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To cite this article: Frédéric Durand, Antoine Decoville & Robert Knippschild (2017): Everything All Right at the Internal EU Borders? The Ambivalent Effects of Cross-Border Integration and the Rise of Euroscepticism, *Geopolitics*, DOI: [10.1080/14650045.2017.1382475](https://doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1382475)

To link to this article: <http://dx.doi.org/10.1080/14650045.2017.1382475>



Published online: 20 Oct 2017.



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Everything All Right at the Internal EU Borders? The Ambivalent Effects of Cross-Border Integration and the Rise of Euroscepticism

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ABSTRACT

The policy of the European Union, which promotes a vision of Europe without borders and has fostered the development of cooperation across borders over 25 years, has led, in some parts of Europe, to the emergence of so-called integrated cross-border regions. Thus far, the increase of cross-border flows and interactions has always been a normative and almost unquestioned policy paradigm. However, tendencies of re-bordering and signs of growing Euroscepticism can also be observed nowadays in these border regions, which show the importance of investigating the negative externalities that can be generated by cross-border integration. This article attempts to do this by focusing on three case studies usually considered as among the most integrated ones in Europe because of cross-border flows related to work: the cross-border metropolitan regions of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg. Our findings show that if several decades of cross-border integration have led to the reinforcement of the functional linkages between the border regions, some effects of the cross-border integration process have also created a functional specialisation of space that relies on social and economic inequalities. Such a situation contradicts the ideal of cross-border territorial cohesion and helps to better understand the rise of Euroscepticism in some of the border areas.

Introduction

A number of reports or articles apprehend the notion of cross-border integration through purely quantitative measures, such as the number of cross-border commuters (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière (MOT) 2004; European Commission, DG Employment and Social Affairs 2009; Krätke 1999), assuming that these indicators can somehow estimate the level of Europeanisation achieved within the different European border areas.¹ However, these measurement tools cannot embrace the complexity, the diversity and the paradoxes that the opening of borders generates with respect to border practices and

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perceptions. In border regions, more than elsewhere, the political construct of Europe concretely affects daily life either in a positive or a negative way. As Kuhn says, 'in contrast to people living in core regions, for whom European integration might be still a more abstract and remote process, residents of border regions experience European integration on a daily basis' (Kuhn 2011, 95). Observing the cross-border areas that constitute both margins and interfaces and which embody the ideals of the European project (as well as its weaknesses) allows to shed light on the ambivalent effects of cross-border integration on space and society. Indeed, while the normative discourse supported by the European institutions for the last 25 years has mostly emphasised the supposed benefits of the cross-border integration process (Wassenberg and Reitel 2015), it has also ignored some of its negative effects.

The objective of this article is to highlight the diversity of the consequences that European integration can have on border regions, and to illustrate that the effects of the cross-border integration process are complex, sometimes unexpected, and should therefore be apprehended in a less normative way than is usually the case in EU rhetoric. McLaren has shown that 'for some Europeans – particularly the elites of society – the integration project may present countless opportunities to draw upon one's skills and finances. For the vast majority of Europeans, however, contemplating the specific benefits – or costs – of integration is likely to be difficult, [...] non-elite groups do indeed fail to detect any personal benefits or costs of integrating Europe' (McLaren 2006, 189). This comment is especially relevant in cross-border areas, where the increase in interactions resulting from the cross-border integration process engenders an interdependence between the border areas, which is usually perceived as a source of opportunity, but which can be seen as a source of vulnerability as well. As already highlighted by the academic community in border studies, borders have different effects, they have different meanings for different people and serve different purposes. Consequently, cross-border integration and its impacts sometimes reinforce Eurosceptic views in border regions for certain inhabitants who have the feeling of suffering from it. This contradicts the classical and normative discourse according to which 'living in a border region might affect transnationalism, which in itself leads to less Euroscepticism' (McLaren 2006, 98). If this vulnerability is largely absent from the normative discourses on cross-border integration, recent events (terrorist attacks in Europe, migrant crisis, 'Brexit') have suddenly shown that cross-border interactions depend on a high degree of openness and, conversely, how vulnerable they are to sudden re-closures of borders.

This article proposes a conceptual opening in the academic literature on border studies by addressing in an iconoclastic but necessary way the issue of the risks associated with cross-border integration. Here, risk refers to the probability that an event occurs that might greatly affect the functioning of cross-border territorial systems as promoted by the process of European

construction. The purpose is therefore not to feed an anti-integration discourse, but, on the contrary, to highlight how some effects of the cross-border integration process can negatively impact on living conditions and therefore create Euroscepticism within cross-border areas. It is a first step towards the elaboration of more comprehensive policy responses to the ambivalent effects of the cross-border integration process.

The first part presents the state of the art with respect to how Europeanisation has allowed the fostering of cross-border integration but also how it has generated a Eurosceptic discourse. In the second part, we analyse by means of statistical indicators how spatial development is impacted by the cross-border integration process in three cross-border metropolitan regions that are considered to be the most functionally integrated ones in Europe with regard to cross-border workflows (Decoville et al. 2013): Luxembourg, Geneva and Basel. In the third part, which draws on the results of a large-scale survey carried out in border regions, Eurobarometer 422, we highlight the divergent perceptions of the population living in border regions regarding the national border. Finally, in the last part, we show that the uncertainties and vulnerabilities associated with cross-border integration gave rise to some new challenges.

