

**INSTITUTE FOR REGIONAL STUDIES
CENTRE FOR ECONOMIC AND REGIONAL STUDIES
HUNGARIAN ACADEMY OF SCIENCES**

DISCUSSION PAPERS

No. 91

**Towards EGTC: Evaluating Influence
of the Perception of the Borders
on the Cross-Border Policies
and Cooperation in Serbia**

**by
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Series editor

Gábor LUX

**Pécs
2013**

Join European Master in Comparative Local Development
Academic year 2010/2012
Project Work Paper

Master Programme jointly established by the Università degli Studi di Trento, the Universität Regensburg, the Corvinus University Budapest and the University of Ljubljana.

Project title: Towards E.G.T.C. Evaluating Influence of the Perception of the Borders on the Cross-border Policies and Cooperation in Serbia.

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ISSN 0238–2008
ISBN 978 963 9899 64 3
978 963 9899 65 0 (PDF)

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Printed in Hungary by Harthmedia Ltd., Pécs.

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List of abbreviations

AEBR – Association of European Border Regions

AP – Autonomous Province

BR – Border Region

CBC – Cross-border Cooperation

CoE – Council of Europe

CoR – Committee of the Regions

EGTC – European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation

ENPI – European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument

ERDF – European Regional Development Fund

ESF – European Social Fund

IPA – Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance

LSG – Local Self Governments

NGO – Non-governmental Organisations

RDA’s – Regional Development Agencies

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my university supervisor, László Letenyei, whose knowledgeable support and attention to detail has helped me in structuring my ideas and the entire research project. He also helped me improve my overall graduate experience, especially regarding the use of mental mapping as a research method, and advice on how to analyse and present the subject matter.

I would also like to thank the members of the Hungarian Academy of Sciences CERS Institute for Regional Studies in Pécs, in the first place Professor Gyula Horváth, whose advice and help regarding regional studies and border issues literature contributed significantly to the professionalism of the study.

Finally, I would like to thank my girlfriend Sara Polidoro for taking time out from her busy schedule to serve as my external reader and for the assistance she has provided at all levels of the research project.

Abstract

Research of perceptions of regions involved in cross-border cooperation (hereafter CBC) in Serbia should provide new insight in the matter of managing cross-border projects and answering the fundamental question: what is the biggest obstacle in the minds of citizens who live in bordering regions to be more involved in cross-border programmes and initiatives, beside those already analysed in literature? Have previously conducted projects in Serbia changed the perception of citizens, and if yes, in what way and to what extent; what cities or regions in the future will be most suitable for setting up EGTC? These issues are directly related to main objectives of CBC as the EU territorial development policy, which are to erase borders and bring economic development to regions that stay behind the average development of nation states; to promote local cross-border “people to people” actions and economic and social development in regions on both sides of common borders.

This research is looking at all of the above-mentioned goals. *Our first hypothesis* is that borders are perceived as less important in regions with higher CBC. As per the *second hypothesis*, more developed regions (higher GDP, more local institutions and actors, more CBC projects) are already working (consciously or by chance) on the creation of common cross-border territory. The necessity for this study is emphasised by the fact that Serbia has had numerous transformations of borders and state status during last 20 years. At the moment, because of Kosovo’s independence issues, Serbian citizens are not sure what represents the territory of the Republic of Serbia.

This paper consists of five chapters. The first two are background chapters. The first chapter examines the relation between local development and cross-border cooperation in the EU context, and clarifies what are Serbia's developing opportunities being involved in this initiatives and specific Programmes, as Serbia is part of cooperation areas outside the EU. We continue explaining the dynamic character of borders in the contemporary world and focus on complex influences of borders on peoples' perception of space, concluding this chapter with literature review of related studies using mental mapping. The second chapter concerns European Grouping of Territorial Communities as a new policy instrument for CBC, and discusses the added value of this instrument to already existing ones. In the third and four chapters, the methodological background and results of research are discussed. Here the emphasis is put on target groups for interviews and how questions were structured. We can notice that vicinity to the border from economical and development perspective is the advantage for certain regions while for other, it is not. The concluding chapter is dedicated to the indications that contacts, networks and projects are concentrated in specific areas. Thus, we provide the conclusive map of border perception in Serbia and recommendations about territories that in the future will be most suitable for establishing EGTC.

1 Introduction

“Neighbour is determined by the destiny, and the friend is chosen freely, friendship between neighbours is converting of destiny into personal choice.”
(Cross-border cooperation in Europe, Anđelko Šimić, 2005).

This research¹ aims at enhancing understanding of perceptions of borders in the cross-border regions of Serbia (hereafter CBR) and to evaluate the influences of these perceptions on cross-border policies and cross-border cooperation. The study relevance is rooted in the fact that only a small number of CBC projects and initiatives exist in Serbia. Regional differences in Serbia are extremely high, while the local development sector is having the second highest share of total disbursed IPA funds (around 10% from €11.5 billion for the period 2007–2013). This raises the question of CBC development impact within domestic absorption capacity, which is at 85.73% slightly under the Western Balkans average of

¹ Project Work is a crucial and compulsory element for the overall and final assessment of the Joint European CoDe Master Programme, and needs to be successfully passed in order for the student to graduate. This Project Work is also recognised as a part of internship research objective in the Institute for Regional Studies in Pécs.

87.3% (Knezevic 2010, p. 8). The problems of utilising funds available for CBC in the regions of the Republic of Serbia which are eligible for CBC under the IPA Programme are well known and already analysed in literature (CESS-Vojvodina 2010). Still, this instrument of European territorial cooperation, which also serves as a developing instrument of local self-governments, is not used to its maximum.

Local development is an academic discipline that combines elements of many social science fields and concepts. As part of public policy, it is distinct from political science or economics in general because it is focused on the application of theory to practice. For this reasons, the study will apply a mix of qualitative and quantitative methodology and mental mapping as a research method. It will combine science disciplines that are essential for the research, such as: local economic development, public administration, regional studies, psychology, geography and policy impact analysis. In fact, “CBC deals with issues that include social affairs, economic development, minority rights, cross-border employment and trade, the environment, etc. CBC, however, has also been about attempts to use the border as a resource for economic and cultural exchange as well as for building political coalitions for regional development purposes” (Scott – Matzeit 2006, p. 3). For this reason the research will be conducted on the whole territory of Serbia and specially focused on border regions.² The study uses Computer Assisted On-line Interviews³ (CAOI), and a limited number of personal interviews have been conducted with people working on local and regional development issues and managing CBC projects in Serbia.

The main objectives of CBC as an EU policy instrument are to erase the borders and to bring economic development to regions that stay behind the average development of national state:

Nowhere is the need to overcome obstacles and barriers created by borders, which can then reoccur due to national laws despite the existence of the EU, more apparent than in the border regions of neighbouring countries... In the framework of Europe-wide disparities, in addition to territorial cohesion, CBC is helping in particular to eliminate economic imbalances and obstacles in neighbouring border regions in a regionally manageable framework, in partnership with national governments and European authorities (European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions 2004, pp. 7, 8).

The research is looking at both of the above-mentioned goals. The *first hypothesis* is that borders are perceived as less important in regions with higher

² Definitions of border regions and other definitions important for gathering data are provided in the section that deals with research methodology and questions for questionnaires and interviews.

³ Computer Assisted On-line Interviews (CAOI) are a special kind of Computer assisted self-interviewing (CASI), which is a method for data collection in which the respondent uses a computer to complete the survey questionnaire without an interviewer administering it to the respondent.

CBC. The *second hypothesis* is that more developed regions (higher GDP, more local institutions and actors, more CBC project) are already working (consciously or by chance) on the creation of CB territory (well organised spatial and urban policies, good CB communication, cooperation between entrepreneurs, better infrastructure and cultural exchange projects). This is due to the fact that in the globalised world, local governments in bordering territories want to make a resource out of borders and not an obstacle. In addition, national governments guided by the principles of democracy, inclusion and subsidiarity are searching for models and methods to bring equal regional development to the whole territory of a country. In the end, the conclusion will try to argue what border regions are best prepared for the future establishment of EGTC once the legal bases are set and Serbia becomes a candidate country for the EU. Mr. Herwig van Staa⁴ indicated in his speech in the international conference “New Regional Policies and European Experience”, held in Belgrade on the 2nd of February 2012, that Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 will be amended in April of the same year, allowing the members of the Council of Europe to establish EGTC.⁵

Serbia has had numerous transformations of borders during the last 20 years. There is no other country in the world that has witnessed this phenomenon in such a short period of time: from two types of federation to a unitary state; from self-governing Socialism dominated by a single party to the authoritarian regime of Milosevic; finally, the most recent transition to democracy. The phenomenon was followed by wars and strong media propaganda under which different territorial aspirations were presented to the majority of the population.⁶ An illustrative example of these changes can be the following: if you were born in Serbia in the end of 1980's and did not travel out of Serbia yet, you would have already changed 4 countries – considering, of course, just the name of the country. Presently, because of the Kosovo independence⁷ issue, Serbia still has open debate and problems about its state borders. In December 2011, during the negotiation of Belgrade and Pristina, we saw how great problems can arise just about the name or connotation the border will have: is it going to be a state or administrative border? What uniforms will custom officers carry and how the border is going to be managed, unilaterally or jointly? In this regard, it is neces-

⁴ President of Board of Regions for local and regional governments of Council of Europe.

⁵ Serbia has been a member of CoE since April 3rd 2003.

⁶ Influence of media on people perception of territory and orientation in space is conducted in several studies, such as Montello (1997).

⁷ Before 1999 Kosovo was the autonomous province of Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. After 10th of June 1999, with UN Security Council Resolution 1244, Kosovo was placed under interim of UN administration (UNMIK). On 17th February 2008, Kosovo has unilaterally declared independence and till this moment 85 members of the UN have recognised it as a sovereign state.

sary to remember that because of failing to achieve a compromise with Kosovo, the Council of Ministers of EU postponed to March 2012 the decision of granting candidate status to Serbia.

Furthermore, from the largest country in Former Yugoslavia and the status of central power in the Balkans, Serbia has become a small country with a still problematic definition of its territory. Also, Yugoslavia as a Non-Aligned country was for a long time the first free country after the descent of the Iron Curtain and the sense of bordering country is emphasised in the dominant interpretations of history⁸ (*see appendix 1*). Presently, Serbia is a land-locked country bordering with 3 EU member States, 3 EU candidate countries, BIH with whom Serbia has a special relation agreement due to the border with Republika Srpska, and with Kosovo, where border issues are highly problematic.

After the fall of the communist regime and following the wars in the 1990's on the territory of Former Yugoslavia, concluding with fall of Milosevic in October 2000, Serbia started the process of democratic transition and membership in the EU has been set as one of priorities of all governments since that time. Serbia is presently involved in EU Programmes for CBC (ENPI and IPA) with all bordering countries except Kosovo.

The debate about boundaries is intensified because of the EU's will to become a "continent without borders" and refer to borders as "scars of history". On the other hand, we must be aware of the role that borders play for all nation states. They have been considered as fundamental elements of the state which represents security and serve as protection, distinction between the eternal political division of "us and them", and boundaries of legal jurisdiction and sovereignty.

Local development must be bottom-up driven and supported by project proposals created from the local population. For CBC in Serbia, there is a chance for more actors to be involved in creating project proposals so the projects could be addressed to burning problems and increase the development of these economically backward regions. This is possible, of course, if proposals *per se* are written to comply with EU standards. To this end, involvements of state and regional government professionals are a necessity. Still, because of the lack of evaluation of sustainability of projects, we do not know whether CBC initiatives and conducted projects have satisfied one of their main goals, such as promotion of local cross-border "people to people" actions and "of economic and social development in regions on both sides of common borders" (ENPI CBC Strategy paper 2006, p. 5).

⁸ In historical books and touristic brochures, Serbia is referred as the crossroads of east and west because it was positioned on the border between the Turkish Empire and the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy.

2 Theoretical background

2.1 Defining Cross-border Cooperation (Cohesion Policy of EU as Instrument for regional and local development)

This chapter will examine the relation among local development and cross-border cooperation in the EU context and how CBC initiatives, programmes and projects are supporting the convergence objective of the EU. The study examines the goals, structure, effects and the specific place of CBC initiatives in using means from ERDF Cohesion fund. Alongside, I will clarify what are Serbian developing opportunities being involved in these initiatives and specific Programmes as it is part of cooperation areas outside of the EU.

The European Charter for Border and Cross-border Regions states in its preamble that cross-border cooperation helps to diminish the disadvantages of national borders, overcome the marginal status of the border regions in their country, and improve the overall existence of the people living in these areas. “It encompasses all cultural, social, economic and infrastructural spheres of life. Having both knowledge and an understanding of a neighbour’s distinctive social, cultural, linguistic and economic characteristics – ultimately the well-spring of mutual trust – is a prerequisite for any successful cross-border cooperation.” (European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions, 2004.)

