

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN THE PYRENEES. THE CASE OF Cerdanya

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Abstract

This paper examines how cross-border regions can generate, under certain preconditions and with EU support, territorial cooperation based on local endogenous development, reducing the effect of mental and physical borders as a potential new centrality. The tools made available by the Communitarian legislature (as European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation or INTERREG programme) therefore should not be perceived as an aim but rather as a means to support this process.

The research is divided into three parts. The first reviews the evolution of cross-border cooperation in Europe. The second part analyzes the Pyrenees as a region involved in the last INTERREG IV-A (POCTEFA) programme, focusing on some elements supporting the practice. The last section analyzes the case of the Cerdanya valley, underscoring the homogeneity of the territory, the historical and current cooperation, the limits and some advice to improve it.

Keywords: *cross-border cooperation, local development, INTERREG, EGTC, Cerdanya, proximity.*

1. INTRODUCTION

This paper is the result of work based on my Master Thesis dissertation entitled “*Cross-border spaces between territorial cooperation and local development. The case of Cerdanya*” at the University IUAV of Venice¹ in combination with the first results of an ongoing research project at the University of Girona².

¹ European Master Course in Planning and Policy for the City, the Environment and Landscape

² The research project “25 years of cross-border projects between Spain and France in the EU framework. Analysis from the geopolitics of plans, projects, agents and territorial impacts” has been assigned by Spanish Ministry of Science and Innovation to Analysis and Environmental Planning Research Group (University of

Cross-border cooperation in the European Union framework is historically a recent phenomenon. Since the end of World War II, which affected almost the entire continent, there have been several attempts for rapprochement and cooperation between the major European countries, supported by the Cohesion Policy promoted by the European Union at the end of the eighties. Territorial cooperation can be defined as "more or less institutionalized association that develops between the authorities or sub-entities of one or more States, whose highest expression is the creation of cooperative organizations, oriented horizontal and vertical coordination of policies and actions..." (Durà, Oliveras and Perkmann, 2010:24). Perkmann in his studies identifies four steps that marked that particular territorial cooperation (Perkmann, 2003). Moreover the communitarian territory is rich in cross-border regions, which present some characteristics of homogeneity, according to a geographical, natural, socio-economic or cultural point of view. The Pyrenean region is a good example of territorial cooperation. Along the border between France and Spain, from the west to the east side there are several cases in which the boundary generates conflicts or new territorial strategies and Cerdanya is a good example to describe this phenomena.

The methodology is based on both qualitative and quantitative data analyses of cross border projects³ along the French-Spanish border. These data have been exploited for deeper cartographic studies in order to detect cross-border dynamics. Finally it focus on the specific case of the Cerdanya Valley: these data have been used to study the historic cross-border cooperation, showing its limits and its potentialities (Berzi, 2013).

2. EUROPEAN CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND THE SUPPORT OF THE COHESION POLICY

After the Second World War World one of the first steps in cross-border cooperation was carried out at a local level by applying the principle of twinning, a movement that took place since the fifties. These were symbolic links promoted by local authorities. In 1963 there were 120 twinning projects and today more than 40.000 local agreements⁴ have been signed. At the end of the 1950s regions began to forge agreements with their neighbours. In 1958 the first Euroregion, the Gronau-Euroregio, was established along the border between Germany and Netherlands⁵ (Schelberg, 2001), including today almost 2 million inhabitants. This case became an important precedent for other Euroregions and in general as an example of territorial cooperation.

In the first half of the 1980s important institutional agreements were concluded. Some examples to promote and facilitate cooperation are: the European Cooperation Framework Agreement in 1980; the European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions in 1981; and the European Charter of Local Self-Government in 1985. Political commitment of the European Economic Community followed with the Reformation of the Structural Funds in 1989 (EUROPEAN COMMISSION, 1998; Berzi, 2013) aimed at preparing future border regions of the Single European Market (Joan, Patassini 2006).

Nowadays EU Cohesion Policy is an important factor to achieve cross-border cooperation and the INTERREG initiatives represent a key tool for an effective implementation. The main goal is to reduce the socio-economic isolation of border regions. Over a period of nearly

Girona) that counts on the participation of several researchers from the universities of Perpignan-Via Domitia, Toulouse II-Le Mirail Paris VIII and Basque Country.

³ For further information see Feliu, Berzi et al. (2013)

⁴ <http://www.twinning.org/>

⁵ The Euroregio includes on the German side Lower Saxony and North Rhine-Westphalia Renenia while in the Netherlands the provinces of Gelderland, Overijssel and Drenthe.

twenty-five years there have been four INTERREG⁶ initiatives at the amount of more than 12 billion euro involving more than 79 programs. It provides funds for a large number of cross-border projects in different thematic areas, including employment issues, infrastructure, environmental protection, efficient use of energy focusing on renewable sources, social inclusion and gender equity (Panorama, 2008; Feliu, Berzi et al, 2013).