Between Europeanisation and Euroscepticism: The Cross-Border Integration Process Called into Question

Borders, which can be considered as constantly in motion, influence regional development in a manner that has strongly varied through time (Konrad 2015). If we apply a long-term perspective, border regions were declining during the nineteenth and first half of the twentieth centuries. 'The majority of border regions were long considered to be peripheral areas, marginalized from an economic and a social point of view in line with the classical theories of localization' (Sohn 2014b, 1697-1711). The first decade of European integration allowed a de-bordering process that generated new opportunities for border residents and thus new development possibilities for the cross-border areas. However, the recent re-bordering tendencies show how sensitive to external context these areas are. Border regions are privileged spaces for 'taking the pulse' of the level of European integration and of the Europeanisation process.

Europeanisation is a contested concept with no stable meaning since it encompasses different phenomena and processes of change, all referred to by this term (Olson 2002). In this article, we refer to the broad but quite complete definition given by Radaelli. Europeanisation is a 'process of a) construction, b) diffusion and c) institutionalisation of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic (national and

subnational) discourse, political structures and public policies' (Radaelli 2003, 30). Consequently, Europeanisation redirects the content of national policies, which 'become increasingly subject to European policy-making' (Börzel 1999, 574). The process of Europeanisation has implied a partial redefinition of the role of national borders by state actors and has promoted a supranational understanding of the European political, social and cultural space (Kolossoff et al. 2012). Different political agreements such as the European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation (called Madrid Convention) launched in 1980, or the Schengen Agreement signed on 14th June 1985, combined with the ideals of European integration, have helped to increase exchanges between border territories, particularly regarding the labour market and commercial activities, thus engendering a complex process of cross-border integration at the regional level.

In response to this unifying process, oppositional forces have gradually denounced the top-down influence on national policies. First appearing in the 1980s in England, the term 'Euroscepticism' refers to an opposition to the powers of the EU and to the idea of a European integration (Brack and Startin 2015). Euroscepticism was seen as a marginal position until the speech of the Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, Margaret Thatcher, in Bruges in 1988 (Hooghe and Marks 1997), which strongly questioned the functioning of the EU and inflected a number of its principles, particularly economic matters. Since then, Euroscepticism has become a persistent and growing response to EU policies (Usherwood and Startin 2013). Through the term 'Euroscepticism', we refer to hostile feelings in general towards the EU and its achievements. The campaigns and the results of the referenda on the ratification of the European Constitutional Treaty that took place in France and the Netherlands in 2005 showed that Euroscepticism reached a higher level to become a truly mainstream phenomenon (Leconte 2015). In order to explain the rise of Euroscepticism in Europe, Hooghe and Marks have put forward the hypothesis that 'individuals with exclusive nationalist identities are predisposed to Euroscepticism if they are cued to believe that love of their country and its institution is incompatible with European integration' (Hooghe and Marks 2009, 13). They argue that the populist right, which pretends to defend the national interest, or at the opposite end of the spectrum, that the radical left parties, which are opposed to the capitalist paradigms that they perceive as leading the EU integration process, might be closer to the pulse of public opinion than mainstream parties.

The study of attitudes towards the EU enables to understand voting behaviours in relation to European politics. Previous literature has shown that people living in border regions are less prone to Euroscepticism than people living in central regions (Díez Medrano 2003; Gabel 1998; Schmidberger 1997), out of practical considerations or differences in collective identities. However, perceptions and behaviours vary on each side of a

border within a single cross-border region (Díez Medrano 2003; Gabel 1998; Schmidberger 1997), and we cannot therefore consider the people living in a cross-border region as constituting a single community sharing the same ideas about, or representation of, matters of importance to it. The distinction proposed by Kuhn between the *utilitarian* and the *identitarian* arguments to explain the positive attitudes of people living in border regions towards European integration constitutes an interesting prism for unravelling the sources of Euroscepticism in cross-border regions.

According to the *utilitarian* argument, people assess the gains of the Europeanisation process through a cost-benefit analysis. If cross-border integration increases the quality of life of residents in border regions, or if it maximises their working or consumption opportunities, it is likely that people living there will be less Eurosceptic than people living in central regions. However, this argument could also be used in an opposite way. Indeed, Euroscepticism may potentially increase if the effects of cross-border integration are associated with a fear of being exposed to more constraints, competition, nuisances or insecurity. In that case, the 'added value' of cross-border integration in collective representations can be negatively compensated by the perceived disadvantages. As De Voogd wrote, 'in addition to distinctions between rich and poor, or religious and secular, a gap has emerged between the highly-educated, embracing individualistic and cosmopolitan values, and profiting from open borders on the one hand, and on the other hand, the less educated, more nationalist, community-oriented, and nostalgic, who all feel threatened by globalization and immigration' (De Voogd 2014, 21-30).

The *identitarian* argument is based on the idea that the interconnections fostered by the spatial proximity between border populations decrease prejudices and support the emergence of cross-border collective identities (De Voogd 2014). But this argument can also be reversed, especially in a context characterised by political tensions and economic disparities. Indeed, strong inequalities or disagreements in important political questions, such as the refugee policy, can also emphasize differences between two sides of a border and hamper the development of collective cross-border affinities, thus leading to Euroscepticism.

