

CENTRAL AND EASTERN EUROPEAN DEVELOPMENT STUDIES

Leibenath · Korcelli-Olejniczak · Knippschild (Eds.)

Cross-border Governance and Sustainable Spatial Development

Mind the Gaps!

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Central and Eastern European Development Studies

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Cross-border Governance and Sustainable Spatial Development

Mind the Gaps!

With 12 Figures and 5 Tables

 Springer

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Preface

The relevance of borders is particularly high in Central Europe because hardly any other part of the world features a comparable density of sovereign states. While the number of states is continuously growing since the political watershed of 1990, a far-reaching process of integration and Europeanization is taking place – epitomized by successive rounds of enlarging the European Union. Parallel to these phenomena of bordering and re-bordering, of separation and of integration, border regions undergo tremendous changes. The book explores the consequences of these processes for cross-border governance and spatial planning in Central Europe.

The contributions are based on presentations given at an international workshop which was organized in Warsaw in the frame of the German-Polish Year 2006 in Poland and in cooperation with *spa-ce.net*, the Network of Spatial Research and Planning Institutes in Central and Eastern Europe. The editors wish to thank the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organization of the Polish Academy of Sciences, Warsaw, and the Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development, Dresden, for the supportive environment and the spirit of cooperation which made this event possible in the first place. The editors also thank the German Federal Ministry for Education and Science who co-financed the workshop.

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Dresden and Warsaw, March 2008

Markus Leibenath, Ewa Korcelli-Olejniczak and Robert Knippschild

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Exploring the gaps

Sustainability as a challenge for cross-border governance in Central Europe

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1 Mind the gaps! – By the way, which gaps?

Research on border regions and cross-border cooperation is essentially concerned with gaps: how gaps emerge and vanish, what effects they have, and how people deal with them.

When looking at national borders in Central Europe, various kinds of gaps can be identified. There are still significant economic disparities between countries, between East and West, and between metropolitan and peripheral regions. The diversity of cultures and institutions that becomes particularly evident at borders can be regarded either as another case of gaps or as one of the major assets of the European continent. There are also cleavages between the perspectives of actors from different policy sectors and different levels of policy-making. For instance, an official from the European Commission's Directorate-General for Energy and Transport views borders differently than an activist from a local environmental NGO.

Furthermore, there are gaps between rhetoric and reality, e.g., when it comes to issues such as sustainability or the integration of the European continent. For instance, the German government traditionally describes itself as the vanguard of integration, but has negotiated transition agreements that restrict the access of Polish and Czech workers to the German labour market for up to 12 years. Or there is much talk about the need to cooperate across borders and harmonize spatial plans, but the conditions on the ground are often sobering. Many more gaps could be described, e.g.

between past, present and future – keeping in mind the dynamic developments that have taken place in Central Europe since political regime change in 1989/1990.

The focus of this book is on cross-border governance and sustainable spatial development in Central Europe. The intention is to explore the gaps between different border regions and approaches to cross-border governance in Central Europe, as well as between different disciplinary perspectives on borders. The aim is to shed light on some current research on border regions and cross-border cooperation and eventually to identify knowledge gaps and needs for further research.

The volume is based on presentations given at the international workshop “Towards Sustainable Border Regions. Analyses, Strategies and Approaches for Transboundary Spatial Development”. This event was organized jointly by the Institute of Geography and Spatial Organisation of the Polish Academy of Sciences and the Leibniz Institute of Ecological and Regional Development in the frame of the German-Polish year in Poland. The participants were mostly young researchers, many of whom were affiliated with the Network of Spatial Research and Planning Institutes in Central and Eastern Europe (spa-ce.net).

Although a certain bias towards Poland and Germany cannot be denied, the geographic scope of the book is principally open. It includes case studies from borders between countries such as Austria, Belgium, the Czech Republic, Hungary, the Netherlands, and Slovakia.

A brief introduction to the issues of borders and sustainability is followed by an outline of the structure of the book.

2 New borders in a new Europe

Since the end of the Cold War, the number of sovereign states and hence the length of borders has increased significantly in Europe. Considering only Central and Eastern European countries that have acceded to the European Union in 2004, 6 of the 10 new Member States did not exist 20 years ago: Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, the Czech Republic, Slovakia, and Slovenia.

The recent EU enlargement has increased the length of internal land borders by 174 per cent while the EU external border has increased by only 23 per cent and the population by 20 per cent. Today more than half EU’s internal land borders – roughly 16,500 kilometres – are to be found in the new Member States. If one defines border regions as NUTS-3-territories adjacent to a national border, then 66 per cent of the area of the

new Member States can be regarded as border region containing 57 per cent of the population in comparison to 21 and 15 per cent respectively in the EU as a whole (Schindegger et al. 2005: 5-8).

These figures make clear that border regions are an important spatial category in Europe. But what is the character of borders as such? What does the term border actually mean? And what forces influence the nature of European borders at the beginning of the 21st century? – It is obvious that the enlargement of the EU, but also the entire process of Europeanization, which concerns all Member States, is fundamentally changing the function and the effects of borders. At the new external borders, the Schengen regime with its strict border controls has to be implemented. By contrast, the new internal borders are becoming less of an obstacle to the flows of people, services, goods, and investment. But Europeanization means more than implementing these famous four freedoms. It is also about the evolution and adoption of the *acquis communautaire*, including various sectoral policies with cross-border effects, e.g., transport or environment, and about access to EU funding schemes for border regions. These policies affect the borders of all Member States.