Several assessments of previous programmes have shown however that despite the INTERREG efforts there have been several limitations that need to be overcome in order to make it a real strategic and effective tool. The main problems have been the lack of confidence between partners, lack of experience, the absence of an efficient common evaluation system, a failure to give importance to bottom-up processes, etc. (LRDP, 2003; PANTEIA, 2010). For these and other reasons, a new legal instrument was established in 2006 leading to the INTERREG IV-A 2007-2013 programme: the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation.

Despite the efforts of the Communitarian Legislator to achieve an effective and efficient assessment for cross-border projects, it remains difficult to evaluate the local cross border development. This is mainly due to a lack of suitable tools and indicators (Berzi, 2013). For instance, cartography could be a useful device to map projects, density of stakeholders and territories involved in a better understanding of cross-border dynamics or address future policies (Feliu, Berzi et Al., 2013).

2.1 When Europe empowers local actors: the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

Two basic types of institutional constraints were identified in the INTERREG III 2000-2006 programme (Beltran, 2010). Firstly, the difficulty of local and regional authorities to implement and manage projects due to differences between national laws, an over-complex bureaucracy and the different degrees of regional competence. For example French regions, German Länder and Spanish autonomous communities do not have the same administrative and decision-making powers (Keating, 1997). Secondly, the ineffectiveness of existing institutions were limiting factors, such as the Institute of European Grouping Economic Interest (EGEI), which resulted in the creation of situations and circumstances that were not fit for territorial cooperation purposes and needs (Beltran, 2010). These reasons led the Communitarian Legislator to adopt EC Regulation n.1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

The EGTC provides a legal body since it recognizes, the ability to "...acquire and dispose of movable and immovable property, employ staff and support at trial..."⁷. The members can be national, regional and local⁸ who must approve a convention, a Statute and choose the legal Seat deciding which national laws apply in case of need. Competencies have been well defined to avoid conflicts with national authorities. Finally, the main responsibilities are related to the promotion of territorial cooperation in order to achieve economic and social cohesion. For this reason an EGTC has to support the implementation of the projects which could be funded both by Structural Funds and by other means.

By the end of 2012 there were 32 EGTCs: 7 between Spain, France and Portugal, 5 between Belgium, France and Germany and 12 in the central-eastern European region

⁶ The EU has developed, through Cohesion Policy, four cross-border initiatives: INTERREG I (1989-1993), INTERREG II-A (1994-1999), INTERREG III-A (2000-2006), INTERREG IV-A (2007-2013) and INTERREG V-A for the period 2014-2020.

⁷ Article 1, section 4, Regulation (EC) N. 1082/2006

⁸ At least from two Member States

(Slovakia, Hungary and Romania). Currently another sixteen EGTCs have been established, of which five are awaiting the final approval (METIS 2010; 2012). Along the French-Spanish border there are currently 5 EGTCs, two in the Atlantic region and three in the Mediterranean area - where the Cerdanya case study is located.

For the programme period 2014-2020 the European Commission, together with the Committee of the Regions and other institutions are trying to improve the EGTC framework through technical and legal changes (COR, 2012). These new institutions are considered important tools in the new 'Communitarian Strategy Europe 2020'. In addition to the specific role they perform, they could also be used to implement real policies of territorial cohesion (Berzi, 2013). Local authorities can therefore seize this opportunity offered by the Community legislation to provide a new tool that is not only limited to INTERREG programs and structural funds but at the same time stimulates a new territorial governance (MOT, 2008).

2.2 Cross-border cooperation in the Pyrenean region

The French-Spanish border has always been interesting from the perspective of cross-border cooperation. The border has changed many times over the centuries. The agreements signed between the two kingdoms in different historical periods generated many conflicts (Sahlins 1989; Capdevila 2009). Specifically, some areas, such as those belonging to the Basque and Catalan cultures, suffered fragmentation of the territory, for example in Northern Catalonia and the Basque Country in Southern France. Due to these conditions there have been local and regional initiatives of reconciliation between the cross-border communities sometimes diverging from the centralizing strategies of national governments (Castañer, Feliu, Gutiérrez, 2010; Oliveras 2009). Many cross-border institutions are now involved in this area. At regional level they include the Euroregió Pirineus-Mediterrània, the Platform Aquitània-Euskadi, the Space Pourtalet and at a local level the Cross-border Comarca Bidasoa-Txingudi (West of the border), Eurodistrict of Catalan Cross-border Space (MOT, 2008) and EGTC Pirineus-Cerdanya.

The introduction of Cohesion Policy and INTERREG programmes allowed local and regional stakeholders to develop many joint projects in support of economic, commercial and social cooperation. According to data provided by Comunidad de Trabajo de los Pirineos, in the POCTEFA 2007-2013⁹ a total of 133 projects have been approved belonging to different thematic areas, such as local economic development, environmental conservation, health services, infrastructures, green-tourism, etc. (Berzi, 2013; Feliu, Berzi, et al., 2013). More than €68 million was granted by FEDER fund, supporting on average over 50% of the costs of each initiative.