Euroscepticism appears as 'an expression of reactive identities towards European integration' (Trenz and De Wilde 2009, 18). It finds a fertile ground in the current context of the European construction, which is 'under stress' (Saurruger 2014, 182) and even more since the referendum on the UK's withdrawal from the EU (Brexit) in June 2016. This stress can be especially felt in the regions that are at the interface of different domestic territorial systems, and which experience concretely the impacts and tensions caused by European integration. This process, which is difficult to define because of its 'multifaceted forms' (Sohn 2014a, 588), impacts on border

territories and on the populations living there to varying degrees, at different scales and temporalities, and generates cross-border territorial systems (Reitel 2013). Four main dimensions can be defined in order to capture the sometimes contradictory impacts of cross-border integration in border areas (Durand 2015).

The first and probably the most obvious and well-studied dimension of the cross-border integration process is the *functional* one. It relates to the concrete exchanges that link border regions together. This dimension has been analysed by border scholars who have 'focused on the impact of borders on the flow of economic activities, modelling the impact of borders as though it increased the physical distance' (Van Houtum 2000, 60). The gradual opening of borders fosters individual or collective spatial practices to take advantage of the existing differentials (e.g. prices or wages) on both sides of borders. Cross-border shopping, the use of services across the border, cross-border work or residential mobility to the other side of the border, all of them due to costs differentials, are phenomena that have frequently been observed at different spatial scales (Carpentier and Gerber 2009; Matthiessen 2005; Spierings and Van Der Velde 2013). Indeed, cross-border differentials generate opportunities (Ratti and Reichman 1993) for those who have the requisites to exploit them, thus leading some authors to consider them as a 'resource' (Sohn 2014b, 1697-1711). However, what appears as a resource for some people can also be perceived as a constraint or as a limit for others. Indeed, the differentials can offer a benefit for a specific population of a border region that can sometimes be at the expense of another specific population in the neighbouring border region (Knippschild and Schmotz 2016). Not all individuals have the means – e.g. physical or labour mobility – to use these differentials to their advantage. This is why the functional dimension of cross-border integration should not be idealised; it should rather be perceived as an equivocal phenomenon, even though studies and reports tend to present an important number of border interactions as a positive thing, whatever the nature and the impacts of these interactions.

The second dimension of cross-border integration, which can be defined as the *structural* one, highlights the dynamics of convergence of the border territories with respect to socio-economic characteristics. An integrated cross-border region from a structural point of view would therefore present a low level of inequality in terms of development on either side of a border (De Boe, Gasland and Healy 1999). However, the increase of cross-border interactions does not necessarily imply a reduction of inequalities (Topaloglou et al. 2005), and such findings might contradict the European postulate proclaiming that territorial co-operation is one of the premises for more territorial cohesion (Commission of the European Communities [CEC] 2008).

The third dimension of cross-border integration, the *institutional* one, is related to the networking of public and private actors with the aim of

supporting cross-border initiatives, and tends to institutionalise a shared co-operation area on both sides of the border as well as the building of cross-border regions (Perkmann 2007). Nevertheless, cross-border areas are still institutionally fragmented by the co-presence of several territorial systems marked by different practices, regulations and planning cultures (Durand 2014). These gaps create challenges related to institutional mismatches (Chilla, Evrard and Schultz 2012). Under the influence of EU policy on cross-border governance (Leibenath, Korcelli-Olejniczak, and Knippschild 2008), numerous socially constructed and 'invented' spaces of co-operation have emerged (Gualini 2003) that attempt to articulate horizontal and vertical networks of decision-making (Perkmann 1999). Consequently, these new institutional arrangements call into question the exclusive gatekeeper role that national executives held during most of the twentieth century (Blatter 2004) even if the political decisions are still dominated by national governments (Nelles and Durand 2014). In addition, and beyond the positive and normative discourse on cross-border co-operation, a certain 'cooperation fatigue' has appeared among the actors (Knippschild 2011, 629-645). Even when the need for co-operation is obvious and the willingness to realise it is shared, certain barriers to cross-border co-operation remain. These are linked to the lack of substantial experience, competencies, knowledge of cross-border co-operation and communication, as well as to a lack of common interests and consensus on crucial and strategic issues (Decoville and Durand 2016).

The fourth dimension of cross-border integration, associated with individual and collective representations, reveals the impressions and opinions that the people living on one side of a border have of their neighbours and which result from historical legacies as well as from the actual and evolving social practices within the border regions (Morehouse 2004; Zhurzhenko 2011). This *ideational* dimension emphasizes the importance of perceptions and imaginaries (Bürkner 2015) and their influences on the socio-spatial practices of individuals (Van Der Velde and Van Naerssen 2015) and on their political choices (Brunet-Jailly 2005).

These four dimensions shows that cross-border integration cannot be reduced to a process supposed to have a unique causal effect. It is rather driven both by symmetries and similarities as well as by asymmetries and differentials between border regions (Durand 2015). Moreover, cross-border integration is strongly related to the bordering dynamics, which can be defined as an ongoing process of construction, deconstruction and reconstruction of borders through political discourse and decision-making, as well as individual and collective representations (Kolossoff et al. 2012). A de-bordering dynamic tends to promote a gradual phasing out of the border, while a re-bordering dynamic reinforces the physical or mental presence of the border or re-activates its effects. In addition, the process of cross-border

integration has a stronger impact in the immediate border area than in the hinterland. Indeed, the spatial proximity to the border has, for instance, certain cost advantages in terms of trade due to market access considerations (Lundquist and Trippl 2013). Nonetheless, the EU continues to offer a single discourse on the process of cross-border integration and still actively supports it in that direction, especially through its main instrument of cross-border co-operation, the Interreg A programmes. Meanwhile, some contestations have been formulated by certain national actors who have criticised the Schengen Agreement, mostly in response to crises which have nothing to do with local and regional integration but which nevertheless have a strong impact on border crossing issues. For instance, during the campaign for the 2012 French presidential elections, the President Nicolas Sarkozy, called for the re-introduction of border controls within the Schengen Area (Meijers 2015). In a more abrupt manner, Hungary's and Austria's governments have recently closed their borders with wire fences and restored customs controls to limit the flows of refugees from the Middle East, thus de facto suspending the application of the Schengen rules. As Dürschmidt argues, border regions can be 'seedbeds of cosmopolitanism, sites of political closure, and often both simultaneously' (Dürschmidt 2006).

