

CO-DEPENDANT BORDER AREAS IN REGIONAL AND GLOBAL CONTEXT. THE EUROPEAN UNION - A CASE STUDY

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Abstract

This article develops a conceptual framework for the systematic analysis of the European Union as a first step towards building a theory of the role of co-dependant border areas in regional and global context.

The position of the state has changed, at the end of the 20th century, being burdened by the interdependence processes, allowing a state to reach its goals only by means of the cooperation with other states and with the other non-state actors, both at regional level and at global level.

The end of the Cold War, marked by the fall of the Berlin Wall, generated the opening of the borders that was oppressed by Soviet Army. The importance of regions and the mutual communication between borders began to activate again and it created a huge window of opportunity. It is possible that the reshaping of the map had a positive influence as regional integration patterns along the lines of the post-war borders gradually appeared.

Theorizing borders in regional and global context also involves an attempt to understand others concepts, such as: cross-borders, new regionalism, networking system, interdependence and transnational issues. The international actors in the contemporary international system engage themselves in different action across state boundaries.

Keywords

Co-dependent border, European Union, globalization, governance, interdependence

1. INTRODUCTION

As we entered the 21st century, there is a growing sense of urgency that we need to increase our understanding of what co-dependant border areas in regional and global context represent.

With rapid changes in global economy, global governance, technology, transportation and the immigration policy, the world is becoming an intersecting community. New regional and global context regarding the border areas and the interactions among different actors will need to take into account several fundamental changes in world politics such as: the mounting influence of non-actors - groups and individuals that are capable of operating across multiple sovereign jurisdictions, the spread of regional and sub-regional organizations, the fact that today's global agenda is dominated by a host of issues, that no single country, no matter how powerful, can manage by itself, and the existence of multiple channels between societies, with multiple actors, not just states, multiple issues, not arranged in any clear hierarchy, etc.

In this new situation, the key hypothesis concerning the importance of border areas needs to find the appropriate framework for managing the issues above mentioned.

In Beck's opinion, "the unity of state, society, and the individual underpinning the first [industrial] modernity is in the course of dissolution. What we have instead is a 'non-state society, a social aggregate for which territorial state guarantees of order, as well as the rules of publicly legitimated politics, lose their binding character'" (Beck 2000, 12).

The term *co-dependent* means that we live in an interdependent world and that the nature of global interdependence in the world today is such that no problem is just cultural, economic, political, or ecological. Every problem unfolds all four aspects mentioned above, and by virtue of complicated patterns of actions, reactions and repercussions, involves many nations (Koizumi 1993, 142).

Thus, the complex patterns of global and regional aspects indicate that conflicts, but most cooperation among economy, policy, and culture are confined by co-dependent border areas. The current competitive environment demands "collaborative information sharing and problem solving, cooperative resources sharing, and collective implementation - in short a relationship built on interdependence" (Barlett *et al.* 2001, 106).

In this context, we need to address the imbalances that exist in standards of living and levels of opportunity between regions and we have to understand how regional and global governance can contribute to solving the huge global challenges that our society is facing. Regions are increasingly becoming key actors in the global arena in order to deal with most of the economic, social, and environmental challenges the world is facing today. The global challenges need regional and local solutions; in other words, as has been put forward by many multidisciplinary researchers, we need to think globally and act locally (Hubner 2009).

Globalization challenges, national welfare systems stretch the creative capacities of citizens, political leaders, and academics to invent suitable policy responses. If we are at all interested to manage the world as a system, we need to see the organization of border areas as the key issue for both the regional and the global context.

The most influential authors in international management, Bartlett and Ghoshal, have argued, since the beginning of the 90s, that globalization challenges our paradigms because it forces companies, citizens and policy makers to see reality as a growing interdependent network. According to these authors, the main driving force behind globalization is the fall of the national boundaries that impeded the full development of the private sector and the corresponding creation of economic opportunities.

