

Recovery or Discovery? Models and Motives of Cross-border Co-operation along the Eastern Border of Hungary after 1989–1990

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Abstract. *The aim of the study is to look at the various forms of cross-border co-operations which were created along the Hungarian-Romanian border after the transformation period. The specific chronological evolution of cross-border co-operations provides the framework for the analysis. One of the most crucial aspects of the classification of cross-border co-operations is that they vary significantly in their nature. Therefore, the approach includes geographical, historical, local, regional, economic, social and human aspects leading to the creation of a complex model for the Hungarian-Romanian border region. The study compares the advantages and disadvantages of twin settlement relations, euroregions, EGTCs and project-based co-operations in order to find the most effective cross-border co-operation form. The decades after the change of regime are the years of recovery from the negative historical heritage and the years of discovery of new types of relations. The years of EU accession constitute very important milestones in this respect since more opportunities were opened for the two countries for more thorough co-operation. The study presupposes that the transformation years and the accession years were the chief drivers in this process culminating in the financially secured project-based cross-border co-operations. The model proposed for the Hungarian-Romanian border region therefore builds on elements related to border theories. How can the various cross-border co-operation forms affect border interpretation? How do they affect the dividing or connecting role of borders? What is the most effective method to overcome the negative aspects of borders? Which co-operation fields are the most relevant in the strengthening of cross-border co-operations? Who are the chief actors in this process? How do the two countries manage cross-border co-operations on the various (local, regional, national, and civil, institutional, governmental, political, etc.) levels? The author intends to provide a model based on the synthesis of the advantages and disadvantages of the various cross-border co-operation forms in the Hungarian-Romanian border region in order to find the most effective form of cross-border co-operation.*

Keywords: *cross-border co-operation, transformation, EU accession, cross-border model*

Introduction

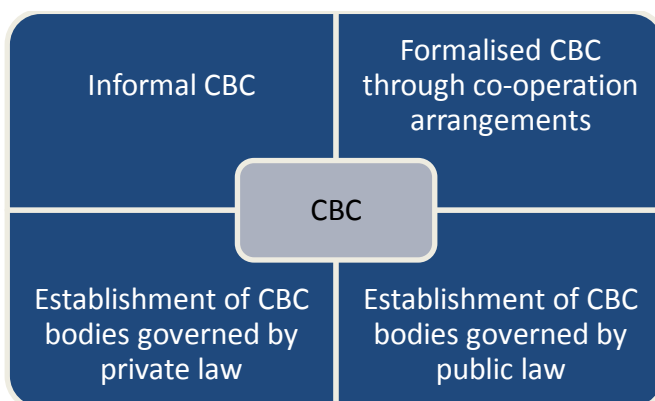
The intensive growth in the number of cross-border co-operations in the past decades is an obvious consequence of the increasing attention from the part of the various EU institutions and the favourable EU policies. As a result of the definition and harmonisation of cross-border co-operations by the legal instruments, and as a consequence of the variety and abundance of financial sources available for cross-border initiatives and projects the institutionalisation of cross-border co-operations gained more

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and more attention. The settling of the legal background further encouraged the cross-border co-operations based on contracts and bi-(or tri- and multi-) lateral agreements to set up their own institutions and create bodies, communities and organisation on various levels to become eligible for supports.

Cross-border co-operations (CBCs) may also vary by their operation (*modus operandi*) and may take extremely diverse forms: from simple joint meetings of existing structures to the establishment of joint committees, or from legally non-binding arrangement to public-law bodies. What is common in all of them is that whether informal or formal (with a legal personality under public or private law can be created under the provisions of national or international law. It is possible, therefore, to distinguish between four broad categories of CBC arrangements. (**Figure 1**)

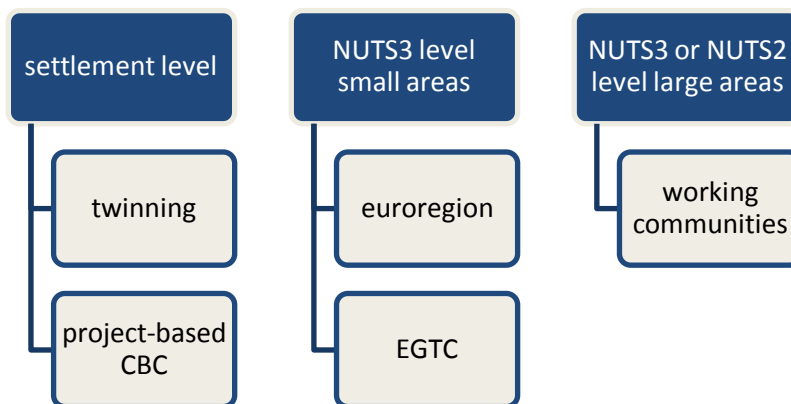
Figure 1. Different kinds of CBC by legal status



Source: Cross-border co-operation toolkit¹

Partly based on the legal status and partly taking into consideration the mission and goals of cross-border co-operations (in addition to, of course, the geographical aspects), the present study selected the following types of cross-border co-operations as basic types of cross-border co-operation. (**Figure 2**) These are compared with respect to their impacts on the borders and border regions. Our hypothesis is that the more institutionalised and legally embedded a cross-border co-operation the higher impact it has on the border and border region.