In this article, we proceed to substantiate these theoretical reflections by focusing our analysis, firstly on the dynamics of spatial distribution of employment and population in the three above-mentioned European cross-border areas, and secondly on the results of a European Public Opinion Analysis (European Commission 2015). The goal is to demonstrate that cross-border integration impacts in an ambivalent manner on border areas, i.e. by strengthening the links across borders as well as by generating asymmetries that can potentially harm the perceptions of the European project.

Cross-Border Integration without Convergence

The three cross-border metropolitan regions of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg (see Figure 1) have been chosen because they can be considered as the most integrated regions of Europe with regard to cross-border work (Sohn, Reitel, and Walther 2009). Indeed, recent studies revealed that in 2012 some 53,517 cross-border workers were commuting daily to the Basel metropolitan region (53% of them from Germany and 47% from France), 63,386 to the Geneva Canton from France and 166,021 to Luxembourg from France (50%), Germany (25%) and Belgium (25%) (Decoville, Durand, and Feltgen 2015). As such, one can expect that they constitute relevant cases for apprehending how the cross-border integration process influences the dynamics of development on both sides of a border and how, in response, the border regions' residents perceive these influences. Taking into consideration

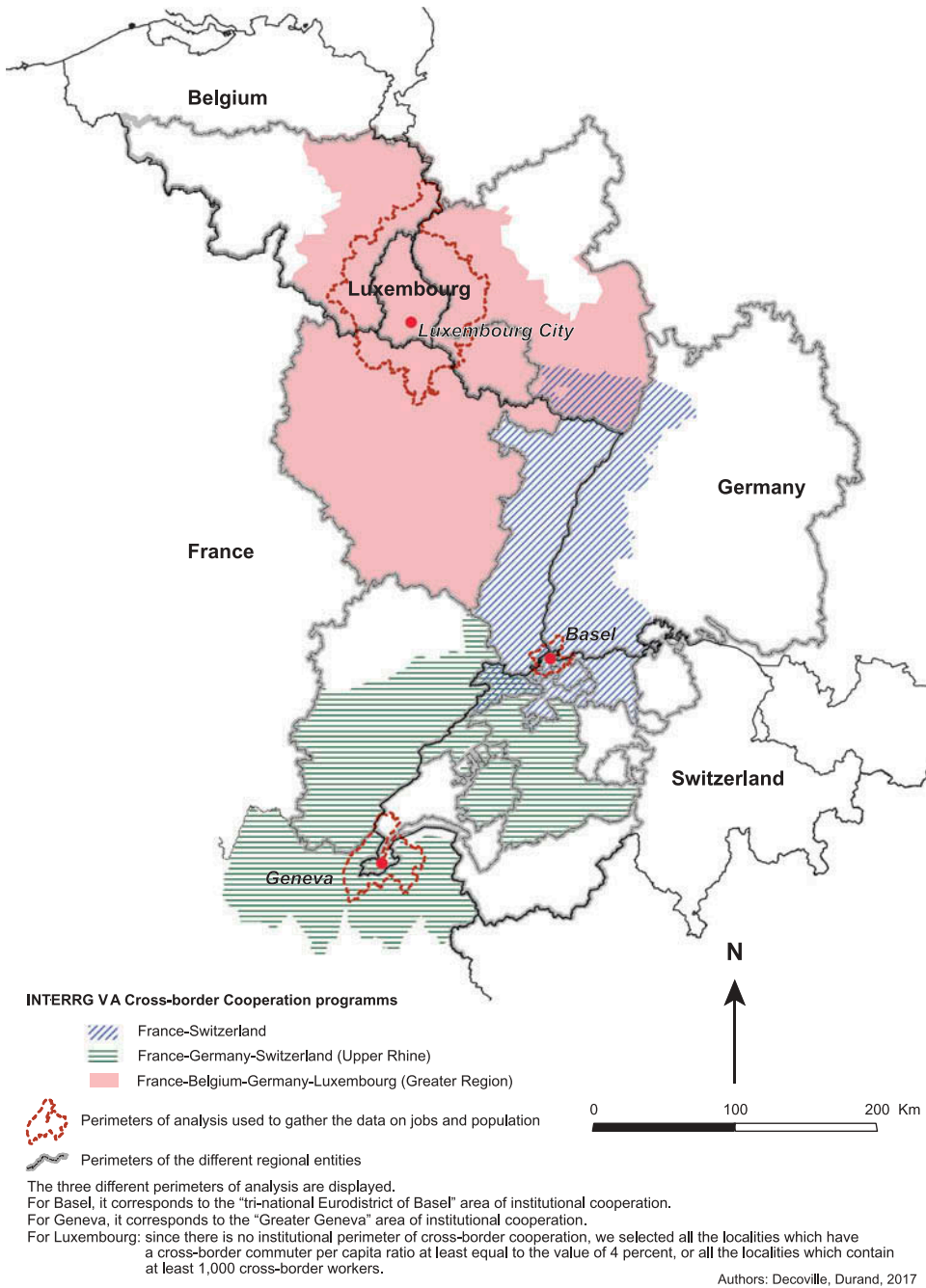


Figure 1. Map 1: Location of case studies.

