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(Luxembourg, Basel and Geneva)**

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# **Cross-border metropolitan integration in Europe (Luxembourg, Basel and Geneva)**

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## **Introduction**

The concentration of economic activity in metropolitan regions is without doubt one of the most striking aspects of contemporary economic geography (Krätke, 2007). This process of metropolisation goes hand in hand with a redefinition of the traditional prerogatives of States in relation to urban centres and with a regeneration of cities as a territorial actor (Brenner, 2004; Le Galès and Harding, 1998). In this way the State has passed from the role of a top-down resource-allocating and regulatory authority to that of a partner and mediator (Kohler-Koch, 1996). As Jessop (2004) argues, this reconfiguration of the role of the State is organised based on two privileged directions. By transferring part of their sovereignty to a supranational authority, the Member States of the European Union (EU) have contributed to the construction of an economic system of regulation and to the removal of obstacles that may have impeded exchanges between them (Scharpf, 1999). At the same time the reforms of government functions carried out since the 1980s (decentralisation, deregulation, privatisation) have given new room for manoeuvre to a large number of actors such as public agencies, local and regional authorities, firms, NGOs etc. These different processes have participated in the emergence of multi-level governance within the framework of the EU (Hooghe, 1996).

In this context many studies relating to metropolitan governance have shown the difficulty of building institutional territories of cooperation that are adjusted to the functional spaces of metropolitan areas (Jouve and Lefèvre, 2002; Le Galès, 2002). Very often the types of cooperation, when they exist, take place within narrow parameters which only include part of the metropolitan region. Combined with the institutional fragmentation of these areas, there is a political management which struggles to integrate at the scale commensurate with the real issues at stake. This compartmentalisation of public action, which the multiplicity of actors contributes to perpetuating, constitutes one of the major challenges for cities.

In the particular case of the cross-border metropolitan spaces, the presence of a State border represents a specific geographic configuration where the function of the metropolitan node connected into world networks is combined with the double function of interface and barrier specific to the border. The opening of the borders in Europe constitutes an opportunity for cities to exploit the border differentials and flourish from the positive effects that they represent for businesses and workers (Ratti, 1994). The cross-border metropolitan space which results from this can testify to a functional

integration that extends beyond the border. In addition, if the border remains a political and institutional discontinuity likely to slow down certain interactions between actors (Newman, 2006), the multiplicity of cooperation projects at the cross-border level observed in Europe since the 1990s (Gualini, 2003; Perkmann, 2007) has shown that it is not necessarily a limiting factor. The promotion of legal tools, initially by the States and then by the EU, and the provision of financial resources aimed at formalising cross-border projects (Interreg) constitute a strong incentive for cities and cross-border regions to cooperate (Scott, 2002). Though likely to play a restrictive role in the contacts and exchanges between actors, the border and the territorial, political and cultural differentials that it instigates may also represent a source of new opportunities contributing to accelerating awareness of the interest (or the necessity) of cooperating with the territories located on the other side of the border.

Based on the cases of Luxembourg, Basel and Geneva, this article examines the integration of small metropolises inserted within global networks and located in a cross-border context. This article will first of all evaluate the nature and intensity of integration from both a functional and an institutional point of view. Using a comparative approach, analysis of their positioning and different trajectories then makes it possible to clarify the elements that structure the cooperation between the protagonists in the cross-border metropolitan areas. In order to identify the key factors and their respective contributions in the dynamics of institutional integration, four explanatory frameworks have been mobilised. Their identification is based on the works of Lefèvre (2004) relating to examples of metropolitan cooperation in Europe. The determining factors emphasised by this author have been adapted to the cross-border context, in particular the effects of the State border on the logic of metropolitan integration and the relationships between actors.

Firstly it is a question of considering the political and institutional structures plus the positioning of the different actors involved in urban governance, their role and their strategy in relation to a metropolitan project. Where does this initiative come from? Who provides the decisive impetus in the construction of cross-border and metropolitan cooperation? By referring to previous studies (Reitel, 2006; 2007), this work suggests that it is not so much the cross-border institutional context with its legal differences and politico-administrative singularities that prevails but rather the institutional and political organisation of the urban core and the strategies of the public and private actors who make up the city. The aim is therefore to see what are the dominant rationalities in the

cross-border cooperation and the underlying challenges. The leadership of the core city and the interventionism of States, the place of cross-border local authorities and the nature of the relationships between these different protagonists are at the heart of these questions.

