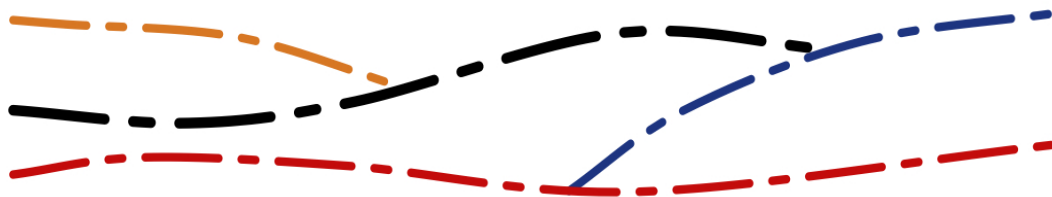# EUBORDERSCAPES

Working Paper 17

The "represented" borderscape of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai: What interplay between cross-border integration and cross-border cooperation?

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Abstract

In a twofold context of a process of de-bordering and the construction of the European Union on the one hand, and of a re-bordering and identity crisis on the other hand, the relationships within cross-border areas are facing challenges, not only in the organization and structuring of these specific spaces, but also in the building of a common cross-border living area. In this context, two processes intervene simultaneously and constitute the specific framework of cross-border regions: bordering and cross-border integration. This paper addresses the interplay between these two processes by drawing on the representations of stakeholders from within the Eurometropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai. It highlights two main results. At first, the representations of stakeholders shed light on two bordering dynamics that can combine even though they can also appear to be contradictory. In this framework, the paper unveils an original dimension of bordering, namely 'a-bordering', which refers to the status quo of the border, in other words, a certain dynamics of permanence. Secondly, the representations of stakeholders show ambivalent and simultaneous visions of a "cross-border integration with border" and a "cross-border integration without border". These representations challenge the implementation of cross-border policies and schemes.

The "represented" borderscape of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai: What interplay between cross-border integration and cross-border cooperation?

Introduction

Borders are geographical objects designed and built mostly by territorial authorities to assert their influence and to defend their sovereignty. They constitute inherent elements of any human society and present ambivalence, since they both spatially separate and distinguish populations but also bring them into contact and generate relationships between them (Kolossov et al., 2012). From the end of World War II borders, in their Westphalian form, have evolved in their functions and practices (Green, 2012). Contemporary borders are mobile: "*Border functions no longer tend to be constrained to the established limits of national sovereignty areas, but to be pushed back and forth, and become spatially projected, multiplied or diffused*" (Amilhat-Szary, 2013: 2). As Balibar suggests (2002), borders "vacillate", they are not only a line of demarcation but also have a multiple aspect and can appear everywhere. In Europe, the mutation of national borders raises many questions about the future of the European project. Indeed, the European context encompasses two different trends. On the one hand a de-bordering process, linked to the construction of the European Union, has for decades promoted cross-border interactions by opening up borders in order to facilitate movements across border, the development of partnerships, of the single market, and of the Schengen Area. Yet, on the other hand, a latent re-bordering, due to a many-facetted crisis (socio-economic, political and identity-based) – Jean-Claude Junker, president of the European Commission, used the phrase "polycrisis"[i] – is challenging this drive to European integration with the reestablishment of borders, and the emergence of identity closure movements. This ambivalent situation generates confusion and makes it harder to investigate the issue of borders, especially within European cross-border regions which are not only facing challenges in the organization and structuring of their spaces, but also in the building of a common cross-border living area. In this framework, the concept of 'borderscape' appears to be relevant to address and better understand the construction of cross-border areas. Indeed, this concept deals with the evolution of society in its territorialities, representations, narratives, and socio-spatial practices or experiences *at and with* the border, as well as the major changes affecting it, including transnational flows and migration (Brambilla, 2015).

Following this approach, this paper questions two particular dynamics of the borderscape: bordering and cross1-border integration. The main objective is to mobilise the representations of regional stakeholders and practitioners of cross-border initiatives and projects, in order to investigate the interplay between the significance of borders and the meaning of cross-border integration. The research is based on fieldwork conducted within the Eurometropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai, in the framework of the EU FP7 project EUBORDERSCAPES. This cross-border region is historically an area of intense cross-border trades and relations, where cross-border cooperation appears to be one of the most successful, and presumably "integrated", in Europe.

To provide an answer to the research question on this interplay, the paper pursues the following demonstration. First, a review of the current *state-of-the-art* concerning the two notions of bordering and of cross-border integration will be presented. In a second part, the research framework presents the methodology used and the case study of the Eurometropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai. Thirdly, the main results will be set out, revealing the ambivalent complexity of the representations of cross-border dynamics in this region. The last part of the paper proposes a discussion of these results and opens perspectives about the borderscape of the Eurometropolis.