¹ „Cross-border Cooperation Toolkit” (Prepared by Centre of Expertise for Local Government Reform, Council of Europe in cooperation with Daniele Del Bianco, Italy, and John Jackson, UK), June 2012, accessed November 12, 2017, http://www.slg-coe.org.ua/wp-content/uploads/2012/10/Toolkit_Cross-border-co-operation.pdf.

Figure 2. Basic types of cross-border co-operations

Theoretical background

The first signs of cross-border activity can be traced in the evolution of **sister relations between settlements in two different countries**. The participating countries are most often neighbouring countries but sister alliances may also be possible between towns located on different continents. From our point of view, the classic example for cross-border co-operation is when the self-governments of adjacent settlements, counties or regions on the two sides of a state border establish an alliance in accordance with their own national legal systems. Within Europe, town twinning is supported by the European Union. The support scheme was established in 1989. At present there is an extensive European town twinning network: there are more than 30 thousand twinning projects linking towns from all over Europe. The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) plays an active role in this process. According to the CEMR town twinning has always been a vital way to bring Europe closer to its citizens beyond national boundaries.

Euroregions constitute areas linked by cross-border co-operations which are based on economic, social, cultural, etc. relations between two or more states and their local and/or regional governments. The euroregions usually form easily demarkable contiguous geographic areas comprising of partner regions from two or more countries. The members agree to harmonise their activities on certain areas. An indispensable condition for the euroregional co-operations is that the former isolating role and impermeability of the borders disappear. Table 1 demonstrates the chronological development of cross-border co-operations – and thus the stages in the evolution of euroregions. (Table 1)

Table 1. Chronological development of cross-border co-operations

period	co-operation type	
	internal	external
early	twinning	funds
middle	bi- and trilateral co-operations	experience exchanges
late	euroregion	EU

The most important feature of euroregions is that they are dual-faced phenomena: on the one hand demarcating peculiar spatial entities, and on the hand may be also interpreted as institutional formations. Markus Perkmann (1998) categorised the forms of

cross-border co-operations by the area of the participating regions and their relative geographic location. (**Table 2**)² On the basis of this grouping, euroregions may be defined as cross-border co-operations comprising of a small and contiguous area.

Table 2. Types of interregional and cross-border co-operations

geographic feature	small area	large area
contiguous	cross-border region	working community
non-contiguous	interregional co-operation	peak organisation

Source: based on Markus Perkmann, “The anatomy of cross-border co-operation. Institutional innovations in regional governance” (Manuscript presented at Second European Urban and Regional Studies Conference „Culture, Place and Space in Contemporary Europe,” Durham, 17–20 September 1998).

In 1995, Sucha summarised the principal features of euroregions in six points: (1) most effective forms of cross-border co-operations, (2) tools to diminish development disparities in the border regions, (3) strengthen trust and co-operation will in the people, (4) study fields of good neighbourly relations and integration, (5) help to overcome the negative heritage of the past, (6) important elements in the EU accession processes of the Central and Eastern European countries.

The most exact and most widely applicable definition of euroregions was made by the Association of European Border Regions in their “Euroregion criteria” (AEBR Working Paper on the EU Initiative Interreg and future developments, July 1997) The AEBR argues that although several euroregions exist in Europe but apart from sharing many common characteristics they may have different legal forms or organisations. The AEBR points out the common characteristics as

- being permanent
- having a separate identity from their members
- having their own administrative, technical and financial resources
- and having their own internal decision making.³

When typifying cross-border co-operations, Markus Perkmann defined **working communities** as cross-border co-operations covering large contiguous areas. In one of his later works (2003) he made his definition even more precise taking three dimensions – geographical scope, co-operation intensity and type of actors – as a basis: “usually involve five or more regions” “... emerge from co-operation between several regions forming large areas that can stretch over several nation-states (‘multi-lateral cross-border cooperation’).... Their organisational structures usually consist of a general assembly, an executive committee, thematic working groups and secretariats⁴, but activities tend to be confined to common declarations and information exchange.”⁵ Resulting from the number of participating regions and the nature of their mission, working communities are almost always based on co-operation at the regional level, between regional authorities.

² Markus Perkmann, “The Anatomy of Cross-border Co-operation. Institutional Innovations in Regional Governance” (Manuscript presented at Second European Urban and Regional Studies Conference „Culture, Place and Space in Contemporary Europe,” Durham, 17–20 September 1998).

³ Association of European Border Regions, “Transeuropean Co-operation between Territorial Authorities: New Challenges and Future steps Necessary to Improve Co-operation. Final Version,” October 2001, accessed November 12, 2017, http://www.aebr.eu/files/publications/territorialauthorities_01.en.pdf.

⁴ Aykaç, 12–14.

⁵ Ibid., 10.