Switzerland, which is a non-EU country, can at first sight be perceived as outside of the scope of this article, but this country is the one which receives the most important number of cross-border commuters from the EU. Moreover, the increasingly dense network of agreements that has been

developed between Switzerland and the EU (Vahl and Grolimund 2006) and its accession to the Schengen area in 2008 tend to prove that despite it does not legally belong to the EU, it can be considered as having a ‘functional membership’ (Federal Department of Foreign Affairs, Swiss Confederation, Switzerland and the European Union 2016).

The indicators in Table 1 show selected figures related to the number of jobs and residents in each of the border regions of the three case studies between 2007 and 2012.² These data allow for unravelling some interesting elements, which relate to the constitution and the functioning of cross-border territorial systems. Indeed, different development trajectories can be observed between the different regions of each case study, but all in all the three different cases show the same trend towards a functional specialisation of space on each side of the border.

First, a strong employment growth can be observed in each of the metropolitan centres (the cities of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg). This employment growth benefits the local residents, but also, and in a very impressive way, the cross-border commuters. The openness of borders to the flows of workers obviously constitutes a huge opportunity for the regions located in France, Belgium and Germany, for the Luxembourg case-study; in France and Germany for the Basel case-study and in France for the Geneva case-study. For some of these regions the dynamic of employment growth related to the metropolitan central areas has even allowed to compensate for serious unemployment and demographic shrinkage, such as in the Lorraine Region

Table 1. Employment and inhabitants in the three cross-border areas of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg.

Case study	Basel			Geneva		Luxembourg			
	CH	DE	FR	CH	FR	LU	FR	BE	DE
Inhabitants 2007	554,757	238,063	51,423	525,177	348,884	476,200	677,362	204,328	347,630
Employment 2007	327,384	77,069	13,237	293,507	98,047	306,213	254,973	71,681	119,453
Ratio job/capita 2007	0.59	0.32	0.26	0.56	0.28	0.64	0.38	0.35	0.34
Inhabitants 2012	570,943	235,636	55,877	555,983	387,466	524,900	687,434	214,698	352,023
Employment 2012	375,725	79,791	14,190	319,285	100,701	352,273	247,112	71,041	125,923
Ratio job/capita 2012	0.66	0.34	0.25	0.57	0.26	0.67	0.36	0.33	0.36

Sources: Databases from the official websites of the Belgian, French, German, Luxembourgish and Swiss national statistical offices (walstat.iweps.be, insee.fr, regionalstatistik.de, statec.lu, statregio-francosuisse.net, bfs.admin.ch)

Notes:

- i) The two dates (2007 and 2012) have been chosen for reasons of data availability. The data for the German regions and the Swiss Basel region is from 2008 and 2012.
- ii) The three cross-border areas considered correspond to the institutional spaces of cross-border cooperation, that is to say, for Basel the ‘Basel Metropolitan area’ (Tri-national Eurodistrict Basel), and for Geneva ‘Greater Geneva’. Since there is no space of cross-border cooperation which corresponds to the extension of the cross-border functional area, the case study of Luxembourg relies on previous empirical work realised on behalf of the cross-border network of cities ‘Tonicités’. This framework of empirical observation covers the whole Grand Duchy and, for the neighbouring localities, the ones which have a commuter per capita ratio equal to, or exceeding, the value of 4%, or all the localities which contain at least 1000 cross-border workers.

(INSEE Lorraine 2011) and in the western fringe of Rhineland Palatinate (IBA 2012) for the Luxembourg case-study, or in the French ‘Département’ of Haute-Savoie for the case-study of Geneva (INSEE 2014).

Second, it can be assumed that the non-metropolitan border regions are attractive from a residential point of view, since a growth in population can be observed in each of them whereas the number of jobs, proportionally, remains quite steady or even decreases.

The analysis of these three cross-border areas reveals significant disparities in the spatial distribution of jobs and residential locations. Indeed, individuals exploit the differences existing between both sides of a border to maximise their utility, as businesses do to maximise their profits, in accordance with neoclassical economic assumptions. Cross-border exchanges and flows, in return, create interdependency between the border regions.

The centralisation of economic activities in Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg and the attractiveness that they exert on the regions located on the other side of the border lead to a strong functional specialisation of space on both sides of the border. The different territories tend to be more and more specialised according to their comparative advantages. The metropolitan cores are dynamic economic centres with a skilled workforce and attractive tax environments for businesses while the peripheral regions located on the other sides of the borders can be considered as residential suburban extensions, notably because land is cheaper and more readily available.³ As a consequence, numerous employees of these metropolitan cores choose to live in the territories located abroad in order to reduce their housing costs, thereby contributing to the increase in the average home-work travel distance (Carpentier and Gerber 2010). Conversely, space-consuming activities such as recreational areas, golf courses, large shopping areas and storage areas are massively developed in the regions located on the ‘peripheral’ side of the border, where land prices are lower, than near the metropolitan centre. Obviously, the catchment areas of these large infrastructures largely overlap on both sides of the border.