1. State of the art
1.1. What does bordering mean?

From the 2000s on, the concept of bordering has emerged in relation to theories of the social construction of space and its application to the study of borders (Van Houtum & Naerssen, 2002; Newman, 2011; Scott, 2011). This concept changed the understanding of borders and their related social phenomena, and renewed perspectives in the field of border studies (Hamez et al., 2013; Amilhat-Szary & Giraut, 2015). Bordering can be defined as the on-going process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of borders through political discourse and decision-making, as well as individual and collective representations (Kolossov et al., 2012). We have but to think about the European Union's discourse and policies which, notably during the 1990s, fostered and supported the transformation of borders through cross-border cooperation initiatives. This brought about the construction and development of new socio-spatial forms and modalities of governance along European borders: cross-border regions, euro-regions, Interreg programs (Perrin, 2011).

Thus, the concept of bordering gives the possibility of grasping borders as dynamic processes and not only as static ones. "*The notion of 'bordering' suggests that borders are not only semi-permanent institutions but are also non-finalizable processes*" (Kolossov & Scott, 2013: 2). Within a bordering process, two main forms and trends are usually distinguished that shape cross-border integration dynamics (Rumford, 2006): de-bordering, which reduces the effects of a border, and re-bordering, which reinforces or reinstates border effects. .

Furthermore, we put forward the existence of a third form of bordering process, in which border effects are neither reduced nor reinforced, but simply maintained. This dynamics of a certain permanence of the border, positioned between the de-bordering and the re-bordering processes, could be named "a-bordering". The "a" prefix is intended to show a state of continuity and permanence of the border despite global changes and institutional and socio-economic evolutions in the borderscape. The a-bordering process does not refer to a static border, but rather to a status quo of the border, that is to say, the permanence of some functions and meanings of the border in time, whilst taking into account the inherent evolutions of the borderscape.

### 1.2. What does cross-border integration mean?

Cross-border integration can be described as "*a process of increasing and intensifying relations among entities that leads to the emergence and expansion of an inclusive integral whole*" (Svensson & Nordlund, 2015: 373). However, cross-border integration is seen to be an elusive concept, not

reducible to any simplistic vision (Sohn, 2014). In the academic literature, the concept of cross-border integration is both linked to interactions that have developed between territories, notably economic ones (Krätke, 1998; Anderson & Wever, 2003), and to phenomena of convergence and territorial homogenization which play a role in bringing border territories in closer contact (De Boe et al., 1999; Decoville et al., 2013). In addition, in the field of border studies, cross-border integration is generally presented in a rather linear and sequential manner (Martinez, 1994; Lundquist & Trippl, 2013), without taking possible changes into account (like the closing of a border, the hardening of relations, or the loss of mutual confidence of actors). These changes could alter and even reverse the dynamic of integration.

Furthermore, the analysis of cross-border integration remains a delicate question. This concept harbours a fundamental ambivalence about its interpretation. Cross-border interactions can result "*as much from the symmetries and similarities between border territories as from the asymmetries and existing differentials on either side of a border*" (Durand, 2015: 315). To take into account the complexity of the concept, cross-border integration can be seen as a multidimensional process characterized by the dynamics of inter-linkage. Four principal dimensions of this process can be formulated (Figure 1):

- The functional dimension, which is linked to cross-border flows. It delineates to some extent the space within which a cross-border system is functioning.
- The institutional dimension, which is characterized by the networking between actors (public or private) and by the policies and strategies implemented to cooperate.
- The structural dimension, which relates to the socio-economic and spatial characteristics of border territories, and focuses on the dynamics of convergence between them.
- Lastly, the ideational dimension, which designates a variety of more subjective elements, linked to individual and collective representations, such as the sharing of common values or references.

Figure 1: Cross-border integration, a multidimensional process

Functional dimension	Structural dimension	Institutional dimension	Ideational dimension
(to cross)	(to converge)	(to link)	(to share)
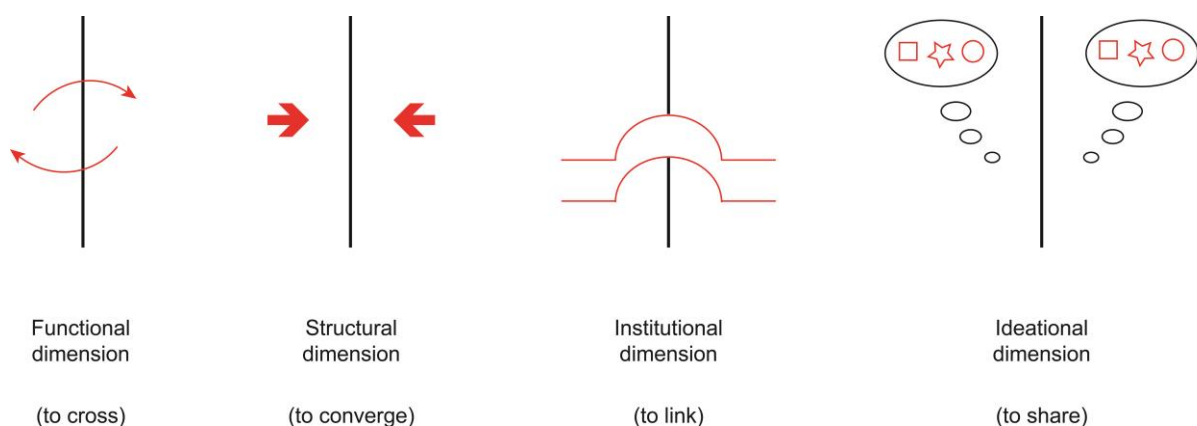
Author: Durand Frédéric, LISER, 2016

