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**Universitat Autònoma  
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**A methodology for the design of  
Euroregional cross-border organizations  
and its application in the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region**

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## Presentation of the PhD Dissertation

The following Dissertation is structured according to the rules established by relevant authorities for the production of PhD compendiums of publications. More specifically, it follows the indications provided by the Academic Commission (CAP) of the PhD programme in Geography of the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). These were generated in accordance with the legal disposition provided by Spanish law (RD 99/2011) and according to the transitional provision approved by CAP (10/04/15) regulating students who initiated their PhD before the academic year 2015/2016.

In agreement with instructions provided by Spanish legislation (RD 1393/2007) regulating the presentation structure of such compendiums, this document will also be shaped around the three main sections required:

- Introduction and justification for the thematic unit of the Dissertation
- Publications which compose the compendium
- Global discussion of results and final conclusions

For the purposes of the Dissertation, six original scientific contributions (including one in the form of annex) have been included in the compendium. All of them (five journal articles, plus one book chapter) were authorized by the CAP of the Geography Department on 20/06/19 and are therefore proposed for this document in their original language and publication format.

At the time of writing, three of the articles have been published online on their journal's website, while the remaining ones and the book chapter have been accepted and are pending for publication. Accordingly, we present below a reference listing of all contributions included in the Dissertation:

- NOFERINI, Andrea; BERZI, Matteo; CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni (2019). «Cross-border cooperation in the EU: Euroregions amid multilevel governance and re-territorialization». *European Planning Studies*. Available online, ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1623973>
- CAMONITA, Francesco (forthcoming). «Passer par l'étape "proto-eurorégionale" : le cas de la Région Transfrontalière Sicile-Malte». *Sud-Ouest Européen*.
- CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni; NOFERINI, Andrea (forthcoming). «A territorial scale-based model for Euroregions and its implications for Cross-Border Cooperation in maritime contexts». *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*.



- CAMONITA, Francesco (forthcoming). «Cross-Border Islands Governance: A Field Analysis of the Italy-Malta Interreg Programme». In: DUPEYRON Bruno; PAYAN Toni; NOFERINI Andrea (eds.) *Agents and Structures in Cross-Border Governance: Comparing North America and Europe in an Era of Border Securitization*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.
- CAMONITA, Francesco (2019). «Envisioning the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago: a Braudelian inspired triple-level analysis of a European cross-border region». *Island Studies Journal*, 14 (1), 125-146.
- CAMONITA, Francesco (2017). «Una Euroregione per l'area transfrontaliera Sicilia-Malta?». *Strumenti RES, Rivista della Fondazione RES, Anno IX, 1, Luglio 2017*. (Annexes)

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COOP-RECOT II: *Territorial Cooperation in Spain and the EU: A selection of guiding experiences for Excellency and Innovation in the 2014-2020 period*. Funding entity: Ministerio de Economía y Competitividad (MINECO, Reference code: CSO2013-45257-P). Head Researcher: Antoni Durà Guimerà (RECOT Network)

All previous arguments mentioned in this presentation are provided to support the request for the International Doctoral Research Component in addition to the PhD title.



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## Abbreviations & Acronyms (Sections I & III)

AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
CBA	Cross-Border Area
CBC	Cross-Border Cooperation
CBR	Cross-Border Region
CPRM	Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions
DGRegio	Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (EU)
EC	European Commission
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
ERDF	European Regional Development Fund
ETC	European Territorial Cooperation
EU	European Union
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
NAFTA	North Atlantic Free Treaty Agreement
OECD	Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development
SAF	<i>Strategic Action Fields</i> theory





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The best metaphor for a PhD is undoubtedly the one of very long journeys. Some days you will love it, some others you will rather despise it. It will make you enthusiastic about your own research and yet frustrated by the countless days spent researching, writing and then revising. But it is genuinely amazing when you hit the end and then look back at how much you have grown during those years.

Perhaps it is true when they claim that writing a PhD Dissertation only makes you too much of an expert in just one field and that it is only the beginning of your career. And yet, there is something deeply satisfying in how much it helped to forge your skills, to look at different perspectives and to develop your critical thinking. But a PhD is also an history of the many relations you develop out there while doing research. In truth, behind every researcher there are mentors, colleagues, friends and family who deal with us and somehow share a small part of our burden. In the story of this Dissertation there are many who worked hard to support me from behind the stage. It seems only fair that I would take my time to dedicate a little space to them in this section.

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## Abstract

This doctoral thesis presents **a coherent and innovative theory-based methodology for the development of new Cross-border Cooperation's (CBC) Euroregional organizations** within the territories of the European Union (EU). In addition to the necessary theoretical framework, the dissertation exploits as case-study the maritime cross-border region between the European islands of Sicily and Malta.

The research feeds on a broad knowledge developed in the fields of territorial cooperation both in the academic world (integrating contributions from different disciplines, above all geography and political science) and in the sector of EU institutional policies (INTERREG instrument), specifically through the current objective of the European Territorial Cooperation policy.

The dissertation therefore proposes **a theoretical model for analyzing the features of Euroregions** as permanent and political cooperation structures generally employed in multiple internal borders of the EU. In this regard, the work of analysis and classification was based upon previous databases including excellent Euroregional cases (R&D project COOP-RECOT II).

An important purpose derived from the model has been **its exploitation as a tool for the preliminary design of new Euroregional organizations**. Particular attention was given to territories that do not (yet) present cross-border institutionalization beyond the INTERREG programmes sponsored by the EU (such cross-border regions are defined in the dissertation as "proto-euroregional" territories).

In any case, the model holds to the principle that territorial scale has an important correspondence to the type of CBC enacted through the border. At the same time, it exerts an influence over the governance structures existing in a determined region. In addition, this hypothesis is reinforced by introducing the territorial features derived from the geographical border typology. An evident example of this has been shown in the case-study area affected by a maritime context.

In relation to this argument, **the third contribution of the dissertation derives from the observation of CBC in maritime contexts**. This has revealed that maritime border areas between two (or more) EU territories require specific types of governance due to different issues affecting the CBC projects' execution. Accordingly, these obstacles can be reduced by employing multilevel governance structures and involving actors with territorial competences capable to enact at cross-sea level.

To accomplish the creation of a useful Euroregional organization which is genuinely adjusted to the needs of the territory, **the dissertation proposes as fourth contribution two further methods based on the interpretation of SAF theory (Strategic Action Fields) and on the adaptation of geo-historical approaches from the Longue Durée (Braudel)**. This was instrumental in obtaining a multisectoral analysis (commonalities and differences in the CBR) stressing the accent on the power relations and the cross-border flows and issues between the two parts.

At the same time, **the construction of the methodology** has been instrumental in its application to the case-study area. Indeed, it **has been exploited in the Sicilian-Maltese case as to provide a list of suggestions derived from theoretical results**. These constitute broad indications which may lead to the creation of a Euroregional strategy between the two islands.

Lastly, this research demonstrates **that it is possible to employ existing academic theories and empirical studies for the consolidation of a theory-based instrument in the design of new Euroregional organizations**. Their active presence along the internal borders of the EU, coupled with the desire for peaceful cooperation and joint development within the framework of European Integration, invite us to produce new theoretical tools to support the development of Euroregional initiatives.

## Resumen

Esta tesis doctoral presenta **una propuesta teórica y metodológica, coherente e innovadora para el desarrollo de nuevas iniciativas Euroregionales de Cooperación Transfronteriza (CTF)** dentro de los territorios de la Unión Europea (UE). Además del necesario marco teórico, la tesis presenta un caso de estudio concreto basado en la región transfronteriza marítima de las islas europeas de Sicilia y Malta.

La investigación se alimenta de un amplio conocimiento desarrollado en los campos de la cooperación territorial tanto en el mundo académico (integrando aportaciones de diferentes disciplinas, ante todo de la geografía y de la ciencia política) como en el sector de las políticas institucionales que se desarrollan adentro de la UE (instrumento INTERREG), específicamente a través del actual objetivo de la política de Cooperación Territorial Europea.

La tesis propone por lo tanto **la aportación de un modelo teórico para analizar las características de las Euroregiones** en cuanto estructuras políticas de cooperación permanente y cuyo uso está generalmente extendido en muchas fronteras internas de la Unión. En este sentido, el trabajo de análisis y clasificación ha sido imprescindible de la anterior elaboración de bases de datos de casos euroregionales excelentes dentro del proyecto de I+D COOP-RECOT II.

Una importante finalidad derivada del modelo ha sido **su explotación como herramienta inicial para el diseño preliminar de nuevo proyectos Euroregionales** en territorios que aún no presentan institucionalización política transfronteriza más allá de los programas técnicos INTERREG garantizados por la UE (dichos territorios son denominados en la tesis como ‘proto-euroregionales’).

En todo caso, el modelo sostiene la idea que las escalas territoriales tienen una notable correspondencia con el tipo de CTF practicada y en menor medida con las estructuras de gobernanza euroregionales existentes en un determinado territorio. Además, las hipótesis generadas por el modelo se refuerzan cuando se introducen las características territoriales de las áreas fronterizas, como en el caso de estudio principal a través de las áreas marítimas.

De ello se desprende **una tercera aportación derivada de la observación de la CTF en contextos marítimos**, y que revela que las fronteras marítimas entre dos territorios de la UE necesitan una gobernanza particular, ya que la distancia y la barrera marítima producen problemáticas distintas a la hora de ejecutar proyectos de cooperación. Ello se refleja principalmente en la adaptación de

necesarias estructuras multinivel para involucrar distintos actores con diferentes competencias de cara a proyectos conjuntos.

Para conseguir una estructura Euroregional de alta utilidad y realmente ajustada según los procesos existentes de CTF, la tesis propone **como cuarta aportación la construcción de un marco metodológico basado en la interpretación de la teoría de los SAF (*Strategic Action Fields*) y en la adaptación de enfoques geo-históricos de la *Longue Durée* (Braudel)**. Ello permite obtener un análisis multisectorial (puntos de contacto y diferencias entre los territorios de una región transfronteriza) que evidencian también las relaciones de poder y los flujos transfronterizos en acto entre los componentes.

Finalmente, todo lo anterior se ve explotado en el **análisis multisectorial de la región transfronteriza marítima Sicilia-Malta para la producción de un listado de sugerencias derivados de los objetivos anteriores** e incluyentes consideraciones para la elaboración de una estrategia Euroregional entre las dos islas.

En última instancia, cabe recordar que **esta investigación contribuye a demostrar la posibilidad de elaboración de una propuesta metodológica para la planificación de nuevas Euroregiones basada sobre teorías interdisciplinarias y estudios empíricos preexistentes**. La muy activa presencia de éstas en las fronteras internas de la UE, junto al deseo de cooperación pacífica y desarrollo conjunto en el marco de la Integración Europea, nos invitan a la producción de nuevas herramientas teóricas para apoyar el desarrollo de proyectos Euroregionales.



## Resum

Aquesta tesi doctoral presenta **una proposta teòrica i metodològica així com coherent i innovadora per al desenvolupament de noves iniciatives Euroregionals de Cooperació Transfronterera (CTF)** dins dels territoris de la Unió Europea (UE). A més del necessari marc teòric, la tesi presenta un cas d'estudi concret basat en la regió transfronterera marítima de les illes europees de Sicília i Malta.

La recerca s'alimenta d'un ampli coneixement desenvolupat en els camps de la cooperació territorial tant en el món acadèmic (integrant aportacions de diferents disciplines, abans de res de la geografia i de la ciència política) com en el sector de les polítiques institucionals que es desenvolupen endins de la UE (instrument INTERREG), específicament a través de l'actual objectiu de la política de Cooperació Territorial Europea.

La tesi proposa per tant **l'aportació d'un model teòric per a analitzar les característiques de les Euroregions** com a estructures polítiques de cooperació permanent i que l'ús d'elles està generalment estès en moltes fronteres internes de la UE. En aquest sentit, el treball d'anàlisi i classificació ha estat imprescindible de l'anterior elaboració de bases de dades de casos Euroregionals excel·lents dins del projecte de I+D COOP-RECOT II.

Una important finalitat derivada del model ha estat **la seva explotació com a eina inicial per al disseny preliminar de nou projectes Euroregionals** en territoris que encara no presenten institucionalització política transfronterera més enllà dels programes tècnics INTERREG garantits per la UE (aquest territoris són denominats en la tesi com "proto-euroregionals").

En tot cas, el model sosté la idea que les escales territorial tenen una notable correspondència amb el tipus de CTF practicada i en menor mesura amb les estructures de governança Euroregionals existents en un determinat territori. A més, les hipòtesis generades pel model es reforcen quan s'introdueixen les característiques territorial de les àrees fronterers, com en el cas d'estudi principal a través de les àrees marítimes.

D'això es desprèn **una tercera aportació derivada de l'observació de la CTF en contextos marítimes**, i que revela que les fronteres marítimes entre dos territoris de la UE necessiten una governança particular, ja que la distància i la barrera marítima produeixen problemàtiques diferents a l'hora d'executar projectes de cooperació. Això es reflecteix principalment en l'adaptació de necessàries estructures multinivell per a involucrar diferents actors amb diferents competències de cara a projectes conjunts.

Per a aconseguir una estructura Euroregional d'alta utilitat i realment ajustada segons els processos existents de CTF, la tesi proposa **com a quarta aportació la construcció d'un marc metodològic basat en la interpretació de la teoria dels SAF (*Strategic Action Fields*) i en l'adaptació d'enfocaments geo-històrics de la *Longue Durée* (Braudel)**. Això permet obtenir una anàlisi multisectorial (punts de

contacte i diferències entre els territoris d'una regió transfronterera) que evidencien també les relacions de poder i els fluxos transfronterers en acte entre els components.

Finalment, tot l'anterior es veu explotat en **l'anàlisi multisectorial de la regió transfronterera marítima Sicília-Malta per a la producció d'un llistat de suggeriments derivats dels objectius anteriors** i incloent consideracions per a l'elaboració d'una estratègia Euroregional entre les dues illes.

En última instància, cal recordar que **aquesta recerca contribueix a demostrar la possibilitat d'elaboració d'una proposta metodològica per a la planificació de noves Euroregions basada sobre teories interdisciplinàries i estudis empírics preexistents**. La molt activa presència d'aquestes a les fronteres internes de la UE, al costat del desig de cooperació pacífica i desenvolupament conjunt en el marc de la Integració Europea, ens conviden a la producció de noves eines teòriques per a donar suport al desenvolupament de projectes Euroregionals.

## Résumé

Cette thèse de doctorat présente **une proposition théorique et méthodologique cohérente et innovante pour le développement de nouvelles initiatives de coopération transfrontalière Eurorégionale (CTF)** sur les territoires de l'Union européenne (UE). Outre le cadre théorique nécessaire, la thèse présente une étude de cas concrète basée sur la région transfrontalière maritime des îles européennes de Sicile et de Malte.

La recherche se nourrit d'une large connaissance développée dans les domaines de la coopération territoriale tant dans le monde académique (intégrant des contributions de différentes disciplines, par exemple la géographie et les sciences politiques) que dans le secteur des politiques institutionnelles développées au sein de l'UE (instrument INTERREG), notamment au travers de l'objectif actuel de la politique de Coopération Territoriale Européenne.

La thèse propose donc **l'apport d'un modèle théorique d'analyse des caractéristiques des Eurorégions** en tant que structures permanentes de coopération politique dont l'utilisation est généralement étendue à de nombreuses frontières intérieures de l'UE. En ce sens, le travail d'analyse et de classification a été essentiel pour le développement antérieur de bases de données de cas eurorégionaux excellents dans le cadre du projet de R&D COOP-RECOT II.

Un important objectif dérivé du modèle a été **son exploitation comme outil initial pour la conception préliminaire de nouveaux projets Eurorégionaux** dans des territoires qui ne présentent pas encore d'institutionnalisation politique transfrontalière au-delà des programmes techniques INTERREG garantis par l'UE (ces territoires sont désignés dans la thèse comme "proto-eurorégionaux").

En tout état de cause, le modèle soutient l'idée que les échelles territoriales ont une correspondance remarquable avec le type de CTF pratiquée et, dans une moindre mesure, avec les structures de gouvernance Eurorégionales existant sur un territoire donné. De plus, les hypothèses générées par le modèle sont renforcées lorsque les caractéristiques territoriales des zones frontalières sont introduites, comme dans l'étude de cas principale des zones maritimes.

**Une troisième contribution découle de l'observation de la CTF dans les contextes maritimes**, révélant que les frontières maritimes entre deux territoires de l'UE nécessitent une gouvernance particulière, car la distance et la barrière maritime posent des problèmes différents lors de la mise en œuvre des projets de coopération. Cela se reflète principalement dans l'adaptation des structures multi-niveaux nécessaires pour impliquer différents acteurs avec des compétences différentes pour des projets communs.

Afin d'obtenir une structure eurorégionale très utile et réellement adaptée aux processus existants du CTF, la thèse propose **comme quatrième contribution la construction d'un cadre méthodologique basé sur l'interprétation de la théorie SAF (Strategic Action Fields) et sur l'adaptation des approches géo-historiques de la longue durée (Braudel)**. Cela permet d'obtenir une analyse multisectorielle (points de

contact et différences entre les territoires d'une région transfrontalière), qui montre également les relations de pouvoir et les flux transfrontaliers en action entre les composantes.

Enfin, tout ce qui précède est exploité dans **l'analyse multisectorielle de la région maritime transfrontalière siculo-maltese pour l'élaboration d'une liste de suggestions découlant des objectifs susmentionnés** et incluant des considérations pour l'élaboration d'une stratégie Eurorégionale entre les deux îles.

Au bout du compte, il convient de rappeler que **cette recherche contribue à démontrer la possibilité d'élaborer une proposition méthodologique pour la planification de nouvelles Eurorégions basée sur des théories interdisciplinaires et des études empiriques préexistantes**. Leur présence très active aux frontières intérieures de l'UE, ainsi que la volonté de coopération pacifique et de développement commun dans le cadre de l'Intégration Européenne, nous invitent à produire de nouveaux outils théoriques pour soutenir le développement de projets Eurorégionaux.

## Riassunto

Questa tesi di dottorato presenta **una proposta teorico-metodologica coerente e innovativa per lo sviluppo di nuove iniziative Euroregionali di Cooperazione Transfrontaliera (CTF)** nei territori dell'Unione Europea (UE). Oltre al necessario quadro teorico, la tesi presenta un caso di studio concreto basato sulla regione marittima transfrontaliera delle isole europee di Sicilia e Malta.

La ricerca si basa su un'ampia conoscenza sviluppata nei campi della cooperazione territoriale sia nel mondo accademico (integrando contributi provenienti da diverse discipline, soprattutto geografia e scienze politiche) sia nel settore delle politiche istituzionali sviluppate all'interno dell'UE (lo strumento INTERREG), in particolare attraverso l'attuale obiettivo della politica di Cooperazione Territoriale Europea.

La tesi propone quindi **il contributo di un modello teorico per l'analisi delle caratteristiche delle Euroregioni** in quanto strutture permanenti di cooperazione politica, il cui utilizzo è generalmente esteso a molte frontiere interne dell'UE. In questo senso, il lavoro di analisi e classificazione è stato possibile grazie al precedente sviluppo di banche dati di casi Euroregionali eccellenti nell'ambito del progetto di R&S COOP-RECOT II.

Un importante scopo derivato dal modello è stato **il suo utilizzo come strumento iniziale per la progettazione preliminare di nuove iniziative Euroregionali** in territori che non presentano ancora una istituzionalizzazione politica transfrontaliera al di là dei programmi tecnici INTERREG garantiti dall'UE (questi territori sono indicati nella tesi come "proto-euroregionali").

In ogni caso, il modello sostiene l'idea che le scale territoriali hanno una notevole corrispondenza con il tipo di CTF praticata e, in misura minore, con le strutture di governance Euroregionale esistenti in un dato territorio. Inoltre, le ipotesi generate dal modello si rafforzano con l'introduzione delle caratteristiche territoriali delle zone di confine, come nel caso principale di studio sulle zone marittime.

**Un terzo contributo deriva dall'osservazione della CTF nei contesti marittimi**, il quale rivela che le frontiere marittime tra due territori dell'UE hanno bisogno di una particolare governance, poiché la distanza e la barriera marittima producono problemi diversi nell'attuazione dei progetti di cooperazione. Ciò si riflette principalmente nell'adattamento delle necessarie strutture multilivello per coinvolgere diversi attori con competenze diverse per progetti comuni.

Al fine di ottenere una struttura Euroregionale utile e realmente adeguata ai processi di cooperazione esistenti, la tesi propone **come quarto contributo la costruzione di un quadro metodologico basato sull'interpretazione della teoria SAF (Strategic Action Fields) e sull'adattamento degli approcci geo-storici della Longue Durée (Braudel)**. Ciò consente di ottenere un'analisi multisettoriale (punti di contatto e differenze tra i territori di una regione transfrontaliera), che mostra anche le relazioni di potere e i flussi transfrontalieri in atto tra le componenti.

Infine, tutto ciò viene sfruttato **nell'analisi multisettoriale della regione transfrontaliera marittima Sicilia-Malta per la produzione di una lista di suggerimenti derivati dagli obiettivi di cui sopra** e che includono considerazioni per l'elaborazione di una strategia Euroregionale tra le due isole.

In definitiva, va ricordato che **questa ricerca contribuisce a dimostrare la possibilità di elaborare una proposta metodologica per la pianificazione di nuove Euroregioni sulla base di teorie interdisciplinari e di studi empirici preesistenti**. La presenza molto attiva di queste ultime nelle frontiere interne dell'UE, insieme al desiderio di una cooperazione pacifica e di uno sviluppo comune nel quadro dell'Integrazione Europea, ci invitano a produrre nuovi strumenti teorici per sostenere lo sviluppo di nuovi progetti Euroregionali.

*“E mi accorsi che diventavo meridionale, perché, stupidamente, maturavo orgoglio per la geografia di cui, altrettanto stupidamente, Bossi e complici volevano che mi vergognassi.”*

Pino Aprile, *Terroni*.

*“Non nego che alcuni Siciliani trasportati fuori dall'isola possano riuscire a smagarsi: bisogna però farli partire molto, molto giovani; a vent'anni è già tardi: la crosta è fatta; rimarranno convinti che il loro è un paese come tutti gli altri, scelleratamente calunniato; che la normalità civilizzata è qui, la stramberia fuori.”*

*“Il clima si vince, il paesaggio si può modificare,  
il ricordo dei cattivi governi si cancella.  
Io sono certo che i siciliani vorranno migliorare.”*

Giuseppe Tommasi di Lampedusa, *Il Gattopardo*

# Section I: General Introduction



*Picture 1- View of the Etna volcano from the Maltese city of Medina (Source: Rene Rossignaud, rossignaud.com)*



# 1. Background and Context of the Research

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## 1.1 General Structure of the Dissertation

This Dissertation is presented in the modality of compendium of publications. It is composed by 4 sections which group the 15 constituting chapters.

In **Section I (General Introduction)**, I provide a comprehensive presentation of the Dissertation's topic and methodology. In this **chapter 1**, I have deliberately introduced personal and professional background information to show the reader the deeper reasons that brought to the scope and content of this Dissertation.

In **chapter 2**, I present the main objectives through the research questions and corresponding hypothesis, eventually leading to the theoretical and methodological proposition articulating this study. At the same time, I also illustrate the thematic unit of the Compendium by showing the multiple links and crossed results leading the general argument.

In **chapter 3**, I explore the theoretical framework laying on the ground of the Dissertation's proposal for the design and implementation of new Euroregional organizations. The framework is further divided into three subsections corresponding to the different stages of the main research.

Finally, in **chapter 4**, I introduce: *a.* the quantitative and qualitative methods employed in all stages of the research; proper justifications for *b.* the employment of the quantitative data (RECOT Euroregional Database) and for *c.* the selection of the main case-study (the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region); last, a description of the *d.* data management techniques.

**Section II (Publications of the Compendium)** is composed of the five publications included in this Dissertation (the sixth one was added into the Annexes). For each **chapter (5 to 9)**, I provide the full reference and an abstract of the article/book chapter before presenting the full text.

In **Section III (Global Discussion and Conclusion)**, following the indications provided for a PhD compendium, I firstly proceed in **chapter 10** to a global listing reconnecting the results throughout the publications. Accordingly, I give way to the elaboration of the general discussion in **chapter 11**.

However, I also go more in detail and choose to propose two different sets of arguments. In the **theoretical discussion (11.1)**, I elaborate both on the process of construction and the final implications of a methodology for the design and implementation of new Euroregional cross-border organizations. In the **case-study discussion (11.2)**, I further illustrate the effectiveness of the methodology by assembling arguments which could help shaping a Euroregional strategy in the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region.

Finally, I discuss the prospects for the research and generate a reflection on the methodological and empirical advancements of this Dissertation in the Conclusion (**chapter 12**). The accent is also stressed on the knowledge-transfer process to society generated by an application of the methodology in cross-border institutional planning.

In **Section IV (Annexes)**, I provide complementary material that was elaborated for the research but that it was not ultimately included in the publications. Likewise, I also present operational material such as the questionnaires to stakeholders employed during the fieldwork (**chapter 13**). In terms of additional contributions, it will be possible to find a *dissemination journal article in Italian* (**chapter 14**) dedicated to the case-study and produced during the realization of interviews in the area.

## **1.2 The Author's Background: approaching the field of CBC and Euroregions**

The main purpose of this Dissertation lays in advancing the debate over the classification and replicability of Euroregions as organizations devoted to processes of Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) across the internal borders of the European Union (EU). However, the discovery of a world of multilevel institutional relations across borders only happened for me around 2012 when, as a Sicilian-born yet recently graduate abroad in *International Relations with Spanish* (Swansea University, UK), I decided to return to my former Erasmus programme destination and to apply for a research internship position at the Autonomous University of Barcelona (UAB). My portfolio was rich with IR theories and worldwide case-studies, but European Integration had already struck my intellectual curiosity and led me to my first undergraduate dissertation on the subject between 2011 and 2012.

I have never failed to acknowledge that I owe a big part of my current academic trajectory to the late Prof. Francesc Morata Tierra, who decided to personally interview me for an internship position and to give me a chance to join the European Network on Territorial Cooperation (RECOT by Spanish acronym) the same day. From that moment I joined the world of academia and developed my professional career among administrative tasks, project officer duties and my first steps as a researcher. The RECOT family also encouraged me to attend the *Master in European Integration Studies* from the same university (2013-2014). By the late summer of 2014, a quick succession of events saw us losing our friend and mentor Prof. Morata

due to illness, but also earning our second R+D research project funded by the Spanish government. As one of the main collaborators of RECOT, Prof. Antoni Durà willingly decided to take the leading coordination of the research group, thus trespassing it from the Political Science and Public Management department to the Geography one. Thankfully, he also decided to ask me whether I would be interested in participating to the selections for the PhD grant scheme that came attached with the R+D project. With the help of both Prof. Durà and Prof. Andrea Noferini (another long-time cornerstone of the network) as main and second supervisors, I decided to cross the border between executive research assistant and doctoral student, thus beginning the PhD journey in 2015.

It was the culmination of a top-down process which had led me from political and global studies to interdisciplinary approaches towards the study of the EU and its member countries. Finally, it had guided me to the political and geographical realms of subnational governance relations and EU-funded territorial developments. The first project where I participated was the original **COOP-RECOT** (*“Territorial Cooperation in Spain and the EU: Comparing institutional capacities for the governance of cross-border areas”*, 2009-2012, funded by MINECO), where we proceeded in comparing Euroregional case-studies from a selection of five countries in Southern Europe. The project foresaw a large qualitative fieldwork while investigating mechanisms influencing either the success or failure of CBC. The analysis mainly focused on the concepts of institutional and administrative capacities as factors determining cross-border governance developments in Euroregional organizations.



Figure 2- Logo of the RECOT Network

**RECOT**

**bordergov network**

Figure 1- Logo of the BORDERGOV Network

The second experience was even deeper in scope than the first one, in-so-far as the RECOT Network was included in the partnership for the **BORDERGOV NA-EU** research project (*“The Transformations of Cross-Border Governance: North America and Europe in Comparative Perspective”*, 2011-2017, funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, SSHRCC). The research was in itself ambitious due to the employment of several case-studies of CBC from EU and NAFTA (*North Atlantic Free Treaty Agreement*) countries. At academic level, the project brought to the realization of a large quantitative and qualitative fieldwork whose data have been exploited in an upcoming book also including a chapter from this compendium. At personal level, this meant approaching the elaboration of questionnaires, the managing of a quantitative survey sent to over three hundred actors through digital platforms and the comparative

analysis of all corresponding data. It also meant working in a highly international team and having the chance to be selected for a fieldwork programme carried out along North American borders (both the US-Mexico and US-Canada in 2014).

However, despite the important insights provided by previous experiences, it was up to the latest RECOT research project (in which I acted both as project officer and doctoral researcher) to provide the fundamental expertise and the invaluable research data that helped shaping this Dissertation. Therefore, the next section is dedicated to a brief context explanation of COOP-RECOT II which was developed parallel to the Dissertation.

### 1.3 The Dissertation's Background: The COOP-RECOT II Research Project

The European Network on Territorial Cooperation (*Red Europea de Cooperación Territorial*, RECOT) represents an interdisciplinary research team headed by the Autonomous University of Barcelona and yet involving several collaborators from both Spanish universities (UVigo, Basque Country, Girona) and European research centers (Portugal, France, UK, Slovenia and Italy). Indeed, both its cross-cutting composition and the more than twelve years of experience were part of the reasons for submitting and later securing funding for the **COOP-RECOT II** research project ("*Territorial Cooperation in Spain and the EU: A selection of guiding experiences for Excellency and Innovation in the 2014-2020 period*". Funding entity: MINECO, Reference code: CSO2013-45257-P).

The new research project proposed to focus in the scarcely explored field of Euroregional global and comparative studies. As acknowledged by the specialized literature, to this day: *a.* no universally acknowledged definition of Euroregion has been accepted; and *b.* most studies dedicated to these cross-border organizations have tended to be focused around restricted geographical areas (i.e. the Balkan area) or sectoral fields of activity (i.e. urban or health policies) (see chapter 3.2). COOP-RECOT II therefore aimed at a comprehensive research effort to address these issues through a bird's eye perspective on existing Euroregional organizations in Europe. At the same time, it also sought to produce a sample of excellent and innovating Euroregional experiences for comparative purposes<sup>1</sup>.

The **first objective** was to design our own **operational definition of Euroregion**. After carefully analyzing a variety of academic and institutional sources, we were led to consider **a Euroregion as an organization or institution that:**

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<sup>1</sup> In the following paragraphs I provide an operational summary of the main outputs and results of the project through the achievement of its objectives. For a more detailed discussion over the methodology followed, consider revising the publication generated through the project (cited further down in the text) or the first publication included in this Compendium.

- covers a **cross-border territory** and usually **hosts a corresponding population** (except for some Transboundary Parks) or **provides a specific service** for the population in the surrounding area (as in the case of Cross-Border equipment);
- **represents a declared will of cooperation** (= permanent/progressive cooperation), being reinforced by public institutionalization via political agreement; and
- clearly shows **signs of joint activities** as well as **consolidation of public cross-border policies**, particularly when developing a **common strategy**. Such activities may be shaped by either funded projects, as in the case of most of the Euroregions considered, or the provision of permanent services, i.e. Cross-Border Equipment and Transboundary Parks.

This brought to the **observation of 343 European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) organizations**. They were analyzed according to our criteria as to obtain a global listing of existing Euroregional structures during the EU financial framework 2007-2013. Different classification typologies were further employed to refine the sample (i.e. the distinction between traditional multisectoral policies Euroregions, Cross-Border Equipment and Transboundary Parks; the acknowledgement of their Active/Inactive status). The results initially indicated up to 214 organizations responding to our concept of Euroregion. However, the mentioned work of classification brought us to claim the presence of **158 operating Euroregions** on the EU internal borders during our research period (see Table 1 for more details).

The **second objective** corresponded to the **in-depth investigation of “Especially Active” Euroregions** responding to our operational definitions of Innovation and Excellence in a cross-border context. In practical terms, this translated into the selection of a reduced sample and the following construction of an ad-hoc database gathering relevant information for the research. A total of **61 Euroregions** were selected for this stage, as we also began to register individual CBC projects confirming their exceptional status.

The **third objective** was obtained through the realization of a highly original **comparative study of the 61 Euroregions and their CBC activities (one project per each)**. Throughout the analysis, it was possible to provide feedback on various features of Euroregional processes such as their temporal and geographical distribution across Europe, the diversity of actors and legal instruments employed in their governance and the sectors and modalities of activities developed in their projects.

The **fourth and final objective** was fulfilled through the publication of a **Catalogue of Euroregional Good Practices** contemplating both the presentation of all the data listed above and a selection of 80 “Euroregional Info Sheets” (61 Euroregions, 10 Cross-Border Equipment and 9 Transborder Parks); these last ones were produced by appealing to the interest of relevant stakeholders outside of academia. The full reference for the publication is:

- DURÀ A., CAMONITA F., BERZI M. and NOFERINI A. (2018). *Euroregions, Excellence and Innovation across EU borders. A Catalogue of Good Practices*. Barcelona, Department of Geography, UAB, 254 p.



Figure 3 - Cover of the Euroregional Catalogue



Figure 4- Example of Euroregional Info Sheet

Typology		Status & Classification		Catalogue Selection		
				Excluded	Selected	
Euroregions	214	1. EUR (Active)	152	158	95	57
		2. EUR Monothematic (Active)	4		2	2
		3. EUR Micro (Active)	2		-	2
		4. EUR Inactive			56	56
Cross-Border Equipment	13	1. Active		13	-	10
		2. In constitution			3	0
Transboundary Parks	40	1. Advanced EUR Features (Active)		40	-	9
		2. Active			31	-
Euroregion + CB Equip. + TB Parks			267	267	187	80
Excluded (Unfitting Criteria Catalogue)	32	1. Working Communities		32	16	-
		2. EUR External Borders			7	-
		3. EUR Transformed			9	-
Excluded (Not EUROREGIONS)	44	1. Excluded (Not EUROREGIONS)	-	-	44	-
<b>TOTAL ETC STRUCTURES ANALYZED</b>		<b>343</b>	<b>TOTAL CBC STRUCTURES ANALYZED</b>	<b>299</b>	<b>263</b>	<b>80</b>

Table 1 - Summary of the Euroregional operational listing of the RECOT Catalogue (Source: Durà et al., 2018, p. 35)



At the time of writing of this Dissertation, the Catalogue has already received much praise through its presentation and later distribution among academic circles (i.e. participation in relevant conferences such as: Border Regions In Transition [BRIT], Hamburg, 2016; Association of Borderland Studies [ABS], Luxemburg, 2016; European Association of Geographical Societies Conference [EUGEO], Brussels, 2017; 1<sup>st</sup> Cross-Border School of the Association of the European Border Regions [AEBR], Caceres, 2017; XXI Conference of European Studies, Slubice, 2018) and through institutional gatherings with involved stakeholders (i.e. DGRegio, AEBR, Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion, Working Community of the Pyrenees). Likewise, the results of the project have already been proposed for publication in peer-reviewed journals (i.e. Publication 1 of this Compendium). The Catalogue of Euroregional Good Practices is fully downloadable through the website of the RECOT network and it has been included in the FUTURIUM policy-discussion platform of the European Commission (EC)<sup>2</sup>.

In terms of the doctoral research, the direct participation into the project represented an invaluable source of data for the development of my own research. Furthermore, the in-depth study of Euroregional mechanisms and dynamics also stimulated my intellectual curiosity towards the search for common patterns and their chance for replicability in other European contexts. These are the main reasons behind the inclusion of a first journal article presenting data extracted from the Catalogue. Similarly, the core of the theoretical framework heavily relies on quantitative work performed over the sample and partially obtained from the reconsideration of existing results. Although not indispensable, consultation of the Catalogue is still encouraged to the reader as complementary research to this Dissertation.

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<sup>2</sup> [https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/recot\\_crii\\_catalogue\\_0.pdf](https://ec.europa.eu/futurium/en/system/files/ged/recot_crii_catalogue_0.pdf)

## 2. Justification for the Thematic Unit of the Dissertation

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### 2.1 Main Objectives

The main purpose of this Dissertation is based on the presentation of a **theory-based methodology proposal for the design and implementation of new Euroregional cross-border organizations in the internal borders of the EU**. Furthermore, the theoretical framework is accompanied by **its pilot application in a case-study area** corresponding to the **cross-border maritime region between the European islands of Sicily and Malta**. The approach to the research is led by the following research questions:

**Main:** Is it possible to replicate Euroregional structures in any given cross-border territory of the European Union? What factors would ensure the success of the initiative in a given geographical context?

**Sub-Question 1:** Is it possible to construct a Euroregional theoretical model through the observation of existing experiences?

**Sub-Question 2:** Can we elaborate a theory-based methodology helping in the definition of new Euroregional strategies?

The **main hypothesis** leads to the assumption that **it is indeed possible to employ existing academic theories and empirical studies for the consolidation of a theory-based instrument fulfilling the research questions**. In principle, at the heart of the Dissertation lays **the construction of a Euroregional theoretical model** showing different governance and membership patterns for Euroregions through their territorial scale and the geographical typology of the border (sub-question 1). In this regard, the idea of replicability is based on solid evidence provided by a sample of highly performing Euroregions identified in the COOP-RECOT II project (see chapter 1.3).

However, it is here suggested that providing indications regarding the typology of the cross-border governance agreement is not in itself sufficient. Further information would be needed to address factors relative to the geographical context of the cross-border area and the corresponding CBC initiatives to be planned into a joint strategy (main question and sub-question 2). Indeed, cross-border institutions do not



exist in a vacuum and are highly affected by the territorial context in which they are created. Several features help to define such differences, such as the degree of administrative autonomy of the territorial authorities involved, the typology of CBC to be carried out across different borders (i.e. maritime borders, metropolitan areas, mountain spaces) and the existing degree of stakeholders' involvement in the INTERREG programmes funded by the Union. In reality, the elaboration of a comprehensive methodology needs to account for a wider variety of backgrounds influencing CBC processes in a cross-border area.

This is the reason why this Dissertation proposes the development of a **three-stages methodology** for the design and implementation of new Euroregional cross-border organizations (see Table 2). Accordingly, it considers the identification of **three main factors** influencing the successful development of a new Euroregion. These are:

**1. the acknowledgement of the existing networks of CBC**, specifically of cross-border regions (CBRs) located along the EU's internal borders. Of relevant interest are territories affected by a cross-border INTERREG programme but that do not show the presence of political governance agreements among the subnational administrations (the Dissertation provides new theorization on these through the concept of *“proto-euroregional” territories*);

**2. the selection of an appropriate Euroregional typology according to a Euroregional model** based on *a.* the territorial scale of both the actors involved and the CBC activities performed, and *b.* the administrative competences needed to perform across the specific type of border (i.e. land, sea, mountain, etc.);

**3. an in-depth analysis of the case-study area** from two different perspectives: *a.* the acknowledgement of currently existing power relations in CBC processes (i.e. INTERREG programme); and *b.* the elaboration of a multisectoral framework of existing historical, economic, social and cultural ties (and disparities) in the CBR.

Beginning from this approach, **each publication included in Section II of the Compendium develops its own objectives and hypothesis** that constitute the different stages of the proposal.

In *Publication 1*, the main objective is to provide **a clear example of the exploitation potential of the RECOT database through a focus on the re-territorialization and multilevel governance capacities of Euroregions**. Although it is not a constituting part of the three-stages methodology, the study was deliberately included in the Dissertation as **a prologue to the main argument**. From a descriptive perspective, it accounts for classification efforts on a variety of Euroregional features in the sample (i.e. the

number of actors involved in the agreement, their administrative and political nature and the official goals pursued). From an analytical perspective, the study's **main hypothesis relies on challenging overenthusiastic approaches towards Euroregional organizations as established multilevel governance systems. Rather, it understands them as processes of cross-border institutionalization leading to soft forms of re-territorialization through their policy-forum functions in the area.** On the one hand, the article gives a chance to assess the multiple results of the COOP-RECOT II project inspiring the Euroregional model. On the other hand, its conclusion gives a realistic argument for contextualizing the analysis performed in the third publication.

The first step of the methodology is unveiled in *Publication 2*. The acknowledgement of existing networks of CBC is framed inside original theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories. The article's **main hypothesis claims the existence of “proto-euroregional” CBRs as functional spaces developing their activities in an intermediate stage between the birth of cooperation processes** (establishment of an INTERREG programme) **and stable cross-border institutionalization** (i.e. constitution of a Euroregion). It exploits a theoretical framework based on theories of New Regionalism, bottom-up Europeanization processes and regional institutionalization. The study develops a complete definition of this scarcely explored typology of CBR, alongside providing a description of its features and exploring the conditions for advancement towards institution-building. **In terms of the case-study, the article also seeks to test its validity through indicating the Sicily-Malta CBR as one such example of “proto-euroregional” territory.** In addition, the analysis allows to obtain a mapping of existing INTERREG cross-border networks. Likewise, it provides a list of opportunities and obstacles for CBC institutionalization that should be addressed to proceed with a Euroregional proposal.

In line with the second stage of the methodology, *Publication 3* is mainly devoted to **the proposition of a Euroregional theoretical model.** The main argument is produced through observation of the RECOT sample of Euroregions and the corresponding database. First, the article constructs **an appropriate theoretical background over the mechanisms and functions of Euroregions** while reconnecting to the few previous attempts of Euroregional classification. Second, **it establishes as main explanatory variables for a Euroregional model: a. the territorial scale of the participating actors (and of the CBC activities performed); and b. their institutional density and level of self-government.** The results include a classification of CBC activities according to a scale-based typology (*‘Local’*, *‘Eminently Supralocal’* and *‘Regional’*) and the creation of a Euroregional model including three variants and six sub-typologies for Euroregional structures (from *‘bilateral Eurocities’* to *‘multiregional Euroregions’*). Third, it is suggested in the paper that **the chosen territorial scale is also affected by the geographical context of the border.** The article therefore reconnects to the case-study by **trying to understand the different dynamics of multisectoral cross-sea cooperation and how they affect the choice for a specific model variant (and sub-typology).**

The two final publications are connected to the third and final stage of the methodology. In this respect, the in-depth analysis of a case-study area necessarily requires taking a step beyond the framework employed in previous stages. Rather, the two studies exploit a combination of former theories with further theoretical contributions stimulating the results needed for a multi-perspective analysis.

In this regard, *Publication 4* is represented by **a book chapter dedicated to the INTERREG governance system affecting the case-study area**. The study belongs to a larger editorial project dedicated to the application of *Strategic Action Fields* theory (SAF) to several case-studies in North America and Europe. The analysis exploits its descriptive potential to provide **a mapping of power relations in CBC management through a specific terminology**. Besides providing an historical summary of Italo-Maltese relations and observing the governance structure of the programme, the **main hypothesis assume that the Siculo-Maltese area is currently “crystallized” in the execution of EU-sponsored CBC**. Island authorities from both sides of the maritime border dutifully administer EU funding from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) inside the seven-years financial framework. Notwithstanding, CBC institutionalization proposals fall short of interest due to a series of political obstacles and perceptions. Despite the different theoretical background, the chapter provides evidence which also reconnects to the “proto-euroregional” argument in *Publication 2*. However, **whereas the interest of the previous study laid on the networks performing the CBC activities, Publication 4 provides an outlook on institutional actors by focusing on the power relations in existing INTERREG cooperation**.

As fifth and final contribution to the Compendium, *Publication 5* seeks to construct **a multisectoral analysis indicating existing connections and disparities among the territories of a CBR**. To fulfill such outcome, the article elaborates a combination of Fernand Braudel’s historical durations (*Longue Durée*) and the concept of Movements of Connection and Separation (*Island Studies*). This leads to **the creation of a triple-level historical analysis** including *a. a long-term perspective on the geohistorical conditions of territories* throughout their event histories; *b. a medium-term focus on the alteration of historical cycles of political and cultural dominations* identifying commonalities and differences; *c. a short-term analysis on the recent histories of the territories involved, particularly in their relationship with European Integration*. Accordingly, **the article proposes a first application of the historical methodology in the Sicily-Malta CBR**. In terms of results, the publication was instrumental in producing relevant data such as **a list of common territorial and geopolitical matters affecting the maritime cross-border region** or even **a multisectoral list of cross-border issues currently happening between the two islands**. From a theoretical perspective, the publication also proposes a crossing between archipelago conceptualizations in *Island Studies* (understood as re-territorialization processes among cross-border islands) and the employment of European instruments and strategies to achieve such objective.

Table 2 - Summary table of the 5 Publications of the PhD Compendium and their objectives (Source: Own elaboration)

Theory-based Methodology	Main Objectives	PhD Articles (Compendium of Publications)
<p><b>STAGE 0:</b> Background analysis (CRII project)</p>	<p>Example of the exploitation potential of the RECOT database through a focus on the re-territorialization and multilevel governance capacities of Euroregions</p>	<p>NOFERINI, Andrea; BERZI, Matteo; CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni. «Cross-border cooperation in the EU: Euroregions amid multilevel governance and re-territorialization». <i>European Planning Studies</i>.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 1:</b> Acknowledgement of pre-existing networks of CBC</p>	<p>Own theorization: “proto-euroregional” territories only showing INTERREG programmes as starting grounds for the construction of new Euroregions based upon existing INTERREG CBC Networks</p>	<p>CAMONITA, Francesco. «Passer par l'étape "proto-euroregionale": le cas de la Région Transfrontalière Sicile-Malte». <i>Sud-Ouest Européen</i></p>
<p><b>STAGE 2:</b> Selection of an appropriate Euroregional typology according to a Euroregional model</p>	<p>Proposition of a Euroregional theoretical model based upon previous research data (RECOT Database). Classification according to: territorial scale of actors and CBC activities performed ; institutional density and level of self-government of actors; geographical context of the border.</p>	<p>CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni; NOFERINI, Andrea. «A territorial scale-based model for Euroregions and its implications for Cross-Border Cooperation in maritime contexts». <i>Documents d'Analisi Geogràfica</i></p>
<p><b>STAGE 3:</b> In-depth analysis of the case-study area for tailoring the Euroregional strategy</p>	<p>Analysis of the origins and current status quo of institutional actors and managing authorities administering the CBC processes of ITALY-MALTA INTERREG programme</p> <p>Construction of a framework for multisectoral analysis indicating existing connections and disparities among the territories of a cross-border region. Pilot application in the Sicily-Malta maritime cross-border region.</p>	<p>CAMONITA, Francesco. «Cross-Border Islands Governance: A Field Analysis of the Italy-Malta Interreg Programme». In: DUPEYRON Bruno; PAYAN Toni; NOFERINI Andrea (eds.) <i>Agents and Structures in Cross-Border Governance: Comparing North America and Europe in an Era of Border Securitization</i>. Toronto: Toronto University Press.</p>
		<p>CAMONITA, Francesco. «Envisioning the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago: A Braudelian inspired study of a European cross-border region». <i>Island Studies Journal</i></p>

## 2.2 Justification of the Thematic Unit

The publications included in this Compendium are strictly related to each other and presented according to the sequential order defined by the proposal (see 2.1). Although the publications separately deal with the different stages of the methodology, numerous thematic connections and self-citations are provided across the articles. In addition to the explanation below, multiple tables are introduced to show conceptual evidence of the links among the publications.

The **ties between the research questions and each publication** are shown in Table 3. Four out of five publications address the main research question by developing the different stages of the theory-based methodology. The only exception is found in Publication 1, whose inclusion is instead required to provide context to the construction of a Euroregional model (sub-question 1). Conversely, sub-question 2 is reinforced by the remaining three Publications (2, 4, 5) as they provide context-based analysis for the case-study area.