Cross-border integration fluctuates and depends on various factors such as political decisions that are taken at various levels of the administrative hierarchies. Therefore, cross-border integration remains a perpetual and complex construction (Durand 2015), but also an unpredictable one since it can vary along a gradient from weak to strong but also from strong to weaker. Although the normative discourse of the EU highlights the virtues of cross-border integration, this process can also potentially generate challenges with regard to the uncertain future of the European construction. The functional specialisation of space seems to be fed by and also to feed the socio-economic inequalities that tend to increase over time between border regions (Durand 2015; ESPON 2014), meaning that the territorial dynamics are not converging within these three cross-border areas. This result

confirms the evidences highlighted by Hudson (2003) that economic integration does not reduce socio-spatial inequalities within the EU.

Perceptions that Diverge within Cross-Border Areas

How do these mechanisms impact the perceptions of individuals? How do the people who live in border regions today perceive the open borders that the Europeanisation process has put in place? The Eurobarometer Survey 422, commissioned by the European Commission, Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy and co-ordinated by Directorate-General for Communication, offers precious insights to better understand the perceptions of citizens about the pros and cons of living near a border. This survey was conducted in 54 different cross-border co-operation areas eligible for Interreg IV A programs and gathering 123 border regions. It includes border regions in Norway and Switzerland. Realised in June 2015, 40,619 people were contacted by telephone and responded to it. More information about the regions of investigation and the methodology can be found in the report written by the European Commission (European Commission 2015). This survey is the most extensive source of information ever collected about the representations and practices of individuals living in European border regions. All the data can be downloaded from the official website of the European Union.⁴ So far, the results of this study are mostly descriptive, and the potential of this rich database has not been used to understand Eurosceptic trends and behaviours. In this article, we focus only on question 5, related to the perception of the border (as an opportunity/an obstacle/has no impact) by the inhabitants of border regions (see Table 2).

Two ways can be used to analyse the results of this specific point of the Eurobarometer: either at the level of the Interreg cross-border co-operation programme areas as a whole, or at the level of the border areas which are part of a cross-border co-operation area.

According to the first method, the cross-border regions which mainly consider the border as an opportunity and therefore received the highest

Table 2. Results of Eurobarometer 422 on perceptions concerning the presence of a border. Question 5: Would you say that living near the border represents...

	Basel			Geneva		Luxembourg				Average in EU border regions
	CH	FR	DE	CH	FR	BE	DE	FR	LU	
Total respondents	393	401	402	304	300	400	400	404	400	40,619
More of an obstacle	5%	2%	3%	7%	8%	1%	2%	1%	5%	4%
More of an opportunity	31%	66%	46%	35%	51%	34%	37%	60%	27%	37%
It has no impact	60%	31%	47%	55%	39%	63%	52%	38%	65%	55%
No Answer	4%	1%	4%	3%	2%	2%	9%	1%	3%	4%

Sources: Eurobarometer 422: Cross-border cooperation in the EU (open-data.europa.eu/en/data/dataset/S1565_422_ENG).

scores are cross-border areas composed of older member countries of the EU such as the Germany-Denmark, Spain-Portugal or the Upper Rhine (France-Germany-Switzerland) cross-border areas. In contrast, the lowest scores were obtained in the cross-border co-operation areas, including new members' states only, such as the cross-border regions of Lithuania-Poland, Latvia-Lithuania, Czech Republic-Poland, Hungary-Romania and Hungary-Croatia.

The second method is rather useful for highlighting the divergences existing on both sides of a border within a cross-border co-operation program area. Indeed, the results of question 5 of the Eurobarometer 422 show clear differences in people's perception of a cross-border area, and especially between both sides of a border, thus confirming Kuhn's point that perceptions and behaviours vary across borders. Concretely, the regions which tend most to consider the border as an opportunity are usually the ones which are economically less favoured in a cross-border co-operation programme set up between a wealthy and older member state, and a more recent and less wealthy member state, such as in the Austrian - Hungarian programme INTERREG V A (only 25% of the Austrians consider the border as an opportunity whereas 77% in the Hungarian border region of the programme consider it as an opportunity), or in the Austrian - Slovenian INTERREG V A programme (where 67% of the interviewed Slovenians consider the border as an opportunity).

Two of the three case studies treated in this article rank among the European cross-border programmes in which the gaps in perception are the highest, namely the Luxembourg and the Geneva case-studies, whereas the gap appears lower in the Basel case-study. The population of the French borderlands, where most of the workers come from, tends to consider the presence of the foreign border region as an opportunity (see [Table 2](#)) whereas the population of the regions hosting these migration flows (the core cities of Basel and Geneva and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg) consider the foreign border region as having no impact. These contrasting results highlight the asymmetries in collective perceptions, which might impede an ongoing cross-border integration process.

The Cross-Border Integration Process and its Challenges in an Uncertain Future

The settlement of cross-border workers in the regions located across the border from the main metropolitan centres, who often have a greater purchasing power than the 'local' residents, leads to an increase in land and property prices (Diop 2013) which in turn creates negative social externalities for the domestic inhabitants. The latter can have the feeling that they are less privileged and suffer more than they benefit from the cross-border integration process. To take up the analytical grid proposed in the first part, it appears that these border regions, which are functionally among the most integrated in Europe in terms of flows,

seem to be much less ideationally integrated, since perceptions differ strongly on both sides of the border. This lack of integration in terms of perception is probably to be linked with the important imbalances in terms of levels of development, that is to say, to an insufficiency in structural cross-border integration. Despite all the benefits that cross-border integration has engendered for the metropolitan core areas of Luxembourg, Geneva and Basel, and for the regions located on the other side of the border, the lack of territorial convergence concerning the various levels of socio-economic development is a potential topic of resentment, rivalry and social dissent both between and within border regions, and thus constitutes a first challenge. These regions offer a fertile ground for tensions between those who benefit from European integration and the others who do not.