Secondly it is also useful to take an interest in the spatial form of the metropolis. What is the impact of the geographic configuration of the metropolis, in particular the spatial proximity of the border in relation to the metropolitan core? The considered hypothesis states that the existence of a cross-border urban agglomeration constitutes a favourable stimulus to cooperation, since interaction between local actors seems indispensable to the smooth functioning and competitiveness of the metropolitan area.

Thirdly, the relationships between the private and public sectors are considered. According to the prevailing political culture, the place of civil society and economic protagonists vary widely in the modes of cross-border metropolitan cooperation. *A priori*, the opening up of systems for actors constitutes a stimulating factor since private initiatives are likely to favour actions undertaken by public entities (Jouve and Lefèvre, 2003).

Finally the historical dimension is also taken into consideration. Institutional integration is a process that is part of the duration and history of relationships between actors and often intervenes in the current and future types of cooperation. In this way the capitalisation of exchanges and experiences over time can be used as a foundation for the emergence of a “culture of cooperation” (Lefèvre, 2004) characterised by speeches, practices and common images. In addition, the dynamics of cross-border metropolitan integration are part of a wider context dictated by the evolution of legal frameworks and financial incentives, both on the level of inter-state agreements and at the European level.

The first part specifies the concept of integration applied in the case of cross-border metropolises and justifies the approach preferred in this article. The second part proposes a theoretical analysis framework of the cross-border metropolitan dynamics which distinguish the functional and institutional dimensions of the integration. The third part analyses the functional and institutional evolution of the metropolitan spaces considered by questioning the role of the borders in the integration process. The last part examines the hypotheses considered and provides some explanations.

## **Integration approaches in a cross-border environment**

An analysis of the integration process within cross-border metropolitan spaces involves a clarification of the concept and the approaches developed in order to understand the idea of integration. In a report on the *Study Programme on European Spatial Planning*, the authors put forward the idea that “spatial integration expresses the opportunities for and level of interaction within and between areas and may reflect the willingness to co-operate” (Grasland et al., 1999: 8). The significance of the concept of interaction is that it emphasises the process more than the form and it positions the analysis in a systemic perspective where the relationships between the system elements prevail over their attributes.

Such an approach also corresponds to the meaning given to the border in a context of globalisation and European integration, to the extent that the functions of contact and exchange tend to prevail over the barrier, distance and control functions traditionally assigned to State borders (Anderson, 1996). Of course the border is still a “significant boundary from a political point of view” (Groupe frontière, 2004), but due to its high porosity, it increasingly exercises a mediating and contact role between two cultural systems (Donnan and Wilson, 1999). In this sense it acts as an element of comparison with the *otherness* which is likely to provoke stimulation and creativity (Dear and Burridge, 2005). The border interface henceforth constitutes a privileged space of interactions between the protagonists located on one side or the other of the political and territorial discontinuities.

However, this preponderance of relationships in the analysis must not let us forget the structural approaches of spatial integration, in particular those which apply to the consideration of the layout of the territories. Therefore the extension of the infrastructure networks which reinforces the connectivity between the elements of a spatial system or the densification of the border areas which testifies to a convergence of demographic dynamics are also aspects likely to illustrate a dynamic of cross-border integration. Back in their era, Durkheim with *Le Suicide* and Ratzel in *Politische Geographie*, both published in 1897, made a clear distinction between two forms of integration, one defined as “mechanical” based on the structure of a system and the extent of its homogeneity and the other designated as “organic” which referred to the flows between the members of a system (social or spatial) and to the extent of the intensity of the relationships within this system. The constraints linked to the difficulty of gathering

comparable data for the three cross-border spaces under analysis have led to a preference for the approach in terms of interaction.

### **Conceptual framework and analysis method**

Taking inspiration from the distinction made by Joye and Leresche (1997) between functional and institutional spaces, the same conceptual base is proposed in order to comprehend the two dimensions of cross-border integration. Functional integration relates to the form and intensity of the socio-economic interactions observed from one part of the border to the other, via the flow of commuters in the metropolitan area. Moreover, institutional integration concerns the form and intensity of interactions between actors who are potentially willing to cooperate, whether they have political responsibility, are technical operators or representatives of civil society. Entering a more political dimension, this approach considers the partnerships between the actors and their strategies.