Table 3 - Links between the Research Questions and the Publications (Source: own elaboration)

Research Questions	Publication 1	Publication 2	Publication 3	Publication 4	Publication 5
	<i>European Planning Studies</i>	<i>Sud-Ouest Européen</i>	<i>Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica</i>	<i>Toronto University Press</i>	<i>Island Studies Journal</i>
<i>Main</i>		X	X	X	X
<i>Sub-Question 1</i>	X		X		
<i>Sub-Question 2</i>		X		X	X

Further connections are noticeable by directly **linking the stages to each of the Publications** (Table 4). The **acknowledgement of existing networks of CBC (Stage 1)** is reflected both in Publication 2 and 4. However, while the former is involved in analyzing the networks performing the CBC activities, the latter is more concerned with institutional actors administering the existing INTERREG cooperation. As already hinted above, the selection of **an appropriate Euroregional typology according to a Euroregional model (Stage 2)** is contained in Publication 3 through the strong background context of Publication 1. Finally, **the in-depth analysis of the case-study area (Stage 3)** is delegated to the two final Publications (4, 5) due to their methods and the dedicated application in the Sicily-Malta CBR.

Table 4 - Links between the development of the Theory-Based Methodology and the Publications (Source: own elaboration)

Theory-based Methodology	Publication 1	Publication 2	Publication 3	Publication 4	Publication 5
	<i>European Planning Studies</i>	<i>Sud-Ouest Européen</i>	<i>Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica</i>	<i>Toronto University Press</i>	<i>Island Studies Journal</i>
Stage 1		X		X	
Stage 2	X		X		
Stage 3				X	X

Three further results also show high connectivity across the Compendium's publications (see Table 5). These were born out of specific needs for the case-study area's analysis. The first corresponds to the **observation of multisectoral CBC across a maritime border (1)**. In Publication 2, examples of "proto-euroregional" territories were prominently observed in cross-border maritime regions. Publication 3, in turn, shows how the different dynamics of multisectoral cross-sea cooperation can affect the choice for a specific Euroregional model variant. Finally, Publication 5 still deals with the multisectoral analysis of a cross-border maritime region despite a focus on Sicilian and Maltese island status.

Table 5 - Links between the Complementary Results of the Research and the Publications (Source: own elaboration)

Complementary Results of the Research	Publication 1	Publication 2	Publication 3	Publication 4	Publication 5
	<i>European Planning Studies</i>	<i>Sud-Ouest Européen</i>	<i>Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica</i>	<i>Toronto University Press</i>	<i>Island Studies Journal</i>
1. Analysis of Multisectoral Maritime CBC		X	X		X
2. Excursus of Historical Relations (Case-Study Area)				X	X
3. Suggestions for a Euroregional Strategy (Case-Study Area)		X	X	X	X

The Dissertation also reconstructs **one of the first excursus of historical relations for the cross-border area (2)**. The majority of the dedicated literature tends to deal with individual histories, although there are frequent mentions of cross-border relationships between the two territories. Under this perspective, Publication 4 gives attention to the history of national Italo-Maltese relations up to the establishment of the INTERREG programme. Conversely, Publication 5 exclusively focus on a joint history of the Sicily-Malta



CBR. Finally, **multiple evidence is produced across Publications 2 to 5 amounting to a list of suggestions for a Sicilian-Maltese Euroregional strategy (3).**

To conclude this chapter, I also deem necessary to comment upon two of the main challenges derived by the production of a PhD Compendium. First, unlike monographs, the production of each individual article is influenced by external factors modifying the planned order of writing and publication. For example, circumstances may vary from the deadline of a concrete journal proposal to the realization of fieldwork forced by the timing of grant schemes. Nonetheless, it is up to the ability of the researcher to try and provide as much continuity as possible among the publications. According to this principle, the table below (Table 6) shows a graphical representation of the amount of self-citation (either through direct mention of the article or by introducing ideas developed in future contributions) in each publication.

Table 6- Self-Citation among the Publications in the PhD Compendium (Source: own elaboration)

Self-Citation of Other Publications from the Compendium	Publication 1	Publication 2	Publication 3	Publication 4	Publication 5
	<i>European Planning Studies</i>	<i>Sud-Ouest Européen</i>	<i>Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica</i>	<i>Toronto University Press</i>	<i>Island Studies Journal</i>
<i>Publication 1</i>			X		X
<i>Publication 2</i>			X	X	
<i>Publication 3</i>		X			
<i>Publication 4</i>		X	X		X
<i>Publication 5</i>		X	X	X	

In terms of publication content, it is also important to consider that peer-reviewed journals are often indifferent to the main argument of PhD compendiums. When considering an article for publication, its acceptance is often filtered by compromise between anonymous revision feedback and the introduction of theoretical perspectives akin to the publisher<sup>3</sup>. Once again, it is up to the PhD candidate to show sufficient skill in balancing unforeseen content and the Dissertation's final objectives. Notwithstanding, such adaptation process can also provide interesting opportunities to exceed original purposes. A clear example in this Dissertation is represented by Stage 3 of the methodology. Here, the need for multisectoral background analysis was developed through contributions from the field of Sociology (*Strategic Action Fields*), interdisciplinary analysis through alternative re-territorializations (*Island Studies*) or even geohistorical methodologies (*Longue Durée*).

<sup>3</sup> These circumstances even apply to the choice of the main language employed in the articles. In this Dissertation, the production of Publication 2 in French was considered as a top priority from the editors of the SOE Journal, thus generating a contrast with the other four chapters. Publication 6 (Annexes) is deliberately included in Italian due to dissemination purposes in the case-study area.

### 3. Building a Theoretical Framework for the Design and Implementation of Euroregions

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This chapter is dedicated to an exposition of the theoretical framework supporting the doctoral research<sup>4</sup>. It is divided into three sub-sections following the three stages of the study. First, I provide background proceeding from broad perspectives on regions, networks and borders which permeate the main argument (i.e. New Regionalism; Multilevel Governance). I also develop the content through referring to theories of Border Studies and European Integration, ultimately unveiling connections with Stage 1 of the methodology. Second, I reconnect to the argument of CBC at institutional and academic level as the fundamental *raison d'être* of European cross-border organizations. Consequentially, I also explore the relevant literature on Euroregions as I provide academic background for Stage 2 of the methodology. Third and final, I present the theoretical contributions that helped supporting both the development of Stage 3 and the specific reality of the Sicily-Malta CBR (i.e. Island Studies for the interpretation of the case-study's territory).

#### 3.1 Broad Theoretical Perspectives: Regions, Networks & Borders amid Geography and Political Science.

The definition of a Euroregion can be essentially grasped through its geographical (territorial) and political (organizational) dimensions. In its simplest conceptualization, it can be described as a bounded territorial unit formed by (at least) two contiguous sub-national units belonging to two separate states (Perkmann, 2002). However, there is a strong association between the geographical area involved and the subnational governments administering the territories. This is especially the case in relation to their joint institutionalisation in the pursuit of common socio-economic development (Carming et al., 2003).

On a theoretical level, the Euroregional territorial dimension locates the roots of this Dissertation at the crossroad between **Regional and Political Geography** as direct branches of **Human Geography**. At the same time, the organizational dimension provides justification to theoretical connections from **Political Science and European integration**. In addition, the cross-border perspective reclaims some reference to the multidisciplinary approaches of **Border Studies**. In the following text, I proceed with an exposition of all relevant theories.

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<sup>4</sup> As it is usually the case in a PhD Compendium, the overall majority of theories from this chapter proceed from individual research developed in Section II. Therefore, I deliberately choose to present a re-elaborated and enriched version of the theoretical backgrounds employed in the Publications. Indeed, the content of the chapter is also reinterpreted as to show the coherence of the main research proposal.



Beyond a long history of Regional Geography understood as *Chorography* (description and mapping) of countries or areas of the world, it is only in the late XIX century that the discipline acquires its modern traits. New theoretical perspectives allow to define the existence of bounded territorial spaces (and their specific features) which can be interpreted through a series of factors. The first approach to this kind of identification is found in the ecological perspective of the “natural region”, attributing the evolution of societies to determinants from the physical background inhabited (Ratzel). However, due to critiques related to environmental determinism, Regional Studies would soon follow multiple paths towards different geographical complexes, their intrinsic features and the corresponding evolutionary processes. For example, the French school (Vidal de la Blache, Febvre) pursued a stronger empirical approach to regions and the study of county areas (the French “*pays*” or the Spanish “*comarca*”); on the other side of the planet, the North American school of geographers from Berkeley (Sauer, Hartshorne) proposed the vision of a “cultural region” whose features and landscape could help defining population cultures. These visions, however, did not prevent Regional Studies to undergo a new period of crisis in the post-WWII age. Complaints were due to the over-synthesizing role of geography, the production of numerous monographies with no clear thematic connection and the lack of global theories and laws (what Schaefer would come to consider as “the Critique of Geography’s Exceptionalism”). Nonetheless, other contributions from the field of Economy around the same period also acquired an interest into the role of the regional unit. In their studies, new authors (Isard, Juillard, Kayser, von Bertalanffy) began to elaborate theories on “functional” and “systemic” regions much more focused around social relations and material flows. It corresponds to a moment in which Regional Geography detaches from physical and landscape-based perceptions to include larger complementarities and functional relations into its framework.

In modern academic terminology, all previous arguments are acknowledged under the broad category of (*Old*) *Regionalism*. The term is employed nowadays as to provide stark contrast with the renewed focus on regions in the *New Regionalism* strand of Regional Geography. It officially begins around the 1980s by the hands of Anglo-Saxon geographers, as in the case of Doreen Massey’s re-elaboration of the concept of *place* (a combination of identity, local institutions and global connections). However, even in more recent times, proponents of the theory kept reinforcing the neo-regionalist debate through exploring the fundamental relationships between the territory and their social processes. For example, in the case of fundamental authors such as Michael Keating (i.e. Barry & Keating, 1995; Keating, 2013) and Anssi Paasi (i.e. Paasi 1986, 2006, 2009, 2012;), the study of regions was associated to their features both in institutional and cultural identity terms.

Most importantly, the new approach saw an opportunity for a neo-regionalist focus based upon the context of European Integration and the rising economic internationalization paving the way for globalization. The real issue at stake for regions became their challenge to traditional state sovereignty, interpreted by scholars as a “relativization of scales” phenomenon. To its proponents, the world was witnessing the appearance of new economic and political spaces at sub-state level seeking to gain renovated primacy in their domestic processes (i.e. Collinge, 1996; Jessop 2003). Along the same lines, Brenner (1999) speaks of deep

geopolitical and geo-economic changes developing after the end of the Cold War and pushing nation-states into a “re-scaling process”. Due to the pressures of contemporary times, countries were being compelled to reorganize and redistribute power both at sub-national level<sup>5</sup> (regional and local authorities) as well as supra-national level (international organizations). Indeed, Söderbaum (2003) pushed the theoretical definition of New Regionalism as far as defining it as a new set of triangular relations; one where decisions are not exclusively taken at state-level but also influenced by non-state actors, particularly at subnational level.

The argument is strictly connected to the so-called process of “reterritorialization”, understood as the reorganization of social, economic and political activities at the subnational scale. The concept, drawing upon Deleuze and Guattari’s work (1986, 1988), has been widely applied since the late 1980s as a way of reinterpreting the production of space through a postmodern geopolitical approach (Elden, 2005). It is a new perspective which ‘questions the meaning and purpose of nation-states, fixed territoriality, common governance and scientific-technological progress within a stable international order’ (Luke, 2006, p. 221).

Crossing all the arguments, Perrin (2017) attempted to provide a synthesis of neo-regionalist tendencies while understanding the role of regional spaces in the modern EU political system. His analysis brought forward the idea of regions as a meso-level configuration in the state; one that would help it in better organizing society rather than being instruments of contention against national sovereignty. Furthermore, he effectively analyzed the existing literature and highlighted the new implications derived from the contemporary neo-regionalist scenario: *a.* a renovated focus on the role of networks, partners and collective action in the regional field; *b.* the importance of economic regional entrepreneurialism; *c.* the renovated regional capacity in external action inside an EU framework; and *d.* the chance for regional peripheries at national level to pursue alternative development strategies (among which it is also possible to consider cross-border agreements) (Perrin, 2017, p. 9-11).

Indeed, both the neo-regionalist perspective and the consolidation of re-scaling and reterritorialization proposals could not have been possible without the *Multilevel Governance* framework provided by European Integration. In its essence, it refers to the EU’s tendency in a context of globalization, Europeanization (Featherstone and Radaelli, 2003) and decentralization to shift policymaking towards an increasingly plural, open and less hierarchical decision-making from supranational to local level (i.e. Hooghe & Keating, 1994; Hooghe & Marks 1996, 2001; Hooper & Kramsch, 2004; Gualini, 2003; Jeffery, 2007; Keating, 1998; Morata, 2004; Piattoni, 2010). Whilst nation-states might have been very dominant until the early 1980s, in the 1990s the neo-functional discourse of *Multilevel Governance* began shifting towards the novelty that,

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<sup>5</sup> Although largely employed in the Dissertation, it should be reminded that the definition of ‘subnational authority’ is often contested. In Belgium, for example, since the federal level and federated entities are on an equal standing, it is inappropriate to refer to regions and communities as “subnational levels” of government. Below the central level, subnational governments are decentralized or deconcentrated public authorities that own (some) responsibilities and (some) degree of autonomy in the provision of (some) public good to a population within a certain territory (OECD, 2010).

in some areas of EU policymaking, decisions may depend on network relations between different levels of government and on the participation of a new array of actors from civil society. The presence of these would contribute to a qualitative shift in EU policymaking and politics, which some viewed as becoming increasingly plural, open and less hierarchical (Piattoni, 2010). In technical terminology, multilevel plurality is usually indicated by two different levels of participation: at the *vertical* level (including authorities from supranational to local status) but also at the *horizontal* one (in terms of widespread participation across society or even across administrations from different countries) (Hooghe & Marks, 1996, 2001). On its account, the multilevel argument also provides conceptual justification to multilevel cooperation initiatives across European borderlands.

Leading into the matter of borders, a Dissertation dedicated to the design and replicability of Euroregions necessarily needs to refer to *Border Studies*. However, it is also necessary to situate the research inside this highly interdisciplinary set of theories and studies whose common purpose is the knowledge of the borders and their associated dynamics (for comprehensive states of art on the field, check Berzi, 2017; Brunet-Jailly, 2005; Kolossov, 2005; Newmann, 2003; Paasi, 2005; Rumford, 2006, Van Houtum, 2000, 2005). Much like the history of Regionalism, the Border Studies were also marked by a contrast between a classical phase in most of the XX century (mainly devoted to a static and deterministic vision of national borders) and a second innovative phase permeated by neo-regionalist approaches.

According to a classification provided by Van Houtum (2000), it is possible to consider up to the three focuses in the field: a. a *flow approach* mainly defined by economic studies and dealing with borders as limitations to the circulation of goods, services and people; b. a *cross-border cooperation approach* centered around institutional relations and territorial integration across borders (i.e. Miörner et al., 2018; Sohn, 2014; Trippel, 2010); c. a *people approach* that analyzes society's relations with borders in matters of culture and identity (i.e. Balibar, 2002; O'Dowd, 2002; Paasi, 1986, 2009). Of course, Euroregional discourses in this Dissertation are easily identifiable in the second strand of Border Studies.

Finally, the connections of the framework with Political Geography are largely demonstrated by the wide interest of relevant authors towards border issues. Indeed, the broad purposes of the discipline (whose main task is to unveil the ways in which political processes are affected by spatial structures) often produce fruitful links with neo-regionalist arguments and cross-border approaches. A fundamental example would be the definition of the "territorial trap" by John Agnew (1994), conceived as an overcoming of nation-state territories as exclusive containers of modern societies. Building upon the neo-regionalist discourse, Zimmerbauer (2014) tries to deliver an integrated framework between territory and networks in processes of cross-border regionalization. To him, the presence of networks redefines and shapes the creation of new scales, territories and visualizations of the border through dynamic socio-spatial relations (Painter, 2010; Jessop et al., 2008 ctd. in Zimmerbauer, 2014). Similarly, Metzger (2013; Paasi & Metzger, 2016) attempts the design of an integrating model for regional institutionalization. Indeed, arguments from Political

Geography even reach the field of Euroregional studies through the analysis of their cross-border reterritorialization effects across borderlands (i.e. Popescu, 2008; Sanguin, 2013).

Although the arguments discussed above have broad implications for all the stages of the research, their most evident use is provided in Stage 1 of the methodology through the acknowledgement of existing networks of CBC in a given CBR. At the same time, they help providing theoretical background to theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories. These are considered in the Dissertation as neo-regionalist spaces involved in multilevel governance practices and yet located into an intermediate stage towards cross-border institutionalization.

### **3.2 The Core Framework: understanding the roles and mechanisms of Euroregions**

In the field of Euroregional studies, there is little doubt about the natural association between the establishment of Euroregions and their employment in CBC activities. This is demonstrated by the presence of joint institutionalization and the interaction of agents on both sides of the border. Effectively, it may also be considered as the one common feature to all Euroregions, even though a few entities labelled as such may develop other forms of ETC beyond cross-border level (Durà et al., 2018, p. 25).

As already hinted by the second approach of Border Studies (see chapter 3.1), there exists a wide variety of literature involved with Cross-Border Cooperation both at academic (i.e. Anderson, O’Dowd and Wilson, 2003; Blatter, 2004; Perkmann & Sun, 2002; Scott, 2012; Van der Molen & Letswaart, 2012) and institutional (i.e. AEBR, 2000; EC Website, 2019; MOT 2017) levels. However, the definition provided by De Sousa (2013) can be considered as one of the most comprehensive descriptions as such:

“CBC can be defined as any type of concerted action between public and/or private institutions of the border regions of two (or more) states, driven by geographical, economic, cultural/identity, political/leadership factors, with the objective of reinforcing the (good) neighborhood relations, solving common problems or managing jointly resources between communities through any co-operation mechanisms available” (De Sousa, 2013, p. 5).

Due to the common institutionalization of these practices under the EU framework, the definition can also be operationally resumed as “an institutionalized collaboration between contiguous subnational authorities across national borders” (Oliveras et al., 2010, p. 24).

Nevertheless, the very presence of an EU institutional background supporting ETC makes it important to understand the double approach (what I choose to define as *top-down* and *bottom-up*) to the realization of CBC across European borders. On the one hand, since the late 1980s the Union progressively began to support all kinds of territorial cooperation (cross-border, transnational, interregional) through the creation and implementation of the INTERREG operational programmes. Nowadays, 60 CBC initiatives are set in

place across the EU's internal borders (INTERACT Website, 2019) (See Figures 5 and 6). These are present in the territories through the constitution of technical offices (i.e. managing authorities, joint secretariats) whose officers belong to the administrations involved. However, they are exclusively tied to the execution of European strategies. Their main role consists in the implementation of EC-approved programmes through the *top-down* funding of CBC projects.



Figure 5 - Structure of the ETC instrument (INTERREG)  
(Source: Interreg.eu)

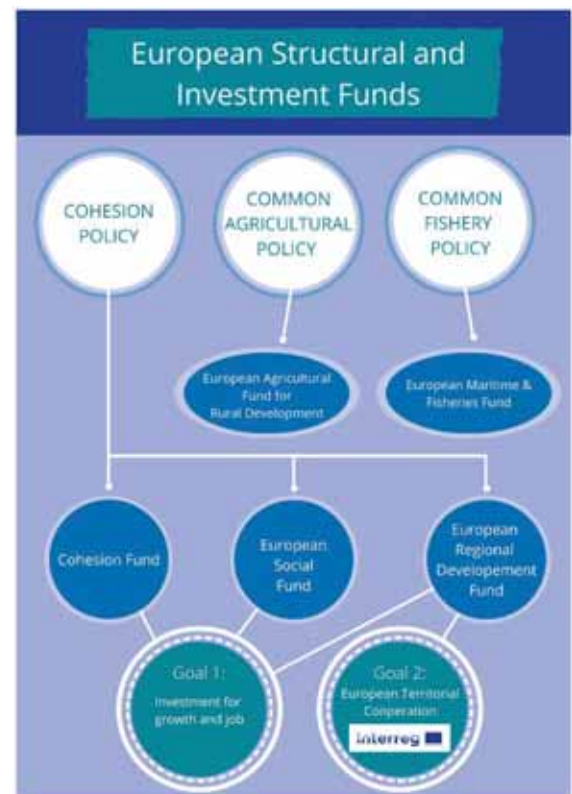


Figure 6 - Sources of INTERREG funding  
(Source: Interreg.eu)

On the other hand, the *bottom-up* approach is represented by the appearance of Euroregional cross-border organizations whose origins and purposes are different from the INTERREG instrument. In terms of the former, the Catalogue research acknowledged the creation of a significant number of Euroregional cooperation entities long before the appearance of EU funding (Durà et al., 2018, p. 45-46). As for the latter, from a functional and managerial viewpoint Euroregions can be interpreted as cross-border associations of subnational authorities seeking to generate an integrated space through specific policies in multiple sectors (AEBR, 2000; Sanguin, 2013: 157). Contributions from political science have come to define them as straightforward political agreements focused on cross-border institution-building through public actors' networks and the mobilisation of their institutional capacities (i.e. Harguindéguy and Bray, 2009; Morata, 2007; Morata & Noferini, 2014).



The conceptual differentiation is also relevant for understanding the relationship between the co-existence of top-down (INTERREG CBC) and bottom-up (Euroregional) approaches. This holds especially true when considering that the execution of CBC programmes does not necessarily imply the presence of a permanent cross-border structure (Durà et al., 2018, p. 24). Previous studies have showed the existence of CBRs inside the EU where the presence of an INTERREG programme does not show the parallel implementation of a political cross-border organization (i.e. Perkmann, 1999). A first superficial outlook may lead to conclude that there is no need for overlapping the two approaches.

However, Euroregional structures perform up to four ranges of activities demonstrating their function as complementary policy-network organizations. These include: *a.* the provision of information regarding the regulations of cross-border activities, the promotion of joint projects and the organisation of knowledge exchanges; *b.* a strong lobbying interest for attracting national institutions towards border issues; *c.* raising incentives for collective sense-making through the attraction and distribution of EU and local funds; *d.* the promotion of the cross-border territory per se (i.e. identity-building and marketing image) (Miörner et al., 2018, p. 6-7).

Most importantly, it appears evident that Euroregions do not represent a new layer of administrative government inside the domain of Member States. Quite the opposite, when considering them as promoters of cross-border reterritorialization (Popescu, 2008; see chapter 3.1), a certain degree of criticism can be pointed at their general weakness in such processes. Indeed, Euroregions are subject to political compromises in their voluntary partnerships and are often constrained by the asymmetries between their national administrative and legal systems.

An alternative explanation about their pragmatic utility is provided by Telle (2017), who generates a definition of Euroregions as *soft policy spaces* created by the flexible governance arrangements between bordering politico-administrative units. As voluntary agreements, they are allowed considerable freedom to determine their organizational form and agenda<sup>6</sup>. However, the lack of strong political influence and substantial economic funding well explains their frequent choice for adaptive strategies in search of policy niches where to develop their activities. Consequentially, their main objective becomes the achievement of mutual gains through pragmatic coalitions around certain issues and by working through existing institutional arrangements (Telle, 2017, p. 94-98; see also Faludi, 2013; Giband & Vicente, 2018). This argument is equally supported by Perkmann & Spicer (2007), who employ the concept of *institutional entrepreneurship* to describe the capacity of Euroregions in opening windows of opportunity and building

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<sup>6</sup> Even if it is not directly relevant to the main argument of the Dissertation, it is still important to acknowledge that Euroregional governance structures usually assume a variety of (more or less) formalized structures and different legal instruments to implement cross-border initiatives (Morata, 2007). Nowadays, CBC agreements can use three typologies of legal instruments: a) not binding cooperation agreements; b) instruments that confer legal personality to the organization (regulated either by private or public law) and including European initiatives such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC); c) private law associations with a cross-border purpose (Publication 1; see also Durà et al., 2018)

cross-border competences. Furthermore, they define their role as specialized implementation units which help designing INTERREG strategies as well as sponsoring CBC projects (2007, p. 25-26).

Further insights in this regard are provided by the literature on actors' motivations in CBC. Medve-Bálint (2013) conceptually extends the concept of Europeanization to the study of the "domestic adaptation according to European regional integration" (Graziano and Vink, 2008 cited in Medve-Bálint, 2013). His work identifies the views of actors involved in CBC between: *a.* the "logic of consequences" depicting them as rational, interest-seeking and utility-maximizers (by means of INTERREG funding's exploitation); and *b.* the 'logic of appropriateness' which pushes them to follow perceived norms and social expectations regarding European integration and CBC institutionalization. In turn, such distinction brings him to produce an initial listing of incentives and obstacles towards institutionalized CBC. His fieldwork over CBRs in Central Europe brings to the interesting conclusion that one kind of incentive (i.e. external presence of EU funding) is not enough to push for CBC institutionalization. The process needs a larger combination of variable factors needed to achieve such outcome. Svensson (2014) brings the debate further by identifying normative EU feelings, grant-given reasons and policy-driven motives for participating in institutionalized CBC. Her results over a larger fieldwork from the same European area show that normative and grant-given motivations lead actors' participation into Euroregional institutions. However, she highlights that common policy formulation has not been the leading issue in CBC despite the potential space for joint work.

All of the above therefore aligns the position of this Dissertation in supporting Euroregional activities and their diffusion in INTERREG areas lacking their presence. Specifically, the research agrees with prior statements considering that the CBC's 'higher expression is reflected in the creation of cooperation-based organizations, which are in turn oriented towards the coordination of horizontal and vertical policies and joint actions' (Oliveras et al., 2010, p. 24; but also, Durà et al., 2018, p. 16-18). In response to concerns deriving from bottom-up CBC Europeanization, it advocates a need for further observation of existing experiences to produce broad orientations toward increased Euroregional efficiency; one which is understood as improved performance in a smooth governance system, wider spaces for policy alignment and generally successful CBC processes.

Notwithstanding, one of the most peculiar features of Euroregional studies is represented by the general scarcity of global comparative analyses and classifications. To provide some among the few notable examples, Perkmann (2003) has attempted to classify Euroregions through simple geographical scope (micro/macro) and the intensity of cooperation activities. Others have tried classifications either based on their geographical size in square kilometres (Medeiros, 2011; 2013) or through their typology of institutional arrangements (Gasparini, 2014). Furthermore, there have been cases of sectoral studies with samples from a specific geographical typology (Decoville et al., 2015) or from specific areas of Europe (Gasparini & Del Bianco, 2011). Some encouraging steps towards global perspectives were also taken by Wassenberg et al. (2015) through an EC-sponsored publication classifying all CBC organizations across the EU territory. More recently, Harguindéguy & Sánchez (2017) attempted a global listing of Euroregions while searching for

variables demonstrating their impact on policy activities. Finally, it was under this perspective that the RECOT Catalogue (Durà et al., 2018) attempted to provide a more exhaustive comparative study on existing Euroregions.

It is along the same classificatory intentions and the will to provide further orientations for Euroregional efficiency that Stage 2 of the Dissertation finds its theoretical justification. The elaboration of a model based upon the observation of highly performing Euroregions represents an attempt to decipher common patterns meant for replicability in other European contexts. Likewise, the general proposal of a theory-based methodology for the design and implementation of Euroregions must be considered as an innovative attempt to provide indications for a “entrepreneurial” Euroregion; one capable of: *a.* complementing European strategies; *b.* pursuing the alignment of sectoral policies across borders; but also *c.* performing lobbying functions towards local cross-border issues not contemplated by INTERREG funding.

### **3.3 The Complementary Framework: theoretical perspectives supporting in-depth analysis of case-study areas**

This final chapter section is dedicated to an exposition of theories which supported either the development of Stage 3 or the specific reality of the Sicily-Malta CBR. Initially, the variety of background fields from which they derive (including contributions from Sociology, Island Studies and Geohistory) may seem anomalous in their incorporation within a framework dedicated to Euroregions and CBC. However, their deeper observation allows to identify existing connections with the core framework and their role inside the main argument. About the order of presentation, I divide them according to two categories: *a.* a sub-framework for the in-depth case-study of CBRs; *b.* a second one for the cross-border analysis of maritime and island territories.

#### **3.3.1 Theory-based methods for the in-depth case-study of cross-border regions**

When considering Stage 3 of the methodology, my aim was to make sure that I could provide a set of theory-based indications for the contextualized establishment of a new Euroregional organization. Through the previous stages, I was able: *a.* to draw a mapping of existing CBC networks performing across the border (Stage 1); and *b.* to create an instrument assisting the selection of a territorial scale and membership composition for the new hypothetical Euroregion (Stage 2). However, I felt that I was missing theoretical background on a series of factors needed for its efficient implementation in the cross-border territory. What about the status of the INTERREG CBC already in place? What political stakeholders would be more likely to be involved? But also, how to provide a framework for the understanding of similarities and differences of



the CBR involved? Most importantly, how to provide guidance on the cross-border needs of the Euroregional territory?

The need for further analysis in existing CBC programmes was fulfilled by adaption of the **Strategic Action Fields (SAF)** framework to cross-border context. Admittedly, familiarity with this contribution from Sociology was granted by participation in the BORDERGOV EU-NA project (see chapter 1.2). Furthermore, the corresponding analysis performed in Publication 4 is part of a larger editorial project aiming to demonstrate the utility of the theory in CBRs across North America and Europe. In any case, SAF theorization is of recent proposition and it finds its main proponents in the figures of Fligstein and McAdam (2011, 2012). Together, they provide a descriptive framework which delineates a “Field” as a meso-level social order where actors (either individual or collective) interact with one another under a set of common purposes and rules of action. From there, the “socially constructed arenas” become the context for power struggles among those who seek advantages and the other stakeholders inside the Field. In addition, the theory employs specific terminology as to describe the field protagonists: it identifies *Incumbents* (those who have disproportionate influence in the Field and usually impose their views over its functioning), *Challengers* (actors who occupy minor or external roles in the Field and would want to align it to their views) and *Governance Units* (generally, the institutions tasked with overseeing compliance of the Field and the functioning of the general system). Different circumstances (i.e. direct power struggles or unforeseen events) may provoke *Exogenous Shocks* to the Field, and at the time of the *Onset of Contention*, the outcome may lead to new or inverted roles (i.e. incumbents becoming challengers and vice versa) (Fligstein & McAdam, 2012). In terms of the Dissertation, the framework was employed to draw SAF schematization inside an INTERREG programme.

The research goals also pointed to a **multi-perspective analysis** combining the many features of a cross-border territory beyond simple *histoire événementielle* (history of events). The development of such method was performed in Publication 5 despite including the perspectives of *Island Studies* (see chapter 3.1.2) and the strong contextualization in maritime and island areas. However, this did not prevent its generalization for other geographical types of CBRs (see chapter 10.1).

Initial investigation regarding historical methodologies led me to Fernand Braudel’s (1972) work on *The Mediterranean* and his **Longue Durée** analysis. Of relevance were the desire to repair the break between history and social sciences and the formal introduction of the concepts of **Long, Medium and Short Durations** (or Terms) of history as three separate yet intertwining levels of analysis (Canto Mayén, 2012). Longue Durée history allows one to “step outside of the confines of national history and ask about the rise of long-term complexes over many decades, centuries or even millennia” (Armitage & Guldi, 2015, p. 222). It is a methodology connected to changing questions of scale by holding the power of persuasion and promoting conversation about social change (Armitage & Guldi, 2015, p. 244).

At the same time, normative motivations behind Stage 3 also agreed with the return of a renewed Longue Durée. They agree with the fusion of short and long durations as a dialogue between past and present while

looking toward the future. They rely on the theory's potential accessibility to non-specialized readers, making it possible to uncover moments of continuity and rupture between constituting components of a territory. Indeed, the new *Longue Durée* constitutes a dynamic, flexible and critical tool to dismantle established narratives and institutions in place (Armitage & Guldi, 2014). Of course, these features are all appreciated in the geohistorical analysis of CBRs.

Consequently, the proposed method represents an adaptation of *Longue Durée* with a strong analytical component across three types of histories: *long-term*; *medium-term* and *short-term* analysis (see chapter 9 and 10.1). In addition, thematic comparison across categories was based upon the multi-perspective analysis of Sicilian history provided by Schneider and Schneider (1976) (see chapter 4.3) alongside conceptualizations of island movements provided by Pugh (2013) in the field of *Island Studies* (see 3.1.2).

### 3.3.2 A sub-framework for the cross-border analysis of maritime and island territories

The first set of theories to be presented in this subsection is one of the closest to the core framework (chapter 3.2). However, it provides a renewed focus on the role of **multisectoral CBC across maritime borders**. Reasons for study were initially provided by the geography of the case-study area. However, I was quick to notice a gap in the academic literature over the CBC of territories divided by the sea.

At most, the maritime physical dimension of borders has been inserted into larger models explaining them as multicontextual social constructs among other layers (i.e. legal, economic, political, etc.) (Zimmerbauer, 2011). In a way, it also did not help that CBC aroused the interest of *Maritime Spatial Planning* proponents. The concept has been useful to them for introducing a joint governance dimension to initiatives concerning the protection and sustainable development of marine areas (i.e. Carneiro et al., 2013; Schaefer & Barale, 2011). However, in a recent EU study on maritime CBC programmes, the interviewed stakeholders were unanimous in claiming the presence of other terrestrial priorities in cooperation activities. The maritime dimension is to them 'only one of the several features of the programme geography, and only requires some co-operation activities to be related to it' (Hill & Kring, 2013, p. 8).

Furthermore, maritime CBC has also been recently questioned by the EC. Accordingly, it has recently suggested the creation of a hybrid INTERREG programme incorporating maritime territories and transnational initiatives for the next financial framework. The proposal has received heated answers from individual authorities and lobbying organizations (Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions, CPRM), who "deeply regretted" the decision by exposing multiple flaws in downsizing the cross-border dimension (CRPM, 2018, p. 9-11). Negotiations for the next European budget are still open at the time of writing. Notwithstanding, both the EU Parliament and Council seemed inclined to maintain the status quo rather than supporting reform of the INTERREG architecture (Halleux, 2019).

A relevant contribution to the topic was provided by the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT), a French agency established for studying ETC. On its website, it is possible to encounter a short yet significant topic-study on the theme of multisectoral CBC in maritime areas (MOT Website, 2019). It confirms that the maritime space is a natural barrier creating territorial separation through bigger obstacles in accessibility (time-cost factors for border crossing) and a less-marked cross-border culture. However, it still recognizes a variety of issues upon which CBC can achieve an impact by developing joint potential. These do not only include arguments related to marine areas, but also a variety of economic issues such as employment initiatives, industrial clustering, logistics, tourism and even cultural activities due to historical links. Most importantly, the study recognizes three factors associated to the organization and management of maritime CBC: *a.* that cooperation for coastal communities is not an immediate necessity as in the case of cross-border living areas; *b.* consequently, that any long-term strategic project will need political determination from participating authorities; and *c.* that the development of governance in maritime CBC necessarily requires multilevel linkages among the different territorial levels affected by the border. The last point proves of the utmost importance since local, supralocal, regional and national levels all have different allocations of powers for enacting through the context of a sea-border (MOT Website, 2019).

These implications have been significant both in terms of the theoretical proposal and the assessment of the case-study area (Stage 2 and 3). Despite the initial proposal of the territorial scale-based Euroregional model, the maritime framework introduces a relevant geographical component into the theorization. It shows that, under certain territorial circumstances, the administrative competences needed to perform across the type of border (i.e. land, sea, mountain, etc.) can also influence the design of new Euroregional strategies.

The second set of theories helping in the analysis of island and maritime territories proceeds from the field of **Island Studies**. These represents a relatively recent set of theories whose goal is “the critical, inter- and pluri-disciplinary study of islands on their own terms”. Furthermore, they are based on the concept of

“islandness and its possible or plausible influence and impact on ecology, human/species behavior and any of the areas handled by the traditional subject uni-disciplines (such as archaeology, economics or literature), subject multi-disciplines (such as political economy or biogeography) or policy foci/issues (such as governance, social capital, waste disposal, language extinction or sustainable tourism)” (Baldacchino, 2006, p. 9-10).

Essentially, the discipline focuses around three main dimensions for studying islands: a) islands embedded in their insularity; b) islands in comparative disadvantage with the mainland; and c) islands in relation to other surrounding islands (archipelagos), often seen as an alternative disrupting the first two views (Stratford et al., 2011). The third dimension is of relevant significance for the Dissertation. Their main proponents elaborate the concept of “Archipelagraphy” as an alternative historiography considering chains of islands and their realities. They propose a process of dislocation and de-territorialization, constituting a new viewing platform that perceives them anew (DeLoughrey, 2001, 2007; Stratford et al., 2011, p. 114).

It is at this point that one can see the connections with proponents of “re-territorialization” and “re-scaling processes” (see 3.1). As a matter of fact, Pugh (2013) also benefits from Deleuze and Guattari’s work (1986, 1988) to define the key element of archipelagic visions. His work brings him to pursue the concept of *island movements* as generative and interconnecting spaces of metamorphosis, material practices, culture, and politics (Pugh, 2013, p. 14). Besides, the objectives behind such territorial reconfiguration closely follow the ones pursued by cross-border proponents under a neo-regionalist perspective. Whether the purpose lies in: *a.* identifying relational paradigms unveiling the biases of dominant relations (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 124); *b.* delineating an island community across multiple jurisdictions (Hau‘ofa, 1993); or *c.* developing a collective identity for strengthening a common islands region (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 123), all resolutions indicate a will to “locate vantage points [for archipelagos] that give one a wider horizon” (Sengupta, 2004, p. 1).

In this respect, the affiliation to Island Studies and Archipelagraphy holds a double finality in the general proposal. On the one hand, the concept of *island movements* is employed in the construction of a method for analyzing cross-border territories (see 3.1.1). On the other hand, it grants the opportunity for a theoretical proposal through publication in one of the main journals affiliated to the discipline (*Island Studies Journal*). In Publication 5 (Chapter 9), I elaborate on the potential opportunities for the application of archipelago visions to European islands. By taking advantage of the INTERREG instrument and of political governance platforms such as the Euroregion, there is enough common ground to suggest the introduction of archipelagic visions in European cross-border islands’ strategies.

## 4. The Methods of the Research

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This Dissertation combines the development of a theory-based methodology for the design and implementation of Euroregions with its pilot application in the case-study area of the Sicily-Malta CBR. The production of the theoretical framework has been marked by comprehensive qualitative analysis of academic and institutional literature relative to its three different stages (see chapter 3). However, the production of the research outcomes was due to a combination of **quantitative and qualitative methods**. Stage 1 and 3 rely on the qualitative analysis of academic and institutional material on the selected CBR as well as a set of semistructured interviews realized during fieldwork in the same area. Stage 2 relies instead on quantitative data collected during the COOP-RECOT II project and enclosed in an operational database of 61 highly performing Euroregions. In such a way, the results of the Dissertation are reinforced by both quantitative evidence from an identified sample *and* the assessment of the case-study.

I initially provide a summary exposition of the quantitative data employed (see 4.1) and of the case-study area (4.2), alongside listing methodological justifications for their selection. Next, I proceed into listing the sources employed for the multisectoral analysis of the latter (4.3). Finally, I provide a short description of the data management techniques employed during the research (4.4).

### 4.1 Quantitative Data (COOP-RECOT II Database)

The use of data from COOP-RECOT II was implicitly suggested in the affiliation between the research grant and the PhD scheme provided by MINECO. Indeed, the questions and objectives were inspired by the classification efforts of the project and from the resulting comparative study (Durà et al., 2018, p. 44-86) providing original data on Euroregional processes (see chapter 1.3). Most importantly, as project officer and doctoral researcher I was strictly involved in their recollection and elaboration at all stages.

For the sake of the analysis, I mainly decided to focus my attention on the RECOT Database of 61 highly performing Euroregions and their corresponding CBC projects. These had already been identified as “especially active” among a list of 158 active Euroregions during the 2007-2013 framework. The units included in the sample can be consulted in the annex section of Publication 1 and in section IV (chapter 5 and 13.1).

In terms of data collection, the investigation mainly required a **holistic web-content exploration** which was sometimes followed by a **direct interview approach** (e-mail or phone call). Accordingly, relevant information was recorded inside the **RECOT Euroregional database, whose structure is grouped around four main categories**: general information, geographic data, governance and the territories involved (Berzi

et al., 2016) (see Figure 7). In the following lines, I provide a short description of the content of each field as described by the research team:

- *General information* summarizes the basic information on the Euroregional structures. In this part, we highlighted descriptive information such as the year of funding and the location of the Euroregion's headquarters, whether it possessed AEBR membership (or not), plus any specific data (where available) such as the annual budget, the percentage dedicated to the funding of projects and their Operational Programme of reference;
- *Geographic Information* brings together a series of territorial and geographical attributes. In addition to the basic data (i.e. area and population density of the countries involved) we introduced some original variables such as a geographical typology of the border that divides them alongside their predominant environment (urban, rural, mountain, coastline, etc.). The section also included a classification based upon authors-designed geographical macro-areas to locate the Euroregions and their projects across European space. (*South-West Europe; Western Europe; Northern Europe; Central Europe; Central Mediterranean and Adriatic; Eastern Europe*) (see Figure 8). The geographical criteria were particularly considered when producing comparative data among performances in different parts of the continent;
- The *Governance section* collected information related to the institutional capacity of Euroregions. Therefore, beyond enlisting the territorial actors involved in the organization (according to their territorial level of self-government), we were also interested in identifying the legal / institutional formula adopted for the decision-making (i.e. simple consensual agreement, the existence of an association of public or private law, the specific creation of a European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation [EGTC], etc.);
- The category of *Territories Involved* accurately listed the territorial areas involved in Euroregional activities. Through the classification, we sought to understand which public actors were involved in the management of a cross-border territory and at what territorial level, either wider or smaller than the original size of the public administration (i.e. counties or departments involved in a whole CBR).

**The second part of the database is based on one example of Euroregional CBC project per selected Euroregion** (also amounting to 61 total). It was meant to collect information about the specific subject, the partners involved, the budget amounts and funding sources plus a set of arguments demonstrating their quality and their potential impact on the territory. In terms of project classification, we also introduced 11 thematic typologies according to previous studies (Feliu et al., 2013): *Accessibility & Transportation; Social Cohesion; Education & Culture; Energy; Environmental Management & Risk Prevention; Governance;*



Health; Local Economic Development; R&I; Security; Spatial Planning. As understandable, the RECOT Database provided a highly original source of comparative data among a refined sample of Euroregions from all over Europe. The wide variety of information collected would allow for cross-analysis while searching for explanatory variables. Further description of the operations performed on the data can be consulted below (see 4.4).

1. General info										
1.2_Name	1.2.1_English Name	1.1_Website	1.4_Date_of_creation	1.5_Date_of_Activity (Set up)	1.6_Annual_Budget (€)	1.7_Investment_in_Projects	1.8_Micro-Project Funds	1.9_Headquarters	1.10_Member-ship of the EUR	1.11_Op. (Ref. 2007/13)
Adriatic Ionian Euroregion (AIE)	Adriatic Ionian Euroregion	<a href="http://www.aie.eu">http://www.aie.eu</a>	2006	2006	NA	NA	NA	Fila (HR)	No	INTERREG IVC
Alpine-Adriatic Euroregion (AAE)	Alpine-Adriatic Euroregion	<a href="http://www.aae.eu">http://www.aae.eu</a>	2012	2013	187.500	NA	NA	Adriatic-Tyrol (IT)	No	ERDF GRANDS
Aquitaine Euroregion (AE)	Aquitaine Euroregion	<a href="http://www.ae.eu">http://www.ae.eu</a>	1992	1992	1.100.000	404.111	FDC Aquitaine-Basque	Hendaye (FR)	No*	POCTEFA
Baltic Euroregion (BE)	Baltic Euroregion	<a href="http://www.baltic.eu">http://www.baltic.eu</a>	1998	1998	49.796	NA	Small Cross-Border and Inter-Regional Grant Fund	Elbląg (PL)	No	SOUTH BALTIC
Basque Euroregion (BE)	Basque Euroregion	<a href="http://www.be.eu">http://www.be.eu</a>	2008	2008	100.000	NA	NA	Hondarribia (ES)	No	ERDF
Beltane-Tengali Euroregion (BTE)	Beltane-Tengali Cross-Border Consortium	<a href="http://www.bte.eu">http://www.bte.eu</a>	1998	1998	294.764	NA	NA	Trin (ES)	No	POCTEFA
Balkan Euroregion (BEO)	Balkan Euroregion	<a href="http://www.balkan.eu">http://www.balkan.eu</a>	2002	2002	NA	NA	NA	Hempstead (DE)	Member	PROGAFME
Carpathian Euroregion (CE)	Carpathian Euroregion	<a href="http://www.carpathian.eu">http://www.carpathian.eu</a>	1993	1993	NA	NA	NA	Radek (PL)	Partially Member	INTERREG IVC
Central Adriatic Euroregion (CAE)	Central Adriatic Euroregion	<a href="http://www.caie.eu">http://www.caie.eu</a>	1997	1997	327.588	NA	NA	Americo (FR)	No	INTERREG IVC
Country of Lakes Euroregion (CLE)	Country of Lakes Euroregion	<a href="http://www.cle.eu">http://www.cle.eu</a>	1998	1998	46.670.154	10.606.000	European's transnational regional offices and small CBC projects	Krynów (PL)	Partially Member	FRANCE-GERMANY COOPERATION
Quatre-Dirons Euroregion (QDE)	Quatre-Dirons Euroregion	<a href="http://www.qde.eu">http://www.qde.eu</a>	2009	2009	654.000	NA	NA	Tribiana (ES)	No	POCTEFA
East Border Region (EBR)	East Border Region Ltd.	<a href="http://www.ebr.eu">http://www.ebr.eu</a>	1976	1976	NA	NA	NA	Nenagh (IE)	Member	SOUTHERN IRELAND
Egretta Euroregion (EE)	Egretta Euroregion	<a href="http://www.ee.eu">http://www.ee.eu</a>	1993	1993	NA	NA	Centre of the region dependent on Administration (Gobierno de Aragón, Gobierno de Navarra)	Hartmutz (DE)	Member	INTERREG IVC
Elbe-Dollart Region (EDR)	Elbe-Dollart Region (EDR)	<a href="http://www.edr.eu">http://www.edr.eu</a>	1977	1977	NA	NA	NA	Neuchang (NL)	Member	GERMANY - NET
Escaut Euroregion (EE)	Escaut Euroregion	<a href="http://www.escaut.eu">http://www.escaut.eu</a>	1991	1991	NA	NA	NA	Chamoux (FR)	No	INTERREG ALCOFRA
Espace Frontalier (EF)	Frontalier Space Euroregion	<a href="http://www.ef.eu">http://www.ef.eu</a>	2011	2011	724.864	NA	NA	Sabirpango (SP)	No	POCTEFA
EURREGIO (ER)	EURREGIO (German Euroregion)	<a href="http://www.eregio.eu">http://www.eregio.eu</a>	1958	1963	6.226.796	4.221.508	EURREGIO-Meyer-Program	Grimau (GER)	Member	DEUTSCHLAND
Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône (EVS)	Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône	<a href="http://www.evs.eu">http://www.evs.eu</a>	2010	2014	1.333.876	NA	NA	Verin (BE)	No	POCTEFA
Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône (EVS)	Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône	<a href="http://www.evs.eu">http://www.evs.eu</a>	1993	1997	502.310	NA	NA	San Sebastian (SP)	No	POCTEFA
Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône (EVS)	Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône	<a href="http://www.evs.eu">http://www.evs.eu</a>	2003	2003	900.000	50.000	FAM/NA 11	Leutkirch (FR)	Member	ERDF LOWER RH
Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône (EVS)	Euroregion de la Vallée de la Saône	<a href="http://www.evs.eu">http://www.evs.eu</a>	2003	2006	NA	NA	NA	HuProux (FR)	No	INTERREG IVC SUPERIEUR

Figure 7 - Screenshot of the RECOT Euroregional Database

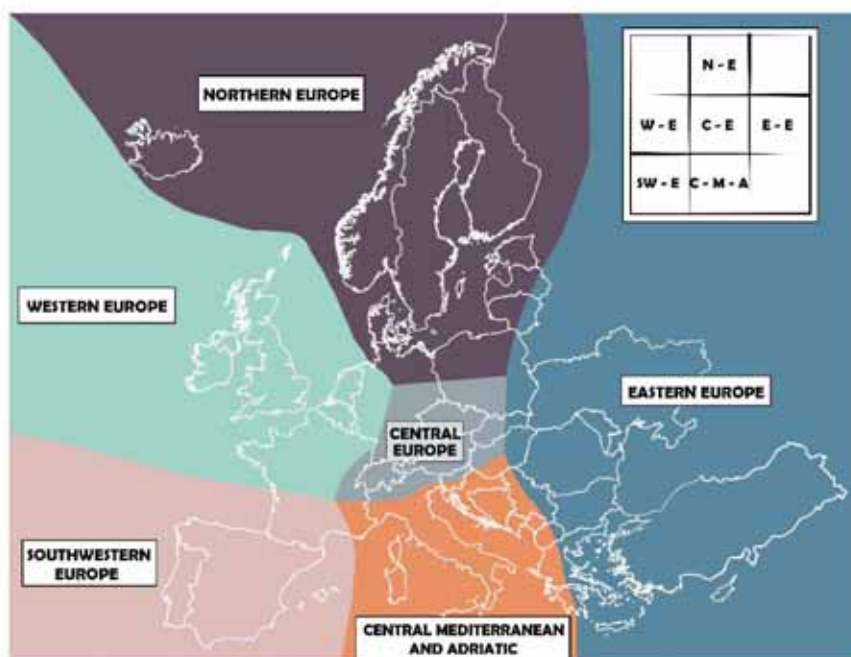


Figure 8- RECOT operational classification of six geographical areas across Europe (Source: Durà et al., 2018, p. 93)

## 4.2 The Case-Study Area (the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region)

The proposition of the Sicily-Malta CBR as main case-study was consequential to the desire of empirically testing the theory-based methodology. Notwithstanding, there exist multiple reasons for its selection.