The North of Lorraine is a typical example of such a phenomenon, which finds its expression through a process of spatial fragmentation. The most obvious forms this takes are the development of new housing estates, located outside the cities and aimed particularly at cross-border commuters, while the less privileged part of the population is concentrated in the older urban fabric, inherited from an industrial past (Diop 2013). It should also be added that local authorities are strongly differentiated in terms of economic resources as well, since taxes on business are collected mainly on one side of the border, i.e. where the companies are located (Decoville and Durand 2017). These trends of socio-spatial fragmentation, visible at different scales, constitute a major challenge for territorial cohesion and feed Eurosceptic feelings, especially for those who consider themselves excluded from the benefits generated by cross-border integration. The results of the French presidential election in May 2017 show that the inhabitants of the northern part of the Lorraine Region have massively supported Marine Le Pen, who proposes an anti-EU policy and who is largely in favour of reinstalling border controls (in the 'Département' of Moselle, Le Pen has obtained 28.35% of the votes in the first round (the first position among the candidates) and 42.34% in the second round, which is far above the national average of 33.90%). This result was achieved despite the numerous cross-border workers who live in this region and who have everything to lose with the reestablishment of border controls. In order to face the market-driven development at the cross-border scale, which increases the differences between the 'winners' and the "losers" of the integration process, certain stakeholders have proposed to put in place tax compensation mechanisms in favour of the less dynamic side of the border (Agape [Agence d'urbanisme Nord Lorraine] 2009), successfully in the past for the Belgian region, but not so for the French side.

In the canton of Geneva, the 'Genevan citizen Movement' (MCG), which is an anti-cross-border political movement set up in 2005, shows evidence of emerging tensions between border populations in a context of growing cross-border interaction (Herzog and Sohn 2014). The MCG advocates that priority be given to Genevans for recruitment and criticises policies that favour

cross-border workers. In the local elections in 2015, the MCG scored 13.4%, and was the subject of much criticism, notably for its campaign in favour of a 'zero cross-border commuter' label for the municipalities. Certain concrete actions have also been taken at the cantonal level, such as a framework directive instituting a cantonal preference for hiring new workers in 2014, which increased the perception of cross-border workers from France of being unwanted. These campaigns, which are driven by nationalist discourses, have come up in reaction to the perceived negative effects associated with cross-border integration. Some people have the feeling of being left behind by economic prosperity and are therefore subject to resentment towards the incoming cross-border commuters, who are accused of taking jobs away from the local labour force (Herzog and Sohn 2014).

By contrast, the cross-border metropolitan region of Basel does not seem to be confronted with the same problems of tension between border populations. It must be said that the cross-border agglomeration does not encounter some of the issues faced in the ones in Luxembourg and Geneva, especially in terms of road congestion, thanks to an efficient cross-border public transport system that has benefited from several decades of close institutional cooperation. Indeed, the cross-border region of Basel 'is widely regarded as an example of cross-border cooperation in Europe, particularly as far as transport is concerned. Public transport has long been recognized as a top priority and is the starting point for the agglomeration program subsidized by the Swiss Confederation Agglomeration Policy' (Walther and Reitel 2013, 217-236)⁴. In addition, the differences in socio-economic situation between the inhabitants of the Swiss, German and French border regions is not as important as in the cases of Luxembourg or Geneva (Walther and Reitel 2013). Baden-Württemberg is one of the wealthiest German Länder, and so is the Alsace region, in France, even though the unemployment rate is much higher in the latter than in Basel (14.1% in the 'Département' of Haut-Rhin in 2014, and 3.5% in the Canton of Basel and 2.8 for Basel-Land in 2017⁵).

The comparison of these three case-studies highlights the fact that divergences appear between the logic promoted by the EU with regard to cross-border integration, which aims at eliminating differences in development levels, and the mechanisms at work, driven by the behaviours of various individuals who exploit border differentials, thus leading to more social and spatial differentiation both at the cross-border scale and within each border region (Terlouw 2012). The EU has already mentioned its willingness to tackle the problem of uneven development, for instance considering tax convergence when taking fiscal policy decisions (Vintilă, Onofrei, and Țibulcă 2014). Taxation, especially of companies, influences the strategic choice of the location of a business and also the scope of job creation, and as such contributes to accentuating the disparities between territories, notably at the cross-border scale. However, the EU has limited room for manoeuvre since most of the competencies which

would be required to support more convergence between border regions remain at national or regional level.

A second challenge concerns the perceptions of border residents, and the rise of Euroscepticism. Some border residents wonder what the real benefits that result from European integration actually are. They have the impression that their national/regional identity is 'overshadowed by the EU' (Laine 2016). Therefore, in such a context of uncertainty, different attitudes and sentiments tend to combine into major driving forces of Euroscepticism. They range from the feeling that the necessary political efficiency of the EU is missing to answer their needs or fears. Even if different expressions of Euroscepticism coexist in Europe (Bouillaud and Reungoat 2014), they highlight the will to preserve national or regional identity, and question the added value of being an EU member or being part to the EU area. These populations call into question the way the European construction is set up. The important scores obtained by nationalist or sovereignist parties in many border regions in Europe (Bouillaud and Reungoat 2014) – which defend Eurosceptic positions – tend to show that a part of the population living in border regions has a low level of trust and support for EU institutions and EU policies. However, it must be said that it is problematic to isolate the weight of the Eurosceptic discourse in the rationale that pushes people to vote for these parties. Furthermore, border residents can adopt contradictory behaviours, for instance by profiting from the open-border regime while voting for anti-European parties. These reservations should prevent us from establishing simplistic and unique causal relations.

