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European Urban Research Association (EURA)
10th Anniversary conference, University of Glasgow, Scotland

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

Keywords:

Territoriality, territorial cooperation, shared knowledge, border regions.

Abstract

The ways spatial planning fosters the context of vital cities 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 issues 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.

1. Introduction

This paper outlines parameters for an empirical approach to the study of territorial cooperation in European Union countries. It also offers concepts that arise when we make the connection between territorial cooperation and spatial planning. It aims to show that a theoretical approach centred on the concepts of territorial cooperation and spatial planning can offer a conceptual menu for the study of territorial cohesion.

Questions of interest are:

How has the connection between territorial cooperation and spatial planning been made within the literature and how have these concepts pointed towards a new field of study, that is, spatial planning in shared places such as the border areas?

What makes territorial cooperation and spatial planning work and to what extent was the EU a promoter or obstacle to territorial cohesion?

This paper begins by outlining the concept of territoriality applied to the spatial planning field. There are many reasons for focusing on territorial cooperation, these are mainly: to search for ways of making

contiguous regions more economically competitive on a cross border basis; to address the problem of interaction between local policies in border regions; and to look at the problem of recognizing rights of coexisting groups and communities living within the same area.

The latter is a deeply politically relevant question. Territorial practices apply to wider aspects of local democracy, concerning deeper meanings rather just the relationship between who is governed and who is governing. Territorial practices are relevant to a wider range of territories where people live and belong to one or more communities at the same time, to one or more places at the same time. This implies not only social interaction building up territorial practices but also a variety of actors interacting in those places on a cross border basis. Social interaction including several groups of people sharing the same place are relations where every subject acts in more than one place and multiple subjects act in the same place at the same time (Crosta, 2005, p. 78-79)¹.

Indeed, societies living in border countries have a variable nature, and are floating and unstable from a social relations perspective. This variability lets us better understand the social and political implications in EU border countries. European Union initiatives have been promoting territorial cooperation, justifying that as a reply to the need for integration. Articulating a cross border cooperative orientation in spatial planning may have benefits in getting resources from the EU government for local governments. This is not the only advantage to look for in spatial planning in border areas. It may help the formation of enduring interactions with the consciousness of being part of an intercultural area that can act according to shared principles.

In this paper the term “cooperation” refers to that cooperation which includes “all aspects of daily life in the border region: business, work, leisure, culture, social facilities, housing, planning, etc. second, it should take place every day and should involve partners from all areas and social groups on both sides of the border. Third, it should take place on all levels of administration, i.e. national, regional and local (AEBR 1997: A2, 2). This definition is regarded as an unsatisfactory term and the questions of definitions will be addressed further.

And moreover, territorial cooperation is that action able to “create new forms of shared memory and experience, new ways to communicate, new expectations of individuals and groups regarding their own behaviour as well as the needs and actions of political and social formations and institutions” (Anderson, O’Dowd, Wilson, 2003, p.21).

2. Questions of territoriality

My interest here is to deal with the meanings that interrelate space and society. The definition of ‘territoriality’ as the primary geographical expression of social power is useful to my argument. This section deals with the connections between space, time and territory. These issues can be framed in the model of “territoriality”. This model, according to R.D. Sack is ‘a strategy to affect, influence and control’. “Both the selection of territoriality and the effect it has, depends on social context: on how space in general is used and conceived as well as on who is controlling whom and for what purposes. This means that the history of territoriality is closely bound to the history of space, time and social organization.”²

The aim here is to explore the connection between territorial cooperation and spatial planning as a particular kind of territoriality, i.e. the controlling and marking of areas to gain power. According to Sack, a modern use of territory is based most of all upon a sufficient political authority or power to control human spatial organization at vast scales. Indeed the use of territoriality is a matter of degree and scale and can lead to different senses of territory and space. Territorial definitions imply social relations and the term ‘space’ here refers not only to a political territorial unit but also to the experience of territory and of society’s uses for it.

My argument is that spatial planning in border areas is a particular form of territoriality: it is a strategy to control and affect people by controlling a newly imagined area (the border region). By analysing the effectiveness that spatial planning in border areas can provide, I consider the role of territoriality as an important step in the discussion. Exploring how territorial cooperation employs territorializing effects in EU countries helps to reveal the implications for spatial planning.