However, before elaborating on these I should provide clarification about the nomenclature of the cross-border territory analyzed. To the best of my knowledge, I might be the only scholar of Siculo-Maltese CBC to employ the definition of “Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region” for the case-study. Most of the institutional literature exclusively refers to it as the cross-border area of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme. Conversely, there is a huge gap in the academic literature concerning CBC between Sicily and Malta. Over the entire period of the research I was only able of discovering one MA thesis dedicated to an assessment of the Italy-Malta INTERREG programme for the 2007-2013 financial framework (see 4.3). Possible explanation over the absence of a “cross-border region” characterization may be due to all the reasons described below. Nonetheless, the lack of such an approach constitutes *per se* a preliminary reason for analysis of the case-study.

In any case, it is also true that Siculo-Maltese INTERREG CBC is a relatively ‘young’ phenomenon which has only undergone two and half EU funding periods (2004-2006; 2007-2013; 2014-2020). As a matter of fact, the Italy-Malta programme was only initiated in 2004 in concomitance with the Maltese islands’ accession to the Union. This already provides another reason for selection accounting for the outlook of a recently constituted CBC scenario inside a continental ETC context. In addition, access to first-hand documentation or testimony of original activities has been relatively easier than in other contexts verified during my own experience.

Furthermore, the case-study is highly relevant to the chosen focus over territories with an active INTERREG programme and yet not showing cross-border governance agreements among their subnational administrations (see chapters 2 and 3.1). In terms of speculation, it could potentially be easier for “proto-euroregional” territories sharing the border with other Euroregions to get involved into or even begin a parallel cross-border regionalization process. This would not be the case for areas never having registered the presence of cross-border political agreements. In my view, these territories more urgently need orientations towards cross-border institutionalization.

Three further features of the Sicily-Malta CBR constituted highly interesting exceptions in European CBC scenarios, thus making the case-study worth of analysis. First, there is a total territorial correspondence between the case-study area (Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region) and the CBC programme (Italy-Malta INTERREG)<sup>7</sup>. In consideration of the intrinsic approach between top-down and bottom-up European CBC

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<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, this is the only southern maritime border that the Italian peninsula shares with another EU member state. The Italy-Greece INTERREG programme can be considered as standing alongside the eastern or south-eastern maritime borders of Italy. In turn, the Italy-Tunisia CBC ENPI Programme belongs to a different set of ETC initiatives included in European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP).



(see chapter 3.2), the presence of territorial overlapping was considered as an opportunity for close assessment of the relations between the two. Second, the CBC between Sicily and Malta represents an interesting anomaly of cooperation between state-level and regional authorities. However, as in other European cases there does not appear to be conflict in the different sovereignty status. Third, geographical size also adds an interesting variable through the specular vision of a large and autonomous island region cooperating with a small yet sovereign island state.

It is also important to mention two *a posteriori* factors that were discovered early on during the research and which reinforced the selection of the case-study. First, during the execution of the fieldwork I quickly discovered two cross-border institutionalization proposals (the first in 2011, the second between 2012-2013) which failed to raise enough awareness for the creation of a Euroregional structure. Second, in my research on “proto-euroregional” territories, the maritime component of the border was discovered to be highly present among cross-border territories lacking Euroregional institutionalization.

However, as a final argument I also cannot deny my personal motivations and intellectual curiosity towards the CBR as a native Sicilian researcher having spent several years in the field of Euroregional and CBC-related studies. This also motivated me to construct a framework of “proto-euroregional” territories helping them to understand the reasons and obstacles preventing strategic forms of CBC institutionalization.



Figure 9- Photograph of the Malta channel taken from space (Source: NASA Archives, <https://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/>)

### 4.3 Qualitative Data (Sources of the Case-study Research)

In addition to the literature mentioned in chapter 3, I have employed a set of complementary sources for the analysis of the case-study:

1. **Academic references on historical, geographical, cultural and socio-economic factors of the two islands (Sicily and Malta).** Very limited publications were found to be exclusively dedicated to the Sicilian-Maltese area (i.e. Bonanno & Militello, 2008). Therefore, the research was rather based on authors dealing with the individual territories and later exploited in the development of the multisectoral analysis. Their discovery was also favored by consultation of local archives in the case-study area (Sicilian Gramsci Institute; Private library of the RES Foundation; Regional Library of the Sicilian Assembly). The references are listed below according to their island of interest:
  - In the case of **Sicily**, out of consultation of a variety of works (including Correnti, 2002; Di Matteo, 2006; Hamel, 2011; Renda, 2003), I selected Mack Smith and Finley (1968), Schneider and Schneider (1976) and Menighetti & Nicastro (2002) as main references for the island region.
  - For **Malta**, the works of Blouet (1997), Goodwin (2002) and Harwood (2014) were chosen out of exploration of a larger collection of anthologies (Cassar, 2000; Castillo, 2005; Murray Ballou, 1893);
2. Academic and institutional references over the **territorial condition and the main issues affecting European Islands** (i.e. Briguglio, 1995; Cordina & Farrugia, 2005; Dodds & Kelman, 2008; EURISLES, 2002; EUROISLANDS, 2013; Lopasic, 2001; Moncada et al., 2010; Musotto, 2007; Nichols & Hoozemans, 1996; Papayannis & Sorotou, 2008);
3. **Institutional references on INTERREG CBC between Sicily and Malta.** These included extensive consultation of the INTERREG institutional website<sup>8</sup> in search of documents relative to the operational programmes 2007-2013 and 2014-2020, info sheets of previous and currently funded CBC projects, contact details of responsible authorities, etc. (Regione Sicilia, 2006, 2009, 2014);

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.italiamalta.eu/>

4. **One MA Thesis produced by a postgraduate student from the University of Palermo.** This was written under the supervision of my Italian coordinator for the research stay in the case-study area. The main aim of the study was focused around an assessment of the programme for the 2007-2013 financial framework. Consultation was useful in terms of analysis and background-understanding of the INTERREG instrument in the CBR (Custro, 2013). However, it did not consider matters of cross-border governance nor the inclusion of Euroregional organizations;
5. **Analysis of 23 semistructured interviews** produced during fieldwork in the case-study area (one research period of 3 months in Sicily and a one-week trip to Malta, both in 2016). The interviewing process was directed both at the stakeholders participating in CBC projects between 2007-2013 (18 interviews) as well as political and INTERREG management-related actors (5 interviews). A complete listing can be consulted below (see Table 7 or chapter 6), while further detail on the interviewing process is described in the next section (4.4). Overall, satisfaction can be expressed when considering the many typologies of actors reached. Admittedly, there is a certain preponderance of Sicilian actors in the total recount. However, this can be explained in terms of the lead-partner position that Sicilians exert in the INTERREG projects and through their logically wider presence due to the number of inhabitants. Conversely, Malta's smaller population contributed to the identification of partners often managing multiple CBC projects. One final remark is based upon the **explicit requests for anonymity received**. As a consequence, I have always avoided direct references to the interviewed person and rather referred to them through their technical charges. This has also conditioned the final decision to exclude full-text transcriptions from the Annexes section;
6. Finally, I have also employed **digital press articles** providing coverage of cross-border issues between Sicily and Malta (i.e. 4cOffshore, 2015; The Independent, 2015).

Table 7 - Listing of Interviewed partners in Sicily-Malta CBR Fieldwork (2016) (Source: own elaboration)

Field of Activity	Organisation / Institution	Member or Partner Interviewed	Involvement in CBC activities or projects
INTERREG Administration	Joint Secretariat (JS)	Director of the JS	Management, evaluation and monitoring of INTERREG calls for projects
	Maltese National Coordination Authority (MNCA)	2 Officers	Same as the JS; assistance on the Maltese side of the border (increased proximity)
	DGRegio (European Commission)	EU responsible officer for Italy-Malta O.P.	Monitoring of INTERREG program and external advisor from EU institutions
Political Actors	Sicilian Regional Assembly (ARS)	2 Members: Deputy MP and his former Policy Assistant	Proposers of CBC institutionalization in 2012 to the ARS (EGTC Sicily-Malta)
	Maltese Consulate in Sicily	Honorary Consul in Catania	Siculo-Maltese institutional relations (beyond CBC); assistance to Maltese population in Sicily
Universities (Research Centres)	University of Palermo	3 Researchers (Engineering)	CALYPSO; SIMIT; RESPIRA
		2 Researchers (Architecture)	LITHOX; WATERFRONT
		Honorary Fellow and Scientific Director (Biology)	IMAGENX
	University of Catania	Researcher (Engineering)	BIODIVALUE
		Researcher (Agricultural Studies)	MORISO
	University of Malta	Researcher (Geosciences)	PANACEA; BIODIVALUE
	Institute of Earth Systems (Univ. Malta)	Head Researcher (Agriculture & Foods division)	T-CHEESIMAL; PROMED; VINENERGY
	Argotti Botanic Gardens (Univ. Malta)	Director of the Garden	GARDMED
Public Administration	Province of Siracusa	General Staff Member	RESI
	Province of Agrigento	Staff Member (EU funding)	SIBIT
	Port Authority (Catania)	Director of Port Authority	PORT-PVEV
Public Owned Agencies	Regional Institute for Wines and Oil (Sicily)	2 Researchers & Project Officers	PROMED; VINENERGY
	National Institute of Geophysics and Volcanology (Catania)	Researcher & Project Leader	VAMOS SEGURO
	Heritage Malta	EU Funding Management Officer	REMASI; LITHOS; ARCHEOTUR
NGO	Legambiente (Sicily)	Project Officer	REMASI

#### 4.4 Data Management Techniques

Different types of techniques were employed to process the data in this Dissertation. In broad terms, the two main procedures are divided by their quantitative and qualitative natures.

The **quantitative work** was mainly referred to Stage 2, elaborating upon data from the RECOT Database and employing a sample of 60 Euroregions<sup>9</sup> (see 1.3 and 4.1). The main techniques employed were **basic calculations and filtering of results by means of Excel sheets**. Detailed explanation of the theorization

<sup>9</sup> The original sample amounted to 61 units and this was due to the experimental inclusion of the Sicily-CBR in the recount. There were two purposes in the intentions of the RECOT research group: *a.* to include a “proto-euroregional” territory in the recount akin to my theorization; *b.* to select another case from the Central Mediterranean and Adriatic area as to include geographical balance in the sample. Of course, the implications derived from the doctoral research led to exclude the case-study from the sample used in the model.

behind the quantitative work can be found in Publication 3. In this sub-section, I strictly provide methodological explanation of the work of analysis performed.

The first step that I followed was the creation of the classification system based on the CBC territorial scale and filtered through the 3 model variants (*Local, Supralocal, Regional Euroregions*) and the 6 sub-typologies (*Bilateral Eurocity; Eurocity Consortium; Multilevel Euroregion; Association of Municipalities; Bilateral Regional; Multilateral Regional*). These were obtained through identification of a set of intervals included in the variables considered for the model (approx. size of Euroregions in Km<sup>2</sup>; institutional density; predominant levels of self-government).

It should be mentioned that multiple alternative variables observed in the Catalogue were considered for inclusion, but that they all underwent a process of exclusion. Despite exploiting previous data included in Publication 1, I did not encounter correlations between the selection of the legal form for regulating cross-border governance (i.e. NGO-type associations, ad-hoc public law agreements or other European instruments) and the partnership involved (Durà et al., 2018, p. 63-66). Likewise, geographical factors such as the total number of inhabitants of a Euroregion, their population density or the territorial profile (i.e. urban, rural etc.) also showed weak statistical correlations with governance formulas due to the large variety of contexts encountered (2018, p. 52-54).

Parallel to that, I also worked on the classification of Euroregional CBC projects according to their own territorial scale. By cross-referencing the territorial scale of CBC projects and their Euroregions, I found strong correlation between them, thus confirming evidence of my classificatory system. From there, I also proceeded in generating a new set of cross-analyses of the available data. The objective was to produce results demonstrating strong correlations between available variables and further classifications. Unfortunately, many of the statistical correlations were too weak to demonstrate significative incidence. They have only been included in the Annexes (see section IV).

Notwithstanding, the coherence of the classificatory system plus a smaller number of cross-data results revealed enough arguments for the construction of the general theory behind Publication 3 (i.e. *Observation of n. 9 cases where CBC project scale-based typology was different from the Euroregional model variant; Distribution of Euroregions from the sample according to the scale-based typology across six geographical areas of Europe*). A similar process was employed for the discourse regarding the territorial dynamics of cross-sea cooperation.

In **qualitative terms**, the Dissertation employed the **analysis of the 23 semistructured interviews from the fieldwork**. These were employed in Stage 1 and 3 of the methodology corresponding to Publication 2 and 4. The methods for their realization involved the elaboration of two separate questionnaires for the different categories of stakeholders (project actors and politico-institutional figures). The semi-structured questions were meant to stimulate a naturalistic approach leading in turn to responsive interviewing and further in-depth argumentation. Each interview was recorded and approximately lasted from 20 to 65 minutes. They

were later transcribed as to obtain written material for qualitative analysis. The full text of the questionnaires can be consulted in the Annexes (see section IV). According to the question categories, **the classification of the answers was also focused around wider thematic groupings** (i.e. the origins of the INTERREG projects; debates regarding CBC institutionalization proposals, etc.) (see Publication 2 for more info).

Other examples of secondary techniques employed in the Dissertation have been:

- **cross-data analysis** of the global listing of 214 Euroregional organizations provided by the COOP-RECOT II project. They were all associated with their INTERREG initiative of reference (60 operational programmes). This was done in support of theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories (Publication 2).
- the **cartographic representation** of the Sicily-Malta CBR by means of the ArcGIS software both in its desktop and online versions (Publications 2 and 5);
- the production of **summary tables** across publications indicating schematization of the main findings. These include: representation and classification of “proto-euroregional” territories (Publication 2); the Euroregional model and the different dynamics of cross-sea cooperation (Publication 3); the governance structure and power relations of the Italy-Malta INTERREG programme (Publication 4); finally, multiple continuities and differences across the three historical terms of the Sicily-Malta CBR (Publication 5).



## **Section II: Publications of the Compendium**



*Picture 2 - View of the Etna's eruption in 2013 from Malta (Source: Rene Rossignaud, rossignaud.com)*



## 5. Publication 1

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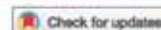
**NOFERINI, Andrea; BERZI, Matteo; CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni** (2019). «Cross-border cooperation in the EU: Euroregions amid multilevel governance and re-territorialization». *European Planning Studies*. Available online, ahead of print. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09654313.2019.1623973>

### **Abstract**

Today, cross-border cooperation promoted by Euroregions all over the European Union is a consolidating reality. The article focuses on Euroregions as formal organizations in the field of cross-border cooperation. By using a data set of 61 Euroregions considered to be particularly active, the study investigates the characteristics of cross-border cooperation agreements. For each Euroregion, cross-country comparisons take into account the following essential parameters: the number of actors involved in the agreement, their administrative and political nature, as well as the official goals pursued. From a descriptive perspective, the study aims to provide some useful classifications regarding the wide variety of cross-border experiences that have developed in Europe in recent decades. From the analytical perspective, the paper challenges enthusiastic claims that interpret Euroregions as effective political instruments for re-territorialization or new modes of cross-border multilevel governance.

### **Keywords**

Euroregion; cross-border cooperation; multilevel governance; reterritorialization; comparative analysis



## Cross-border cooperation in the EU: Euroregions amid multilevel governance and re-territorialization

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### ABSTRACT

Today, cross-border cooperation promoted by Euroregions all over the European Union is a consolidating reality. The article focuses on Euroregions as formal organizations in the field of cross-border cooperation. By using a data set of 61 Euroregions considered to be particularly active, the study investigates the characteristics of cross-border cooperation agreements. For each Euroregion, cross-country comparisons take into account the following essential parameters: the number of actors involved in the agreement, their administrative and political nature, as well as the official goals pursued. From a descriptive perspective, the study aims to provide some useful classifications regarding the wide variety of cross-border experiences that have developed in Europe in recent decades. From the analytical perspective, the paper challenges enthusiastic claims that interpret Euroregions as effective political instruments for re-territorialization or new modes of cross-border multilevel governance.

### KEYWORDS

Euroregion; cross-border cooperation; multilevel governance; re-territorialization; comparative analysis

### Introduction

The article focuses on Euroregions as formal organizations within the wider context of cross-border cooperation in the EU. Broadly speaking, cross-border cooperation can be defined as 'any type of concerted action between public and/or private institutions of the border regions of two (or more) states' (Sousa, 2013). Moreover, it usually refers to a kind of 'institutionalized collaboration between contiguous sub-national authorities across national borders' (Oliveras, Durà, & Perkmann, 2010). Cross-border cooperation, which can be driven by geographical, economic, cultural/identity, political/leadership factors, essentially aims to reinforce relations between neighbours, solve common problems and/or manage joint resources between communities.

For over thirty years, EU institutions have placed a great deal of importance on cross-border cooperation, which has been one of the grand objectives of the European Cohesion Policy since 2007. Today hundreds of Euroregions exist in Europe as formal organizations promoting, coordinating and/or implementing cross-border joint initiatives. Although cooperation across borders *per se* does not necessarily imply the presence of a permanent

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cross-border organization, a consistent number of cross-border cooperation practices is usually implemented by the Euroregions.

The presence of permanent cooperation structures such as Euroregions is indeed considered to be an essential tool for achieving more advanced and stable cross-border cooperation: 'Its higher expression is reflected in the creation of cooperation-based organizations, which are in turn oriented towards the coordination of horizontal and vertical policies and joint actions' (Oliveras et al., 2010). Nevertheless, according to the ongoing debate on territorial cooperation, and depending on perspective, Euroregions can be interpreted differently. From a territorial perspective, they can represent political instruments for the reconfiguration of the cross-border space (re-territorialization). From a public policy perspective, Euroregions could be perceived as more pragmatic and functional policy-oriented organizations that have the ability to promote and stimulate cross-border joint initiatives and/or programmes.

By using a data set of 61 Euroregions considered particularly active (Durà, Camonita, Berzi, & Noferini, 2018), the article investigates the nature, characteristics and goals of the actors involved in cross-border cooperation agreements. The goal is twofold. Firstly, the study provides a useful and updated classification of the great variety of cross-border experience that has been gained in Europe in recent decades. Secondly, the paper proposes a combined approach that includes contributions from multilevel governance and literature on territorialization. This approach facilitates a more in-depth assessment of the multilevel character of Euroregions, by considering the scale of the cooperation as well the typology of the public administration bodies involved (local, supra-local, regional).

Methodologically, the article combines qualitative and quantitative techniques. Unlike most previous research on cross-border cooperation, the study employs the comparative perspective that relies on an original data set of 61 Euroregions (Appendix A). Data and information were gathered during the fieldwork conducted between 2014 and 2017.

## **A theoretical framework for cross-border cooperation and Euroregions**

### ***Euroregions and re-territorialization***

According to a geopolitical perspective, Euroregions can be conceived of as a process of cross-border reterritorialisation, which means the reorganization of social, economic and political activities at the sub-national scale, which transcends the traditional Westphalian system (Popescu, 2008). This concept, which draws upon Deleuze and Guattari's work (1988), has been widely applied in social science since the late 1980s as a way of reinterpreting the production of space according to a postmodern geopolitical approach (Elden, 2005), which 'questions the meaning and purpose of nation-states, fixed territoriality, common governance and scientific-technological progress within a stable international order' (Luke, 2003, p. 221). The deep geopolitical and geo-economic changes that arose during the end of Cold War along with rampant globalization pushed nation-states into a re-scaling process (Brenner, 1999), where they reorganized and redistributed power at the sub-national level (regional and local authorities) as well as the supra-national level (international organizations). John Agnew (1994) contributes to the discussion of nation-state territoriality by introducing the concept of the 'territorial trap', in which he describes the state territory as a geographic container of modern societies where political



borders and social borders often do not coincide. According to Agnew, a territory should not be conceived of as merely comprising bounded 'national' spaces with spatial divisions that have been taken for granted (local, regional, state), but rather as a process of territorialization-deterritorialisation-reterritorialisation process, and therefore a historical contingency.

The concept of borders as being a key element of territory and the nation state-territoriality, has therefore also undergone a profound re-conceptualization. Borders as spatial and temporal delimitations of societies (Jacobs & Van Assche, 2014) are not merely conceived of as political and jurisdictional delimitations between neighbouring states, but rather as a multidimensional concept, whereby their cultural, social and symbolic significance is historically and geographically produced and re-produced by societies (Paasi, 1999; Paasi & Prokkola, 2008). As a social construct, borders represent a complex multi-scale process in which national, regional and local narratives ascribe different and often divergent functions and meanings to them.

According to contemporary literature on EU integration focusing on border studies (Blatter, 2004; Brenner, 2000; Löfgren, 2008; Medeiros, 2018; Perkmann, 2003; Popescu, 2008; Scott, 1999; Scott, 2012), Euroregions – and cross-border cooperation – are regarded as instruments for enhancing territorial cross-border integration. The main question usually focuses on the capability of these formal organizations to implement cross-border strategies that can re-territorialize the space beyond the national jurisdiction (Sohn, 2014). In the most extreme cases, Euroregions would even achieve the goal of 're-inscrib[ing] border areas formerly considered marginal and peripheral to the territorial projects of nation-states to those of centrality and dynamism at the very heart of Europe' (Hooper & Kramsch, 2004, p. 3).

However, the empirical evidence favouring strong processes of re-territorialization is weak. Euroregions are geopolitically unstable and the asymmetries between national administrative and legal systems represent the most frequent obstacle to implementing effective common cross-border strategies. Moreover, in many cases, national governments remain the central actors because international economic relations are 'largely determined by the policies of the states' (Agnew, 1994, p. 58), by presaging a dramatic re-bordering political phase for the coming years.

### *Euroregions and multilevel governance*

According to the literature on multilevel governance, Euroregions are usually framed within the wider context of sub-national mobilization and new regionalism (Hooghe & Keating, 1994; Hooghe & Marks, 1996; Jeffery, 2007; Keating, 1998; Piattoni, 2010; Tatham, 2013). Globalization, Europeanization (Featherstone & Radaelli, 2003) and decentralization are among the most relevant driving forces contributing to the enhancement of a renewed role for territorial units across Europe. Whilst nation-states might have been very dominant until the early 1980s, in the 1990s, the discourse of neo-functionalists and multilevel governance<sup>1</sup> began shifting towards the novel fact that in some areas of EU policymaking, decisions depended on the mutual relations between different levels of government (EU, national, sub-national and local) as well as on the participation of a new array of actors from civil society. The presence of these new actors contributed to a qualitative shift in EU policymaking and politics, which some viewed as

very sensitive to any modifications of the varying political cycles over time. Thirdly, contrary to the idea that borders are more permeable today, nation-states have continuously proven their impact as gatekeepers of external action by sub-national authorities. Central government attitudes and nation-specific regulatory contexts still represent relevant obstacles to implementing joint cross-border initiatives (MOT, 2017). The weak legal character of Euroregions has, for instance, reduced the binding character of the decision-making process at the cross-border level.

From a neo-institutional perspective<sup>2</sup> (North, 1990), Euroregions can be considered as formal institutions whose main goal is to promote and enhance joint cross-border initiatives by mobilizing human, economic and administrative resources already present in the border territory. Since Euroregions represent somewhat formalized forums for negotiating actors' preferences across the border, they contribute to reducing transaction costs and consolidating a cross-border space. In this sense, the institutionalization of Euroregions as organizations can contribute to stabilizing cross-border governance, thereby making them permanent and legitimate.

Euroregions possess varying degrees of institutional density, which means that the number of administrative units of government involved in the cross-border agreement can vary greatly according to each individual case. The success or failure of such institutional consolidation processes will depend on several factors, such as the typology and the number of territorial entities involved in the cross-border agreement. Firstly, the typology of territorial entities (regional, supra-local, local public administrations), coupled with their geographical scale, defines the characteristics of the cross border (multi-level) governance arena. It defines the actors, their responsibilities and the real options for developing collective action at the cross-border levels. According to their respective national contexts, regional supra-local and local administrations enjoy varying degrees of autonomy and different legal competences. Relevant administrative asymmetries are, for instance, common obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Secondly, Euroregions possess varying degrees of institutional density, which means that the number of administrative units of government involved in the cross-border agreement can vary greatly according to each individual case. The main operational hypothesis proposed here suggests that by increasing the number of actors involved, the difficulties and obstacles affecting the cooperation will also increase accordingly. Firstly, in the presence of different administrative practices, a larger number of public actors will probably increase coordination costs for shared initiatives. Secondly, as each self-governing unit will be subject to different electoral cycles, Euroregions with a high number of members may suffer from less stable political commitment. In this regard, the presence of many experiences of low-intensity Euroregions confirms the difficulties of consistently maintaining their political commitment over time. Indeed, when regional and local elections determine some form of political change – a new political majority with no interest in cross-border initiatives, for example – Euroregions notably reduce their activities or even temporarily disappear. Here, it is worth recalling that our database initially selected 267 Euroregional organizations, of which only 158 were considered active.

Finally, territorialization processes as well as multilevel cross-border governance models require the participation of actors from civil society, companies and associations. In policy terms, public administrations alone cannot guarantee the definition and implementation of common cross-border objectives. Actors from the civic society as



well as economic agents must be involved in the cross-border governance structure, which is understood as a network of actors who are willing to develop collective action with beneficial effects for participants of both sides of the border.

### The institutionalization of cross-border cooperation: historical evolution and governance models

Although the first cross-border experiences date back to the late 1950s, the apogee of cross-border cooperation agreements occurred in Europe in the 1990s. As the process of integration, i.e. the deployment of the Common Market, the European Commission assigned cross-border territories the role of 'laboratory' areas for European integration. The reform of the Cohesion Policy in 1988, the introduction in 1990 of the Community Initiative INTERREG, and the Maastricht Treaty in 1993 (with the creation of the Committee of the Regions – CoR) altogether contributed to posing the 'regional question' in the European political agenda, i.e. the role of sub-national authorities in EU policymaking.

Regarding cross-border cooperation Oliveras et al. (2010) pointed out the existence of four stages of expansion of the Euroregional phenomena.

- 1950–1979: Predominantly a time of interstate agreements; first supra-state support (recommendation of further regulation by the Council of Europe in 1966, first initiatives of the Nordic Council); local twinings and first Euroregional initiatives (EUREGIO, also known as Gronau Euroregion);
- 1980–1990: Increased European political and juridical support; Madrid Convention (1980); European Charter of Local Self-Government (1985); initiatives by the CoR; recommendations provided by the AEBR (European Charter of Border and Cross-Border Regions, 1981); Mediterranean enlargement of the European Community;
- 1990–2006: Political and economic support is provided by the European programmes, especially in the case of INTERREG, in light of European agreements for further integration and the subsequent expansion processes towards eastern and northern Europe (main expansion period for the new EU);
- 2007 – onward: Consolidating stage; definition of the main EU objective of the European Territorial Cooperation; the introduction of *ad hoc* legal instruments such as the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) to promote the implementation of new cross-border institutions and consolidate the existing Euroregions.

Rather than creating new layers of administrative government, Euroregions usually assume a variety of somewhat formalized structures and different legal instruments to implement cross-border initiatives (Blatter, 2004; Morata, 2007). In its Practical Guide to Cross-border Cooperation (AEBR, 2000), the AEBR identifies several models of institutionalization (assemblies, permanent secretariats with administrative staff, basic agreements based on public or private law, etc.). Moreover, it highlights the recurrence of multilevel governance contexts. As the practice of cross-border cooperation increased, cross-border governance toolkits increased accordingly (MOT, 2017). Today, cross-border cooperation agreements can mainly apply three typologies of legal instruments<sup>3</sup>:

- Non-binding cooperation agreements;
- Private law associations with a cross-border purpose; or
- Instruments that confer legal personality on the organization (regulated either by private or by public law).

The most common among these legal instruments is the cooperation agreement signed by territorial authorities. Such an agreement represents the contractual commitment of these authorities to developing joint cross-border initiatives. Despite the absence of a standard cooperation agreement, cross-border governance structures are usually informal, flexible and without a legal personality. Being mainly a political agreement among territorial entities, the level of enforcement usually relies on the political momentum and interpersonal relations.

The second typology involves more simplified organizational structures regulated by private law. Euroregions can thus assume the form of private non-profit associations or non-governmental organizations (NGOs), which act as simplified structures with a legal personality, but only governed by the private law applicable to the location of the headquarters (or registered office) of the organization. Since these associations are governed by private law, they cannot take the place of the participating territorial authorities in the cross-border cooperation activities, and they usually offer fewer guarantees compared to cross-border bodies governed by public law. However, advantageously, the flexibility of association structures makes them particularly suitable for realizing concrete cross-border initiatives such as technical consultations, the promotion of a specific single project or preliminary studies.

Finally, with the aim of creating autonomous bodies capable of managing cross-border initiatives, several legal instruments conferring legal personality on cross-border organizations have been established over the last decade by the EU institution and the Council of Europe. As outlined in other studies (i.e. Sanguin, 2013), the diversity of legal frameworks can at times create complexity and even cause confusion. Although the toolbox is vast, today the most used formula seems to be the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), which has mainly substituted previous instruments such as the European Economic Interest Grouping (EEIG) and the Euroregional Cooperation Grouping (ECG).<sup>4</sup> The EGTC (created by Regulation (EC) no. 1082/2006) is a permanent and autonomous structure with legal personality and subject to public or private law according to the national jurisdiction governing the place where the headquarters are located. With 16 cross-border EGTCs created over the last decade, it is an instrument that has acquired high visibility in this kind of initiative around Europe.

The main advantages of EGTCs can be derived from: (a) the long-term political commitment of its members; (b) greater visibility with respect to third parties; and (c) the ability to enter into contracts and compete for external and European funding.

### Methodology<sup>5</sup>

At the time of writing, no official definition for the term 'Euroregion' has so far been universally recognized, despite the many institutional and academic attempts. Formally, a Euroregion can be defined as an institutionalized collaboration between continuous sub-national authorities across national borders (AEBR, 2000; Medeiros, 2011; MOT,



2017; Oliveras et al., 2010; Perkmann, 2003). However, this does not necessarily entail any compromise for cooperation and can even be understood as a simple geographical definition. For the present study, we apply an operational definition of a Euroregion as an organization that exhibits the following characteristics:

- (1) covers a cross-border territory and usually hosts a corresponding population;
- (2) represents a declared will of cooperation (= permanent/progressive cooperation), being reinforced by some form of institutionalization via political agreement;
- (3) shows signs of joint activities as well as consolidation of public cross-border policies, particularly when developing a common strategy. Such activities may be shaped by either funded projects, as in the case of most of the Euroregions considered, or the provision of permanent services.

Employing the operational definition described above was instrumental in delivering a comprehensive total of 267 Euroregional organizations. As no prior listing or web resource could effectively distinguish the Euroregions currently developing cross-border cooperation activities from those that may have succumbed to the numerous circumstances leading to their inactivity, the study therefore distinguishes between 'active' and 'inactive' Euroregions. According to our criteria, an 'active Euroregion' is an organization that:

- possesses a working website with updated information;
- shows clear signs of ongoing or recent cross-border cooperation activities (meetings, joint seminars, workshops, etc.); and
- employs a visible and updated communication strategy.

After excluding 40 transboundary parks and 13 cases of cross-border equipment, the sample included 214 Euroregions, of which 158 were labelled as 'active' and 56 were 'inactive'. Starting from the list of 158 active Euroregions, the study provided a more restricted definition for a sub-sample of 'especially active Euroregions', namely those organizations that<sup>6</sup>

- at the organizational level, showed some distinct traits of stable governance in place among the participating actors (such as a technical secretariat or unit/personnel explicitly dedicated to the Euroregion);
- at the project level, showed a minimum of three to five cross-border cooperation projects per Euroregion during the EU funding period of 2007–2013.

Of 158 active Euroregions, 61 were ultimately marked as 'particularly active' and were thus selected for inclusion in the present Euroregional database (Table 1).

Data and information were collected by using primary sources and institutional and academic literature on cross-border cooperation in Europe during the period of 2014–2017. To construct the database, we first explored all the existing listings. We therefore conducted our own research by contacting the responsible persons for the selected Euroregions directly or via email. The 61 selected Euroregions were subjected to an in-depth analysis by means of a second exploration of their website content. This time, we



**Table 1.** Summary of the Euroregional operational listing.

Typology	Classification & status	Sub-total	Catalogue selection		
			Excluded	Selected	
Euroregions	214 1. EUR (Active)	158	152	95	57
	2. EUR Monothematic (Active)		4	2	2
	3. EUR Micro (Active)		2		2
	4. EUR Inactive	56		56	
Cross-Border Equipment	13 1. Active	13			10
	2. In constitution			3	
Transboundary Parks	40 1. Advanced EUR Features (Active)	40			9
	2. Active			31	
Excluded (not fitting criteria catalogue)	16 1. Working Communities	31		16	
	2. EUR External Borders			7	
	3. EUR Transformed			8	
Excluded (not EUR)	41			44	
Total of Miscellaneous Structures Analyzed	342 Total cross-border cooperation structures analysed	298		262	80

Source: Compiled by the authors from Durà et al. (2018).

supplemented the research by studying documentary materials such as technical reports and strategies downloadable from the internet. Furthermore, we relied on academic literature on case studies, and in some cases we requested additional information via email.

## Analysis and findings

### Historical evolution

The chronological distribution of the sample largely confirms what had already been theorized by other studies that dealt with the sub-national mobilization and proliferation of Euroregions (Oliveras et al., 2010; Wassenberg, Reitel, & Peyrony, 2015). By aligning the 61 entities contained in the sample (Figure 1), the continuity in establishing new Euroregional structures since the early 1970s is indeed remarkable.

Essentially, we distinguish between three main diffusion stages of the Euroregions:

- (1) 13 Euroregions were created earlier than 1990, whereby the prevalence of such structures was most apparent in the 1970s (the first historical EUREGIO is an exception, as



**Figure 1.** Date of creation of selected Euroregions in the sample (see Appendix A). Source: Durà et al. (2018).

it was created in 1958). Such pioneer cross-border structures were usually developed under a weak institutional and financial framework.

- (2) 22 Euroregions were created in the 1990s, reflecting the general trends already established, not only under the Madrid Convention, but also thanks to the new incoming financial subsidies provided by the INTERREG programmes.
- (3) 26 Euroregions finally appeared in the first decade of the 2000s, a good part of which was inspired by the newly established Territorial Cooperation Objective of the EU, as a consequence of the reform of Cohesion Policy in 2007.

Interestingly, the analysis suggests a relation between the different historical stages described above, the actors leading the cross-border initiatives and the institutional forms adopted by the Euroregions. The first Euroregions were primarily inspired by local entities on both sides of the border, which involved pairs of European Member States, namely Netherlands-Germany and France-Germany, etc. These pioneering experiences comprise cross-border agreements that involve a high number of public actors, generally between local and supra-local entities, with a pragmatic approach oriented towards providing solutions to daily problems of commuters who often cross the border, such as the Gronau Euroregio (129 public actors), the Ems – Dollart Region (96), the Rhein-Waal Euroregio (51) and the Meuse Rhin-Nord Euroregio (26).

The same pattern seems to apply to the 22 Euroregions created during the 1990s, of which only three eventually converted to an EGTC legal formula. However, the second grouping shows a higher institutional density, having a total average number of 53 participating public actors. Many of them are both local and supra-local entities, and for the first time they are beginning to jointly develop new urban and rural formulas for envisioning the border area (e.g. the Basque Eurocity or the Espace MontBlanc).

Lastly, the final block of Euroregions, i.e. the 26 created from 2000 onwards, accounts for a reduced institutional density, in which the total average goes down to 21 public actors, and the main shift is represented by a growing territorial extension that is dominated by the new presence of larger administrative levels (regional scale at the level of NUTS2). Such change is visible when comparing the 29 sub-national entities and regional bodies participating in Euroregional structures of this third block with previous numbers (21 in the 1990s and barely 14 in the 1980s). The third stage is also one in which the cross-border cooperation phenomenon seems to attain a new sense of maturity and increasing complexity. This becomes clear when revealing the presence of border territories that host overlapping cross-border cooperation structures at different scales but in the same geographical context. This is especially the case for the so-called 'Euro-districts', which for the first time introduce the idea of developing urban policies at the Euroregional level.

### ***The scale of the cooperation: institutional density and the territorial complexity of Euroregions***

Cross-border cooperation is characterized by specificity, diversity and complexity, with each cross-border region being unique in terms of geographical, historical and political features (Wassenberg et al., 2015). The diversity observed among different Euroregions apparently stems from the heterogeneity of their territorial and administrative features.

### Actors and the scale of cooperation

The leading authorities of Euroregions are predominantly public actors, who are provincial, regional or sub-state entities (Figure 2). They essentially come from the conventional levels of government which are present in the administrative geography of EU Member States. Local entities seem to dominate cross-border cooperation agreements, being present (although normally in combination with other territorial levels) in 44 of 61 Euroregions. Supra-local entities are also relevant, accounting for a total of 41 cases. Finally, a smaller role is usually played by sub-national authorities of larger size, which are only present in Euroregional structures in 24 of the 61 cases.

A further sign of the relevance of public authorities can be perceived in the participation of other public organizations such as public associations, agencies or consortia that differ from conventional levels of government. Over 50% of the sample show the presence of these organizations. We refer, for example, to associations that represent municipal interests (i.e. the Ems-Dollart Region, Sønderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion), local or regional development agencies (i.e. Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion, Regio Pamina) and, to a lesser degree, some universities and public enterprises or sectorial agencies, such as health-related ones.

In reality, the development of necessary institutional capacities for cross-border cooperation with an impact on citizens' needs calls for stronger participation of private actors in cross-border initiatives (Morata, 2007). The sample confirms the scarcity of such actors in cross-border cooperation dynamics. Barely 10 out of 61 cases (Table 2) record the existence of private entities, which are usually represented by chambers of commerce or other organizations for business promotion and local development. The direct involvement of economic agents such as enterprises is still scarce and usually limited to constructing physical infrastructure that affects both sides of the border. As public policy analysis suggests, the involvement of private actors can complement the leadership of public authorities by adding economic and technical resources that can improve the correct implementation of cross-border public policies. At the moment, this occurs in very limited cases.

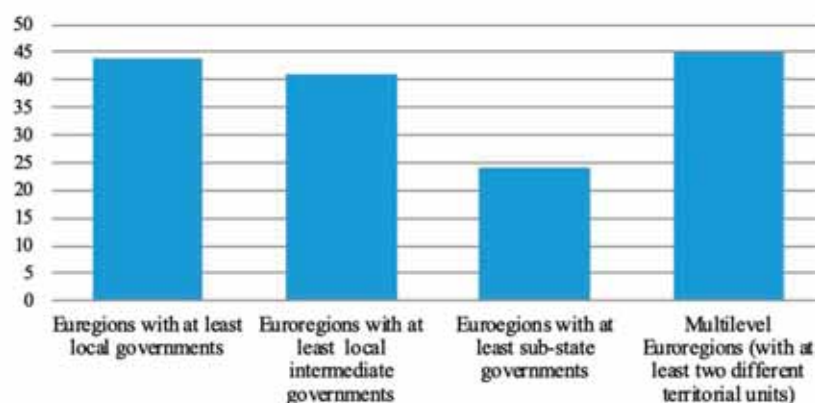


Figure 2. Political and administrative scales of Euroregional actors involved in cross-border cooperation. Source: Durà et al. (2018).



**Table 2.** Euroregions according to the type of public/private actor participation.

<b>A. Multilevel Euroregion with 3 levels (local, supra-local and sub-state)</b>	
Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion	Regio Pamina
Basel Trinational District	SaarMoselle Eurodistrict
Carpathian Euroregion	Scheldemond Euroregion
Fehmarnbelt Committee	Sønderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion
Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee	
<b>B. Multilevel Euroregion with 4 levels (local, supra-local and sub-state)</b>	
FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn)	Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine,
Greater Geneva	MontBlanc Space
International Lake Constance Conference	
<b>C. Euroregions with same levels of government involved (local-local, etc.) (examples)</b>	
Local Level: Chaves-Verin Eurocity, Rhine-Waal Euregio	Supralocal Level: Leman Council, Meuse-Rhine Euroregion
<b>D. Euroregions with the presence of private actors</b>	
Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion	MontBlanc Space
Ems-Dollart Region	Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion
Fehmarnbelt Committee	Praded Euroregion
Inntal Euregio	Rhine-Waal Euregio
Kvarken Council	Salzburg-Berchtesgadener Land-Traunstein EuRegion
Meuse Rhine-North Euroregion	Sønderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion

Source: Durà et al. (2018).

Interestingly, in terms of governance, 45 of 61 Euroregions in the sample have a multi-level character, which means that they reflect cooperation agreements, wherein participation in each case is provided by actors at different territorial levels.<sup>7</sup> The result is positive because it shows the presence of more complex models of governance that can guarantee a complementary role of competences that affect each territorial unit involved in the Euroregional structure. Furthermore, among the multilevel experiences, there are nine cases that are 'entirely multilevel' because their organizational structures include the three main administrative units (local, supra-local and sub-state).

Five more cases achieve one further level by also adding the presence of central state authorities, hence reaching four levels of government involved. However, it should be noted in this case that the presence of state actors in the Euroregions is, as one may expect, a limited phenomenon. National actors are always inserted into a complex governance framework, in which they are merely an additional player, instead of the actual leader in cross-border governance. In some Euroregions, they are formal actors of EGTCs or other legal formulas responsible for supervising cross-border urban agglomeration projects (Alzette-Belval EGTC, Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis, FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn), Grand Geneva, West-Vlaanderen/Flandre-Dunkerque-Côte d'Opale). In other circumstances, there is state participation in territories with an already large trajectory of cross-border cooperation, such as in the cases of the Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine, the International Lake Constance Conference and the MontBlanc Space.

The presence of central governments does not necessarily imply a gatekeeper position of the former over the sub-national authorities promoting the initiative. Instead, the five cases mentioned above show the multilevel character of cross border cooperation agreements. Indeed, on the one hand, Euroregions challenge the nation-state territoriality by promoting innovative cross-border territorial strategies. However, on the other hand, they still need the support of the central authority to legally frame the implementation of their actions.

### *Institutional density and complexity*

Table 3 presents the institutional density and territorial scale of Euroregions. Institutional density refers to the number of actors per Euroregion. The territorial scale indicates the levels of territorial actors overlapping in the administration of the same territory. In organizational terms, the two dimensions measure the institutional complexity of a Euroregion. Greater complexity can lead to different policy and territorialization outcomes. A larger number of members can effectively make general coordination more difficult, while a wider diversity could probably lead to increased asymmetries in the respective competences of each actor involved. Territorialization processes also are affected by the complexity of the cross-border governance scenario. The presence of a high number of members can affect the actors' preferences and resistances towards a renewed configuration of the cross-border territory.

Regarding the institutional density, the sample presents four groupings of Euroregions. In the first grouping, 10 Euroregions only rely on two public actors from both sides of the border. In contrast, the second grouping is composed of Euroregions with total numbers ranging between three and ten actors; such is the case of those Euroregions led by a few sub-state actors enjoying considerable political autonomy, such as the Baltic Euroregion, the Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion and the Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino Euroregion.

In the third grouping, the diversification increases significantly by including a much higher total number of actors, in which a general predominance of local and supra-local entities in cross-border cooperation dynamics is apparent. In contrast, the last grouping classifies those Euroregions with a strong presence of local entities often represented by

**Table 3.** Institutional complexity of Euroregions.

Level of self-government (predominant)	Institutional density (number of self-governing units)			
	2 actors	Between 3 and 10	Between 11 and 30	More than 30 actors
Sub-state (or regional)	<i>Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion</i> <i>New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion</i>	<i>Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion</i> <i>International Lake Constance Conference (JBK)</i> <i>Baltic Euroregion</i> <i>Adriatic Ionian Euroregion</i>		
Supra-local (provincial or intermediate)	<i>Ruse-Giurgiu Danubius Euroregion</i> <i>Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino Euroregion</i> <i>Alzette-Belval</i>	<i>East Border Region Ltd</i> <i>Regio PAMINA Eurodistrict</i>	<i>Euroregio Egrensis</i> <i>Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine</i>	
Local	<i>Kerkrade-Herzogenrath Eurode</i> <i>FinEst Link Helsinki-Tallinn</i> <i>Chaves-Verin Eurocity</i> <i>North West Region Cross Border Group</i>	<i>Freiburg Region and South Alsace Eurodistrict</i> <i>Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)</i> <i>Scheldemond Euroregio</i>	<i>Rhine-Meuse-North Euroregio</i> <i>Kvarken Council</i> <i>Country of Lakes Euroregion</i>	<i>Duero-Douro</i> <i>Inn-Salzach-Euroregio</i> <i>Praded Euroregion</i> <i>Banat Triplex Confinium</i>

Source: Durà et al. (2018).