Thus, in the European context, bordering and cross-border integration appear to be key processes in the development and institutionalization of socio-spatial, cross-border initiatives and organizations. However, even though the link between these two processes can appear to be obvious *a priori*, or

logical, few works have actually addressed the interplay between bordering and cross-border integration, whereas this question can be expected to reinforce the understanding of these two phenomena.

2. Research Framework
2.1. *Methodology*

Our methodology is based on the representations of actors: what are their perceptions, views and feelings about cross-border dynamics within the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai? We used qualitative materials that were collected via a series of semi-structured interviews with local and regional stakeholders as well as practitioners of cross-border cooperation, located on either side of the French-Belgian border. The campaign of interviews was conducted between October 2014 and March 2015 and involved 28 actors (15 French, 13 Belgian), working in the political, economic, and civil society spheres. The main line of the investigation is to mobilise the discourses and insights of the interviewees in order to question and analyse the significance of both the border and of cross-border integration. To do so, we used a specific interview grid that follows this double conceptual approach.

This approach to borders is derived from structuration theory and considers the bordering dynamics through their structuring effects: constraining and enabling (Herzog & Sohn, 2014). This allows to grasp different meanings of the border. Based on this approach, we first ask the interviewees to mention up to five or six keywords that best represent their current understanding of what the French-Belgian border means to them. These keywords can relate to images, ideas or metaphors that they associate with the border. In a second step, we present them with a list of predetermined meanings related to borders (interface, resource, threat, obstacle, shelter…), after which they are asked to indicate to which predetermined meanings their keywords best refer (Table 1).

Table 1. Significance of the border

Keywords	Interface (bridge)	Resource (opportunity)	Symbolic place	Marker of identity	Shelter / refuge	Obstacle	Source of conflict	Other
1.								
2.								

As regards cross-border integration, the objective was to know the stakeholder's point of view about different phenomena that can be related to this process of integration (Table 2). We first asked them to assess the importance of each of these phenomena in their own cross-border region. We also asked them to point out which one of these phenomena they consider to be a challenge for improving cross-border integration.

*Table 2. Phenomena related to the cross-border integration process*

Dimensions of integration	List of phenomena	No existence	Weak	Moderate	Strong
Functional	N°1 – Cross-border labour market				
	N°2 – Cross-border mobility for shopping and leisure				
	N°3 – Cross-border residential mobility (i.e. people crossing the border to live on the other side)				
	N°4 – Cross-border communication and transportation networks				
Structural	N°5 – Socio-economic convergence between the two sides of the border (income, living conditions…)				
Institutional	N°6 – Cross-border planning and policies				
	N°7 – Institutionalization of cross-border cooperation				
Ideational	N°8 - Sharing of similar cultural references				
	N°9 - Sense of belonging to a cross-border region				

2.2. Case study

The French-Belgian border is a stable one (its 300 years of existence were celebrated in 2013[ii]) and can be currently characterized by its porosity. Talking about the border in the Eurometropolis of Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai also involves talking about the various possible forms a border can take. This cross-border area is defined by a multi-layer borderscape: the state border between France/Belgium, the regional border between Wallonia/Flanders/Nord-Pas-de-Calais-Picardie, and the linguistic border between the French and Dutch speaking zones. De facto, this cross-border metropolis is a complex cross-border space made up of several territories and three types of borders. For some stakeholders, the linguistic border is even more important than the national and regional borders.

The Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai is a dense cross-border conurbation of 2.1 million inhabitants (60 % France, 28 % Flanders, 12 % Wallonia), on a total area of 3550 km², located at the centre of the Brussels/London/Paris triangle. This cross-border metropolis is organised around 3 cities: Lille (France), Kortrijk (Flanders) and Tournai (Wallonia). The cross-border urban fabric is partially continuous. In France, the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai covers the inter-communal institution *Métropole européenne de Lille* (MEL). In Belgium, it extends over seven districts. In total, 147 municipalities have decided to come together in this territorial project (Figure 2).