The conceptual framework resulting from the combination of the functional and institutional perspectives follows as a continuum from preceding studies (Reitel, 2007; Sohn and Walther, 2008). It assumes the form of a two-dimensional graphic with twelve theoretical configurations. On the horizontal axis, the functional gradient evolves from a situation of separation to a situation of interaction, with the intermediate phase reflecting the increasing complexity of the socio-economic networks which, beyond borders, unite the actors. In the first configuration, the border constitutes a strict barrier to relationships that may take place between the urban centres, each of them polarising their own national space. This situation may be significantly modified by the cross-border extension of the metropolitan area which goes beyond, at least in part, national boundaries in the second configuration. Finally in the third configuration, the metropolitan centre polarises the cross-border spaces and encompasses peripheral urban centres into its functional area.

On the vertical axis, the institutional gradient evolves from a situation of ignorance to one of cooperation, by referring to the phases of co-existence, interdependence and integration identified by Martinez (1994). The first configuration is characterised by an absence of relationships between the political actors situated on both sides of the State border. The intensification of occasional contacts and the consideration of the spaces situated beyond the border in territorial planning have led this situation to evolve towards a more formal situation in which national or regional concerns are expressed by regular

contacts, formalised exchanges and joint ad-hoc projects. Finally in the final configuration which corresponds to the most advanced level of institutional integration, the political protagonists have managed to implement a joint cooperation mechanism at metropolitan level. Two sub-configurations are highlighted according to which the cooperation is expressed in the form of a project approach aiming for strategic positioning or in the form of an operational approach with the creation of a management community (Vandermotten, 2007). The implementation of cross-border planning projects and their joint financing conveys a more successful cooperation than the compilation of strategic planning documents which are non-opposable to third parties and which do not at the end of the day force the actors to respect their commitments. In its current configuration this approach of metropolitan institutional integration does not make a distinction between the initiatives piloted by the State (top down) and those instituted by local authorities or private bodies (bottom up), but focuses on the intensity of the cooperation undertaken within the metropolitan area.

As far as the analysis method is concerned, the degree of functional integration is expressed by the measurement of the commuting flows linking the metropolitan core to its peripheral areas. This choice is motivated by the fact that the data relating to these flows are relatively accessible and enlightening concerning the socio-economic interactions, as shown by the studies already carried out in this field in Europe (ESPON, 2006). The comparison of the functional metropolitan areas of Luxembourg, Basel and Geneva is based therefore on the studies of Blöchliger (2005) that were carried out on the Swiss cross-border metropolitan centres. In addition to the official urban agglomerations, their metropolitan space comprised the municipalities where the proportion of commuters was above 16% of the working population in 2004. This latter criterion is used in the case of Luxembourg, taking into account all municipalities with a proportion of commuters working in the Luxembourg urban agglomeration that was above 16% of the working population in 2002.

The evaluation of the intensity of the institutional integration is based on an in-depth examination of the forms of cross-border metropolitan cooperation put in place in the three cities. In order to compare speeches and go beyond the representations drawn up due to the concern of territorial promotion, about ten interviews were carried out in each area with territory officials, coordinators of cross-border projects, university lecturers and representatives of chambers of commerce and complemented by an analysis of official

documents. In accordance with the studies of Braillard et al. (1998) devoted to Geneva, this approach favours real initiatives and the displayed will for cooperation rather than the specific legal form of each project. It is therefore primarily the content of any cooperation that has been taken into consideration, in particular the metropolitan dimension of partnerships, the state of advancement of the planning project, the implementation of the technical delivery or governance structure.

### **Analysis of functional and institutional integration**

Luxembourg, Basel and Geneva have several points in common which justify conducting a comparison of their metropolitan integration. In European comparisons, these small metropolises are endowed with a higher rank than could be expected given their populations, due in particular to the fact that they have been successful in projecting themselves onto the European and world stages by welcoming global institutions and companies (Rozenblat and Cicille, 2003; Taylor and Aranya, 2008). Taking certain specifics into account, these cities can be considered as centres capable of producing new knowledge and reaping the benefits of innovation. Luxembourg and Geneva are characterised by a predominance of tertiary activities, in particular financial services, which represented respectively 21.6% and 24.3% of total added value in 2004 (Deloitte, 2006), whereas in Basel the secondary sector is particularly well developed (34.3% in 2004), due to the chemical/pharmaceutical and life science sectors (Fuëg, 2007).

