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EUBORDERSCAPES Newsletter

A short message from the Coordinator

Already three years into our intensive and comprehensive research agenda, the project consortium has developed several insightful perspectives on borders and their wider social implications. However, we have not been detached from or aloof to current events and their impacts. The backdrop of crisis both within the EU and in its immediate neighbourhood has certainly reinforced the perception that political, social and cultural borders have maintained their salience in many negative and problematic ways. Two are elaborated here in the form of a research brief that explores the 're-bordering' of Russia from the viewpoint of food and the food embargo elicited by the EU's economic sanctions and a short seminar report that

focuses on the Italian 'non-city' of Zingonia as a home to translocal community – and marginalized immigrant populations. Above and beyond this, we also have short reports on the second EUBORDERSCAPES conference in Israel and the completion of a partner project, EUBORDER-REGIONS, which has specifically concentrated on cross-border cooperation at the EU's external frontiers.

This update will be followed soon in our next newsletter by in-depth reports from individual work packages and new working papers. We will also keep you informed on our website about upcoming events, including a major policy conference in London to be held on 9–12 November 2015.

Research Brief

St Petersburg Under the Food Embargo: Informal Finnish-Russian Cross-Border Trade as a Coping Strategy

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Over the last decade, foodstuffs from Finland have become an integrated part of everyday diet for many residents of St Petersburg and North-West Russia as a whole. In the St Petersburg foodscape, groceries produced in Finland are constructed by sellers and consumers not only as healthy and tasty food, but also as a symbol of good, healthy, high-quality European life. We can say that consumption of Finnish products has become an identity-forming practice and an indicator of social status.

Much has been written about the social meanings and functions of food; many social scientists have recognized food as something more than just nutrition. Lévi-Strauss noticed that food 'must not only be good to eat, but also good to think'; Bourdieu (1984) pointed out 'that social

stratification and class are defined by taste'. Arjun Appadurai (1981) argued that behind one's everyday diet, we can see the intention 'to mark and create relations of equality, intimacy or solidarity or, instead, to uphold relations signalling rank, distance or segmentation'.¹ Thus, consumer choice of food firmly coheres with one's individual and group identity. For instance, in TV commercials, social and symbolic contexts of food frequently play a more important role than its gastronomic or quality characteristics, which makes a consumer associate certain food with a particular lifestyle and social status. Our interviews with Russian tourists on shopping trips to Finland allow to assume that purchasing groceries produced in Europe is not only about buying trustworthy and tasty products; in many instances, it is also about the construction of 'Europeanness' in one's household against the background of Russia's realities.

¹'Eating yourself: We consume identity through food?', CULTURE DECANTED blog, 19 October 2014.

The ban on the import of European food products, introduced by the Russian government in the summer of 2014 as a countermeasure in response to the European sanctions, has significantly changed the structure of supply on the local food market and problematized the food sector. Food in all its qualities, including not only its gastronomic characteristics and costs but also its 'nationality', has become conversation fodder for average middle-class consumers. In the present article, we touch upon changes brought by the food embargo to St Petersburg and look more closely at residents' strategies of coping with the new food reality, focusing in particular on the role of Finland, Finnish goods and informal cross-border trade.

The disappearance of Western products along with the absence of domestic goods of the same or at least comparable quality has become the most noticeable consequence of the sanctions regime for average Russians. Obviously, the large majority of citizens probably did not spot dramatic changes, though everybody, regardless of region of residence, social class and structure of consumption, noticed the increased prices for food items. Nevertheless, in St Petersburg, where the share of foreign products is usually high and consumers are used to a large variety, changes are striking. Demanding buyers were surprised to find themselves in a new, unfamiliar food environment, characterized by the lack of well-known foreign groceries, and plenty of first attempts at import substitution, such as 'Russian mozzarella' or 'Belorussian Jamón'. Obviously, the present situation is far from being critical, there is no famine and not even the shortages of Soviet times with queues and ration stamps. Nevertheless, as our observations and self-ethnography have shown, the current situation does create noticeable discomfort for many people and presents a subject for reflection and public debate.