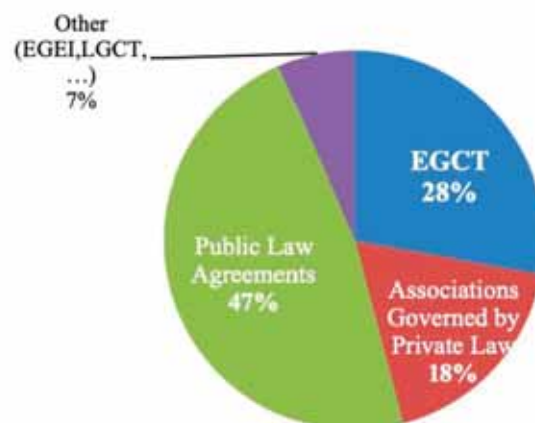
communities or municipal associations having a total number of actors that exceeds the 100 participating self-government units.<sup>8</sup>

In conclusion, the great variability of combinations among participating actors does not reveal consistent statistical correlations between the two factors. Nevertheless, it is possible to claim the presence of a certain tendency showing a decreasing number of public actors when increasing the territorial scale of the cross-border territory. Ultimately, the sample confirms that when institutional density is high or very high, Euroregions are dominated by municipal entities. Ultimately, the findings can aid in the prediction of some aspects of the cross-border agreements, by indicating, for instance, that the municipalities usually enjoy only limited competences in some policy areas. Moreover, the high number of actors with different territorial and policy preferences will likely produce 'lowest common denominator' kinds of cross-border agreements.

### *Variety of legal instruments for Euroregional administration*

Euroregions generally rely on a variety of legal models for their institutionalization. Figure 3 orders Euroregions according to four basic legal instruments. Public Law Agreements represent most of the cases with 29 Euroregions out of 61. They are then followed by EGTCs (17), NGOs (11) and other formulas (4).

Figures from our database do not allow any inferences regarding the key reasons why a Euroregion selects a specific legal formula. Nevertheless, it is possible to observe that most of the Public Law Agreements in the sample were all established before 2006, which is when the EGTC was created as an EU instrument. This clearly means that before EGTCs were established, the main formulas available for cross-border cooperation came in the form of associations governed by private law (NGOs) and different models of Public Law Agreements. NGOs seem to have been the initial trend for creating Euroregions, probably because they could facilitate the establishment process and bring about straightforwardness associated with their administrative dynamics. Nevertheless, territorialization processes can hardly have been developed under this weak legal formula, as NGOs do not represent public administration, nor can they act on their behalf.



**Figure 3.** Legal frameworks of Euroregions: variety of juridical instruments employed by selected Euroregions from the sample. Source: Durà et al. (2018).

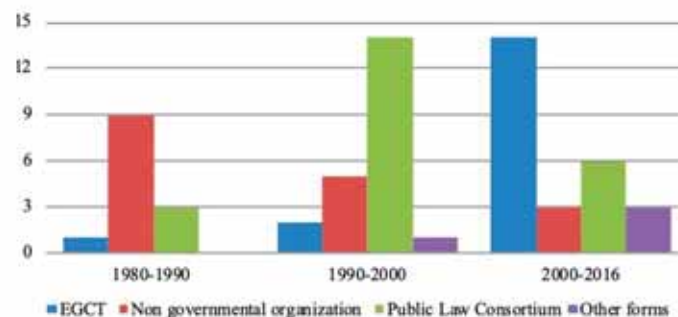
In the 1990s, the most frequent formula came in the form of the Public Law Agreement, and then again from 2007 onwards through the creation and consolidation of EGTCs. The data thus demonstrate that recently established Euroregions tend to prefer EGTCs as their chosen legal formula (Figure 4). Of the 15 Euroregions identified as being created after 2007, 10 chose to apply for EGTC status. Nevertheless, it should be noted that the availability of the EGTC formula does not appear as a concrete solution for Euroregions with a longer trajectory. This is especially true when considering that of the 13 Euroregions created before the 1990s, only one (New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion) decided to adopt the EGTC legal instrument.

When considering the institutional complexity, there does not seem to be any relation between the chosen legal formula and the number and typology of territorial entities involved in the cooperation agreement. Initially, a preliminary hypothesis may consider that the presence of many actors could provide incentives for formalizing cooperation through legal instruments with a stronger institutionalizing effect (EGTCs or advanced formulas of Public Consortia). Regardless, among the grouping of Euroregions with the highest number of participating actors (i.e. more than 50), it is possible to observe not only the presence of EGTCs, but also Public Law Agreements and even NGOs. On a further note, furthermore no relation was found between EGTCs and the territorial scale of cooperation. Both small-scale cross-border experiences (between 25,000 and 70,000 inhabitants) and much larger border regions having millions of inhabitants (i.e. the New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion and its 6 million citizens) can be seen as employing the EGTC instrument.

Nevertheless, it is still possible to claim that since their creation, EGTCs have been of primary interest for most of the Euroregions that have become consolidated in more recent times. From the sample, only five Euroregions created after 2007 did not adopt the EGTC formula: Basel Trinational Eurodistrict (2007), Frankfurt-Slubice Cooperation Centre (2011), Trinational Metropolitan Region Upper Rhine Valley (2008), Fehmarnbelt Committee (2009) and FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn) (2015).

### Sectors of activity of Euroregional cooperation

Cross-border cooperation can be shaped by a large variety of objectives that are generally grouped around wider sectorial fields (Feliu, Berzi, Martín, Pastor, & Castañer, 2018).



**Figure 4.** Chronological evolution of the employment of legal instruments for cross-border cooperation in the selected Euroregions. Source: Durà et al. (2018).

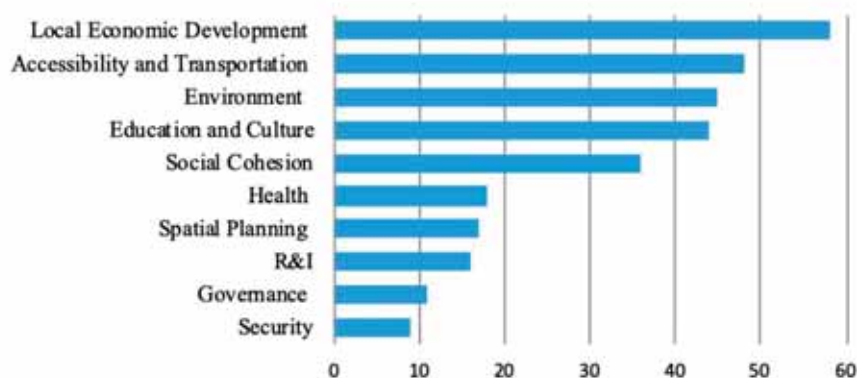


Figure 5 shows the number of policy fields per Euroregion arising from official declarations or foundational documents. It is possible to observe that there is a first core of policy issues common to most Euroregions, consisting of four policy areas: local economic development, transport and accessibility, environment, culture and education.

Despite important variations in competences according to each state, these are sectorial areas in which territorial entities usually possess some degree of autonomy. The cross-border nature of some of these policy sectors (environmental sustainability, mobility or accessibility, among others) usually requires cross-border interventions, which involves the participation of administrative units that are closest to citizens on both sides of the border.

The second group of fields involves social cohesion, health, territorial planning and Research and Innovation (R&I). These issues are also actively pursued by Euroregions, but in these areas, the scope of cooperation is even more dependent on the competences entrusted to territorial authorities by each national juridical system. Actually, these policy areas often correspond to fields in which there can be a higher number of obstacles resulting from asymmetries between cooperating actors across the border. To cite an important example, health regulations very often gravitate towards national systems where local entities can benefit from a small degree of autonomy.<sup>9</sup> A reduced presence of this type of agreement should therefore not be surprising. Similarly, territorial management and strategic planning tend to be competences entrusted to different actors according to the different administrative cultures and competences in Europe. Central and northern Europe almost always rely on supra-local entities, but in other countries like Spain, Italy and France, such competences are rather entrusted to sub-state entities, i.e. regions or autonomous communities. Hence, the fundamental relevance of multilevel agreements including actors from different administrative levels is clearly shown in the pursuit of these strategic policies on a cross-border scale.

As a second result, it is worth noting that a Euroregion usually deals with an average of four sectorial areas for its projects. However, closer examination reveals a variety of situations, in which almost 80% of selected Euroregions focus on three to six sectorial objectives, while up to ten Euroregions reach the higher total of seven or more policy issues. Monothematic or bi-thematic cooperation agreements are indeed exceptions.<sup>10</sup>



**Figure 5.** Sectorial fields in cross-border cooperation practices of selected Euroregions. Source: Durà et al. (2018)



## Conclusions

In the last few decades, renewed interest in the territory as a key factor in socioeconomic development has promoted an upsurge in cross-border agreements between different kinds of sub-national authorities. Today, more than 150 Euroregions, which are actively involved in some form of cross-border initiative, represent different modalities and attempts at reconfiguring the cross-border territorial space. Border territories in Europe are experiencing the activism of a myriad of middle-sized local public administrations which are divided by the border and which work jointly around four to five policy areas. However, whether Euroregions can be considered to be effective organizations for reconfiguring the cross-border space, or for establishing novel multilevel models of governance, is still an open question. Although our study does not yield any conclusive evidence, the findings proposed here do shed light on some relevant aspects of cross-border agreements.

The historical progression of the phenomenon suggests the presence of a real demand coming from sub-national authorities for some alternative models of territorial governance across the borders. Since the 1990s, the rise of Euroregions has opened the debate on cross-border territorial governance. Central governments have seriously monitored the activities of their domestic territorial entities across the border (often requiring the signing of an international treaty or bilateral convention). However, their presence in the Euroregions is usually scarce and does not automatically rely on the external action of sub-national authorities. The failure of some Euroregions can be attributed to the different and asymmetric national institutional frameworks rather than to political motivations. The high number of territorial and administrative units involved in the Euroregional organization has usually increased coordination costs and amplified the negative impact of the asymmetries between diverse national administrative and legal systems. Over time, multilevel cross-border governance scenarios have suffered from the fragmentation of preferences and differing administrative practices. Finally, the multiplicity of goals pursued by the Euroregions, in which in some cases sub-national authorities do not exercise great autonomy, has blurred the impact of many cross-border initiatives for the most part.

Data extracted from 61 'especially active' Euroregions (out of 267 existing cross-border organizations) confirms however that Euroregions are functionally-oriented organizations that have gained momentum and relevance in the cross-border space. Some Euroregions have acted as forums for sharing experience between actors, and some others have been directly involved in the definition and implementation of cross-border projects. Very few Euroregions have shown the capacity to develop and adopt integrated cross-border strategies. However, many Euroregions have succeeded in the less ambitious goal of acting as a policy advisor by establishing a somewhat formal forum in the border area, by providing some financial resources and increasing the institutional capacities of the Euroregional actors.

Although Euroregions are still far from implementing an effective multilevel governance system (Beck, 2017, 2018) that can reshape traditional institutions and reorganize state territoriality, our findings nevertheless suggest some optimistic potential. Euroregions are indeed relevant organizations which can stimulate the institutionalization of some process of soft forms of re-territorialization, which should be perceived as complementary to the conventional state level intervention.

## Notes

1. For a review of multilevel governance, see Stephenson (2013).
2. For D. North, institutions are 'the rules of the game'. In general terms, institutions reduce uncertainty and information costs by enhancing in this way the possibility of developing some collective action. Transaction costs refer to any cost actors incur when they make a transaction.
3. Due to the documented difficulties in applying transnational regulations to cross-border cooperation practices (MOT, 2017), it is important to point out that each of these instruments is usually subjected to the domestic law of the state where the Euroregion was legally established.
4. EEIG and ECGs, in this sense, strongly resemble the functional logic of the EGTC. The first instrument is usually used for cross-border economic activities that involve private actors and for which a legal personality is also required. However, the main limitation of EEIGs lies in the restricted scope of the intervention, which should pertain to the economic activity of its members, and therefore excludes any additional cross-border cooperation features. Even more similar to the EGTC, the ECG also facilitates the creation of a legal personality that manages the cross-border initiative on behalf of its members.
5. For a more detailed methodological explanation, see Durà et al. (2018).
6. Furthermore, a geographical consideration criterion was applied when collecting relevant cases from all over the EU. After identifying a solid nucleus of best practices in the central and northern part of the European continent, we still wanted to achieve a degree of equal representation across all the EU borders.
7. Apart from multilevel Euroregions, there has been a certain amount of cross-border experience at equivalent levels of government (exclusively between local entities or between supra-local and supra-local, etc.). However, the latter model is the one that is least employed for cooperation.
8. Duero-Douro, EUREGIO (Gronau Euroregion), Glacensis Euroregion, Inn-Salzach Euregio, Pomerania Euroregion, Praded Euroregion, Salzburg - Berchtesgarden Land - Traunstein Euregio, Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict, Tatra Euroregion, Via Salina Euregio.
9. Such is the case of the Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict and its cross-border cooperation project for creating a 'Cross-Border Medical Cabinet for the Treatment of Addiction'. In the context of this initiative, a joint medical institution was created for drug addiction treatments for both French and German citizens in the Euroregional territory. Clearly, the project represented a clear example of social innovation promoted by public administrations on both sides of the border.
10. The CAWT Region (Co-Operation and Working Together) of cross-border health cooperation between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland and the FinEst Link Helsinki-Tallinn (former Helsinki-Tallinn Euroregion). The latter case is even more interesting because of the operational choice to shift from a multi-sectorial Euroregion to an organization entirely focused on cross-border transport and the construction of road infrastructure (hence a large-scale project), easing mobility between the two cities.

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### Appendix A: List of Euroregions analysed (Source: Durà et al., 2018).

Euroregions (61)	Year	Code
EUREGIO (Gronau Euroregion)	1958	E_36
International Lake Constance Conference (IBK)	1972	E_62
Kvarken Council	1972	E_69
East Border Region Ltd.	1976	E_29
Meuse–Rhine Euroregion	1976	E_72
North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG)	1976	E_82
Ems Dollart Region (EDR)	1977	E_32
Rhine-Meuse-North Euregio	1978	E_74
Rhine-Waal Euregio	1978	E_98
Svinesund Committee	1980	E_107
Aquitaine-Euskadi Euroregion	1982	E_5
Leman Council	1987	E_21
Scheldemonde Euregio	1989	E_101
MontBlanc Space	1991	E_34
Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion	1991	E_79
CAWT Region (Co-Operation and Working Together)	1992	E_253
Carpathian Euroregion	1993	E_20
Euregio Egrensis	1993	E_30
Bayonne-San Sebastián Basque Eurocity	1993	E_40
Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee	1993	E_85
Inn-Salzach-Euregio	1994	E_60
Tatry Euroregion	1994	E_110
Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)	1995	E_64
Salzburg – Berchtesgadener Land – Traunstein EuRegion	1995	E_100
Pomerania Euroregion	1995	E_87
Glacensis Euroregion	1996	E_54
EUROPAREGION (Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino Euroregion)	1996	E_115
Sønderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion	1997	E_104

(Continued)

## Continued.

Euroregions (61)	Year	Code
Via Salina Euregio	1997	E_121
Praded Eregion	1997	E_89
Baltic Euroregion	1998	E_8
Bidasoa Txingudi Cross-Border Consortium	1998	E_15
Country of Lakes Euroregion	1998	E_22
Inntal Euregio	1998	E_61
Kerkrade-Herzogenrath Eurode	1998	E_68
Bothnian Arc	2002	E_18
Ruse-Giurgiu Danubius Euroregion	2002	E_138
Regio PAMINA Eurodistrict EGTC	2003	E_41
Freiburg Region and South Alsace Eurodistrict	2003	E_42
Strasbourg Ortenau Eurodistrict	2003	E_43
Greater Geneva	2004	E_56
Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion	2004	E_94
Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region	2004	E_126
Vis-a-Vis LGTC	2004	E_257
Ionian Adriatic Euroregion	2006	E_1
Dunkirk – Flandre-Côte d'Opale region and West Flanders EGTC	2006	E_125
Basel Trinational District	2007	E_44
Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis	2008	E_47
Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion	2008	E_52
Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine	2008	E_96
Banat Triplex Confinium EGTC	2009	E_10
Duero-Douro EGTC	2009	E_28
Fehmarnbelt Committee	2009	E_258
Chaves-Verin Eurocity	2010	E_39
Saarnoselle Eurodistrict	2010	E_46
Pourtalet Space EGTC	2011	E_35
Frankfurt (Oder) & Slubice Cooperative Center	2011	E_51
Gorizia-Nova Gorica EGTC	2011	E_55
Pyrenees-Cerdanya EGTC	2011	E_93
Alzette-Belval EGTC	2012	E_4
FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn)	2015	E_255



## 6. Publication 2 (FR)

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**CAMONITA, Francesco (forthcoming).** «Passer par l'étape "proto-eurorégionale" : le cas de la Région Transfrontalière Sicile-Malte». *Sud-Ouest Européen*.

### Abstract

**FR :** Cet article traite des régions transfrontalières qui existent actuellement dans l'Union européenne, et qui sont généralement traitées par la littérature sur la coopération transfrontalière européenne et la gouvernance transfrontalière. L'objectif est de construire une typologie spécifique pour les régions transfrontalières qualifiées de "proto-eurorégionales". D'une part, la recherche construit un cadre théorique pour leur compréhension en utilisant les théories du Néo-Régionalisme, les processus d'eupéanisation ascendante et surtout le modèle de Metzger (2013) de "régions en devenir comme public en stabilisation". D'autre part, l'article cherche à tester la validité de cette typologie "proto-eurorégionale" par l'étude du cas de la région transfrontalière Sicile-Malte. L'argument est également étayé par une analyse qualitative basée sur des entretiens menés auprès des acteurs politico-institutionnels, de la direction d'INTERREG et des acteurs participants pour la période 2007-2013.

**ENG:** This article deals with the cross-border regional realities that currently exist in the European Union, and which are generally addressed by the literature on European cross-border cooperation and cross-border governance. The objective is to develop a specific typology for cross-border regions described as "proto-euroregional". On the one hand, the research builds a theoretical framework for their understanding that draws on the theories of Neo-Regionalism, the processes of bottom-up Europeanisation and above all the Metzger model (2013) of "regions-in-becoming as publics-in-stabilization". On the other hand, the article tests the validity of this "proto-euroregional" typology by studying the case of the cross-border region Sicily-Malta. The argument is also supported by a qualitative analysis based on interviews with political-institutional actors, INTERREG management and participating actors for the period 2007-2013.

### Keywords

**FR :** INTERREG; Régions transfrontalières; Proto-eurorégional; Sicile; Malte.

**ENG:** INTERREG; Cross-Border Regions; Proto-euroregional; Sicily; Malta



## 1. Introduction

Aujourd'hui, il est incontestable que les pratiques modernes de coopération transfrontalière (CTF) en Europe sont profondément imbriquées dans le processus d'intégration européenne. Ceci est principalement mis en évidence par le développement d'initiatives promues au niveau économique et politique. Sur le plan économique, les opportunités offertes par les politiques de coopération territoriale européenne (CTE) et par l'instrument INTERREG à tous les niveaux (transfrontalier, transnational, interrégional) ont entraîné une stimulation sans précédent des programmes territoriaux cogérés aux frontières de l'Union européenne (UE).

Au niveau politique, d'autres initiatives ont vu le jour parallèlement aux programmes européens, bien qu'inégalement réparties à travers les frontières européennes. Il s'agit de la naissance des *Régions Transfrontalières* (RT) institutionnalisées, basées sur les accords des administrations territoriales infranationales à travers des orientations de gouvernance multiniveaux. En d'autres termes, il s'agit d'alliances politiques (entre un nombre limité d'acteurs et à différents niveaux territoriaux) qui encouragent la mise en place d'institutions communes, pour mener des actions au-delà des activités INTERREG (Morata, 2007 ; Morata & Noferini, 2013 ; Oliveras et al. 2010). Une étude récente portant sur la classification des RT institutionnalisées existantes a identifié un total de 158 unités montrant la présence de plateformes avancées de gouvernance transfrontalière, appelées "Eurorégions" (Durà et al., 2018).

Cet article porte sur les *zones transfrontalières européennes* (ZTE), considérées comme l'ensemble des territoires frontaliers inclus dans les 60 zonages INTERREG auxquels correspondent des programmes opérationnels (P.O.) gérés par des autorités de gestion spécifique. La littérature institutionnelle ou académique observe que, dans toutes les ZTE en Europe, la présence d'un programme INTERREG n'est pas toujours corrélée par la présence de RT "institutionnalisées" correspondantes. Néanmoins, la présence même des initiatives INTERREG à travers pratiquement toutes les frontières intérieures européennes nous rappelle qu'il existe des pratiques de CTF actives au-delà des territoires des RT "institutionnalisées". En outre, malgré la taille importante des ZTE financées par INTERREG, les projets transfrontaliers sont généralement réalisés par des réseaux d'acteurs territoriaux dans une partie déterminée de la zone transfrontalière. Dans ces conditions, les espaces fonctionnels qui émergent de ces activités répondent à la définition de Markus Perkmann des RT en tant qu' "unité(s) territoriale(s) limitée(s) composée(s) des territoires des autorités participant à une initiative de CTF" (2003, 4). La principale différence entre les "régions" d'INTERREG et les RT "institutionnalisées" réside donc dans l'idée de construction sociale et d'engagement politique pour la construction de régions transfrontalières au-delà des programmes européens. Cet état de fait nous conduit donc à générer une double classification entre : *a.* les RT "institutionnalisées" ou "eurorégionales" à la fois financées par le programme INTERREG et présentant une plateforme de gouvernance correspondante (dont l'existence précède parfois même les premiers programmes européens) ; et *b.* les RT "proto-eurorégionales" comme régions fonctionnelles où les activités INTERREG développées par les réseaux des acteurs locaux n'ont pas (peut-être encore) encouragé la consolidation des institutions transfrontalières politiques.

L'acceptation d'une définition des RT "proto-eurorégionales" ouvre la porte à de nouvelles approches pour l'étude des territoires transfrontaliers européens dépourvus d'institutionnalisation politique. L'accent sera donc mis dans cet article sur une théorisation de leur dynamique. *Qu'est-ce qui définit exactement une RT "proto-euro-régionale" ? Quelles sont les principales variables qui définissent leur statut ? Quels sont les facteurs qui favorisent ou entravent l'évolution vers un statut "institutionnalisé" de RT ? Existe-t-il un profil territorial dominant dans les ZTE présentant des structures "proto-eurorégionales" ?* Pour analyser cette typologie de RT, il convient de s'intéresser aux définitions des espaces fonctionnels et des régions fournies par le Néo Régionalisme et au domaine plus spécifique de la construction régionale centrée sur les acteurs et de l'institutionnalisation régionale. Après avoir établi un cadre théorique et fourni une première liste de catégories des ZTE susceptibles d'accueillir des RT "proto-eurorégionales", nous présentons une étude de cas basée sur la Région Transfrontalière Sicile-Malte.

## **2. Les RT " proto-eurorégionales " : des régions en stabilisation ?**

Malgré la primauté historique de l'échelle nationale depuis l'avènement du capitalisme d'après-guerre, les perspectives néorégionales n'ont pas manqué de détecter les transformations plus profondes apportées par l'internationalisation économique et les effets de la mondialisation sur les économies régionales et locales. Des auteurs comme Collinge (1996) et Jessop (2003) ont noté la présence d'un phénomène de "relativisation des échelles" dans lequel de nouveaux types d'espaces économiques et politiques au niveau sub-étatique cherchent à obtenir une capacité renouvelée dans leurs espaces nationaux. Parallèlement, Söderbaum (2003) définit également le *Néo Régionalisme* comme l'expression d'un nouvel ensemble de relations triangulaires où les décisions ne sont pas prises exclusivement au niveau de l'Etat mais aussi influencées par des acteurs non étatiques, en particulier au niveau sub-national. Dans le contexte spécifique de "l'Europe des régions", Perrin (2017) estime que de tels espaces régionaux européens peuvent être conçus comme une configuration de méso-niveau dans l'Etat ; une configuration qui l'aiderait à mieux organiser la société en termes économiques et sociaux plutôt que comme des instruments de lutte contre la souveraineté nationale. En outre, il analyse la littérature existante et souligne les nouvelles implications dérivées des tendances néorégionales dans les espaces régionaux contemporains : *a.* un recentrage sur le rôle des réseaux, des partenaires et de l'action collective ; *b.* l'importance de l'entrepreneuriat économique régional ; *c.* une capacité régionale renouvelée d'action extérieure dans un cadre européen et, surtout, *d.* la possibilité pour les périphéries régionales au niveau national de poursuivre des stratégies de développement alternatives, parmi lesquelles il est également possible d'agir par des accords transfrontaliers (2017, pp.9-11). Bellini & Hilpert (2013) poussent encore plus loin l'argument de l'opportunité européenne en insistant sur les changements que les collaborations infranationales transfrontalières peuvent produire dans la géographie de l'Europe à travers de nouvelles configurations visant à améliorer le développement socio-économique. Selon eux, la coopération interrégionale peut contribuer efficacement à l'élaboration d'un cadre dans lequel l'objectif de

compétitivité régionale peut s'insérer dans les motivations à coopérer, par des calculs coûts-avantages opportunistes. Un tel contexte politique justifie donc les deux types de RT envisagés dans notre classification.

Michael Keating (Barry & Keating, 1995 ; Keating, 2013) et Anssi Paasi (2009, 2012 ; Paasi & Metzger, 2016) sont intervenus dans le débat néorégionaliste en explorant les relations fondamentales entre le territoire et les processus sociaux associés à la création des régions tant sur le plan institutionnel qu'identitaire. En lien avec leur raisonnement, Zimmerbauer (2014) tente de fournir un cadre intégré entre territoire et réseaux dans des processus de régionalisation transfrontalière. Pour lui, il est nécessaire de souligner la mutualité et l'interconnectivité des territoires et des réseaux et comment les frontières sont capables de rapprocher les réseaux. La présence de réseaux redéfinit et façonne à son tour la création de nouvelles échelles, de nouveaux territoires et de nouvelles visualisations de la frontière à travers des relations socio-spatiales dynamiques (Painter, 2010 ; Jessop et al, 2008 cité dans Zimmerbauer, 2014). Toutefois, il met également en garde contre le fait que le régionalisme est un processus à plusieurs niveaux, qui peut inclure la manifestation de régionalisations qui se chevauchent et qui n'échappe pas toujours à la mosaïque territoriale existante d'unités politico-administratives. S'il est vrai que les réseaux sociaux multi-échelles peuvent créer un effet de territoire et vice-versa, ils peuvent aussi parfois produire des discours séparés dans une région déterminée (2014, p. 2729-2731).

La littérature spécifique consacrée à l'étude des motivations des acteurs transfrontaliers à l'intérieur d'une RT donnée fournit d'autres indications à cet égard. Medve-Bálint (2013) étend le concept d'eupéanisation à l'étude de "l'adaptation domestique selon l'intégration régionale européenne" (Graziano et Vink, 2008 cité dans Medve-Bálint, 2013), incluant ainsi l'observation des mécanismes horizontaux transfrontaliers pour identifier les processus d'eupéanisation *bottom-up*. Son travail vise à distinguer le point de vue des acteurs politiques régionaux impliqués dans la CTF entre :

- a. la "logique des conséquences" qui les décrit comme des facteurs rationnels, de recherche d'intérêts et de maximisation de l'utilité (au moyen de l'exploitation des fonds de la CTE) ; et
- b. la "logique de pertinence" qui les pousse à suivre certaines normes et attentes sociales (concernant l'intégration européenne et une meilleure institutionnalisation de la CTF).

Cette distinction l'amène également à dresser une première liste d'incitations et d'obstacles à l'institutionnalisation des pratiques de la CTF. Bien qu'il concentre une grande partie de son analyse dans le contexte des RT "institutionnalisées" en Europe centrale, ses résultats aboutissent à la conclusion intéressante qu'un seul type d'incitation (c'est-à-dire la présence d'un financement extérieur de l'UE) ne suffit pas à encourager l'institutionnalisation de la CTF et qu'une combinaison plus large mais variable de facteurs est nécessaire pour atteindre ce résultat. Svensson (2014) approfondit le débat en identifiant les sentiments normatifs de l'UE, les subventions accordées et les motivations politiques transfrontalières pour participer à une CTF institutionnalisée. Ses résultats sur un travail de terrain plus vaste en Europe centrale montrent que

les motivations normatives et les motivations liées aux subventions conduisent principalement à la participation des acteurs aux institutions eurorégionales et que la formulation de politiques communes ne constitue pas le principal problème dans les pratiques de coopération transfrontalière.

Alors que les arguments précédents peuvent nous aider à identifier les motivations et les facteurs à l'origine de la participation des acteurs de la CTF dans une hypothétique structure "proto-eurorégionale", nous avons encore besoin d'une théorie interprétative qui pourrait définir le statut de la typologie que nous proposons. A cet égard, nous considérons la théorie des "régions en devenir comme des publics en stabilisation" [*regions-in-becoming as publics-in-stabilization*] (Metzger, 2013) comme une pierre angulaire de notre cadre inspiré des travaux préexistants sur la Théorie Acteur-Réseau (ANT). Sur l'analyse de l'institutionnalisation régionale, nous reconnaissons aussi le modèle de Paasi (1986) comme une première tentative influente pour identifier une telle dynamique. Cependant, en accord avec Metzger (2013, p.1377), nous estimons également que son orientation se fonde principalement sur des objets de contestation dans les processus de régionalisation, c'est-à-dire les dimensions territoriales ou symboliques. La théorie des "publics en stabilisation" est plutôt un cadre qui cherche à dépasser les débats sur le statut ontologique des régions. Il met l'accent sur les facteurs qui donnent naissance à une proposition de régionalisation au cours d'un processus en trois étapes. Les principaux protagonistes de la théorie sont les réseaux de parties prenantes et autres acteurs intéressés constituant un *public régional* formé en réponse à l'émergence d'un enjeu spécifique (étape 1). Par conséquent, la théorie explore comment ces grappes se stabilisent jusqu'au moment où elles deviennent des médiateurs efficaces d'une proposition de régionalisation plus poussée (étape 2). Lorsque le public régional devient assez fort pour intégrer les réalités de la région dans les pratiques sociales, il tente également d'obtenir la dotation d'un acteur organisationnel qui assume le rôle de porte-parole commun du nouveau processus de régionalisation proposé. L'institutionnalisation constituera donc le câblage et la matérialisation de la région elle-même (étape 3) (*ibid.*, p. 1377-1381).

Il est immédiatement évident que le potentiel de la théorie des "publics en stabilisation" peut être appliquée au scénario européen actuel des pratiques de CTF, où la phase d'émergence peut être liée à la création d'une ZTE *via* INTERREG, donnant naissance à des réseaux de partenaires exécutant des activités transfrontalières (étape 1). La phase d'institutionnalisation à l'autre extrémité du modèle correspond au statut des RT "eurorégionales" (étape 3). Il s'ensuit que nos hypothétiques RT "proto-eurorégionales" doivent se situer dans une étape intermédiaire entre les deux extrêmes (étape 2). L'adaptation de la théorie des "publics en stabilisation" au cadre actuel de l'UE pour la CTF produirait ainsi le schéma contextualisé suivant :

1. La mise en place d'une ZTE parrainée par INTERREG, qui stimule l' "émergence d'une phase publique régionale" au-delà de ses frontières. Celles-ci sont représentées par les partenariats des acteurs participant à INTERREG qui réalisent les premiers projets de coopération transfrontalière dans la région ;

2. La *matérialisation d'une RT "proto-eurorégionale"* le long d'une partie déterminée de la ZTE. Cela correspond à la phase de "stabilisation d'un public régional" dans laquelle la consolidation des partenariats de coopération transfrontalière et la continuité des relations à travers la même partie de la frontière commencent à définir l'existence d'une région fonctionnelle ;
3. La *constitution d'une RT "eurorégionale "* à travers la "phase d'institutionnalisation" correspondante qui est réalisée par un public régional consolidé cherchant à cimenter l'idée de la région par des formes socio-matérielles plus durables.

Une RT "proto-eurorégionale" peut donc être définie comme une région européenne de coopération transfrontalière située à l'intérieur d'un espace transfrontalier européen parrainé par INTERREG. C'est un espace fonctionnel qui développe ses activités dans une phase intermédiaire entre la naissance des processus de coopération et une institutionnalisation transfrontalière stable (figure 1). Ses limites sont déterminées par la portée territoriale des réseaux d'acteurs publics et privés impliqués dans les pratiques de coopération transfrontalière financées par l'UE. En fin de compte, la consolidation des grappes d'acteurs intéressés devrait amener la RT "proto-eurorégionale" à suivre un modèle évolutif vers des formes plus institutionnalisées de CTF sous la forme de RT "eurorégionales".

Cependant, deux derniers enseignements tirés des travaux de Metzger (2013, p. 1388-1391) sont également pertinents pour notre modèle de "publics en stabilisation de la CTF". Tout d'abord, il est important de considérer que la temporalité esquissée du modèle n'implique pas un parcours linéaire de la première à la dernière étape. Les phases peuvent se confondre et se chevaucher, tout comme les processus de régionalisation peuvent avoir des hauts et des bas. Ceci est particulièrement pertinent dans le cas des RT "institutionnalisées" à long terme, qui datent même d'avant la mise en place d'un programme INTERREG. Dans ce contexte, le public régional a déjà manifesté suffisamment d'intérêt pour poursuivre la consolidation de l'espace transfrontalier (par exemple l'*EUREGIO* historique de 1958). Deuxièmement, bien que l'institutionnalisation devrait être l'objectif ultime souhaitable pour améliorer l'efficacité de la CTF, il est toujours possible de se détourner d'un processus de régionalisation de la troisième étape. Le processus est souvent associé au maintien en position de pouvoir des acteurs intéressés par l'institutionnalisation transfrontalière. De même, les propositions en faveur d'une régionalisation plus poussée peuvent même échouer *a priori* à "voyager et rester" à travers la RT. Les propositions de régionalisation sont comprises comme une manière active et politique d'intervenir dans le monde par une construction, éventuellement en réponse à des problèmes et défis concrets. Toutefois, il peut y avoir des cas actifs où ces processus ne sont pas mis en évidence de manière efficace et où la structure "proto-eurorégionale" reste bloquée dans sa phase actuelle. Nous discuterons de ce processus au cours de l'analyse de l'étude de cas.

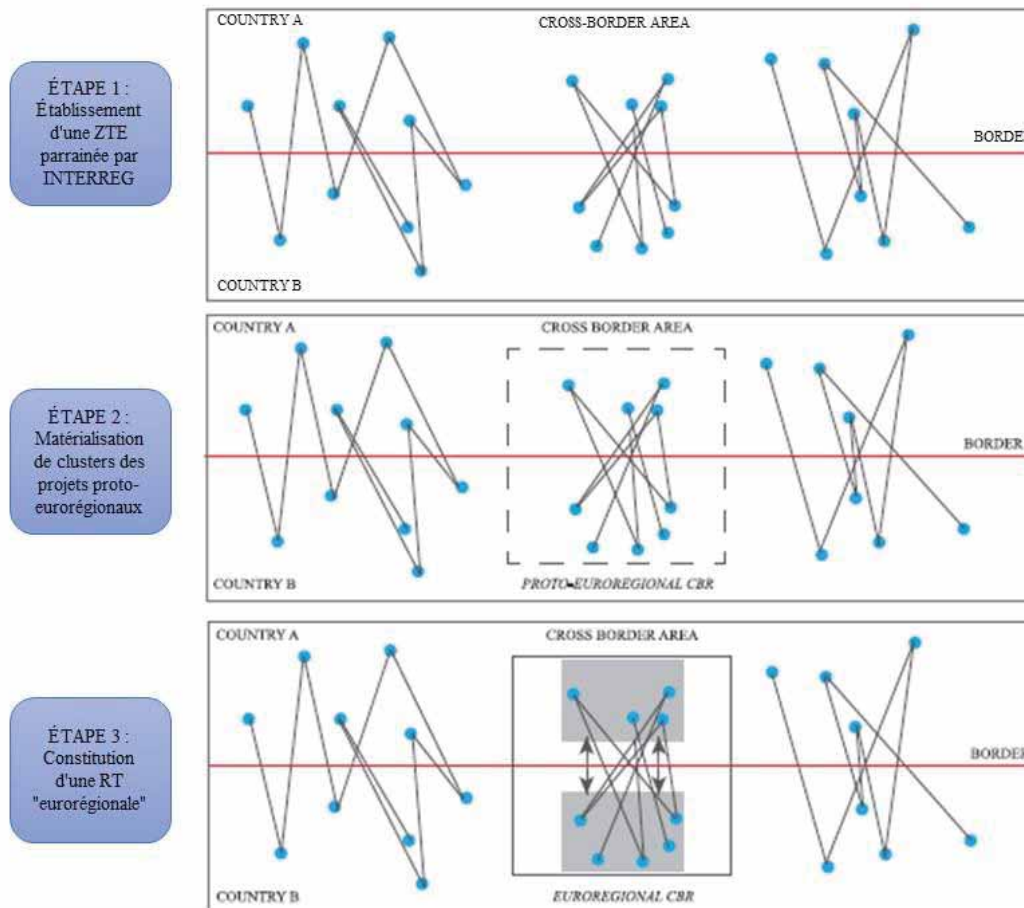


Figure 1- Schématisation du modèle de "publics en stabilisation de la CTF" (Source : élaboration propre)

### 3. Méthodologie d'identification des ZTE et de la RT Sicile-Malte

La théorisation des structures "proto-eurorégionales" dans cet article s'adresse en premier lieu aux ZTE ne présentant pas actuellement de RT "eurorégionales". Cela se base sur l'hypothèse qu'il pourrait être plus facile pour les RT "proto-eurorégionales" partageant la frontière avec des RT "institutionnalisés" de s'engager dans un processus parallèle de régionalisation transfrontalière, voire de le lancer. On part donc du principe que cela ne serait pas le cas pour les ZTE dans lesquelles on n'a jamais identifié de RT "eurorégionales".

Les raisons susmentionnées nous ont amenés à enquêter sur l'absence de RT "institutionnalisées" dans les 60 ZTE définies par les programmes INTERREG. Nos sources sont représentées par la liste officielle de l'UE



des 60 INTERREG VA<sup>10</sup> (INTERACT, 2018) et une liste précédente de 214 RT "eurorégionaux"<sup>11</sup> identifiés par Durà et al. (2018). La tentative de classification des structures eurorégionales "actives" et "inactives" aide également à mettre en évidence les ZTE où des RT "institutionnalisées" ont pu être mises en place mais ont ensuite cessé leurs activités. Notre méthodologie a donc consisté à identifier pour chaque organisation "eurorégionale" son programme de référence INTERREG afin de les exclure ultérieurement de notre propre liste. Par conséquent, la schématisation conceptuelle conduit à des catégories pour lesquelles nous n'avons pas pu identifier de correspondance directe (tableau 1).

Plus précisément, nous pouvons distinguer jusqu'à trois scénarios différents concernant l'absence de RT "institutionnalisées". Dans le premier cas, nous rencontrons des ZTE qui ne détiennent actuellement pas de RT "eurorégionales" actives en raison du peu ou de l'absence d'activités réalisées par les institutions de coopération transfrontalière précédemment établies. Des activités ont été enregistrées dans les précédents cadres de financement septennaux de l'UE, mais la liste des RT "eurorégionales" identifiée dans Durà et al (2018) porte principalement sur la période de financement 2007-2013. Par conséquent, le tableau montre un exemple de RT "eurorégionales" considérées comme inactives dans la ZTE correspondante. Deuxièmement, il est important de signaler la présence de chevauchements entre les ZTE et les juridictions INTERREG dans certains territoires transfrontaliers européens. Cela signifie que même si un programme INTERREG n'influence pas directement la consolidation des institutions de CTF, l'ensemble ou une partie de la ZTE peut être incluse dans un autre programme qui a plutôt réussi dans un processus d'institutionnalisation. C'est par exemple le cas des programmes INTERREG Italie-Croatie et Slovénie-Croatie qui sont inclus dans la zone beaucoup plus large de l'*Eurorégion Ionienne-Adriatique*. Enfin, la troisième catégorie énumère la présence des ZTE où aucune existence antérieure de RT "institutionnalisées" n'a jamais été détectée. Cette catégorie fait apparaître un certain effet de la géographie physique, ou de la typologie frontalière, sur la coopération transfrontalière : on y trouve sept ZTE marquées par une zone frontalière maritime, dont au moins quatre cas présentent également des composantes insulaires. Ces résultats ouvrent de nouvelles pistes de recherche sur les relations entre les RT "eurorégionales" et les ZTE maritimes<sup>12</sup>, mais là n'est pas l'objectif principal de cet article.

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<sup>10</sup> Les critères de filtrage du site web INTERACT excluent a priori les programmes INTERREG IPA CTF de la sélection totale (voir site web). Nous avons également procédé à l'exclusion de cinq autres ZTE appartenant à des programmes spéciaux INTERREG mis en place pour les territoires ultrapériphériques de l'UE.

<sup>11</sup> Nous rappelons également qu'en suivant les travaux de Durà et al (2018), nous excluons également de notre sélection d'autres types d'organismes de la CTF, tels que les communautés de travail.

<sup>12</sup> [CAMONITA F. à paraître 2019b]

Tableau 1 - Classification des ZTE selon l'absence de RT " institutionnalisées " correspondantes. (Source : élaboration propre)

Programme INTERREG	Pays (Codes ISO)	Typologie des frontières géographiques	Exemples de RT " institutionnalisées "
<i>1. RT actuellement inactifs</i>			
France (Manche) - Angleterre	FR-UK	Maritime	Eurorégion de la Manche (Kent-Nord-Pas-de-Calais)
Grèce-Bulgarie	GR-BG	Terrain ; Montagne	Eurorégion Nestos-Mesta
Hongrie - Croatie	HU-HR	Terrain ; Rivière	Eurorégion Mura-Dráva
Italie-Suisse	CH-IT	Montagne	Regio Insubria
Slovénie - Autriche	SI-AT	Montagne	Steiermärk - Euregio du nord-ouest de la Slovénie
<i>2. Chevauchement des ZTE (RT non financées directement par le programme INTERREG)</i>			
Italie-Croatie	IT-HR	Maritime	Eurorégion Ionienne-Adriatique (IT- GR -HR-BA-ME-AL)
Lettonie-Lituanie	LV-LT	Terrain	Pays des lacs (LV-LT-BY)
Nord	SE-FI-NO	Terrain ; Maritime	Comité Mittnorden (Conseil nordique des ministres)
Slovénie - Croatie	SI-HR	Terrain	Eurorégion Ionienne-Adriatique (IT- GR -HR-BA-ME-AL)
Slovénie-Hongrie	SI-HU	Terrain ; Montagne	Eurorégion des Carpates (SI-HU-UA-PL-RO)
<i>3. Aucune existence antérieure de RT " institutionnalisées "</i>			
2 Mers	BE-FR-NL-NL-UK	Maritime	N/A
Grèce - Chypre	GR-CY	Maritime (Île)	N/A
Grèce - Italie	IT-GR	Maritime	N/A
Irlande-Pays de Galles	IR-UK	Maritime	N/A
Italie-France (Maritime)	FR-IT	Maritime (Île)	N/A
Italie-Malte	IT-MT	Maritime (Île)	N/A
Irlande du Nord - Irlande	IR-UK	Maritime (Île)	N/A

Afin d'approfondir notre analyse des RT "proto-eurorégionales", nous choisissons le cas de la ZTE Italie-Malte et plus particulièrement la RT "proto-eurorégionale" Sicile-Malte comme un exemple approfondi de notre théorisation (figure 2). Plusieurs raisons expliquent ce choix. Premièrement, l'étude de cas appartient à la troisième catégorie de ZTE identifiée dans la classification ci-dessus, ce qui répond à notre volonté d'enquêter dans des zones où il n'existe pas de RT "eurorégionales". Deuxièmement, le cas présente une correspondance intéressante entre la taille territoriale de la ZTE parrainée par INTERREG et la RT "proto-eurorégionale" correspondante entre la Sicile et Malte. En outre, elle représente une situation anormale intéressante de coopération efficace entre les autorités nationales et régionales. Troisièmement, des tentatives d'institutionnalisation de la coopération transfrontalière ont déjà été enregistrées ces dernières années, mais



l'échec du processus constitue un exemple illustrant des obstacles au passage de l'étape 2 "protorégional" à l'étape 3 "institutionnalisé" de notre modèle.

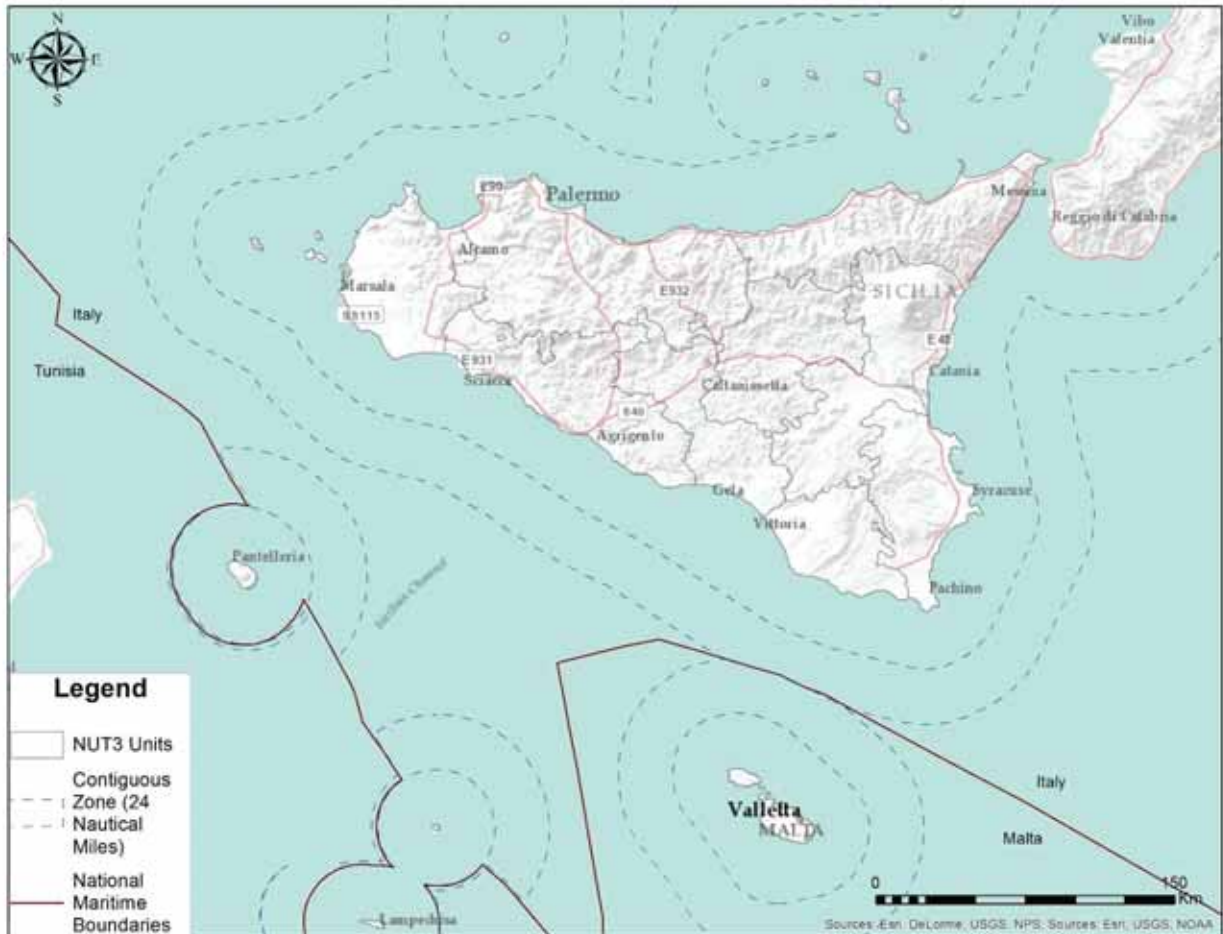


Figure 2- Carte de la région transfrontalière Sicile-Malte indiquant les régions NUTS 3 et les zones maritimes contiguës (Source : propre élaboration, ArcGIS)

Le programme INTERREG Italie-Malte n'a été lancé qu'en 2004, en même temps que l'adhésion des îles maltaises à l'UE la même année. Il s'agit d'un programme relativement "jeune" qui n'a bénéficié que de deux périodes et demie de financement pour son exécution (2004-2006 ; 2007-2013 ; 2014-2020). L'étude de cas a fait l'objet d'une analyse approfondie au cours de l'année 2016 au moyen d'un processus d'entretiens qualitatifs s'adressant à la fois aux parties prenantes participant aux projets de CTF entre 2007-2013 (18) et aux acteurs locaux politico-institutionnels et de gestion INTERREG (5). Une liste complète des acteurs interrogés peut être observée à travers une schématisation sectorielle selon leurs domaines d'activité (tableau 2). On remarque une certaine prépondérance d'acteurs siciliens dans le recomptage total. Cela peut toutefois s'expliquer à la fois par la position de chef de file que les acteurs siciliens occupent généralement dans les projets INTERREG et par la présence plus large d'acteurs disponibles pour les activités en raison de la plus grande taille de l'île. En effet, la taille réduite de Malte a également contribué à l'identification de partenaires qui ont souvent géré plus d'un projet. La méthodologie opérationnelle a consisté en l'élaboration de deux questionnaires distincts et semi-structurés stimulant une approche naturaliste, ce qui a conduit à des entretiens réactifs et à des questions plus approfondies<sup>13</sup>. L'ordre de présentation suivra une adaptation des regroupements thématiques déjà inclus dans le questionnaire original.