Analysing the 127 cross-border co-operations, 74 of them were categorised by Perkmann, of which 13 (17.6%) are working communities.

As working communities usually comprise several regions forming large areas that can stretch over several countries, their analyses reveals that their highest concentration (7 of them) can be found in the Alpine-Danubian region, while the rest is equally distributed (1-2) in the other macroregions. As for their year of establishment, the first two were founded in 1972 followed by seven more in the next twenty years, and only four were founded in the next twenty years. This shows that the golden era of working communities was before 1990, and after that the “age of working communities” was replaced by the “age of euroregions” or other smaller cross-border co-operations. Examples of working communities include the Alpes-Adria Working Community (in which Hungarian regions are also involved), the Arge Alp, the COTRAO or the Working Community of the Pyrenees.

Emily Lange da Silva, researcher, relies on the Valencia Convention in arguing that “Working Communities are defined as co-operation bodies without legal personality, whose aim is non-operative, but to act more like a consultative institution. ... these non-operative bodies have serious restrictions when regarding decision making...”⁶

Combining the above definitions, and mainly relying on Perkmann’s dimensions, we can establish that working communities are institutionalised cross-border co-operations covering extensive areas, involving regions from more than five countries and having no legal personality.

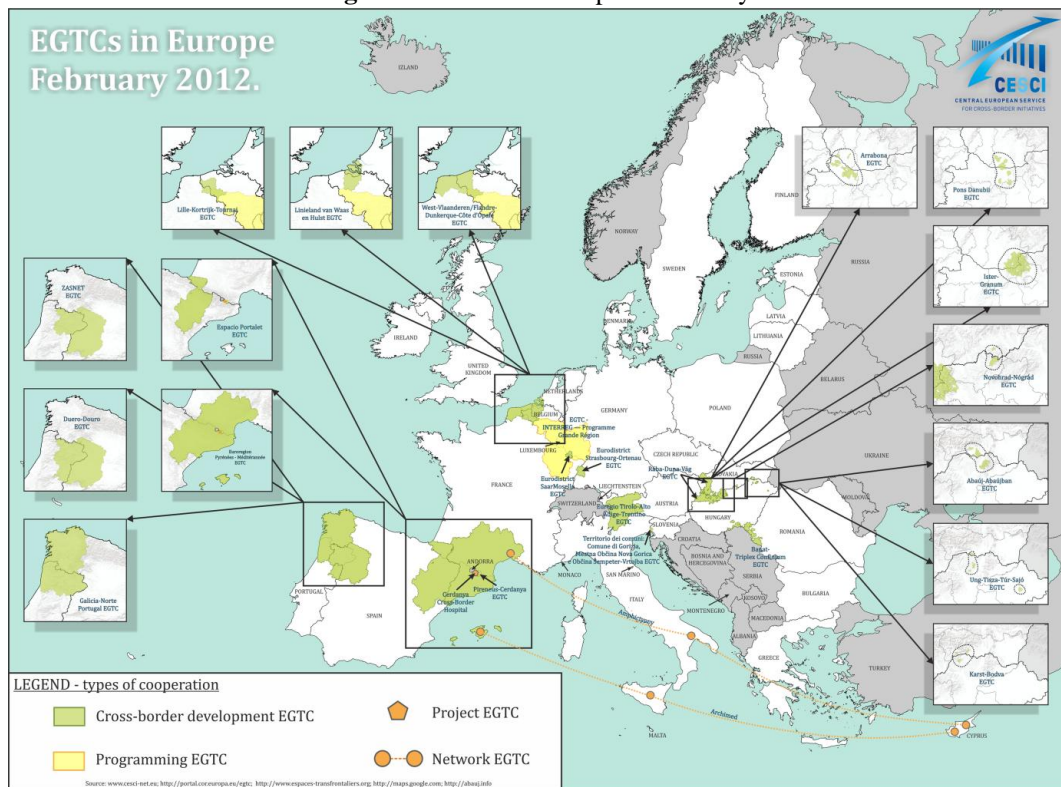
In Perkmann’s definition working communities in a geographical sense have a large area but they have a low co-operation intensity. Nevertheless, he calls attention to an other form of cross-border co-operation, the Scandinavian Grouping, which is also large in its area but is characterised by much higher co-operation intensity with a variable mix of local and regional authorities (counties) involved. The name comes from the fact that this type of co-operation is predominantly found in the Scandinavian countries. The oldest of these is the Öresundskommittén (1964) founded along the Danish-Swedish border. Then came the Nordkalottkommittén (1971), Kvarken Council (1972), Mittnorden Committee (1977), Arko Cooperation (1978), Skärgårdssamarbetet (‘Archipelago’) (1978) and the Four Corners Co-operation, the Gränskommittén Østfold/Bohuslän and the Nordatlantiska Samarbetet in 1980. The most important point to make here is that all of these were founded in the very early years of the first cross-border co-operation establishment wave. It is also worth to mention that the above listed cross-border co-operations all have Swedish participant regions.

