
Institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation in the Catalan borderlands: the Eurodistrict

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Abstract

In the past decades many countries around the world, and mostly in Europe, have started to change the significance of their borders as limits of isolation. Instead they have introduced the idea that cooperation between territories across the border might be beneficial for the development of border regions. This political view of cross-border cooperation (CBC) has progressively increased, in part thanks to the support of the European Union. It has also led to a process of institutionalisation as CBC structures have been set up, something which represents a new political/territorial scale within a multi-scalar system of policy making. In the late 1970's the aftermath of Franco's dictatorship represented a favourable context for CBC in the Catalan cross-border area, as well as in the so far impermeable Spanish-French border. Such context has fostered the emergence of many forms of institutional CBC between public authorities.

Such a favourable context for CBC has had a positive effect on the Catalan borderlands. In 2007, many local and regional authorities reached an agreement on the creation of a new cross-border institution, namely the Eurodistrict of the Catalan cross-border area, with the aim of achieving a cooperation framework that would satisfy the territory's needs for proximity cooperation.

The aim of this lecture is to explain the development of the Eurodistrict of the Catalan cross-border area, the current state of affairs and the challenges of its future. These are directly related to the results of my Master's thesis, defended in February 2017 at Europa-Universität Flensburg (Germany), which deals with processes of institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation in the context of the European Union, taking as case of study the Catalan cross-border area.

Keywords: Cross, border cooperation, institutionalisation, cross, border policy networks, Catalan borderlands

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