An analysis carried out by the University of Girona has shown the general involvement of the various stakeholders such as, for instance, public and private associations, local, regional enterprises universities, Natural Park authorities (ibid.). Nevertheless, there are significant differences between the number of French and Spanish stakeholders (Figure 1) mainly due to differences between the capabilities and decentralization of administrative competences, as Spanish Autonomous Regions have much more power than French ones (Keating, 1997). In relation to the actors involved in the CB projects, a significant mobilization has been observed throughout the French side, especially in the central-western (Haute Garonne Toulouse, Pau and Pyrenees Atlantiques). In these French territories there has been specific engagement of actors at provincial level (departmental agencies, Chambers of Commerce, universities, etc.) while in Spain regional stakeholders are most common (Figure 3). Even so, local agents are

⁹ Programa Operativo de Cooperación Transfronteriza España-Francia-Andorra 2007-2013
<http://www.poctefa.org>

important on both sides of the border. Important supra-municipal stakeholder are also registered on the northern side as *Communauté de Communes*, *Pays*, Parks Authorities.

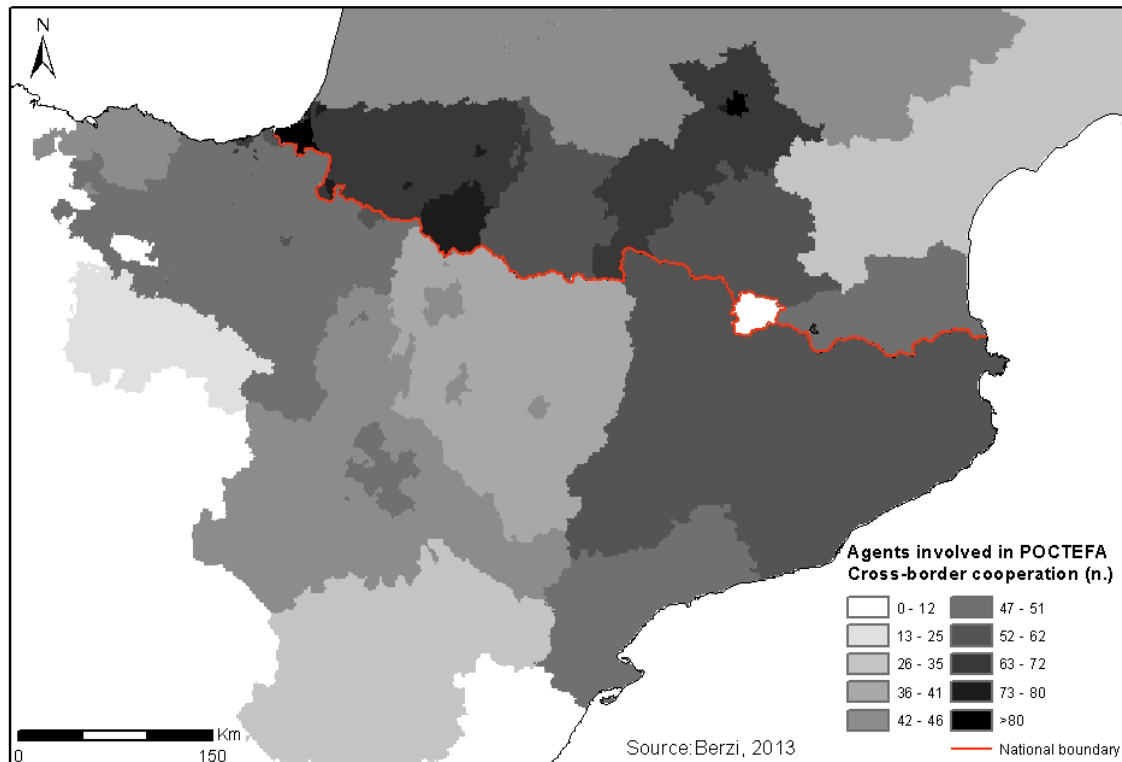


Figure 1. Number of partners involved in POCTEFA 2007-2013.

Source: compiled by the author

The Spanish partners received a greater amount of funding, especially in the eastern part. The highest concentration of funds are located in Catalonia (Barcelona and Gerona) and Aragon (Zaragoza and Huesca), due also to expensive projects. On the Atlantic side there is an higher density of French partners (*Communauté de Communes Sud Pays Basque*, municipalities of Bayonne and Biarritz, *Département des Pyrénées Atlantiques*, etc.). This fact seems to demonstrate that the cooperation is more developed on north-south partnerships rather than transversally (east-west).

