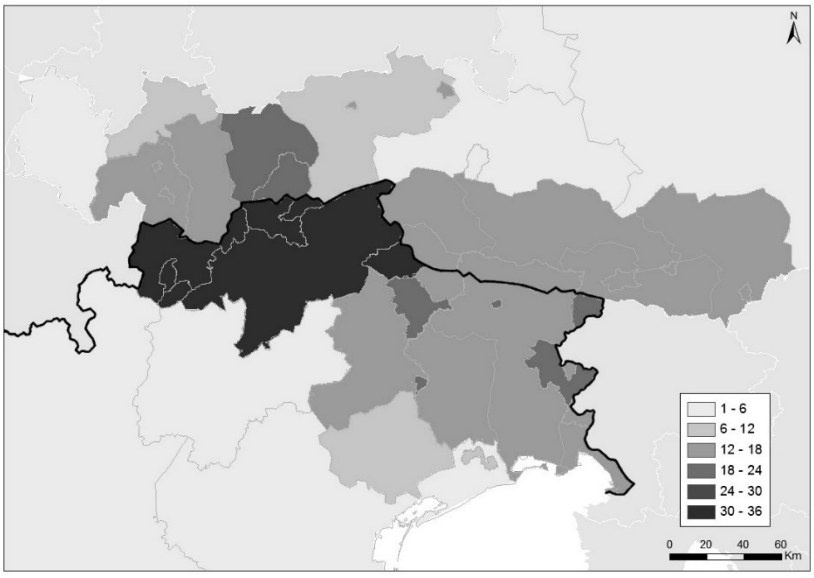


Figure 8: Project Partner Distribution along the Italian-Austrian Border

Source: The authors

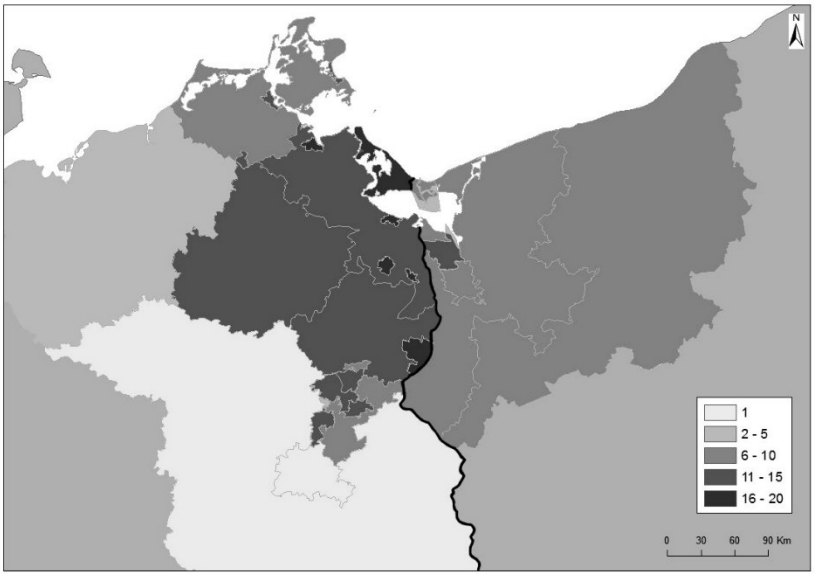


Figure 9: Project Partner Distribution along the Polish-German Border

Source: The authors

Additionally, local authorities are the main actors in the most centralized countries, as in Poland or Portugal, and regional authorities have more agency in decentralized countries. This

Union, Eurostat, GDP at the MUTS 2 level . Accessed September 22, 2018: https://ec.europa.eu/eurostat/statistics-explained/index.php?title=File:Population_density,_by_NUTS_2_regions,_2007_(1)_(inhabitants_per_km%C2%B2).PNG&oldid=28081

phenomenon is easily observed, for example, at the Spanish-Portuguese border. In Spain, a decentralized country, regions take part in 259 projects, but municipalities participate in just 76. Whereas in Portugal, representing a centralized model, regional authorities take part in 89 projects, but local authorities participate in 192. Here another element, visible in both the quantitative and qualitative elements of the research, is worth taking into consideration: participation of academic partners, especially universities or research centers. With the methodology used, this type of partner is limited as a sub-regional actor. These partners became the main sub-regional actors in some countries, as the case of Portugal reveals. Also, in the Portuguese example, there is participation from 162 sub-regional actors, 78 of which are universities.