Other major factors that influence the character of European borders are the overarching and often subtle processes of rescaling and re-territorializing. Rescaling economic activities refers to the phenomenon of globalization. Re-territorializing means the shift of powers away from the level of national governments to sub-national units (regionalization), but also to supranational organisations (Perkman & Sum 2002: 11). The emerging new forms of multi-level governance include a broad range of non-governmental actors like private companies and NGOs.

What does this imply for border regions and for the character of European borders? – At least four trajectories of change can be identified:

- First, EU enlargement leads to higher permeability of new internal borders and to significantly lower levels of permeability at the new external borders.
- Second, Europeanization spurs cross-border cooperation in a multifaceted process, which includes financial incentives, legal pressures, as in the case of the EU Water Framework directive, and the discursive spread of ideas and paradigms.
- The third aspect is that national governments are losing their role as gatekeepers of transboundary relations (cf. Blatter 2003: 511). What comes to the fore are heterogeneous forms of transboundary governance, including actors from different political-administrative levels and sectors, who are often organised in the form of networks (see fig. 1). These new forms of transboundary relations can be termed

“transnational regionalism” (Schmitt-Egner 1998: 30 f.), “cross-border governance” (Perkmann & Sum 2002: 16) or “para-diplomacy” (Keating 2002: 43 f).

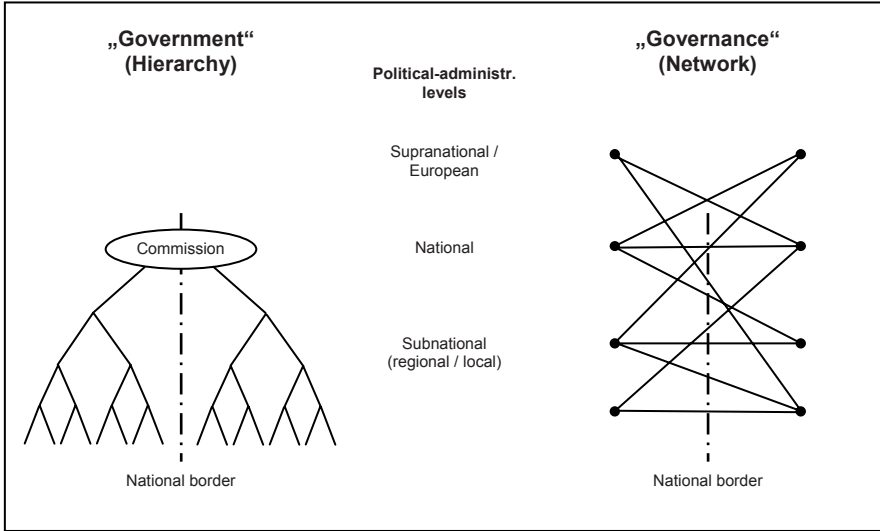


Figure 1. Forms of cross-border interaction patterns: From government to governance (design: M. Leibenath)

- The fourth observation is that borders between sovereign states are no longer the single “Westphalian”¹ line (Brunet-Jailly 2004: 1) separating two countries in all respects. Instead, there is an overlap of different functional spaces which are each delimited individually. What we are currently witnessing is that economic, social, legal, political and identity spaces are to an ever greater extent bounded separately (Christiansen & Jørgensen 2000: 62). This is due to the growing complexity of modern societies and their functional segmentation, which makes it impossible to control all external relations on the basis of one territorial border line (Luhmann 1982: 241).

¹ The Peace of Westphalia from 1648 officially ended the Thirty Years’ War and paved the way towards a mosaic of sovereign, completely autonomous micro-states all across Germany.

3 Sustainable spatial development of border regions in the context of territorial cohesion

A great deal of scholarly work has focused on borders and the development of border regions. Research on borders has even been dubbed a “growth industry” (Bucken-Knapp & Schack 2001: 13) and the growing number of publications on borders has been compared to a “minor avalanche” (Strassoldo & delli Zotti 1982: 1). Most researchers concerned with borders are rooted in the social sciences and have concentrated on issues of identity (e.g. Paasi 1996), social construction of borders (e.g., van Houtum & Strüver 2002) and cross-border institution-building (e.g., Blatter 2001). Furthermore, many researchers, chiefly with economic backgrounds, examine borders as obstacles to flows of goods, capital etc. and seek solutions for overcoming those obstacles (e.g., Huber 2003).

What distinguishes this book from the rest of the “avalanche” is the attempt to bring together contributions from different disciplines under the overall heading of the sustainable development of border regions. It is almost two decades since the Brundtland report (WCED 1987) placed the concept of sustainability on the global political agenda. However, the idea of sustainability as such is much older, dating back to at least the early nineteenth century. Originally, the definition of sustainable development was part of a statement of faith: “Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable – to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (WCED 1987: 8). The Brundtland report also stressed the concept’s dynamic character: “[...] sustainable development is not a fixed state of harmony, but rather a process of change in which the exploitation of resources, the direction of investments, the orientation of technological development, and institutional change are made consistent with future as well as present needs” (WCED 1987: 9). With regard to the breadth of these definitions, one author has noted ironically that “sustainability seeks to provide the best of all possible worlds for people and the environment both now and into the indefinite future” (Wikipedia 2006, no page numbering).

Not surprisingly, the EU has published a very similar, catch-all, visionary definition of sustainable development:

“Sustainable development offers the European Union a positive long-term vision of a society that is more prosperous and more just, and which promises a cleaner, safer, healthier environment – a society which delivers a better quality of life for us, for our children, and for our grandchildren.” (CEC 2001: 2)