Figure 2. Location map of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai
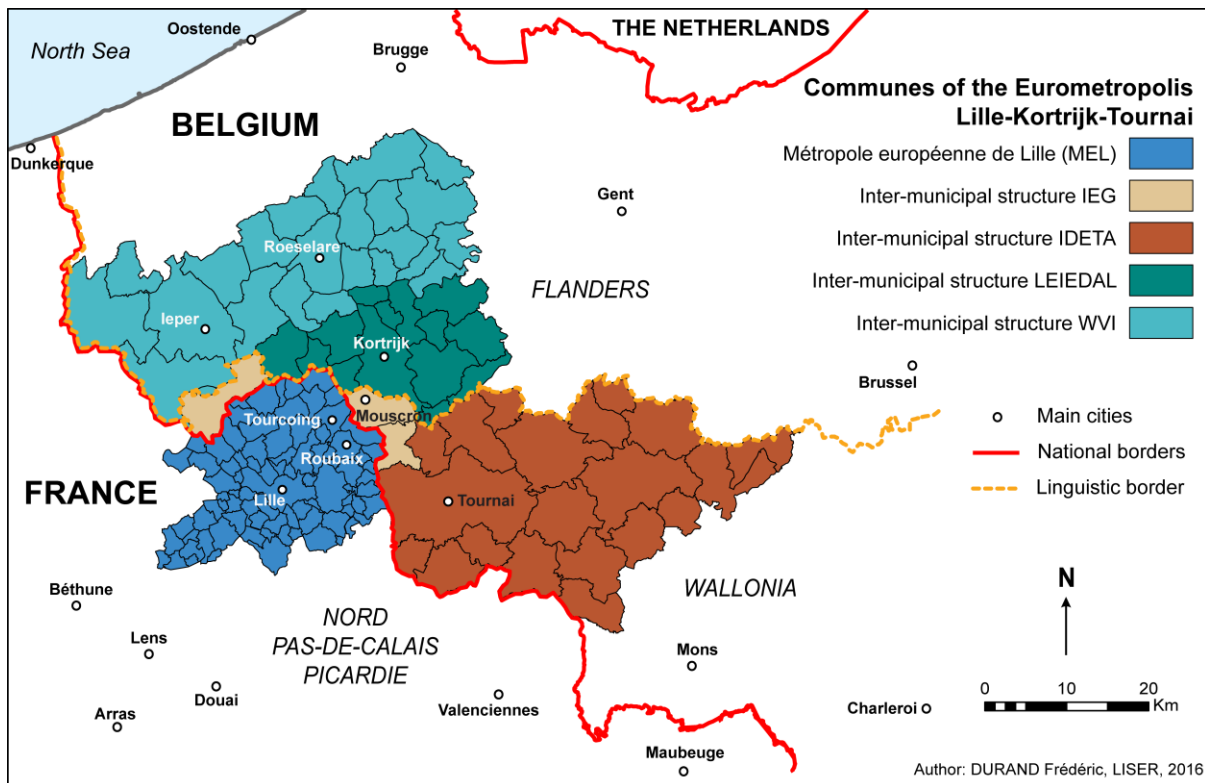
The cross-border metropolis encompasses a dense road network in the urbanized parts including two motorways. This region has a long history of cross-border contacts and interactions and the flows of cross-border workers are rooted in this history. These flows increased at the end of the 19th century for economic and industrial reasons, even though they evolved in terms of size and direction: around 100 000 Belgian workers came to work in the textile industries in Lille during the interwar period (Lentacker, 1973), although that number dropped in 1936 to 50 000 workers due to the economic crisis (INSEE, 2006). Today, the cross-border flows are still quite important (47 000 inhabitants of the *Métropole européenne de Lille* travel to Belgium daily, and 32 000 Belgians enter the conurbation of Lille each day (LMCU, 2010)).The reasons for this cross-border mobility appear to be diverse. Only a third of journeys are reported to be work or study, about a third of journeys are made for shopping and using services and the remaining third of the trips involve recreation, tourism and other activities.

At institutional level, contemporary cross-border cooperation was originally supported by local authorities. Launched during the 1990s thanks to Pierre Mauroy, mayor of Lille and former French Prime Minister, the ambition to build a cross-border metropolis, with French and Belgians actors, has strengthened the institutional links on either side of the border. A first cross-border structure was created (COPIT) in 1991 around the local initiatives (MEL, four Belgian inter-municipalities). However, the partnership quickly encountered difficulties in implementing its cross-border agenda. The primary obstacle was a lack of both financial and political capacity to follow through on collective projects, particularly when implementation required the cooperation of senior levels of government. In 2002 the French and Belgian governments signed the Brussels agreement to reduce the roadblocks to cross-border cooperation. The agreement established conventions and a legal framework for cross-border cooperation between local authorities. In addition, a French-Belgian Parliamentary Working Group was created in November 2005. This group of twelve parliamentarians was asked to identify the main

legal, legislative and regulatory obstacles limiting effective cross-border cooperation and to define conditions for institutional experimentation in the Greater Lille metropolitan area and along the Franco-Belgian border more generally. Since 2008, cross-border institutional cooperation is driven by a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) regrouping 14 partners drawn from all French and Belgian institutional levels (from local to national/federal), which initiates and orchestrates discussions between French and Belgians actors. In addition, these cross-border cooperation dynamics were bolstered by the local elites of the metropolis of Lille choosing a "European development path", particularly where planning and urban policies were concerned, and showing three milestones (Perrin, 2016).

