

Book review: Border cities and territorial development



By Eduardo Medeiros (email), Geography Professor and Integrated Researcher, Instituto Universitário de Lisboa (ISCTE-IUL), DINÂMIA'CET - IUL, Lisboa, Portugal

This book '*Border cities and territorial development*', published within RSA Regions and Cities Book Series (Routledge), is focused on territorial development processes associated with border cities. In this light, the 12 chapters cut across not only economic but also governance and cross-border planning processes and innovation, in both European and North American border cities, thus providing the reader with a holistic and territorial panorama of their importance to the development of the surrounding regions.

In essence, this book is concerned with the analysis of the role of border cities to promote territorial development processes in border regions across the world. It embraces not only the fields of regional and urban studies but also addresses territorial (urban, local, regional) development and planning theories, as well as

the effects of development policies applied to border regions in both Europe and North America. In this light, this book offers a full toolkit of territorial development knowledge for border regions and advances a range of policy development proposals aiming to provide a comprehensive introduction to contemporary thinking about border cities.

Its main themes are centred on analysing urban and regional development, as well as planning processes and policies, and their effects on border regions. In short, the following main objectives are:

- Highlight the potential role border cities have in the territorial development processes of border regions across the world;
- Provide academics, students, and policymakers with a thorough understanding of current debates around territorial development processes in border regions;
- Offer a roadmap for territorial development theories and strategic policy guidelines, by providing evidence-based narratives of how border regions have been promoting territorial development and how these processes can be enhanced;
- Introduce academics, students, and policymakers, to a range of policy strategies essential to promote positive territorial development trends in border regions;
- Fill a gap in the existing literature on how urban areas located in border regions have contributed to their positive territorial development process;
- Provide a wealth of updated analyses of border cities, based on several case studies covering north, south, west, and eastern European borders (Denmark, Germany, Portugal, Spain, United Kingdom, Ireland, France, Luxembourg, Switzerland, Sweden, Norway, Hungary, and Slovakia) and the two North American borders (the USA, Canada, and Mexico).
- Set the agenda for future work on border cities and their roles in border regional development;
- Provide an update on what has been going on in key border regions and show the value of multidisciplinary approaches to this subject matter.

Considering these goals, this book fills a gap in the available literature on urban and regional studies as well as border regions. Following the main conclusions of the EU 'Boosting growth and cohesion in EU border regions' initiative, border regions are mainly peripheral and lagging areas within a national context.

However, they have the potential to be transformed into areas of growth and opportunities. Such territorial development is generally understood as a positive change in economic competitiveness, social cohesion, environmental sustainability, territorial governance, and spatial planning processes, during a certain period, in each territory. This requires not only a systematic reduction of all sorts of border barriers, but also a harmonization of legal-administrative procedures to increase trade, freedom of movement, and, ultimately, local cross-border interaction.

Being the anchors of territorial development, cities and, in this case, border cities, play a vital role in stimulating economic activity, institutional cooperation, cross-border planning processes, and access to public services (e.g., hospitals, universities) for inhabitants living on both sides of the border. In this context, this book provides the reader with an almost complete set of case studies from Europe and North America on how border cities have been implementing cross-border cooperation processes, with a view to developing their border region. From a policymaking perspective, the evidence can serve as a pool of best practices that could be replicated elsewhere.

From theory to case studies in Europe and North America

The book is divided into three main sections. The first section presents a theoretical framework for the role of border cities to promote territorial development and planning in border regions. Comprised of three chapters, the first is written by Eduardo Medeiros (the editor) and Martín Guillermo Ramírez (the Secretary-General of the Association of European Border Regions - AEBR). It introduces a theoretical discussion on the concept of territorial development as well as the main role that border cities can have to support and implement positive territorial development processes. It concludes with an analysis of the territorial trends of 67 identified border cities located in the European Union (EU) internal and external border regions. Following this theoretical introduction, the second chapter is presented by Bjørnar Sæther, whose analysis of the economic development and innovation processes in border regions is based on the groundwork he has done on the border cities located in the Inner Scandinavia Sweden-Norwegian Interreg-A sub-programme cross-border area. In the end, the analysis addresses the following fundamental question: how can a national border move from being a barrier to innovation to a source of innovation? This section is concluded with a theoretical proposal on how to analyze cross-border planning

processes promoted by the collaboration between border cities. Written by Antoine Decouville, Frédéric Durand, and Christophe Sohn, the analysis is developed in view of the increasingly reinforced role of certain cross-border agglomerations in the territorial development processes of several cross-border regions in which they are located. The authors take the case study of Luxembourg to conclude their analysis.