2. THE CO-DEPENDANT BORDER AREAS AND CROSS-BORDER GOVERNANCE

Borders are no longer exclusively the safeguard of the state, and different actors can redefine borders or suitable them for their purposes. Moreover, numerous actors engage themselves both locally and beyond in an increasing number of cross-border co-operation initiatives. Local identities have become knowledgeable by globalizing economic, political, cultural, and technological developments.

The partial de-territorialization of the border has not only given rise to various “flows” but has created new social practices that are gradually turning the border areas in “interdependent borderlands”. Cross border, interaction is becoming more diverse, varying from cultural, to environmental, from

economic development to humanitarian projects (Ganster and Lorey 2006, 126).

In this context, I would like to add that the appearance of the so called “co-dependent border areas” as a new paradigm in the international system. In other words, the new co-dependent border areas with the concepts mentioned above exist because it could address those issues that could not be addressed by such “national” field.

As we can see the ability of international actors to influence each other’s development and effectiveness is increasingly recognized.

The growing number of regional and global aspects prompts a number of questions: how is the contemporary world defined, why does the border effect matter for economic policy, how different actors communicate and interact across the border.

As we can see the world is not flat and the distance is not dead, in short, borders matter. However, the contemporary system must be seen as a system consisting of cross-boarder and transnational aspects which try to meet the units of political, economic, social and cultural life. A large body of empirical work shows that cross-borders increase trade flows and have a positive impact on commercial links.

Another interesting point is that co-dependent border areas create platforms for innovation and creativity and a space where new ideas develop by bringing together potential stakeholders, from many different environments, such as governments, schools, universities, business, research, the arts, etc. It also gives opportunities for dialogue and public debate between the people from different countries regarding issues of mutual interest.

Newly created social links between people across national borders due to transnational organization is one of the most notable features of globalization. One of the consequences of easier access to other countries and increased intercultural communication is the creation of networks between people.

Globalization in the contemporary world means that transnational relationships are both extensive and intensive. States and other organizations exert effects over great distances: people’s lives can be fundamentally changed, or ended, as a result of decisions made only days or moments earlier, thousands miles away (Held and Koenig-Archibugi 2003, 130).

In other words, the international shifts, new trends and the actions on the world stage underline that an efficient understanding cross-boarders or

transnational issues relies on the aspects of border areas. First, in an increasingly industrialized and consumption-oriented world, problems and issues that were once limited largely to national territories are, increasingly, cross-border, transnational and even global in scope. Second, in an increasingly globalized economy, the costs of social and environmental consequences of production and consumption are seen as a drag on profits and competitiveness, and corporations are reluctant to pay them. Environmental quality is one arena in which co-dependant border areas' problems are particularly evident, especially in cases in which activities within one state may have impacts on environments within others. The co-dependant Border Areas arise through communicative interactions, which create networks between different actors. According to Castells the networks are "open structures, able to expand without limits, integrating new nodes as long as they share the same communication codes" (Castells 1996, 470).

The changing spatiality of politics - represented by, for example, the emergence of supra-national governance, for example, the European Union indicates that political space can no longer be equated with that of the nation-state, and, consequently, bordering processes have undergone concomitant changes, acquiring spatiality beyond territoriality. This form of governance involves actors and their interests from various spatial scales (e.g. region, municipality, state). In Kramsch and Mamadouh's opinion Europe's Euregios offer sites for a potential renegotiation and reworking of basic categories of political life normally tied exclusively to the national state (Kramsch and Mamadouh 2003, 45).

The cross-border governance spaces do not appear for no reason. Amin argues that globalization has unleashed a rigorous restructuring of the rationale and spaces of formal politics, including the rise of new forms of economic and political regionalism (Amin 2002, 396). The implementation of Euregios is part of the institutional innovations in the European Union and creates new policy fields.