Nous tâcherons tout d'abord de mieux caractériser notre concept de RT "proto-eurorégionale" à partir des exemples des réseaux et projets INTERREG siculo-maltaise. Enfin, dans la dernière section, nous analyserons les arguments pour ou contre un processus d'institutionnalisation de la RT, à partir des divers entretiens réalisés.

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<sup>13</sup> Sur la base de demandes explicites d'anonymat, nous évitons les références directes à la personne interviewée.

Tableau 2 - Liste des partenaires interrogés dans le travail de terrain de la région transfrontalière Sicile-Malte (2016)  
(Source : élaboration propre)

Domaine d'activité	Organisation / Institution	Membre ou partenaire	Participation aux activités ou aux projets de coopération transfrontalière
<b>Administration INTERREG</b>	Secrétariat conjoint (JS)	Directeur de la JS	Gestion, évaluation et suivi des appels à projets INTERREG
	Autorité nationale de coordination maltaise (MNCA)	2 Dirigeants	Identique à le JS ; assistance du côté maltais de la frontière (proximité accrue)
	DGRegio (Commission européenne)	Officier responsable de l'UE pour l'Italie-Malte O.P.	Suivi du programme INTERREG et conseiller externe des institutions de l'UE
<b>Acteurs politiques</b>	Assemblée régionale sicilienne (ARS)	2 membres : Député et son ancien adjoint	Propositions d'institutionnalisation de la CTF en 2012 à l'ARS (GECT Sicile-Malte)
	Consulat de Malte en Sicile	Consul honoraire à Catane	Relations institutionnelles siculo-maltaises (au-delà de la coopération transfrontalière) ; assistance à la population maltaise en Sicile
<b>Universités (Centres de recherche)</b>	Université de Palerme	3 Chercheurs (Ingénierie)	CALYPSO ; SIMIT ; RESPIRA
		2 Chercheurs (Architecture)	LITHOX ; BORD DE L'EAU
		Membre honoraire et directeur scientifique (Biologie)	IMAGENX
	Université de Catane	Chercheur (Ingénierie)	BIODIVALUE
		Chercheur (Études agricoles)	MORISO
	Université de Malte	Chercheur (Géosciences)	PANACÉE ; BIODIVALUE
	Institut des systèmes terrestres (Université de Malte)	Chef de recherche (division Agriculture et alimentation)	T-CHEESIMAL ; PROMED ; VINENERGY
Jardins botaniques Argotti (Univ. Malte)	Directeur du Jardin	GARDMED	
<b>Administration publique</b>	Province de Syracuse	Fonctionnaire	RESI
	Province d'Agrigente	Membre du personnel (cherche de financement de l'UE)	SIBIT
	Autorité portuaire (Catane)	Directeur de l'Administration portuaire	PORT-PVEV
<b>Organismes appartenant au secteur public</b>	Institut régional du vin et de l'huile (Sicile)	2 chercheurs et agents de projet	PROMED ; VINENERGY
	Institut national de géophysique et de volcanologie (Catane)	Chercheur et chef de projet	VAMOS SEGURO
	Héritage Malte	Responsable de la gestion des financements de l'UE	REMASI ; LITHOS ; ARCHEOTUR
<b>ONG</b>	Legambiente (Sicile)	Agente de projet	REMASI

## 4. Analyse des entretiens concernant la RT Sicile-Malte

### a. *Identité et expériences de coopération antérieures des parties prenantes*

L'analyse suggère la présence de trois éléments communs caractérisant la plupart des entretiens. Premièrement, comme on l'observe souvent dans les processus européens de CTF, ce sont les acteurs du secteur public qui dominent le paysage du programme INTERREG Italie-Malte. Deuxièmement, en termes de partenariats, nous signalons la présence récurrente des réseaux des universités ou des centres de recherche en tant que piliers et bras opérationnels de nombreux projets de la CTF. Troisièmement, en raison de la courte expérience préliminaire de 2004-2006 et du nombre réduit de projets pilotes, nous avons compris la RT Sicile-Malte comme une structure "proto-eurorégionale" qui a récemment évolué de la phase 1 du modèle et ne nous attendions donc pas à trouver des profils très expérimentés dans la CTF. Néanmoins, l'ensemble des personnes interrogées ont déjà montré d'autres expériences de projets solides, soit dans d'autres formes de CTE (INTERREG transnational comme Med ou Médoc), d'autres programmes européens (Fonds européen de développement régional, ERASMUS+, Horizon2020) ou même dans d'autres recherches et collaborations en milieu universitaire (projets nationaux de R+D, participation aux conférences scientifiques, etc.).

### b. *Les origines des projets INTERREG*

Dès le départ, la disponibilité des fonds de l'UE a été identifiée comme le facteur le plus fort de motivation des activités de coopération. C'était surtout évident dans le cas des universités et des centres de recherche des deux côtés de la frontière, mais les administrations publiques et les ONG étaient également sensibles au processus. En effet, les coupes budgétaires fréquentes dues à la crise financière de 2008 ont souvent poussé ces organisations à chercher ailleurs de nouvelles ressources, donnant le rythme aux motivations de recherche de subventions définies par Svensson (2014). Qu'il s'agisse de partenariats existants ou de nouveaux réseaux *ad hoc*, ceux-ci ont souvent été informés par des intervenants attentifs (des directeurs de l'administration publique, des bureaux de soutien des universités) qui ont fait connaître le programme existant de la CTF et qui ont facilité la naissance d'une proposition. En outre, du côté italien de la frontière, il est important de signaler la présence d'une série de consultants proposant des demandes de financement INTERREG. Ce sont généralement des acteurs privés impliqués dans la gestion de projets européens et disposés à travailler pour des organisations du secteur public. Leur présence est toutefois moindre du côté maltais en raison d'une réglementation interne autorisant l'embauche d'un chef de projet, mais non d'un rédacteur de projet. La plupart des projets sont passés par les étapes habituelles de négociation entre les partenaires potentiels : réunions en ligne et en direct, élaboration de dossiers de travail. La négociation du

projet lui-même s'est révélée être un processus difficile dans quelques cas, surtout pour des initiatives ambitieuses visant à forger des langues technico-administratives communes ou même parfois en raison de différences culturelles et de barrières linguistiques. Toutefois, la plupart des projets n'a rencontré aucune difficulté particulière.

Enfin, un retour d'information intéressant a été fourni sur la constitution des réseaux transfrontaliers qui composent le "public régional" dans notre cadre d'analyse. La plupart des acteurs se sont lancés dans des recherches de partenaires sur la base de la méthode habituelle *bouche-à-oreille* pour la connaissance d'autres partenaires potentiels. D'autres ont choisi de consulter Internet pour effectuer des recherches dans les bases de données des partenaires européens ou pour étudier les activités de leurs homologues de l'autre côté de la frontière. Le cadre 2007-2013 comportait également des conditions spécifiques pour la participation des entités territoriales siciliennes plus proches de la frontière maritime (Camonita, n.d. a). Cette situation a entraîné une forte participation des administrations territoriales (provinces, conseils locaux) et des détachements universitaires (*Poli Universitari*) de la partie sud de la Sicile. Enfin, il convient de noter que les acteurs des deux parties définissent généralement un rôle de chef de file aux Siciliens dans la composition des partenariats. Pour contrer cette tendance, des points supplémentaires sont attribués dans les appels à projets pour les Maltais souhaitant mener une initiative.

### *c. Expériences de coopération dans les projets*

Tous les projets devaient respecter le protocole INTERREG habituel dans les relations entre les partenaires, y compris la création d'un comité de pilotage transfrontalier et de fréquentes réunions conjointes pour discuter des étapes du projet. En conséquence, la plupart des personnes interrogées ont fait part de réactions positives concernant les expériences horizontales de coopération marquées par des décisions communes. Seuls quelques projets ont semblé montrer une tendance des partenaires chefs de file vers la gouvernance verticale, qui n'a pas été appréciée par tous les partenaires aux deux côtés de la frontière.

Le retour d'information général concernant l'interaction avec les institutions INTERREG apparaît très positif, démontrant un suivi constant mais aussi une assistance technique dans toutes les étapes des projets. Les seuls retours d'information discordants provenaient dans de très rares cas d'acteurs situés plus près de la frontière maritime et plus loin de l'autorité de gestion de Palerme. Ils ont parlé d'une certaine distance dans les interactions entre les membres du projet et les autorités INTERREG. Un autre acteur a commenté la situation difficile des provinces dans le cadre italien moderne en raison des tentatives incomplètes de réforme sous le gouvernement de Matteo Renzi (2014) et de la longue série de coupes financières qui paralysent leurs activités. En outre, il a également mis en garde contre le rôle controversé des provinces siciliennes actuelles non élues, qui cherchent leur but entre le gouvernement régional autonome politiquement responsable et les conseils locaux.



Les questions consacrées aux obstacles dans les processus de CTF ont également fourni des éléments très intéressants pour l'analyse. Tous les acteurs se sont plaints des difficultés liées à la gestion de projets européens et de la pléthore de bureaucratie qu'elle entraîne. Certains acteurs ont signalé l'existence d'une bureaucratisation paralysante dans les procédures italiennes, même au-delà des activités de coopération transfrontalière. D'autres se sont tournés vers le programme INTERREG pour signaler une certaine difficulté dans le compte rendu financier des projets à fort contenu technique ou scientifique. Cela s'explique principalement par le manque d'expérience des contrôleurs régionaux dans la justification de certaines dépenses d'équipement. Enfin, et bien qu'il s'agisse d'une tendance générale dans tous les programmes INTERREG en Europe, certains se sont plaints du système de remboursement des projets qui oblige les partenaires à avancer d'importantes sommes d'argent et donc à fermer les portes aux organisations qui ne peuvent se permettre ce processus.

Très peu de cas ont révélé des désaccords extrêmes entre les partenaires des projets de CTF, mais ils ont toujours été résolus soit par la médiation, soit par le remplacement du partenaire dans sa composition même. De même, les obstacles culturels ont toujours été surmontés par des affinités culturelles. Les Siciliens ont reconnu le mélange de culture méditerranéenne maltaise et d'efficacité anglo-saxonne et ont admiré la capacité de planification de leurs voisins, même s'ils l'ont parfois trouvée trop "franche". A l'inverse, les Maltais ont éprouvé des difficultés à comprendre certaines attitudes siciliennes et italiennes à l'égard de procédures extrêmement longues et "brouillonnes". Dans l'ensemble, cependant, ces problèmes ont toujours été surmontés par de bonnes relations fondées sur une compréhension mutuelle et un sens du patrimoine culturel commun.

Bien qu'il s'agisse d'anomalies notoires dans les processus classiques de CTF en Europe, la nature de la RT marquée par des îles séparées par une frontière maritime et l'approche État-Région entre les deux territoires n'ont constitué que des obstacles mineurs aux projets. Dans le premier cas, la plupart des acteurs ont apprécié les liaisons de transport fréquentes entre la Sicile et Malte (ferry *Katamaran*, vols fréquents) et ont souvent résolu les problèmes par les technologies de communication (vidéoconférences, e-mailing, etc.). En outre, les projets ont toujours été conçus avec des objectifs clairs, marqués par des groupes de travail territorialement différenciés visant des résultats communs au cours du processus. Dans le second cas, seuls les projets relevant de compétences nationales ont connu des réactions lentes pour obtenir les autorisations et mobiliser les acteurs nationaux, mais cela était généralement conforme aux longues procédures déjà mentionnées dans la bureaucratie italienne. Du côté maltais, la participation fréquente des autorités nationales en raison de la petite taille de l'île a souvent permis de réagir rapidement aux initiatives.

Il est intéressant de noter que certains des obstacles les plus importants ont été les difficultés rencontrées par les administrations territoriales infranationales dans la gestion des projets. C'était surtout le cas à tous les niveaux du côté sicilien, mais il est vrai que des plaintes ont également été déposées sur les îles maltaises lorsque les projets n'étaient pas portés par des niveaux élevés de l'administration publique (c'est-à-dire les conseils locaux). La liste comprend les éléments suivants : un manque général de savoir-faire et de

protocoles dans le traitement des projets de coopération transfrontalière ; une mentalité passive de la part des fonctionnaires publics affectés aux projets, qui se traduit également par une lenteur de réaction aux activités ; inversement, un système qui manque totalement d'incitations du personnel public pour le travail supplémentaire associé aux projets européens ; des interférences des élections politiques locales et nationales qui entraînent des retards dans la réalisation des projets ; des difficultés à dépenser les ressources disponibles pour le projet et des difficultés extrêmes en matière d'externalisation et de monétarisation des résultats des projets innovants ; enfin, dans deux cas seulement, nous avons été signalés par une réorientation du financement vers des activités alternatives à celles initialement prévues par le projet (bien que toujours en ligne avec les objectifs généraux). A notre avis, ce type d'obstacles peut être symptomatique d'une RT "proto-eurorégionale" qui reste dans une "logique de l'opportunité", c'est-à-dire dépourvue d'un ensemble de raisons normatives concernant le processus d'intégration européenne. On peut faire l'hypothèse que cette difficulté pourrait être partiellement surmontée par une institutionnalisation de la CTF, l'existence d'une RT "eurorégionale" pouvant permettre de stimuler une coopération plus efficace et appuyer la résolution de problèmes structurels.

#### *d. Résultats et retour d'information sur l'état actuel de la CTF entre la Sicile et Malte*

Au-delà de ces obstacles, la CTF entre la Sicile et Malte a permis de réaliser différents projets. Il n'est pas possible ici d'en donner une vue d'ensemble complète, mais on peut rendre compte de quelques cas. Le système commun de surveillance mis en place pour contrôler le volcan sicilien Etna (VAMOS SEGURO) et les pratiques expérimentales dans les cultures durables de la vigne et de la production vinicole (PROMED, VINENERGY) ont reçu une mention officielle de la Commission européenne. On peut également signaler un ambitieux plan transfrontalier de protection civile entre les deux îles (SIMIT), la mise en place d'un système transfrontalier de surveillance environnementale pour la détection des marées noires (CALYPSO), l'échange de connaissances et de pratiques dans l'élaboration et la commercialisation des fromages locaux (T-CHEESIMAL) ou encore la consolidation d'un réseau transfrontalier traitant de recherche en cancer du sein (IMAGENX). Dans ces cas, la combinaison de deux facteurs a contribué à l'amélioration des résultats. Premièrement, dans la plupart des cas, les parties prenantes se sont appuyées sur des contacts préétablis ou de nouvelles collaborations institutionnelles formalisées par l'environnement universitaire. Deuxièmement, tous les acteurs ont fait preuve d'une gestion compétente tant en termes de production de résultats spécialisés que de médiation nécessaire en cas de désaccord sur le projet et d'implication des administrations publiques. Toutefois, malgré les activités de diffusion locale, nous avons également compris que la plupart des projets de CTF ne pouvaient tout simplement pas assurer une dissémination plus large de leurs résultats transfrontaliers en raison des limitations pratiques liées aux délais et au budget. Cela peut constituer un risque supplémentaire pour les RT "proto-eurorégionales" non institutionnalisées car un « support

institutionnel », quel que soit son degré, peut servir à promouvoir et à soutenir les entreprises transfrontalières réussies.

Lorsqu'on leur a demandé s'il était possible d'apporter des changements au cadre actuel du programme opérationnel, les participants ont été unanimes à souhaiter une plus grande simplification de la bureaucratie actuelle de la gestion des projets. Toutefois, dans quelques cas, on s'est efforcé de signaler une série de changements pratiques (par exemple, des dates limites différentes pour les lettres de demande de projet et de participation des partenaires) ou même d'envisager une stratégie à long terme pour le financement des projets, assurant ainsi une plus grande continuité entre les initiatives. Quoi qu'il en soit, le retour d'information global sur l'expérience a été très positif et la majorité des partenaires ont exprimé le souhait de consolider leur travail, soit en proposant de nouveaux projets, soit en se rendant disponibles pour de nouvelles propositions. Cette constatation est conforme à notre identification des structures "proto-eurorégionales" dans une phase de consolidation des réseaux de CTF en tant que "public régional" de notre cadre analytique.

#### *e. Débat sur les propositions d'institutionnalisation de la CTF*

L'une des conclusions les plus originales du travail sur le terrain a été tirée de la découverte détaillée de deux propositions d'institutionnalisation qui ont échoué à l'intérieur de la RT. La première tentative mineure a été faite par une autorité maltaise anonyme visitant la ville sicilienne de Catane vers 2011-2012 et mentionnant la possibilité de développer un Groupement local de coopération territoriale (GLCT)<sup>14</sup>. Toutefois, il semble que la proposition n'ait jamais atteint les canaux institutionnels officiels. La deuxième tentative a été tentée à l'intérieur de l'Assemblée régionale sicilienne par l'intermédiaire d'un député régional du *Partito Democratico* italien et de son assistant politique ayant une expérience antérieure dans d'autres RT. Malgré l'élaboration d'un avant-projet de décret d'un Groupement européen de coopération territoriale (GECT) pour l'institutionnalisation transfrontalière à présenter au parlement régional, l'idée n'a pas suscité suffisamment d'intérêt politique pour la poursuite des discussions et le projet d'un GECT Sicile-Malte doté d'une personnalité juridique individuelle pour la RT est resté dans l'impasse.

Les opinions des acteurs politiques et technico-administratifs interrogés permettent d'identifier plusieurs raisons de l'échec du passage à la phase 3 de notre modèle. A la base, il y aurait un problème structurel avec l'identité et la stratégie régionales de la Sicile en tant que région européenne. Les autorités siciliennes n'auraient pas la vision à long terme d'un engagement politique officiel dans des actions extérieures telles que l'institutionnalisation de la CTF et seraient plutôt préoccupées par de fréquents épisodes d'instabilité

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<sup>14</sup> Le Groupement local de coopération territoriale (GLCT) et le Groupement européen de coopération territoriale (GECT) représentent deux formules juridiques différentes actuellement utilisées dans la construction des RT "institutionnalisées" et leur gouvernance transfrontalière dans l'Union européenne. Pour plus d'informations, voir Durà et al., 2018, p. 26-27; 63-67.

gouvernementale régionale. De l'autre côté de la frontière, l'île de Malte est un État-nation et, en tant que tel, les politiques de CTE sont une option supplémentaire parmi l'ensemble des programmes des politiques européennes. D'autres préoccupations politiques peuvent découler des relations généralement controversées entre le gouvernement national italien et la région autonome sicilienne. L'institutionnalisation de la CTF passe par une négociation appropriée entre l'État et la région, et nécessite l'appui – ou tout au moins l'aval – de Rome. Pour leur part, les acteurs liés à INTERREG se sont également montrés prudents à l'égard de l'institutionnalisation, même s'ils ne l'ont pas totalement rejetée. Certaines préoccupations ont été exprimées quant à l'absence d'acteurs influents pour soutenir la création d'une structure "eurorégionale". D'autres se sont interrogés sur les problèmes de délimitation spatiale entre le programme INTERREG et une hypothétique RT "institutionnalisée" Sicile-Malte, qui pourrait conduire à des chevauchements et à une confusion pour les acteurs territoriaux. La nature exacte des compétences à confier aux institutions de CTF a également été mise en question. Enfin, certains responsables ont souligné l'existence d'opportunités plus importantes pour d'autres formes d'affiliation institutionnelle, comme par exemple des GECT ou autres structures coopératives à une échelle transnationale méditerranéenne plus large, et ont exprimé des préoccupations quant à la nature financière relativement limitée de l'initiative INTERREG Italie-Malte actuelle.

Dans le même temps, la quasi-totalité des acteurs participant à INTERREG ont montré une forte méconnaissance de l'existence des organisations eurorégionales. Ce résultat confirme la vision d'un "public régional" issu d'une ZTE dépourvue de toute forme de RT institutionnalisée (Metzger, 2013, p. 1388-1391). Cependant, lorsqu'on leur a expliqué les fonctions possibles attribuées à ces structures, ils se sont généralement montrés favorables à une participation plus positive et plus active des administrations territoriales pour promouvoir et soutenir les initiatives de coopération.

A cet égard, les questions et débats sur l'institutionnalisation soulevés lors des entretiens illustrent notre modèle de "publics en stabilisation de la CTF", dans lequel la RT entre la Sicile et Malte apparaît comme une structure "proto-eurorégionale" située en phase 2 d'institutionnalisation. Cette situation n'exclut pas une évolution vers un cycle de "stabilisation" et les *scenarii* restent ouverts. Il y a actuellement peu de contacts réels entre les partisans politiques de l'institutionnalisation de la CTF et les partenaires des projets transfrontaliers. Ainsi une variable clé dans l'évolution de la gouvernance et du « statut » de la RT peut être un rapprochement entre les administrations régionales ou nationales et certains acteurs particulièrement impliqués, comme les réseaux universitaires et centres de recherche très présents dans la coopération, ou les provinces italiennes en quête de nouveaux rôles (Camonita, n.d. a).

En outre, bien que cet article se soit concentré sur le cadre du programme INTERREG Italie-Malte, il semble également pertinent de considérer que les processus de CTF peuvent être étendus aux questions territoriales au-delà du seul cadre de ces programmes. En effet, des recherches récentes ont contribué à la production d'une des premières listes d'enjeux transfrontalières actuels partagés entre les deux îles, selon une classification multisectorielle (c'est-à-dire économique, culturelle, politique, etc.). Des exemples notables peuvent être la coordination informelle entre les pêcheurs du canal Sicile-Malte, la concurrence touristique

entre les deux îles ou la présence d'associations culturelles maltaises et italiennes qui développent leurs activités sur le territoire de l'autre. Ces travaux ont permis d'identifier des pistes pour le développement de la CTF, soit pour renforcer les liens existants, soit pour résoudre les frictions existantes entre les deux territoires (Camonita, 2019. : 11-16).

Ainsi, en ce qui concerne les préoccupations exprimées par les acteurs politiques et techniques au sujet de la création d'une organisation "eurorégionale", nous identifions principalement, comme principaux obstacles au passage du niveau 2 vers 3 dans ce modèle : *a.* l'absence de motivations normatives pro-UE (la "logique de pertinence" identifiée par Medve-Bálint, 2013) ; et *b.* les propositions d'institutionnalisation de la CTF qui n'ont pas réussi à "voyager et rester" en mettant en relation les promoteurs politiques avec les acteurs concernés (Metzger, 2013). Si l'analyse qualitative a permis d'identifier de multiples arguments en faveur d'une RT "institutionnalisée", consolidant la CTF dans des formes plus socio-durables, ce passage à une phase 3 du modèle suppose que les parties prenantes soient convaincus du bénéfice de créer une structure "eurorégionale" et que celle-ci soit dotée d'un ensemble clair de compétences et d'une taille adaptée à la nature de la coopération envisagée.

## 5. Conclusion

Cet article a proposé une analyse des régions transfrontalières fonctionnelles qui ne montrent pas de signe d'institutionnalisation politique, au sein des frontières intérieures de l'UE. L'analyse contribue à l'élaboration d'une définition opérationnelle du concept des zones transfrontalières européennes (ZTE) et à la classification des régions transfrontalières (RT) "proto-eurorégionales" et "eurorégionales" correspondantes qui peuvent se développer sur les territoires des ZTE. Tous ces éléments ont été présentés comme des étapes conceptuelles menant à l'élaboration de notre propre modèle de "publics en stabilisation de la CTF" en trois étapes, adapté des travaux de Metzger (2013). De plus, la recherche a également tenté un exercice préliminaire visant à identifier les ZTE qui ne montrent pas la présence de RT actives et "institutionnalisées". Nous avons isolé trois catégories (1. les ZTE dont les RT sont actuellement inactives ; 2. les ZTE dont les RT se chevauchent ; 3. les ZTE n'ayant jamais eu de RT) et avons décidé de nous concentrer sur un cas particulier de la troisième catégorie. Le cas choisi était la RT Sicile-Malte, correspondant à la ZTE Italie-Malte et financée par le programme INTERREG. Cela a permis de démontrer l'existence d'une RT fonctionnelle maintenue dans une phase de stabilisation ("proto-eurorégionale", étape 2).

L'approche théorique élaborée a aussi permis de synthétiser, d'adapter et d'étendre les considérations néo-régionalistes sur le territoire et les réseaux citoyens (Keating, 2013 ; Paasi, 2009) dans un contexte transfrontalier. L'analyse des différentes étapes des projets a été essentielle pour fournir des éléments concernant la naissance et la consolidation des réseaux d'acteurs. Cela a effectivement contribué à rendre compte de la capacité de la CTF à rapprocher les réseaux (Zimmerbauer, 2014). De plus, l'analyse des



obstacles actuels à la coopération Sicile-Malte, ainsi que les principaux arguments entourant les tentatives infructueuses d'institutionnalisation de la CTF, ont permis de mieux comprendre les conditions qui peuvent favoriser ou prévenir de tels processus, et quels effets la consolidation de réseaux d'acteurs à de multiples échelles peut avoir sur le développement territorial et socio-politique (id., 2014).

Les résultats corroborent les travaux précédents qui considèrent que l'expression plus élevée de la CTF se trouve dans la création d'organisations de coopération, elles-mêmes orientées vers la coordination des politiques horizontales et verticales et des actions communes (Oliveras et al., 2010). Certes, les organisations "eurorégionales" sont toujours en phase de stabilisation du fonctionnement de leurs mécanismes et fonctionnalités. Néanmoins, la présence même de 158 RT "eurorégionales" actives le long des frontières intérieures de l'Europe témoigne de la valeur ajoutée de organisations pour la coopération et pour le développement socio-territorial.

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## 7. Publication 3

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**CAMONITA, Francesco; DURÀ, Antoni; NOFERINI, Andrea (forthcoming).** «A territorial scale-based model for Euroregions and its implications for Cross-Border Cooperation in maritime contexts». *Documents d'Anàlisi Geogràfica*.

### **Abstract**

This article attempts to advance the theoretical debate on Euroregions by focusing on their governance structures and the territorial scale of their activities. It develops around a sample of 60 Euroregions and as many corresponding INTERREG projects provided by previous research on Euroregional practices (Durà et al., 2018). Firstly, it elaborates a Euroregional model for the classification of these cross-border governance structures by focusing on a. a territorial scale-based typology of the cross-border cooperation activities performed, and b. the institutional density and level of self-government of the Euroregional actors involved. Secondly, theoretical contributions are applied in the case of territories mainly focused around maritime borders. By exploiting the results of the research, the article strongly suggests the employment of supralocal and regional partnerships alongside employing multilevel Euroregions in cross-sea cooperation.

### **Keywords**

Cross-Border Cooperation; Euroregions; Euroregional Model; Scales of Cooperation; Maritime CBC

## Highlights:

1. Introduction
  2. Theoretical Framework
  3. Towards a Territorial Scale-based Model for Euroregions
  4. Understanding the Different Territorial Dynamics of Cross-Sea Cooperation
  5. Conclusion
- 

### 1. Introduction

There has been a growing interest in the field of European Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) over the last decades. Currently classified as one of the three strands from the European Territorial Cooperation policy of the European Union (EU) (cross-border, transnational and interregional), the cross-border dimension has received attention as an intrinsic tool for subnational authorities pursuing European integration while reducing the separating effects caused by national borders. In this respect, this journal has already produced two monographic issues, Vol. 64(3), 2018 and 56(1), 2010 dealing with CBC and Cross-Border Governance topics.

Following this line of research, our article also means to contribute to the debate by focusing on the structure and functions of Euroregions. It achieves its purposes by presenting two main objectives for the research. Firstly, it seeks to provide a general model for the classification of these European cross-border organizations through establishing as explanatory variables: *a.* the territorial scale of the CBC activities performed; and *b.* the institutional density and level of self-government of the public actors involved. This is done by employing a sample of 60 Euroregions<sup>15</sup> and a corresponding number of CBC projects provided by previous research on Euroregional practices during the 2007-2013 EU financial framework (Durà et al., 2018). The work of analysis includes an innovative classification of CBC activities according to a scale-based typology (*'Local'*, *'Eminently Supralocal'* and *'Regional'*) and a Euroregional model including three variants and six sub-typologies for Euroregional structures (from local *'bilateral Eurocities'* to *'multiregional Euroregions'*).

Secondly, this paper represents the continuation of applied research on the maritime border-context of the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region (Camonita, 2019, n.d. *a, b*). Such work paved the way for analysing the CBC processes of territories across a maritime border (*'Eminently Maritime'* cross-border regions). The attention towards this geographical context is not incidental. Early on during the creation of the Euroregional sample we had noticed a low presence of Euroregions in the Mediterranean area of Southern Europe. Initially, the presence of maritime spaces seemed to justify the reduced numbers. However, the sample clearly indicated the existence of active CBC experiences across the Baltic Sea. To this

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<sup>15</sup> The original sample amounted to 61 units due to the experimental inclusion of the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border region in the recount. The implications derived from this research have led us to exclude it from the sample in this article.



issue, we responded through dedicated theorisation also inquiring over the minor presence of cross-border agreements in sea straits. Through the Sicilian-Maltese example, we developed an operational definition of ‘proto-euroregional’ territories — understood as border regions developing their CBC activities through EU programmes but without employing a Euroregional platform — and effectively identified a core of maritime areas that never hosted cross-border institutionalisation (Camonita, n.d. *a*).

In this regard, the proposition of a territorial scale-based typology for CBC activities and cross-border governance structures is also exploited in the article for understanding the different dynamics of cross-sea cooperation. The main analysis is based on a selection of projects developed in ‘proto-euroregional’ and ‘euroregional’ maritime areas (Camonita, n.d. *a*) as well as the governance agreements of the six ‘Eminently Maritime’ Euroregions in our sample (Durà et al., 2018). Our observations show that, contrary to the presence of all territorial levels across land borders (*‘Local’*, *‘Eminently Supralocal’* and *‘Regional’*), the partnerships in maritime areas require a wider number of actors at multiple territorial levels for their activities. This appears evident when noticing the different patterns in local scale CBC and the absence of exclusively local Euroregional agreements. Therefore, the results lead us to conclude that: *a*. all scales of activity require partnerships also including supralocal and regional actors; and *b*. that “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions should rely on the multilevel/supralocal variant suggested by our model for increasingly strategic forms of cooperation.

Under this perspective, it is also worth considering the reasons behind the proposition of a Euroregional model. Multiple studies have already acknowledged the great variety of features and institutional backgrounds in Euroregional structures. At the same time, others have attempted providing explanatory behaviours for these cross-border organisations (see section 2.1). However, in our view the identification of stronger patterns responds to a need for orientations towards increased Euroregional efficiency; one which is understood as improved performance in a smooth governance system and successful CBC processes. In such a way, the production of results leading to alternative policy suggestions (i.e. the interpretation of the different dynamics of cross-sea cooperation) well fits into our attempt to provide a model through empirical data and previous theoretical contributions.

In any case, this line of research was already opened through the publication of the Euroregional catalogue (Durà et al., 2018). It corresponds to the final output of the COOP-RECOT II research project<sup>16</sup>. Altogether, the investigation accounted for a comprehensive effort to obtain a bird’s eye perspective of Euroregions across Europe. The four years of execution have provided solid theoretical ground on a variety of features such as: an operational definition of Euroregion as a cross-border organisation; two databases showing a compilation of research data; a Euroregional sample representing the most active CBC experiences during the research period; most importantly, a comparative study performed over the sample. Indeed, the research hereby proposed represents a deepening into existing results (i.e. the production of a Euroregional model) as well as a search for new interpretations of data in further territorial backgrounds (i.e. maritime border areas).

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<sup>16</sup> See the end of the article for full reference of the project.

Due to all the above, it will be central for this article to answer the following research questions: (1) *Is it possible to construct a general model for Euroregions through the observation of existing experiences?* (2) *What type of Euroregion would better suit a cross-border territory whose activities are mainly focused across a maritime border?* To provide evidence, we construct our framework through exploring the theories associated with the two main objectives. Having established our references, the first part of the article is dedicated to a presentation of the territorial scale-based typology and the corresponding Euroregional model. In the second part, we shift instead to the topic of ‘Eminently Maritime’ cross-border regions. Accordingly, we will proceed with our discussion on cross-sea CBC and the suggestion of a supralocal/multilevel variant for Euroregions in maritime contexts. Lastly, we elaborate our conclusion on the whole argument by considering the prospects of the research inspired by the model.

## **2. Theoretical framework**

The first step in our theorisation resides in an adequate understanding of CBC processes. Due to the institutionalisation of these practices under the EU framework, European CBC can be easily resumed as ‘an institutionalised collaboration between contiguous subnational authorities across national borders’ (Oliveras et al., 2010: 24). Indeed, this is due to the fact that all INTERREG programmes promoting Territorial Cooperation are mostly managed and exploited by subnational authorities (from small local council to federated state) belonging to the Union<sup>17</sup>. The argument is also relevant for understanding the relations between CBC programmes and Euroregions, especially considering that the former does not necessarily imply the presence of the latter (Durà et al., 2018: 24). Indeed, previous contributions have shown border areas inside the EU where the presence of an INTERREG programme does not show a corresponding Euroregional organisation (Camonita, n.d.a; Perkmann, 1999). Notwithstanding, this article agrees with prior statements considering that the CBC’s ‘higher expression is reflected in the creation of cooperation-based organizations, which are in turn oriented towards the coordination of horizontal and vertical policies and joint actions’ (Oliveras et al., 2010: 24).

### *2.1 The Euroregion: definitions, activities, meaning and classification*

At the time of writing no official definition for the term ‘Euroregion’ has been universally recognised despite the many institutional and academic attempts. Nevertheless, we hereby indicate the presence of common features across the literature concerned with these organizations.

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<sup>17</sup> It should be reminded, however, that the definition of ‘subnational authority’ is often contested. In Belgium, for example, since the federal level and federated entities are on an equal standing, it is inappropriate to refer to regions and communities as “subnational levels” of government. Below the central level, subnational governments are decentralized or deconcentrated public authorities that own (some) responsibilities and (some) degree of autonomy in the provision of (some) public good to a population within a certain territory (OECD, 2010).

*Two essential definitions.* The definition of Euroregions can be essentially grasped through its geographical (territorial) and political (organisational) dimensions. In their simplest conceptualisation, they can be described as bounded territorial units formed by (at least) two contiguous sub-national units belonging to two separate states (Perkmann, 2002). However, there is a strong association between these geographical areas and their subnational governments which develop joint institutions in the pursuit of common socio-economic development (Carmin et al., 2003). Indeed, from a functional and managerial viewpoint Euroregions can be seen as associations of subnational authorities across the border seeking to generate an integrated space through specific policies in multiple sectors (Sanguin, 2013: 157; AEBR, 2000). Contributions from political science have even come to define them as political agreements focused on institution-building processes through public actors' networks and the mobilisation of their institutional capacities (Harguindéguy and Bray, 2009; Morata, 2007; Morata & Noferini, 2013).

*The tasks and purposes of a Euroregion.* In their classification of the organizational activities from EU cross-border institutions, Miörner et al. (2018) identify four different ranges of activities for policy-network organizations such as the Euroregions. These include *a.* the provision of information regarding the regulation of cross-border activities, the promotion of joint activities (i.e. CBC projects) and the organisation of knowledge exchanges; *b.* a strong lobbying interest for persuading national institutions towards cross-border issues; *c.* incentives for collective sense making through the attraction and distribution of EU and local funding; *d.* the promotion of the cross-border area per se (i.e. common identity-building and marketing image) (2018: 6-7). Most importantly, it appears evident that Euroregional structures do not represent a new layer of administrative government inside the domain of Member States. Quite the opposite, when considering them as promoters of cross-border reterritorialisation – understood as the effective rescaling of social, economic and political activities at the sub-national scale (Popescu, 2008) – a certain degree of criticism can be pointed at their general weakness in such processes. Indeed, Euroregions are usually subject to political compromises in voluntary partnerships and are often constrained by asymmetries between their national administrative and legal systems (Noferini et al., n.d.).

*The meaning of Euroregional cooperation.* An alternative explanation on the utility of Euroregions is provided by Telle (2017) through his adaptation of the theory of *soft spaces*. His research elaborates a conceptual distinction between *a.* hard spaces defined by the boundaries of national politico-administrative units and *b.* Euroregions as soft spaces made by the flexible governance arrangements between them. The second ones are indeed considered as deliberate attempts to overcome the impact of national borders. As voluntary agreements, they are allowed considerable freedom to determine their organizational form and agenda. However, the lack of strong political influence and substantial economic funding well explains their frequent choice for adaptive strategies and policy niches in their activities. Consequentially, their main objective becomes the achievement of mutual gains through building pragmatic coalitions around certain issues and through existing institutional arrangements (Telle, 2017: 94-98; see also Giband & Vicente, 2018; Faludi, 2013). The argument is equally supported by Perkmann & Spicer (2007), who employ the concept of *institutional entrepreneurship* to describe the capacity of Euroregions to build organisational competence in

cross-border policies. Furthermore, they define their role as specialised implementation units which help designing INTERREG strategies and sponsoring the consolidation of the CBC projects (2007: 25-26).

*Factors allegedly increasing efficiency in Euroregional processes.* For the purposes of this article, we focus on two main arguments acknowledged by the literature: *a.* the presence of a *multilevel governance* component in Euroregional partnerships, and *b.* the alleged effectiveness of Euroregions headed by intermunicipal/supralocal coalitions (which is typical of administrative traditions from Central and Northern Europe). In the first case, we refer to the EU's tendency in a context of globalisation, Europeanisation and decentralisation to shift policymaking towards an increasingly plural, open and less hierarchical decision-making from supranational to local level (i.e. Hooghe & Marks, 2001; Piattoni, 2010). Since it is generally understood that CBC involves the implementation of EU programmes through multilevel actors, it should also be assumed that the more layers of governance are involved in institutionalised CBC, the more successful this should appear (Boman & Berg, 2007; Gualini, 2003). However, this must counterweight with the risks of increasing coordination costs and unstable political commitment in the presence of large partnerships (i.e. Noferini et al., n.d.: 8). In the second case, we refer instead to Markus Perkmann's pioneering studies on Euroregions. In his work, he was brought to deduce that Euroregional organisations are more effective in countries dominated by administrative traditions granting intermunicipal action. This was elaborated through limited comparative assessment between Northern and Southern European cross-border regions. He takes the example of decentralized countries like the Scandinavian states or Germany and compares them to the much more centralized realities of Italy and France. In his deductions, the benevolent attitude of Northern countries towards implementation of regional policies at the local level strongly contrasted with the suspicion of Southern state authorities; these last ones would be often fearing autonomist or separatist tendencies. Ultimately, the risks associated to ethno-cultural projects brought him to question Euroregions which are usually dominated by regional administrations (Perkmann, 2000; 2003; 2005; Perkmann & Spicer, 2007).

*Previous applied research and classifications.* Due to the multisectoral character of CBC activities, applied research has focused on a variety of fields concerning Euroregional action. To provide some examples, cooperation and euroregional governance across borders have been filtered through the lenses of regional innovation (Lundquist & Tripl, 2013; Tripl, 2010), innovation and tourism (Weidenfeld, 2013), cultural issues (Perrin, 2013), knowledge sharing and triple helix perspectives (Lepik, 2009; Lepik & Krigul, 2014), sustainable development (Morata & Cots, 2006), urban spatial planning (Fricke, 2015) or even public health issues (Glinos & Wismar, 2013).

However, one of the most peculiar features of Euroregional studies is represented by the scarcity of global comparative analyses of these cross-border organisations. To provide some among the few examples, Perkmann (2003) also attempted to classify Euroregions based on their geographical scope and the intensity of cooperation activities. Others have tried classifications either based on their geographical size in square kilometres (Medeiros, 2011; 2013) or through their typology of institutional arrangements (Gasparini, 2014).

Furthermore, there have been cases of sectoral studies with samples from a specific geographical typology (Decoville et al., 2015) as well as from specific areas of Europe (Gasparini & Del Bianco, 2011). Some encouraging steps towards global perspectives were taken by Wassenberg et al. (2015) through a EU-sponsored publication aiming at the classification of all CBC organisations across the continent. More recently, Harguindéguy & Sánchez (2017) attempted a global listing of Euroregions while searching for variables demonstrating their impact on policy activities.

Therefore, it was precisely under this perspective that the Catalogue of Euroregional Good Practices (Durà et al., 2018) tried to provide a more exhaustive outlook on existing Euroregions. The publication included a comparative study on a sample of organisations acknowledged as highly active in their CBC activities. Throughout the analysis, it was possible to provide feedback on various features such as their temporal and geographical distribution across Europe, the diversity of actors and legal instruments employed in their governance or the sectors and modalities of activities developed in their projects (Durà et al., 2019). Notwithstanding, the renewed focus on the territorial scales of CBC allows us to reengage into the discussion through reconsideration of the data produced until now.

## 2.2 *The concept of Cross-Border Cooperation applied to maritime contexts*

The second part of this article deals with the empirical observation of different dynamics of cross-sea cooperation discovered through a territorial scale-based classification. However, the need for further explanatory references fell short when noticing the wide gap of theorisation concerning maritime CBC in the specialised literature.

At most, the maritime physical dimension of the border is inserted into a larger model seeking to explain multicontextual social constructs through several layers (i.e. legal, economic, political, etc.) (Zimmerbauer, 2011). In a way, it also did not help that CBC would rise the interest of *Maritime Spatial Planning* proponents. The concept has been useful to them for introducing a joint governance dimension in the protection and sustainable development of marine areas (i.e. Carneiro et al., 2013; Schaefer & Barale, 2011). However, inside a recent study on the maritime dimension of European CBC programmes the stakeholders were unanimous in claiming other terrestrial priorities in their activities. The maritime dimension is to them ‘only one of the several features of the programme geography, and only requires some co-operation activities to be related to it’ (Hill & Kring, 2013: 8).

Furthermore, maritime CBC has recently been questioned by the European Commission. As a matter of fact, it has recently suggested the creation of a special INTERREG programme incorporating maritime cross-border territories and transnational initiatives for the EU operational framework 2021-2027. The proposal has received heated answers from individual authorities and lobbying organisations such as the *Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions* (CPRM), who ‘deeply regretted’ the decision through exposing multiple flaws in the downsizing of the cross-border dimension (CRPM, 2018: 9-11). Negotiations for the next

European budget are still open at the time of writing. Notwithstanding, as stated in a recent briefing report, both the EU Parliament and the Member States' Council seemed inclined to maintain the status quo rather than supporting reform of the INTERREG architecture (Halleux, 2019).

A most relevant contribution to the topic was provided by the *Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière* (MOT), a French agency established for studying territorial cooperation. On its website, it is possible to encounter a short (and yet significative) topic-study on multisectoral CBC in maritime areas (MOT Website, 2019). It acknowledges that, contrary to traditional conceptualisations along land borders, the maritime space constitutes a natural barrier creating a territorial separation. However, despite acknowledging increased obstacles in terms of accessibility (time-cost factors for border crossing) and a less-marked cross-border culture, it still recognises a variety of issues upon which CBC can achieve joint potential. These do not only include environmental and sustainable development matters related to marine areas, but also a variety of issues such as employment initiatives, industrial clustering, logistics, tourism and even cultural activities related to historical links. Most importantly, the study recognises three factors associated to the organisation and management of CBC in maritime spaces: *a.* that CBC for coastal communities is not an immediate necessity as in the case of cross-border living areas; *b.* consequently, that any long-term strategic project will need political determination from participating authorities; and *c.* that the development of governance in maritime CBC requires multilevel linkages among the different territorial levels affected by the border. The last point proves of the utmost importance since local, supralocal, regional and national levels all have different administrative powers in relations to enacting through a sea border (MOT Website, 2019). Indeed, the lack of further contributions to the topic strongly justifies the research exposed in this article.

### **3. Towards a territorial scale-based model for Euroregions**

#### *3.1 A territorial scale-based classification of CBC activities promoted by the EU*

Our first hypothesis towards a Euroregional model implied that the territorial scale is capable of affecting both the CBC activities performed *and* the governance structure of cross-border organisations. This is why our work begins through the production of a territorial scale-based typology for the categorization of CBC levels. Initial inspiration was provided by cataloguing efforts of the 60 projects in the Catalogue research (Durà et al., 2018). During our observations, we were led to appreciate the relative freedom of operation in cross-border programmes over the territorial scope of approved projects. This was proved by the funding of a set of initiatives ranging from the development of specific infrastructure on the border to the consolidation of large-scale sectorial networks. Quantitative analysis therefore led us to the idea that the CBC projects could be classified according to a precise territorial scale and through the observation of their effective outcomes. Our first step was to consider the territorial scales defined by effective distance in kilometres from the border as the independent variable. From there, we developed our own typology by focusing on *a.* the territorial scale upon which CBC projects' outputs were supposed to have an impact; *b.* the predominant levels of self-



government in the projects' partnerships; c. the predominating territorial objectives from each scale according to sectoral activities (*environmental protection, socio-economic development, thematic networking and cross-border services and infrastructure*). The process led us to identify three separate categories in the classification: 'Local', 'Eminently Supralocal' and 'Regional' CBC activities (see Figure 1 for a schematisation).