3. LA Cerdanya, A CROSS-BORDER REALITY

In the cross-border region of the Cerdanya Valley, the physical and cultural characteristics are important elements for historical territorial cooperation. Geographically it is located in the eastern Pyrenees (Figure 2), between the Region Languedoc-Roussillon (France) and the Autonomous Community of Catalonia (Spain). More precisely the Cerdanya is a valley of about 200 km² in area, surrounded by mountains, adjacent to the south side with Catalans Comarca del Berguedà, Comarca del Ripollès. Bounded to the west by the Comarca del Alt Urgell and Andorra, on the north by the plain of Roussillon and to the East with Conflent and Capcir (Vila, 1984). Administratively, it is divided between the provinces of Girona, Lleida in Catalonia and the French department of Pyrénées-Orientales. Many authors have described how the national boundary does not respect natural borders (Vila 1984; Blanchon 1992; Sahlins 1993, 1998; Mancebo 1999; Moncusí 2003; Berzi 2013).

The Cerdanya is rich in wooded areas, meadows and is crossed by two major rivers, the Segre and Carol, which have been subject of much conflict and cooperation. In the whole area

there are no physical elements of discontinuity and the only division is the national border between France and Spain following the Treaty of the Pyrenees in 1659 and the subsequent Treaty of Bayonne 1866-1868. The political events produce not only administrative and legal differences between the two side of Cerdanya but also social and cultural producing also a *mental borders* (Moncusí 2003).

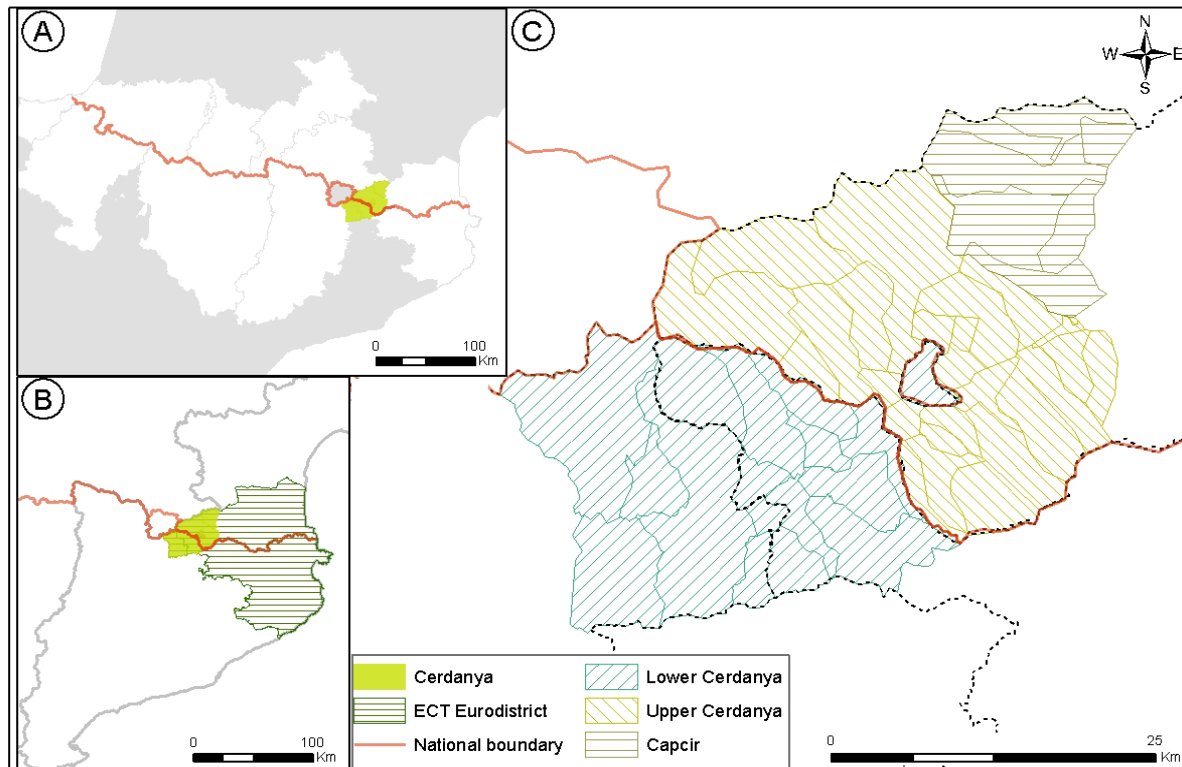


Figure 2. Localization of the Cerdanya in the Pyrenean region within the POCTEFA's eligible area (A), in the Eastern Pyrenees and inside the recent 'Cross-border Catalan Space Eurodistrict' (B) and showing its administrative structure (C).

Source: compiled by the author

Historically, the territory has been composed of small villages and a few larger centers installed in the valley bottoms as for example at Saillagouse and Puigcerdà, which is the capital for all the Cerdanya (Vila, 1984). Currently the population of the area is around 31,550 inhabitants (INSEE, IDESCAT, 2009) being most numerous of the Catalan side but during periods of peak tourist season could reach 150,000.

Historically, the main activity was based on agriculture and cattle farms (Moncusí, 2003), while the processing industries included several slaughterhouses, dairies and textile mills, located primarily in Puigcerdà. The interaction between the physical structure of the land and farming has produced a typical landscape of Cerdanya, *el Bocage Cerdà* managed by local communities (Observatori del Paisatge, 2013). In recent decades this landscape has undergone a process of transformation by the modernization of agricultural activity, the development of the tertiary sector, such as construction and tourism, including skiing and spa resorts. The appearance of low-density second residences leads to the loss of cultural heritage and landscape throughout the county.