The European Union provides an excellent laboratory for exploring how border regions offer new spaces of/for governance, cultural interaction, and economic development. In order to allow the regions to play an increasingly active role, a multi-level system of governance provides the right institutional answer, and the EU regional policy framework is the most outstanding example from which some lessons can be drawn.

There are a number of factors influencing the increasing role of the regional level. One of the most important is globalization and its effect on regional economies. Competition is increasingly taking place along regional lines in the world market. Regional economies are becoming nodes in global production networks and increasingly outward-looking. The European Union's duty is to share its experience in regional development with the rest of the world in order to promote economic growth and ensuring the benefits are spread fairly across the regions.

The rapid emergence of new global actors poses serious challenges for European competitiveness. The challenges care about national, institutional or policy borders and they impact directly on regional and local communities. Many regions have strong concentration of economic activity in sectors where competition from emerging economies is high. These regions need to diversify their economic structures into new, growing sectors, and modernize existing activities to move up the value chain.

When it comes to sharing experience, we can see that the aspect of Europe's regional policy which is the most in demand is the importance of cross border co-operation: A feature of EU Regional policy since the beginning, the encouragement of cross border, trans-national and interregional co-operation has yielded great benefits: on the one hand the ability to promote constructive contacts between regions along the European Union's external frontiers has helped many candidate countries prepare for the responsibilities of the European Union membership. On the other hand co-operation between regions across the European Union's internal borders has cemented relations between otherwise divided communities as we have seen most forcefully in the case of Northern Ireland.

In summary, the explicit goals for creating new European regions arise from three interrelated factors, identified by Deas and Lord (2006) and others. They are: (a) lowering internal boundaries within the EU to improve the functioning of the single market; (b) improving competitiveness by encouraging coherent, viable regions; and (c) fostering social cohesion through economic interdependence and harmonization (Deas and Lord 2006, 43).

For the Member States and their regions, this would represent a further developing of their policies in these areas with reference to common objectives and an effort to steer joint activities *inter alia* through an open method of coordination and exploration of opportunities offered by European funding.

The case of the European Union can offer a good example in understanding the co-dependent border areas in a regional context but also in the global context.

The European Union has a key role in shaping the globalization and it has a lot to offer to the development of the global governance.

A useful framework for understanding the differences of the governance in cross-border cooperation is provided by Blatter (2004). Blatter distinguishes between 'spaces of place' (territorially based governance) and 'spaces of flows' (functional governance involving networks of governance institutions – government and civil – working together thematically on issues of mutual interest, rather than strictly based on their physical proximity) (Blatter 2004, 28).

In conclusion, we can argue that European Union represents a good example for the manner in which co-dependent border areas are understood in the world today.

3. CONCLUSION

The classical notion of enclosure has been rethought and restated to that of connection. Borders have come to represent no longer a limit area but an active frame for social, cultural, and economic interworking between the citizens of different states.

At the same time, in an integrating world, the issues regarding the border are key elements as long as the "cultural diversity" perceived as an evolution from the historical multiethnic states to the present European Union's national states, ethnic homogeneity, and attitudes towards minorities from "inherited enemy" to "partner", historical and present relations between neighbouring people matter.

Globalization requires a considerable increase of the transnational and cross-border cooperation, a collaborative network that operates as a shared resource in identifying common issues and priorities. Now that the world is understood as consisting of codependent border areas, governments must be able to manage growing global problems, they must define initiatives and projects capable to respond to the transformations in the international system, and they must also develop more instruments for facilitating multilateral action.

In conclusion, the understanding of the challenges in oversight and accountability in codependent border areas policing will be taken forward through some key issue: regional and global networking, interdependence, multi-level or global governance, cultural diversity, etc. A complex perspective of all these realities which surround us in the world today (system of connections and linkages among its constituent subsystems – individuals, groups, associations, organizations, and nations in the context of co-dependant border areas) is vital if we are to gain the proper understanding for the promotion of economical development and competitive advantage in a larger number of host countries and regions.

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