Cross-border cooperation serves in the realisation of quite a lot of the EU policy goals⁹, and it is one of the best ways to bring to life principles of subsidiarity, decentralisation and regionalisation. These interconnected principles sustain basic provisions of all democratic systems for the sharing and exercising of power on all levels. Competencies are supposed to be shared according to the criteria of efficiency, suitability and interest. A lower level of self-government should not be in charge simply because the power was attributed to its level, but because the best and most efficient exercise of this power is guaranteed by given tier (*Gamper* 2005). Furthermore, CBC also facilitates regional and local cooperation below the government level and between different social partners and

⁹ “Europe of regions”, Convergence objective and Europe 2020 goals whose are divided on five targets 1. Employment: 75% of the 20–64 year-olds to be employed; 2. R&D / innovation: 3% of the EU’s GDP (public and private combined) to be invested in R&D/innovation; 3. Climate change / energy: greenhouse gas emissions 20% (or even 30%, if the conditions are right) lower than 1990, 20% of energy from renewables, 20% increase in energy efficiency; 4. Education: reducing school drop-out rates below 10%, at least 40% of 30–40-year-olds completing tertiary education; 5. Poverty/social exclusion: at least 20 million fewer people in or at risk of poverty and social exclusion. For more information please visit: http://ec.europa.eu/europe2020/targets/eu-targets/index_en.htm; last time visited on: 19/03/2013

segments of the population across international borders (European Charter for Border and Cross-border Regions, 2004). These efforts should support both the cohesion of economically backward regions and the long process of European unification which is impossible without intensive cooperation between border and cross-border regions.

Before we continue, we must define the term and significance of CBC because this term can acquire different meanings in different parts of the world and to differentiate CBC from other forms of cooperation among regions. In the published texts and books from the EC, Committee of Regions, professionals, academics and declarations and conventions it can be summed up that CBC is the total of relations, phenomena's and institutions which are created through cooperation of border regions among sub-national authorities and between two states which are sharing common state border.

This general definition is an adequate assemblage of what we find at different authors. For example Perkmann (2003) on page 4 is operationalising the term of CBC through four criteria:

- 1) The main protagonists of CBC are always public authorities and CBC *must be located in the realm of public agency.*
- 2) CBC refers to collaboration *between sub-national authorities in different countries whereby these actors are normally not legal subjects according to international law.* They are therefore not allowed to conclude international treaties with foreign authorities, and, consequently, *CBC involves so-called "low politics"*. This is why CBC is often based on informal or "quasi-judicial" arrangements among the participating authorities.
- 3) In substantive terms, CBC is foremost *concerned with practical problem-solving in a broad range of fields of everyday administrative life.*
- 4) CBC involves a *certain stabilisation of cross-border contacts, i.e. institution-building, over time.* (Emphasis added)

Both Perkmann (2003) and Šimić (2005) are referring to the definition of CBC given in the Madrid convention as an important international legal framework of the Council of Europe. The Convention specifies that so called "trans-frontier cooperation shall mean any concerted action designed to reinforce and foster neighbourly relations between territorial communities and authorities within the jurisdiction of other contracting parties and the conclusion of any agreement and arrangement necessary for this purpose" (Madrid Outline Convention 1980, article 2).

In the practical guide for CBC between Georgia and Turkey from 2010 on page 4, authors are speculating that the process of developing CBC is depending on: „partners size and functions; number of partners; agreements and treaties;

cultural traditions, ethnic and languages disparities; historical background; existing challenges and society needs etc.“ These factors are proving once more the complexity of CBC (*Kakubava–Chincharauli* 2010).

As the conclusion we can say that “CBC deals with issues that include social affairs, economic development, minority rights, cross-border employment and trade, the environment, etc. CBC, however, has also been about attempts to use the border as a resource for economic and cultural exchange as well as for building political coalitions for regional development purposes” (*Scott–Matzeit* 2006, p. 3). Moreover, CBC always deals with conventional contacts and movements between two states motivated by development and taxation systems differences, trading, educational and job opportunities.

This is the right place to provide our definition of local economic development and stress the intersection of both notions: “Local Economic Development is a process where the *local actors shape and share the future of their territory*. We could define it as *a participatory process that encourages and facilitates partnership between the local stakeholders, enabling the joint design and implementation of strategies, mainly based on the competitive use of the local resources, with the final aim of creating decent jobs and sustainable economic activities*” (*Rodríguez-Pose* 2005). Thus, purpose of local economic development is to bring together LSG, business and nongovernmental sector with objection to create a network connected trough mutual trust and finally create better conditions for economic growth and employment generation.

Going from abstract and long term goals to more concrete and tangible intentions, we need to locate CBC in the present structure of the EU budget, and to see what percent of financial means is allocate for this *instrument that in the end should enrich local governments in border regions with one more developing tool and financial source*¹⁰ in generating positive atmosphere for their regional economies.

“European territorial cooperation objective aims to reinforce cooperation at the cross-border, transnational and interregional level. It acts as a complement to the two other objectives, as the eligible regions are also eligible for the convergence and regional competitiveness and employment objectives. It is financed by ERDF.” (*Cohesion policy commentaries* 2007, p. 120.) Predominantly, territorial cohesion as part of territorial cooperation should secure a framework which allows the achieving of “sustainable and balanced regional development and greater policy co-ordination within regions” as two most important targets of Convergence objective (*Cohesion policy commentaries* 2007, p. 120).

¹⁰ Majority of CBC projects is generated under principles that would allow co-financing of EU funds. These principles will be listed in the summary.

With the Lisbon Treaty (signed on 13th December 2007 and becoming effective in December 1st 2009), cohesion policy gained the third dimension of territorial cohesion together with economic and social cohesion. This happened because of the interest to *pay special attention on the process of the European enlargement¹¹ and evolution of EU territory which were becoming larger and more integrated* (INTERACT 2011).

CBC Programmes are specific because they were *created as the instrument of regional policy of the EU with the aim to help underdeveloped regions inside the EU through the cooperation of peripheral bordering regions*. Later by the accession of new member states in the EU, *CBC Programmes also became the instrument used by the policy of enlargement. Accent is placed on integrating far-off regions with regions that share external borders with the candidate countries*” (INTERACT 2011, emphasis mine).

Regional policy is the expression of the EU’s solidarity with its less-favored countries and regions, working through integrated Programmes to support the sustainable development of the regions and of the EU as a whole. [...] Regional policy is *worth €347 billion between 2007 and 2013. It is not just about transferring wealth from well-off regions to poorer ones. The money is targeted towards economic growth and creating jobs, by, for example, improving transport links to remote regions, boosting small and medium-sized enterprises in disadvantaged areas, investing in a cleaner environment and improving education and skills* (Hahn 2011, section 6) (Emphasis added).

INTERREG as Cohesion Policy Programme is specific in one important aspect. Not only that it involves cooperation between two or more authorities of Member States which should result in a positive impact on development on either side of the border, but the *implementation of projects must be carried out on a common cross-border basis*.

There are three types of possible regional cooperation that are funded through the Cohesion Fund, and they are so-called standards of cooperation:

Standard A: cross-border; eligible for this type of cooperation are NUTS3 level regions “along all the land-based internal borders, along maritime borders separated by a maximum distance of 150 km” (European Commission, 2007, p. 20).

¹¹ The Enlargement of the European Union is the process of expanding the European Union through the accession of new member states. This process began in 1952 and since then, the EU’s membership has grown to twenty-seven with the most recent Central and Eastern Europe enlargement. Eight states became members of the EU in 2004 and in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania also joined the Union. States of the Western Balkans are part of the Stabilisation and Association Process which should guide and help all regions in reaching the standards for accession in the EU.

Standard B: transnational; eligible are all the regions but in consultation with Member states, the Commission has indentified 13 cooperation zones (these zones were defined in the decision of 31st October 2006 (EC Guide 2007, p. 20).

Standard C: interregional cooperation, and setting up networks and exchange of experience; all regions of the Union are eligible.

CBC in the EU perspective applies an approach based on structural fund principles such as partnerships, multi-year programming and co-financing. Main features that ENPI CBC set as a standard for all future CBC Programmes are rooted in the fact that areas included in the Programmes on both sides of the EU border are obliged to create: common management structures, common legal framework, common implementation rules and single budget.

Since 2008, cooperation with countries outside the EU is no longer aided by the Structural Funds but by two new funding opportunities: the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) and the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). “Financial assistance tool annual programmes are *implemented in cooperation with the international donor community and co-managed with local representatives from the beneficiary countries. IPA regulations (Component II as defined in Article 91 of Implementing Regulations) stipulate that a participating country must be fully capable of assuming the financial, administrative and regulatory responsibilities of carrying out such bilateral projects.*” (Bastian 2011, section 5.)

From what is mentioned above, we can see that the process of European integration is the *spiritus movens* of CBC at least in the Balkans, where available funds could be used for sustaining of crucial structures for project development, implementation and evaluation procedures. Experiences of European countries are showing that sometimes the only motive and aim for initialising CBC is the absorption of the EU funds planned for these purposes. Moreover these experiences are suggesting that initial enthusiasm regarding development expectations is decreasing before the cooperation delivers the concrete results.

This is because CBC represents complex process and more time is needed for measureable results to occur. *Nevertheless, analyses of implemented projects are showing the domination of so called “soft themes” such as culture, education and social cooperation. All these conducted projects had significant impact on setting the relations for long term cooperation between organisations of civil society, professional association, educational institutions, syndicates and business community in bordering areas* (Knezevic et al. 2011).

Nevertheless, the other dimensions of CBC like long-term strategies that are aiming economic development or improvement of infrastructure are relatively rare in CBC. On the one hand reasons for this can be traced in fact that the *CBC is seen as an optional solution for LSG; on the other hand CBC brings uncertainty*

in negotiations about defining strategic projects between cross-border partners. That's why local and regional authorities are hesitating to start talks about strategic themes in bordering areas, even in the cases where CB solutions are feasible and efficient (Bufon–Markelj 2010, pp. 24–27, emphasis added).

2.2 Local Self-Government and CBC in Serbia under EU cohesion policy framework

“The Congress recommends that the Serbian Government find a legislative solution to the issue of restitution of public property to local authorities and to improve intermunicipal cooperation as well as consultation between central and local government. It draws attention to the need to continue the implementation of the status of autonomy for the province of Vojvodina, and recommends that Serbia lift its reservations on Articles 4 para. 3 and 8 para. 3 of the European Charter of Local Self-Government dealing with the principle of subsidiarity. Finally, the Congress calls upon Serbia to sign and ratify the Additional Protocols to the Charter.” (O. A. Kvalöy 2011, the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities)

The Serbian Constitution adopted in 2006 represents the *legal foundation for the principle of guaranteeing the right of citizens to provincial autonomy and local self-government*. Article 190 of the Constitution envisages the original competencies of local self-governments, which are specified in greater detail in the 2007 Law on Local Self-Government as 39 competencies. Other tasks delegated to municipalities by the state administration are regulated through specific sectoral laws. *All these provisions are in line with the European Charter of Local Self-Government which Serbia ratified in 2007*. Moreover, the 2009 Statute of the Autonomous Province of Vojvodina envisages *delegation of a number of competencies from central to provincial government*.

Although the Law on Financing Local Self Government, also adopted in 2006, clearly defined sources of revenues for local self governments, the Constitution guaranteed to Vojvodina 7% of the Republic's budget, transfers from the central government have been continually reduced since 2009. *In the same year, the Law on Regional Development was passed and amended just one year after in 2010, reducing the number of initial seven statistical regions to five.*¹²

Therefore, the Venice Commission claims that the *Serbian Constitution leaves it entirely to the National Assembly to define the scope of the rights of citizens to*

¹² These regions have only administrative-statistical purpose and they are created largely because of necessary criteria Serbia must fulfil on its way towards the EU regarding support of balanced regional development.

sub-national tiers of government, and clearly states the constitutional provision “the right of citizens to provincial autonomy and local self government shall be subject to supervision of constitutionality and legality” indicates that ordinary law can restrict the autonomy of provinces and local self-governments, which is in contradiction with European practices (Commission, 2007, p. 4, emphasis added)

Relations between the EU and Serbia developed more intensively after the democratic changes in October 2000. Negotiations were initiated with the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and then, from 2003 onwards, with the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro. The EU continued its relations with the Republic of Serbia as the successor of the State Union when Montenegro became an independent state in 2006.

Since 2000, Serbia has profited from Autonomous Trade Preferences from the EU and is presently involved in the Stabilisation and Association Process signed in April 2008. Visa liberalisation for Serbian citizens travelling to the Schengen area was granted by the Council of Ministers as of December 19th 2009. In October 2008, the government of Serbia adopted the National Programme for the Integration of Serbia into the European Union for the period 2008–2012. EU is also the biggest foreign trade partner of Serbia (European Commission 2011, p. 4).

Serbia has been receiving EU financial assistance since 2001. Overall, *between 2001 and 2011, the EU has committed over €2 billion to Serbia in the form of grants and €5.8 billion in the form of soft loans*. From 2001 to 2006, Serbia benefited from EU CARDS assistance worth €1.045 million. Since 2007, CARDS has been replaced by the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA), under which Serbia received assistance worth €974 million between 2007 and 2011. *The assistance under the IPA is designed to support the reforms undertaken as part of the European integration process, with a focus on the rule of law, institution-building, approximation with the EU acquis, sustainable economic and social development and support to civil society* (European Commission 2011, pp. 4–5).

Serbia has in total 123 municipalities¹³ (without Kosovo), 46 of which are bordering (see *table 1*). At the moment, Serbia is involved in six IPA CBC Programmes and two trans-national Programmes.¹⁴ Moreover, absolute majority of the CBC projects are managed under patronage of the IPA funds. CBC

¹³ Municipality is the only tier and type of LSG in Serbia, and usually consists of an urban centre and its rural surrounding. The average size of municipalities is 25 thousand inhabitants.