The EGTC Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 came into force on 1 August 2006. The first EGTC was created in February 2008. The **EGTC is a new European legal instrument designed to facilitate and promote cross-border, transnational and interregional co-operation**. Unlike the structures which governed this kind of co-operation before 2007, the EGTC is a legal entity and as such, will enable regional and local authorities and other public bodies from different member states to set up co-operation groupings with a legal personality. For example, an EGTC or an EGTC member can be Member States, regional or local authorities, bodies governed by public law, and

⁶ Emily Lange da Silva, “EGTC: a ‘breath of fresh air’ for practical cross-border co-operation (Tracing the legal cross-border co-operation from the European Level to the Galicia-North of Portugal cross-border region”. RSA International Conference 2011, accessed July 25, 2012, <http://www.regional-studies-assoc.ac.uk/events/2011/mar-slovenia/papers/Lange.pdf>.

associations consisting of such bodies. An EGTC must be composed of at least two members coming from at least two EU Member States. (Figure 3)

Figure 3. EGTCs in Europe in February 2012



Source: Interact, “EGTCs in Europe,” November 12, 2017, <http://www.interact-eu.net/egtc/egtc/30/16>.

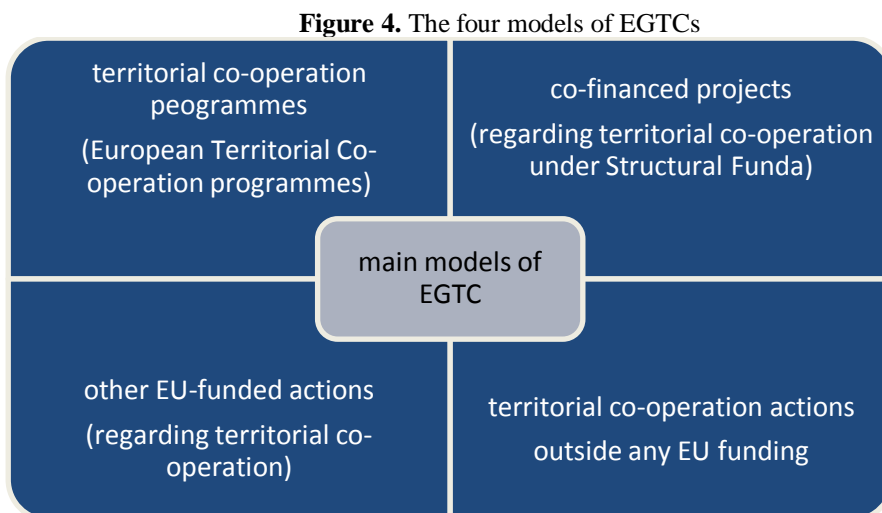
“The EGTC is unique in a sense that it enables public authorities of various Member States to team up and deliver joint services, without requiring a prior international agreement to be signed and ratified by national parliaments. Member States must however agree to the participation of potential members in their respective countries. The law applicable for the interpretation and application of the convention is that of the Member State in which the official EGTC headquarters are located. An EGTC convention sets out in particular the name of the EGTC and its headquarters, the list of members, the area it covers, its objective, its mission, and its duration.”⁷

It is primarily a tool to be used for the management of EU Structural Funds and different functions can be envisaged for an EGTC: (1) in charge of the implementation of a Territorial Co-operation programme (upon delegation by the Member State to the EGTC), (2) lead partner or partner in a Territorial Co-operation project, (3) other co-operation actions with EU-funding, (4) other co-operation actions without EU-funding.”⁸

⁷ European Commission. Regional Policy – Inforegio, “European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC),” accessed November 12, 2017, http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/archive/funds/gect/index_en.htm.

⁸ INTERACT, “EGTCs in Europe,” accessed November 12, 2017, http://www.interact-eu.net/the_egtc_regulation/the_egtc_regulation/68/42.

“As stated in Article 7(3) of the EGTC Regulation, there exist four models of EGTCs. (Figure 4)



Currently most EGTCs in place are multi-functional and have a diversity of objectives and types of actions. One EGTC is currently involved in the management of ETC programmes but more EGTCs are actually preparing or implementing ETC projects or active as governance structures. The EGTC does not aim to replace existing instruments and structures. In regions where no alternatives exist or where these appear to be ill-adapted to the needs of programme management, the EGTC offers a unique, harmonised and adapted solution to foster programme management by cross-border structures.”⁹

The last updated list of EGTCs whose establishment has been notified to the Committee of the Regions include 68 EGTCs, of which 18 are located along the state borders of Hungary (14 with Slovakia, 3 with Romania, 1 with Slovenia). This means that the Hungarian borders are among the most active ones in the establishment of EGTCs.

Project-based CBCs have become more and more widespread in the past three decades as the financial policy of the European Union set border regions more and more into its focus.

Data and methods: Account of the cross-border co-operations along the Hungarian-Romanian border

Relying on the literature discussed above, an account is made of the different types of cross-border co-operations along the Hungarian-Romanian border. (Table 3)

⁹ INTERACT, “The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation,” accessed on November 12, 2017, http://www.interact-eu.net/egtc_and_etc/egtc_and_etc/67/40.