Just like any changes, but especially the ones happening in such an important and essential area as food, adaptation to the new food reality brings up a wide range of emotions. Our daily observations and pilot research on internet blogs show that attitudes towards the situation in the food sector correlate with one's political views and opinions about the current political situation. Two axes, a patriotic and oppositional, frame the emotional space of reaction to the new food reality. The former is illustrated by statements such as 'We can survive without these foreign products', 'We've seen worse times, we're used to this', 'We won't surrender to the Americans' or 'Our dairy products are none the worse'. The latter reveals itself through utterances such as: 'Because of one person's ambitions, the whole nation is suffering' or 'Russian cheese is awful and too expensive'. While in practice consumer behaviour is most probably determined by economic factors

and a price-quality ratio rather than by political attitudes, the sphere of food becomes so emotionally charged that thorough research of today's situation in St Petersburg will certainly reveal examples of gastronomic patriotism or dissidence and other means of expressing one's political position through food.² In everyday conversations and in the cityscape, we have encountered different reactions to the sanctions and the geopolitical situation in general. Here is, for instance, a commercial banner in front of a small café near Udelnaya Metro Station in the North of St Petersburg, which appeared in the Fall of 2014: 'We feed everyone except Barack Obama'.



A sign of food defiance in St. Petersburg: 'Here we serve everyone except Barack Obama.' (© Authors)

²A number of studies show how the economic, political or military situation in the international arena can influence consumer behaviour. Consumers, following their patriotic convictions as well as negative attitudes towards the 'enemy' state, can consciously choose domestic products over foreign ones, even when convinced of the superior quality of the latter (Klein: 2002). In the literature, such consumer behavior is referred to as 'ethnocentric consumerism' (Shimp and Sharma: 1987).

While food has become a political issue, there has been no sharp politization of this subject; or, to put it differently, the absence of food from the West, a certain transformation of eating habits or rising food prices do not incite people to take to the streets. In the stores, there is plenty of food, produced in Russia or by Russia's food allies, so in most cases living under the embargo is not a matter of life or death (although people with special dietary needs may face serious difficulties when trying to find substitutes for previously imported special products).

Being deprived of habitual imported goods, the population of St Petersburg copes with this situation along the lines of two main strategies. The *first strategy* is an exploration of the new food reality, characterized by attempts to find substitutes for habitual trustworthy brands and to compose a new household foodscape that follows the contours of Russia's domestic supply. As it turns out, this strategy, mostly based on trial and error, is fraught with disappointment and additional expenses. If a consumer is dissatisfied with the quality of the product, he or she will not use it and will have to throw it away. Russia's new foodscape is forcibly patriotic, as it includes goods which for the most part are made in Russia or by supplier countries 'allied with Russia', notably the Republic of Belarus as the main (food) ally. Strangely enough, Belarus has become a place that now imports sanctioned goods and re-labels them 'Made in Belarus' before re-exporting them to Russia. Norwegian salmon imported to Russia under a Belarusian brand is probably the most humorous example of this.³ Recently, Russian consumers also made closer acquaintance with food items from Serbia, Argentina, Israel and other suppliers who have not embraced the sanctions.

The *second strategy* consists of attempts to preserve the old outlines of the household foodscape under conditions when the 'outside' foodscape is unrecognizable and falls apart at the seams. This strategy is typical for those householders whose pattern of consumption during the pre-crisis period included a larger share of high-quality and expensive products with European brands, including goods imported from Finland. In line with this strategy, there are two main scenarios.

The *first scenario* relates to the purchase of products produced in Russia but under well-known Western brands. The most vivid example of this is the case of Valio. In 2013–14, the Valio corporation became one of the largest suppliers of cheese and other dairy products for the Russian market. Before the imposition of the embargo, about 20 % of Valio's trade turnover fell on Russia, and about 90 % of all Valio products sold in Russia were imported from Finland. The embargo on exports from Finland, which was among the countries that supported anti-Russian sanctions, brought huge losses to the corporation. On the Russian consumers' side, the disappearance of Valio goods from store shelves became one

of the most unpleasant 'disturbances'. As one interviewee remarked, 'I simply don't know what to buy now'. Valio products vanished but then reappeared in January 2015, accompanied by an advertising campaign with the slogan 'The yoghurts are back!' This happy return was the consequence of a significant expansion of Valio's production in Russia. The Valio management had come up with this plan to maintain customers' loyalty and to reduce losses.⁴ However, one discerning consumer, though glad that Valio is back, still noted that 'the taste was not the same'. Thus, consumption of products made in Russia under Western brands is perceived as a forced compromise and accepted with strong reservations.