I argue about the link between space and society given by territoriality. The establishment and uses of territory are intermeshed with social historical contexts, and if this is true in the EU countries simply living within a territory enables one to be a member of a community, in this point of view EU cross border cooperation policies can be seen as an original maze of nested and overlapping hierarchies of political and communities territories (living in a border areas means being located at one moment in a place that is either a piece of national property and/or shared -between the two sides of the border- piece of land).

A stronger territoriality would be a useful device for EU policies. Territoriality can interplay with cooperation, and its use can transform social relations, and it can be used to advantage by territorial planning. Sack argues that this points to the possibility of territorial changes occurring largely from forces within the

¹ Crosta P.L., (2005), *Le pratiche dell’uso sociale del territorio come pratiche di costruzione di territori. Quale “democrazia locale?”*, in Gelli F. (2005), *La democrazia locale tra rappresentanza e partecipazione*, Franco Angeli, Milano.

² Sack R.D., 1986, *Human Territoriality: Its theory and History*, Cambridge University press, Cambridge, p. 52.

society. As Sack underlines in his theory of territoriality differences exist in the use of territoriality between different societies (Sack, 1986, p. 29-31) and they are not due only to cultural contexts but also to organizational structures and organizations may change far more than do their broader social contexts. “There is, in other words, a dynamic to organizations which territoriality shares. [...] Territoriality, as a component of power, is not only a means of creating and maintaining order, but is a device to create and maintain much of the geographic context through which we experience the world and give it meaning.” (Sack, 1986, p. 219). Indeed this theory helps us to specify the more likely effects that can occur within complex organizations such as the EU. Especially at the local scale, the societies sharing that territory and as complex organizations, need territoriality to coordinate efforts and responsibilities. The sort of territoriality the EU employs for border countries has the potential to control and affect local communities and organizations. In the case of cross border planning, the use of territoriality doesn’t necessarily correspond to the local community’s aims and objectives; it is through this counterpoise that this work explores the borderlands.

The link provided by territoriality – as an expression of power - between society, space and time suggests the use of territoriality as a device in cross border strategies through which people manage spatial organizations and through which people are affected, influenced and controlled. The analysis of territoriality can help us have a better use of territorial cooperation through a more realistic and effective embedding in social relations. Territorial dynamics are made of multiple and complex interrelationships. This work aims to analyze who is actually using territoriality and for what purposes within the different social context in each case studies.

3. Territorial cooperation in Gorizia - Nova Gorica and in the Irish Northwest Region

The purpose of this paper is to compare territorial cooperation in the Gorizia –Nova Gorica area with the Irish northwest region in terms of territorial cooperation. It compares the way in which cross border practices have worked in the two areas (Gorizia and Nova Gorica and in the Irish Northwest region) and the fields in which territorial cooperation works better. The central point is to verify how territorial cooperation in two different border areas has facilitated the conceptualization of mutual learning and of shared knowledge. Thus shared knowledge is considered the main task of cooperative projects in border areas. In the Irish case and in the Gorizia-Nova Gorica case this outcome has been commonly recognised as a product coming from the development of cooperative processes.

Central in the promotion of territorial cohesion in EU countries has been the EU initiatives for border areas. The transformation of Gorizia and Nova Gorica and the Irish Northwest region has been driven by considerations of economics, tourism, arts, culture, language and religion sectors, facilitated by EU programmes and legitimated by their peripheral situation. 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 developing territorial cohesion. The two case studies are read with the perspective of a reconceptualization of border territories in a shared view of spatial planning.

The pressure for information is shown by the business communities in both the case studies, these communities are keen to open up an East-West trade in the Italian Slovenian border area and a North-South trade in Ireland for the development of border economic corridors. Local institutions in Ireland look at an all-regional economy, but the idea of a regional economy in the Gorizia region still is not favoured by local institutions. Also the participation of associations developed within ethno-cultural issues is considered as having the function of pushing up territorial cooperation on cross border basis.