Table 3. Types of cross-border cooperation in the Hungarian-Romanian border region (2018)

Type	Number	Total number along the borders of Hungary	Activity of the Hungarian-Romanian border region
Sister settlement*	62	136	45.6%
Euroregion	3	15	20.0%
EGTC	3	18	16.7%
Project-based CBC (2007-2013)**	455	1227	37.1%

* The numbers in this respect are estimations. The total number represents all those sister settlement relations that are linked to Romanian settlements from all over Hungary. The number of sister settlement relations in the Hungarian-Romanian border region cover only the area of the four counties along the Hungarian-Romanian border.

** The data used for the study reflect the number of cross-border co-operations as of 2018. However, in the case of the project-based co-operations the author decided to use the data for the 2007–2013 period with the exact number of project-based co-operations implemented within the framework of the HU-RO CBC Programme 2007–2013 (and the other similar programmes respectively for the other borders of Hungary).

When looking at the various levels and forms of cross-border co-operations along the Hungarian-Romanian border, a *timeline approach* was applied.

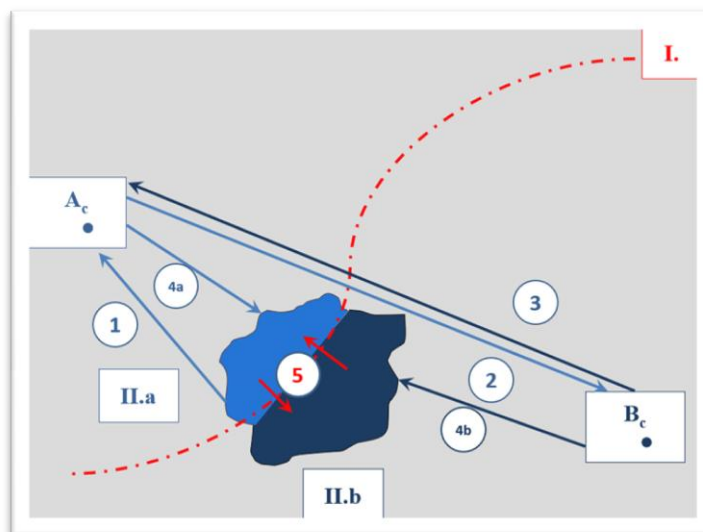
Co-operation before 1989–90 – twin settlements

Twin settlement relations became widespread all over Europe, especially in western Europe, after the Second World War. In Western Europe, the key motives for the establishment of these co-operations was the will to overcome the hostile relations between the nations formerly fighting each other during the world wars. The primary aim was to create a real basis for peace and the reconstruction of Europe. On the other half of the continent, the socialist regime allowed and supported twin settlement relations to strengthen the role of the socialist ideology. In Hungary, the overwhelming majority of these relations were established with partner settlements in neighbouring countries, there were only a few Finnish settlements and some other settlements from countries in special cases.¹⁰

However, in Eastern Europe twin settlement relations were highly controlled and limited in activities which followed the pattern of cross-border co-operations between regions. (Figure 5) József Tóth analysed the **cross-border relations between the former COMECON countries** and created a model in 1996 to characterise the cross-border co-operations of the countries of the region. The model (Figure 5) presupposes the existence of a strictly closed and controlled border line which depends on the strongly centralised state power and decisions brought in the countries concerned. The two border regions marked on the schematic map were allowed to contact each other only if the national party and the governmental forums agreed to it. **These relations, however, could never get beyond the cultural and protocol levels** which was the result of the dependence on the relationship between the two states.

¹⁰ Zoltán Hajdú, “A testvértelepülési kapcsolatok sajátosságai és az eredmények hasznosítása” [Particularities of sister settlement relations and the application of the results] (Study paper for the Establishment of the Institute of Studies in Federalism and Decentralisation in Hungary), 2012.

Figure 5. The mechanism of establishing cross-border co-operations between border regions in the COMECON countries



Source: based on József Tóth, “A regionális fejlődés kezdetei és a mai problémái a Kárpát-medencében” [The beginnings and current problems of regional development], in *Határon innen – határon túl* [Outside the border, beyond the border], ed. Ágnes Pál and Gabriella Szónokyné Ancsin (Szeged, 1996), 1.

The border regions, which wanted to start cross-border co-operation on the local level, had to undergo **five phases**:

- (1) Let us suppose that there are two neighbouring countries (A and B) sharing a common border (I). If the border region (IIa) in country ‘A’ wanted to form a co-operation with the border region (IIb) in country ‘B’ then ‘IIa’ had to inform the capital city (A_c) of country ‘A’.
- (2) After this A_c contacted the capital city of country ‘B’ (B_c).
- (3) Following the decision of the central party, B_c informed A_c about its opinion on establishing cross-border co-operation.
- (4) Then A_c and B_c informed IIa and IIb about their decision concerning the establishment of cross-border co-operation.
- (5) Finally, the official could be made between the border regions of the two countries after it had been approved.