The analysis presented in the previous sections clearly marks the more dominant position of one side of the border when compared to the other. This dominance refers to the presence both of leading partners and all partners together. The presence of more actors (especially leaders, who are required to have more duties but also enjoy skills and benefits) creates a situation in which some regions exhibit dominance over their partners. This dominance changes the regional geopolitics and poses the question of cross-border cooperation as a venue for creating new inequalities and multiplying both structural asymmetries and imbalanced potentials. This is especially visible in cases of "reversed relations" where partners from the "weaker" states dominate stronger states in border regions.

The empirical data presented above allow for further interpretation in the next section.

Interpretation

With regard to the territorial dynamism of the 2007–2013 INTERREG projects and partners' spatial composition in the four tested borderlands, the following findings can be formulated.

Regarding project typologies, four main types (development, environment, education, culture) depict the majority of projects that are highly representative of the most striking difficulties in border areas: shortages in economic development, education and culture; as well as environmental issues with predominance of rural areas and specific challenges; especially water management and climate change of natural parks. Length of access to European funds (resulting from EU membership) as well as the border legacies determine the specific composition of the priority fields.[79] Projects are used to facing these challenges and problems that are common in all borderlands across Europe. European Union and national authorities have been trying to facilitate projects to achieve better cohesion in Europe's territory, empowering regional and local actors across borders.

On the other hand, structural asymmetry and imbalanced potentials explain other findings about how cross-border cooperation is implemented in practical terms to achieve the aims described above. Regarding project leaders, a structural asymmetries perspective (when approaching political and administrative structures and capacities) helps to understand the picture presented. More or less political power corresponds to more or less capacity. Clearly, the more decentralized the country, the

[79] Interview 3. Scholar. Spain, March, 2018.

more leading actors in cross-border projects. This means that more flexible administration,[80] more power and resources are the factors that result in high numbers of project leaders. There are, however, other aspects as well, and they are especially visible after interviews with key actors during the fieldwork. Technical capacities from actors on one side, as represented by German actors when compared to Polish,[81] or more interest in cooperation, also have an impact.[82]

When taking into account all the partners involved in a project, the key element is not the direct imbalance in potentials at the regional level, but the space typology that corresponds with the potential of both sides of the border. Urban areas have more participation, probably because they have more resources to take part in projects.[83] Local partners are also more active in more centralized countries where regional authorities have less political power, as the cases of Portugal, France or Poland illustrate. As for the project typology, it is important to stress that depending on the project, partners represent different levels in the administrative structure. For example, in environment or transportation, regional partners are more visible (normally the scale of the project is bigger, as in the case of a natural area management plan, river basin investment or new infrastructure).[84] On the other hand, local actors participate more in economic development projects. For example, the projects may be related to tourism or to culture and education, with projects in schools or for young inhabitants.

The considerations presented above also reveal another factor: they picture local and regional geopolitical constellations at two levels. First, they show power relations between European Union member states' centers and their peripheries. The center of the state, which serves as the engine of economic, social and political development, dominates in spatial logics while still to some extent trapped in a Westphalian model. The periphery, suffering from underdevelopment but offered a development opportunity together with a de-bordering process, obtains a new supranational ally in the form of the EU and an additional set of instruments supporting their cross-border efforts. Second, they also inform power relations between neighboring subnational territorial units across state borders. To some extent, they deny simple duplication or reproduction of the logics of inter-state relations to the local/regional-scale environment. Structural asymmetries resulting from a degree of centralization give some regions dominance over others in cross-border cooperation, sometimes reversing the logics of state-level differences in potentials. Urban centers that concentrate local and regional resources, as well as power delegated to local and regional structures, determine mutual position and power relations in shaping the cross-border project landscape.