So while territorial cooperation projects seem to be welcomed by all the border communities, mistrust is still present and this is mainly to the lack of knowledge and especially to the lack of shared experiences. One of the main advantages of territorial cooperation is that by working together people experience and learn with each other about how they do business and activities in this region. The Good Friday Agreement deals with this taking into account a method to share information on a cross border cooperative basis, this appears in article n°19: “*Consideration shall be given to: an independent consultative forum appointed by the two administrations, representative of civil society, comprising the social partners and other members with expertise in social, cultural, economic and other issues*”.

According to Mr Richard McKean: «*As far as political figures go wouldn’t be that much contact with them, but senior civil servants, for instance, in the planning department, in Dublin and in Belfast, we’ve brought them together and conducted meetings with them trying to promote better linkages by way of roads and rail networks and transport, bus services for instance. Because there isn’t an integrated approach with those, it causes problems, so we have brought representatives from senior civil servants from both government together to try to promote this idea of the region rather than the two jurisdictions. And they have taken on board what we have said. I believe in a relationship that has been formed and, you know, they do work closing together, and sharing information together as well*». [...] «*The main value of this project is to stimulate that a cross border mind set is awarded, and let people see that its mere interest is to deal with other companies in cross border, but also the share lobbying with of the organizations, the fact that they represents six, and will do currently later in*

the year, nine Chambers of Commerce, thousands of companies, therefore they have a bigger voice with government departments to get improvements of issues or tackle issues. The project it will be midlife and hopefully that middle life section will continue for a long period of time, the conclusion is many years down. I think that they always be a need for an organization as long as two jurisdictions exist» (Interviewed 27/07/2005).

4. Issues providing an infrastructure for cross border links

EMOTIONAL SIGNIFICANCE: About the presence of emotional significance, Mr Liam Milligan argued «*I don't think we have to cooperate, but it's in everyone's interest. I mean, the difficulty we had because of the conflict meant that we basically had separate communities, separate societies; we didn't have the chance to do it in the way that most other European states interactive with their border regions. If you look at the economies of scale that Ireland has, and you look at the global markets, it doesn't make economic sense for us to operate separately. I think if we're to take full advantage of global economies, if we're to take full advantage of trying to promote the island economically, we need to do it in cooperation» (Interviewed 29/08/2005).*

When local communities mesh together in ways that do not threaten the position of the other community living on the opposite side of the border and when they work together for mutual benefit on prefixed objectives, then cross border cooperation works.

The Italian populations show a weak interest in cooperation after the enlargement (20% of interviewees declare that the enlargement won't impact on their activity in terms of having no interest in cross border cooperation) and this is because they feel they have a stronger economy and feel it threaten by the weaker economy of Slovenia. Also the population from the Republic of Ireland shows indifference to the topic of border crossing: a large part of people contacted to be interviewed refused the interview and part of them declared to be too busy. This showed disinterest in the topic.

On the other side, Northern Ireland showed great interest in the topic and in working on a cross border basis, it shows interest “to improve the conditions for those who live and work in the northwest region, for social and economical development and in attracting the number of investments in promoting region to investors both at the local level also as a region, looking at the greater capacity” (Interview with Kieran Houston).

And at the same time Slovenia appears to be very keen on cross border activity, it aims to “make efforts in cross border cooperation useful for improving life's conditions in the territory” and also proudness is visible in the ongoing cross border cooperation activity because “outcomes coming from the cross border work are already visible and tangible, and they are very positive in terms of better living conditions”.

This painting shows a divergent point between the two case studies: the Italian side is not interested in cross border cooperation as it is the country with the stronger economy that Slovenia, at the same time Slovenia is interested in it as it has a weaker economy and sees in cross border cooperation a chance to get advantages; thus Northern Ireland is keen in border crossing even if the UK economy is stronger than the Irish one, and the Republic of Ireland doesn't care about cooperation, they feel some kind of superiority as Italian side. From this it arises that interests in cross border cooperation do not come necessarily and directly from a lack of national economical power.

NATIONAL IDENTITIES: Separate national identities exist in both the cases. Thus, the logic of national identity is still continuing to prevail over that of socio-economic integration in both the borderlands. Even if everyone recognizes that there has been an extraordinary improvement in the state of affairs in the Italian-Slovene frontier and in the Irish-Northern Irish frontier —due to commitments and efforts on the part of institutions and actors at all levels, as well as on the part of the borderlanders themselves—lack of interest, fear, and mistrust among the populations seem set to continue to undermine the possibility of interactions and cooperation overcoming borders.