At present, almost half of the Romanian twin city relations in Hungary are linked to settlements in the four counties along the Hungarian-Romanian border. This is first of all due to the fact that twin settlement relations from neighbouring countries were supported during the socialist period, and secondly the proximity of Romania in this case is also determining.

Co-operation between 1989–90 and 2004 – twin settlements, euroregions, project-based CBC

After the transition, the mechanism of establishing twin settlement relations changed in its nature, and the aims of the twin settlement relations became similar to those in Western Europe. Twin settlement relations became widespread and supported all over Europe with legal, and later financial support from the European Union.

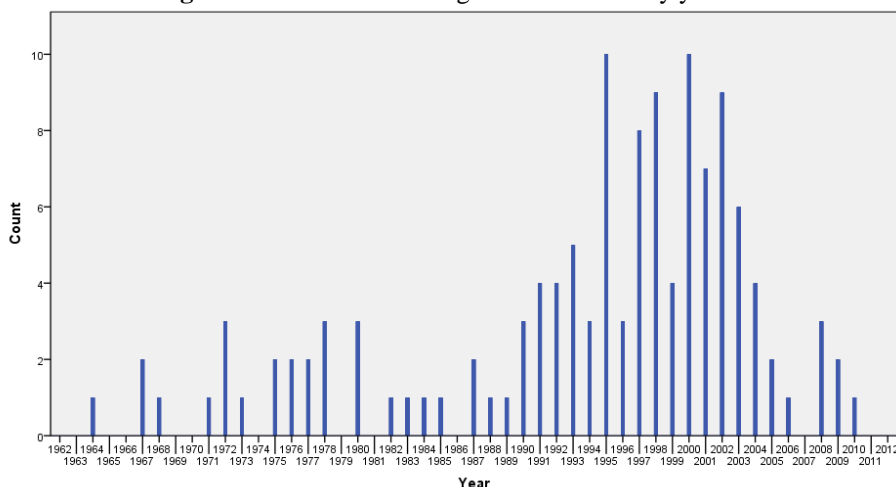
Besides twin settlement relations, border regions also started to establish cross-border co-operations. There were good practices from Western Europe which actually paved the way for cross-border co-operations in Eastern Europe. Many of these cross-border co-operations between border regions soon realised the importance of being institutionalised and a special type was created in the form of euroregions. These types of cross-border co-operations already acted as institutions and initiated joint projects in various fields, including co-operation between health care institutions, educational institutions or regional development organisations. Euroregions became very popular in the nineties, and they spread so rapidly in Central and Eastern Europe that they soon covered all borders. At present, the number of euroregions is the highest in Central and Eastern Europe. Their primary significance is the role they played in the economic, social and regional development of the participating border regions making EU accession more attainable. The overcoming of borders and thus the euroregional co-operations may have several advantages for not only the border regions but nation states of the participating regions as well. These advantages may be detected on several levels. (**Table 4**)

Table 4. Potential advantages of the euroregional co-operations on the various levels of co-operation

Level	Impact
civil	border regions get to know each other which leads to better understanding
institutional	local governments and authorities get to know each other's work and start co-operation
economic	co-operation between small and medium-sized enterprises create jobs
social-cultural	provides opportunity for the exchange of know-how and information between the regions
services	tourism develops through the joint marketing activities and joint projects

Nevertheless, the **sceptic** still argue that the partner regions may experience **disadvantages** as well if they participate in cross-border co-operations: **may inhibit** the participating regions in their economic development, **may deteriorate** the image of the participating regions, or **may even weaken** the more developed regions in the application for funds.

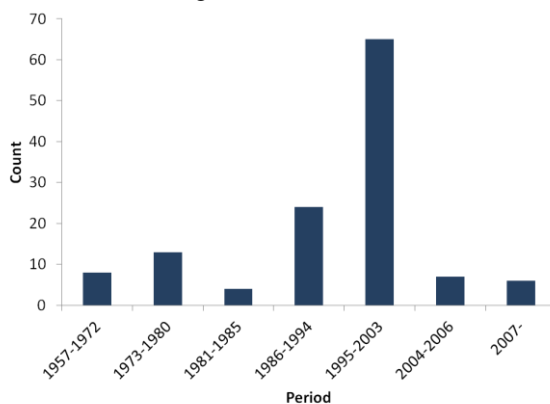
The first really remarkable upswing in the foundation of euroregions (and also of cross-border co-operations in general) could be observed in the 1970s and 1980s when the institutionalisation processes also accelerated. While (Western) Europe was characterised by centralised regionalism after the Second World War, it was gradually replaced by bottom-up – that is locally initiated – regionalism from the eighties. From the nineties, – mostly as a result of the rapid expansion of the euroregional approach – the foundation of relationship systems on the euroregional level became even more frequent. (**Figure 6**)

Figure 6. Number of euroregions established by years

Accordingly, the future Europe shall not be interpreted as the Europe of nation states but as the Europe of regions comprising of border regions with similar economic interests. It is not surprising, therefore, that the term “Europe of Regions” became generally used by the late nineties.

