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Les défis de développement pour les villes et les régions dans une Europe en mutation

A socio-economic typology of cross-border regions in Europe

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S22 - La coopération transfrontalière en Europe aujourd'hui : un laboratoire ou une impasse ?

Résumé / Summary

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Launched in the 1990's through INTERREG programme, European Territorial Cooperation has been a corner-stone for building a common European space and integration. During the 2014-2020 programming

period, the EU dedicated 10.1 billion euros (including 6.6 billion euros for cross-border cooperation) to achieve this objective. The huge challenges involved in this programme support the need for a durable cross-border observation that could help assessing actual cooperation and planning new modalities for future agreements. However, despite the existence of local initiatives related to observation, comparable data about cross-border interactions (like cross-border commuting for instance) is still missing at a European scale (Topaloglou et al., 2005, Riate/Cist, 2014).

In this presentation, we set out the main results of a recent study carried out by the Riate team (Interdisciplinary Network for European Spatial Planning) that developed an alternative approach to differentiate cross-border territorial contexts, for all EU internal borders (Guérois et al., 2016). Instead of directly measuring cross-border relations, we propose to identify potential interactions between territories. These observations are based on two major assumptions: the first one lies on the opportunity to move easily on both sides of the border, this multidimensional issue being dealt from the perspective of transport networks density and connectivity. The second assumption lies on the measure of socio-economic discontinuities on both sides of the border (Grasland, Hamez, 2005): the boundary may materialize a break between a territory younger or richer than its neighbour and some of these differentiations reveal strong cross-border complementarities (Decoville et al., 2013).

First of all, we assess transport accessibility conditions between cross-border territories. The use of the road network provided by OpenStreetMap and of the population grid of Geostat allows setting up a performance index of the road network between cross-border regions (combinations of NUTS2/3) that takes into account road speeds and more or less direct routes. This index is calculated by weighting the theoretical routes (i.e. without traffic congestion) by the population reached. The higher the value of this index, the higher the capacity of interconnection between inhabitants located at both sides of the international border. Whereas physical barriers (Danube, Alps, Carpathians, Pyrenees and Ardennes to lesser extent) affect substantially the performance of road levels, in other areas it is rather the lack of road infrastructures that is captured by a low performance index (Poland/Germany, Czech Republic/Germany).

Secondly, the measure of cross-border discontinuities allows to highlight cooperation potentials on the basis of four indicators: GDP per capita, unemployment rate, share of population under 15 and share of population over 65. The typology based on each pair of cross-border regions highlights several profiles of socio-economic complementarities: some regions present differentials characterised by a young population and a high unemployment rate on one side of the boundary, opposed to high GDP per capita and ageing population on the other side. These situations are mainly located in cross-border territories of Germany (East and West), around Benelux and also between Southern Italy and France or Italy and Slovenia. In other cross-border comparisons, some regions are cumulating all the advantages on one side whereas their neighbour accumulates disadvantages on the other, revealing unfavourable situations to set up mutual cooperation. At last, the confrontation of the road performance index with the socio-economic typology reveals that regions experiencing good socio-economic complementarities are also the ones which have good road infrastructures linking them. However several exceptions exist, such as the cross-border territories of France and Switzerland, or Poland and Germany, which are significantly less interconnected regarding what could be expected from their degree of socio-economic complementarities.

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