3. Results
3.1. Border representations

Generally, the interviewed actors of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai have the feeling that the border today is more significant than before. They are aware that the border is more than just a simple line. They see the complexity of the border and its effects, the difficulties of cooperating and implementing cross-border projects.

In the results about the significance of the border, it becomes clear that a majority of local and regional stakeholders of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai primarily (and in an equivalent manner) perceive the border in three ways: as a resource, as an interface as well as a marker of identity. These results reveal a certain ambivalence in the perception of the border, somewhere between disappearance and permanence. Indeed, perceiving the border as an interface (creating a junction between people and between territories), or a resource (opportunities and benefits associated with the border), conveys a vision in which some functions of the border appear to be "*contested and constantly by-passed*" (Sohn, 2014: 594). In this vision, the border can be jointly mobilised from both sides and the delimitation and separation functions of a border disappears. At the same time, the notion of marker of identity maintains this separation-delimitation function of the border, the one that has to do with identity, cultural practices and sense of belonging. This approach is all the more interesting as the question of symbolic, or identity-providing, activities is generally associated with a process of hybridisation, convergence and, in a way, disappearance of the border so as to recreate a new "*common cross-border territorial identity*" (id.: 604). In this way, the interviewees' representations express at the same time a dynamic of de-bordering and a-bordering (cf. part 1.1). In this representational frame, stakeholders have simultaneously integrated both the disappearance and the permanence of certain functions of borders. A basic example that illustrates this vision is cross-border shopping habits. As expressed in the interviews, people wish to be able to easily cross the border, and they are happy to do so to find different – "foreign" – products on the other side.

As regards the perception of cross-border cooperation dynamics, the stakeholders conceive current cross-border cooperation as being at a new stage. In terms of politics, the stakeholders report that a new generation of leaders has been elected on the French side and also in the Flemish and Walloon parts of the Eurometropolis, mainly at the local level (mayors, burgomasters, local councillors…), which is also the crucial level in terms of involvement of the actors (Durand & Lamour, 2014). At the legal level, a new momentum was given thanks to the setting up of new cross-border organizational structures with the status of EGTC. This new frame has revitalised cross-border governance and a new

cross-border strategy has been elaborated. In addition, at policy level, a general consensus emphasizes the necessity and fruitfulness of cross-border cooperation. All local actors are convinced that the common future is to be together. Though they are aware of the fact that there is strong competition between the territories of the Eurometropolis, they will cooperate with neighbours to share public facilities and to seek complementarity between the territories. The actors try to go beyond any duality by taking advantage of the positive aspects, both of cooperation and of competition. "Coopetition" is a word that comes back very frequently in the interviews. In terms of work culture, many interviewees recognized that they had learned from their partners. They also observed a mutual influence on their ways of working. For instance, in spatial planning policies, the French tend to become more and more pragmatic and concrete in their actions, while Belgians tend to be more and more strategic in their work, and they tend to project mostly over the medium and long term.

3.2. Cross-border integration representations

As regard the issue of cross-border integration, the stakeholders' representations convey different degree of significance with respect to the four dimensions of this process (see Table 2).

- The perception of phenomena linked to the functional dimension appears mostly strong for all the actors. For the *cross-border labour market* and *cross-border shopping*, this is due to the relatively large number of people who cross the border (almost 80 000 people cross the border every day). For the *cross-border communication networks*, the reason is that the cross-border transportation services are not considered to be efficient outside the Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai triangle. In addition, Flemish people are not so concerned by the labour market and the residential mobility in relation to France. Nonetheless, Flemish economic actors seem to be interested in the French and Walloon workforce for recruitment purposes, as long as any linguistic issues can be overcome.
- The perception of phenomena related to the structural dimension is rather moderate for the French actors and weak for the Belgian ones. For the *socio-economic convergence*, it can be explained by the fact that the Flemish province is richer than the Lille region and the Walloon province of the Hainaut. These different regions are not convergent, especially regarding GDP or unemployment indicators.
- As regards the institutional dimension, the perceptions are contrasted, not to say contradictory, but all the actors have the same opinions. The *institutionalization of cross-border cooperation* is seen as strong (thanks to the long history of collaboration and the creation of the EGTC). In contrast, *cross-border planning and policies* are weak in the mind of actors (actors highlight the lack of concrete achievements and the lack of strategic and operational planning).
- With respect to the ideational dimension, the responses fluctuate more widely: the *sharing of similar references* and the *sense of belonging to a cross-border region* appear uniformly as weak for Flemish actors, whereas they are considered as more important to the Walloons and the French. We can assume this is mainly due to the different linguistic practices.

Beyond these perceptions, stakeholders point out some important challenges to the improvement of cross-border integration within the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai. The main challenges

identified concern cross-border transportation (cross-border links and services have to be improved), cross-border policies and a sense of belonging to a well-defined cross-border living area.