Enlargement perspective

The foundation of euroregions shows remarkable differences when looking at the periods lasting between the years of enlargement. **The period between the fourth and the fifth enlargements is the most active** in this respect when actually as many euroregions were founded as during the other periods together. (Figure 7) This shows that there is a strong relationship between the two processes.

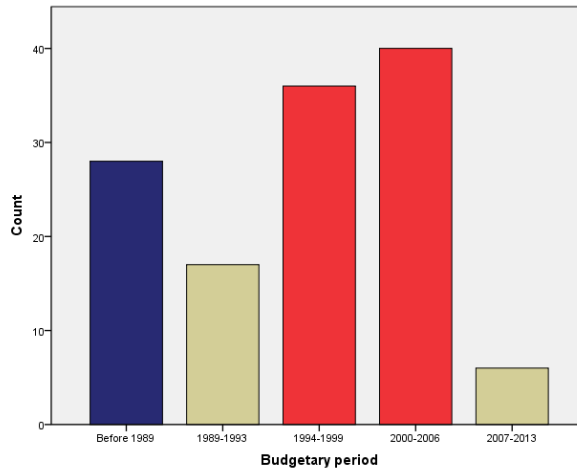
Figure 7. Number of euroregions established between the enlargements

Budgetary perspective

The **distribution of euroregions by budgetary periods** reveals that there is a strong relationship between the activities of the European Union providing financial instruments for cross-border co-operations and the establishment of euroregions. The highest proportion of the currently existing euroregions was established during the most

active budgetary periods, that is when the Interreg and Phare CBC Community Initiatives were introduced. (Figure 8)

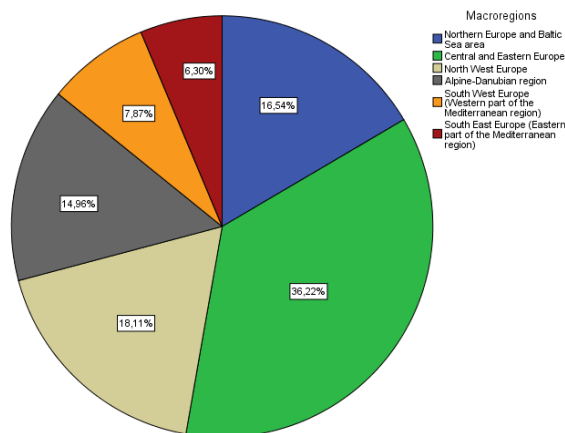
Figure 8. Number of euroregions established by budgetary period



Geographical perspective

As for the geographical distribution of euroregions, the **macroregional division** also applied by the Association of European Border Regions was used revealing that **the highest proportion of the euroregions can be found in Central and Eastern Europe**, while North West Europe, Northern Europe and the Baltic Sea area together hosts around the same number of euroregions (or similar types of cross-border cooperations). These together constitute a little less than three-quarters of the total number of euroregions. (Figure 9) In this respect the Mediterranean region seems to be the least active.

Figure 9. Distribution of euroregions by macroregions



A third type of cross-border co-operations, that is the project-based cross-border co-operations, became also widespread during this period. Project-based cross-border co-operations mean cross-border co-operations when a joint project is initiated by neighbouring settlements or small groups of settlements located close to the state border. These projects can be initiated by settlements or groups of settlements, or even by institutions, organisations, sports clubs or SMEs from various fields (education, health care, sports, agriculture, industry, food production, etc.). It may also happen that the local

governments start joint projects in this way. It is very important that both sides of the border must take an active part in these projects and that they should definitely have a cross-border impact. Within the area of the European Union, the financial supply for these projects comes from the Interreg programme. Before the EU accession of Hungary and Romania, the Phare CBC programme already made it possible for the various levels to initiate joint cross-border projects. Just before the fifth enlargement the number of these project-based cross-border co-operations increased first culminating between 2004 and 2007.

Co-operation after 2004 – euroregions, EGTCs, project-based CBC

The budgetary period 2007–2013 brought a boom in the number of cross-border projects along the borders of Hungary, especially along the Hungarian-Romanian border. As both countries became members of the European Union, there were no difficulties in harmonising the financial sources and making reports and project management became much easier. The Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme 2007–2013 was an efficient instrument through fundraising that led to the harmonious cross-border development of the Hungarian-Romanian border region. The total available joint funding of the Programme for the period 2007–2013 was 224.5 million euro (ERDF) of which 13.5 million euro was allocated for the Technical Assistance of the Programme, and a total of 211 million euro for interventions. In comparison with the distribution of cross-border funds on the level of counties, we can observe that the most active counties were Bihor (Romania) and Hajdú-Bihar (Hungary) with an absorption of 43% of the total funds allocated through the program¹¹. This consistency in attracting funds can be explained by the well-defined institutional dimension, the previous experience of the two counties with other European funds, and last but not least the two counties form the Bihor–Hajdú-Bihar Euroregion, a form of cooperation that managed to gather the two cross-border communities of Hungary and Romania.