European Union priorities, related to Lisbon and the 2020 Strategy, can also be visualized with the project typologies and participants, especially when related to a boost in technology and innovation. Universities and research centers are important players in many of the projects. Participation is especially high in cities like Zaragoza (Spain), Toulouse (France), Porto (Portugal) or Bolzano (Italy).

[80] Interview 5. Border town representative. Poland, October 2017.
[81] Interview 5. Border town representative. Poland, October 2017.
[82] Interview 7. Scholar. Poland, October 2017.
[83] Interview 8. Scholar. Portugal, May 2018.
[84] Interview 4. Regional administration representative. Spain, July 2017.

Conclusions

The main aim of this text is to outline the model(s) of cross-border cooperation in Europe, by investigating the INTERREG program as a source of data, and to evaluate its intensity and map the actors involved there. All of that is a response to different historical, geographical, economic and/or institutional realities. Consequently, one can examine why the same policy and financial tools – as investigated with the INTERREG example – may lead to similar or different results. The authors also assumed that analysis of cross-border cooperation at the sub-national level is a good indicator of the evolution of the European integration project. Moreover, instruments, concepts and approaches from development studies, geopolitics and (a)symmetries were considered useful for analyzing this type of cooperation, stakeholder logics and results. After testing the selected border areas on the Portuguese-Spanish, Spanish-French, Austrian-Italian and German-Polish borders, the following conclusions can be presented.

Many of the border areas in Europe still face difficulties in development and integration with national and global networks. The European Union, with its cohesion[85] and cross-border policies, has been trying to reverse this situation and advance into a more coherent and balanced territory. At the same time, the INTERREG program is the main (and the most common) instrument and source of funding for stimulating cross-border cooperation within the European Union. Consequently, it can be one of the best data sources for understanding cross-border cooperation dynamics. While the European Union tries to focus projects in some areas to face challenges related to the main European agendas, the projects also address global challenges in border areas, especially economic development, transportation, environment and education together with culture. The specific balance among these fields depends on local border legacies as well as the duration of membership in the EU.

Second, the structural asymmetry and imbalance in potentials, in various aspects, correspond to specific patterns of cross-border relations at many European borders and can be considered the reasons for those patterns. Regarding project leaders, in all the borderlands analyzed, the structural asymmetry visible in the level of (de)centralization coexists with higher activity in project initiation and leadership, and qualitative analyses suggest a causal relationship here. It refers especially to mismatches of regional authorities' political power when actors are located on opposite sides of the border. With regard to imbalance in potentials, the picture is more complex than the simple GDP comparison would suggest. It reveals the relevance of other factors, like territory typology (urban-rural), that influence the cross-border processes. Urban areas have greater capacity to take part in projects, but borderlands in Europe are still more rural than urban.

Third, both the quantitative and the qualitative approach suggest that differences in the number of leaders and partners in cross-border projects on both sides of the border strongly suggest the presence of dominant regions in "cross-border couples." This may result in further strengthening of one side over the other, sometimes reversing the model seen at the state scale. Both structural asymmetries and imbalances in potential seem to play a key role in favoring the position of some regions over others.

[85] Interview 6. Project partner and civic society representative. Poland, October 2017.

From this point of view of local geopolitics, cross-border cooperation on the one hand aims to equalize disproportional development, but on the other reproduces inequalities in the new form.

Finally, the authors believe that the investigation presented here can be an inspiration for all actors (especially institutional ones) designing and stimulating cross-border cooperation in Europe. This study can facilitate responses to the challenges the border areas face and inspire increasing participation by specific project participants with limited opportunities, especially those from more centralized states and rural areas.