#### ***The cross-border dimension of three small specialised metropolitan centres***

The three metropolitan functional areas are comparable demographically, consisting of 741,000 inhabitants in Geneva, 805,409 inhabitants in Luxembourg and 890,477 inhabitants in Basel, whereas the core cities totalled respectively 178,000, 80,670 and 166,600 inhabitants in 2000. Between 1995 and 2005, Luxembourg and Geneva experienced strong annual demographic growth (+1.4% and +1.3%), whereas the number of residents in the Basel metropolis stagnated (ETB, 2007). An identical state of affairs can be observed in the annual growth of employment which has been clearly more significant in Luxembourg (+4.3%) and in Geneva (+1.4%) than in Basel (+0.2%). The pronounced orientation of the three metropolitan economies towards knowledge-intensive activities has also led to an increased dependency on national and cross-border work (Schuler et al., 2007). More than 123,000 commuters cross the border every day to

work in Luxembourg from France, Germany and Belgium (2005), whilst more than 46,500 people come to work in the Canton of Geneva from France (2006) and more than 46,000 residents from Germany and France have a job in the Trinational Agglomeration of Basel (2000) (OCSTAT-INSEE, 2007; ETB, 2007). The cross-border proportion of the population in these metropolitan regions is also higher in Luxembourg (44.9 %) than in Basel (39.8%) or Geneva (34.2%), which is completely remarkable in Europe.

The Luxembourg metropolitan area has the distinction of being larger (4,344 km<sup>2</sup>) than those of Basel and Geneva (2,544 and 2,080 km<sup>2</sup>). It extends in a concentric manner throughout the Grand Duchy starting from Luxembourg-City and encompasses the small border urban centres situated less than 30 km away such as Thionville and Longwy on the French side or Arlon in Belgium, without reaching however the medium-sized cities of Metz, Nancy (F) or Saarbrücken (D). Unlike Switzerland, which has a polycentric urban network comprising dynamic and competing cities, Luxembourg is surrounded by cities more severely affected by the industrial downturn and therefore not very likely to counterbalance its attractiveness in terms of jobs. In addition the high density areas are further away from the employment centre in Luxembourg than in the Swiss case where the urban agglomerations constitute the dominant demographic poles. These two reasons taken together explain why the proportion of commuters who gravitate towards the metropolitan centres is comparatively higher in Luxembourg than in Switzerland.

Taking into account the small distances separating the core cities from the State borders, the Swiss metropolises have a cross-border area that is much more developed, particularly in Geneva, where almost 73.4% of the metropolitan area is located in France. In Basel, too, the metropolitan area is particularly developed in France and Germany, though without reaching the cities of Mulhouse (30 km) and Freiburg im Breisgau (53 km).

### ***Two levels of cross-border metropolitan cooperation***

The examination of the cooperation projects reveals a difference between Luxembourg on the one hand and Basel and Geneva on the other. Due to its size and geographic location, the border question is inextricably linked with Luxembourg. Involved since 1951 in the process of building Europe, a member of the Benelux Economic Union, and a signatory of the Karlsruhe Agreement (1996), the Grand Duchy is also present on the cross-border cooperation scene. However, it is particularly striking

to note the lack of synergies between institutional actors on the metropolitan integration scale. Indeed, the experiences of cooperation undertaken to date in Luxembourg favour the local level or that of the Greater Region (formerly known as Saar-Lor-Lux), a cooperation area created in 1971 based on a agreement between Saarland (D), the Lorraine region (F), Rhineland-Palatinate (D), Wallonia (B) and Luxembourg.

At local level the cartography of the extent of cross-border cooperation reveals that the existing projects are restricted to a small part of the metropolitan area. In addition, the City of Luxembourg has developed some inter-urban cooperation in the form of city networks which link on the one hand Saarbrücken, Trier and Metz (Quattropole), and on the other hand Esch-sur-Alzette, Longwy, Arlon, Thionville and Metz (LELA+). However, the objectives pursued by these networks do not enable them to really embrace the current metropolitan challenges.

At the inter-regional level, Luxembourg holds an active position within the context of the Greater Region. Despite not benefiting from any representation at the political level, this structure offers the Grand Duchy a framework of institutionalised cooperation which places it in a favourable situation in relation to other regional entities that do not benefit from the prerogatives that fall within the remit of a sovereign State. However, as stated by Sohn and Walther (2008), the investment in this type of territorial cooperation has not proven to be well adapted to support the emergence of governance focused on the specific challenges of the metropolisation of Luxembourg. From this point of view, Luxembourg has not seen a renewal of the metropolitan institutions comparable to that experienced in other European urban centres (Brenner, 2003), and characterised by a transfer of responsibilities from the State to the City or to the metropolitan institutions.