The *second scenario* relates to the commitment to 'authentic' products, that is those produced in the country of the brand's origin. Even though the food embargo went hand in hand with a rapid devaluation of the ruble in the Fall of 2014 and Winter of 2015, people have been willing to pay more just to preserve the habitual composition of their food baskets or at least some basic items, which 'one just can't live without'. One of these products is cheese. A lot of people, regardless of income and social position, have noticed the lack of good-quality cheese; Internet fora are full of lamentations and requests to recommend a good local cheese – 'cheese that is at least eatable' – but obviously local producers do not yet live up to the desired standard. So cheese brought from abroad has become a delicacy, a valuable gift and a treat on the table.

In St Petersburg, maintaining the 'old food reality', untouched by the embargo, becomes possible thanks to the city's location near the border and its closeness to Europe (i.e. Finland and Estonia). It is thus possible to build a parallel foodscape saturated with embargo goods without leaving the city. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the trade of goods from Finland, especially foodstuffs, has become a widespread phenomenon. Before the embargo, one could find Finnish products in large supermarkets and semiformal random kiosks, retail stands or small private shops, run by single persons who act as drivers and sellers. A large variety of these kiosks, shops and stands, labeled 'Goods from Finland', can be found in the most unexpected places of St Petersburg: a stand in the hall of a paediatric polyclinic or an improvised hawker's tray in the foyer of the city court. Indeed, with the disappearance of Finnish products from supermarkets in the Autumn of 2014, the informal segment of the Finnish goods trade not only remained but even strengthened its market position, taking on the burden of meeting the needs of St Petersburg residents yearning for 'sanctions' goods. The influence of the galloping ruble-euro exchange rates and the tightening of the Russian customs regime on the informal segment of the Finnish goods retail trade is a subject for a separate study. According to the present customs regulations, an individual is allowed to import to Russia

³K. Romanova 'Losos po-belorusski', *gazeta.ru*, 22 September 2014.

⁴A. Ponomarev 'Valio sokhranit prsutstvie v Rossii', *slon.ru*, 8 August 2014.

a maximum of five kilos of plant products and five kilos of heat-treated animal products in their original packaging, and no more than fifty kilos of goods overall. At the border, the final decision remains with the customs officer, who may conclude that the imported goods are actually meant for resale in Russia and therefore tax or confiscate them. Since the embargo entered into force, the Russian media and customs have regularly reported on cases of smuggling and confiscation, followed by the return to Finland of large consignments of prohibited goods brought in by private travellers. However, there seem to be ways around these customs regulations, as private shops and stands with Finnish goods are still in business, offering an ever wider range of products.

The food embargo has also stimulated a formalization of the Finnish goods informal trade. For instance, the organization and structure of an Internet shop called 'The First Market for Finnish Goods' strongly resembles those of the informal private retail stands described above. At a first glance, the main differences are in the variety of goods offered and the possibility to buy or preorder straight from the website, instead of from a retail stand. More importantly, the unlimited advertising space available to an Internet shop contrasts with that of a real stand selling Finnish goods and occupying a tiny little corner; it allows to be eloquent about the merits of the offered products: 'For those who take care of their health and quality of life, as well as of the health and well-being of their loved ones, our company offers high-quality products and household goods from Finland.' Small stands usually get along without long texts – sellers rely, and rightly so, on the implicit local knowledge and expect that in St Petersburg the sign 'Goods from Finland' speaks for itself, as local residents, even without entering, can understand what range of goods is presented inside. A webpage also allows for a precise division into categories, just as in a big supermarket. Arrangements in smaller shops are more haphazard – coffee is shelved with coffee, tea with tea, and everything that requires cold storage can be found in a fridge – without any particular signage. In these grocery 'jungles', where a counter of two to three square meters is filled with everything from salmon and Valio cheese to Fairy dish soap and clothing, customers often have to search for what they require, for the familiar, the unknown and the interesting items.