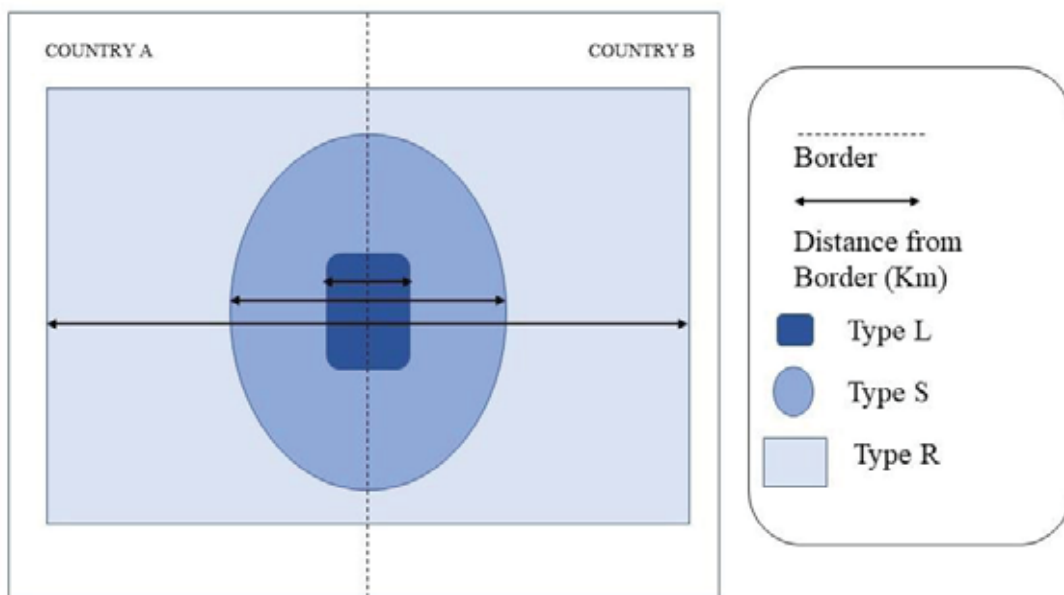


Figure 1 - Graphical schematisation of a scale-based typology for classifying CBC activities (Source: own elaboration)

Accordingly, the three modalities are described more in detail as follows:

- Type L (*Local or 'Proximity Cooperation'*): It includes CBC activities performed on the border or in its immediate proximity. They are usually addressed to the environmental protection and/or the socioeconomic development of such territories, or even to the development of infrastructure and/or services which help reducing the border effect of separation across them. Partnerships involved in this kind of activities are usually composed of local and/or supralocal territorial actors, except in the case of cross-border infrastructure not covered by national cooperation treaties and which usually require regional and state-level authorizations (i.e. a cross-border hospitals or large-scale tunnels or bridges);

- Type S (*Eminently Supralocal or 'Intermediate Borderlands Cooperation'*): it involves CBC activities with a territorial impact directed at a wider portion of borderlands than the L type. Activities are also dedicated to the protection and/or socioeconomic development of the territories surrounding the border. The term 'Eminently' is willingly employed to indicate the frequent multilevel presence of actors (from the local to the regional sphere) implicated in this typology of projects;
- Type R (*Regional or 'Interregional Neighbourhood Cooperation'*): it refers to CBC activities involving larger regional territories through the consolidation of wide-scale sectoral networks, at times including partners which are relatively distant from the border. However, all participating actors are still part of a territory involved into a CBC initiative (i.e. INTERREG programme, Euroregional organisation, etc.). Projects belonging to this typology are more likely to focus on advancements in common knowledge and practices with a looser territorial impact. Their similarity to activities from the transnational and interregional strands of INTERREG suggested a suitable definition for the hybridisation of the cross-border dimension with an interregional project-modality.

Having established our typology, we proceeded to its testing through the classification of the 60 CBC projects from our sample. The results indicated the presence of 15 Type L, 39 Type S and 6 Type R projects, of which it is possible to consult a few cases in the table below (Table 1).

Table 1 - Example of CBC projects from the sample classified according to the scale-based typology (source: own elaboration)

CBC Typology of Activities	Project Examples from CRII Catalogue	Euroregion	Details of Activities
<b>Local or Proximity Cooperation (Type L)</b>	Border Place Jacques Delors	Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis	Joint administration of a public square located on the border between two towns
	Bus-Vis-à-Vis to the Rhine	Vis-a-Vis LGTC	Establishment of a local Cross-Border Bus Service
	Thermal and Water Euroregion	Chaves-Verín Eurocity	Coordinated development of tourism strategies connected to thermal waters included in the local area.
<b>Eminently Supralocal or Intermediate Borderlands Cooperation (Type S)</b>	Euregio Bodensee day pass	International Lake Constance Conference	Creation of a harmonized public transport services in the Lake Constance area by introducing a day pass available for local transport across the border
	Emergency response without borders	Sønderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion	Common resources in terms of equipment and personnel for joint coordination and prevention of risks (i.e. fires, accidents and natural disasters)
	Cross-Border Medical Cabinet Treatment of Addiction	Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict	Management of a cross-border center for drug addictions. It allows treatment to the euroregional population across the border.
<b>Regional or Interregional Neighbourhood Cooperation (Type R)</b>	CREAMED	Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion	Creation of a Euroregional Network Business Incubator in order to stimulate innovation, exchanges and complementarities between SMEs from the wider euroregional territory
	Putting Patients First	CAWT Region	Delivering of a range of specialist, targeted, accessible and sustainable cross border health and social care services across a large selection of health-related public and private actors from the entire euroregional territory
	AdriGov	Adriatic-Ionian Euroregion	Activities focused on the development of governance skills and greater involvement of local authorities and civil society from the entire euroregional territory (decision-making processes and implementation of the EU regional policy)

### 3.2 A new model for Euroregions based on the scale of their governance and projects

The idea that a cross-border governance structure may be associated to a territorial scale was already hinted through the Euroregional actors' configurations shown in the Catalogue research (Durà et al., 2018: 58-63). In previous analyses, we identified a tendency towards a decreasing number of public actors when increasing the territorial scale of the cross-border territory (2018: 62-63). However, reasoning connected to the scale-based typology in this paper led us to further consider *a.* the territorial level of activities that CBC may want to achieve; and *b.* the different Euroregional partnerships required for their execution. As a matter of fact, there is a strong correlation between the presence of certain territorial actors in a CBC organization and the degree of administrative competences entrusted to them by their national constitutions. Although we could assume as 'ideal' the concept of a Euroregion involved with all levels of cooperation (local, supralocal and regional), realistic expectations reveal that the territorial scale of its activities will be much constrained by

the territorial level of actors in the governance agreement. To provide an obvious example, it would be quite unlikely to envision the local councils of two towns at the border dealing with large-scale R&D cooperation networks (Type R).

This is why the Euroregional model is here reflected as both the continuation and the refinement of previous analytical work. On the one hand, it exploits the *institutional density* (the total number of actors) and the predominant *levels of self-government* (local, supralocal or regional) of a Euroregion as fundamental factors determining the scale of the governance system in place. On the other, it employs our typology of CBC activities as a reinforcing argument supporting a classification of Euroregions through a territorial scale-based perspective.

Nevertheless, it should also be mentioned that multiple alternative variables were considered for inclusion. However, they all underwent a process of exclusion. For example, we did not encounter correlations between the selection of the legal formula for regulating cross-border governance (i.e. NGO-type associations, ad-hoc public law agreements or other European instruments) and the partnership involved (Durà et al., 2018: 63-66). Likewise, geographical factors such as the total number of inhabitants of a Euroregion, their population density or the territorial profile (i.e. urban, rural etc.) also showed weak correlations with governance variables due to the large variety of contexts encountered (2018: 52-54).

The final design of the Euroregional model can be observed in the Table 2. Following the scale-based typology, the model provides three variants for existing Euroregions (*Local scale*, *Supralocal scale* and *Regional scale*). Accordingly, it also provides six sub-typologies generated to better appreciate the intervals in institutional density and the main levels of self-government. The inclusion of a control variable relative to approximate size in square kilometres was also provided as to introduce greater clarity in the differentiation. Admittedly, the size intervals provided by the sample account for considerable variation in the model. However, they provide orientation between Euroregions with different territorial focuses despite coinciding in governance variables. This is clearly demonstrated in the separation between L (2) and S (1) / (2) Euroregion types. Finally, the model is further reinforced by introducing on one side the classification of the 60 Euroregions from the sample; and then on the other by showing the correlation between the model variants and the classified CBC projects from the previous section.

Table 2 - Design of a Euroregional Model through a territorial scale-based typology (source: own elaboration)

Model Variants	Total of n. 60 EURs	Sub-total	Approx. Size (km <sup>2</sup> )	Euroregion Sub-Typology	Institutional density	Predominant Levels of self-government	Corresponding CBC Project Typology (n. 60)
(L) LOCAL SCALE EUR	8	3	Up to 950 km <sup>2</sup>	L (1) : Bilateral Eurocity	2	Local	L x 8
		5		L (2): Eurocity Consortium	3 to 10	Local and Supralocal	
(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	46	27	From 950 to 55.000 km <sup>2</sup>	S (1): Multilevel Euroregion (Eurodistrict, Eurometropolis)	3 to 10	From Local to Regional	S x 39 (L x 5; R x 2)
					11 to 30		
		19		S (2): Association of Municipalities	2	Local and Supralocal	
					3 to 10 More than 30		
(R) REGIONAL SCALE EUR	6	2	From 23.000 to 110.000 km <sup>2</sup>	R (1): Bilateral Regional	2	Regional	R x 4 (L x 2)
		4		R (2): Multiregional	3 to 10		

Most importantly, the model shows a good potential for classifying existing euroregional experiences across Europe's internal borders. The L (1) 'bilateral Eurocity' type is well-suited for city twinnings across the border happening between local city councils (i.e. *Chaves-Verín Eurocity* or the *Frankfurt (Oder) & Slubice Cooperative Centre*). The L (2) 'Eurocity Consortium' rather refers to other initiatives on a local scale with a more elaborate partnership (multiple local councils or including participation of supralocal actors, i.e. the *Bidasoa-Txingudi Cross-Border Consortium* or the *Vis-à-vis Local Grouping of Territorial Cooperation*). The S (1) 'Multilevel Euroregion' hosts a large number of realities with a smaller (3 to 10) and a larger (10 to 30) institutional density. Its dominant feature is represented by deeply multilevel partnerships ranging from local council to regional level administrations. Interestingly, some of the CBC initiatives included in this grouping also provide alternative marketing brands for defining their Euroregional status (i.e. *Strasbourg-Ortenau Eurodistrict*, *Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis*). The S (2) 'Association of Municipalities' strongly relies on multiple local council memberships, but sometimes numbers are reduced by the coordinating efforts of supralocal actors in intermunicipal action (i.e. the French *Communauté de communes*). In turn, this helps to explain the large intervals ranging from bilateral agreements (i.e. *Pyrenees-Cerdanya EGTC*) to much larger partnerships (i.e. the historical Dutch-German *EUREGIO*). Finally, R (1) 'bilateral regional' and R (2) 'multiregional' Euroregions are meant to classify cross-border governance exclusively dominated by regional level administrations, whether on a face-to-face modality (i.e. *Galicja-North Portugal Euroregion*) or in a multiple partnership (i.e. *Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion*).

At this stage, some further clarifications should be considered over the supporting numbers introduced in the model. Firstly, it is important to consider that the sample employed for the elaboration is a high-quality collection of 60 Euroregional units (and their CBC projects) identified according to operational definitions of Excellence and Innovation in the Catalogue research. It is the result of a selection out of 158 operating Euroregions showing different levels of activity and identified in the EU's internal borders during the 2007-2013 framework (Durà et al., 2018: 30-35).

Secondly, awareness is expressed towards the strong predominance of *Supralocal Scale* Euroregions in the sample. However, it is important to consider that the Catalogue did not consider the criteria of this research. Indeed, the original results of the Euroregional model show a tendency among the most performing Euroregions to prefer a *Supralocal Scale* variant in their composition. Furthermore, preliminary observation of the total 158 active units would allow at best to increase the number of local and somewhat less the regional variants. Nonetheless, it seems that similar distribution rates among the three would prevail.

Thirdly, the introduction of the CBC projects' classification has proved helpful in confirming the validity of the model variants. A total of 51 out of 60 projects identified effectively matched the territorial scale proposed for their Euroregion. The remaining 9 projects represented interesting exceptions in the capacity of Euroregions to partially expand the scope of their activities. Furthermore, in the specific case of L Type projects from the *Supralocal Scale* variant, it is possible to observe a set of special interventions which seem to require greater involvement from territorial actors beyond local councils. Noteworthy examples may be the compromise towards the creation of technology and innovation centres (*North West Regional Science Park; The Innovation's Circle*), big infrastructure works of an historical local building (*Management and Improvement of Lauterbourg customs building*) or even the legal challenges in attempting the cross-border spatial planning of urban areas (*Border Square Jacques Delors*) (see Table 3). Under such conditions, it may be possible to speculate that for these local interventions the partnerships including supralocal actors would rather dispose of *a.* a territorial scale sufficiently in proximity to the local area involved (with respect to regional or national level authorities), *b.* a wider financial and organisational capacity for mobilising significant amounts of resources; most importantly, *c.* the right amount of administrative competences inside their national jurisdictions.



Table 3- Observation of n. 9 cases where CBC project scale-based typology ≠ EUR Model Variant (source: own elaboration)

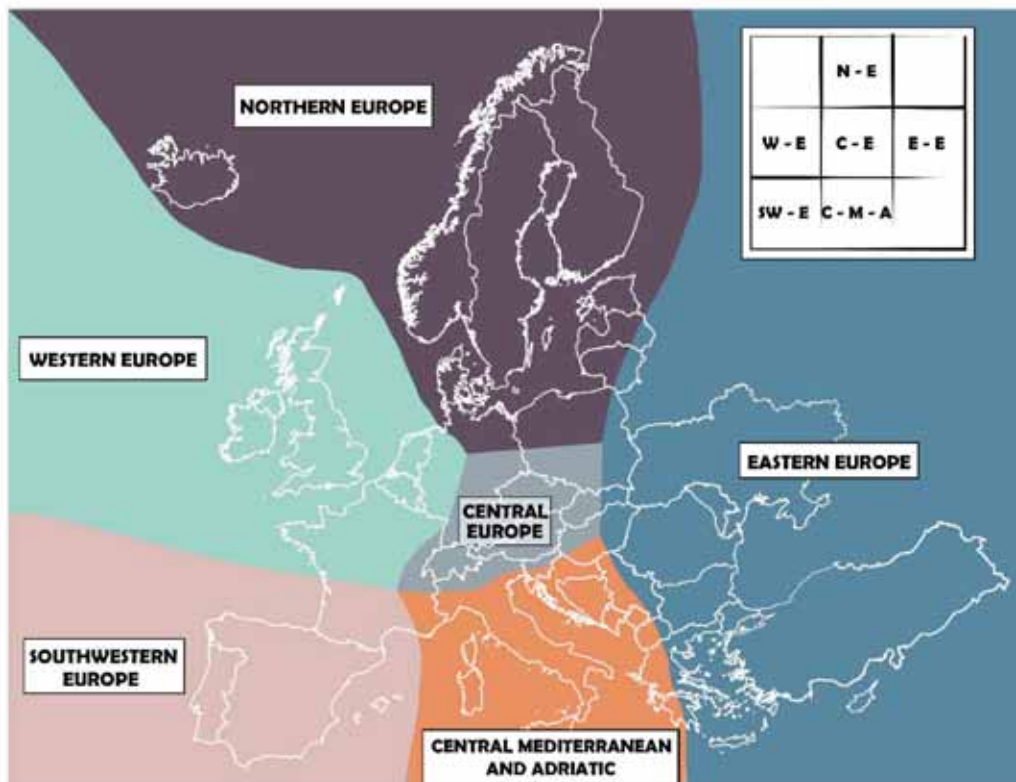
Project Goal	Typology CBC Project ≠ EUR Model Variant	EUR Model Variant	CBC Project	EUROREGION	Project Budget (€)
Accessibility and Transportation	L	R	TransferMuga	New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion	390.775
	R	S	Rail Baltica	FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn)	3.587.090
Education and Culture	L	R	Portalet's Space Cooperation Centre and Border integration	Pourtalet Space EGTC	1.312.376
Local Economic Development	L	S	North West Regional Science Park	North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG)	13.859.599
	L	S	The Innovation's Circle	Greater Geneva	1.050.000
Spatial Planning	L	S	Management and Improvement of the former Lauterbourg's customs building	Regio PAMINA Eurodistrict EGTC	1.127.729
	L	S	Border Place Jacques Delors	Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai Eurometropolis	1.361.085
	L	S	3Lands	Basel Trinational District	700.000
Research & Investigation	R	S	DISKE : Development of Innovative Systems through knowledge Exchange	Baltic Euroregion	1.315.311

The recurring presence of the *Supralocal Scale* variant also inspired us to discuss insights from the alleged factors for Euroregional efficiency (see 2.1). By observing the 46 S-Type Euroregions, it is immediately evident that the largest portion of the sample (27/60) employs a S (1) multilevel structure including all self-government levels (local, supralocal, regional). This higher preference could confirm previous arguments linking multilevel institutionalisation with better capacity (i.e. Boman & Berg, 2007). In contrast with Perkman's claims over a limited comparative study (2000; 2003; 2005), Type S (2) Euroregions dominated by intermunicipal action would only rank second as most employed modality for cross-border governance (19/60).

Furthermore, Perkman's hypothesis concerning national attitudes towards subnational CBC influenced us to observe the model variants' concentrations in different parts of Europe. On its part, the Catalogue already accounted for the classification of six European geographical areas, as it calculated the distribution of Euroregions from the sample along them<sup>18</sup> (see Figure 2). Once applied the criteria of our Euroregional model, we were returned with the data illustrated in Table 4 below.

<sup>18</sup> However, the Catalogue also considered 19 *Cross-Border Equipment* and *Trans-border Parks* which are not included in this study. Numbers relative to the sample of 60 Euroregions are adjusted in table 4.

Figure 2 - Map of the Six European geographical areas employed in the RECOT sample classification  
(Source: Durà et al., 2018)



Accordingly, higher concentrations of *Supralocal Scale* Euroregions are clearly showed in Central (39%), Western (26%) and North Europe (20%). Conversely, *Regional Scale* Euroregions from the sample reflect a marked presence along the areas of South Western Europe (66%), with a presence of such variant in the Central Mediterranean and Adriatic area (17%) and one exception in Western Europe (17%). *Local Scale* Euroregions seem to show a wider distribution across all areas. However, it is interesting to notice the lack of experiences from the sample in the Central and Eastern Europe (0%) where intermunicipal action is often favoured at supralocal scale. Indeed, the distribution of Euroregional variants across Europe seems to suggest that administrative traditions and historical factors have considerable meaning over Euroregional configurations. Germany's interest in pursuing good neighbourly relations since the aftermath of WWII, the Scandinavian tradition of cooperation in the Baltic area or even the integrative attitude of Benelux countries can all help to explain higher proliferation rates in those areas (Durà et al., 2018: 93-95). Likewise, the different degrees of administrative decentralisation opposed between two larger Northern and Southern European areas (Page and Goldsmith, 1987) also explain the higher presence of either S-Type (Northern) or R-Type (Southern Europe) Euroregions.

Table 4- Distribution of Euroregions from the sample according to the scale-based typology and across six geographical areas of Europe (source: own elaboration)

MODEL VARIANT & SUB- TYPOLOGY	N. Euroregions = 60	SWE (9)	WE (16)	CMA (2)	CE (18)	EE (5)	NE (10)
L (1) : Bilateral Eurocity	L (1) = 3	1	2	0	0	0	1
L (2): Eurocity Consortium	L (2) = 5	2	1	1	0	0	0
(L) LOCAL SCALE EUR	L (1+2) = 8	3	3	1	0	0	1
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 8	37%	37%	13%	0%	0%	13%
S (1) : Multilevel Euroregion	S (1) = 27	0	8	0	9	3	7
S (2) : Association of Municipalities	S (2) = 19	2	4	0	9	2	2
(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	S (1+2) = 46	2	12	0	18	5	9
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 46	4%	26%	0%	39%	11%	20%
R (1) : Bilateral Regional	R (1) = 2	2	0	0	0	0	0
R (2) : Multiregional	R (2) = 4	2	1	1	0	0	0
(R) REGIONAL SCALE EUR	R (1+2) = 6	4	1	1	0	0	0
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 6	66%	17%	17%	0%	0%	0%

#### 4. Understanding the different territorial dynamics of cross-sea cooperation

As hinted at the start of the article, the focus on cross-border maritime territories was mainly inspired by previous work on the subject (Camonita, 2019, n.d. *a, b*). However, such in-depth analysis suggested the identification of ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ territories with a stronger emphasis on the physical dimension of maritime borders than the one attempted in the Catalogue (Durà et al., 2018: 55-56). This was due to the fact that Euroregional organisations showing maritime or coastal borders (14 in our sample) do not necessarily focus on cross-sea cooperation in the presence of land borders among the parties involved. In other words, it is important to appreciate the difference between cross-border regions possessing maritime or coastal features and the ones where both the maritime border – and effective multi-sectoral cooperation of actors across it – are indeed the main concern of the CBC. Once adjusted the criteria, only 6 cases in our sample could be defined as ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ Euroregions.

Furthermore, the application of ‘proto-euroregional’ theorisation to ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ territories allowed to: *a.* highlight the reduced presence of cross-border governance organisations in these contexts when compared to the ones possessing land borders; *b.* identify a group of INTERREG maritime areas never having showed signs of Euroregional institutionalisation (Camonita, n.d.*a*). The strong relation between the two findings – in addition to the recognition of different territorial dynamics in cross-sea cooperation – bring us to consider a wider range of CBC activities in our analyses below.

As already suggested in our framework (MOT Website, 2019), maritime borders are very different from traditional land borders both at geographical and administrative level. Therefore, our first empirical argument is derived from the observation of different patterns in CBC scale for “*Eminently Maritime*” activities both at

Euroregional and ‘proto-euroregional’ level. Once relating the argument to the three modalities of the scale-based typology, Type R cooperation appears as the easiest way to perform activities in a cross-border maritime space. By focusing on Type R partnerships made of thematic networks pursuing common objectives (i.e. R&D clusters), the ‘interregional neighbourhood’ modality allows for outcomes showing a looser territorial dimension and a major focus on common knowledge and practices. Conversely, Type L projects dedicated to ‘proximity cooperation’ would find extremely hard to rely exclusively on local partnerships. This is because activities directed at the environmental protection and/or socioeconomic development of cross-border marine spaces and their surrounding areas would rather be oriented toward the ‘intermediate borderlands’ level (S Type) (i.e. environment, transport and mobility). Under these circumstances, projects aspiring towards a stronger territorial dimension will require partnerships with marked multilevel features. This is proved by the frequent involvement of a vast array of actors such as ports authorities, territorial administrations with different levels of national authorizations regarding maritime and coastal competences, universities and technological centres, dedicated NGOs or even private stakeholders from the maritime industrial sector.

To support the discussion, we proceeded to the construction of a table analysing 15 CBC projects (5 for each territorial level) from ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ Euroregional and ‘proto-euroregional’ territories (Table 5). Apart from the 6 Euroregional projects in our sample, we also included 3 projects from the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region and 6 more from a previous list of ‘proto-euroregional’ areas (Camonita, n.d. *a*). The analysis is based on the matching of the projects’ territorial scale with the one from project-executing partnerships. Accordingly, it shows the regular presence of R-Type activities, the complete absence of exclusive Type L groupings of actors and the primacy of Type S partnerships in cooperation activities with a stronger territorial impact (both at local and supralocal levels).

Table 5 - Analysis of 15 CBC projects according to the scale-based typology from 'Eminently Maritime' cross-border regions (Sources: Durd et al., 2018; Camonita, n.d.; Keep.eu)

CBC Project Typology (L-S-R)	Sources	Interreg IV A Programme (2007-2013)	Name of Project (English)	Theme	Brief description	Partnership Typology (L-S-R)	Partnership Composition (Type of Organisations)	Budget (€)
S	Euroregional Catalogue: Fehmarnbelt Committee	Fehmarnbelt Region	Funra Maritima	Cohesion and Social Integration	Info. & Professional Training for young people in the Maritime sector; industry	S	2 Professional Schools; 1 NGO; 1 Leisure and Education Centre;	778.886
R	Euroregional Catalogue: Baltic Euroregion	South Baltic Cross-Border Cooperation Programme	DISKE - Development of Innovative Systems through knowledge Exchange	Research and Investigation	Cooperation and Exchanges of technology parks and SMEs incubators	R	1 Local Council; 3 Innovation, Science and Technology Centres; 1 Public Enterprise;	1.315.311
S	Euroregional Catalogue: Botnian Arc	Interreg Bomia /Atlantica Kolarectic ENPI CBC	ENERU - Efficient Energy Management in Barents region	Research and Investigation	Joint Studies and Exchange of Practices in Energy Management	S	1 University; 1 Technology Center; 1 Private Enterprise; 1 Local Council; 1 Euroregion (Botnian Arc); 1 Municipal Education and Training Consortium; *1 intermunicipal association (Russia)	944.324
R	Euroregional Catalogue: Fineslink Helsinki-Tallinna	Baltic Sea Region	Rail Baltica Growth Corridor	Accessibility and Transportation	Study for development of multimodal logistics and modern railway infrastructure in Eastern Baltic Sea Region	R	8 Local Councils; 5 Regional Councils; 2 Provincial councils; 3 Universities; 2 Technology Centres; 1 Regional agency (includes extra-euroregional actors)	3.587.090
S	Euroregional Catalogue: Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee	Øresund - Kattegat - Skagerrak	Øresund Region Creative Metropole	Education and culture	Developing strategies and competences for innovative cultural platforms	S	13 Local Councils; 3 Universities	1.870.949
S	Euroregional Catalogue: Kvarken Council	Bornia Atlantica	Kvarken Short Cut System	Accessibility and Transportation	Assessment and Impact study of euroregional infrastructure on a number of sectors, plus investigation on new fixed links	S	1 Euroregion (Kvarken Council); 1 Regional Council	1.100.000
L	Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region (proto-euroregional)	Italy-Malta	CALYPSO - Radar Monitoring System and Response against Marine Oil Spills in the Malta Channel	Energy and Environment	Set-up of a cross-border environmental monitoring system for the detection of oil spillages in the border marine space	S	3 Universities; 3 Regional Agencies; 1 Civil Protection Department; 1 Armed Forces Representation (Malta)	1.455.399
S	Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region (proto-euroregional)	Italy-Malta	SIMIT - Integrated System of Cross-Border Civil Protection	Energy and Environment	Development of a coordinated cross-border civil protection plan between the two islands in case of natural disaster	S	3 Universities; 1 Regional Government; 2 Civil Protection departments	2.369.589
R	Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region (proto-euroregional)	Italy-Malta	IMAGENX - Italia Malta Genome Breast Cancer Border Risk Surveillance	Health	Consolidation of a cross-border research network dealing with breast cancer research	R	2 Universities; 1 Hospital; 1 Provincial department; 1 National council for Science & Technology	2.406.710
L	INTERREG Maritime Areas	Italy- France Maritime	GIONHA - Governance and Integrated Observation on Marine Natural Habitat	Energy and Environment	Protection, enhancement of the marine resources and raising of awareness marine habitats that support the local area of the Pelagos Sanctuary.	S	2 Regional governments; 2 Regional Agencies; 1 Provincial government	2.465.000
L	INTERREG Maritime Areas	Greece-Cyprus	AKTH - Configuration and Pilot Implementation Plans Integrated Coastal Zone Management in Rhodes and Cyprus	Spatial Planning (Maritime)	Feasibility study for a joint analysis of coastal areas and promotion of common measures towards integrated coastal and marine management	S	1 Local Council; 1 University; 2 Research Centres	700.000
L	INTERREG Maritime Areas	Ireland-Wales	CSTP - Celtic Sea Trout Project	Energy and Environment	Joint study to monitor, manage & protect sea trouts in the coastal rivers of the region & the Irish Sea itself. Implications for fisheries and cross-border biodiversity.	S	2 Universities; 1 Public Environment Agency, 1 National agency.	2.081.841
L	INTERREG Maritime Areas	Greece-Italy	DEMSNISI - Stations Network on the Ionian Islands and Southern Italy	Energy and Environment	Development of a network of 11 meteorological ground based stations.	S	1 Technology Centre, 1 University, 1 Regional government, 1 Provincial government	759.500
R	INTERREG Maritime Areas	2 Seas	AIMER - Achieving the Integration of Migrant communities and Ethnic Residents	Cohesion and Social Integration	Creation of a model approach to assist local areas across the cross-border zone to integrate ethnic minorities of migrants	R	2 Provincial Councils, 1 Private services business; 3 NGOs;	2.468.403
R	INTERREG Maritime Areas	Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland	BioMara- Sustainable Fuels from Marine Biomass	Energy and Environment	Feasibility study for production of multi-fuels from marine biomass derived from seaweeds and microalgal sources as an alternative to agricultural production	R	1 NGO, 2 Universities, 2 Institutes of Technology, 1 Research Centre	4.874.414

In terms of cross-border governance structures, our second argument derived from the observation of the six ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ Euroregions in our sample. The first striking feature is the immediate identification of all cases in the *Supralocal Scale* variant of the Euroregional model, with five Euroregions from the S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* sub-typology and one S (2) *Association of Municipalities* (Table 6). This is followed by acknowledgement of the Euroregions’ geographical concentration along the maritime areas of Northern Europe. However, both conditions can be attributed to factors proper of the geopolitical area. In geographical terms, the presence of the Baltic sea in a context of Scandinavian cooperation would certainly encourage the development of cross-sea CBC experiences (Durà et al., 2018: 93-95; Perkmann, 2000; 2003; 2005). In administrative terms, it is important to appreciate the lack of strong regional authorities in Northern European countries and the corresponding weight of Northern provinces (Page & Goldsmith, 1987) even in cross-border activities. Notwithstanding, it is equally important to acknowledge that the examples provided do not exclude the opportunity for regional administrations in other parts of Europe to participate in new Euroregional proposals (i.e. Southern European regional authorities in the Mediterranean).

Table 6 - Identification of 6 ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ Euroregions from the sample (source: own elaboration)

Model Variants	Total of n. 6 Euroregions	Sub-total	Approx. Intervals of Size	Euroregion Typology	Institutional density	Level of self-government	CBC Project Scale (n. 61)	Euroregions
<b>(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR</b>	6	5	From 950 to 55.000 km <sup>2</sup>	<b>S (1): Multilevel Euroregion (Eurodistrict, Eurometropolis)</b>	3 to 10	From Local to Regional	S x 4 (R x 2)	<b>S1:</b> Bothnian Arc, Kvarken Council, Fehmarnbelt Committee, FinEst Link; Baltic Euroregion
					11 to 30			
		1		<b>S (2): Association of Municipalities</b>	2	Local and Supralocal		
					3 to 10			
					More than 30			
		<b>S2:</b> Greater Copenhagen & Skane Committee						

Two further considerations reinforce our discussion on ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ Euroregions. Firstly, the predominance of the *Supralocal Scale* and of the S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* is deeply intertwined with the territorial dynamics of cross-sea cooperation outlined above<sup>19</sup>. Secondly, the six units from the sample clearly show high levels of institutionalisation and a common strategic behaviour (i.e. publication of joint material dedicated to visions, operational documents, cross-border strategies etc.) as expected by our sources in the framework (MOT Website, 2019). On the one hand, such dedication reinforces the political commitment of areas where maritime borders do not make CBC an immediate necessity. On the other, the lack of sufficient involvement would help explaining the recurring presence of maritime territories possessing an INTERREG programme and yet not showing a corresponding Euroregional platform. A lack of political will keeps them locked in a ‘proto-euroregional’ state (Camonita, n.d. a). In conclusion, empirical observations allow us to confirm that multisectoral CBC across a maritime border: a. will

<sup>19</sup> Speculation may lead us to assume that the only S (2) intermunicipal exception (*Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee*) may be justified by the presence of important cross-border equipment (*Øresund Bridge*) overriding the separating effect of the maritime border and shifting the focus on other terrestrial priorities.



necessarily need to rely on multilevel S-Type and R-Type partnerships at all level of activities (L-S-R); and *b.* that existing cross-border governance systems in these areas show a tendency in adopting the S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* modality for actor-inclusive and strategic forms of cooperation.

## 5. Conclusion

This article has attempted to advance the theoretical debate on Euroregions by focusing on their governance structures and the territorial scale of their activities. The main theoretical propositions included: *a.* a scale-based typology for the classification of cross-border INTERREG projects (*Local, Eminently Supralocal, Regional*) and of the partnerships executing them; *b.* a Euroregional model based on three model variants (*Local, Supralocal, Regional*) and on six-sub typologies for the classification of existing Euroregions (ranging from ‘*bilateral Eurocities*’ to ‘*multiregional Euroregions*’); *c.* a contextualised discussion on the different territorial dynamics of CBC in ‘*Eminently Maritime*’ cross-border territories (and the effective multi-sectoral cooperation of actors across it).

In the last part of this article, we will provide some final considerations on the results of the research. First, the creation of a scale-based typology for CBC activities was considered as an inclusive method for framing all types of cooperation modalities. Far from considering this research as a way of discovering the best CBC across Europe’s borders, this article rather defends the concept that each territorial scale and Euroregional model variant holds a separate territorial dimension. In turn, each individual one leads to considerable variation in the activities performed.

Notwithstanding, the research was also able to highlight a tendency among the most performing Euroregions to prefer the *Supralocal Scale* in their governance structure. It also confirmed a few interesting exceptions for S-Type Euroregions to extend their territorial reach and to perform special interventions at other levels. While this is certainly accounted by historical factors and administrative traditions in different parts of Europe (Durà et al., 2018; Perkmann, 2000; Page & Goldsmith, 1987), it is also important to consider that the most employed sub-typology in the sample was the S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* (27/60). This would lead us to suggest that in the presence of a strategic interest for CBC with a stronger territorial impact (L or S Type), it may be favourable to consider employing an S (1) modality. Given the hardships of intermunicipal action in countries with more centralised administrative traditions (i.e. Italy, Spain), the inclusive nature of multilevel governance would allow for a combination of competent regional administrations and the membership of local and supralocal actors (i.e. local councils, provinces, research centres, etc.) performing a lobbying function despite the limited responsibilities. In turn, this may help quelling suspicions over autonomist or separatist tendencies (Perkmann, 2000; 2003; 2005). Rather, it would pass the image of Euroregions as *soft spaces* and examples of *institutional entrepreneurship* for policy formulation and implementation scenarios (Miörner et al., 2018; Telle, 2017; Perkmann & Spicer, 2007).

Meanwhile, in the second part of the article our results hinted towards the need of a S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* framework for ‘Eminently Maritime’ territories. This was demonstrated by the interpretation of maritime CBC through our scale-based typology. Accordingly, it has showed the need for employing Type S and R partnerships at all levels even when the projects are focused on the local scale. Likewise, observation of the governance structures in the six ‘Eminently Maritime’ Euroregions in our sample also supported our discussion. By reconnecting to arguments in our framework (MOT Website, 2019), *a.* the wider separating effect generated by maritime spaces; and *b.* the presence of a vast array of actors with different competences in relation to cross-sea activities are both elements to be strongly considered in “Eminently Maritime” processes of Euroregional institutionalisation.

Finally, in terms of prospects of research, two paths may indicate ways for future contributions. First, the territorial scale-based typology could be further tested by expanding the number of Euroregions in the sample. In turn, this could lead to new cross-data analysis of sectoral data (i.e. fields of activity, categorisations of project outputs, etc.). Second, the features uncovered in maritime borders could inspire new studies based on different geographical backgrounds. Accordingly, the methodology may be adjusted for understanding CBC across other non-plain or non-easily commutable borders (i.e. mountainous or fluvial/lake areas). From our perspective, the increased presence of large-scale and sectoral comparative studies will be key to the comprehension of cross-border governance dynamics in Europe.

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## 8. Publication 4

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**CAMONITA, Francesco (forthcoming).** «Cross-Border Islands Governance: A Field Analysis of the Italy-Malta Interreg Programme». In: DUPEYRON Bruno; PAYAN Toni; NOFERINI Andrea (eds.) *Agents and Structures in Cross-Border Governance: Comparing North America and Europe in an Era of Border Securitization*. Toronto: Toronto University Press.

### **Abstract**

This chapter will provide a comprehensive mapping of the INTERREG CBC programme in place between Italy and Malta. The European-sponsored CBC in the region was only officially initiated in concomitance to Malta's accession into the European Union in 2004. The involvement of the two Mediterranean islands, despite the different levels of sovereignty (Sicily as an autonomous region and Malta as an island-state) and the cooperation executed across a maritime border, makes for a highly interesting European case-study of cooperation dynamics. In addition, Sicilian-Maltese CBC has suffered from a general scarcity in previous academic analysis over its governance system and performance. Thanks to an application of the theoretical framework offered by this book, the chapter will be innovative in exploring (and expanding) SAF theorization while exploiting original fieldwork in the form of semistructured interviews to INTERREG institutional and management-related actors. The work of analysis will include: a reconstruction of the different stages of the programme, a description of the governance mechanisms in place and an assessment of the opportunities and obstacles of an INTERREG programme that has only reached its third cycle of European funding. Furthermore, the identification of a highly structured SAF invites the Challengers of the field to exploit the opportunities of political cross-border institutionalization if they are to align it to their views beyond European CBC strategies.

### **Keywords**

Cross-Border Cooperation; INTERREG; Cross-Border SAF; Italy-Malta;

## **Cross-Border Islands Governance:**

### **A Field Analysis of the Italy-Malta Interreg Programme**

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The following book chapter wishes to exploit the potential of the Strategic Action Fields (SAFs) theoretical framework to analyze the study-case of the Sicily-Malta border region inside the European framework of territorial cooperation. Unlike many other examples on the borders of the old continent, the cross-border region made up of the two islands in the geographical center of the Mediterranean Sea is relatively young in its constitution as it has officially been active since 2004, and does not possess a European political cross-border governance platform such as a Euroregion. Instead, it relies solely on the institutional apparatus provided by the INTERREG cross-border programme agreed between the Italian and the Maltese at state level (Operational Programme [OP] INTERREG Italy-Malta). Notwithstanding, there is still ground for both the testing and expanding of the theory from Fligstein & McAdam (2012) on the basic institutional structure built between the micro-island state and the vast autonomous island-region. The identification of extremely powerful incumbents (such as the political governments of the two islands exploiting the governance units of the INTERREG programme) and the presence of very weak and isolated challengers, such as the Sicilian Regional Assembly deputy who pursued the failed establishment of a new euroregional structure, will clearly provide the outline for what could be defined as a “crystallized” SAF. As we will see, the clear lack of shocks powerful enough to completely disrupt the cycle of the Italy-Malta INTERREG SAF can and should be in turn interpreted as a call to arms for challengers to reorganize themselves if they are to bring any substantial changes to the Field. By exploiting the extensive fieldwork realized by the author in the border region, we seek to test the performance of the cross-border system in place in the relevant area<sup>20</sup>. Through reconstructing the history and features of the Field, we aim for a complete mapping of all the actors involved in the processes, thus identifying Incumbents, Challengers and Governance Units in the field. Furthermore, we will proceed to the operationalization of new SAF functional terminology (*Functionality vs. Effectiveness; Field Participants*) as to provide new insight to the already existing framework. In the end, the whole process will give way to some much-needed conclusions that will elaborate on the whole process and on how to interpret necessary challengers’ actions and response to bring change to the current system. Regarding the methodology involved in this study, institutional interviews were conducted over two research periods on both islands and specific semi-structured questionnaires were handed over to the interviewed. The rest of the data was provided by an analysis of institutional documents and very little academic studies published over the topic, hence underlying the high level of originality for the research here proposed.

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<sup>20</sup> The substantial fieldwork was conducted thanks to funding associated to the Spanish FPI scholarship granted to the Ph.D. candidate. As a matter of fact, this book chapter will also be included in the final compendium making up for an article thesis to be delivered by the author in the next few years.

### *The European Background on Cross-Border Cooperation*

There can be little doubt about the fact that European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) policies are among some of the most advanced forms of interstate cooperation in the international arena. It is in fact through the action of the European Union's (EU) INTERREG programmes that cross-border, transnational and interregional initiatives are funded through a relatively modest (at least in macroeconomic terms) but consolidated seven-year budget. Furthermore, thanks to the 60 Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) programmes approved for the most recent 2014-2020 EU funding period, virtually all internal borders of the Union are covered in some way by the INTERREG VA strand of ETC. In their entirety, the programmes serve as a stimulus to the realization of cross-border projects or the activation of pioneer transfrontier common services for the 185 million EU citizens living along the member states' borders (European Commission, 2011, 2017b).

However, the innovation brought upon by ETC policies is not only limited to the financially stable presence of the European programmes. As a matter of fact, the initiatives can also nurture the establishment of new governance structures which defy the separating logic of the border for the joint management and distribution of the allotted resources. Such is the nature of the Multilevel Governance framework firstly analyzed by Marks and Hooghe, in which the EU strongly endorses subnational authorities and willing Non-Governmental Actors (NGOs) to participate in new governance processes across different levels of policy in their respective domains (among the many contributions, take as special references Hooghe & Marks, 2001, 2004). When the theoretical concept is translated onto cross-border policy, such multilevel structures can initially be developed through the commitment of the participating territorial actors in joint INTERREG-based institutions for the funding of CBC projects. But on a more advanced level, and even more so in the presence of a vast borderline, different groups of territorial actors may decide to sign further agreements for the constitution of new organizations commonly representing territorial administrations from both sides of the border. One of the most common forms of such advanced associations in Europe is represented by the Euroregions. As a general definition, they represent dedicated cross-border governance platforms voluntarily established as to concur for European funding and for the alignment of policies across the territories (for a strong introduction on the topic, check Perkmann, 2003). Thanks to a pilot research project, some European members from the BORDERGOV network underwent a comprehensive cataloguing and classification of euroregional experiences as to obtain a birds' eye perspective over the whole EU territory (COOP-RECOT II<sup>21</sup>). The results were quite encouraging in showing 158 euroregional structures active on the European borders, as well as a selection of cross-border "equipment", such as a binational hospital in the Pyrenees or a trinational airport between France, Switzerland and Germany, along some interesting examples of cross-border nature parks commonly managed across the border (Durà, Camonita, Berzi, & Noferini, 2018). However, generally considering that the whole European territory has nowadays achieved "heaven-status" for CBC would be a gross misconception. Beyond still existing legal, administrative and technical obstacles

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<sup>21</sup> "Territorial Cooperation in Spain and the EU: A selection of guiding experiences for Excellency and Innovation in the 2014-2020 period" (COOP-RECOT II, 2014-2017; CSO2013-45257-P)

and once applied a localization of the CBC experiences across the European map, the results foretell the continued presence of an unfortunate trend already well-known in the field of economics: notably, we are referring to a tangible North-South divide in terms of outcomes and performances. In such a way, the research identified an hard core of excellent euroregional CBC practices in the geographical areas of Central and Western Europe, followed by the solid presence of Northern European cases (2018, p. 93-95).

Of course, one must also immediately refrain from falling towards an opposite bias and solely believing in the presence of a “Mediterranean Syndrome” which would blame the lack of efficiency ‘on specific endemic characteristics of the socio-political institutions hindering implementation and enforcement’ of policies (Koutalakis, 2002; La Spina & Sciortino, 1993; Pridham, 1996; Pridham & Cini, 1994). In truth, we must rather acknowledge the presence on the European territory of cross-border regions whose institutional settings have not reached a deeper stage of involvement or where the corresponding authorities have not felt the necessity of politically exploring new paths of collaboration. Take the example at hand of Italy, whom despite being involved in eight INTERREG A-strand of internal cross-border programs (European Commission, 2017a) does not present an equal number of euroregional structures. It is specifically in this kind of European CBC that the Sicily-Malta border region can be categorized. And precisely through applying useful theoretical lens such as the multilevel governance toolkit coupled to the SAF framework, the purpose of this study is revealed in trying to unveil the mechanisms of these areas still locked in what we may define as *proto-euroregional* structures. We choose here to apply such definition in-so-far as we will deal with the existence of a management structure first and foremost interested into administering the assigned European funding. Of course, we are still dealing with governance platforms in which territorial actors choose a specific operational strategy and that jointly decide whom to assign a budget for the execution of cross-border projects. However, we also acknowledge in such cases the lack of political vision and identity-building of a cross-border region which is rarely even mentioned as such by the members of the Field. We will refer again to this particular condition of the region in the following sections. For the time being, we will begin our analysis of the INTERREG Italy-Malta SAF through analyzing its first chronological stage, namely the circumstances around the formation and emergence of the Field.

#### *Field Formation and Emergence:*

##### *The Origins of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme*

##### *Historical Antecedents of the Field: Italy-Malta Relations*

Before analyzing the events strictly connected to the establishment of the INTERREG programme, it will be useful to produce a short summary of the recurring ties established between the two neighboring countries

throughout the centuries<sup>22</sup>. The Italo-Maltese common history is certainly one where geopolitical size mattered, so much that Italian politics and culture, well before the constitution of the Italian State, have often produced resonating effects over Maltese developments. As a matter of fact, it would not be too much of an overstatement to assert that most of the historical events leading up to the XVI century were commonly shared between Southern Italy and Malta. Historical dominations such as the Roman, Arab, Franco-Norman and even the Catalan-Spanish ones all dealt with the two islands at the center of the Mediterranean through common decisions. A real breakup moment in the destinies of Sicily and Malta only occurred in 1530, when Charles V of the Spanish Crown decided to give the Maltese Islands as a gift to the St. John's Knights, a rich Order notoriously famous for their Crusades' role in fighting against the Muslim world and later against the Turkish expansion in the Mediterranean. While it is true that the commercial and cultural relationships were not stopped by this transition in power, it is also certain that such change of leadership would shape the future of Malta towards a distinct path from its neighbor island. After three long centuries of relatively high levels of prosperity provided by the wealthy Order, a change of regime was provoked at the end of the XVIII century by Napoleon, who decided to cast down the Order from command and take Malta for the new French empire on its way to Egypt. The French dominion, however, was not destined to last. It was a revolution-inspired regime in which the troops showed no respect for the Christian religious institutions that had acquired a fundamental place in the cultural ways of the Maltese. The outrage from the Maltese population was the political base for their own request to the British Empire to intervene and take the archipelago under their protection. In such a way, Malta opened to itself a strong colonial scenario destined to last well into the XX century (Blouet, 1997; Goodwin, 2002). The Maltese prospered and developed both economically and politically under British protection: from the initial presence of advisor councils to the British Governor of Malta, they will come to negotiate different Constitutions opening up to more and more representative powers, an official House of Representatives and above all real political parties (Harwood, 2014). Furthermore, it is essentially through looking at the bipartisan polarization of Maltese politics that we discover the recurring presence of Italian cultural influences in Maltese culture, at least until the times of independence from the United Kingdom. Since the very beginning, the two parties of the Maltese system were the left-winged Maltese Labour Party and the right-winged Nationalist Party. And it was precisely in the more conservative approach of the latter that the intellectual classes revealed a constant set of values deriving from solid Roman Catholic faith, a Church-controlled education, in which Italian was the vehicular language, and ultimately a Latin identification of Maltese identity and culture as opposed to the features of the British ruler. However, what eventually prevented any further talks of political proximity between the Maltese islands and the by-now constituted Italian state was the WWII scenario between Fascist Italy and British Malta.

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<sup>22</sup> The following historical summary will quickly shift the focus from Sicily-Maltese relations to more Italy-Malta based international relations. While this does provide a useful insight as a prologue to the INTERREG programme, a further line of research will be opened by the author in a future publication to reconstruct a much-more-in-detail chart of the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region at various levels. [Camonita, F. (forthcoming 2019) *Envisioning the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago: a Braudelian inspired triple-level analysis of a European cross-border region. Island Studies Journal*]



After the end of the second global conflict, then, new changes were going to shape Maltese history more than ever. The British were fast approaching the end of colonialism and giving always more ground for new independence processes in the former colonies. The friendship with the Italians was quickly restored due to political, commercial and even touristic issues (Ardizzone, 2002). In a relatively rapid succession of events, Malta achieved formal independence from the UK at political level in 1964, officially became a sovereign Republic in 1974 and separated itself militarily from Great Britain in 1979. Meanwhile, the interpretation of a bipolar world torn apart by the influence of the Cold War was also engulfing the Mediterranean as another big chessboard onto which countries had to play their best diplomacy moves. Having shifted the political debate onto the future of the Maltese archipelago, a bipolarized “Switzerland of the Mediterranean” versus the Cold War’s naval base approach, Malta’s newly acquired foreign policy interests made the small country quickly realize its position as a “consumer” of security rather than a producer, hence clarifying its status of military dependence from other countries (Pace, 1999). In the meanwhile, during the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s Italy was also undergoing a new phase of political maturity in which stronger foreign policy was welcomed even beyond the European Community Multilateralism (Aliboni, 1999). When a failed attempt to arrange a multilateral table for the neutrality of Malta combined with frictions and hostilities with Libya over some underwater oilfields in contested waters, the Italian government officially took the matter onto its own hands to solve what would have later been termed as “*L’Affare Maltese*”. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1981, foreign secretary Emilio Colombo delivered a significant speech to the Italian parliament about the special agreements between the two countries. On one side, Malta officially proposed to the Italian government its own universal declaration of neutrality. But on the other, Italy would correspond with a series of financial assistance protocols for the strong modernization of the country (Melchionni, 1981). Over the following twenty years a total number of four protocols were signed, and by such means a significant total of approx. 618 million US dollars (in modern day’s converted rates) were provided to the Maltese islands to develop structural projects transitioning the small country into a modern state. Among the several fundamental structural interventions in multiple sectors, an “Italian Military Mission” in Malta was also included for assistance and training, de facto establishing a small but meaningful military presence with a strong symbolism for the Mediterranean foreign policy of both countries (Aliboni, 1999; Governo Italiano, 2001).