There are still some nationalist factions who pose a threat to the integration of the Italian-Slovene border but interviewees don't seem to bother about it, “it makes sense to consider cross border cooperation. Because this country is a “small region, off the centre of Europe, and because there are two major global markets on either side of the border, then certainly there are differences, or something like that, but these differences can become fairly insignificant in the scale of things” (Interview with Vanja Mervic).

The same happens in the Irish border where: “there is still a large degree of skepticism about fully engaging with cross border cooperation by the Protestant community in particular”. But those that have founded any benefits discovered that it doesn't have to be so strapping [constraining] they can engage and cooperate at whatever level. And it doesn't certainly mean that they're signing up to anything, like a whole Ireland, a sort of solution” (Interview with Liam Milligan).

Indeed, and ironically, because the conflict is not as recent as it is on the Irish border, between Gorizia and Nova Gorica there is not such a big desire for unification. Territorial cooperation is generally accepted as welcome but none sees the reason for a totally unified area, neither culturally, nor politically. In the Irish Northwest region the level of territorial cooperation is so strong because, according to some part of the

population, it emphasises and brings political advantages. The Catholic part of the population looks towards the reunification of Ireland, so cross border cooperation seems to be a strong tool to get towards that and it works in the interests of the unification of the island as a whole.

Despite this, nation-states have tended toward civic uniformity and the attenuation of cultural and ethnic distinctiveness. The exception to this is represented by the cultural persistence of the Slovene-speaking population in Gorizia that for the greater part seems to be integrated enough in the town to ask for special policies addressed to minority rights.

While the Italian nationalist view could be overlooked as extremist or outdated, given the substantial level of approval for Slovenia's accession, the negative impact of such nationalist views upon Italian-Slovene economic integration continues to be felt.

RELIGIOUS ISSUES: On religious issues, Slovenian people identify themselves as Catholics. Being Catholic is first of all an identity element for them because this, in the past and even nowadays, has marked them from Yugoslavians, orthodoxies and Muslims. Slovenians, through being Catholics, could identify themselves as a nation and could counterpoise to Serbs, Bosnians and Montenegro people. Hence "the Catholic religion has been an element of cohesion between the Slovenian people". In particular, Nova Gorica belongs to Primorska region, one of the three regions Slovenia is divided into. In this region the Latin culture impacted more than the others (Interview with Miroslava Braini).

On the other hand, for Italian people being Catholic is "more an historical and cultural element rather than an identity element", in the past they didn't need to point out their religion in any conflict. The Slovene minority defines itself as belonging to Slovene national identity, language and culture and for the greater part they don't care about religion. They have historically been a multiethnic entity and this multiplicity impacted on them also in religious terms. As a field of ideological belonging, the Slovene minority has involved in different political parties from different perspectives. Time by time, they supported several political parties (Partito Comunista, Partito dei Democratici di Sinistra, Liste Civiche ...) and these divisions blocked them from getting specific advantages.

The religious belonging implied a certain tendency of the community to patronize business and social events of one's own side. The level of mixing is variable from one community to the other, but every community keeps together for its social events. For example, mixed marriage presented a particular difficulty for the Protestant community in the Derry region, and this community still minimized contacts with its Catholic neighbours and eschewed cross-community work, closing in on itself. On the opposite in Donegal emerged a protestant community with a strong sense of identify with the Irish state, active participation in civic and community life, good community relations, a continuing relevance of identity to church and religion and a level of commitment to both single identity and cross community involvement at local level (Harvey, 2005). "*There is no difference in Protestant and Catholic attitudes to the everyday effects of the border, but whereas Northern Protestants see the border as a barriers protecting their British identity, the Donegal protestants are unconcerned about the border and are moving on from being a passive remnant of pre-partition Ireland to an active minority who identify as being Irish*" (McCracken 2004, 24 and Anderson 2005).