A third challenge concerns the vulnerability of border regions to a potential re-bordering process. The durability of interdependencies between the border areas depends on the continuity of a high degree of permeability of borders. The current political disagreement between European policy-makers over the management of the refugee crisis, combined with an increase in nationalist and protectionist opinions in the public debate, show that national borders are more and more associated with 'protective shields' in the current discourse of several states. These tendencies, which go against ideational cross-border integration, constitute an immediate threat to cross-border interactions, especially if they result in measures which degrade border-crossing facilities. Obstacles to cross-border flows can have huge economic consequences, as shown in France with the temporary re-establishment of border controls after the terrorist attacks in Paris in November 2015 (Le Monde 2015). Indeed, the reintroduction of French border controls has had significant effects on the efficiency of daily trips to the employment centres of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg, which are already quite slow in normal times. More frequent or even permanent reintroduction of these controls would result in the collapse of road traffic with strong consequences on economic activities. Some studies have even tried to quantify the effects of a permanent reintroduction of border controls, both in terms of economic impact

and transport time (Aussilloux and Le Hir 2016). Such a situation can be harmful for cross-border regions which have developed strong interdependencies based on a pure exploitation of rent differentials, as in the case studies described above. Of course, the EU cannot be held accountable for re-bordering tendencies, but its incapacity to ensure that its internal borders stay open can also be grounds for criticisms of the EU for people living in border regions given the complexity of transnational and cross-border governance.

Conclusion: Going Beyond the Normative Discourse on Cross-Border Integration

Border regions are considered as laboratories of the process of Europeanisation (Kramsch and Hooper 2004), and as such they constitute a major point of interest for the EU policy-makers. The study of the three cross-border metropolitan regions of Basel, Geneva and Luxembourg shows that several decades of cross-border integration policy have led to a functional specialisation of space between the metropolitan cores and the neighbouring peripheral regions. It also shows that from a more ideational perspective, asymmetries in the perceptions of the 'neighbour' on both sides of the border still exist. The analysis of the three cases also confirms the purposes of Rumford who wrote in 2012 (i) that the borders can be interpreted differently from different perspectives, and (ii) that 'ordinary people (citizens, non-citizens) are increasingly active in constructing, shifting, or even erasing borders' (Rumford 2012, 897). In a Eurosceptic perspective, they try to activate certain functions of the border to delimit, to distinguish and to reject other people from their territory.

These key findings put forward a certain fragility of the territorial systems put in place at the cross-border scale. Indeed, the intensification of cross-border exchanges produces interrelations and interdependencies between border areas while also emphasising the differences and communication problems, thus sometimes creating tensions. In the case-studies described above, which are among the most functionally integrated in Europe, the cross-border integration process has led to reinforcing or to creating negative ecological and social effects, such as residential segregation, urban sprawl and long-distance commuting. In more economically peripheral areas, cross-border integration can also contribute to the destabilising of local economies that are already affected by high unemployment rates, by encouraging people to work abroad. Frustration with, and mistrust of, the 'neighbours', or even xenophobia, can more frequently be found in these border regions nowadays.

The 'multiperspectival' (Rumford 2012) approach to the border leads to apprehend the bordering process in an intermingling way (Herzog and Sohn 2017) and to better understand the co-existence of both de- and re-bordering trends. Therefore, we conclude that it is crucial to go beyond the normative discourse of

EU regional policy, which only emphasises the positive aspects of cross-border integration, observing it through a 'functional' lens without paying enough attention to its structural and ideational outcomes (the growth in inequalities and the lack of shared values and perceptions at the cross-border scales). While some scholars mention the possible disintegration of the EU (Krastev 2012), it seems indeed necessary to acquire some critical distance with respect to European territorial co-operation policy and to consider as well the risks of regional imbalances, social fragmentation, economic dependencies and ecological impacts contained in this process. Today, the ideal of European integration is confronted with new challenges, such as migration flows, inner security or general Euroscepticism and border regions are the most sensitive focal points of this landscape in which challenges can change over time.

Acknowledgements

The authors would like to thank Professor Hans-Joachim Bürkner for his helpful comments on the previous draft of this article. The authors are grateful to the referees and editor, whose suggestions helped to improve the article.

Notes

1. In this article, two types of areas will be addressed which are not adequately differentiated in the literature:
 - Cross-border area: A portion of space which covers several territories from both sides of a border. Different words will be used to name it (every time with the adjective 'cross-border'): cross-border region, cross-border area.
 - Border area: A portion of space which is located on one side of the border. Different words exist to name it: Borderland, border region, border area, border space, border territory.
2. Since the data related to jobs at the work place is not strictly comparable (due to the different methods used by national statistical offices), the focus should be put on the evolution of the job per capita ratio.
3. For the case of Luxembourg: (Diop 2011) for the cases of Basel and Geneva: (MOT (Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière) 2006).
4. See http://data.europa.eu/euodp/en/data/dataset/S1565_422_ENG.
5. Sources: INSEE and Amstat. Data available online.

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