The bilateral character of the Italo-Maltese alliance, however, was not meant to last as such. On one side, Italy was quick to lose its role of mediator and assertive of a Mediterranean foreign policy due to the groundbreaking *Tangentopoli* scandals that shook the national political order in the 1990s (Aliboni, 1999). On the other, the Cold War was reaching a peaceful end with the demise of the Soviet Union, making the Maltese state lose the soft-diplomacy appeal of their neutrality. For the island-state, the time had also come to face its relationship with the European community. The previous contacts up until this historical moment had been limited by generic trade agreements and a certain tendency to follow more British eurosceptical arguments. But within the discourses of the soon-to-be European Union and its intended political mission of reunifying Europe, the Maltese also initiated a fundamental debate on the future destiny of their country.

Once again, the country followed bipolarization in opposing left-wing eurosceptical arguments willing to keep Malta neutral versus the nationalist joining of the European family both in economic and cultural identity terms (Harwood, 2014; Pace, 1999). Over an extremely intense national debate, Malta applied for official EC membership in July 1990 and started undertaking a series of fundamental structural reforms in multiple sectors to adjust its requirements. In the end, both the Maltese political parties would come to embrace the idea of joining the Union as the only viable option for the country. Once completed all the necessary structural preparations, the Maltese government issued a referendum on the 8<sup>th</sup> of March 2003 to ask its population whether they finally wanted to join the EU. As a result, 53.6% of the population voted in favor with a total 91% turnout of the voting population. Consequentially, Malta joined Cyprus in tagging along the historical annexing of the Eastern European countries into the European institutions on the 1<sup>st</sup> of May 2004. In such a way, Malta was finally entering the European family and it was by right acquiring the possibility to access a high amount of European funding under the provisions of the EU Cohesion Policy.

*The Origins of the INTERREG Italy-Malta Field and its Consolidation: The 2004-2006 “Experimental Phase”*

The historical summary produced in the previous section has been instrumental in laying the background in Italian and Sicilian relationships with Malta up to the year 2004. As a matter of fact, the emphasis is here placed upon the strict coincidence of the Maltese accession in the European Union and the start of a European-sponsored CBC programme between the Sicilian Autonomous Region and the Island-State of Malta. As already suggested in other parts of this chapter, one fundamental feature of this study-case SAF is encountered in the lack of a political vision meant to reinforce the identity of a cross-border region between the two islands. We cannot establish here a direct comparison with the political history of cross-border governance platforms elsewhere in Europe (such as in the cases showed by most of the other European authors in the book). Rather than these, the context-at-hand must be understood uniquely in terms of a brand-new member of the European Union exploring all possibilities for the full acquisition of European funding, therefore also allowing for the possibility of generating a funded cross-border operational programme with the closest Italian territory. At the same time, the other side would see the presence of an Autonomous Island Region constantly situated as an objective 1 priority of the European Cohesion policy --the red ‘priority 1’ mark stands for the most urgent cases in closing the structural gap with other European regions-- and always proactively seeking for new public funds. Although not explicit, a possible reference to what we could define as a “full-menu package” choice for exploiting the INTERREG funds is also deducible from the words of the Maltese interviewed officers:

*A: “About how it all started with Sicily... it might have been that Malta doesn’t have any actual borders. The only nearest European sort of a part of a member state is Sicily so it might have been this reason as well, and all those agreements that we had before were mainly with Italy from the Italian protocol fund and it was much before the accession.”*

*B: “...and there’s also the definition that we took from the European commission and the 150-km border rule. So, automatically, this was between our region and this one... of course if there were other islands in the 150-km area, it could be that we could have other cross-border programmes, so this is the reason why we have this only cross-border one”.*

(INTERREG Local Authorities, personal communication, May 2017)

Unfortunately, it must also be acknowledged that in the fieldwork it proved impossible to get closer to the original staff involved in the negotiations of the programme. Whether at Sicilian, Maltese or even at European level, the personnel had already been replaced or was not in charge of the political negotiations at the time. However, sufficient elements have been gathered from interviewing current officials at institutional level as to identify the main key-actors in the process. Following their accounts on the matter it appears that already in 2003, once established the official preparations after the positive outcome of the Maltese EU referendum, the European Commission officers were insisting for the elaboration of a first draft of the programme. The governmental actors involved, however, positively showed an immediate interest in the potential access to further EU funding. The timing was certainly not ideal, as the financial seven-year EU budget for the period was enclosed in the 2000-2006 window. The Commission, notwithstanding, was in possession of around 7,5 million euros which were left unallotted in the previous distribution of the INTERREG IIIA programme: the chance to be almost automatically entitled to a first set of European funds was enough of an opportunity not to be wasted. Interestingly, the political decision about the leading management role in the programme was also swiftly justified by the Maltese newcomer status. The Managing Authority was therefore entrusted to the Sicilian Regional Government as the most experienced partner of the two in the field of European planning. The Italian national government, in turn, was present as second-level control and approver of the final decisions, always leaving a high degree of mobility to the Autonomous Region in the negotiations. The experience of cooperation in joint planning was indeed a new process for both partners and there seems to have been initial uncertainties regarding the degree of cooperation between the island-state and the island-region, especially considering the more restricted circle of competences of the latter in the preparation of a common strategy. Furthermore, both sides seemed to have initially fatigued to find common ground to produce the cross-border programme while also avoiding overlapping with their strategies required for access to the individual strand of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). A partial explanation of this would also derive from the common

acknowledgement among all partners (whether at European, national or regional level) of the hardships in addressing European cross-border planning for two islands separated by a maritime border such as the Channel of Malta, a street of sea of approx. 92km in-between the two archipelagoes.

Be it as it may, the INTERREG IIIA programme was effectively initiated in 2004 and throughout its duration it granted for the realization of 13 cross-border projects (Regione Sicilia, 2006; SiciliaInformazioni.com, 2008). Most likely due to the time-pressure exerted by operational limits, all the activities mainly focused on cultural exchanges, common gathering of good practices and more generically the first construction of actors' networks across the border. In the very same words of the Commission representatives:

*'Especially in this first moment [of the CBC] Malta was able to strengthen its capacity building in terms of cooperation processes and Sicily was able to understand how to interface with a new Member State who was completely new to European policies and legislations. If you look at older reports, you will realise that the first two years (2004-2006) were mostly needed for institutional networking and the construction and build-up of both networks and capabilities much needed during the following years. The 2004-2006 was a period of "institution-2-institution" collaboration strongly focused around public-sector cooperation'*

(European Commission Authorities, Skype Interview, March 2017)

The execution of the OP was certainly not without obstacles and delays, as both countries faced joint cross-border planning for the first time and the Maltese staff, whether the public institutions or the private actors carrying out the projects, began to walk the arduous path of European bureaucracy. However, the line of events described up to the closure of the 2004-2006 period of Siculo-Maltese CBC can undoubtedly be described as the stage of field formation and emergence of our analysed SAF. Under the auspices of an encouraging European Commission willing to stimulate further territorial cooperation, both the negotiations and what we decided to term as the first "experimental phase", due to its pioneer networks and trust-establishing activities, laid the core basis for the current CBC dynamics in place between the two islands. To continue our analysis, let us now focus our attention on the following chronological stage in the SAF process. Namely, we refer to the Stable Field in place and its governance and processes currently affecting the Siculo-Maltese cross-border region. This will also allow us to start mapping the different actors on the field and their corresponding role inside our SAF analytical framework.

*The Stable Field: Governance, Operational Capacity and Main SAF Actors of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme*

In this central section of the chapter, we intend to reconstruct a full mapping of the Italo-Maltese cross-border SAF through the identification of the key-actors that shape its functioning. By unraveling the several features of the Field, we aim at a step-by-step identification of the SAF actors shaping the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme. To do so, we will use the practical information gathered through the interviews and the official documentation provided at institutional level (Regione Sicilia, 2009, 2014). At the same time, we will also gather some hindsight from the work of Custro (2013) (representing one of the very few, if not the only, previous academic studies on the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme) and a preliminary paper produced by the author during the field research in Sicily (Camonita, 2017).

*The governance structure of the SAF: Mapping the Incumbents, Governance Units and the Broader Field Environment.*

To decipher the governance structure of the INTERREG programme, let us now turn our attention to the interpretation of the scheme proposed in Figure 1. Out of the dense web of relationships among the different actors and their configurations, we can clearly separate four different groups meant for classification purposes. The first one stands at European level and it only includes the participation of the *Commission's Office for Macro-regions, ETC and Programme Implementation* inside the Directorate-General for Regional and Urban Policy (DG Regio) department. Although external to the daily operations, the Office's involvement into all the fundamental decisions is closely related to the responsibility as funding entity of the CBC activities. The EU personnel specifically ensures a mediating position in the debate among the partners when writing the operational programme to be submitted for approval. Later, it ensures a constant monitoring of the operations through the revision of yearly status reports produced by the OP authorities for checking the state of activities and the financial accounts. Furthermore, the responsible staff can generally participate in the INTERREG program events and at times in the meetings of the Monitoring Committee described below.

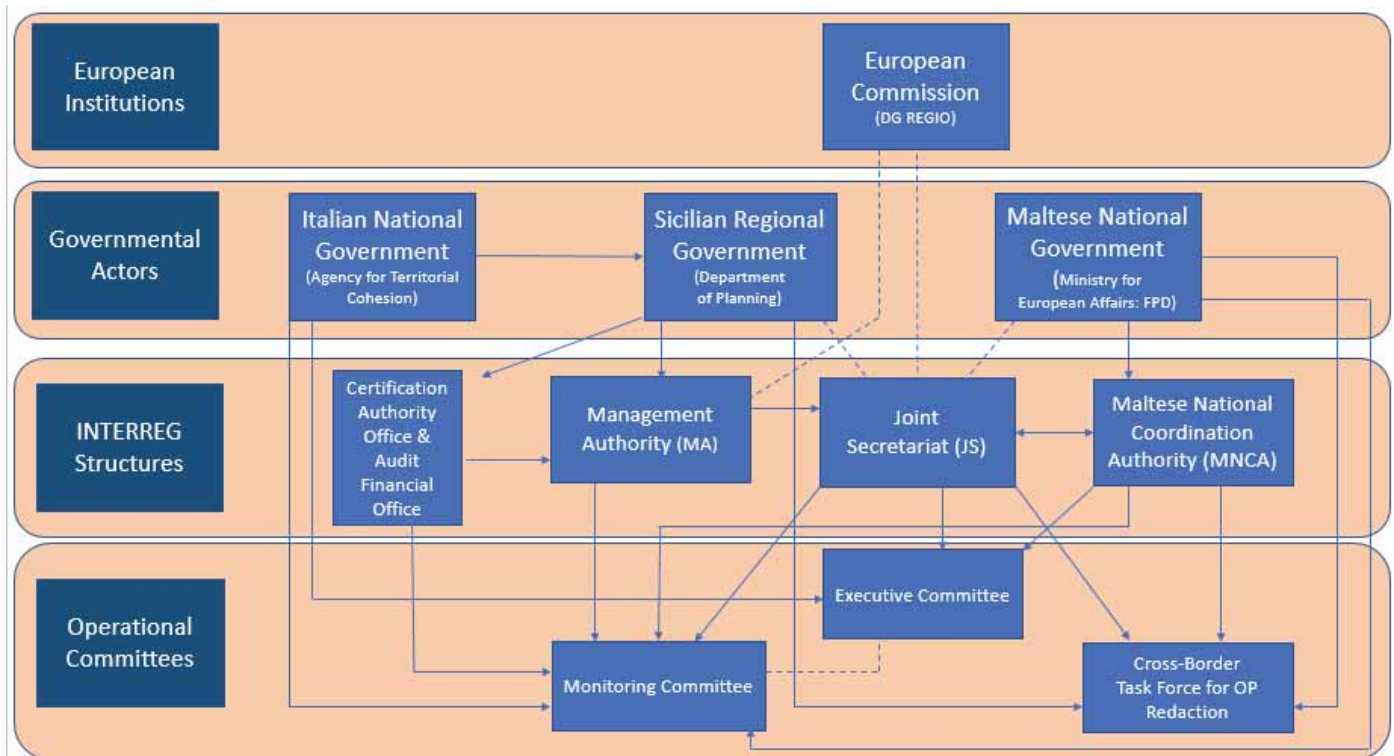


Figure 1 - Governance Scheme of the INTERREG Italy-Malta Programme (Source: Author's elaboration)

The second group represents the core of governmental actors which compose the political partnership for the execution of the cross-border programme. The Italy-Malta INTERREG OP is first and foremost an agreement between the Italian and the Maltese state, but in the first case there is a clear delegation of competences and responsibilities on the hand of the Italian regional authorities in closest proximity to the border. The Italian government, on its part, only participates in the work of the OP through its *Agency for Territorial Cohesion*. By acknowledging the manager role entrusted to the Sicilian Regional Government, the correspondent *Office VI – Operational Programmes of co-financed territorial cooperation, international activities and bilateral cooperation (Projects and Instruments area)* mainly develops functions of monitoring and approval over the operations of the programme. A very different role is instead assumed by the Maltese Government which does not count upon a hierarchical territorial system of sub-national authorities for the administration of the OP. Due to the small size of the country and the inclusion of the whole archipelago in the eligibility criteria for CB activities, it is the *Ministry for European Affairs* and its internal *Funds and Programmes Division (FPD)* which directly accounts and participates in the main decisions related to the INTERREG OP. Interestingly, the Italo-Maltese structure provides for an atypical case of CBC between a State and a Region in which it is also unusual to see the latter handling the managing position. Due to the circumstances described in the previous section, it is in fact the Sicilian Regional Government which holds the *Managing Authority (MA)* office inside its *Department of Planning* in the *Service for European Territorial Cooperation and Decentralized Developmental Cooperation* office. In such a way, the premises in Palermo host an overall majority of the INTERREG-generated structures enclosed in the third grouping of



actors. In the case of the *Certification and Audit Authorities*, the Sicilian did not choose to develop new structures but entrusted all relevant financial controls to the already existing offices charged with the supervision of other regional programmes co-financed by the European Commission (such as the ERDF). The MA role, instead, is carried out in the *Operational Unit Italy-Malta* office which is mainly composed by two people, one General Director and one Executive Director. Among other tasks, it mainly develops a leading role in the Monitoring Committee of the programme, overseeing all decisions and records related to monitoring, evaluation, financial management, verification and audit. The *Joint Secretariat (JS)* of the OP, on its account, is the designated office for assisting the Managing Authority in the daily development of tasks. The JS's personnel can be composed of up to four employees, but it counts at present times of mainly three Italian functionaries, one General Coordinator and two Technicians for communication, monitoring and support. It collects financial, physical and statistical data regarding the programme and the assigned cross-border projects, while also taking a leading role in the project's proposals' evaluation and posterior monitoring and assessment. Finally, as a practical solution to the obstacles imposed by a maritime border, the parties involved also decided to generate one further structure on Maltese territory (hosted inside the FPD Department) officially defined as the *Maltese National Co-ordination Authority (MNCA)*. Its main functions are those proper of an antenna office of the INTERREG programme, in-so-far as the three members of staff involved in the operations (one General Director, one Head of Unit and one part-time Technician) help develop the monitoring and implementation of the OP with all the Maltese partners involved in CBC projects.

Once we unravel the components of the fourth and final group of the Operational Committees, however, we quickly discover that the separation of the offices' tasks is not distinctively marked. Quite the opposite, it is possible to speculate that both the small dimension of the CBC programme and the presence of relatively few employees stimulate the presence of the various sectoral gatherings of the different INTERREG structures for an efficient operationalization of common decisions across the border. Thus, the *Monitoring Committee* becomes the common platform where its 12 voting members proceeding from all the participating structures (the Italian Agency for Territorial Cooperation and the Maltese FPD; the Sicilian Regional Government through the MA and the Certification/Audit offices; the JS and the Maltese MNCA) meet at least once per year to discuss and approve the different stages of the OP. The *Executive Committee* is instead a much smaller platform giving the chance to the two operative branches of the OP, the Palermo-based JS and the MNCA, to discuss directives from the Monitoring Committee and proceed to collective decisions regarding evaluation and assessment of CBC projects. Lastly, the *Cross-Border Task Force* is part of an interesting experiment already used in other European contexts and here developed by the existing structures to improve the content of the INTERREG programme. Following some European institutional concerns regarding the difficulties in the elaboration of strongly territorial-based strategies, this Siculo-Maltese Committee was created for the first time in preparation of the 2014-2020 planning period. Through directly involving non-CBC related personnel of the two islands' governments together with public/private actors of the cross-border region, the INTERREG structures sought to exploit institutional and technical meetings to gain real

feedback for the elaboration of the recently approved OP. Remarkably, and in line with the delegation of competences described so-far, the Italian National Government was not officially involved in the process. In any case, it is obvious that such governance tool is mainly activated whenever the INTERREG personnel is preparing for the drafting of a new programme to be sent for approval to the Commission.

How can we therefore interpret the previously described scenario under a SAF perspective? Certainly, any considerations regarding the fields involved in European CBC must begin through acknowledging the presence of the overarching and supranational political structure that is both warden and sponsor of such cooperation, namely the European Union. Due to its extraordinary political complexity, the EU well fits the theoretical concepts elaborated by Fligstein & McAdam (2012) regarding the existence of *multiple nested Fields* and a common *Broader Field Environment*. Even when focusing our attention on one purely dedicated to ETC, the Italo-Maltese field would only emerge out of a huge grouping of cross-border regions' SAFs (be them Euroregions, proto-euroregions or other cooperation structures). Accordingly, all of them would still be dependent on the decisions generated in other SAFs such as the one in the Brussels' offices of the INTERREG programme. In turn, the central INTERREG structure would be itself depending on the SAF generated by the negotiations for the EU seven-year budget at the upper level of the Union's decision making. Beyond bottom-up speculations that could convolute the reasoning, however, the Italo-Maltese SAF stands out for the relative easiness in identifying the key-players of the whole process. In the straightforward political agreement engraved by the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme, it is indeed the Maltese National Government and the Sicilian Regional Government (albeit oversights by the third party of the Italian National Government) which represent the *Incumbents* of the cross-border Field. Therefore, under the external and somewhat impartial role of the European Commission as *External Incumbent* of all the cross-border regions' SAFs, the Governmental actors of the Italo-Maltese case take all the major decisions in shaping the direction of the OP and oversee the attribution of resources for the CBC projects. To able to do so, they fully exploit the INTERREG structures and their operational committees which are naturally identified as the *Governance Units* of the field according to SAF terminology. As we will see, however, a deeper level of analysis will be instead needed to identify the challengers inside such structured Field.

#### *Functionality vs. Effectiveness of the Italo-Maltese SAF*

In line with the general purposes of this book referring to further testing of the SAF into new contexts, we will now try to apply and expand further the potential of the theory. We choose here to introduce the ideas of *Functionality* and *Effectiveness*. The two terms can be looked as functional terminology designed to complement and expand the analysis of the dynamics taking place inside the study-area. In the case of the Field's Functionality, we intend the term as to indicate the specific operational processes enclosed in the daily actions of the Governance Units by the will of the Incumbents; in its analysis, it is also possible to include the specific purpose of the Field and its reason for existing. The terminology Effectiveness, instead, is here formulated as a theoretical concept that can be applied when considering the daily obstacles

compromising the Functionality of the Field itself. By counterbalancing the expected outcomes with the day-to-day hardships, we expect to introduce extra elements of evaluation in the global performance of the SAF at hand.

To begin with, some features of the Field's overall Functionality have been already suggested throughout the chapter, but a more holistic description is here formulated as to better mark the capacity of the Field and its implicit limitations. The whole purpose of the Governance Units, i.e. the INTERREG structures, in the Italy-Malta OP rotates around the elaboration of a joint cross-border cooperation strategy to be carried out through CB projects during the seven-year financial period. There are however important delimitations in regarding the choice of sectoral priority-axes to which the scope of the projects may be dedicated. As the funding entity, the EU imposes the thematic priorities of the programmes in line with the guidelines of pan-European strategies such as the former Lisbon Strategy or the current Europe2020. Therefore, even if two archipelagoes such as the Sicilian and Maltese ones may find a strong common interest in a sector like tourism, this cannot be directly put forth as a main strategic axis but rather be incorporated into more European priority guidelines. In the 2014-2020 period, as an example, the study-case OP established a thematic concentration around Research & Innovation, Environmental protection and Economic Competitiveness. In any case, it is only after evaluation and approval of all relevant documents by the Commission that the INTERREG structures can generate the correspondent calls for cross-border projects. The Italo-Maltese programme does not make an exception in this regard, although the modality of the call for projects underwent some structural reform over time. More specifically, in the 2007-2013 funding period the authorities decided to remove the atypical separation between ordinary and pre-established strategic CB projects to make room for a more INTERREG-standard call in two phases. Be it as it may once the call is launched several partnerships of actors will then respond with their own applications. In such a way, the policies of the field are provided and translated as resources to what we choose to term as *Field Participants* by stretching SAF terminology even further. In our view, the Participants are all those public and private actors which, although not directly involved in the power relationships of the Field, willingly participate to its policies through securing funding for the realization of cross-border activities. Such participation will thus follow the classical European project management approach through development stages and constant monitoring and report, expecting the partnership to fulfil a set of outputs and targets for the successful marking of the activity. Finally, one last commentary in terms of Functionality of the Field and its territorial involvement must be made for the eligible territory and financial expansion that the OP underwent between the 2007-2013 and the 2014-2020 periods. While the Maltese state was always eligible in its entirety, the participation to the INTERREG programme was only limited, out of the nine Sicilian provinces, only to the five directly facing the border with Malta. The two main provinces of Catania and Palermo were initially allowed very limited participation (20% of total project's costs). Curiously, the remaining two provinces (Enna and Messina) were left ineligible for the funding. The reasons for this initial choice may leave some room for speculation, in-so-far as they might have been conceived as to stimulate the less developed territories laying in the Southern part of the island. However, it is also conversely easy to conjecture a

posterior opening to the whole Sicilian Region due to the strong leading role of Catanese and Palermitan actors proceeding from the most industrialized and urbanized areas, coupled with a desire to avoid territorial discrimination. A further pro-opening argument was very much likely provided by the Commission's formula in calculating the amount of funding to distribute through the INTERREG programme. By making the standard proportion between inhabitants and territory, the enlargement of the programme also contributed to augmenting the initial amount from €30,148,017 (2007-2013) to €43,952,171 (2014-2020).

Whereas the unraveling of the Functionality of the field provides us with a theoretical description of the processes that should be ideally taking place into the SAF, we now exploit the idea of Field Effectiveness to oversee more in detail the obstacles that may prevent the full realization of the former. We propose to do so by providing a listing of the main relevant problematics that emerged during the interviews to Incumbents and Governance Units. The list includes the EC office responsible for CBC cooperation Italy-Malta, the JS, the MNCA, here grouped as INTERREG Local Authorities, and in a lesser measure the Italian Agency for Territorial Cooperation.

The most striking obstacle when considering the realities of the INTERREG Italy-Malta OP is found in the delay accumulated over the years in the execution of the programme. As a matter of fact, in the two and a half funding periods that the OP has experienced, frequent procedures of postponing both the strategy's approval and the final justification of project expenditures had to be applied to secure the rightful completion of activities. Even when considering the current 2014-2020 period, at the time of writing of this book chapter the INTERREG structures are only about to launch the first awarded projects. Far from accusing the responsible authorities, however, we must point out an important set of structural conditions that can explain the current scenario. Firstly, the interviewed Governance Units remarked the difficulty of a one-size-fits-all policy in the managing and administration of the INTERREG programmes. In their view, such a small-staffed OP should not be dealing with all relevant administrative obligations on the same level as much larger programmes present in the Union, because '*the designation of a managing authority handling €200-300 million is one thing and the one of a MA handling €40 million is quite another thing*' (INTERREG Local Authorities, Personal Communication, May 2017). Especially when dealing with small expenditures, they observe that a simplified cost option could well help to dispel intricate bureaucratic procedures committing authorities and partners in time-wasting efforts. Furthermore, the accumulation of frequent reports and evaluation procedures does not help in-so-far as it only claims more multi-tasking attentions slowing down the whole process. Secondly, and as a recurring argument since the very origins of the Field, the recurring difficulties in the elaboration of a cross-border strategy between the two islands still affect the current outcome of the cooperation processes. The very same 2014-2020 strategy suffered over a year of revisions due to an EC's negative verdict on a general lack of thematic concentration in the expected results of the programme, thus only managing final approval in October 2015. The local authorities are of course aware of the situation, but in their own words they also express a certain uneasiness in differentiating their activity from other European programmes:

*“We try to touch all those themes that cannot be directly funded under ERDF, otherwise we may as well get crazy, there would be overlapping, and it would be a mess. The Commission’s opinion is that there should be complementarity, but there is a subtle distinction between overlapping and complementarity; from here we had to make a choice, we have few financial resources and then you also have to go and find your own place in the world.”*

(INTERREG Local Authorities, Personal Communication, April 2017)

While the argument certainly connects with the hardships brought upon by the maritime border and the harder elaboration of a sound strategy in a context of indirect proximity, a third hindrance to the Field Functionality is unfortunately present in the endemic behavior of Italian institutions. In fact, some of the European and Italian authorities interviewed would tend to agree in noticing a clear lack of long-term sustainability in both State and Regional levels of European planning. Nor would they be alone in their judgement, as soundly stated in a recent academic contribution by the former Director of the island’s European Planning Department. In his own words, Robert Leonardi initially feeds the debate by reminding that even the Italian government faced an almost two-years delay in the approval of its national-level strategies regarding Cohesion Funding for the 2014-2020 period. Furthermore, at the Sicilian level, the Autonomous Region is criticized for a sectorized regional planning which clearly lacks an integrated strategic approach beyond the individual funding term in coordinating the distinct European interventions (Leonardi, 2016). To this matter, some degree of speculation may refer to the frequent episodes of political instability conditioning both the Italian and Sicilian governments, hence betting for self-concluding strategies rather than more integrated approaches. Finally, a fourth source of complications in the execution of the programme would derive from the multilevel governance framework enclosed in the OP. In terms of institutional collaboration, the complementarity showed between wider territorial size (Sicily) and sovereign power (Malta) and the cultural similarities grant for generally harmonious relations between the two parties:

*“One it’s like larger than the other but we don’t think that there isn’t any difference...we don’t consider ourselves to be bigger or more important than them. It’s never come to our mind as a problem. [...] We feel like two islands on the same level cooperating with each other”.*

(INTERREG Local Authorities, Personal Communication, May 2017)

Beyond good intentions, however, the real issues are hidden beneath the different competences that the two islands are granted. More specifically, and even when considering the special Statute, there are still some important limitations to the degree of action that Sicily can achieve when standing beneath Italian authority. Take for example the recent removal of the transport and infrastructure axis in the INTERREG strategy for



the 2014-2020. Accordingly, such suppression was mostly due to the small funding provided by the programme but also to the complex governance process which grants other Italian actors a final opinion over such decisions. A similar case at hand would derive from the EU institutions call for all European programmes to invest into immigration-related activities due to the refugee crisis. Even when Malta was willing to discuss such a delicate issue at cross-border level, the Italian authorities would retain total control over such competence. In addition, when a pilot cross-border project established an agreement between the two islands in terms of mutual assistance and disaster relief (SIMIT project), the pact between the two civic protections still required the step-in of Italian national authorities for the final ratification. Of course, the line of reasoning conducted thus far should not imply a lack of operativity in the SAF. In providing such list of obstacles, we can understand that the official Functionality of the Field is compromised by a set of structural obstacles that limit at present time the potential Effectiveness of the SAF for reaching its full potential in the CBC processes. However, this has not prevented the Italy-Malta programme to fund 23 cross-border projects for the 2007-2013 period, providing in some cases some examples of successful cooperation for the development of common solutions to specific problematics in both islands. To name but a few, take the case of the VAMOS SEGURO project based on the construction of a cross-border surveillance system for the Etna volcano's activity (even acknowledged in 2013 by the EC as a European best practice in the risk prevention sector); the PROMED, VINENERGY and T-CHEESIMAL initiatives on the improvement of local products such as cheeses and wines through greener technologies; the IMAGENX cross-border medical research network dedicated to interesting advancements in the fight against breast cancer; finally, the CALYPSO project aiming at the construction of a cross-border antennae system for the monitoring of oil spillage in the Channel of Malta, which is now being considered for replication in the maritime Italy-France INTERREG in the Northern Mediterranean. While some among academic and institutional circles may informally hold doubts over the real effectiveness of a cross-border region with a maritime border generating indirect proximity, we strongly consider that the added value provided by such initiatives should still be appreciated in its capacity to push actors from both sides to pursue innovative solutions to common problems.

*Insufficient Shocks and Isolated Challengers: completing the SAF mapping.*

One of the most interesting features of SAF theory proceeds from the identification of the relationships of power, as well as their shifts and evolutions, between Incumbents and the so-called Challengers to the existing status quo. When considering the case of a strongly institutionalized INTERREG programme sponsored by European funding, a first level of analysis may rashly conclude that there is no space here for altering the balance among the participating actors. Indeed, none of the individual episodes listed below effectively managed to do so by the end of the contentions. However, after identifying the shocks and the very few Challengers of the SAF, we will still suggest in the conclusions an alternative vision to the Field that may help to break its current order in the Border Region. To produce this section, we do not only refer to



the institutional interviews already exploited above, but we extend the range to other interventions provided by different actors when realizing the field work (Sicilian Regional Assembly Members and the Consul of Malta in Catania).

In pursuing events that could summon episodes of contention in the Field, we identified four weak episodes of shock in the SAF, two of which endogenous, thus happening inside the existing structures, and two exogenous, external to the Incumbents and Governance Units. The first endogenous shock to partially shake the balance of the SAF was represented in the death of the previous Coordinator of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme Dr. Antonio Piceno in February 2016. Appealing to the features of SAF theory, Mr. Piceno can be identified as an individual whose Social Skill was instrumental in establishing the INTERREG programme. In the praising words of his own colleague:

*“We are what we are nowadays thanks to him [...]. It was always his expertise, and even before the Italy-Malta programme, he was director of the special office for international cooperation taking care of projects in developing countries. When he started dealing with cross-border themes, he already knew what it was all about [...]. He surely avoided the intromission of local politics into our programmes [...].”*

(INTERREG Local Authorities, Personal Communication, April 2017)

The importance of the role assumed by Mr. Piceno thus reflected significantly in the daily operations of the Governance Units of the SAF. His death, accordingly, brought to a slowdown of the OP's activities during months and a consequential restructuring of the positions in the JS. Despite so, the loss of a founding father of the programme was not enough of a shock as to bring down the strong institutional agreements which himself had contributed to begin. The second endogenous shock identified represents an interesting case breaking up with the traditional SAF rhetoric, in-so-far as it shows us that even inside the coalition of Incumbents some degree of contention is possible. According to the sources, once begun the draft negotiations for the 2014-2020 period, the Maltese government informally began questioning whether the time had arrived for a switch of the Managing Authority role to a fully Europeanized Malta. The shock never reached the form of a political debate, and it was rather quelled by maintaining the current status quo through a settlement between the two Incumbents. Among generical conditions, however, an interesting one was the employment of a fourth possible member of the JS to be secured by a Maltese national. At the time of writing, such condition has been impossible to fulfill despite two job proposals due to a lack of applications from Maltese citizens. It seems most likely that a third job proposal would also include applications from Italian personnel.

In terms of exogenous shocks, on the other hand, we firstly identified a future development in the Field which is still uncertain in its effects but that may induce significant transformations in the SAF. Referring to the fundamental dependence of the Italo-Maltese Field on EU-based decisions, some among the INTERREG local authorities expressed concern over the post-2020 negotiations producing a significantly reduced European budget. Many factors could influence such choice: Malta's final exit from the priority 1 target of funding due to its prosperous recent development; a further Cohesion funding redistribution more oriented towards Eastern Europe; the absence of British quotas due to Brexit; finally, certain preliminary discussions among Brussels INTERREG authorities for a reduction and merging of programmes by exiting the one border equals one OP logic. The extent of the shock clearly remains unknown at the time of writing, but especially in the last considerations there is indeed potential for an unprecedented shift in the current balance of the SAF. Finally, this research was instrumental in discovering a fascinating, although unfruitful, double attempt to establish further governance platforms in the cross-border area. This last exogenous shock that tried to bring changes to the Field was produced around 2011-2012 on both sides of the border, but the two attempts were left in the preliminary stages and too weak to produce significant changes. On the Sicilian side, the Regional Assembly Deputy Massimo Ferrara from the Italian *Partito Democratico (PD)* counted upon the assistance of Dr. Antonio Matasso, a university professor who had previously collaborated in projects related to the Tyrol-South Tyrol Euroregion in Northern Italy. Understanding the benefits of an advanced euroregional structure in European CBC processes, Mr. Ferrara politically backed Dr. Matasso's proposal for submitting draft legislation on a Sicily-Malta Euroregion. Unfortunately, the project utterly failed to impress the political groups of the Sicilian Assembly. Following the line of reasoning already cited in the previous section, the interviewed openly criticized the lack of vision beyond the daily routines of the regional parliament connected to the Government, hence dealing more with regional budgets and political stability rather than European strategies. The same fate happened one year later, when the Maltese Consul in Catania hosted the visit of a Maltese Minister informally interested in proposing to the city of Catania a more locally based cross-border cooperation platform between the two islands. Once again, such proposal never left the realm of idle talks, and apparently neither the Deputy and his assistant nor the Maltese functionary (whose name was not eventually cited) were even aware of each other's intentions. The last shock analyzed, no matter how weak in its intent, is still of high significance due to its revealing task of showing the *very few and isolated Challengers* to the current Italo-Maltese SAF. In their actions, a will to try and introduce new Governance Units in the Field is clearly detected as to promote increased Effectiveness for the SAF. Unfortunately, their current situation places them in an unfavorable position where alterations of the status quo may initially seem unlikely. The full mapping of the INTERREG Italy-Malta SAF (as showed in Figure 2) provides a clear scenario in which the Field is "crystallized" in the perpetual dependence from the INTERREG programme dynamics and channelized into a strict top-down process. In such a context, decisions taken at Incumbents level are then directly transmitted to the Governance Units which implement them through granting resources to the Field Participants for the realization of the strategy through individual

cross-border projects. In the current interpretation of the Italo-Maltese Field, the isolated Challengers appear completely alien to the dynamics and cut out from the SAF cycle.

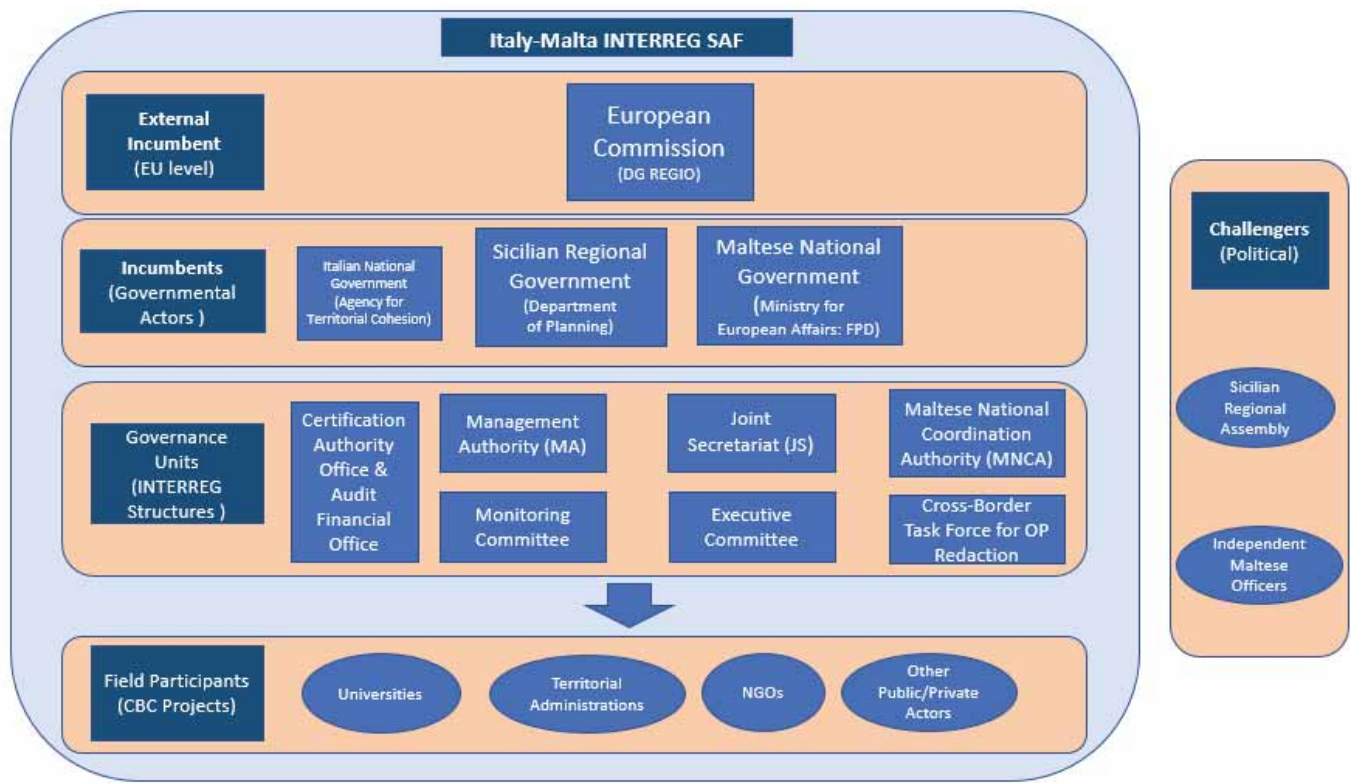


Figure 2 - Structure of the INTERREG Italy-Malta SAF (Source: Author's Elaboration)

*Conclusions: Expanding SAF theory and formulating an alternative strategy between Challengers and “Field Participants”*

From a theoretical point of view, the application of the SAF framework to the features of the INTERREG Italy-Malta OP has proved to possess strong analytical potential in identifying both the power relations and the collective roles of all the actors involved in the CBC governance processes. Indeed, the analysis has helped to generate the picture of a Field currently “crystallized” in its current dynamics. By acknowledging the origins of the CBC processes in the opportunities provided by the establishment of a European programme, the Governments of the two islands acquired full Incumbents status under the guidance of the Commission as external Incumbent and sponsor of the process. Furthermore, the Incumbents rely on official INTERREG structures acting as shock-resistant Governance Units which are not disturbed by the few and isolated political Challengers cut off from the daily operations of the SAF. However, this research was also instrumental in highlighting some limitations of the theory which were adjusted by conceptually expanding the scope of the framework. Firstly, SAF theory did not provide the necessary tools for evaluating the purposes behind the formation and daily operations of a SAF field (*Field Functionality*); secondly, it did not

show sufficient interest in underlining the potential obstacles that may be hindering full capacity of the Field (*Field Effectiveness*), thus providing rationale to the Challengers for contention. Finally, when considering the specific case of a SAF analysis made up of public actors entrusted with territorial mandates *and* the financial capacity to mobilize other agents for the purposes of the Field, new conceptual focus was required in order to evaluate the presence of what we decided to term as *Field Participants*. As a matter of fact, in the analysis of CBC dynamics it is common to find public and private agents external to the governance processes of the Field and yet contributing to its *Effectiveness* through the execution of CBC projects; these are in turn necessary for the fulfilment of general strategies and thus of the Fields' *Functionalities*. Clearly, the presence of such actors must also be considered when observing the potential role that these may play in the Field's development. Indeed, in the following conclusions on the Siculo-Maltese case we draw upon all such reflections and thus suggest that the current status quo may not be the only possible scenario for the cross-border cooperation between the two Mediterranean islands. In SAF terminology, the biggest issue that currently prevents a shift in the power dynamics resides in the exclusion and lack of organizational support of the individual Challengers. Two main theoretical solutions are finally proposed for increasing the *Effectiveness* of the Field.

In the first place, an ontological separation must be considered in breaking off from the pure INTERREG-driven logic that permeates the whole process. The analysis carried out on this chapter implicitly assumed that the concept of a Cross-Border Region Sicily-Malta SAF had to be one and the same with the SAF of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme. While this may be true for the moment, the exit from a proto-euroregional stage purely based on INTERREG structures and the introduction of a political cross-border governance platform may indeed be key to reintroducing the Challengers in the game. By extending the dimension of the Field itself beyond the requirements of the INTERREG, new spaces for cross-border action would be opened as to increase the SAF's *Effectiveness*. The presence of a new euroregional structure would therefore be instrumental in trying to downplay the European funding exploitation scenario and to bring a renovated strategy towards the vision of an integrated European island border region. At the very least, the solution would provide a multilevel governance framework for a much-increased debate among Sicilian and Maltese actors for alignment of policies beyond individual CBC projects. Furthermore, and in relation to what discussed above, Challengers should not stand as they are in such an isolated context and without a strong Coalition behind them granting them authority in the quest for further acknowledgement. Thanks to the opportunities for participation provided in euroregional structures, there is indeed space for bringing membership to a wide array of public and private actors for further involvement in a cross-border scenario. Ideally, the initial process should push towards a quest for new allies among those who already possess expertise in cross-border planning. No better candidates are present now than the most successful *Field Participants* who already executed cross-border experiences in the area. For example, in the great majority of the 2007-2013 projects, Universities played a fundamental role in establishing successful projects and basing the cooperation on solid links forged in the academic world and pre-dating the INTERREG opportunities. Following the model of other multilevel euroregions, it is also easy

to considerate a deeper inclusion of public territorial actors, especially on the much larger Sicilian island. Involving the presence of the most active municipalities (such as the richer Catania and Palermo), revitalizing the role of the stranded Sicilian provinces who recently underwent partial reform or involving the historically significant local authorities from Malta may just be some of the possible options at hand. Standing in the current crystallized scenario, Siculo-Maltese CBC may well continue being downplayed as a smaller secondary addition in the bigger financial amounts of the ERDF. In our view, it is now up to new socially skilled individuals to break the SAF's glass, generate the ordinary SAF's shift dynamics and create new pro-active Coalitions of Challengers capable of imposing a renovated political project for the Cross-Border Region Sicily-Malta.

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## 9. Publication 5

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### Abstract

This article seeks to advance the current debate on the ‘archipelagic turn’ described by island studies. It does so by answering the call for further analysis of island-to-island relations (Stratford et al., 2011) through applying existing historical methodology with the identification of island movements (Pugh, 2013) between archipelagic islands. Firstly, it proposes the application of an adapted method by combining Fernand Braudel’s historical durations (Longue Durée) (1972) with an original attempt of island movements’ classification; this is done to conceive a triple-level historical analysis (Long, Medium and Short Term) of islands belonging to archipelagos. Secondly, this article hints at the possibility for island territories inside the European Union to translate archipelagic visions into viable policies by means of European Territorial Cooperation strategies as provided by the European institutional framework. Such arguments are then supported by comparative analysis proving the existence of an archipelago between the islands of Sicily and Malta. In our case study, we both apply the triple-level methodology and suggest that the exploitation of European Cross-Border Cooperation instruments and strategies (such as the Euroregion) could be highly useful for the recovery of a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago vision.

### Keywords

Archipelagos, cross-border cooperation, Euroregions, islands, Longue Durée, Malta, Sicily

## Envisioning the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago: a Braudelian inspired triple-level analysis of a European cross-border region

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### Introduction

This article seeks to advance the current debate on the 'archipelagic turn' described by island studies. It does so by answering the call for further analysis of *island-to-island relations* (Stratford et al., 2011) through applying existing historical methodology with the identification of *island movements* (Pugh, 2013) between archipelagic islands. Firstly, it proposes the application of an adapted method by combining Fernand Braudel's historical durations (*Longue Durée*) (1972) with an original attempt of island movements' classification; this is done to conceive a triple-level historical analysis (*Long, Medium and Short Term*) of islands belonging to archipelagos. Secondly, this article hints at the possibility for island territories inside the European Union

to translate archipelagic visions into viable policies by means of European Territorial Cooperation strategies as provided by the European institutional framework. Such arguments are then supported by comparative analysis proving the existence of an archipelago between the islands of Sicily and Malta. In our case study, we both apply the triple-level methodology and suggest that the exploitation of European *Cross-Border Cooperation* instruments and strategies (such as the Euroregion) could be highly useful for the recovery of a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago vision. Throughout the article, the case study provides a useful testing ground for our methodology while theoretical insights provide context for reinterpreting the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago area.

In the first section, we build the basis of our methodology inspired by a theoretical framework of archipelago-related theories and historical insights from Braudel's *Longue Durée*. The following three sections are devoted to each of the three durations proposed for our case study (*Long, Medium and Short*). Thereafter, we proceed to discuss the application of a 'Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago' conceptualization over the current Sicilian-Maltese cross-border area. Finally, we draw some necessary conclusions on the implications derived from the article.

### **Theoretical framework and methodology**

In their contribution to the development of archipelago theories, Stratford et al. (2011) indicate three main dimensions for studying islands: a) islands embedded in their insularity as lands surrounded by water; b) islands in comparative disadvantage with a mainland often exercising territorial jurisdictions and imposing normative values upon them; and c) islands in relation to other surrounding islands (archipelagos), often seen as an alternative disrupting the first two predominant views (Stratford et al., 2011). However, despite the original proposals included in their work, the authors continue to agree with the original claim from Lewis & Wigen (1997) portraying the Archipelago as one of the least-examined metageographical contexts. This does not necessarily indicate a previous lack of theorization. The early concept of 'Archipelagraphy' as presented by DeLoughrey (2001, 2007) already identifies it as an alternative historiography, considering chains of islands as a more appropriate metaphor for reading into island realities. It involves a process of dislocation and de-territorialization, constituting a new viewing platform that perceives them anew (DeLoughrey, 2001, 2007; Stratford et al., 2011, p. 114). A complementary definition also sees the process as an exploration of alternative cultural geographies and alternative performances, representations and experiences of islands (Stratford et al., 2011). Jonathan Pugh (2013) brings the reasoning even further by trying to define the key element shaping archipelagic visions, thus placing an emphasis on *how* islands act in concert. He benefits from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1986) to define *island movements* as "fluid cultural processes, sites of abstract and material relations, of movement and rest, dependent upon changing conditions of articulation or connection" (Pugh, 2013, p. 11). Furthermore, he identifies them as generative and interconnecting spaces of metamorphosis, material practices, culture, and politics.

The final objectives behind such reconfiguration have also been identified by proponents of archipelago conceptualizations. Whether the purpose lies in: a) identifying relational paradigms that transcend the current status quo and unveil the biases of dominant relations (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 124); b) delineating an island community across multiple jurisdictions (Hau'ofa, 1993); or c) developing a collective identity for strengthening



marketing, branding, exports and the “suggestive” character of a common islands region (Stratford et al., 2011, p. 123), all resolutions ultimately indicate a will to “locate vantage points [for archipelagos] that give one a wider horizon” (Sengupta, 2004, p. 1). Despite the abundance of good intentions and theoretical definitions, however, we claim that there are two gaps in the specialized literature regarding the application of archipelagic visions. More specifically, this research identifies one *ex ante* and one *ex post* vacuum in the archipelago conceptualization. First, at *ex ante* level, it is not clear specifically *how* island movements should be methodologically identified, assessed and measured in a specific case study. Pugliese (2011) offers a reinterpretation of a previous definition of Brathwaite by quoting ‘tidalectics’ as the analysis of material, cultural, and psychological island processes. In his words, the analysis of islands’ histories and practices can provide new “technologies for un-islanding” (Pugliese, 2011, p. 148). Notwithstanding, proponents of archipelagic studies often prefer to leave ample choice for creativity in new lines of research without considering a specific set of guidelines. Second, at *ex post* level, the real challenge for academics dedicated to the conceptualization of island-to-island relations lies in the capacity to motivate island actors towards common archipelagic policies. Especially considering the multiple national jurisdictions to which many archipelagos are today exposed, it does not take long to see the hardships involved in empowering local actors towards joint actions for the benefit of all component islands.