The Cerdanya valley has a rich cultural heritage. Several studies highlight the importance of oral and written traditions, works in prose and verse, witnesses of the ancient agro-pastoral system in which the collective life constituted the identity value (Vila, 1994; Mancebo, 1999; Moncusí, 2003; Berzi, 2013). An important role was led by the cultural associations, born in

the late seventies (Oliveras, 2013) which promoted a shared vision of the territory, realizing different activities and involving local community.

3.1 Historical cooperation

The main reasons that led to the basis for cross-border cooperation are the homogeneity of the territory, the socio-economic structure and common cultural values. Cross-border actions take place in several sectors: local administration, education, environmental resources, traditional activities and tourism. The most important successful and unsuccessful initiatives are considered in the following sections.

3.1.1 Institutional cooperation

Since the 1980's the Institut d'Estudi Ceretans (IEC)¹⁰ has promoted the Day of the Cerdanya - *La Diada de la Cerdanyai*, an institutionalized event to discuss local, cross-border cooperation: here the mayors and the inhabitants of Cerdanya celebrate a yearly meeting alternating each time the celebration in Lower and Upper Cerdanya. Furthermore, since 2009, they introduced the use of a new common flag and an anthem, symbolizing their union of local administration. In 1991 the Association of Municipalities of Cerdanya (AMC) was established in order to promote agreement between the municipalities (43 of 50 in total) in several sectors such as tourism, environment, infrastructure, transport, health and culture. Towards the end of the nineties, during one Diada, *The Manifesto of Font-Romeu* was approved and the creation of the *Grand Council of the Cerdanya* was set up to connect local institutions.

The Pyrenees-Cerdanya EGTC¹¹ has been established since 2011, between the Regional Council of Cerdanya and the Communauté de communes Cerdagne Pyrenees. Despite these important initiatives to improve institutional cooperation, shared territorial planning is still missing. Strategic planning between these municipalities could be an effective tool to strengthen the institutional cohesion and social capital (FLOCH, 2004), to provide local services and the enhancement of common heritage¹² (Berzi, 2013). For instance, the adoption of Climate Neutrality Plan as in the Italian-Austrian border area¹³ and the 'Covenant of Mayors' could reinforce the established relationships and increase mutual trust as well as sensitizing local people about the efficient use of energy and the importance of climate change.

3.1.2 The difficulty of shared education

There have been several proposals in the past to establish shared public schools for Cerdanya's pupils. The first attempt to set up a French-Spanish school in Puigcerdà was launched at the beginning of the last century. In the 1990s Estavar and Llívia's Primary Schools tried to institute a new and common one, but the initiative failed for lack of political support (Oliveras 2013). It was tried again in 2001, but there were too many difficulties due to

¹⁰ The Institute of Ceret is a non-profit cultural association for the preservation and dissemination of the Cerdanya's culture. It organizes 'The International Colloquia of Archaeology' in Puigcerdà. See <http://www.ddgi.cat/iec/activitats/activitats.html>

¹¹ <https://portal.cor.europa.eu/egtc/en-US/news/Pages/NewEGTCPirineus-Cerdanya.aspx>

¹² This concept is referred to as the common resources and heritage (tangible and intangible) that, if improved and managed by local agents, can lead to local indigenous development. See Magnaghi 2000, 2006; Dematteis 1994, 1997; Dematteis, Governa 2009.

¹³ <http://www.klima-dl.eu>

local conflicts¹⁴. In the same year, the IEC proposed the creation of a secondary education center in Puigcerdà introducing a joint graduation system recognized by both French and Spanish national authorities. However the project did not start because of a shortage of students.

There have been a few examples of cross-border educational cooperation, for example in the French department of the Eastern Pyrenees there are several private institutions, such as "Escola Bressol" which provide opportunities to study in the Catalan language. The *Festa de l'Arbre* is an example of a successful joint educational activity (ibid., Berzi, 2013). It involves all primary and secondary schools students in the Cerdanya who learn about environmental awareness and planting symbolic trees in the valley. This event has also been a platform to propose other cross-border actions. For instance the pedagogical project "The Segre, a river without borders" which has been active since 2009 in the local schools. This project aims to improve student awareness of environmental, socio-economic, historical and political issues related to the River Segre. Aside the latter initiatives, it still seems difficult to create a shared educational system. However, with the institutional support of EGCT, the new Cohesion Policy could be an effective tool to create a common school providing a shared education.

3.1.3 Shared management of environmental resources

Cross-border cooperation on the environment has produced numerous agreements and projects. In the past, local communities used to cooperate to manage natural resources and resolve conflicts related to water use (Joseph 1996, Oliveras 2010, 2012b). The management of trans-boundary rivers passed through joint agreements among all communities of the Cerdanya according to their needs, mainly via agricultural activities, mills and forge shops (Moncusí, 2003).