ETHNIC DIVISIONS: Concerning present and past ethno-national conflict, Italian and Slovenian ethnic groups are considered competing between each other to access economical privileges by the 65% of the inhabitants. So the ethnic groups are influenced by tensions coming from the still present difficulties in thinking about Gorizia and Nova Gorica as a whole system with a high social and economic level. Ethnic divisions are still quite strongly perceived by local communities, in fact less than 50% think about cooperation. About the 30% of the Italian population think that ethnic groups act independently, compared to a minor part of Slovenians thinking like that; only a small part of these people think that there is agreement for cooperation. In Ireland there was rising tension in the Northwest border from the moment partition was proposed and in 1914 the border communities were close to the civil war. Unrest was a feature of Northern Ireland throughout the 1920s and 1930s, while the IRA waged a border campaign in the 1950s and early 1960s. Even with the end of the 'troubles' in the 1990s, the impact will be felt for many years. Despite of the ceasefires and the subsequent political settlement, the impact of the troubles is still felt by the communities. Many argue that the Good Friday Agreement failed to deal sufficiently with trust, justice and reconciliation issues so that the troubles continue to leave behind a legacy of issues around reconciliation.

CONFLICTS: Although ethnic conflicts are often explained as consequences of ancient and past hatreds, they are never confined to geographical or national borders. In the Irish case, the national conflict still matters, in the Italo-Slovene area local interests suit are more to the fore than national interests. Historically the national conflict is more recent in Ireland than in the Gorizia region, this difference demands different approaches for the areas: in Gorizia people are quite happy about the border where it is, in Derry-Donegal the general attitude

doesn't accept the existing border and it is still perceived as a division strengthening ethnic and identity terms rather than cooperation and interaction terms.

Therefore all these topics make the Irish territory better prepared for the chance of getting a shared knowledge between the two sides of the border. In Ireland the different jurisdictions and the different political contexts cause, at one and the same time, a strong motive to cooperate for one side of the population but also a residual threat for the Protestant side of the population.

Conclusions

In this paper I attempted to bring together many of the issues that have arisen in the two case studies, relate them to each other and make them work within a framework that can be an useful guide to effectiveness in territorial cooperation process and for territorial cohesion. This comparison needs a broader framework for lessons about territorial cooperation to be drawn.

Under the Third cohesion report (European Commission, 2004) territorial cooperation is elevated from an area of Community cooperation to a formal structural funds objective, called objective 3. Objective 3, dealing with Territorial Cohesion, lays down the Community commitment to "further the harmonious and balanced integration of the territory of the Union by supporting cooperation between its different components", managed by a single authority in each cooperation area. The Commission stated that it would propose a new legal instrument in order to allow member states, regions and local authorities to address the traditional legal and administrative problems encountered in the management of cross border programmes and projects. 4% of all the structural funds are now devoted to the new objective 3 and it will be financed by the European Regional Development Fund. The regulations for the new objective 3 are subtitled *Proposal for a regulation establishing a European Grouping of Cross border Cooperation (EGCC)*. The preamble is interesting, as it refers to the way in which existing instruments have proceeded to be "ill-adapted" to organizing structured cooperation within the old Interreg programme.

It also points to the establishment of a cooperation instrument which allows the creation of cooperative groupings of a communitarian type, i.e. the European Grouping of Cross Border Cooperation, to be invested with legal personality, to be given the capacity to act on behalf of its members and the regional and local authorities of which it is composed, and to create conditions for cross border cooperation in an efficient way. EGCCs have the aim of promoting cross border cooperation between member states, local and regional authorities and public bodies. It should be lead in conjunction with the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) to be used for joint strategies for sustainable territorial development in the areas of the environment, communication, culture, education, social inclusion and the sharing of human resources.

In this perspective the future of territorial cooperation, from the EU's point of view, is made by a complex model of development that border regions have to build if they want to play part in future structural funding.

Within the Italian-Slovenian border area these kind of institutions do not already exist. Despite this, it will be given preference in this development because the eastern borders are preferred in terms of future funding. In Ireland the Irish northwest border has the advantage of already having a cross border instrument, the NWRCBG, which is rooted in the local authorities and it is closely tied to the national governments.

From the studies it is possible to say, and this is my opinion, that the experience of the authorities working along the Irish and Italo-Slovene border are still immature. The operation of Interreg III programs has been traditional and slow to follow community participation, although in Ireland this program has put a cross border local authority-based network in place.