The modern and stylish interface of the online shop is designed to prove that this is a serious business, unlike the usual neighbourhood retail stand. In addition, the website published a schedule for its deliveries and information about the ongoing embargo. It can be presumed that this stylish online shop is relying on a number of cross-border shuttle operators who bring in products from Finland informally in their own vehicles without

paying customs at the border. It is also possible that the drivers take people to Finland for free, so that they can assign extra weight to their passengers and import bigger quantities of goods. The phone number of the online shop suggests that the 'office' of The First Market for Finnish Goods is located in St Petersburg, but the business also does deliveries to Moscow. This is how this partly formalized but still informal economics of the borderlands helps demanding consumers 'survive' during the food embargo.

In addition to those who fulfil their demand for Finnish products through intermediaries, there remains a significant segment of the St Petersburg metropolitan area's population that has not been ready to give up the joys of traveling and independent shopping in Finland. In recent years, trips to Finland, particularly to the border cities of Lappeenranta and Imatra, have become a widespread practice and are part of everyday life for many citizens of the Russian North-West. According to the Finnish statistical agency TAK, a record-breaking 5.2 million Russian tourists visited the country in 2013. According to the same source, 80 % of all Russian respondents (n = 3500) at the border named shopping as the main reason for their trip to Finland.⁵ One-day shopping trips combined with so called taking-out-a-visa-for-a-ride trips have become especially popular among residents of St Petersburg.⁶

Buying food is the most popular type of shopping among Russian tourists, along with purchases of household chemicals and, to a lesser extent, clothes and special items such as winter tires and car oil. Russians who makes these kind of trips to Finland can be divided into two categories. The first includes those who are shopping there on a regular basis (approximately once a month) and who try to store a certain type of Finnish products at home. For them visiting the Finnish borderland is like going to a shopping mall on the outskirts of St Petersburg. For the second category, shopping in Finland is an additional joyful bonus to a trip made for different purposes, e.g. 'taking out a visa for a ride' or vacation. Even a tourist indifferent to shopping is familiar with the most popular Finnish goods (cheese, coffee, chocolate, salmon, Fairy). Among experienced travellers there is a strong perception that Finnish products, unlike their Russian equivalents, are of high quality, taste better or have some other distinguishing characteristic (sustainability, safety, reliability), in addition to offering a better price-quality ratio, especially when discounts and the VAT refund are taken into account. These perceptions about better quality (and the quality-price ratio) develop not only from pragmatism and consumer experience, but also from the joyful emotions associated with shopping abroad. These beliefs are one of the main factors that motivate people to go on these after all rather exhausting day trips.

⁵TAK Rajatutkimus 2013 'Venäläiset matkailijoina Suomessa', April 2014.

⁶The expression "taking out a visa for a ride" designates a common practice among the residents of St Petersburg to make a trip just for the sake of crossing the border and obtaining a Finnish border stamp for the passport to show that the visa has been used for its intended purpose of travelling to Finland and not to any other Schengen country, as is often the case.

A closer look at shopping practices in Finland and the predilections of St Petersburg residents reveals new aspects and depths of this seemingly utilitarian phenomenon. On a popular internet forum for St Petersburg parents, people actively discuss trips to Finland and shopping in particular. The main list of the topic 'What yum-mies do you bring from Finland?' represents a map of the Finnish food world, with well-known main 'cities' such as Valio butter or Oltermanni cheese next to unfamiliar, but surely worthy of trying 'towns' and 'villages' such as *leipäjuusto* or spinach fitters. As our interviews show, research on Finnish food can become a self-sufficient project and the foundation for building ties with the country. Among travellers, there are many enthusiastic food explorers who buy basic products on their shopping list, but are always ready to 'try a new jar of something' and really enjoy their gastronomic discoveries.