One of the first actions was the completion of the 'EDAR' treatment plant of Puigcerdà in 1989, supported by the Association of Municipalities of Cerdanya (Oliveras, 2010). Puigcerdà's wastewater treatment plant was also built thanks to the intervention of the respective management authorities and INTERREG I funds. The Generalitat of Catalunya and the French government agreed to connect their municipalities to the EDAR plant and through the INTERREG II funding, eleven villages are now connected to sewerage systems.

An interesting cross-border environmental project is the "Contract of the Segre River" signed in 2004 between the County Councils of Cerdanya, Alt Urgell and the Communauté de Communes Pyrénées-Cerdagne obtaining the Interreg IIIA funds. The aim of the project was to improve the management of one of the most important resources of the Cerdanya, through an integrated and shared strategy to enhance water quality and riparian ecosystems. Specifically the river deposits were regulated, most of the riparian vegetation and the common heritage along the river, such as old mills and forge shops, was restored (Oliveras 2010; Berzi 2013). Several environmental education actions were set up. In the same INTERREG IIIA programme another project for the Carol River (Querol in Catalan) was approved. This river is a tributary of the Segre and crosses the city of Puigcerdà. The high level of contamination in the river was increasing due to the polluted waters coming from Pas de la Casa, a small Andorran stream. In 2003, the river was decontaminated and the wastewater purified with the financial support of ERDF funds. In 2009 the treatment plant in Latour de Carol (Upper Cerdanya) was inaugurated.

Other than water resources, cooperation developed to prevent forest fires and to protect agricultural activities. In 1959 Catalan and French firefighters signed an agreement to harmonize maps, symbols, improve the exchange of information and the coordination of

¹⁴ The diversity of educational systems and the parental rejection of the school's location is technically problematic (Oliveras, 2013)

interventions. Throughout Cerdanya there are 17 fire units, 4 in the Lower and 13 in the Upper and Capcir (Bosom, Valiente, 1993).

Environmental cooperation in Cerdanya seems to have resulted in successful collaborative experiences (Berzi, 2013). A further achievement could be the institution of the first cross-border protected area in Pyrenees. Large-scale environmental and natural heritage are clearly common elements. Both the Upper and Lower Cerdanya present natural protected areas, the *Parc Natural del Cadi-Moixerò* and *Parc Régional Natural des Pyrénées Catalan*. The idea of cross-border parks is spreading worldwide, understanding that nature and biodiversity have no political boundaries.¹⁵

3.1.4 *The need for local services*

Cross border cooperation involves several different local activities and services. The primary economic sector was very important for the Cerdanya's community. In 1974, French breeders and farmers formed an association (CCVB), which now has 140 members (Oliveras, 2012b). In 1996 the pioneering "Comunidad Agroalimentaria de los Pirineos" was set up, that aimed to develop rural areas through the establishment of quality-based assessment of local produce. Nowadays this has resulted in different brands like the IGP 'Rosee vedelles et des Pyrénées Catalanes' for meats, the PDO 'Alt Urgell Formatge Cerdanya' and the PDO 'Mantega de l'Alt Urgell i la Cerdanya' for dairy products which will be soon be extended to the northern side of the region (ibid.).

In POCTEFA 2007-2013 the project 'MTC Slaughterhouse of the Cerdanya' was approved¹⁶. The main goal of this initiative was to build a new and shared slaughterhouse, supporting farming and local meat production. It was also an opportunity to follow new EU legislation for the livestock sector. The implementation of a new slaughterhouse provides a shared facility for the entire valley, located in the village of Ur (Upper Cerdanya). The new building will centralize the killing of the stock, about 900 tons/year at least (Berzi, 2013). Thanks to MTC the farmers will no longer send their animals to be slaughtered out of the valley and they will complete the production cycle on-site. This project also gives support to the individual breeders who will produce their own meat and retail it at local markets. An EGTC form was chosen for the management of the slaughterhouse, but now it seems that the partners will change it into a cross-border partnership (Oliveras, 2012b).

The weekly market is another important activity. Depending on the day and place, traders and customers from Upper and Lower Cerdanya move to sell and buy products as if the border does not exist. However, French traders are disadvantaged due to different timetables favorable for the Spanish trade. Another local service is the Technical Review of Vehicles (ITV). Since 1996, approximately 150-200 trucks per year stop in Puigcerdà ITV's station, renting the testing room once a month (Berzi, 2013). This is a very useful service for truckers and French companies that do not have to go to more distant French centers (ibid.).