¹⁴ Through its Component II, IPA will support Cross Border Cooperation by proposing joint programmes at the borders with Hungary, Romania, Bulgaria, Croatia, Montenegro, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as financing participation of Serbia in the two ERDF transnational programme “South-East Europe” and “Adriatic programme”.

programmes and projects in Serbia are implemented since 2004 under the framework of CARDS¹⁵ programme which was specially designed for SAP countries. *The European Neighbourhood Policy of the EU has offered new dimensions of cross-border relationships.* Within this framework, new financial resources opened for organisations operating on both sides of the border to implement joint development projects. Through the CARDS programme in the period 2004 – 2006, the financial means were provided for the participation of the State Union of Serbia and Montenegro in the activities of cross-border programmes. Even then, only the border regions on the territory of the Republic of Serbia were eligible for the programmes. For this period, the total budget for projects realised in Serbia was €17.5 million.

In 13 calls for proposals, 856 project applications were received and 174 were financed. During this period, projects proposals could be presented only by NGOs, non-governmental institutions, chambers of commerce, agencies, universities and other educational and cultural institutions. Financed projects covered different sectors from economical development, culture, tourism, protection of environment and projects that targeted social needs. The value of projects could range from EUR 10 to EUR 300.000; 96% of projects were contracted and 92% form available funds was used (Knezevic et al. 2011, p. 107).

CARDS Programmes in Serbia for 2004–2006:

- 1) Hungary – Serbia €4.0 mill.
- 2) Romania – Serbia €5,6 mill.
- 3) Bulgaria – Serbia €4.0 mill.
- 4) Adriatic €1.1 mill.
- 5) CADSES €2.8 mill.

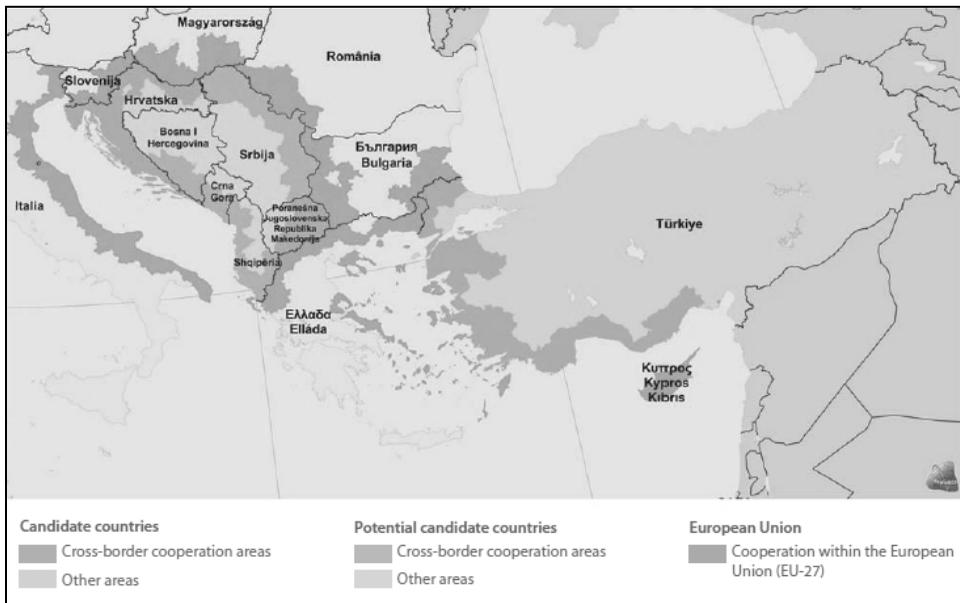
In this, which we can call the pre-IPA stage, all *project proposal participants gained valuable experience about standards and procedures in management of projects financed by the EU.* Neighbourhood programmes supported the creation of partner relations and *for most of citizens from the Serbian side of the border this was the first time they experienced the impact of the EU on their daily life. Thus, they have broken the prejudice that relations with the Union are a question of “high policy.”* For Serbia, this was one more mechanism for paving the way to more efficient public and local administration and raising the capacities of developing institutions in border regions.

¹⁵ Abbreviation which stand for Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Development and Stabilisation.

From five IPA components,¹⁶ Serbia as a potential candidate country for the EU is eligible only for the first two. *Financial means from the second component of the IPA are used for the strengthening of CBC trough common local and regional initiatives which are aiming at the improvement of sustainable development in a number of fields, such as: natural and cultural heritage, living environment, public health, securing efficient and safe borders, fight against organised crime, as well as supporting the common actions of small scale which are involving local actors from bordering areas.* To further clarify how important IPA is as an instrument of local development, we must scrutinise the EC decision on multi-annual indicative planning documents in whose creation the Serbian government actively participated (*Figure 1*).

Figure 1

Cooperation – Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance



Source: Cohesion Policy 2007–2013 Commentaries and official texts 2007, p. 137.

¹⁶ IPA I – Transition Assistance and Institution Building; IPA II – Cross-Border Cooperation; IPA III – Regional Development; IPA IV – Human Resources Development; IPA V – Rural Development.

IPA supports Serbia's efforts in the implementation of the National Programme for Integration but also other relevant horizontal, multi-sectorial strategies, such as the National Strategy for Economic Development, National Strategy of Regional Development, Needs Assessment for Development Assistance, the Poverty Reduction Strategy, and other relevant National Plans to the extent that these correspond to the EU integration process. *Serbia has already participated actively in EC-financed cross border co-operation with positive results. Cross border co-operation is crucially important for stability, cooperation and economic development in Serbia's border regions. The aim of EC assistance will be to develop local capacity in relation to cross border co-operation in all of Serbia's border regions while also targeting specific local development projects. Development of cross-border cooperation is dependent on general capacity building activities of the local and central authorities responsible for development policy.* Therefore, institution building activities under IPA components I and II have as an objective to generate additionality, complementarity, and catalytic effect between components and to ensure that the successful cross-border skills base that has been built up at the national level is further developed. IPA is addressing the regional cooperation requirement under a different MIPD (MIPD 2009, p. 14, 18, emphasis added).

In the 2007–2013 IPA CBC framework, which is different from CARDS programming, project proposals are sent exclusively by non-profit organisations and institutions, such as:

- LSG units and their bodies, hospitals, public enterprises etc.
- Schools, libraries, sports and cultural association etc.
- Organisations for the support of entrepreneurial activity, chambers of commerce, business centres, sectoral associations etc.
- Regional and local development agencies
- Bodies competent for protection of nature and management parks of nature
- Euroregions
- Universities, high schools, special schools for adult education etc.

All organisations and institutions must be registered on the territory of the RS which is eligible for specific programme of the CBC (*see appendix 2*) as well that they have at least one cross-border partner which is registered on the territory of neighbouring countries that are eligible for the same programme.

These EU initiatives and means are new developing opportunities for LSG's located in bordering regions of Serbia. Building and raising the capacities of local self-government for planning and programming of the IPA funds and their allocation through the realisation of feasible projects at the same time represents investment in the overall managerial and administrative capacities of the LSG units. The experiences of Slovenia and others countries from Central and Eastern

Europe in using the accession funds of the EU are undoubtedly showing that the absorption capacity¹⁷ of one country depends from the quality of previous experiences in project cycle management and programming of all relevant actors from national to local level (CESS-Vojvodina 2010).

2.5 Borders

“The ‘human face’ of European policy can show itself to its best advantage in places where the will to cooperate is vitally necessary and is put into practice, namely in border regions. Here, a ‘back-to-back’ existence must be transformed into a ‘face-to-face’ relationship by dismantling barriers and impediments at borders.” (European Charter for Border and Cross-Border Regions, 2004.)

This part of the paper puts emphasis on the dynamic character of borders in the contemporary world and focus on the complex influences of borders on peoples’ perception of space, providing a definition of cross-border region and the different notion of borders.

Borders are not some fixed lines of state sovereignty but rather the *mutually constitutive dynamic practice* of “bordering” and “de-bordering.” Moreover bordering processes are “often implicit, latent, meaningful, and contextual strategies” (Berg–Houtum 2003). Therefore, the *border is not regarded as us being at one side and them at the other, but as an area open to co-operation* and not an abyss which divides people, but a community with its own energy, direction and future (Oda-Angel 2003, emphasis added).

Just by ordinary contemplation we could outline the many different types of borders that would go from the political-administrative, traditional, historical, linguistic, cultural, economic, maritime, fluvial, “to those borders which are more intimate and refer to thought, collective imagination or mentality” (Oda-Angel 2003, p. 2). Borders can serve as both bridges and barriers, as demarcation lines for country sovereignty and safety, and lines that serve as excuses to wage war. That is why *border areas were always specific from different socio-economical aspects*. “Conditions in borderlands worldwide vary considerably because of profound differences in the size of nation states, their political relationships, their level of development, and their ethnic, cultural and linguistic configurations” (Martinez 1994, p. 1). However, *the need for overcoming obstacles created by borders is nowhere more obvious than in border regions. Even in the EU, due to*

¹⁷ Defined as the extent to which a state is able to fully spend the allocated financial resources from the EU funds in an effective and efficient way. (CoE, 2010).

different legal frameworks, these obstacles for cooperation are still present. There is no need after what was said before to point out Serbia where “border issues” were used for the mobilisation of fear, rising nationalistic prejudice and war propaganda just 20 years ago. Nowadays this agenda is also the focal question in Serbian media and political discourse due to problems with Kosovo’s independence declaration in 2008.

Today, globalisation and Europeanisation are permanently contesting the power of the nation state. Increasing integration, interdependence and mobility of people, goods and services are testing the significance of the borders more than ever before. Still, we must stay aware that consumption of the advantages that come from the globalised world or united Europe is just a fortunate happening for the privileged group of people. *Not everyone can use the benefits of borderless Europe. Therefore, the people in developing countries or economically backward regions have numerous differences in perceptions of the border regions.* This is because the existence of the border had and still has a significant influence on them. The biggest proof is that some of the least developed municipalities in Serbia are placed along the national border.¹⁸

From spatial divisions on centre and periphery over constantly shifting EU internal and external borders (due to enlargement policy) to religious and language obstacles for communication and trading, people who live in border areas must pay attention to these factors usually caused by the negative consequences that vicinity to the border present – *negative because it limits the services and movements, and also hinders economic activity.* Thus, CBC is not only a developing instrument for the LSG and state in general, but moreover it’s a tool for the people that live in the border areas to realise their rights to equal standards of living and freedom of movements and better mobility in general. We must always have in mind that the result and sustainability of the CBC is directly dependent on the will of national, regional and local authorities, EU regulations, as well as the quality for programmes, projects and contracts signed by all mentioned actors. Hardi (2010) in his study on trans-border mobility is noticing well on the page 5 and 6 that:

Borders and border areas are all unique, individual phenomena. The, birth, change and character of the spatial borders depend to a large extent on the spatial unit (in this case: state) they surround, but this is a mutual relationship: states, border regions, and the characteristics of the state border all influence each other... These differences are

¹⁸ Emblematically, according to the 2011 census, the poorest municipality in Serbia is Trgoviste on the border with FYR Macedonia, and it is followed by municipalities on the border with Bulgaria, Kosovo, Romania, Montenegro and Romania; namely Bor, Bela Palanka, Kikinda, Novi Pazar, Knjazevac and Sombor.

true in the neighbourhood of the central area of the state just like in areas more distant from it, and *it is a question where we can draw the boundary of the zone where the proximity of the border has a strong impact on the socio-economic processes than the distance from the centre does. The proximity of the border can increase the features that get worse and worse as we approach the periphery (e.g. isolation, bad accessibility, worse economic indices), but the border may as well have positive impact on economy and society*, effects that can even turn around this tendency (a nearby traffic junction of neighbour country may alleviate isolation, capital may find the border region more attractive as a result of geographical proximity or cultural similarity. (Emphasis added).

Hardi (2010) is constantly advocating that border regions should be examined depending from place and time and if they were “conflict-laden or free from conflicts” as taking in consideration short, medium and long term effects of the borders, that can also be different in their “intensity and direction and also can be direct or indirect.”

For the purpose of this paper, it is important to mention the existing concepts of border regions in contemporary literature. The first concept is from a statistical-planning perspective, and it is used mostly by the EU in the form of NUTS classification. “Regions in this case integrate spatial units that were created by different – usually administrative – logics.” Therefore, the border region in this concept would correspond to the NUTS 3 spatial units next to the borders and their cluster along the border (Hardi 2010, p. 7).

The second is the geographical or homogeneity approach, and in this perspective, border areas can be defined as single-feature homogeneous regions along the borders, whose life and socio-economic processes are considerably influenced by the existence of a state border (Hardi 2010).

The third is the dynamic definition which identify types of border areas “on the basis of the number and depth of cross-border interactions and accordingly differentiate among alienated, co-existing, mutually cooperating and integrated border areas.” *Therefore, the “cross-border region is an area where these interactions mark a spatially designable and intensive system of relations. Functional regions are cross-border in the sense that the administrative boundaries are not the obstacles to the implementation of their affairs.”* (Hardi 2010, p. 8, emphasis added).

The fourth concept we can call cultural or anthropological approach to the boundaries. Donnan and Wilson (2010) are examining border communities, border cultures, frontiers of physical and metaphorical borderlands which are by their words stretching “away from legal borderlines between states”. For this research especially interesting is the “problem of bounding culture which is compounded by the notion that cultures of disjuncture and difference are still seen

to provide maps of meaning and charters for action among peoples who no longer can rely on the unity, homogeneity and protection of discretely bounded nations, communities, states, identities and territories” (Donnan–Wilson 2001, p. 9).