In December 2014, many Russians were horrified by the rapid devaluation of the ruble – the exchange rate for the euro doubled – and this was very disheartening for those who were used to frequent trips abroad, and particularly to Finland. Moreover, in the midst of the general escalation of the political situation, concepts of food shortages reminiscent of Soviet times and the Iron Curtain resurfaced at a time when they had seemingly sunk into oblivion. When the opportunity for travelling abroad was challenged, people felt that the world they had become familiar with and the freedom of movement were threatened by the construction of new boundaries. Dietary restrictions as a result of the sanctions and the increased exchange rate for the euro became surprisingly painful for many Russians. The right to choose food in the Russian context, where memories of shortages are still very much alive, proved to be a very important issue. Under these conditions, trips to Finland acquired a new special quality.

While many Russians, including residents of St Petersburg, live without ever having Finland on their mind, there is a large category of people for whom proximity and accessibility to Finland has become a factor that significantly changed their life and lifestyle. For them Finland in one respect or another has become an integrated component of the everyday, an important part of their individual geography and explored world, particularly in the gastronomic sense, which recently has been threatened.

Epilogue

With the rising value of the ruble, this Spring looks more optimistic in terms of cross-border mobility than the past Autumn and Winter. Whereas in January and February of this year there was a dramatic decrease of border-crossings, people were getting used to the higher ruble prices and finishing off old supplies of Finnish products at home, the appreciation of the ruble in March made fans of Finland and Finnish food more optimistic. In a situation of high inflation in Russia and deflation on some products (including cheese and other dairy products) in Finland, food prices on both sides of the border have started to even out. On Saturday, 21 March, the Border Office at the crossing point of Nuijamaa, close to the popular shopping destination of Lappeenranta, registered a record number of border-crossers for 2015 (10,700), to be even surpassed on the following weekend.⁷ Everyone sighed with relief – Russian tourists are back! In April the ruble continued to appreciate, a trend that will undoubtedly influence the cross-border mobility of Russians, and consequently their diet.

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Dissemination Seminar THINKING + ACTING + INHABITING ZINGONIA

by CHIARA BRAMBILLA
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The University of Bergamo has launched an EUBORDERSCAPES Dissemination Seminar Series on *THINKING + ACTING + INHABITING ZINGONIA. Policies, Practices, Experiences and Representations of a Borderscape between the Local and the Global*. The central aim of the series is to present a case study of Zingonia, a suburban area of the Province of Bergamo, which has been a major research focus in EUBORDERSCAPES Work Package 5 'Post-Colonial Bordering and Euro-African Borderscapes'.



Chiara Brambilla and Gianluca Bocchi from the Bergamo team discussing the original plans of Zingonia with local residents

Zingonia was founded in the 1960s as a model industrial town by the entrepreneur Renzo Zingone. Its industrial areas were almost all constructed in the early years of the project, but its population did not increase as expected, and the project was scaled down in the early 1970s. This imbalance led to the degradation of the area, which caused a drop in real estate prices that, together with the high number of firms and their strong demand for labour, attracted many migrants to Zingonia. At first, in the 1970s, the migrants came from the southern part of Italy, and later, in the 1980s, the number of foreign migrants greatly increased as well. Foreign workers – mainly from Africa, and particularly from Senegal – have gradually taken the place of Italians and now constitute approximately 70 per cent of Zingonia's total population, transforming it into a 'space of exception' within Italy. Zingonia has become a landmark along the expanded routes of many Senegalese migrants in Italy. Zingonia has been socially constructed as a shared spatial reference for them.

However, although these transformations have changed Zingonia's social and structural make-up, the

expectation to create a modern town has never been fulfilled. Further, the eye-catching presence of foreign migrants in the zone has contributed to the creation and spread of a negative image of the area, which is mostly regarded as a deprived suburban neighbourhood 'conquered' by migrants – a dangerous place to be avoided. One of the dominant political orientations in Italy and the debate in the national and local media have diffused such a negative idea of Zingonia that it is often labelled in public opinion as a border ghetto.



Kamà Abdou Samath of the residents' organisation 'Torri Zingone' and Chiara Brambilla open the seminar.