Speaking more generally, the interviewed actors conceive of cross-border integration in the Eurometropolis as an intensive process. The fieldwork conducted led us to consider four principal ways in which this process is perceived and understood. First, a majority of them see cross-border integration as something positive, linked with the idea of erasing borders or border effects (supposedly negative). They perceived it as a removal of the restricting aspects of the border (no obstacles toward free movement): "*It is when the border has disappeared*" / "*cross-border integration should bring about a harmonization of rules on either side of border*". It is thus related to the idea of the de-bordering process: "*You don't make any differences according to which side of the border you are on*".

Another aspect of cross-border integration is linked to the economy, which is really relevant for the cross-border metropolitan regions, since, in a globalised context, cities and metropolises compete to be attractive urban centres. In such a perspective, cross-border integration constitutes a benefit for the territorial development of the cross-border space. It is a means to create partnerships across borders, to seek economic complementarities or synergies, but also to develop the attractiveness of the Eurometropolis by providing a common labour market with increased facilities for working: "*cross-border integration means an expansion of the catchment area and trade across the border*".

Some actors think that cross-border integration is above all a grass-roots phenomenon (made by people to people interactions), but at the same time, it must be regulated: authorities must manage the cross-border flows and their spill-over effects through a cross-border collaboration which responds to the needs of citizens and businessmen. De facto, cross-border integration is related to the institutionalization of cross-border cooperation and to the achievements of common initiatives made for citizens: "*It is when there is cooperation at all levels, joint initiatives, a sharing of public facilities*".

Lastly, cross-border integration should also lead to the transcending of existing mental and cultural barriers in order to create a cross-border living area where people think that they belong to a recognized and named space. According to a stakeholder statement, "*cross-border integration is when cross-border spatial proximity is more important than national belonging*".

3.3. The Janus face of cross-border dynamics

The ambivalent and dual perception of the border on one hand, and the different levels of perception of cross-border integration on the other hand, show that various visions can coexist in the same area, expressing different and somehow contradictory outlooks on cross-border dynamics, from the creation of cross-border links to the emergence of a new polity. The fieldworks and analysis of the survey show that the actors have two main lines of representations, which can play simultaneously:

• **"Cross-border integration with the border"** expresses a "centripetal vision" of the border. The border still exists and constitutes a central element around which local and regional actors exchange and build their cross-border Eurometropolis. The border continues to be a marker of territorial

sovereignty and a marker of territorial identity. It cannot be avoided, but its interface function feeds cross-border cooperation. This cooperation aims at mutualizing resources, combining means and sharing skills: for instance the action programme of the Eurometropolis aims at fostering the learning of the neighbours' language. Moreover, coordinating the tourism offer and improving the networking of the cultural stakeholders are also means promoting existing heritage and cultural structures or events. In this realistic approach, actors insist more on the institutional nature of cross-border cooperation: the border still distinguishes two territorial systems with different rules and cultures. Cooperation across the border can develop while maintaining cultural, economic or political differences. Cross-border cooperation tries to respond via a set of initiatives and actions to the needs of citizens, businessmen and entrepreneurs.

• The results also reveal a **"cross-border integration without the border"**, which can be referred to as a "transcendant vision" of the border. This vision intends to erase the border and to facilitate cross-border activities and meetings between people within the Eurometropolis. There is a wish to delete the physical and mental barrier function of the border. In this view, cross-border cooperation aims firstly at enabling the crossing of the border by the implementation of cross-border services, by erasing all border symbols and buildings (border crossings), and secondly at providing a cross-border ideal (or a long term vision) that is deprived of the presence of the border and imagines a common future for the different populations. At empirical level, this can consist of developing a shared territorial marketing policy (e.g. participation of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai at MIPIM, one of the most important global real estate exhibitions), creating cross-border clusters (notably in textiles – innovative materials – design) or *ZOAST - Zones organisées d'accès aux soins transfrontaliers*, a special cross-border zoning that allows anyone to use the neighbouring care facility without prior permission. The construction of the Jacques Delors[iii] square, a common cross-border square of the cities of Halluin (FR) and Menen (BE), also illustrates a certain attempt at integration obliterating the border. Thus, this idealistic vision suggests a transformation of the Eurometropolis into one vast metropolitan area without borders, where there is no problem in working, living or studying wherever one wants. It provides a cross-border ideal (or a long-term vision) that is deprived of the presence of the border and that imagines a common future shared by the different populations.

4. Discussion: Evolution of representations and concrete impacts

This double representation of cross-border integration, with and without a border, raises three points in relation to the development of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai envisaged by local and regional actors: a certain paradox of cross-border integration, the specific temporality of cross-border cooperation and the balance between European and regional strategies and policies.