For the scope of this work, the most important *question is the connection of perception, national borders and border regions and consequently what is determining reason for perceiving the borders as more or less important or more or less permissible*. State is the key factor in these change because of the organising role it has both in the systems of values and economical production. At the common sense level, we all know that we must have certain documentation to legally cross the border of state for which we do not have citizenship. *Some border crossings are easier to cross than others thanks to the kindness of border workers and police, or our state has a special contract with that particular state about the freedom of movement*. Other crossing of borders involve danger and fear; for example, the crossing of the so called “administrative border” with Kosovo or Croatia always imply a certain dose of fear if you have Serbian symbols on the car registration number. Crossing the border in the majority of situations means that one is leaving his or her natural (nation state) space of movements.

That’s why we *must have some kind of a gain or profit which motivate us to ignore the barrier coming from the reality of state borders and diverse socio-cultural contexts*. Movements between border regions are different in a way because advantages arising from the differences of systems are more available if one has residence close to the border region. “All people who cross international borders must negotiate not only the structures of state power that they encounter, and new relations and conditions of work, exchange and consumption, but also new frameworks of social status and organisation, with their concomitant cultural ideals and value.” (Donnan–Wilson 2001, p. 108)

We can sum up above mentioned arguments by quoting Hardi once more:

Movements, migrations between two states occur as a result of differences that have evolved between socio-economic developments levels (and accordingly the realisable incomes) and the national systems (e.g. taxation, healthcare, educational etc.) Naturally, this motivation can also appear in case of movements between border regions; in fact, the probability of movements is greatly promoted by the spatial proximity of the neighbour system. For example, between Slovakia and Hungary, it is especially the inhabitants of the Hungarian towns and cities near the border who establish businesses and buy cars in Slovakia, motivated by the differences in the taxation systems. (Hardi 2010, pp. 12–13).

2.6 Mental mapping

“Most often, our perception of the city is not sustained, but rather partial, fragmentary, mixed with other concerns. Nearly every sense is in operation, and the image is the composite of them all.” (Lynch 1960, p. 2.)

“The image of a given reality may vary significantly between different observers.” (Lynch 1960, p. 7.)

“Other studies show distance away from a city centre are judged shorter than distance toward a city centre, and landmarks separated by a line (e.g. a political boundary) on a map are judged to be further apart than those same landmarks not separated by a line.” (Matei 2001, p. 430.)

We are all aware of the fact that time is a subjective category and that sometimes, usually when we are feeling good, it flies. On the contrary, when we are feeling bad, it seems that every second is like a minute and a minute is like an hour. One of the first to observe this interesting phenomenon was Hudson Hoagland, who conducted an experiment with his wife once he realised that she had a totally distorted perception of time due to her fever. She was complaining that her husband took too much time to get to her and that he went away too often. Hoagland then proposed to his wife quite an interesting experiment. She would count off 60 seconds while he was timing her with his watch. The result of this simple experiment was amazing. When her minute was up, his clock showed 37 seconds, almost double faster than the real time. In subsequent experiments he showed that his wife’s mental clock ran faster the higher her temperature became.

The obvious connection between time and space reminds us of the connection, often neglected by majority of people, between space and territory. In fact, a person with different experiences and feelings may perceive the same space differently: “Border people do not perceive the border in the same conditions as those at each side who do not hold such a condition” (*Oda-Angel* 2003, p. 2), Other researches on correlated subjects have shown that variety of factors are influencing perception¹⁹ of space, as for example frequency of travel, media reports, fear from being attacked, being an adult or a child, communication networks, distance, signalisation, territories separated by border lines or not, various travel modes, neighbourhood, demographic characteristic, race, ethnicity, age, sexuality, socio-economic status, education level etc. This perception can sometimes vary from day to day simply by the fact that personal priorities have changed or one is more jovial in that particular moment.

¹⁹ It is evident from quoted paragraphs before and in this chapter. For more information look at Kitchin–Freundschun (2000), pp. 197–215.

Here we will focus on several examples of closely related studies that as well try to deal also with issues of perceptions of the territory and their effects those perception have on people life and cooperation in urban and border areas.

Some of the researches on the Austro–Hungarian border region have already shown that *perceptions of the people who are living in the border regions are significantly different than those from inland parts of the country*. The object of study was “to reconstruct the “mental map” of residents in the border region, with a special emphasis on their construction of a mental border and the use they make of for their daily activities (Hintermann 2001, p. 269). A perfect example was the perception of the Austrian citizens towards the EU enlargement process in 2004. Those living close to Hungarian border supported the enlargement by a majority, while citizens from the central parts did not support it, probably frightened by newcomers, criminality and mass migration. Therefore, the results of the above-mentioned research in the border region “show that the perception of the people residing in the respective region is far more differentiated: in their perspective, with the opening of the border after 1989, a first step of the enlargement of the European Union has already taken place” (Hintermann 2001, p. 269).

In a different research of the Northern Greek CB zone, authors focused on “the type and level of interaction, the perception and policies occur across the border between Albania, FYR Macedonia and Bulgaria”, which is by their words the “most fragmented economic, social and political space in Europe.” (Topaloglou 2008) This study is an example on how the perception of border regions can be changed over time with cross-border cooperation policies pioneering socio-economic changes in Central and Eastern Europe, turning these backward regions into areas of cooperation with neighbouring countries.

Directly correlated questions from the above-mentioned studies with this research are: “Whether or not the map of geographic borders is associated with the map of perception and what are effects of the borders as dividing lines between two countries on their overall interaction and economical cooperation?” (Topaloglou 2008).

However, the border line in terms of its intellectual and geographic dimension contributes significantly in the formation of the “us” vis-à-vis “others” identity. In fact, one could claim that the definition of “us” in relation to the boundaries presupposes the existence of the “others” in the opposite side of the borders. *The manner that the people of these two countries perceive the concept of borders is not simply a matter of lines drawn on a map or on the ground but something rather more complex and dynamic*. The issue lends itself to further complexity when borders divide large geographic territories such as the EU25 with neighbouring countries. *In such cases, the grouping of characteristics that form integrated perceptions like religion, language, historical and cultural affairs all lead to an intellectual hierarchy in space*.

It is obvious that this “intellectual” special hierarchy is not always associated with the “geographic” spatial hierarchy (Topaloglou 2008, p. 63, emphasis added).

Furthermore it is rather interesting how Blatter (1997) interpreted CBC: a group process “where the willingness to solve a problem was seen as determined by the specific interests with respect to a problem and by the perception of the problem ... However, the willingness of collective participants (e.g. sub-regions) to act was not determined by the “objective” focus of interests. *Culturally normative and cognitive factors also influence the perception of problems and the definitions of self-interest and preferences*” (p. 152). A little bit further, the author discusses the importance of different factors for CBC, emphasising the importance of intangible ones by stating that:

Interests, values and capacities within the relevant subregions are important for policy outputs but they do not play a decisive role for CBC. *For cooperation, the crucial matter is the constellation among subregions, as well as the possibly different perceptions of the problem in the subregions...* Also, differences in the problem solving capacity and the compatibility of the administration systems are important factors. Not surprising, but nevertheless *very central, is the conclusion that situations with symmetrical interests and values make cooperation easier and that asymmetrical constellations are much more difficult to handle.* However, it is also important to recognise that the interests are seldom totally asymmetrical ... scale of social and economic linkages and a common CB regional identity play a minor role in a specific environmental problem-solving processes. *In contrast, history, language, and institutional aspects seems to have major influence on the cooperation outcome.]* (Blatter 1997, p. 153–154) (Emphasis added).

This means that a common language permits a better communication and the social capital to flourish in the form of trust and understanding.

Complexity and interdependence of relationships between different political arenas in the context of cross-border cooperation is witnessed on the next figure.

When it comes to mental mapping as a research instrument, when we especially measure discrepancies of mental and physical distance in space, we must notice as Montello (1997) did, that it is “difficult in naturalistic settings to disentangle which characteristics of the environment provide distance information (pathway slope, aesthetic appeal, number of trees and curves, etc.).” This is because “naturalistic research on subjective and interurban distance is difficult to interpret because the relative influence of locomotion-based and symbolic-based distance knowledge is uncontrolled and un-assessed” (p. 2).

Mental mapping as a research instrument applies the mental picture of different individuals within groups with specific characteristics. In this way we can measure perceptions of city identity and the general functioning of a territory

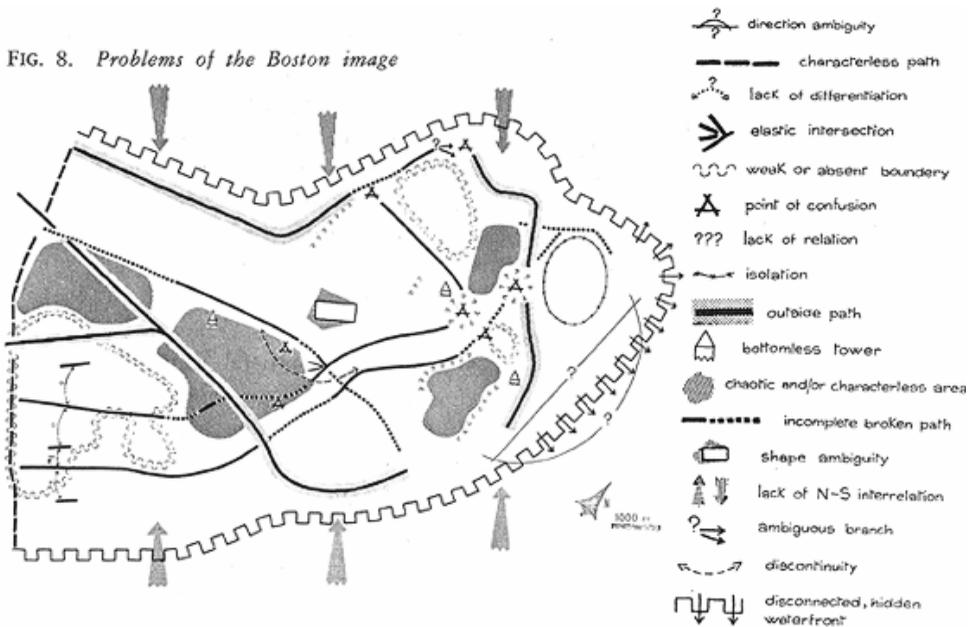
inhabited by specific groups. As a specific method, mental mapping, as Sulsters explains, is used in the following way: “All individuals construct their own map based upon a questionnaire using different tools for answering such as different line types, icons or symbols. After the exercise people are asked to comment their own results” (Sulsters 2005, p. 1). The added value of MM as a research method results from the fact that MM:

Seeks to give insight in different, interrelated levels of mapping. The different mental maps are thematically grouped, super positioned and compared. Synthesis or conclusive maps can then be created upon specific combinations or series of individual maps. Similarities might appear between maps of people with a comparable lifestyle, age, interest or grade of experience with the area. In this way, the meaning of specific parts of the area for specific groups can be revealed. (Sulsters 2005, p. 1).

Researches on connections between cognitive mapping and urban planning started with Lynch (1960) who picked Los Angeles, Boston and Jersey City and asked their citizens to draw maps of the environment they live in and later describe it. The mental maps he got in his study look like this one (Figure 2).

Figure 2

Problems of the Boston image



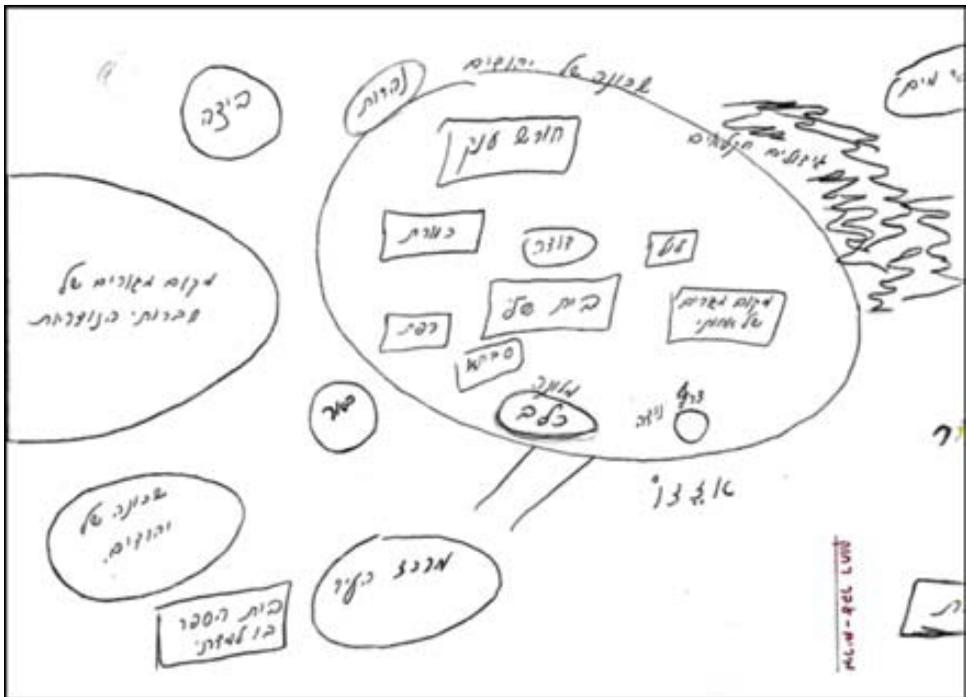
Source: Lynch, 1960, p. 24.