The need for coordinated health services is now the most symbolic issue of cooperation in Cerdanya. In the past there were several attempts to connect the two different health systems (Oliveras, 2013). In the Lower Cerdanya the health centres are located in Puigcerdà while in the Upper Cerdanya there is a lack of local services¹⁷. Moreover, a "psychological barrier"

¹⁵ Two examples are the the *Parc Naturel Transfrontalier du Hainaut* between France and Belgium and the *Peace Parks Dreams* in the southern Africa (see <http://www.peaceparks.org/>)

¹⁶ The MTC project was presented in 2002 during the Day of the Cerdanya and the following year ERDF funds were assigned to conduct a feasibility study. The study had a positive outcome and partners -Association Abbatóir Cerdanya-Capcir from the French side and the Catalan Regional Council for Lower Cerdanya-proposed the project to POCTEFA. Due to the lack of Spanish funds the project is still not completed (Oliveras, 2012b).

¹⁷ Hospitals in Prades and Perpignan are respectively approximately 40km and 80km away (Oliveras, 2013).

existed between the French and Spanish health systems as the latter was considered by French citizens as worse in qualitative terms (Mancebo and Moncusí, in Oliveras 2013).

A number of random events led to the need for cooperation in health provision, breaking down the negative attitudes and creating a shared service (Oliveras 2013; Berzi, 2013). Regional and local institutions began to sign agreements for the potential development of a new cross-border hospital. A positive feasibility study, financed by INTERREG IIIA in 2003 proposed a new project. The Generalitat of Catalunya, together with the Fundació Hospital Transfronterer de la Cerdanya¹⁸, proposed the HTC project 'Hospital Transfronterer de Cerdanya' for POCTEFA 2007-2013, obtaining more than €18M of ERDF funding. The scheduled objectives were essentially twofold: i) providing a local service for the 30,000 inhabitants involved (all the Cerdanya and Capcir) up to 150,000 people (the seasonal tourist peak) and ii) promoting local economic development. In 2010 the statute for the EGTC Hospital of Cerdanya was adopted, whose legal framework simplified many issues.

One of the biggest challenges was to overcome legal problems linked with births and deaths¹⁹. To avoid this, the Catalan Government and the French Ministry decided to give to the EGTC Hospital of Cerdanya a similar status as an embassy. Moreover, when completed, the hospital will get trilingual staff (at least speaking Catalan, French and Spanish) and this will give more opportunities for training students. If the hospital achieves its expected results, it will be a very important precedent in Europe. A scheme like this could generate a more cohesive context between institutions and societies, offering employment and induced collective integrated development in the area such as in planning, accessibility and transport, tourism. The effect would also create cross-border networks among key stakeholders like pharmacies, universities and medical research centers (Berzi, 2013).

It is too early to assess the impacts of the slaughterhouse and the hospital, currently the two most important projects in Cerdanya. Nevertheless the INTERREG programme could be a strategic tool to help set up new local services. For instance, regarding the proximity of infrastructure and waste management, in INTERREG V-A 2014-2020 local stakeholders could propose a feasibility study about the introduction of an integrated public transport system, so far absent from the region (ibid).

3.1.5 Cooperation in tourism

In the Cerdanya cross-border cooperation in tourism is fairly recent (Oliveras, 2012a). A first experiment took place in 1990, when local governments collaborated to set up the "Cerdanya Museum" offering a glimpse of much of their historical and ethnographic heritage in one place. However the development of the facility, was hampered by political, economic and local conflicts. As a result, the museum was never built and paradoxically they created two museums, one in Sainte-Léocadie in Upper Cerdanya (called Musée de Cerdanya) and the second one in Puigcerdà (Museu Cerdà). Nevertheless since 2010, the Regional Patronage of Cerdanya and the Community of Municipalities Pyrénées-Cerdagne have shared joint promotion of tourism through the exchange and translation of information and advertising. They jointly promote *El Tren Groc* (The Yellow Train), a small tourist railroad connecting 20 villages between Latour de Carol and Villefranche de Conflent. INTERREG IIIA also financed improvements to the ancient *Roman Road*. EGTC Pirienus-Cerdanya, established in

¹⁸ It is a Foundation created in 2005 entrusted to manage the project of the new hospital..

¹⁹According to the French law, citizens born out of Metropolitan France are considered "born overseas" even for the HTC cross-border hospital. The eventual repatriation of remains from Lower Cerdanya, even though it is close to the border, has to follow specific, lengthy procedures. <http://www.elpuntavui.cat/ma/article/2-societat/14-salut/382221-hospital-transfronterer-pero-nomes-de-nom.html>

2011, became a promoter of several tourist and cultural initiatives, trying to differentiate the offer and reduce problems of tourist seasonality.

An interesting project that provides international exposure of cross-border collaboration is the sporting initiative *Gran Volta de la Cerdanya*, a mountain circuit about 215 km long, sponsored by EGTC Pyrenees-Cerdanya, which annually attracts world-class athletes for competitions. This includes the "ULTRAFONDO", a professional running event. Winter tourism generates a strong economic impact in the region, mainly through skiing and geo-thermal activities. However cross-border cooperation is almost absent and no relevant experiences have been developed. In order to achieve a real, joint, profitable, tourist offer, local administration and economic stakeholders need to start to cooperate. A good example for the next INTERREG programme might be the development of a "Cross-Border Ski pass" that unifies skiing in the region (Berzi, 2013).