4.1. A certain paradox of cross-border integration

The duality of perceptions around the notion of border is particularly represented in one actor's speech on cross-border integration, which appears to him to be an oxymoron, since there is a certain opposition between the two components of the phrase: "*the term 'integration' means belonging to an integrity, while the term 'cross-border' refers to the relationship between two distinct sides*". This conception puts to the fore the dual rationale of the border-relation or even a sort of "border

schizophrenia". Indeed, one and the same person can think - without even being completely aware of it – of the cross-border integration process, both with and without border, and the one does not exclude the other. This underlines a potential simultaneity in these two different perceptions of cross-border dynamics. Yves Barel demonstrated, in his essay on the social fantastic (1979), that the apparent incompatibility between a vision and its opposite reveals the paradox of a social system, which is expressed by a double discourse or which is materialized by the implementation of a dual strategy. This paradoxical dimension of representations is thus characterized by "*a choice as well as by a refusal of choice*" (Barel, 1979: 214). This can be transposed, in the study of cross-border integration, by an ideational conception of the border's disappearance, associated with a more pragmatic approach that reminds us of the impossibility of ignoring the presence of physical and / or mental borders.

4.2. The specific temporality of cross-border cooperation

The feedback from the different actors allowed to trace back an evolution discernable in the cross-border cooperation process, following different and particular sequences. Three periods can be observed and cross-border cooperation can be seen as a learning process (Table 3).

The early 1990s was a phase that could be described as euphoric: the beginning of Interreg programs, symbolic of European integration, ideals of the blurring of boundaries, an experimental time of cooperation, building of high-speed train lines and the Channel Tunnel... This favourable context opened up unprecedented possibilities for achieving cross-border integration. But from the 2000s, actors in charge of cross-border issues began to realise all the difficulties in operationalizing and implementing cross-border projects with their neighbours. Successful projects faced different obstacles: the uncovering of legal barriers, of heavy administrative barriers, the slow pace of negotiations (Decoville and Durand, forthcoming). This evolution is close to what Knippschild mentions about the German–Polish–Czech border region: "*a certain "cooperation fatigue" among the participants has become evident*" (Knippschild, 2011: 631). In this perspective, cross-border cooperation (understood in the technical sense) may appear as a hindrance to cross-border integration, since the objectives covered by cooperation, to improve / strengthen integration, were not "achieved". In this sense, the actors who are most active in cross-border cooperation are those that face up the most to the administrative and technical discrepancies: "*Since I set up a cross-border project, I rediscovered the regulatory differences between the territories, differences in status, bottlenecks and slow administration*", contrary to people who almost never face border deadlocks when carrying out their various cross-border activities (shopping, travel and tourism, or even healthcare...). More aware now of the difficulties, but also of the opportunities that both symbolic and pragmatic cross-border integration offer, the institutional actors have a more realistic and mature attitude towards coping with the challenges and issues of the Eurometropolis project. They try to take into account the slower pace of cross-border cooperation and adapt their political agendas accordingly.

Table 3. Cross-border cooperation: a learning process

Period	Prevailing trend	Perception of cross-border cooperation (CBC) in relation with cross-border integration (CBI)
1990's	"beginners' euphoria"	CBC an opportunity to achieve CBI
2000's	"cooperation fatigue"	CBC a hindrance to CBI?
2010's	"maturity"	adaptation to CBC features, realistic vision of CBI

4.3. Representations of cross border integration, regional priorities and European programmes: challenging the identity issue at cross-border level

The perceptions of cross-border integration highlight some contradictory challenges to the policy schemes and strategies in cross-border regions, in particular with respect to the gap between the European Union's visions and objectives and the expectations and interests of the regional and local stakeholders. In this way, the analysis suggests to reconsider some of the priorities of the European programmes of territorial cooperation.

On the one hand, the varied understandings of cross-border integration and the policy priorities of the interviewees focus mostly on the functional and ideational dimensions of cross-border integration. The stakeholders include in their representations not only the importance of the ideational dimension of cross-border integration, but also the maintenance of the border as a marker of identity. On the other hand, the main EU schemes dedicated to cross-border cooperation and integration put most emphasis, not only on the functional, but also on the institutional and structural dimensions of cross-border integration. We can refer to the implementation at the regional scale of some European-wide policies, such as the Trans-European Networks policy or the Regional Policy. One must not forget that the orientations and contents of the EU programmes are determined and conditioned by the prerogatives of Member-States which, as sovereign authorities, are not really inclined to transfer or transform the symbolic-ideational and identity relation they have established with the population they govern. This situation points out the difficulty and complexity of all the debates on identity, territorialities and cooperation when it comes to European cross-border areas (Prokkola et al., 2015).