On the other hand, Kitchin and Freundschuh (2000) speak about closely related notion of cognitive mapping “as a process composed of a series of psychological transformations by which an individual acquires, stores, recalls, and decodes information about the relative locations and attributes of the phenomena in everyday spatial environment” (p. 1).

In addition, Fenster (2009) explains how he became aware of the great possibilities of cognitive temporal (CT) maps as a method offered through the drawings of a 19-years-old girl; an Ethiopian Jewish immigrant who came to Israel. He asked her to draw the map of her childhood environment back in Ethiopia. Her map is simple but it also shows a clear distinction regarding valuable, close and pleasant places in her life and how human cognition is functioning (*Figure 3*).

Figure 3

Miriam’s mental map of her childhood environment



Source: Fenster, 2009, p. 480.

She illustrated the shapes and then marked them with meaning she attached to them: “my home”, “my aunt’s home”, “ my sister’s place of living”, “menstruation hut”, “dog shed”, “cow shed”, “big forest”. “Then she drew a circle around this central area and wrote on it “Jewish neighbourhood” and in the upper right hand side of the sketch she wrote “areas for vegetable growing”. On the circle in the left-hand side of the sketch she wrote “living area of my Christian friends” (Fenster 2009, p. 479).

Fenster used three steps methods which includes in-depth interviews, drawing CT maps and dialogue between the researcher/planner and the interviewee/resident as a method which helps to expose the local spatial knowledge necessary for effective planning (Fenster 2009).

We can conclude that MM is used as a *valuable tool both for orientation, judging of distance, importance and therefore motivation of people. Moreover, mental maps are used, in a different form, as a scientific method for gaining information about interior cognitive representation of the outside world. The connection point between all mentioned studies with this one, which is focused on influences of perceptions to CBC and image of BR, can be found in the fact that mental maps are generally regarded as path-finding tools and psychological “controllers” of our decisions: “Should we stay or should we go?”* Thus, the way we perceive the space we live in can improve communication with others and help us to use the opportunities. We all know that information are scattered all around our living environment and several above-mentioned studies showed how spatial cognition shapes access to opportunity in complex environments, such as BR. Entrepreneurs and project planers could consequently utilise this information for their activities in these areas.

As Mondschein (2005) said, “to a careless job seeker, job opportunities not easily reached by transit are effectively out of reach and even transparent. Modally constructed cognitive maps, in other words, are key to understanding both travel behavior and accessibility in cities.” This is followed by the valuable insight of Montello (1997) that mental maps assist us in using resources like time, money and food more efficiently. As a result, “knowledge of distances in the environment affects the decision to stay or go, the decision of where to go and the decision of which route to take. It *therefore seems likely that an understanding of the perception and cognition of distance will prove fundamental to the prediction and explanation of spatial behaviour*” (p. 297, emphasis added).

3 EGTC, a new instrument for efficient CBC

We have learnt from our experience that borders shouldn't be lines dividing people but places where people come together. For that reason alone cross-border cooperation is indispensable as "cement of the European House" and key element of the European integration (Association of European Border Regions: White Paper on European Border Regions, 2006).

This chapter is moving focus towards European Grouping of Territorial Communities as a new policy instrument for CBC, and discusses the added value of this instrument to already existing ones.

Today, local and regional authorities, especially from member countries of the EU, are easily forgetting that 30 years ago instruments they are using today for CBC were under control of the central state. Arrangements were "according to a legal form suitable within their own national systems", small scale and mostly based on the free will between twin associations on each side of the border.

Throughout the time two supranational bodies engaged in the macro-regional integration of Europe have widened the scope of LSG's in border regions. The Council of Europe and the EU has had a dominant role in improving the legal situation while EC granted financial support for CBC initiatives (*Perkmann* 2003, p. 4).

Since 1958 when the first Euroregion along the German-Dutch border was set up, more than 70 cross-border entities in Europe started to operate under this name. This was done in an accelerating process involving all the border areas of the EU, stimulated by the INTERREG-A Community Initiative's financial support. This initiative was converted into the third objective of structural funds (European Territorial Cooperation), since 2007, which not only aims to reinforce cooperation at cross-border level, but also at the transnational and interregional levels, respectively related with the previous INTERREG-B and C strands (*Medeiros* 2010, p. 2).

"During this time different legal and administrative systems presented a real obstacle to the smooth implementation of these programmes and projects [...] however even in this context it was not possible to solve all the problems, especially those related to cross-border cooperation. In many other border areas, especially in the new Member States, such treaties do not exist." (Inforegio 2007, p. 11–12). That's why EU needed a new legal instrument shaped to support European cooperation structure and overcome obstacles to CBC.

Therefore, European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation was created on July 5th 2006 by the European Union as an opportunity for member states to establish EGTC²⁰; i.e. non-profit organisations with legal personality which are to facilitate

²⁰ Founded by Article 159 of the Lisbon Treaty.

the efficient use of Union resources and supporting the establishment of successful cooperation of the municipalities, local and regional authorities of two or more member states. “Unlike the structures that govern this kind of cooperation until 2007, EGTC is a legal entity, with all associated powers and obligations. It can therefore buy and sell goods, as well as employ personnel.” (Inforegio 2007, p. 11). Within the frame of this new instrument cross-border, transnational and inter-regional cooperation can be implemented.

It is highly important to make difference from other international multilateral conventions and contracts and *emphasise that EGTC is a legal instrument under Community law and it is directly applicable in all Member States*. EGTC operates under the law of member states in which it is registered. Initiative for founding of EGTC originates from its future members that must be located on the territory of at least two member countries. *The competences of the EGTC are predetermined in an obligatory cooperation convention*. Every EGTC must have an Assembly of its members and the Director. With the statute, which is decided by its members, it is possible to found additional bodies of administration with clearly defined competencies. The statute of EGTC must define its name and seat, list of members and territory it covers, objectives, mission and duration.

EGTC is primary doing the jobs regarding the implementation of cross-border programmes and projects co-financed by the EU through ERDF, ESF and the Cohesion Fund. Founding of EGTC is not bounding for member countries because they can develop CBC over previously established instruments of cross-border and transnational cooperation. Member states must give consent to potential founders of EGTC which are coming from their countries. What is more important is that central states authorities can forbid membership of their local and regional authorities in the EGTC only in case that a state has firm proof that EGTC is violating state laws or working contrary to national interest.

The Committee of the Regions (CoR) has highlighted the added value of the EGTC:

- *Territorial cohesion*: It helps to achieve the objectives of the EU as stated in the Treaty of Lisbon.
- *Europe 2020*: It can be a tool to implement the Europe 2020 Strategy, boosting competitiveness and sustainability in Europe’s regions.
- *Multi-level governance*: The EGTC offers “the possibility of involving different institutional levels in a single cooperative structure”, and thus “opens up the prospect of new forms of multilevel governance, enabling European regional and local authorities to become driving forces in drawing up and implementing EU policy, *helping to make European*

governance more open, participatory, democratic, accountable and transparent". (Brande, 2008)

At the end of this chapter, we will quote some of the most important provisions from Regulation (EC) No 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and of the Council on a European grouping of territorial cooperation (EGTC)

Provisions) It should be specified that the financial responsibility of regional and local authorities, as well as that of Member States, with regard to the management of both Community funds and national funds, is not affected by the formation of an EGTC.

Article 7) Paragraph 1 and 2: An EGTC shall carry out the tasks given to it by its members in accordance with this Regulation. Its tasks shall be defined by the convention agreed by its members, in conformity with Articles 4 and 8. An EGTC shall act within the confines of the tasks given to it, which shall be limited to the facilitation and promotion of territorial cooperation to strengthen economic and social cohesion and be determined by its members on the basis that they all fall within the competence of every member under its national law.

Article 9) Paragraph 1: The statutes of an EGTC shall be adopted on the basis of the convention by its members acting unanimously.

Article 15) Paragraph 2: Except where otherwise provided for in this Regulation, Community legislation on jurisdiction shall apply to disputes involving an EGTC. In any case which is not provided for in such Community legislation, the competent courts for the resolution of disputes shall be the courts of the Member State where the EGTC has its registered office.

4 Research plan

4.1 Research questions and hypotheses

Research question I: How citizens of Serbia perceive borders in CB regions?

Hypothesis statement I: Borders are perceived as less significant in regions which are actively involved in CBC. (Higher ratio of CB projects)

Research question II: Which are the regions that are most suitable for establishing EGTC once legal basis for this instrument are set?

Hypothesis statement II: It is feasible to establish EGTC in territories where perceptions (mental maps) of citizens indicate a high level of community and closeness with CB regions.

4.2 Methodological background

Anthropologists have increasingly probed new ways of theorising the conditions and practice of modernity and post-modernity. Much of this theorising has sought to liberate notions of space, place and time from assumptions about their connection to the supposedly natural units of nation, state, identity and culture. These new theories regard space as the conceptual map which orders social life. Space is the general idea people have of where things should be in physical and cultural relation to each other. In these sense, space is the conceptualisation of the imagined physical relationships which give meaning to society (Donnan–Wilson 2001, p. 9).

It is aforementioned that CBC is part of different socio-economic scientific disciplines and studies. In order to get the best results, different fields of research are brought together from regional studies, public administration and psychology to political science, financial management and urban planning. Therefore, the reasonable answer on the question about choosing the research methodology and methods, would be the multidimensional “whatever works” approach.

Finding our foundation in postmodernism²¹ as epistemological paradigm we used dominantly qualitative method while developing conceptual and methodological framework of the study. This is firstly because “qualitative research is often inductive, rather than deductive, and consists of describing people’s and groups particular situations, meanings and experiences. Second, qualitative research designs are often emergent and flexible, and the research itself is quite dynamic. Third, the qualitative research process is non-linear and non-sequential” (Frankel–Devers 2000). Whereas during data collection, data systematisation and data analysis, we used both qualitative and quantitative methods because information about examined phenomena are spread across several scientific disciplines and various stakeholders. Given the analysed subject, we have chosen combination of qualitative and quantitative methods to achieve the best results.

Empirical materials were collected from various related studies, best practice example and available academic literature on regionalisation, CBC, influence of EGTC on territorial cooperation. Equally important are interviews, undertaken before and during the research, about the personal experience of professionals and scholars involved in the aforementioned fields together with data from two

²¹ Postmodernism reflects loss of certainty in ways of knowing and what is known. What we are left is awareness of the complexity, historical contingency and fragility of the practices trough which knowledge is constructed about ourselves and the world. The orthodox consensus about how to reach scientifically has been displaced (Punch 1998, p. 148).

international conference on related topics: “New regional policies and European experience” held in Belgrade – Serbia on 2nd and 3rd February 2012 and “The socio-economic effects of the Danube developments in Southeast Europe” held in Komarno – Slovakia on November 24th and 25th 2011.

4.3 Objective and target group of the interviews and on-line questionnaire

The aim of personal interviews and on-line questionnaires is to gather data that will serve to evaluate the process of borders perception of citizens living in Serbia and to measure influence of these perceptions on managing of CBC projects. The biggest challenge, as in all social research, was to correlate questions about opinions with measurable indicators and to be as efficient as possible in terms of time, considering that the whole territory of the Republic of Serbia is taken in consideration. Performing close surveys, roundtables and drawing mental maps is time and money consuming; this is why the adjusted mental mapping method was implemented²² for on-line questionnaires and channels for gathering data. Thus, questions and questionnaires are designed so they could be completed online for computer-assisted self-interviewing (CASI). Our goal was to get as much as possible answers on the on-line questionnaires; 100 questionnaires were sent to border settlements that are located not more than 50 km from the state border, but we received only 63 answers for evaluation of mental distances and 54 answers on questionnaire regarding perception of CBC and BR; 4 personal structured interviews were conducted (one via Skype) with representatives of local government or regional development agencies that are in charge of managing cross-border project in their regions under the IPA CBC Programme.

Data gathered from questionnaires provided material for the construction of a conclusive mental map that would reflect the “image within” of borders of Serbia. During the making of the map and the results of the research, we compared all data and tried to weigh results with official information, for instance about: demographics, standard of living, project structure and size, money that local governments manage to allocate being a part of the CBC Programme, export-import, workforce migrations between countries etc. and hopefully provide an evidence about the region/s in the territory of Serbia where it would be most feasible to build EGTC once the legal bases for this instrument are created.

²² As a research method, mental mapping’s use the mental maps drawn by samples of people to get insight in the way people perceive given territory or how significant certain landmarks are for specific groups of population.

It would be ideal to compensate on-line interviews by conducting the surveys and drawing of maps between the carefully chosen samples of members that live in given border areas. Anyway, considering the scope and purpose of this project, this kind of surveys must wait for some other research opportunity.

Target group: Experienced professionals who were for a number of years involved in managing CBC programmes and projects.

First group: personal interviews conducted before the research: Mrs. Danica Lale who is Programme Manager in Joint Technical Secretariat Hungary-Serbia IPA Cross-border Co-operation Programme; Mr. Ivan Knezevic who at the time of interview was programme manager in the CESS-Vojvodina.

Questions for first group: 1. What national and supranational laws are regulating the field of CBC; 2. How have CBC projects been evaluated, what are the evaluation criteria?; 3. What bodies and funds are involved in financing and conducting the projects?; 4. Are there any obstacles in communication with project partners that can be connected with borders?; 5. What is the biggest problem for CBC in Serbia; 6. Did CBC have a strong and measurable influence on the establishment or strengthening of sustainable networks and co-operation platforms capable of providing a real contribution to capacity building for management of CBC projects on local level?