Among the main reasons for the failure of Zingone's dream is Zingonia's location, notably the fact that it is divided between five different urban municipalities: Boltiere, Ciserano, Osio Sotto, Verdello and Verdellino. Because Zingonia has never been declared as a municipality and is still divided into pieces within five towns is one of the main determinants of the area's border ghetto situation. Zingonia does not even exist on topographical maps of the zone; this implies that the area is considered as a sort of no-man's land. This territorial isolation of Zingonia is the primary factor that produces a prevalent mono-image of the area as a border ghetto. The discourse of fear and crime propagated by political and media discourses and the search for a 'secure community' by those who escape Zingonia legitimize and rationalize residential segregation (*i.e.* by ethnicity, race or class) in the urban environment. This suggests that the discourse of urban fear encodes other social concerns, thereby producing racialized boundaries as internal social categorizations in which migrants are reminded of their foreign origin. However, the mostly voluntary concentration of foreign migrants in Zingonia should not necessarily create a ghetto. Civil society in Zingonia and the surrounding towns has reacted to this negative representation of the area: a number of demonstrations have been orga-

nized by local movements of activists to protest against stereotyping Zingonia as a ghetto.

Within this framework, the aim of the Seminar Series has been to propose a Foucauldian ‘problematization’ of Zingonia, by bringing together actors who are thinking, acting or inhabiting Zingonia, depending on the case. Adopting the borderscape notion as a key conceptual and methodological angle of enquiry, the seminars have been intended to explore the area of Zingonia as a translocality between the local and the global, inhabited by a multiplicity of cultures, as well as a site where complex visible and hidden interactions between external political-territorial borders (that are related to the exercise of modern state sovereignty) and the production of boundaries as internal social categorizations (that are related to politics of identity) can be critically investigated.

The seminars have been held in Italian in order to allow the team of the University of Bergamo to share the outcomes of research activities within the EUBORDERSCAPES project with different local actors who are thinking, acting or inhabiting Zingonia and to gain significant insights through discussion.

The first seminar was held at the University of Bergamo on 28 November 2014. It was planned as a half-day event including two parts: in the first part, the programme included brief talks by ‘key actors’ who are thinking, acting or inhabiting Zingonia; in the second part focus-group activities were organized with actors invited

to the Seminar as privileged and experienced witnesses (for more information see *here*).

The second seminar was held on 10 April 2015 at a civic centre in Boltiere (BG), that is one of the five urban municipalities between which the territory of Zingonia is divided. A priority was indeed to move the seminar series from the university building to the territory of Zingonia in order to enhance the potentialities of action research. During the seminar, focus-group activities were organized with actors invited to the seminar as privileged and experienced witnesses with the aim of identifying, through group discussion, some clusters of themes, which regard relevant issues to think, act and inhabit Zingonia. Specifically, focus-group activities aimed at reflecting on possible ways to operationalize such clusters of themes by discussing possible ways to translate them into good practice and feasible actions.

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Billboard advertising Zingonia in the 1960s (Z! Zingoniamonamour archive).

The Second EUBORDERSCAPES Conference on ‘Borders at the Interface’, 8–11 December 2014, Beer-Sheva (Israel)

BGU organized and hosted the conference and workshop ‘Borders at the Interface’ during the second week of December 2014 (8–11 December). The conference was a result of productive cooperation between the FP7 consortium on Euroborderscapes, the newly founded Geopolitics Chair at Ben-Gurion University, along with three dynamic research centres at BGU, the Herzog Center for Middle Eastern Studies, the Center for the Study of European Politics and Society (CSEPS) and the Tamar Golan Center for African Studies.



Conference at the Ben-Gurion University at Beer-Sheva.

In its geopolitical context, Israel is located at the interface of three major regions – Europe, Asia and Africa. The region itself is the interface of cultures and the world’s great monotheistic religions, partly explaining the fact that it continues to be one of the world’s largest geopolitical shatterbelts and the focus for ethnic, religious and territorial conflict. Against the backdrop of Israel’s unique



The Jordan River, the border and vicissitudes of cross-border water management. Discussion of the ‘Good Water Neighbours’ with members of Friends of the Earth Middle East.

context, the conference sessions dealt with contemporary border research in Asia, Europe and the Middle East, alongside sessions that were fully devoted to discussions

about Israel’s borders and its relationship with Europe and its Arab neighbours (for the full programme of the conference, see [here](#)).