The second section debates current mainstream policies focusing on supporting border regions and specifically border cities in the EU, North America, and the UK, each one with a dedicated chapter. The first (chapter 4) is written by Bernard Reitel, Pauline Pupier, and Birte Wassenberg, and reviews past and current European policies for border cities. In this context, the authors address European territorial cooperation policies and programmes mainly implemented via the support of the EU Cohesion Policy (Interreg-A). The analysis is complemented with the presentation of the case studies of Strasbourg-Kehl and the Upper Rhine cross-border region. The following chapter (5), written by Francisco Lara-Valencia and Lawrence A. Herzog, presents a reflection on the United States (US) cross-border policies supporting border cities, as well as their space and identity. Again, it concludes with the presentation of an overall panorama of the US-Mexico border cities. The last (6) chapter of this section considers a novel EU external border area: the UK-Ireland border, as a direct result of the Brexit process. Here, the author (Anthony Soares - Director at the Centre for Cross Border Studies - CCBS), provides a critical review of the pre-Brexit policy context for cross-border cooperation, which is complemented with a more detailed analysis of the cross-border cooperation processes between border cities on the island of Ireland.

Finally, a third section presents a wealth of updated knowledge, based on the analysis of six concrete case studies: border cities from both Europe (north, south, east, and west) and North America. These chapters follow a similar structure. They start by presenting a historical and geographical overview of the analysed border cities and the respective cross-border area(s). This is followed by the examination of the cross-border processes and territorial development trends of the analysed case studies. Chapter 7 is written by Jean Peyrony (Director General of Mission Operationnelle Transfrontalière - MOT) and his colleagues, Aurélien Biscuit, Thibault Devillard and Jean Rubio. It provides concrete examples of French border cities and their contribution to territorial development trends in

French cross-border regions. Chapter 8, written by Martin Klatt, examines the territorial development trends in German-Danish border cities. Chapter 9 then deals with eastern European border regions, by reviewing the territorial development trends in Hungarian border cities. Again, the chapter is written by X, the Secretary-General of the Central European Service for Cross-Border Initiatives (CESCI), and two colleagues, Mátyás Jaschitz and James Scott. Chapter 10 introduces the analysis of border cities to a south European cross-border region: Portugal-Spain. In addition, the authors (Eduardo Medeiros and Pedro Neto) add the case study of the Eurocity Elvas-Badajoz. The last two chapters (11 and 12) conclude the third section by respectively presenting the case studies of the USA-Canada border cities (written by Emmanuel Brunet-Jailly) and the USA-Mexico border cities (written by Sergio Peña).

As seen, the book chapters are written by some of the most renowned authors in this field, scholars from several European and North American countries, as well as the Secretary Generals/Directors of four border regions entities (AEBR, MOT, CESCI, and CCBS). As a result, the book will thoroughly prepare students and provide knowledge to academics and policymakers in the fields of urban and regional planning and development studies, human geography, economic development, border regions, and EU policies and policy impacts. As far as we know, there is no similar book in the market with the proposed approach, although there are several books with a general overview of border regions and cross-border cooperation processes and policies. Moreover, this book is unique in covering case studies of border cities on two continents (Europe and North America), thus providing a comparative analysis and policy practices that can be replicated on both sides of the Atlantic.

Conclusions

In conclusion, all the book chapters present valuable and updated insights, based on European and North American experiences, on the current state of play of border cities and their contribution to the territorial development of the surrounding areas. In all, the various chapters reveal a few key policy messages. Firstly, the presence of national boundaries continues to impose their legal and administrative presence, despite systematic advances in the openness to cross-border urban and regional governance arrangements, especially in Europe, which includes Eurocities' experiences. Indeed, despite a few positive exceptions like Trinational Basel and Greater Geneva, which have long developed a fully

functioning integrated cross-border governance approach, for the most part, European and North American border cities are still at an undeveloped starting point for fully integrated urban strategy-making and governance processes. Secondly, factors like the degree of political will and cooperation maturity (time factor), as well as the city size (administrative and financial capacity) and territorial governance frameworks (urban and regional political power), are crucial to determine the potential positive results and, ultimately, impacts of the ongoing border cities' collaboration strategies to the lives of border citizens and cross-border commuters. In the Iberian Peninsula, for instance, whilst six Eurocities strategies are already being implemented, showing a great deal of political will to cooperate, the Portuguese centralised governance framework might limit the effective and sound concretization of these strategies in the long run. Thirdly, factors associated with changing political agendas, which might follow a 'closing of the borders rationale', as recently experienced by the U.S. - Mexico border, play a huge role in the consolidation or dismantling of the institutionalization of border cities' collaboration on both sides of the border. In this context, this book can provide politicians, policymakers, practitioners, and researchers with valuable information on the potential advantages and opportunities to exploit open borders to foster territorial development, via the implementation of cross-border urban governance and planning strategies.

Complementary readings

Brakman, S.; Garretsen, H. & Oumer, A. (2016) Town Twinning and German City Growth, *Regional Studies*, 50(8): 1420-1432.

Decoville, A.; Durand, F.; Sohn, C. & Walther, O. (2013) Comparing Cross-border Metropolitan Integration in Europe: Towards a Functional Typology, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 28(2): 221-237.

Ganster, P. & Collins, K. (2017) Binational Cooperation and Twinning: A View from the US-Mexican Border, San Diego, California, and Tijuana, Baja California, *Journal of Borderlands Studies*, 32(4): 497-511.

Medeiros, E. (ed.) (2018) *European Territorial Cooperation. Theoretical and empirical approaches to the process and impacts of Cross-Border and Transnational Cooperation in Europe*. The Urban Book Series. Springer, Cham.