Yet it is currently acknowledged that the institutionalisation process encompasses an important symbolical-ideational dimension for stakeholders, especially in a cross-border context (Blatter, 2003). The growth capacity and the institutional legitimacy of cross-border areas and entities are particularly based on intangible, symbolic and identity-providing variables and elements (Sohn, 2014; Perrin, 2012). In this way, the importance given by stakeholders to the ideational dimension of cross-border integration raises questions as to how to foster the ideational dimension of cross-border integration in relevant European programmes. For instance, the France-Belgium Interreg programme addresses the issues of reinforcing the cross-border sense of belonging and identity by providing cross-border public services (axis 3 and 4 of Interreg IV, axis 4 of Interreg V). One can wonder whether these projects can truly provide a cross-border sense of belonging to the people, or whether there is an opposition here between an ideational requirement and a functional / structural response. If a sense of belonging and its shared symbols are essential to build a cross-border polity, how can EU programmes and schemes support such development in a context characterised by multiple, diverse and multi-level identity references? How can a sense of belonging be fostered at the cross-border scale without interfering with the will to maintain national references and prerogatives, and to respect the cultural

and identity differences (as expressed by stakeholders)? How can one build a common specificity while keeping the existing specificities?

These questions therefore seem to confirm the peculiar "in-between" nature of cross-border areas at different levels, not only the ideational one but also the territorial, geopolitical, institutional levels (Perrin, 2015). Addressing these questions can constitute a crucial challenge for cross-border regions and illustrates the European challenge – and EU motto – "Unity in Diversity" (Bufon, 2014). If cross-border regions can be considered antechambers to the territorial and ideational construction of Europe, they not only reflect the progress, but also the obstacles and hindrances to such a construction. More globally, the paradoxes of cross-border policies and strategies underline, when it comes to the ideational or symbolic level, "*the complicated constellation of identifications that people normally have* […]. *Some of these identities may be linked with a territory, some with other territories, some may be non-territorial*" (Paasi, 2009: 146). In this sense, cross-border regions often reveal a nested identity ("Russian dolls" identity), which comprehends local, regional, cross-border, national and European references.

Responses to such challenges can make cross-border regions loci for social innovation, which is one of the main objectives targeted by the EU 2020 strategy. At operational level the stakeholders' feedback suggests that European cross-border schemes and support schemes should insist on things such as living together and bringing people to sporting or cultural events as instruments for changing the representations people have of their living spaces, and this without contradicting – indeed, rather complementing – identifications and symbolic attachment at other levels. In this way, the case of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai suggests the emergence of a "post-cross-border" approach, highlighting a multi-scale sense of belonging that simultaneously preserves differences and fosters unity, an approach that could aim at resolving the equation of unity in diversity.

In this sense, this research also raises further questions about the role of the EU in creating a supranational identity referential that would respond to citizens' expectations – especially in these times of distrust towards representative democracy. Whatever the evolution of the debate on this question will be, it raises stimulating perspectives for reconsidering the meaning of EU policies: do nationalisms condemn the European project (Menasse, 2015)? Must the EU construction necessarily be based on national states (Lefebvre, 2013)?

Conclusion

The study of the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai confirms that, in the context of European construction, the border has evolved from a political and geopolitical device to a locus where new territorialities emerge, where social and economic interactions and opportunities multiply. Stakeholders' representations show this evolution of the notion of border towards a more democratised, individualised, and socialised use. More and more the residents of border regions appropriate "their" border and the dynamics attached to it. However, the current issues of security, terrorism, large-scale migrations and xenophobia – added to the lasting economic, financial and identity crisis – have deeply modified the European agenda and raise questions about open borders, in particular the Schengen system. Several institutional and academic events have begun to highlight

these current hot topics[iv]. Much political discourse and many actions have already seized the moment to condemn the Union's construction, with a growing consent from the population.

The results of the fieldwork in the Eurometropolis Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai highlight two main findings. At first, different bordering dynamics simultaneously interact, as shown by the ambivalent and dual representations of the stakeholders. Indeed, we can observe both a de-bordering process which evolves in time (interface and resource) and, in parallel, an 'a-bordering' process which persists in time (marker of identity). Additionally, the analysis puts forward the twofold conception of a cross-border integration without border, which goes beyond the border, and of a cross-border integration with border, which takes notice of the existence and prevalence of the national borders. These results suggest that the development of European borderscapes requires processes that adjust to this twofold conception, so that the maintenance of the border does not become an obstacle to cross-border integration, and that innovative schemes respond to the evolution of European societies and polities in cross-border regions. Indeed, the contradictory dynamics highlighted in this study cannot be wholly managed by sectorial programs and policies. In this sense, the launching of the Integrated Territorial Investment for the current period of the EU Regional Policy is expected to favour a more inclusive approach to the cross-border issue. However, as this paper has made clear, the ideational challenges might not be the simplest nor the least significant of the issues that will need to be addressed.

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[i] President's New Year's press conference – 15 January 2016
(http://ec.europa.eu/avservices/video/player.cfm?ref=I115044)
[ii] http://www.300ansdefrontiere.fr
[iii] Jacques Delors, former president of the European Commission (1985-1995), and father of the current mayor of Lille (Martine Aubry).
[iv] For instance, the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT) organized conferences with international partners: "Reform Schengen what impacts for border areas?" (March 2016), "Security and development: how to manage the border?" (July 2016); ESPON held a seminar "A world without borders: Refugees, cooperation and territories" (December 2015).