The Jordan River as a border and baptism site.

The conference incorporated two days of tours to Israeli border areas. On 9 December, conference participants visited the Israel–Jordan border and began the tour at the southern point of the Kinneret Lake (Sea of Galilee). An expert from Friends of the Earth Middle East (FoEME) introduced the participants of the conference to the complex geopolitical and environmental issues that impact the region’s transboundary environmental resources through an in-depth look at the Jordan River Valley. Throughout the tour, the FoEME guide highlighted how sustainable management of the region’s natural resources can serve as a catalyst towards wider peacemaking efforts and how cooperative management frameworks can be part of a future settlement between Israel and Palestine. During the tour, participants visited



Renen Yezersky and David Newman discussing details of the conference programme.

several sites including: the old Gesher (the southern entrance to the Jordan River); the village Auja and the Eco-Center there; and Kaser El-Yahud. The group traveled

back to Beer-Sheva through the Dead Sea road and completed the day with a viewing of the movie 'The Syrian Bride'.

On the last day of the conference (11 December), participants took part in a field trip organized by 'Ir Amim' focusing on the separation barrier in Jerusalem. Ir Amim's study tours provide a ground-level exposure to East Jerusalem, creating a platform for critically assessing the notion of Jerusalem as the 'eternal, undivided capital of Israel' and understanding the city's fundamental role in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The field trip included stops at East Jerusalem neighbourhoods and utilized key observation points to provide the context for understand-

ing how developing facts on the ground impact the future of a secure, democratic Israeli state. The tour focused on Israeli policy related to the separation barrier, government construction plans in East Jerusalem, Israeli settlements and national parks built in the heart of Palestinian neighbourhoods, the legal status of East Jerusalem residents and policies impacting the Palestinian community. During the tour, participants visited numerous sites including: the separation barrier between the Jewish neighbourhood Gilo and the city of Bethlehem; the Har Homa neighbourhood; Palestinian neighbourhoods Umm Tuba and Sur Baher; Goldman Promenade, Armon Hanatziv; the separation barrier in Abu Dis; and Mount Scopus.

After Four Years EUBORDERREGIONS Comes to an End

The 'sister' project of EUBORDERSCAPES, EUBORDERREGIONS, completed in February 2015 four years of intensive investigation of local cooperation along the European Union's external borders. Eleven case studies were involved, giving evidence of complex and highly differentiated relationships across the EU's external borders. What we see is that, with very few exceptions, border regimes and geopolitical contexts limit the potential significance of cross-border cooperation (CBC) – and this despite the fact that the EU has continued to argue the importance of CBC. At the same time, our fieldwork documents quite clearly show that there are considerable and as yet unexploited potentials for border regions through cooperation. Furthermore, this applies not only to the most dynamic regions in terms of economic exchange, investment and tourism. Rather than seeing CBC as a short-term exercise, the development of trust built around networks of actors and local communities – the basic prerequisite for successful CBC – needs time to experiment and develop.

Research in the field was designed to provide a holistic picture of regional development situations at the external border as well as to involve local organizations and actors in elaborating potential scenarios of future development in conjunction with cross-border interaction. We have understood these regions as interfaces between different development dynamics, policy framework and scales of cross-border interaction. As part of its contribution to scientific and policy debate, EUBORDERREGIONS has therefore raised the question of whether and in what ways the concept and policy process of Cohesion might be applicable to the conditions prevalent at the EU's external borders. The areas at the external borders are large territories that will have both a stake in and impacts on the future of economic, social and territorial cohesion within the EU as well. However, in these cases, the question of Cohesion cannot be divorced from "Neighbourhood" and the structuring conditions of border regimes, bilateral relations with neighbouring states, geopolitical contexts and the quality of social interaction across the border. We

have thus situated local development issues in selected borderlands within wider perspectives of an emerging European neighbourhood that goes beyond more territorially restricted notions of European Cohesion.

