

## **Walls versus bridges: what future for cross-border co-operation in Central and Eastern Europe?**

Marie-France Gaunard-Anderson  
University of Lorraine, LOTERR  
UniGR Center for Border Studies

marie-france.gaunard@univ-lorraine.fr

Title of the Special Session: S21 “Walled Territories”

Keywords: Cross-border co-operation, Central and Eastern Europe, Euroregion, Walled territories, European Territorial Co-operation, Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance.

Cross-border co-operation appears all over Europe above all thanks to the European cohesion policy; but even before the implementation of this policy, cross-border co-operation existed in Western Europe through different euroregions (“Euregio” between Netherlands and Germany, “Tri-Rhena”, “Saar-Lor-Lux” and so on). The INTERREG programme -now part of the European Territorial Co-operation policy- encourages the development of Euroregions between Member-States but also at the fringe of the European Union with non-EU countries; different programmes were implemented such as PHARE-CBC and TACIS-CBC replaced today by the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). The aims are to enhance the development of border regions, to offer a better quality of life to their inhabitants and also to gather people together in order to break down prejudice thanks to people-to-people policy. Border regions can rebuild former relations that were broken during the communist period. Cross-border co-operation can be considered as a policy to serve a Europe of peace above all in the Balkan region where so many conflicts took place in the past. Several cross-border projects have been already carried out under the IPA cross-border programme between Hungary and Serbia to enhance the development of the local economy and one of the aims of the programme for 2014-2020 is to increase the capacities of border crossing, to improve cross-border transport networks, to reduce traffic bottlenecks at the border, and so on. It is the same with the IPA CBC Macedonia-Greece, IPA CBC Bulgaria-Turkey or IPA CBC Greece-Turkey. All these programs have among their priorities better cross-border connections to stimulate border regions development.

But what’s happening today at the fringe of the European Union? Several States are building walls in order to control and stop the influx of migrants and refugees coming from Syria, Afghanistan, Iraq, etc. These migrants arrive in Greece, Macedonia, Serbia, Hungary and enter in the Schengen zone using different roads through South-East Europe. Walls appeared along the 175 km between Hungary and Serbia, but also partly between Bulgaria and Turkey, between Greece and Turkey (the “Evros wall”) and between Macedonia and Greece. Hungary has also extended the wall to the Croatian border (70 km) and planned to extend it to Romania and already starts to build it; so they will be a new wall inside the European Union!

In this context, what are the perspectives for further cross-border co-operation considering the rise of xenophobia, racism and rebordering process due to the increase of migrants coming from outside the European Union and due to the economic crisis? What will happen to the slogan under which Hungary cooperates with Serbia “Good neighbours creating common future?”

This paper will analyze these contradictory processes through examples in Central and Eastern Europe and will focus on a certain number of border regions where walls have been built (between Hungary and Serbia above all) and other regions “open” or still open (for example between Hungary and Romania) in order to compare the impact on cross-border co-operation.

The reactions of local and regional authorities will be taken into account and the opinion of people who live in these regions because one of the questions is also what can be the psychological impact on people who live in these walled territories? Will they still cross easily the border if it is closed? Isn't it a feeling of living in a kind of ghetto and being enclosed? Do people ask for more security and want to close the border or is it just a national decision exacerbating at the same time nationalism?

The expected conclusions are to show that these walls have a strong psychological impact but no really efficiency and above all they are not the solution to the migration crisis that has to face the European Union. They have of course a negative impact on cross-border co-operation; the comparison between open border regions and enclosed ones show it clearly. It also points out contradictions in national policies; Hungary illustrates it: on one side they are many cross-border projects building bridges between neighboring communities and, on the other side, the government has chosen to build a wall with Serbia, Croatia and finally with another EU-member still not in Schengen area, Romania.

The process of building an integrated European Union is slowed down and border regions will not be peace building regions if they are turning their back on each other and are creating new no man's lands. The development of walled territories also questions the relations between the EU and potential candidates to the EU like Macedonia and Serbia. So walls have an impact at different territorial scales, undoubtedly on local and regional development of border regions slowing down cross-border co-operation and at the national and European levels as well.

## Bibliography

Anderson, J. (2002) ‘Borders after 11 September 2001’, *Space & Polity* 6 (2): 227-232

Banu, Georges, « Des murs...au Mur », Gründ, 2009, 157 p.

Batt, J. and Wolczuk, K. (2002) *Region, State and Identity in Central and Eastern Europe*, London: Frank Cass

Baxter, D. and Krulfeld, R. (1997) *Beyond Boundaries: Selected Papers on Refugees and Immigrants, Volume V*, Arlington, VA: American Anthropological Association

Boda Zs - Medve-Bálint G. (2015): How perceptions and personal contact matter: The individual-level determinants of trust in police in Hungary, *Policing and Society*, DOI: 10.1080/10439463.2015.1053479

Cattaruzza, A., Sintès, P. (2012), «Atlas géopolitique des Balkans : un autre visage de l'Europe », Autrement, 128 p

Derens, J.-A. (2008), « Balkans, Mosaïque brisée. Frontières, territoires et identités », Cygne

Foucher, M. (1998) 'The Geopolitics of European Frontiers', M. Anderson and E. Bort (eds) *The Frontiers of Europe*, London: Pinter, pp 235-250

Gaunard-Anderson, M.-F. (2005), « The role of borderlands in the European Integration process using the examples of the regions of Lorraine (France), Lublin (Pologne) and Volhynia (Ukraine) », "Region and Regionalism", n°7 vol.1, Lodz-Opole, pp.41-51.

Collantes-Celador G., Juncos, A. (2012), « The EU and border management in the Western Balkans: preparing for European integration or safeguarding EU external borders? Southeast European and Black Sea Studies,

Harguindeguy J.-B.- Sanchez – Sanchez A. (2016): European Cross-Border Regions as Policy-makers: A Comparative Approach. *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2016.1195706

Van Houtum, H. (2002). Borders of comfort: spatial economic bordering processes in and by the European Union. *Regional & Federal Studies*, 12(4), 37–58.

van Houtum, H – Strüver, A. (2002) : Borders, Strangers, Doors and Bridges. *Space & Polity*, Vol. 6, No. 2, 141–146

Klatt, M., and H. Herrmann. (2011). Half Empty or Half Full? Over 30 Years of Regional Crossborder Cooperation Within the EU: Experiences at the Dutch-German and Danish-German Border. *Journal of Borderlands Studies* 26, no. 1: 65–87.

Medve-Bálint G.- Svensson S. (2013) Diversity and Development: Policy Entrepreneurship of Euroregional Initiatives in Central and Eastern Europe, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 28:1, pp. 15-31

Novosseloff, A., Neisse, F. (2015), «Des murs entre les hommes », La Documentation Française, 267 p.

Székely, A. (2013): Border Region Structures. *Analecta Technica Szegedinensia*. 2013(1-2), 64-70.

Wills, E. R. (2016): Constructing a "Wall ": Discursive Fields, Social Movements, and the Politics of the [Wall/Barrier/Fence], *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, DOI: 10.1080/08865655.2016.1174596