Second group: personal interviews conducted during the research:

- Mr. Djula Ribar who is expert advisor for project activities in the Center for Strategic Economic Studies – Vojvodina
 - Mr. Jovan Komsic who is professor of European studies on the master programme in the Faculty of Economy, University of Novi Sad
 - Mr. Aleksandar Popov who is director of the Center for regionalism and founder of the Igman Initiative
 - Mr. Srdjan Vezmar who is director of Regional development agency Backa
- For questions for second group, *see appendix 3)*

Target group for online interviews: Citizens over 18 years from the whole territory of Serbia and citizens over 18 from municipalities eligible for IPA CBC.

Questions for on-line interviews (see appendix 4)

Secondary data analysis:

Data sources:

- Absorption Capacity of Autonomous Province Vojvodina for using the EU funds (2011), CESS- Vojvodina; methodology used: Desk analysis of CARDS and IPA CBC Programmes and surveys about perception of AC in LSG's. (40 interviewees from 40 municipalities from Vojvodina)

- Nagy, I. and Kicosev, S. (2011), Geographical characteristics of the distribution of the INTERREG and IPA funds, and their effects on the development of the border regions of Vojvodina/Serbia, University of Novi Sad/Serbia, Department of Geography, Tourism and Hotel Management.

5 Research and its results

5.1 How citizens of Serbia perceive borders?

Hypothesis statement I: Borders are perceived as less significant in regions which are actively involved in CBC. (Higher ratio of CB projects)

Based on answers of the interviewed professionals, we can conclude that vicinity to the border from economical and development perspective is the advantage for certain regions while for other it is not. All respondents mentioned as an example of comparative advantage the location near borders with Hungary and Croatia, which are more developed than other neighbouring states. Mr. Vezmar specified that these two countries are five years ahead of Serbia when it comes to management cycles and procedures related with CBC, and this experience is valuable resours for future cooperation. On other hand, he mentioned Bulgaria, Romania, FYR Macedonia and Kosovo as states on the same or less development level as Serbia regarding CBC procedures and overall economy. Thus, budgets for cross-border initiatives are smaller if they exist at all, and coordination systems for financing expensive projects are under construction, while in Croatia these mechanisms already exist. Therefore, it is hard to make concrete investments that would influence the development opportunities of bordering regions even if the structure of contacts exists and some Euroregions are established. We can get the same conclusion if we browse the internet presentation of all IPA programmes, where those with Croatia, Hungary and Romania are well organised and updated.

Also, all interlocutors recognised CBC as one of top five developing instruments of border regions eligible for funding from IPA CBC. Mr. Ribar mentioned the paradox where the more developed municipalities and urban centres near the border (Subotica, Sombor, Pancevo, Zrenjanin) allocate these means more than those less developed or underdeveloped, because they lack trained and experienced staff acquainted with project writing procedures, or these municipalities are simply so small that they cannot co-finance CBC projects. It is highly interesting that by answering the previous question, all interviewed answered also

the next one and put the co-financing of CBC projects as the number one problem of CBC, much ahead of language barriers, existing networks, will to cooperate and law procedures.²³

Furthermore, they witnessed a significant influence of CBC projects on the perception of borders, and called the present situation utterly better than during the '90 or first years of the 21st century. Mr. Nagy specified that before CBC initiatives, the border was hard as wall and countries across the border were perceived as another world. On the contrary, in the present time there are a lot of twinned municipalities and strong networks between RDA's, universities, regions and NGO's with all neighbouring countries except Kosovo and the FYR Macedonia.

Establishing EGTC on the territory of Serbia is just a matter of time judging from gathered responses. Some, as Mr. Popov mentioned that it would be more feasible if Serbian regions would be just partners in EGTC because of the advantages that the legal framework and bigger experience of the EU members provide for this kind of cooperation. Others mentioned Novi Sad and Belgrade as possible seats of EGTC and all saw Vojvodina as a reliable and skilled partner in type of territorial cooperation. Mr. Vezmar specified that initial conversations about establishing big macro-region between Hungary, Croatia, West Romania and AP Vojvodina are already taking place. Others mentioned the Danube as the common denominator for establishing EGTC, but all without exception find EGTC useful.

Speaking about the tangible achievements of CBC, it is obvious that there are different objectives and results for different countries. For Croatia and Bosnia, the projects related to culture and dismantling of the negative image from the past are still priority, while in other programmes the priorities have a more local development character in supporting entrepreneurial activity and competitiveness, tourism, border and waste management procedures etc. Mr. Ribar named as an example of a realised CBC project the construction of bicycle tracks in the CRO-SER IPA CBC Programme and Mr. Vezmar mentioned the newly build border crossing in HU-SER IPA CBC Programme. Others couldn't specify any specific project.

Regarding workforce migrations, we can note down its value for CBC and, especially, important daily and season work migrants, student and touristic migrations. This trend is negative for Serbia because national minorities like Hungarians, Croatians and Bulgarians are going to the Universities in their mother

²³ These obstacles are removed by the single set of rules on public procurement procedures and overall management of CBC projects, earlier by PHARE and now by IPA CBC regulations which can ensure genuinely joint cross-border cooperation activities.

countries and the majority of them never return. There are few examples of students from Hungary studying in Serbia.

Finally the marks of personal perception on importance of CB projects and their influence on perception of territory and borders scored relatively high. Mr. Vezmar rated as 6 on the scale from 1 to 7 where seven is the highest mark; Mr. Ribar 5; Mr. Komsic 3 and Mr. Popov 4. Which make it 4.75 in average.

Analysing the responses, we get to our on-line questionnaires (*see table 1, appendix 5*) we can notice regarding mental distance that the biggest positive difference between perception and physical distance is regarding capital of Hungary (-135km) and also first bigger city after national border Szeged (+1km). This mean that majority of people who answered our questionnaires saw Budapest 135km closer than it actually is. Next is the capital of Croatia with the smallest negative difference (+5km), and interestingly when it comes to the first bigger city after the national border, the discrepancy is the highest among all results (+63km). This mean that Serbians perceived Zagreb in almost exact distance as in reality but the border region and the city Osijek, that was the place of war during the '90, as twice more further than it really is.²⁴ A small negative difference is noted regarding Sarajevo (+18); what is strange is that our respondents saw Pristina (+25) twenty-five kilometres more distant than it really is and information about distance of this city can be found on road signalisation in Serbia and in elementary schools Kosovo geography is learned as integral part of Serbian territory. This mean that war which occurred 13 years ago, present conflicts on northern Kosovo, and on weekly basis closing and opening of “administrative border” with Kosovo, shifted the perception of the Serbian population towards this territory in a negative manner, as to say it is perceived as further than it actually is. The first bigger city after the national border with Montenegro is perceived 11km farther than in reality. The absolute record is noticed regarding Sofia, the capital of Bulgaria (+84km) and also regarding Vidin (+11), which is the first bigger city after the national border.²⁵

²⁴ The physical road distance from Sombor to Osijek is 68km while average answer of our sample was 131km.

²⁵ Interesting is the data that Vidin is the only city where our respondents skipped 4 questions and in 3 answers indicate they do not have idea where Vidin is located.

5.2 Which are regions that are most suitable for establishing EGTC once legal basis for this instrument are set?

Hypothesis statement II: It is feasible to establish EGTC in territories where perceptions (mental maps) of citizens indicate a high level of community and closeness with CB regions.

Another on-line questionnaire with focus on perception of borders and cross-border regions provide us with similar conclusions. 54 responses were received (*Table 1*). A link to the online survey was posted on the website of the Belgrade Open School²⁶ and distributed via email to the assembly of city of Sombor

Table 1

Results gained from the online questionnaire focused on the perception of borders and cross-border regions

	Response Percent	Response Count
1. How many of your friends live in states that are bordering Serbia?		
Not one	9.8	5
One	7.8	4
From 2 to 5	27.5	14
From 6 to 10	5.9	3
Over 10	51.0	26
2. On the average, how often do you cross the state border?		
Every day	0.0	0
From 1 to 3 times a week	0.0	0
From 1 to 3 times a month	34.4	11
Once a year	53.1	17
3. Do you consider that the involvement of Serbia in cross-border initiatives has influenced your quality of life positively?		
Yes	44.2	23
No	23.1	12
No opinion	32.7	17
4. Provide the name of at least one CBC project that has been or is still being conducted in your municipality, region or Serbia?	–	–

²⁶ Belgrade Open School (BOS) is a non-for-profit, educational civil society organization founded in 1993. BOS contributes to the overall development of the society through additional education and training of agents of social changes, professional support to institutions, research and policy development in order to build a modern society based on democratic values.
<http://www.bos.rs/eng>

Cont. Table 1

	Response Percent	Response Count
5. Judge how cross-border cooperation projects influence your perception of the state border.		
Positively (I think that CB projects increase the accessibility of the cross-border region)	54.7	29
Negatively (CB projects are without influence)	1.9	1
No opinion	45.3	24
6. Which from the provided answers best represents your attitude regarding the crossing of state border of Republic of Serbia?		
I am crossing the border easily and fast (There is no inconvenience except the usual administrative procedure)	82.0	41
It is hard to cross the border (too much control, inefficient border staff, small number of border crossings)	12.0	6
No opinion	6.0	3
7. Do you think that the state border of the Republic of Serbia is safe?		
Yes	53.8	28
No	25.0	13
No opinion	21.2	11
8. Do you consider that the border of the Republic of Serbia is too “rigid”, as to say do you think that during the transport of people and goods there are certain obstruction factors?		
Yes	40.4	21
No	42.3	22
No opinion	17.3	9
9. Do you think that the culture and language of neighbouring countries are so different that it is hard to communicate with people? Please write the name of the neighbouring country you find most distant (most different) from Serbia in socio-cultural aspects.		
Yes	6.1	3
No	85.7	42
I am not sure	8.2	4
Respondents area (54 responses)	Belgrade, Sombor	Subotica, Lebane, Zajecar

Source: Author’s construction.

(northern Serbia) and Lebane municipality (southern Serbia). Therefore, it is hard to determine the precise response rate and exact sample size. The author had limited financial means for the dissemination of the survey. As a result, for the scope of this research the leading principle was “the more the merrier”, and accurately designed sample size will have to wait another research.

More than half (51.9%) of people who make up our sample have more than 10 friends living in countries bordering Serbia. 53% cross national border on the average once a year and 34% from 1 to 3 times a month, while 12.5% do it rare or never.²⁷ Answer options “from 1 to 3 times a week” and “everyday” did not receive any responses.

Analysing the perception of the CBC and related projects, we reached the next conclusions: 43.4% of people think that the involvement of Serbia in CBC initiatives has contributed to the living standards, 24.5% do not agree with this claim and 32.1% do not have any opinion.

Asked to specify one project of CBC their heard about, the majority named projects related to students exchange, natural environment protection, employment of youth, legal regional cooperation or just wrote different IPA CBC frameworks, mainly with Hungary and Croatia. Still half, of the answers on this question were skipped, and some individuals specified they do not live in a region that is eligible for CBC.

In addition, 55.6% evaluate positively the influence of CBC on the perception of borders, while only 1.9% said that CBC does make any influence on their perception of borders and 44.4% do not have any opinion at all.

Asked what they think about the “rigidness²⁸” of national border, 42.3% said no and 40.4% said they find some difficulties while crossing the border and 17.3% did not have any opinion. When asked if they think Serbian border is safe, 54% answered positively, 25% said no and 21% did not have any opinion.

86% respondents do not find the cultures and languages of neighbouring countries that different that it would be an obstacle for cooperation. Yet asked to name one of the countries they find most distant from Serbia in socio-cultural aspects²⁹ they named Albania (and Kosovo) together with Hungary in the first place with 33.3%; in the second is Romania (23%) and the third place is shared by Croatia and Bulgaria with 5.1%.

Finally, even the analyses of related studies clearly indicate that contacts, networks and projects are concentrating in specific areas. Professor Nagy’s analysis of CARDS and IPA projects from 2011 come to a conclusion regarding

²⁷ NGO “484” from Belgrade conducted a research about travelling habits of Serbian citizens in 2009 and reach the conclusion that 85% of young people to 25 years never travelled outside the Serbia and only 11% of citizens has the passport.