In terms of the potential future impacts of the project, one of the most significant has been to sharpen academic debate on cross-border cooperation based on pragmatic assessments of the contextual framings and potentialities of CBC. Reviewing the present state of the art, much scholarly work on CBC is often characterised by highly abstract socio-political theorisation and philosophical positions that skirt issues of every day cooperation practice. Indeed, there has been a tendency to marginalise CBC as an area of academic research in favour of critical reflections on borders as such. While important in terms of conceptual development of the field, such positions are not helpful as guides for action. EUBORDERREGIONS research, its output as well as forthcoming publications and post-project seminars has combined a sophisticated level of theoretical abstraction with on-the-ground empirical work informed by local stakeholders.

Based on fieldwork and interaction with stakeholders our research has raised a number of issues of particular policy relevance, including:

1. A better understanding the border as a resource. It is clear that national contexts and the gaps between them still very much influence policy-oriented behaviours at the national and subnational levels. As a result we have observed in EUBORDERREGIONS that stakeholders generally affirm the desirability of CBC but that actual implementation remains patchy.
2. Critically interpreting CBC as filling gaps in Cohesion and Neighbourhood Policies. Our research reflects tensions between realist regional policy concerns related to national development and more idealistic policy imperatives that seek to create alternative, border-transcending territorial contexts for regional policy.

3. Highlighting the dilemma of 'hard' versus 'soft' development factors. The one-sided focus on 'hard' factors and physical investment is problematic. CBC is highly networked, and 'soft' in nature: it is about developing social capital and trust.
4. Emphasising the role of civil society actors. Civil society needs to be a more important part of the ENP-Cohesion-CBC nexus. This is a rather long-term concern and reflects the problem that, despite rhetorical assurances to the contrary, actors that represent societal and community issues have very limited access to opportunity structures of CBC promotion.
5. There are huge gaps between local level needs and interests and (geo)politics that governs the management of borders. Rarely do border communities have the political and economic influence to negotiate special border regime conditions with central government agencies. However a degree of local control can be achieved through local networks that create bridges across hard borders.
6. New forms of data collection are needed for policy purposes that focus on social, immaterial, non-quantifiable and networked nature of territorial relations.

The policy-oriented results of EUBORDERREGIONS thus support the notion that cooperation must be based on partnership rather than just conditionality. However, the general atmosphere of economic, fiscal, political and social crisis has contributed to a lack of vision of neighbourhood. Additionally, the EUBORDERREGIONS team asked the question whether, given the very complex nature of EU-Neighbourhood relations, there should be a geographical fixation with border regions and border proximity. CBC could also take place as networks between cities and regions, regardless of location, and these could become a major focus of ENPI funding. There is a need to allow social agents and actors a greater voice in the regional cooperation process of building a viable Neighbourhood.

Another significant impact of EUBORDERREGIONS was sustained interaction with stakeholders, both as part of empirical work as well as more direct policy-oriented activities. During the life of EUBORDERREGIONS, civil society actors, business organisations as well as local and regional government representatives were interviewed, consulted and involved in stakeholder seminars. As a result, the research consortium was able to conduct research that closely reflected working reality and everyday concerns at the border.

For more information visit the programme's website [here](#).

Recent EUBORDERSCAPES Publications

Arieli, Tamar (2015) 'Municipal Cooperation. Across Securitized Borders in the Post-Conflict Environment: The Gulf of Aqaba', *Territory, Politics, Governance*, 5 June 2015, doi: 10.1080.21622671.2015.1042026.

Peninsula', *Cultural Geographies*, 4 September 2014, doi: 10.1177.1474474014547336..

Book

Ferrer-Gallardo, Xavier, Albet-Mas, Abel and Espiñeira, Keina (2014) 'The borderscape of Punta Tarifa: Concurrent Invisibilisation Practices at Europe's Ultimate

McCall, Cathal (2014) *The European Union and Peacebuilding. The Cross-Border Dimension*, Palgrave Studies in European Union Politics, London: Palgrave MacMillan..

Conversation in Space and Society

By clicking on this paragraph you'll be forwarded to a conversation on 'iBorder, Borderscapes, Bordering' between two EUBORDERSCAPES members – Holger Pötzsch and Chiara Brambilla – that has been just posted

on the Environment and Planning D: Society & Space open site, following up on Holger's iBorders article in EPD.