In the case of Basel and Geneva, cross-border cooperation has been developed across a space whose extension is close to that of the functional metropolitan area. In the Basel agglomeration, cross-border relations have a long history. In fact the Trinationnal Agglomeration of Basel (*ATB*) launched in 1997 formed part of the proposals of the Regio Basiliensis, a cross-border cooperation authority created in 1963 and which has often been presented as a model. Financing through Interreg II enabled the planning process to begin. In 2007, the ATB was transformed into the Local Organisation for Cross-border Cooperation (*GLCT*), and renamed the Trinationnal Eurodistrict of Basel (*ETB*). The cooperation parameters were expanded and new topics were added onto those already covered by the former cooperation structure. In parallel to the actions taken by

institutions through the ETB, private actors close to economic circles have developed a strategic vision looking forward to 2020 for Basel and its metropolitan region called metrobasel. In Geneva the cross-border cooperation centred around the Geneva Agglomeration Project (*Projet d'agglo*) is less institutionalised than in Basel. Through the work of the Franco-Genevan Regional Committee (*CRFG*) created in 1973, experiences of cross-border cooperation have been amassed and formalised in an agglomeration approach (2004-2007), on the basis of a charter developed in 1997.

In these two Swiss projects which favour town planning and mobility, a strategic reflection on the development of the cross-border metropolitan space has been undertaken and a joint implementation plan has been drawn up. These initiatives have been expressed in the agglomeration policy launched by the Swiss Confederation in 2001. This national policy aims in fact to reinforce the integration of urban spaces, which in general are institutionally fragmented, by proposing the financing of transport infrastructures at agglomeration level. It also aims to encourage public authorities (Swiss cantons and municipalities) to undertake some strategic reflection on urban development. As a result, the cantons of Basel-City and Geneva have succeeded in consolidating the reflections undertaken concerning their metropolitan areas by involving the main political actors. The two cantons appear unquestionably to be key players in aligning the Federal objectives with their own objectives, but also in reconciling the interests of various political authorities such as other cantons, French and German municipalities. One major difference between the two cooperation projects concerns the manner in which the relationship between the metropolitan centre and its cross-border periphery is envisaged. In Basel, the integration of the peripheries seems to serve the economic influence of the urban core, whereas in Geneva the integration of the French suburban area has resulted in a negotiation to rebalance the functions between the centre and its periphery. Therefore, on the horizon for 2030, the Geneva Agglomeration Project explicitly recommends that population growth should be shared equally between Switzerland and France and that one third of the jobs are to be created in France through fiscal company measures.

Following this presentation, the intensity of cross-border metropolitan cooperation measured in Basel and Geneva seems to be higher than in Luxembourg. The extent of the cooperation undertaken within the context of agglomeration policy instigated by the

Swiss Confederation has placed the two Swiss metropolises within a process that is leading them towards an operational approach.

## **Elements that structure cross-border metropolitan cooperation**

### ***The role of institutional actors and their strategies***

The types of cross-border metropolitan cooperation seem to greatly depend on the positioning and strategy adopted by the actors who exercise their leadership on urban development in the metropolitan areas. The emergence of a cooperation project is primarily a political construction and the power relationships within the national system prevail on the cross-border institutional differences. In Luxembourg it is the State that provides the decisive impetus to cross-border cooperation and that also guides cooperation towards local and regional levels. For Basel and Geneva, the integration of cross-border spaces in metropolitan development projects stems mainly from the volition of the urban cantons (Basel-City and Geneva). In each case, it is the State or the protagonists with the benefit of competences specific to a State, e.g. Swiss cantons, who have a grip on cross-border cooperation at the metropolitan scale. The institutional stability in Luxembourg and Switzerland and the lack of reforms in the modes of urban government partly explain this preponderance of the State.

