

**Report on the Second Workshop of the RSA Research Network on
Regional Economic and Policy History
'Cross-border regions & inter-regional policy transfer in the past,
present & future'**



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**Center for Policy Studies,
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Budapest, Hungary**



Authors bios and photograph



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As borders seem to harden across Europe and North America, it is increasingly important to highlight the regional work that takes place across borders and divisions, and to see how these efforts can be understood and evaluated over time. In the second workshop of the RSA Research Network on Regional Economic and Policy History (ReHi) participants did exactly that. New and emerging ideas and research find-

ings were presented, as well as reflections of existing research experiences. Three keynote addresses, nine panel discussions and a roundtable discussion formed the basis of lively exchanges at the Central European location of the workshop in Budapest. The workshop also included a visit to the Donald and Vera Blinken Open Society Archives, which demonstrated the diversity of ways that cooperation can connect and transcend borders.

With approaches ranging from economic, political, historical, cultural, to symbolic, the workshop brought together a group of 27 researchers and practitioners from institutions representing ten countries from a wide range of disciplines. Participants crossed their own borders (disciplinary and otherwise) continuously, with some general themes and questions emerging. Unfortunately, borders did play a part in keeping one participant from joining from South Africa due to a lack of a timely-granted visa, but via video link we were able to connect and collaborate regardless.

What does it mean to have a successful Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) project, and how can we measure the impact of such projects? In her keynote address, Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt from Brunel University engaged with the difficult question of effect, noting that perhaps we cannot pinpoint the exact impact of Cross-Border Cooperation, but by combining evidence from various sources, we can determine whether an effect exists. In a panel discussion, an index to measure the maturity of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC's) was presented as a way to measure the effectiveness of such organisations. Although economic conditions are a common benchmark, due to the nature of many cross-border cooperation projects, there are other ways to measure impact, as well as participants pointing to the issue of how long a timeline to look at to measure success. Relating to time and history, can a collaboration be called "successful" over only a single project? Showing the variety of cross-border cooperative goals, could some influence over the policy process equal success? Or by what measure can the more symbolic cross-border projects be considered "successful", such as the small "state" of Morokulien on the Swedish-Norwegian border?

Although general tools and ideas can be helpful, many presenters noted the need to be extremely wary of generalisations, and instead to pay close attention to the specific local context and needs of each project. Programs such as CITYNET in Southeast Asia, for example, may be very helpful to share best practices, but it is also important to remember that an approach in a Dutch-German border region will be different in a myriad of ways even going as far as a Hungarian-Slovak border region. There was a wide variety of cross-border territories represented in the workshop, from a confeder-

ation of states, maritime regions, Canadian-U.S. border, to a diverse array of European regions.

When it comes to border regions, there can also be an urban versus rural and core versus periphery divide. Along with governmental centralization/decentralization this has a large impact on how cross-border cooperation projects are able to operate. Attention to these divides, and the resulting inequalities and political implications are important for researchers and practitioners to bear in mind, so as not to take cross-border cooperation as an intrinsically good thing, without interrogating the divergence that may result.

The report of the inaugural workshop in London noted that: “The research group clearly manages to attract scholars of the *study* of regional development and the *history* of regional development. Analytically, these are two different themes...” – and the tension between the different approaches of the Humanities and Social Sciences at times came to light. However, it was used positively or transcended, including by keynote speaker Birte Wassenberg from the University of Strasbourg who, in addition to presenting the historical role of regional integration, advocated for interdisciplinary collaboration.

Many new ideas for further research and collaboration resulted from this second workshop, including more in-depth investigations of what contributes to regional identity—both generally and in specific locations. In promotion of the multidisciplinary nature of the network, and originating from the fruitful discussion of Estelle Evrard’s (University of Luxembourg) thought-provoking keynote on what knowledge means in a cross-border regional context, it was suggested to study a specific issue through all of the fields represented by the network, and see how they overlap, come together, and also disagree. Future publication plans from the network will continue to be discussed at the next workshop.

The third RSA ReHi workshop will take place at Karlstad University, Sweden on 30-31 October 2017 under the title of “Historical Constructions of Regions and Regionalism.” For further information see:

<http://www.regionalstudies.org/events/event/historical-constructions-of-regions-and-regionalism>



Group photo, from left to right: Péter Balogh (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), Silke Reeploeg (Karlstad University), Michael Parrish (Center for Policy Studies, CEU), Birte Wassenberg (University of Strasbourg), Annisa P. Wiharani, (University of Groningen), Marijn Molema (Fryske Academy), Estelle Evrard (University of Luxembourg), Csaba Szilagyi (Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives), Sándor Köles, (Carpathian Foundation), Sara Svensson (Center for Policy Studies, CEU), Martin Klatt (University of Southern Denmark), Marsida Bandilli (University of Antwerp), Sarah Wing (Central European University), Peter Olausson (Karlstad University), András Majoros, (Civitas Europica Centralis) Yuko Kambara-Yamane (Center for Policy Studies, CEU), Constantinos N. Antonopoulos (University of Patras).

Overview of presentations in order of the program:

Katja Sarmiento-Mirwaldt, Brunel University: *Trade-offs in evaluating the long-term effects of small projects funds in territorial cooperation*

Péter Balogh (Hungarian Academy of Sciences), **Sándor Köles** (Carpathian Foundation), **Erika Nagy** (Hungarian Academy of Sciences) & **Gyula Ocskay** (European Institute of cross-border studies): *Round-table: Border regions in Central & Eastern Europe*

Martin Klatt, University of Southern Denmark: *Cross-border regions as a paradiplo-matic playground for non-state actors: Variable place building incited by flows and subsidies*

András Majoros & Erika Törzsök, Civitas Europica Centralis Foundation: *Measuring ‘maturity’ of cross-border cooperation institutions: the case of the Hungarian-Slovakian EGTCs*

Marijn Molema, Fryske Academy: *The relationship between endogenous growth theory and the rise of Euroregions*

Samuel Kehinde Okunade, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa: *Schengen Agreement in Africa? Rethinking the EDOWAS Protocol of Free Movement* (via video link)

Constantinos N. Antonopoulos, University of Patras: *What elements of mutual learning do the histories of marine hydrocarbon resource extraction entail for regional actors and EU territorial development*

Peter Olausson, Karlstad University: *Humour and Culture for cooperation over borders. The Swedish-Norwegian example of Morokulien.*

Estelle Evrard, University of Luxembourg: *Mutual learning & Reflexibility: Avenues for reflexion to analyse cross-border areas*

Dragos Adascalitei & Anita Halasz, Center for Policy Studies CEU: *Credit-claiming for regional development investment –state-level behavior in Hungary and Romania and how regions can respond*

Jan Fidrmuc, Brunel University: *How Persistent is Social Capital? (unable to present)*

Annisa P. Wiharani, University of Groningen: *Policy Learning and the Potential Role of Transnational City Network as an Emerging Policy Tool in Environmental Governance in Southeast Asia*

Marsida Bandilli, University of Antwerp: *Mapping Of Stakeholders’ Mobilization in Cross-Border Cooperation Programs*

Csaba Szilagyi, Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives (OSA): *Border zones, traffic and trade in the ‘small border’ areas during communism.*

Birte Wassenberg, University of Strasbourg: *Linking the history of European integration with the history of regional territorial cooperation: the role of ‘forgotten’ actors*