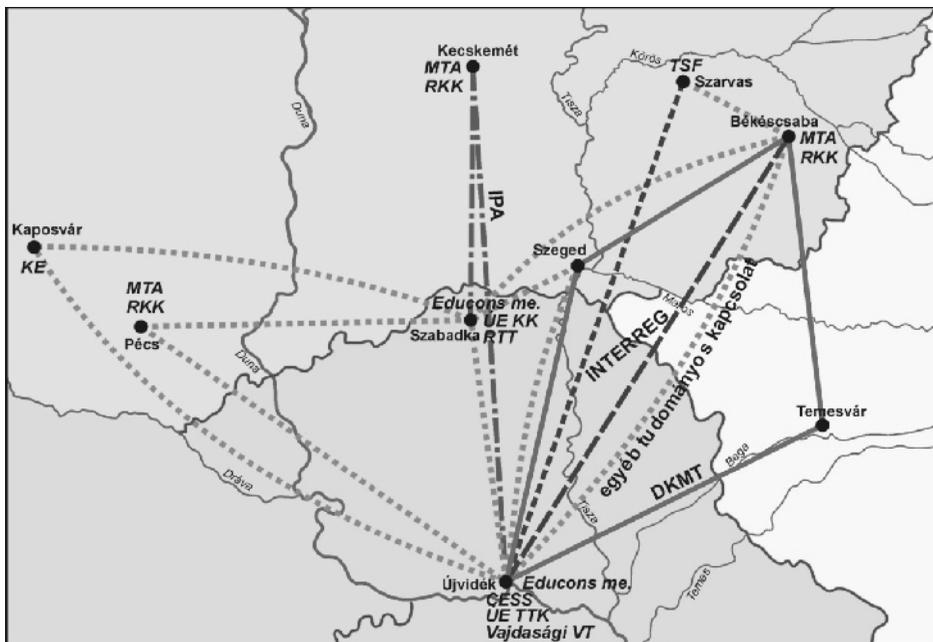
²⁸ The entire question reads: Do you consider that the border of Republic of Serbia is too “rigid”, as to say do you think that during the transport of people and goods there are certain obstruction factors?

²⁹ Some clearly stated that religious and national differences and the struggle with Kosovo are reasons for their answer; other named all Islamic countries, putting the religion in the first place, while other explained that Hungarian language is too hard and Romania is too big a competitor for Serbia, or Bulgaria is very similar to Serbia but we never understand each other etc.

cooperative networks in Vojvodina. Nagy say that these networks are most often formed by institutions and centres in charge of local development established within the EU CARDS programme. These projects significantly contributed to “multi-polar (active) and uni-polar (passive) networking (Nagy 2011, p. 9).³⁰ Nagy witnesses how the number of interested institutions, LSG and NGO is increasing slowly but surely. “Increasing system of connections results in the intense development of the micro-region and macro-region. This impact justifies the long term sustainability of the project. Elements of the network create links among each other often independently of the partner institutions, thus generating new work connections and development” (Nagy 2011, p. 9). These connections are made explicate on the next figures (Figure 4–5).

Figure 4

Multi-polar (active) networking in the fourth year following the implementation of an EU INTERREG IIIA – CARDS-funded project

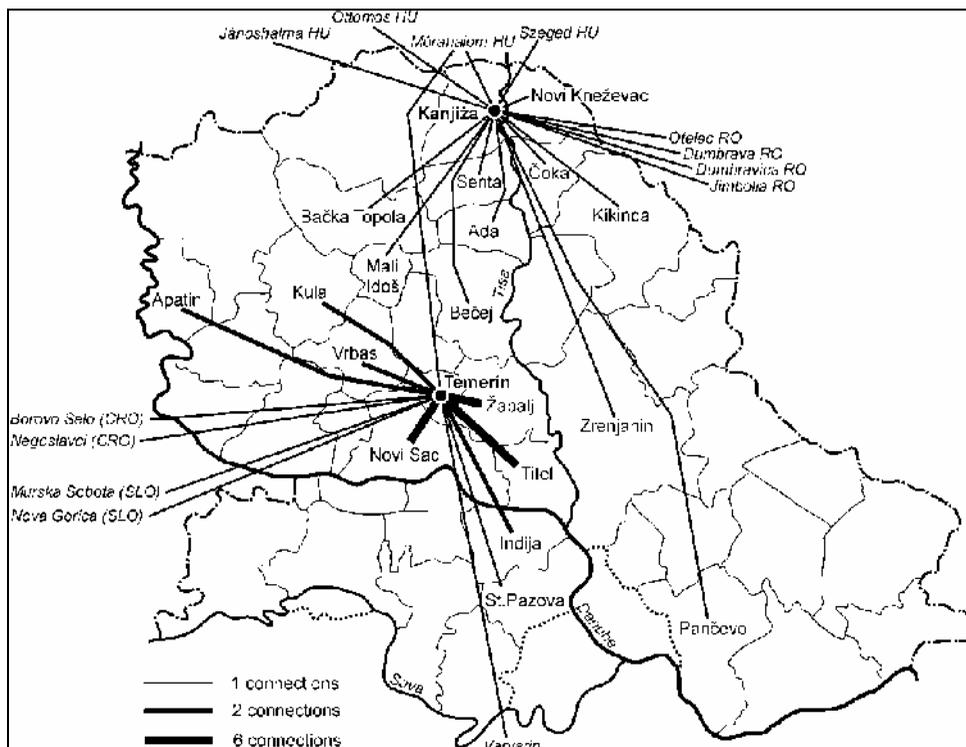


Source: Nagy, 2011.

³⁰ In multi-polar networks, once the project work is completed, new partners join the leading partner in order to continue and improve the work initiated by the original project. In the uni-polar network, projects are implemented only in one of the participating countries without any cooperation with the foreign partner, yet it has significant national networking capacity.

Figure 5

Uni-polar (passive) networking in the fourth year following the implementation of an EU CARDS-funded project



Source: Nagy, 2011.

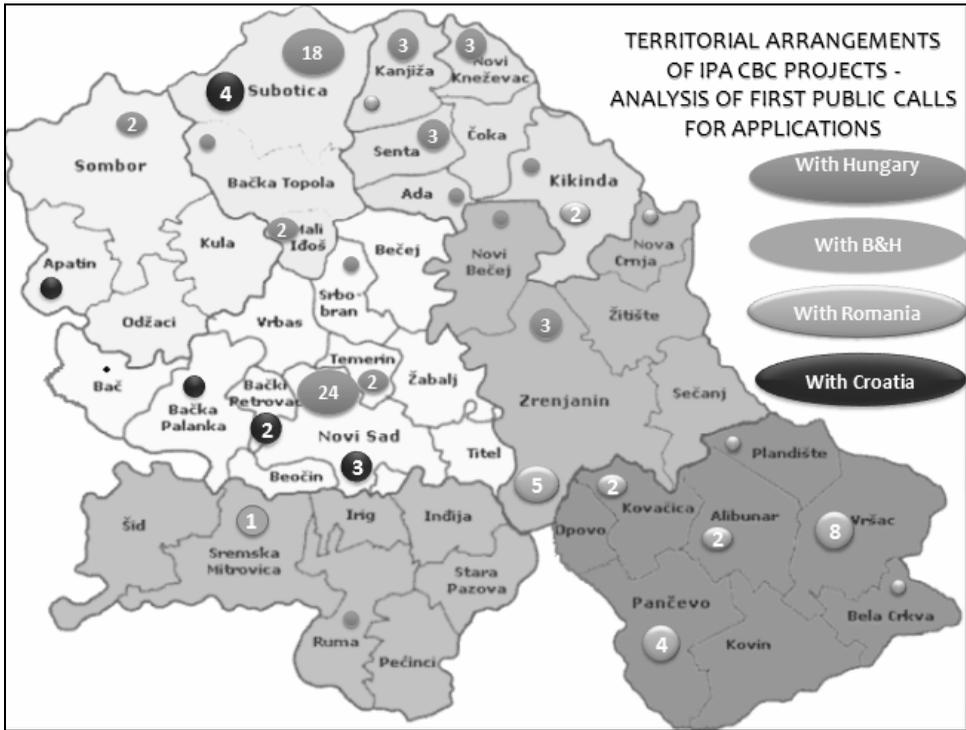
Presented below, *Figure 6* is providing clear insight in the territory dispersion of IPA CBC realised on the territory of Vojvodina. In the 2009–2011 call for proposals under HU-SER IPA Programme, 70 projects were approved with a total value of €18.2 million. In the same time the ROM-SER IPA CBC withdrew €15.5 million in 41 approved projects; BIH-SER IPA CBC realised 15 projects³¹; for same period, 11 projects were realised in IPA CBC with Croatia to a value of €2.7 million (CESS-Vojvodina 2011, pp. 31–42).³² Last but not the least BUL-SER

³¹ No information about total value of withdrawal money.

³² It is important to note that the total available funds for IPA CBC CRO-SER are much lower, precisely € 5.4 million for the first three years (2007–2009), due to fact that Croatia is not an EU member EU but a candidate country.

Figure 6

Territorial arrangements of IPA CBC project applications from Vojvodina



Source: CESS-Vojvodina, 2011.

IPA CBC contracted 32 projects.³³ Other Serbian regions or municipalities eligible for CBC did not conduct a similar research, comparable data or data that could be used for secondary data analysis though the request for this kind of data was sent to 6 RDA's (in Nis, Novi Pazar, Zajecar, Uzice and Kragujevac). This fact can be taken as proof of lesser and worse cross-border cooperation in other areas of Serbia. Maybe this is the influence of significantly lower financial funds for other IPA Programmes, namely with Montenegro and Bosnia and Herzegovina, because they are not EU member states, but the active example of Croatia excludes this opportunity. Maybe it is the consequence of the physical border with Montenegro, which is mainly mountainous and relatively inaccessible, with the

³³ This data is taken from "The updated list of the subsidy contracts under the first Call for proposals as of 16.12.2011. available at: <http://www.ipacbc-bgrs.eu/eng/announcements/view/6>

economic centres located in the larger towns at some distance from the border (IPA CBC 2007, p. 5). All this stay in the field of speculation and it will need to wait another more comprehensive study.

One of the possible explanations why it is easier to reach all necessary data for past and present CBC Programmes from Vojvodina is that this is the only autonomous province in Serbia with a Regional Government; furthermore, it is the most culturally diverse and heterogeneous region in Serbia regarding the number of national minorities. Vojvodina has also in 2011 opened the office under the Mission of Serbia in the EU for access to regional funds and the increasing of foreign investments. Vojvodina also has three RDA's, Provincial Government Offices for International Cooperation and numerous institutes and centres that are dealing with trans-national cooperation and development issues. Not one similar study (absorption capacities, evaluation of sustainability of CBC projects) is done for any other region except Vojvodina. Exceptions include studies and strategies of development of some RDA's (like RARIS in Zajecar) but only for municipalities that are founders of RDA's not on the NUTS 2 level like in case of Vojvodina.

6 Conclusions

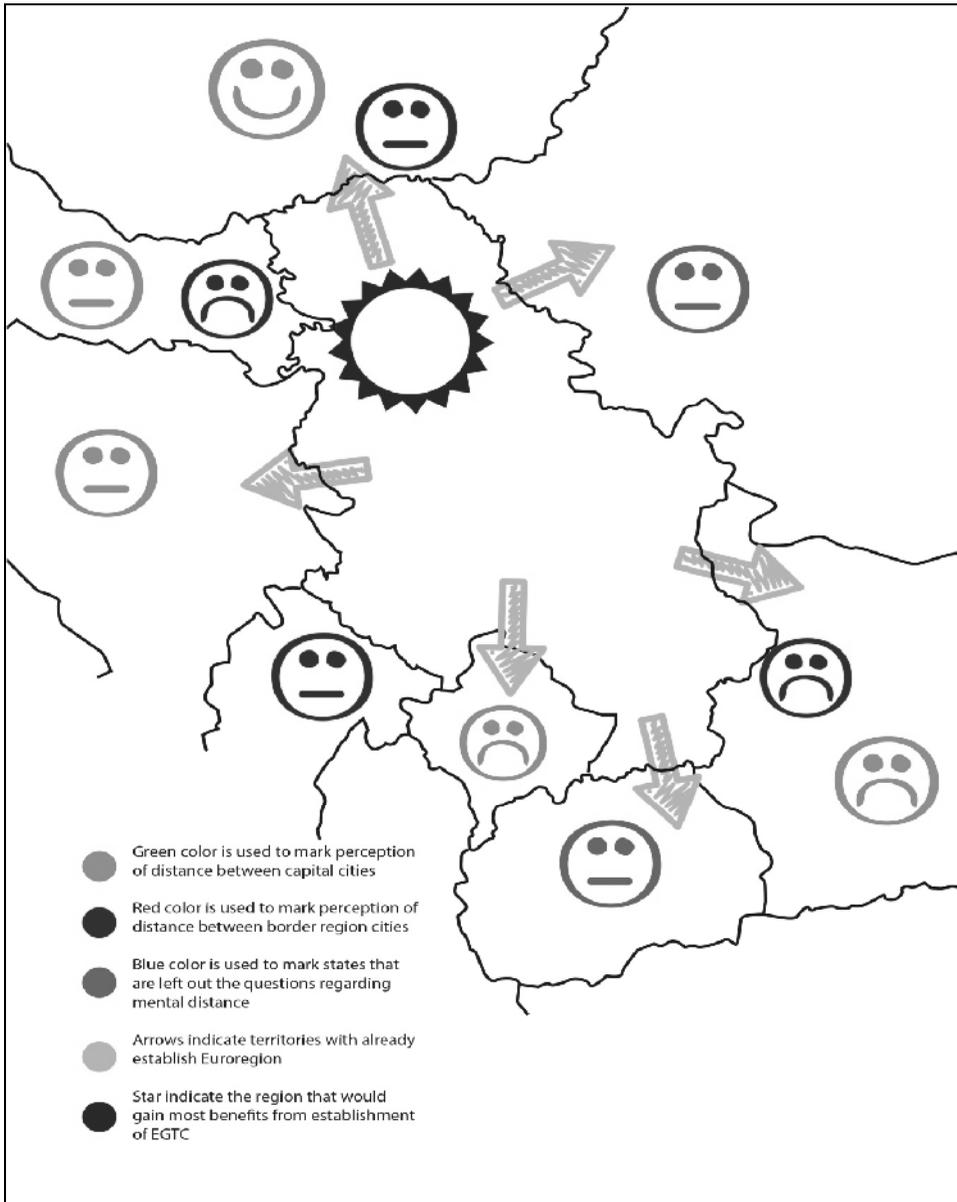
Perceptions as a process of becoming aware of something are indisputable related with our senses and cognition. As utterly subjective representations of reality, they tend to be formed under a great deal of factors. Therefore, perceptions of borders are usually part of larger mental maps we have about the physical space we live in. What is near, well known and easy to accomplish for one person can be far, mysterious and impossible for other.