In the HU-RO CBC 2007–2013 Programme, county seats “play a central role in the development of the area, as most public institutions, higher education institutions, and major economic actors are concentrated in these cities,” and because their impact reaches beyond the border. Due to their major role, these cities could act as regional factors of cooperation, creating partnerships between border areas, stimulating cross-border cooperation in nearby territories and providing additional momentum for co-operation between Hungary and Romania.¹²

¹¹ Constantin-Vasile Țoca, Eduard Ionuț Feier, and Alexandra Radu, “The Impact of Romania-Hungary Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013 on Bihor-Hajdú Bihar Counties,” in *The European Space Borders and Issues*, ed. Mircea Brie, Alina Stoica, and Florentina Chirodea (Oradea and Debrecen: Editura Universității din Oradea and Debreceni University Press, 2016), 489–502; Constantin-Vasile Țoca, *Romanian-Hungarian Cross-border Cooperation at Various Territorial Levels, with a Particular study of the Debrecen-Oradea Eurometropolis (European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation-EGTC)* (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2013), 117–134; Constantin-Vasile Țoca, Ioan Horga, and Luminița Șoproni, “The Frontier – from Boundary to Connecting axis for Cross-border Regions,” in *The Evaluation of Cross-border Cooperation in Europe*, ed. Constantin-Vasile Țoca, Ioan Horga, and Luminița Șoproni (Debrecen: Debreceni Egyetem Kiadó, 2017), 266; Ioan Horga and Constantin-Vasile Țoca, *Evaluarea cooperării teritoriale europene* [Evaluation of European territorial cooperation] (Oradea: Editura Universității din Oradea, 2013).

¹² Final Evaluation Report: Hungary-Romania Cross-Border Co-operation Programme (2007–2013). KPMG Advisory Ltd., Budapest, 30 April 2013.

The main strategy of the HU-RO CBC is to bring the various actors closer together. To achieve this goal, the most significant achievements are partnerships created or consolidated by joint projects. Resources were allocated equally to Hungary and Romania as a result of the project selection process. This is a great achievement and reflects the efforts of the programme bodies to maintain a balanced program between the two countries. However, on the level of counties there were differences in terms of the committed funds. Overall, the programme supported 552 beneficiaries (**Table 5**), of which 70% participated in a project, while several major organisations (especially universities) actually participated in more than one project.

Table 5. Number of beneficiaries per country

Country	Number of Lead Partners	Total number of Beneficiaries
Hungary	150	269
Romania	106	283
Total	256	552

Source: Based on data from: Hungary-Romania Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013, accessed November 12, 2017, http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects/.

Counties are key players in the development of the area. Thus, the beneficiaries located in the eight counties attracted a significant amount from the ERDF funds (56% of the committed funds). This demonstrates that they can significantly influence progress and act as regional factors, improving the level of cross-border cooperation.

The direct relevant results of the programme included, for instance, the establishment of 11 new research centres, improvement of 7 existing research centres, development of 25 tourist attractions, organisation of 788 joint trainings, production of 658 studies and plans, and the development of 14 health centres.¹³

Conclusions

The interpretation of borders has a very strong time factor. The interpretation of borders does not only vary by geographical location but also by the time that passes. When cross-border co-operation started to become more widespread they underwent stages in their development. We can conclude that cross-border co-operations became more and more active as a result of which borders became more permeable and their limiting function became less perceivable. The theoretical background and the models discussed show the development stages of the interpretation of borders.

The various forms of cross-border co-operations have a vital effect on the dividing or connecting role of borders. The dividing function of borders is suppressed, people living, working and co-operating in the border regions are not hindered in making contacts, building relations or starting business. In the heyday of twin settlements, the dividing role of borders more or less set a barrier for the settlements and the people. The fall of the Iron Curtain led to the opening of borders and the dividing role of borders became less intensive. The rapid spread of euroregions allowed regions to get involved in cross-border co-operations and became a connecting element on the map of Europe. The enlargements made it possible to create a Europe regions where even cross-border regions could become

¹³ Data processed by the author based on information downloaded from Hungary-Romania Cross-border Cooperation Programme 2007–2013, accessed November 12, 2017, http://www.huro-cbc.eu/en/financed_projects/.

responsible actors in regional policy. The projects initiated strengthen the connecting role of borders.

The most effective method to overcome the negative aspects of borders is to make it a regional actor with competences. The only way to achieve it is the forming of cross-border co-operations. Experience has shown that twin settlement relations are the most efficient in strengthening the people-to-people relations. Their potential advantages can be most intensively measured on the civil level. Euroregions proved to be the most effective in reducing the negative impacts of borders on the institutional level. The creation of EGTCs meant a step forward in firming the importance of cross-border co-operation in the regional policy of the European Union. Finally, it is found that the project-based cross-border co-operations address the vulnerable points caused by the dividing nature of borders. The projects are funded by the European Union and serve cross-border regional as well as Community interests. Thus, at present the initiation of project-based cross-border co-operations is surely the most effective way to overcome the difficulties set by the traditional role of borders.

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