The compromises which underpin the cross-border projects result from power relationships between the metropolitan core and its peripheries, be they national or cross-border. In the case of Geneva the Agglomeration Project is based on an agreement between the Canton and the French municipalities, organised in the Genevan Association of Regional Cooperation (ARC) and which have played a defining role in the development of the agglomeration project. The Swiss examples show too that the Federal State is also present even it is not directly involved in projects. Through financial opportunities offered by its agglomeration policy, the Confederation plays a launching role (case of Geneva) or an accelerator role (case of Basel) in cross-border metropolitan projects. Beyond financial aspects, the Federal State also expresses its support in a symbolic way by recognising metropolitan initiatives. The legitimacy of the Geneva Agglomeration Project seems however to be better ensured to the extent that the French State integrated it into its own contracts of metropolitan cooperation instigated by the

Interministerial Delegation of Planning and Competitiveness of Territories (*DIACT*) in 2003.

In the three configurations, the core cities seem to stand back which contrasts with the regeneration of cities observed elsewhere in Europe (Le Galès, 2002). This finding does not however lead to any conclusions that are too definitive given the specific nature of City-States. Therefore in Basel, the City can no longer be distinguished from the canton since the political and administrative merger of the two entities in 1833. On the other hand, when the administrations are separate as in Geneva, conflicts often arise and the canton tends to marginalise the municipality. Finally, in the Grand Duchy, the City of Luxembourg does not seem able to develop a metropolitan strategy at cross-border level, nor even at national level, as the central State seems anxious to preserve its grip on the capital and its governance. The weak demographic weight of the City does not facilitate its emergence as an institutional actor.

This defining role of national political and institutional factors tends to minimise the importance that could be granted to the institutional nature of the border or, more precisely, to the role of the institutional or legal differences between the countries concerned in the modes of cooperation. The cases of Basel and Geneva illustrate therefore that the presence of an external EU border, tempered it is true by bilateral agreements, does not constitute a limiting factor in the scope of cooperation projects. Similarly the experience in Basel is testament to the ability of the actors to overcome the inherent territorial complexity of cross-border cooperation, since the Trinational Eurodistrict of Basel brings together three countries, including four Swiss cantons, with significant legal and regulatory differences.

### ***The place of the border in the urban development***

The experiences of cooperation of the Swiss cross-border metropolises show that the more the urban development is constrained by the border, the more the local actors have been tempted to overcome these difficulties prematurely which gives a definitive historic depth to cross-border relationships. The case of Basel confirms that a capitalisation of cross-border experiences over a period of 45 years has proven to be a determining factor in the development of a joint strategy and the implementation of active cooperation. In one way the case of Luxembourg confirms this hypothesis since in the absence of any contact between the border and the core city, cross-border cooperation has not invested in

questions relating to the urban development of the metropolitan area and in the regulation of any negative effects (transport and land costs). In Luxembourg, the metropolitan area of reference remains the national territory, whilst in Basel and Geneva, the politicians think in terms of cross-border urban agglomerations: integration of border peripheries has proven essential in ensuring the smooth operation and attractiveness of the metropolis.

### ***The links between private and public actors***

The convergence of economic and political interests is manifested by an involvement of private actors in the cross-border metropolitan governance. This is clearly more significant in Basel than elsewhere, as demonstrated by the creation of the Regio Basiliensis in 1960s and more recently, the metrobasel initiative launched in 2005. This private sector involvement is explained by the presence of an urban bourgeoisie aware of its sense of belonging to the city and concerned about its future (Sarasin, 1998). The creation of prestigious museums and foundations (Tinguely Museum, Beyeler Foundation) by patrons of the arts and industrialists confirms this strong and sustainable concern of the local elites. However the impact of a project like metrobasel seems ambivalent. On the one hand such an initiative can generate some dynamism in the actions of the public bodies engaged in the ETB, the latter being in a position of having to respond in order to keep control of strategic questions such as the promotion of Basel as a cross-border metropolis. On the other hand, the stacking up of projects and initiatives which have not been consulted upon may introduce a certain confusion amongst the inhabitants and make more complex the implementation of a governance that is efficient and viewed as legitimate.

Such an involvement of the business environment is not found in Geneva where international and non-governmental organisations or the financial sector only manifest a modicum of interest in the border areas. The economic circles only invest slightly in the local or regional area because the economic activities between Switzerland and France are too disparate and lack any complementarities. In Luxembourg the externally focused nature of an economy mainly dominated by the financial sector also contributes to explaining the lack of involvement of the economic actors. The absence of an enlightened bourgeoisie based in the city must also be mentioned in this context. Long assigned the role of fortress in the hands of foreign powers, the capital of the Grand Duchy is nonetheless a small city connected to global networks but nearly 63% of its

population is of foreign origin. *A priori* less inclined to invest effort in the debate on the future of the city, these expatriates do not benefit from political legitimacy to influence big decisions.