By checking the correlation between perceptions and borders, and between borders and cross-border cooperation as an additional developing instrument of LSG in Serbia, we realise that it is going to be hard to define it in a proper manner having in mind all restrictions and limitations (questionnaires interface, time and money, lack of support from a larger academic network and researcher centres in Serbia) in conducting the thorough use of mental maps as a research method. Research served in creation of general mental map that represents the sum of all gathered data both through literature review, interviews and questionnaire. In the below presented straightforward map, we can locate positive and negative perceptions of the Serbian national border (*Figure 7*).

Assumed correlations between positive perception and a higher number of CBC projects are apparent. We do not know what came first in this relation. Did the perception of borders as less significant constraining factor create good

Figure 7

Conclusive map of perception of the borders in Serbia



Source: Creation of author.

cooperation networks and contacts, and then did this collaboration generate a will for mutual aid that resulted in good and relevant project proposals? It is a matter of discussion which reminds irresistibly on the eternal riddle: what came first, chicken or egg.

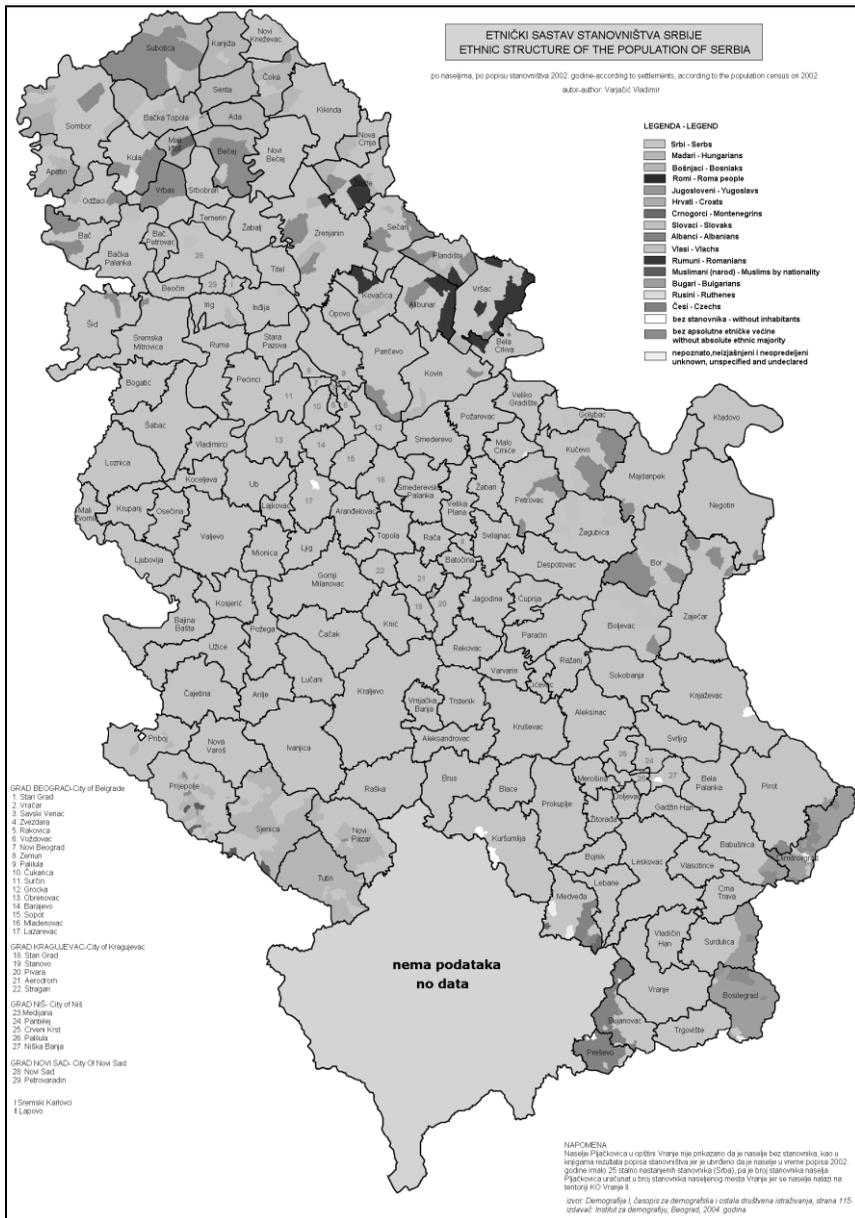
In this place, we can just identify that in the case of Hungary, results of measured mental distance are positive, while towards Croatia, Romania and Montenegro they are ordinary, as to say, did not vary too much from reality. On the other side, negative perception in the mentioned category is expressed towards Bulgaria and Kosovo. This claim finds justification in the fact that even the available funds for CBC are reasonably the same for Hungary and Bulgaria, and these states realised more than twice more projects during the same time. Moreover, bordering territories between Kosovo, FYR Macedonia and Serbia are not eligible for IPA CBC. Nevertheless by the answers in the on-line questionnaires, we saw that Kosovo and Albania are perceived as socio-culturally most separate from Serbia.

Formation of EGTC on the territory of Serbia or membership of Serbian regions in EGTC created on the macro-regional level is just a matter of time. All interviewed professionals spoke in favour of EGTC and in a way, they are looking forward to this opportunity emphasised by the chance that Serbia will soon get the status of candidate country for EU membership, or the relevant regulation will be amended regarding the areas eligible for establishing EGTC. Therefore, the establishing of EGTC seems most feasible in territories experienced in CBC programmes where national and supra-national funds are utilised to their maximum; where established contacts create a sense of mutual trust and further efforts are expected towards the development of the region. AP Vojvodina is the region that provides best additional support to LSG from the area; people and institutions from this region are already working for more than 10 years on mitigation of borders, thus transforming them into axes of friendship and entrepreneurship.

In the end, let's highlight that it is not important what will be the name of EGTC and where it will be sated, but the more important questions are, will it work in the current constellations and with the present competencies of LSG's in Serbia. EGTC is not just a European trend but a possibly useful instrument for solving mutual problems of particular area in the suitable socio-economic framework.

Appendix 1

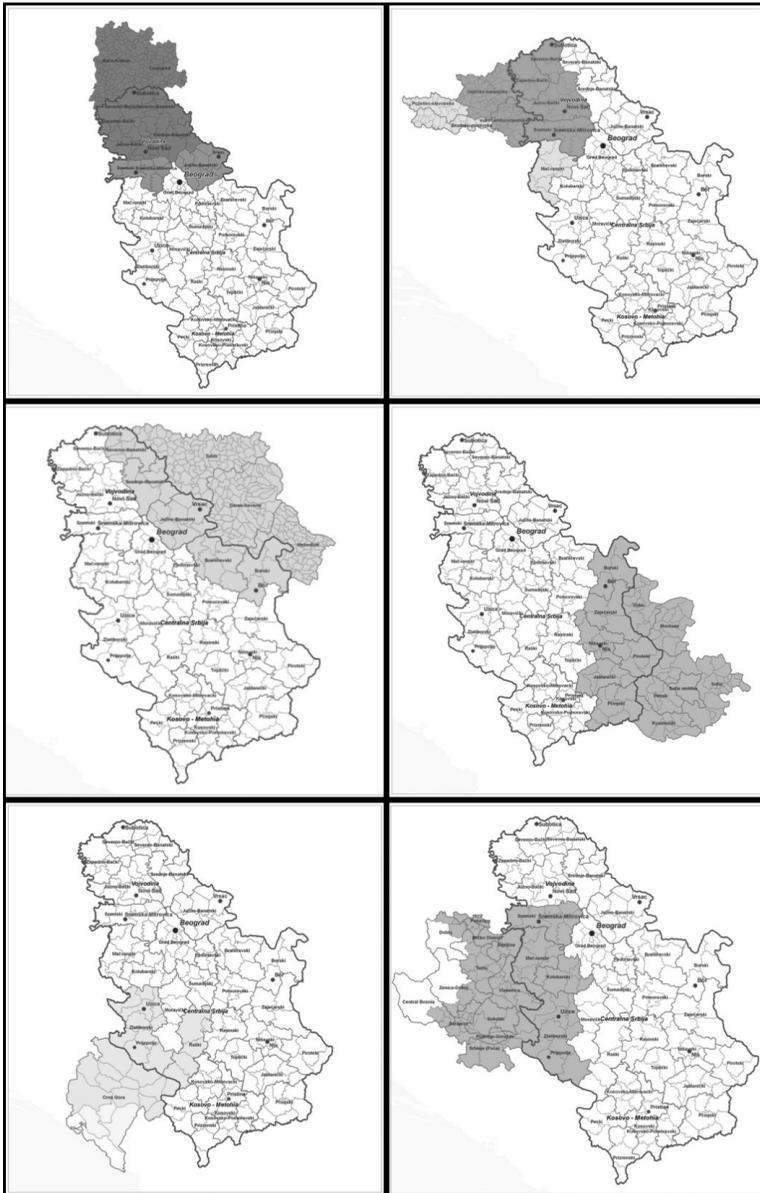
Ethnic composition of the RS by municipalities



Source: Republic Statistical Institute, 2002.

Appendix 2

IPA CBC Programmes and areas eligible for cooperation in the Republic of Serbia



Source: Author's construction.

Appendix 3

Questions for the second group of personal interviews:

- 1) Is the vicinity to the border a comparative advantage or disadvantage for your region? (In economic terms and possibility for creating CBC networks and developing agencies).
- 2) Please indicate 5 priorities for your local government and 5 instruments for local development. Is CB among them, and how important it is?
- 3) How important are the following problems for having an efficient CBC? co-financing of CBC projects, small/large number of exporting firms, law procedures, language barriers, bad connections=small number of contacts with people involved in managing of CBC programmes and projects.
- 4) Considering the involvement in CBC Programmes, would you say that CBC has had some impact in the perception of the borders, let's say that they became less significant for the normal life of people?
- 5) Can you imagine that one day EGTC would be located in your region or that you could mutually work on main issues as, for instance, health care, higher education or cross-border spatial planning and transport policy?
- 6) Which are the tangible achievements of CBC projects in your region? Culture = networking, contacts, removing bad image conceived during the wars and isolation of Serbia; Economic = job market; Infrastructure = more roads, border checking, renewal of train/bus stations, more transport lines.
- 7) Judge the workforce migrations in your regions and their influence on the performance of the local economy. Clusters/ entrepreneurs' contacts/ chambers
- 8) Evaluate your CB surroundings before and after projects. Are you better off with this or that specific project, agencies? What advantages did you gain?
- 9) Evaluate from 1 – 7 the importance of how CB projects influence your perceptions of territory and borders? Please explain.

Appendix 4

Questions for on-line interviews

A) *Measuring the perception of mental distance:*

1. In your own opinion how far (in km) are the two capitals?
(Belgrade and Budapest; Belgrade and Sofia; Belgrade and Sarajevo;
Belgrade and Zagreb; Belgrade and Pristina)
2. In your opinion how far (in km) are the next border-region cities?
(Subotica and Segedin; Sjenica and Bijelo Polje; Sombor and Osijek;
Bor and Vidin)
3. Personal info (Place of residence; nationalities; languages you speak)

B) *Evaluating perception of cross-border regions and influence on CBC:*

1. How many of your friends live in countries bordering with the Republic of Serbia? (4 choices)
2. How often do you cross the state border? (5 choices)
3. Do you think that the Republic of Serbia's involvement in CBC initiatives has increased the quality of your standard of living? (3 choices)
4. Tell us at least one CBC project that is conducted in your municipality, region or state?
5. Mark how the CBC projects influence your perception of the state border? (4 choices)
6. Which of the given answers is best reflecting your attitude when it comes to crossing the state border? (4 choices)
7. Do you think that the state border of Serbia is safe? (3 choices)
8. Do you think that the state border of Serbia is too rigid? (3 choices)
9. Are there any regional development agencies or CBC office in your municipality or region? If your answer is positive, we ask you kindly to put the name of the agency/office in the space left for comments.
10. Personal info.

Appendix 5

Results of measuring the perception of borders in Serbia (mental distance)

Num.	Cities	Responses	Perception	Physical distance	Difference	Comments
1.	Belgrade – Budapest	63	258.0	393	-135	
2.	Belgrade – Sofia	63	464.3	380	+84	
3.	Belgrade – Sarajevo	63	343.5	325	+18	
5.	Belgrade – Zagreb	63	397.8	393	+5	Two means of transportation: by train and motorway.
6.	Belgrade – Pristina	63	398.6	374	+25	
7.	Subotica – Segedin	63	47.0	46	+1	
8.	Sjenica – Bjelo Polje	61	71.0	60	+11	
9.	Sombor – Osijek	60	130.9	68	+63	Two possible regional roads from Sombor to Osijek
10.	Bor – Vidin	57	95.8	85	+11	
Respondents area						
Totaly 63 response			Belgrade, Sombor, Subotica, Lebane, Zajecar			

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