4. CONCLUSIONS: TOWARDS A CROSS-BORDER LOCAL DEVELOPMENT

Territorial cooperation in the communitarian framework is nowadays an important strategy for internal and external border regions. Regions facing common challenges and needs are provided with financial and legal support through INTERREG programmes, in order to help them set up cross-border projects. In the French-Spanish border, since the reformation of Structural Funds in 1989, resources have been committed and stakeholders involved. As a result, many cross-border institutions have been established. In some specific cases cross-border cooperation has been strengthened by socio-economic and cultural factors, like the Basque and Catalan cross border community.

The case of the Cerdanya valley shows how the local communities, in setting up several initiatives, are facing common issues for a shared future in areas such as health, natural resource management, institutional cohesion and the support of traditional activities. Local and regional institutions have in some cases been able to find common solutions to their problems, especially through the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, whose institution demonstrates that the social, mental and bureaucratic "borders" can be overcome through stakeholder participation and political will (Metis 2010; Pucher, Radzyner, 2011; Pucher, Radzyner, Gaspari, 2013).

However, despite these efforts, it is not yet possible to speak about a common and strategic vision. This is because in some sectors the "mental" borders, which seems difficult to dissolve still prevail, for instance in winter tourism, education and territorial planning. The conflicts that still exist between the administrative services and insufficient cooperation among important stakeholders continues to undermine social and institutional cohesion (Berzi, 2013). Therefore an overview is absent and decision makers often lack the will to jointly manage this territory that has many similarities.

Strategic planning, by imagining the region as a potential functional space (Figure 3) could be an important tool to reduce the effects of physical and mental borders that still divide the Cerdanya. Local stakeholders could cooperate on three fundamental concepts: (1) social and institutional cohesion (2) proximity of shared services and infrastructure and (3) the enhancement of common heritage. With the support of EU Cohesion Policy, it is possible to overcome the limitations imposed by national legislation and set up projects that operate under multi-level governance involving local, regional and national stakeholders. In this new strategic cross-border vision, the instruments made available by the Communitarian Legislator should not be perceived as an aim but rather as a tool to start long-term integrated development processes, addressed both to local needs and also big global challenges (climate change, poverty reduction and environmental management). Furthermore the Communitarian

Legislator is improving the evaluation system. A new approach to assess cross border projects and programmes may be found which is focused more on local development, possibly according to the three main concepts argued above. Some advice here could be to set better *core indicators*, targets and expected impacts and to better exploit cartography tools as shown by Feliu et al. (2013).

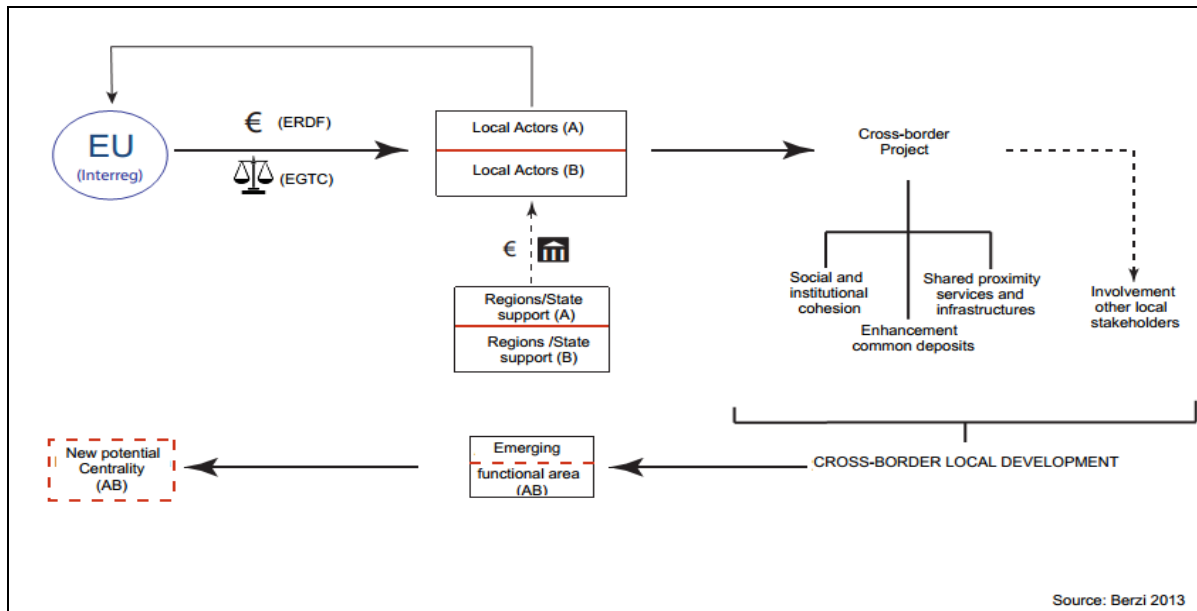


Figure 3. A possible theoretical model for cross-border local development in an EU context

Source: compiled by the author

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