

# **Processes for Territorial Cohesion in Terms of Relational Links: Issues Providing an Infrastructure for Regional Spatial Planning**

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## **ABSTRACT**

The ways spatial planning fosters the context of the risk society in border areas have been subject to this research. This paper outlines the state of ongoing territorial cooperation between Gorizia (Italy) and Nova Gorica (Slovenia) and in the Irish Northwest region in relation to the formal initiatives coming from the EU and in relation to grassroots demands. Through case study comparison this paper compares the way in which spatial practices have worked in the two areas and the fields in which territorial cooperation works better.

The central point is to verify how territorial cooperation has facilitated the access to economic and social opportunities, to mutual learning and shared knowledge. As with spontaneous territorial cooperation development, the working of cooperation varies according to context. Two levels of analysis are used here: the attitude towards cooperation at a local community level is considered, as well as the drive to cooperate from the governmental level. This analysis is applied here within a planning framework in order to assess the effects of territorial cooperation on the idea of a reconceptualization of border territories in a shared view of spatial planning.

The risks involved in EU funded cooperation work, i.e. formal cross border cooperation initiatives, are heightened by the fact that the need for change and a spontaneous and natural attitude towards territorial relations is overcome by the chance of getting EU money.

This paper suggests that a full understanding of this context is required if interactions are the bases for spatial planning. Indeed, the hypothesis emphasising that people live intersubjectively, embedded in a relational world, was demonstrated as truthful through the case studies even if, paradoxically, social relations are still quite weak compared to other kind of relations (business, institutions, etc). This paper points out that the relational links, as activity of cooperation created shared visions which now need to be acted upon and implemented.

**Key Words:** cooperation, shared knowledge