My conclusions coming from this comparison are that existing cross border networks, are quite well established along the borders I analysed, more at an informal level at the Italo-Slovene border, more at a formal level in the Irish border region.

In the Gorizia – Nova Gorica case the EU is important but it was not as fundamental in the past as it is now. So important is the cross border cooperation between the two towns that one town level policy-maker states that "cross border cooperation leads the way for the whole country to be trustable in the EU context" (interview with Vittorio Brancati). This interviewee argues that "ongoing cross border cooperation works because it started during the Cold War, during harder times", because of the primary importance of the early spontaneous cross border cooperation not only with Yugoslavia but also with the other East European Countries.

There is currently a high level of recognition of the mutual benefits of cooperative activity in the Irish Northwest region, in line with the provisions of the Belfast Agreement for the establishment of joint cross-border bodies. Notwithstanding commitment at national government level, however, policies have not necessarily been

translated into effective practices. Implementation continues to be clouded as a consequence of difficulties in the political process, and is likely to proceed fully only when these difficulties have been resolved.

In terms of spatial planning the effort is in trying to put things together, and trying so that everybody looks at development strategies in terms of a spatial perspective “because that’s what Europe is saying – that is the framework Europe is using, if you look at their cohesion report” (Interview with Eamon Molloy). Northern Ireland has a regional development strategy, and the Republic has a national spatial strategy. The difference is that the national spatial strategy in the Republic is a policy document, it has been adopted by the government as a policy, so coming down one level, to the local authority level, within each county they have a separate development plan and it relates directed to the guidelines from the national spatial strategy.

“The regional development strategy in Northern Ireland is a guidance document, it has never been adopted as a policy document, even if it’s a document very widely canvassed and consulted upon, and the document got good degree of ‘buy-in’ from all sectors, it is not a policy document. On one side of the border you have the national spatial strategy, you have the local authorities then creating their county plans using this, relating directly to the spatial strategy because that’s the policy and on the northern side of the border there is nothing and the document is not more of a formal document, it is guidance and so it’s not there that you must do this, even now we have a very good basis within the document for taking different policy areas forward, and we don’t have the joined up development that maybe we could have” (Interview with Eamon Molloy). This interviewee also argues about the attempt at an institutional level to “try to get everyone to look at the same, create something for the spatial perspective for the entire northwest region in terms of the new funding machine”. There is the need to get everybody “at least thinking of that type of perspective, because that’s for Europe is coming from” (Interview with Eamon Molloy).

In Irish spatial planning through coordination between two departments, consultation with their colleagues on the north and south, and discussions about how to take the sectors forward, “in both documents the northwest is identified. And the corridor between Letterkenny and Derry is identified as the only one between both documents”. The difference is that on one side the strategy is policy and on the other side it is a note of guidance.

As the Irish state gained equality with the countries of Europe, and as Slovenia joined the EU, the issue of internal equality between border regions becomes crucial. About territorial cohesion Eamon Molloy argued:

“How do you get joined up development if you’re planning, if it was policy, then making sure that the two roads met and were the same standard, not coming from a motorway on one side to a B-Road, for example. Looking at a wider issues, because when you live in a border area and you need a border environment, there is nothing physical there to delineate between the two, especially here on the Ireland-Northern Ireland border, there is no wall, there is nothing, you can drive north and south, you don’t need to show passports. For example, the growth around urban centres, if you look at the villages on the border, especially here in the Derry area, in the Derry-Donegal border, increasingly those villages are going to merge, there is going to be no difference between the suburbs of the city and the villages on the border. In ten years’ time you won’t recognise, they would simply merge one into the other. So in terms of planning for these developments maybe they need water, sewage, infrastructure for roads, maybe schools, and whatever. But again, obviously the present has done this on two separate bases”. [Interviewed 17/07/2005].

The comparison between the two case studies has been presented as affirming the need of territorial cooperation in all the border areas but as illustrating different levels of it. Nonetheless, while territorial cohesion remains a topic dealing with EU policies, differences in the implementation of EU initiatives has been analysed as well their different impacts on different sectors of action and the weak existence of territorial cross border planning in those areas.

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