### ***The historical depth: an accumulation of experiences***

As far as cross-border cooperation is concerned, it seems that different geographical scales have been favoured depending on the historical period. Cooperation first of all developed within a regional context, then in a local context and more recently in a metropolitan one. The institutional frameworks developed initially by the States and then by the EU are not strangers to these reorientations. The years between 1960-1980 were therefore auspicious for the development of initiatives which spatially were much more spread out than the functional metropolitan areas (Regio Basiliensis in 1963, SaarLorLux in 1971, CRFG in 1973) and which take their place in a context where the ideas of the region and regionalism prevail (O'Dowd, 2002). These were followed between 1980-1990 by many local initiatives within the context of the application of the Madrid Framework Convention and more specifically the Karlsruhe Agreement of 1996. Finally a third change of scale appeared in Switzerland in the early 2000s in favour of an agglomeration policy run by the Confederation and following the signing of bilateral agreements with the EU.

The cases of Basel and Geneva show that the capitalisation of experiences over time both at the local and inter-regional scale may be used as a foundation for developing cross-border metropolitan cooperation projects. The example of Luxembourg, through its involvement in the construction of the Greater Region, recalls however that the historic depth of cooperative relations is not a sufficient condition and that a strong political will remains indispensable. The construction of cross-border metropolitan governance requires a learning process about the border (institutional know-how and knowledge of the neighbours), an intensification of exchanges which will lead gradually to the implementation of a shared culture of cooperation and finally to an ability to develop a common strategy (project approach) and to implement it (operational approach). Such an undertaking is of course not risk-free. The process, carried by a limited number of actors, is often chaotic and the contingency of political U-turns is always likely to disrupt the dynamics set in motion. Having said that, through the gradual consolidation of systems

for the cooperating actors, thresholds have been passed enabling the development of more ambitious cooperation projects.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude it seems that the development of Luxembourg is very different to that of the Swiss cities to the extent that no cooperation area adapted to the current scale of the functional metropolis has yet come to fruition. The contrast with Basel and Geneva is all the more surprising given that Luxembourg is located at the historic heart of the foundation of Europe. This in itself implies a common regulatory and legal framework likely to favour exchanges, whereas the two Swiss cities are crossed by an external EU border, e.g. an institutional and political discontinuity *a priori* stronger than the preceding case.

The analysis of the cross-border metropolitan integration shows therefore that there does not necessarily have to be a reciprocal link between the intensity of the socio-economic interactions and the extent of the cooperation instigated by the territorial institutions. The example of Luxembourg illustrates the fact that the existence of such a disparity is not however attributable to the barrier effect that the border may have on the relationships between the actors but has proven to be more linked to the preponderant role of the State and its wish to preserve its grip on the regulation of border differentials which are the origin of the country's prosperity.

It is certainly true that the State border is always likely to put the brakes on exchanges and cooperation, given in particular the cultural, institutional and regulatory differences that it instigates. The example of Basel and Geneva shows however that the border can also represent a source of new opportunities and at different levels. From a political perspective, the border situation enables the local authorities concerned to hope for increased autonomy through cooperation and alliances which transcend institutional and territorial divides. In this quest for autonomy, the mobilisation of financial resources enabled by cross-border cooperation constitutes without any doubt a strong motivation. On the institutional level, the presence of a State border creates the opportunity to invent original forms of governance, considering in particular the wide flexibility of legal and regulatory provisions which surround cross-border cooperation. If the weak institutionalisation of the cooperation provisions leaves more scope to the different protagonists to develop their projects and to experiment with original planning modes or

governance, it shows however its limits in the implementation of ambitious projects. On the symbolic level finally, the cross-border dimension enables the international character of the metropolitan centre to be displayed, together with its cultural diversity and the possibilities represented by this richness in the context of global competition to attract international companies and a skilled workforce.

Rather than a generalisation on the European scale which can only be illusory given the multiplicity of specific cases, the questions raised by this study bring to the fore the interaction between border and metropolis. One question seems essential in this regard: in the context of international competition which metropolises are now turning towards, to what extent does the presence of a nearby border constitute comparative added value? The three case studies suggest activating the border potential remains subject to the territorial interests of the actors who exercise leadership over the development of the metropolis and who may drive or, conversely, limit the emergence of a cross-border cooperation process.

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