On the methodological level, our research goals pointed to a multi-perspective analysis of islands which could combine the many fields characterizing a territory beyond its *histoire événementielle* (history of events). Investigation regarding pre-existing methodologies soon led to Fernand Braudel’s (1972) celebrated work on *The Mediterranean*. Of relevance were his desire to repair the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century break between history and social sciences and the formal introduction of the concepts of *Long, Medium and Short Durations* (or *Terms*) of history as three separate yet intertwining levels of analysis (Canto Mayén, 2012). Indeed, most of the principles associated with his *Longue Durée* methodology resonate with the goals of archipelago proponents. *Longue Durée* history allows one to “step outside of the confines of national history and ask about the rise of long-term complexes over many decades, centuries or even millennia” (Armitage & Guldi, 2015a, p. 222). It is a methodology connected to changing questions of scale by holding the power of persuasion and promoting conversation about social change (Armitage & Guldi, 2015a, p. 244). The longevity of the theory spawned critical reflections which are also embraced by this research. The rejection of the original *Longue Durée* vision of history as interlocked in historical and economic cycles and often described as a prison constitutes one such example (Armitage & Guldi, 2015b, p. 18); so, too, are the dangers presented by the development of ‘dirty’ *Longue Durée* studies in the second part of the 20<sup>th</sup> century by think tanks and NGOs at the service of positivist international institutions. Their impoverished array of historical evidence and broad-gauge conclusions often resulted in oversimplifications disregarded and rejected by historians from the 1960s onwards, rather focusing on ‘microhistory’ narratives (Armitage & Guldi, 2015b, p. 28-29). However, this article ultimately agrees with the renewed focus expressed by Armitage and Guldi (2014) on the return of a revived *Longue Durée*. We adhere to their request for the fusion of short and long durations as a dialogue between past and present while also looking toward the future. We believe in its potential accessibility to non-specialized readers, and that by creating bridges among past and present, it is possible to uncover moments of continuity and rupture. Indeed,



we carry forward a shared vision of the *Longue Durée* as a dynamic, flexible, and critical tool to dismantle established narratives and institutions in place (Armitage & Guldi, 2014).

However, precisely to avoid incurring accusations of 'dirty' *Longue Durée*, it is important to acknowledge the limitations produced by the crossing of such a historically oriented methodology with island studies. The model hereby proposed is limited in both extension and scope and, as such, will be successful in highlighting certain shared aspects of archipelagos while obscuring other differences. It deliberately focuses on certain typologies of island movements while necessarily ignoring other aspects such as ecology and daily life, which were, indeed, aspects of history with which Braudel himself was deeply concerned. Therefore, in our combination of the *Longue Durée* with a renewed outlook sought by archipelagic visions (Pugh, 2013, pp. 12–14), the *long-term* analysis becomes a necessary focus on the geohistorical and geographical conditions of territories throughout their event histories. The *medium-term* one, which is deliberately represented by the alteration of historical cycles of political and cultural dominations shaping islandic populations, is fundamental in the discovery of movements of connection or separation between islands as well as the appreciation of the metamorphosis of island cultures in relation to each other (Pugh, 2013, pp. 14–19). Finally, in the *Short-Term* analysis, we further test the methodology in relation to a 'short' period by intentionally focusing on the most recent history of the two islands of Sicily and Malta (1945–2018). This final section also provides essential historical background for our *ex post* conceptualization.

The revived *Longue Durée* and new archipelagic outlooks also inspire our desire to pursue solutions in the *ex post* gap in island studies. In this regard, the research hints at the existence of a window of opportunity for European islands within the framework of the European Union (EU). Discourses regarding different interpretations of neighbouring territories are, in fact, appreciated in the academic literature analyzing European Territorial Cooperation policies and more specifically Cross-Border Cooperation practices (e.g., Popescu, 2008; Noferini et al., 2019). Furthermore, at an institutional level, the EU actively pursues European territorial cohesion by providing funding and policy instruments such as the INTERREG cooperation programmes or by sponsoring joint governance agreements. This consequentially translates into the definition of cross-border regions also acknowledged in the presence of a maritime border. Under this framework, we consider there to be common grounds between the finalities of an archipelagic vision and the creation of cross-border strategies for common development between the EU's bordering islands. Thus, while the primary target of this research is related to methodological advances in the identification of archipelagos as described in the field of island studies, the results of the three-terms analysis may potentially become a roadmap for policymakers in the consolidation of archipelagic visions.

All the above thus justifies the selection of Sicily and Malta as an ideal case study for the application of the proposed methodology. In terms of the necessity for an archipelagic reconfiguration, the design of a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago can *de facto* break through the understanding of Sicily as the perpetual 'Italy's Island Other' (Agnew, 2000) while reconnecting Malta outside of its relative isolation as a small and sovereign but resource-limited island state on the southern periphery of Europe (Cassar et al., 2008). Furthermore, both islands belong to the framework of the EU, hence fulfilling the second criteria necessary for theorization on *ex post* action.

### **Long-term analysis: Sicily and Malta as a Mediterranean archipelago**

The first step of the *Long-Term* analysis lies in the definition of the physical unit and its island components. Thus, the envisioned area would be constituted by the two main islands of Sicily and Malta while also including the surrounding waters and the smaller island clusters administratively belonging to the two parent islands (the Aeolian, Egadi, and Pelagian islands on the Sicilian side and Gozo and Comino on the Maltese side; see Figure 1). Within the scope of this article, we mainly aim for a revived conceptualization of territorial issues which can break free of traditional grand narratives. This is done in accordance with new trends favouring a more relational view of space rather than fixed territorial containers (Pugh, 2013, pp. 13-14) defined by national boundaries and sovereignty. To complete such a task, we identify two variables in our reasoning about Sicily and Malta: a) general issues as European and Mediterranean islands in a shared geographical location; and b) archipelagic issues borne of territorial proximity.



**Figure 1:** Map of the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago produced using GIS Software. *Source:* Own elaboration.

In the general assessment of the two islands, perhaps the most immediate shared feature is found in their belonging to the larger family of Mediterranean islands. From a socio-historical point of view, Mediterranean islands experienced isolation as a very relative

phenomenon outside of traditional narratives. Their integration into shipping routes and in the territorial struggles of their time interlocked them in a dual dynamic between either 'archaism or innovation'. Involvement and internationalization through such interactions, as well as their refusal to participate in such dynamics by seeking shelter inland to preserve traditions, became two sides of the same coin. Accordingly, so did their economic markets when considering the capitalist exploitation of islands by foreign powers but also the opportunity of making a reputation through dominating large Mediterranean trade segments (Braudel, 1972, pp. 148-157; cf. Lopasic, 2001).

Beyond history, however, modern institutional and academic literature has focused much on sets of common issues deriving from anthropogenic impacts on the landscape of Mediterranean islands. In a broad categorization, these are related as much in terms of exploitation of natural resources (e.g., agricultural landmarks, land commercialization and expanding urbanization, excessive water demands) as they are to contemporary pressures related to globalization and neoliberal capitalism (e.g., pressure from tourism but also the need for modern infrastructure and services to improve trade and general accessibility) (Papayannis & Sorotou, 2008, pp. 85-94). Further insight is provided by studies funded by the EU. In addition to clear imbalances in of all Southern Europe's islands in terms of economic performance relative to comparable mainland regions, all European islands deal with similar issues regarding: a) vulnerability to climate change and environmental threats (Dodds & Kelman, 2008; Nichols & Hoozemans, 1996); b) poor education levels (leading to difficulty in transitioning from traditional activities to more innovation-based activities) (EUROISLANDS, 2013); and, most significantly, c) the perverse effects of insularity. Due to geographic limitations, their economic attractiveness is always lower when compared to the mainland, and this translates into further disadvantages: d) the impossibility of creating functional economies of scale (impeding the development of greater accessibility and lower transport costs); e) the inability to profit from agglomeration externalities; and, finally, f) the prevention of conversion to sustainable development practices (Briguglio, 1995; Cordina & Farrugia, 2005; EURISLES, 2002; EUROISLANDS, 2013; Moncada et al., 2010; Musotto, 2007).

While it is true that these issues may represent an obstacle to development, a growing strand of literature has sought to counter arguments on islands' disadvantages by reshaping development-oriented definitions of concepts such as 'vulnerability' and 'resilience' (Kelman, 2019). By embracing new views on relationality and empowering discourses, island scholars rightfully warn against excessive prejudice in policymaking and suggest alternative ways of interpreting island realities (Baldacchino, 2018; Chandler & Pugh, 2018). When considering further interpretations which go beyond the island development debate, our case study provides interesting elements for the elaboration of an alternative outlook on the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago. For example, the geographic limitations and lack of hinterlands of the small island of Malta are today compensated by its national sovereignty and its average economic performance vis-à-vis other EU member states. In turn, Sicily's structural issues as an economically lagging island region are a product of its history and are only partially due to its condition of insularity. This becomes rather clear when considering its strong proximity to the Italian peninsula, the richness in natural resources derived from its large size, and its special statute for political autonomy (which could, in principle, allow for greater policy intervention). Beyond individual differences, therefore, it is possible to appreciate several commonalities in island issues affecting the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago space (see Table 1).



In relation to territorial proximity, an initial geographical comparison would only seem to underline differences rather than commonalities between two islands separated by such narrow distance (the approximately 92 km strait of sea called the Malta Channel). With its 25,708 km<sup>2</sup>, Sicily is easily the largest island in the Mediterranean, and its geomorphology allows for a diversified weather regime defined by its mountains, rivers, plains, hills, and long stretches of accessible coastline. The opposite is true for the much-smaller Malta. The Maltese archipelago has a total land area of just 316 km<sup>2</sup>, and its mostly hilly terrain is accompanied by shallow valleys and sheltered natural harbours immersed in a semi-arid climate (Bonanno, 2006, pp. 27–28). However, it is due to such differences that a primordial connection is spawned between the two territories in terms of a territorial dependency of the smaller upon the larger. The state of dependency has been shifting over the centuries due to precise political and historical conditions (see following sections). However, already in prehistoric times, geological evidence suggests that Sicily and Malta were geographically connected by marine regression, resulting in much shared flora and fauna (Cassar et al., 2008, p. 304). Many accounts of Sicilian history remain silent on its relationship with Malta, yet no Maltese reference work can escape narrations of the economic and mobility relationships of the two islands' inhabitants. Even in recent times, European strategies lay the groundwork for a Sicily-Malta submarine interconnector granting energy supply to the small island state (4cOffshore, 2015). Furthermore, considering the recent Eurozone crisis, a reverse trend has been developing in which many Sicilians transfer to the smaller adjacent island to invest in new (mostly food service) businesses in a more favourable economic environment (The Independent, 2015).

When considering more strategic arguments, both Sicily and Malta are identically—yet individually—identified as crossroads that traditionally separates the East and the West as well as the Southern Mediterranean and the Northern Mediterranean (e.g., Blouet, 1997, p. 11; Braudel, 1972, p. 133; Goodwin, 2002, p. 27). Furthermore, it would be conceptually false to claim that the strategic importance of these islands has been lessened by globalization. For example, the European TEN-T transport strategy identifies the presence of a 'Motorway of the Sea of South-West Europe', which includes passage through the Malta Channel (European Commission, 2018a). At the same time, in the contested definition of spatialities, both Sicily and Malta have seen themselves identified as 'Southern Gates' at the periphery of the EU, which have become a hotspot in the EU's 'migration crisis' and spawned an intense debate between national political authorities. There are thus numerous shared attributes within the envisioned Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago space (Table 1). Back to the field of island studies, Stratford et al. (2011, p. 118) coherently mention the risks of erasure faced by archipelagic visions through individual descriptions of islands that reduce them to single entities. In the case of the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago, this process is noticeable due to the historical shifts in policy level for regional issues at the national and later the European scale. We will refer to such episodes of rupture in archipelagic relations in the following sections.

**Table 1:** Long-term analysis of multiple common territorial issues for a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago area. *Source:* Own elaboration.

	<b>Mediterranean/European Island Issues (Geographical Location)</b>	<b>Common Archipelagic Issues (Proximity)</b>
<b>Autonomous Island Region of Sicily (Italy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous island region of Italy</li> <li>• Largest island in Mediterranean, resource rich, varied landscape</li> <li>• Reduced insularity effect (proximity to mainland Italy)</li> <li>• Objective 1 region of Cohesion Policy (lagging region in the EU framework)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediterranean environmental features and their preservation (biota)</li> <li>• Safeguarding joint maritime area (Malta Channel and surrounding Mediterranean)</li> <li>• Strategic positioning at the centre of Mediterranean Sea (economic trade routes)</li> <li>• Strategic energy connections (electricity, gas, etc.) of the smaller to the larger island's power grids</li> <li>• Southern periphery gateway to the EU (relationship with Mediterranean non-EU countries, refugee issues)</li> <li>• Mediterranean cultural heritage</li> <li>• Cross-border direct economic and population flows</li> </ul>
<b>Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading roles and multiple commonalities in Mediterranean history</li> <li>• Vulnerability to climate change and environmental threats</li> <li>• Geographic location far from European functional economies of scale (impossibility to tag along with agglomeration externalities)</li> <li>• Poor education levels</li> <li>• Difficulty achieving sustainability</li> </ul>	
<b>Island Republic of Malta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sovereign island state</li> <li>• Small, limited natural resources, unvaried landscape</li> <li>• Classic insularity effect</li> <li>• One of the best average economies of the Mediterranean EU</li> </ul>	

**Medium-term analysis: common origins but different destinies in the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago**

Let us now turn our attention to the *medium-term* analysis of the two island components. In this second section, we proceed to classify the histories of Sicily and Malta according to the cycles of foreign dominations that have impacted the two territories at different times. In advance of the analysis, it must be acknowledged that many historical sources focus exclusively on Italo-Maltese relations at the national level. Original research on Sicilian-Maltese relations is rare, and often refers to partial timelines or specific events in their joint history (e.g. Bonanno & Militello, 2008). This has led to two separate reconstructions, elaborated through some of the most distinctive accounts of the two islands. Eventually, we decided to mainly refer to research that led to the identification of island movements by granting deeper insight into the material, cultural, and psychological processes of each unit. Thus, having consulted

a variety of works on the history of Sicily (including Correnti, 2002; Di Matteo, 2006; Hamel, 2011; Renda, 2003), we eventually selected Mack Smith and Finley (1968) and Schneider and Schneider (1976) as main references for the island region. Likewise, in the field of Maltese history, the works of Blouet (1997) and Goodwin (2002) were also selected out of the exploration of a larger collection of anthologies (Cassar, 2000; Castillo, 2005; Murray Ballou, 1893). Finally, we decided to stop the timeline of the *medium-term* analysis at the time of creation of the Maltese state. This is done by explicitly considering the time framework between the consolidation of a Sicilian autonomous region (1946) and the declaration of independence of the Maltese archipelago (1964) as the apex of rupture in archipelagic relations between the two components.

The analysis derived from the observation of the comparative timeline allows us to divide the resulting relational history of the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago into two main phases. Specifically, we classify an *Age of Continuity* (c. 5000 BC-AD 1524) embedded in mutual relations and developed through the presence of common foreign dominations as opposed to an *Age of Rupture* (1524-1964) with diminished relations and different dominations of the two islands. Like Baldacchino (2015, pp. 89-90), we identify the main moment of rupture between the two ages as the decision by Charles V of Spain to grant Malta to the Knights of St John. This religious yet military-oriented Order had a strong heritage of heroic chivalry from the time of the Crusades and thus had the respect (and wealth) of many powerful European families. The request for new headquarters to the Spanish ruler was a result of the Order's expulsion from the island of Rhodes after a Turkish siege. The monarch therefore saw an opportunity to donate a small yet symbolically important territory for the Knights to administer independently, although officially under the Kingdom's sovereignty. Following a well-established trend known to scholars of island studies, the jurisdictional rupture of the larger Kingdom of Sicily was decided by an external and distant ruler, setting the political trajectory of the two islands on two separate tracks.

In addition to this event, we claim that there have been up to three historical moments within the *Age of Rupture*, which managed to distance the components of the archipelago even further. These are: a) the aforementioned granting of Malta to the Knights of the Order of St John by Charles V; b) the British presence in the Mediterranean through their subsequent occupation of Malta from 1800 onward (and the failure to introduce a new constitutional order in Sicily during the same period); and c) the establishment of a Maltese sovereign island state and the institutionalization of Sicily as an autonomous region of Italy in the mid-20<sup>th</sup> century.

We endeavoured further elucidation by compiling a list of relational features within the histories of the two islands. As part of the proposed methodology, we classified island movements according to five typologies: a) presence of foreign dominations; b) economic features; c) culture and identity; d) society and social class; and e) political culture and regimes. Such classification work was inspired by the aforementioned work of Schneider and Schneider (1976) in their multi-perspective analysis of Sicilian history. Finally, in accordance with each typology, across all the historical ages, we distinguished the shared features in the history of the two islands (*Movements of Connection*) and the specific events or processes that developed only in either one of the two sides (*Movements of Separation*). The resulting schematization can be observed in Table 2 below.



**Table 2:** Medium-term analysis of Movements of Connection and Separation between the histories of Sicily and Malta. Source: Own elaboration.

	<b>Movements of Connection</b>	<b>Movements of Separation</b>
<b>Foreign Dominations</b>	Age of Continuity (5.000 BC-ca. AD 1530): Sicani and Siculi, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantine, Arabian, Norman, Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese, Spanish	Age of Rupture (AD 1530-AD 1964): Spanish, Bourbon, Italian (Sicily); Order of the Knights of Saint John, French, British (Malta)
<b>Economic Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common lack of historical industrial activities until 19<sup>th</sup> century</li> <li>• Archipelagic islands as common trade routes at heart of the Mediterranean</li> <li>• Wealthy elites, the Church, and later the government as largest employers</li> <li>• Strong migration waves to escape the islands' conditions (Age of Rupture)</li> <li>• Cross-border mobility and inter-island trade flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in natural resources, historical dependence of the smaller upon the larger (until late Age of Rupture)</li> <li>• Sicily mainly dedicated to agricultural sector throughout its history, in a capitalist exploitation system (latifundism)</li> <li>• In Age of Rupture, Malta is economically strengthened in trade both under the Knights (goods and slaves) and through the British shipyard industries</li> </ul>
<b>Culture &amp; Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediterranean culture traits forged by the common dominations in the Age of Continuity</li> <li>• Strong Christian influence since Medieval times</li> <li>• Common 'islander' awareness of the particularity of their own insular conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language: Semitic Maltese and English vs. Latin Sicilian and Italian. Yet strong influence in the vocabulary from the larger island to the smaller.</li> <li>• Malta: mix of Mediterranean culture with Anglo-Saxon traditions</li> </ul>
<b>Society &amp; Social Classes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional and Mediterranean societies (cultural codes, 'honour' as fundamental value, concept of shame, gender segregation, 'friendship' networks)</li> <li>• Small number of elites ruling over the masses</li> <li>• Petit bourgeoisie incapable of prompting major cultural change</li> <li>• Illiteracy for the poorer masses (until 20<sup>th</sup> century)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malta: foreign dominations from the Age of Rupture lead to better treatment of the Maltese; vassalage to the Knights (employing slavery for exploitation) and progressive administrative autonomy through the British Commonwealth</li> <li>• Sicily: During the late Age of Rupture, manifestation of the Mafia phenomenon</li> </ul>
<b>Political Culture &amp; Regimes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditionally conquered lands at the service of foreigners ('servants and masters')</li> <li>• Common administration throughout the Age of Continuity: viceroys and foreign administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malta: evolution in political culture through progressive political and administrative autonomy under the British, later opportunity for independence</li> <li>• Sicily: 'Gattopardian' elitist scenario until institutionalization of the Sicilian autonomous region</li> </ul>

The great majority of identified features support our initial distinction between an *Age of Continuity* and an *Age of Rupture*. During the first part of the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago's history, the presence of almost every Mediterranean-exploring civilization on both islands

produced resonating effects on all further typologies of *Movements of Connection*. Table 2 is thus instrumental in delivering the vision of an archipelago accustomed to the service of foreign administrators. It helps highlight the profile of traditional Mediterranean island societies developing under the same masters and through the deep influence of the Christian church. At the same time, it shows the impact that different political regimes have had over the economic and social development of the two territories.

However, the schematization is equally effective at illustrating the *Movements of Separation* between Sicily and Malta. It considers significant differences occurring even during the *Age of Continuity*. Fitting examples include the incomplete Latinization process in Malta due to a lack of real strategic interest from the Roman Empire (Blouet, 1997), as well as the geographical limitation of a small archipelago without agricultural potential, which also led to the avoidance of latifundism—that is, exploitation by large-scale agricultural actors. Most importantly, the movements of separation reinforce our argument regarding the rupture points in archipelagic relationships. Firstly, the arrival of the Knights of the Order of St John meant that Malta achieved a new level of economic prosperity economically fuelled by the wealth of European nobility. Secondly, despite the continued relationship of vassalage to foreign masters, the Maltese islands were discovering a new level of independence, which lifted their status relative to the larger adjacent island (Goodwin, 2002). Thirdly, the annexation of Malta by the British Empire largely refers to a political-cultural evolution process developed through progressive autonomy at the representative and administrative levels. The resulting mixture of Maltese and Mediterranean culture with Anglo-Saxon traditions would prompt deep changes, in stark contrast with a Sicilian counterpart locked in a 'Gattopardian' elitist scenario, itself dominated by an early capitalist and exploitative system (Mack Smith & Finley, 1968; Schneider & Schneider, 1976). Such considerations are also reinforced by recent research on patterns of island governance tied to their territorial history. Warrington and Milne's (2018) classification accounts for Malta being a fitting example of a foreign-protected *fortress* island while Sicily's despoliation at the hand of predatory elites depicts it as an archetypal *fief*. Eventually, the evolution of historical processes would lead to Sicily's annexation by Italy as an island region (1861) because of intellectual and military involvement in the campaign for Italian unification during the 19<sup>th</sup> century and to the acquisition of special administrative autonomy following the turmoil of the Second World War (1946). Malta, instead, would maintain its British status throughout the ensuing global conflicts up until the declaration of independence, in part due to the process of decolonization (1964).

#### **Short-term analysis: separate archipelagos heading for a common European framework**

As a final step in the proposed methodology, we now direct our attention to the most recent history of the two islands. We do so by establishing the period between 1945 and 2018 as the focus of our *Short-Term* analysis. Indeed, the overlap with the end of the *Medium-Term* is intended to emphasize the consequences that the third rupture point in archipelagic relations brings to the future development of the two islands: the establishment of different political and administrative systems represented the pursuit of very separate territorial and strategic agendas for the two islands. For Sicily, this has meant officially embracing its entrance into the realm of regional politics with a special autonomy statute within the Italian state. But it is



Malta that has experienced the biggest shift in territorial competences through universal recognition of sovereignty and entry into the realm of international relations.

The deeper implications behind the two political statuses required a corresponding adaptation of the *short-term* analysis' structure itself. As hinted at in the methodological explanation, we distanced ourselves from Braudel's idea of '*short-term* history' as the succession of quick events (Canto Mayén, 2012) and from merely producing two separate timelines outlining key events in Sicily's and Malta's histories. Instead, we chose to adapt the scope of the analysis for the purpose of identifying further island movements in our case study within a relatively 'short' timeframe. This was practically done by adapting the classification scheme proposed in the *medium-term* analysis. Firstly, we retained most of the island movement typologies identified earlier, but we replaced the foreign dominations occupying the two islands with the relationship between the island components and European institutions. Secondly, the diversity expressed by the two political statuses imposed a larger representation of the *Movements of Separation* by filtering the main features of their respective regional and national histories. To do so, we relied both on the sources already employed in the previous section and further literature dedicated to the history of the two islands (for Sicily, Leonardi, 2016; Menighetti & Nicastro, 2002; for Malta, Camonita, 2019; European Commission, 2018b; Harwood, 2014.). Thirdly, the table also provides a column identifying the *Movements of Connection* encountered during the selected period, although their recollection followed a different methodological approach and further consideration needs to be devoted to this section of the analysis.

The diverse focus on the *Movements of Connection* was mainly due to the varying scales of relations between the two island territories. On a European level, we already identified direct territorial exchanges stimulated by joint membership into a common supranational framework (e.g., infrastructural projects shown in the *long-term* analysis or the INTERREG cross-border cooperation programme). On a national level, in the table we referred to the presence of state-level relations such as the Italo-Maltese cooperation protocol of 1980 having significant economic consequences for Malta. However, many shared issues affecting the two islands (i.e., the recent migration crisis) are policy-dependent on the national dialogue between Rome and Valletta and are currently beyond Sicilian competences in our archipelagic conceptualization. Finally, at the regional level, the identification of modern cross-border flows between the two islands' inhabitants still represents uncharted territory for academia. To the best of our knowledge, only limited statistical attempts have been made by the INTERREG operational programme. Even then, the data available mainly consisted of territorial statistics regarding the cross-border area involved (Italy-Malta INTERREG, 2015), thereby excluding any qualitative attempt to identify a list of relevant cross-border issues. Many of these, however, are encountered in the everyday experience of practitioners of Siculo-Maltese relations. Such information was recently acquired through the interviewing of public and private stakeholders carried out as part of a larger research fieldwork dedicated to Sicily-Malta cross-border cooperation and the experience of the 2007-2013 INTERREG programme. For the purposes of the present article, we took the opportunity to include such additional information in the general analytical framework based upon secondary sources.

Finally, it is important to underline that the schematization represents a first attempt at classifying island movements between the two islands in accordance with a defined typology and within a triple-level analysis methodology. As such, on the one hand, we indicate the originality of the work and the lack of previous studies in multisectoral relational analyses of

Sicily and Malta in recent times. On the other hand, this research also acknowledges the limitations both in space and content on performing a more in-depth comparative history of the archipelagic components. Our proposed grid containing a selection of main features can be but a starting point of reference. However, the grid still provides essential historical background and relevant cross-border arguments for our *ex post* conceptualization in the following section of the paper. Thus, the results of the schematization can be consulted in Table 3 below.

**Table 3:** Short-term analysis of Movements of Connection and Separation between Sicily and Malta (1945–2018). *Source:* Own elaboration.

	<b>Movements of Separation (selected examples from sectoral histories of the two islands)</b>		<b>Movements of Connection (cross-border issues)</b>
	Autonomous Region of Sicily	Sovereign State of Malta	Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago
<b>Economic Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically an economically lagging region of Southern Italy ('Mezzogiorno' debate)</li> <li>'Modernization without development' process for Sicily (lack of endogenous development)</li> <li>Historical dependence on national public spending and extraordinary measures</li> <li>1950s-1960s: investments in heavy refinement industries (petrochemicals) and agriculture</li> <li>1970s onwards: surge in tertiary sector and public sector activity</li> <li>1970s-1980s: progressive economic privatization</li> <li>Strong investment stimulated by European funding</li> <li>Weak recovery from 2008 Eurocrisis: high unemployment and public debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1950s-1960s: UK's responsibility in reconstructing and diversifying the economy</li> <li>Post-independence, British rental of military facilities until 1979 (despite political clashes in 1970-1972)</li> <li>Strong industrial tradition in shipyards, yet a state-sustained economy</li> <li>1980s: Italo-Maltese protocol (new financial grants)</li> <li>1990-2004: Europeanization of Maltese economy (privatization, public sector reform, etc.)</li> <li>Post-EU accession: Cohesion policy funding</li> <li>Modern investments in financial services (post-EU accession)</li> <li>Quick recovery from Eurozone recession, dynamic and growing economy. Yet small size and limited resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishermen's encounters and informal coordination in the Malta Channel</li> <li>Commercial rivalry between boatyards and yacht repair services (unfair competition from Sicily)</li> <li>Tourism competition between the two islands. (Maltese exploitation of Sicilian heritage as excursion packages)</li> <li>Cruise tourism (both islands on Mediterranean routes)</li> <li>Historical retail tourism of Maltese to Catania (Sicily)</li> <li>Strong Maltese reliance on Sicilian agri-food sector</li> <li>Post-2008 factor: Increased migration tendency of Sicilians to Malta</li> <li>Regular transportation systems between the two islands ('Catamaran' ferry service, daily flights)</li> </ul>

<p><b>Culture &amp; Identity</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mass education and mass media (mostly television)</li> <li>• 'Italianization' of Sicily from 1960s onwards</li> <li>• Bilingualism (Italian as official language, Sicilian recognised only as local dialect)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Strong Maltese national feeling after WWII (further consolidating after independence)</li> <li>• 'European' identity debate: cultural crossroads between North Africa and Europe</li> <li>• Bilingualism (Maltese/English). Italian no longer official language, yet some knowledge among population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cross-border reception of Italian media in Malta (cinema, television, music)</li> <li>• Presence of Maltese and Italian cultural associations in each other's territories</li> <li>• Existence of common Italian and Maltese family names</li> <li>• Persisting presence of Italian/Sicilian vocabulary in modern Maltese</li> <li>• Common Mediterranean cultural traits: values (family, friendship, honour) and conservative attitudes (gender discrimination, clientelism, religious beliefs)</li> </ul>
<p><b>Society &amp; Social Classes</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of historical bourgeoisie</li> <li>• Legacy of a traditional, non-entrepreneurial aristocracy</li> <li>• 1950s onwards: middle-class shows mistrust of partnerships and private investment</li> <li>• Consolidation of Mafia phenomenon</li> <li>• 'No future' society, stimulating migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity to demographic changes (small size and limited resources)</li> <li>• Modern and proactive society</li> <li>• Acknowledged as a good strategic partner, reasonable and willing to achieve results in joint ventures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hints of cross-border criminal networking (Mafia connections to Malta)</li> <li>• Persisting migrations of islanders to other countries (mainly 1950-1980)</li> <li>• Slow but progressive secularization of civil society</li> </ul>
<p><b>Relations with European Institutions</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sicily automatically joining the EC as part of Italy (founding country in 1957)</li> <li>• 'Objective 1' territory of the EU's Cohesion policy regional programme</li> <li>• Strong set of investments stimulated by the European Regional Development Fund</li> <li>• Long-term obstacles in managing and spending of EU funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1970: Initial agreement EC-Malta and Malta</li> <li>• 1980s onwards: national debate about entry in the EU</li> <li>• 1990: Maltese formal application to the EC (during Italian presidency of the EU Council)</li> <li>• 1990-2004: Fulfilment of criteria for EU accession (structural reforms)</li> <li>• 2003: Referendum for EU accession (90% turnout)</li> <li>• 2004: Effective entry during the EU 'Eastern' enlargement</li> <li>• Strategic exploitation of EU funding and new geopolitical relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2004 onwards: Sicily and Malta both in the EU</li> <li>• 2004: Establishment of an INTERREG CBC programme</li> <li>• Participation in joint ventures (i.e. gas/electricity projects)</li> <li>• 2011-2012: First attempt to establish political CB governance structures</li> <li>• Italy (1999) and Malta (2008) both adopting the Euro currency</li> </ul>



The observation of the *short-term* analysis initially confirms our previous considerations regarding a final apex in the rupture of archipelagic relations between Sicily and Malta. This is most evident in the very different political and economic choices pursued by each island through their respective roles in the current international system. Sicilian history reveals a troubled path in its quest for regional development as an autonomous administrative region within the Italian state. It confirms the structural presence of a “modernisation without development” process (Schneider & Schneider, 1976) incapable of producing endogenous stimulus of the island’s own potential. The process has been further aggravated by the presence of ‘nationalized regional politics’ (often incapable of producing solutions to regional issues) and a general political instability represented by continuous shifts in regional governments (currently reaching 59 governments in 72 years of autonomy) (Menighetti & Nicastro, 2002). On the other side of the archipelago, Maltese history instead sets the example of a self-aware island state with national institutions that have demonstrated great skill in diplomacy in arranging international agreements while maintaining an official state of neutrality. Both British and Italian financial grants have also contributed to the slow but steady progression of its state-driven economy, one which would become solid enough to sustain the evolution in the 1990s toward neoliberal regimes indicated by requirements for EU accession (Camonita, 2019; Harwood, 2014). Political and economic features are also tightly intertwined with developments in the two islands’ societies and their own cultures. Beyond the consolidation of the two separate national identities and their official languages, the analysis reveals traces of opposing trends in inhabitants’ attitudes and concerns. This is also accompanied by the underlying of important problematics such as Sicily’s Mafia phenomenon and Malta’s demographic sensitivity.

Notwithstanding, the analysis also clarifies that the presence of a stable national border between the two islands must not be misconstrued as an interruption of island *Movements of Connection*. Quite the opposite, the combined methodological analytical work and field research data permits the production of one of the first listings of modern cross-border issues between the two islands. All the island movement typologies include arguments suggesting further cross-border cooperation either for strengthening existing ties (e.g., European, political, cultural) or for resolving existing frictions (e.g., economic, social, political).

Important differences are also encountered in the separate relations of the two islands with the process of European integration. As an island region belonging to one of the six founders of the European Economic Community, Sicilian presence within the European framework was never really in doubt. Instead, the island is often highlighted as a perpetual top-priority ‘Objective 1’ territory, reaping development aid since the beginnings of the EU’s cohesion policy regional programmes. Such interventions have often produced tangible advances in regional development, but the specialized literature still acknowledges the numerous obstacles provided by a general lack of European identity and strategy coupled with crippling and inefficient bureaucracy (Leonardi, 2016). On the other side of the archipelago, however, the Maltese islands deliberately pursued a rather different path of Europeanization. This would only be achieved after a post-Cold War internal debate leading to either a ‘Switzerland in the Mediterranean’ scenario of neutrality or the final assertion of a European identity proved by membership of the EU club. However, in opposition to Sicily’s passive acceptance of the European framework, we here emphasize the positive role that the

Europeanization identity debate and the consequential structural reforms brought as a chance for Malta to achieve both modernization *and* development. The final accession to the EU granted the Maltese the political opportunity to establish a strong identity and a long-term strategy for their nation. Finally, it is interesting to note that the analysis of the two islands' relations with European institutions brings to the debate both *Movements of Separation* in the archipelago (e.g., two separate Europeanization experiences) and *Movements of Connection* represented by the revival of direct territorial relations between Sicily and Malta (e.g., joint infrastructure projects or the cross-border cooperation program).

### **The Sicilian-Maltese archipelago as a European cross-border region**

Moving beyond the methodology presented above, the analysis of the three terms can be further developed by outlining the different archipelagic configurations experienced by the two islands. The *Age of Continuity* would correspond to a first geopolitical context in which the Maltese islands are part of a *Larger Sicilian Archipelago*. The *Age of Rupture*, in turn, sees the jurisdictional detachment of the smaller archipelago from the wider Kingdom of Sicily. It generates a *de facto* territorial rupture and subsequent creation of two politically independent archipelagos (*the Sicilian Archipelago vis-à-vis the Maltese Archipelago*). However, in accordance with our suggestion about *ex post* action for new archipelago identifications, we propose (as a third and final step) a renewed vision of a *Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago* through the constitution of an institutionalized European cross-border region. This region would be shaped by strategies and processes already sponsored elsewhere at the EU level, and it would allow the pursuit of joint policies developed within the framework of European territorial cohesion in its cross-border modality. Indeed, the choice of such a name would arise out of respect for both cultures and their diversity, having matured over more than 400 years of political separation. In this regard, we strongly agree with Pugh's argument, inspired by the work of Walcott (1998; ctd. in Pugh, 2013, p. 14): archipelagic visions and island movements are not sought as mere resurrections of the past but as the immanence of the contemporary present while "maturity assimilates the features of every ancestor."

To understand the proposal, we must firstly focus the argument on the direct territorial relations between the Sicilian autonomous region and the Maltese sovereign state as political actors in the same maritime cross-border area. As this research identified in the *short-term* analysis, national relations between Italy and Malta have been and continue to remain politically relevant in Mediterranean affairs. However, this has come at the detriment of formal relations between the two islands' governments due to their different political statuses. Some exceptions do exist, as in the case of the reestablishment of friendly relations between Italians and Maltese in the aftermath of the Second World War. These were officially celebrated through a cultural exchange sponsored by the Sicilian Region and involving Boy Scouts from the Sicilian town of Acireale and the national Maltese equivalent in 1947-1948 (Ardizzone, 2002, p. 281). Regardless, the differences in sovereignty ultimately hindered policymaking debate between the two islands.

This is precisely the reason why Malta's accession to the EU in 2004 represents both an important moment of rupture from previous sovereignty debates and an opportunity for the consolidation of archipelagic policies. In practical terms, it means that for the first time after centuries of separation both islands are again affiliated with a common political structure.



Furthermore, the European framework welcomes the chance for multilevel governance relations between different territorial administrations, even in the atypical case between a region and a national government. Specifically, we refer to the policy of European Territorial Cooperation to be achieved through the INTERREG instrument. In its simplest definition, this involves special programmes and funding to be granted to private agents and public actors at different levels of government cooperating across national borders (INTERACT, 2018). Born out of the newly classified EU internal maritime frontier between Sicily and Malta, the cross-border Italy-Malta INTERREG programme was initiated in the very same year as Maltese accession. It effectively allowed for the institutionalization of joint INTERREG structures between the regional and national governments of the two islands. Over its 14 years of existence, the local programme has given birth to some interesting cooperation initiatives while also suffering from legal and administrative obstacles that limited its current effectiveness (Camonita, 2019). However, Sicily-Malta cross-border cooperation is still currently limited to the technical execution of the programme without deeper political dialogue. In the modern EU, this may correspond to more advanced policy agreements or even the establishment of a cross-border governance platform in the area. To quote a meaningful example, a recent investigation reported there to be 158 active cross-border organizations classified under the 'Euroregion' governance modality across virtually every other EU internal border (Durà et al., 2018).

The establishment of an INTERREG programme between the two territories may have been the initial spark reigniting institutional Sicilian-Maltese relations. However, it is here suggested that further action may be taken through employing European cross-border governance structures in the area. The usual tasks associated with their operations generally include common identity-building of a cross-border region, plus increased level of policy dialogue through involvement of public and private actors at multiple levels (local, supralocal, or regional). In our *ex post* conceptualization, the establishment of a Euroregional strategy pursuing archipelagic policies would constitute a highly beneficial focus on the common development of Sicily and Malta.

While the primary target of this research relates to methodological advances in the identification of archipelagos as described by island studies, the results of the analysis may constitute an initial roadmap for policymakers in the consolidation of a cross-border Euroregional strategy; one which could be discerned in the rediscovered Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago. The *long-term* analysis provides a clear basis for calling for joint territorial policies; the *medium-term* analysis holds the key to interpreting the cross-border identity roots of the two island populations; finally, the *short-term* analysis deals with the modern political opportunities for cooperation between a troubled autonomous region in search of a general strategy and a small but smart sovereign state facing issues of long-term sustainability.

As may be expected, we also acknowledge that cross-border cooperation practices will not be the only solution to all the archipelago's challenges. This will most likely be due to the persisting legal and administrative obstacles in the European processes of cooperation and the limited financial resources provided by European INTERREG programmes. Nevertheless, when assessing such a framework, we consider the added value that a joint platform of cross-border governance may bring to the two island territories. First and foremost, the political will to create a cross-border structure would hold great symbolic value towards committing the two islands to archipelagic visions. At the individual level, we envision a precious experience of political empowerment for Sicily through consolidating its

external relations and developing them alongside a partner experienced in European strategies. Furthermore, such Europeanizing practices would be constantly pursued in a framework of increased efficiency and legality inspired by cooperation at the international level. For Malta, we appreciate the potential benefits that may be provided by the alignment of territorial and economic policies. They may be considered in terms of potential access to further natural and human resources, of which the Maltese are currently in need. Provided that the political classes may be convinced of such reconfigurations in policymaking, all arguments could justify negotiations leading to the establishment of a 'Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago Euroregion'.

### Conclusion

This article represents an applied attempt at advancing the island studies debate in the field of island-to-island relations, archipelagos, and island movements. It does so by further developing the debate articulated by authors such as Stratford et al. (2011) and Pugh (2013). Beginning from their reasoning, we have identified two gaps in the specialized literature regarding practical methodologies in the application of archipelagic visions: a) an *ex ante* gap relative to the lack of a methodology for the classification of island movements' typologies; and b) an *ex post* vacuum in the strategy needed for bridging archipelagic conceptualizations with the institutional and policy fields of islands involved. Throughout the article, we responded to the *ex ante* issue by providing a new 'technology for un-islanding' based on the creation of a triple-level methodology of analysis for archipelagos. This was mainly based upon inspiration from the revived debate on Braudel's *Longue Durée* methodology and Pugh's definition of island movements. In turn, the *ex post* lack of policy strategies was filled by the opportunity, at least for the EU's islands, to benefit from strategic processes embedded in European territorial cohesion policies.

The methodological proposition has been filtered through the case study of the Sicily-Malta cross-border maritime area. By applying our focus on the three historical levels, we have been able to define the traits of a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago reality. These were defined by: a) a revived consideration on territorial matters regarding both islands (*long-term*); b) a classification of the typology of island movements between the two units during the alternation of their historical cycles (*medium-term*); and c) a further testing of the island movements' identification throughout a selected timeframe (1945-2018), acknowledging important features about the most recent historical, cultural, and psychological processes of each individual island (*short-term*). Furthermore, we also hinted at the potential opportunities for *ex post* application of archipelago visions to European islands and specifically to the Sicilian-Maltese case. By taking advantage of the European INTERREG instrument and political cross-border governance platforms such as the Euroregion, there is enough common ground to suggest the introduction of archipelagic elements in European cross-border islands' strategies.

While we believe we have successfully exploited the methodology for unravelling the features of the Sicilian-Maltese archipelago, we nonetheless consider the need for opening future lines of research. This call may be addressed as much to island studies scholars as to academics involved in European territorial cohesion and more specifically to cross-border cooperation in European island contexts. Indeed, there is still much work left to do for proponents of archipelagic visions. On the one hand, there is scope for further refining the three-durations methodology, the classification of island movements, and the application of



the whole process to new archipelago cases. On the other hand, the suggestion proposed in crossing archipelagic ontologies and regional cross-border strategies could open a new trend for studying and observing cross-border cooperation across European islands. The compatibility between the two could be further tested in relation to the territorial competences and the instruments available to European units; the same could be proven regarding the political effects that an archipelagic vision would hold sway over island populations and institutions.

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## Section III: Global Discussion and Conclusion



*Picture 3 - Landscape view of Sicily from Mдина, Malta (Source: Rene Rossignaud, rossignaud.com)*



## 10. Summary of Results

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As required by the specific instructions of a PhD Compendium, this chapter will be dedicated to a presentation of the research outcomes from Section II of the Dissertation.

About the order of presentation, I present a list of comprehensive results obtained across the publications. The total number of **10 research outcomes** is further divided alongside **theoretical and experimental (aka case-study applied) results**. Their corresponding links to the theory-based methodology and the case-study application are discussed in chapter 11.

### 10.1 Theoretical Results

#### 1) Production of background comparative analysis over a sample of 61 Euroregions

In **Publication 1**, I worked together with the rest of the Barcelona RECOT team both to produce a theoretical framework on Euroregions based upon multilevel governance and re-territorialization *and* to provide peer-reviewed demonstration of the Euroregional Database. The article showed quantitative work performed on Euroregions from the sample that included:

- a.* classifications of the historical evolution and existing governance models;
- b.* a set of analysis on their institutional density and territorial complexity (i.e. descriptions of actors and territorial scales);
- c.* statistics proving the variety of legal instruments used by Euroregional administrations (including the chronological evolution of their use across time);
- d.* quantitative data on the sectors of activity exploited in Euroregional cooperation;
- e.* A complete list of the Euroregions in the sample employed by the COOP-RECOT II project.

The data illustrated correspond to previous analysis performed in the RECOT Catalogue (Durà et al., 2018). They provide important background information on the general argument of the Dissertation (outcome *b.*) and complementary information useful in other contributions (**Publication 3**) and the final Discussion (i.e. outcome *c.*).

**Table 3. Institutional complexity of Euroregions.**

Level of self-government (predominant)	Institutional density (number of self-governing units)			
	2 actors	Between 3 and 10	Between 11 and 30	More than 30 actors
Sub-state (or regional)	Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion	Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion International Lake Constance Conference (IBK) Baltic Euroregion Adriatic Ionian Euroregion		
Supra-local (provincial or intermediate)	Ruse-Giurgiu Danubius Euroregion Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino Euroregion Alzette-Belval	East Border Region Ltd Regio PAMINA Eurodistrict	Euroregio Egreensis Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine	
Local	Kerkrade-Herzogenrath Eurode FinEst Link Helsinki-Tallinn Chaves-Verin Eurocity North West Region Cross Border Group	Freiburg Region and South Alsace Eurodistrict Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN) Scheldemond Euroregio	Rhine-Meuse-North Euregio Kvarken Council Country of Lakes Euroregion	Duero-Douro Inn-Salzach-Euregio Praded Euroregion Banat Triplex Confinium

Table 8 - Analysis of institutional complexity of Euroregions from the sample (Source: Publication 1, own elaboration)

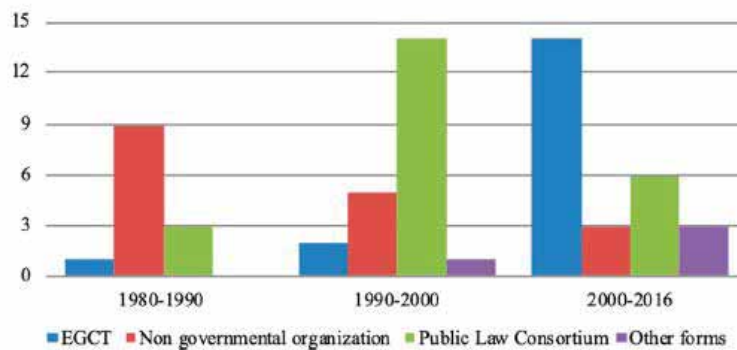


Figure 10 - Chronological evolution of the employment of legal instruments for CBC (Source: Publication 1, own elaboration)

## 2) Elaboration of original theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories as cross-border regions

In **Publication 2** I have been able to elaborate a cross-border regional institutionalization model based upon three stages. The emergence phase can be related with the creation of an INTERREG-sponsored area giving birth to networks executing CBC activities (Stage 1). The institutionalization phase on the other end of the model corresponds to the status of a “euroregional” CBR (Stage 3). It follows that the hypothetical “proto-euroregional” CBR must be found in an intermediate step between the two extremes (Stage 2) (Figure 11). Accordingly, I defined a “proto-euroregional” CBR as a European CBC region located inside an INTERREG-sponsored area. I described it as a functional space developing its activities in an intermediate stage between the birth of cooperation processes and stable cross-border institutionalization. Its boundaries are shaped by the territorial reach of the networks of public and private stakeholders involved in the

EU-funded CBC practices. Ultimately, the consolidation of the clusters should bring the “proto-euroregional” CBR to follow an evolutionary pattern towards Stage 3. Furthermore, I have also analyzed important features of the model determining its workings (i.e. the non-linearity in its temporality; the necessary implication of the CBC networks in the regionalization process; the mix of normative and rational motivations for action).

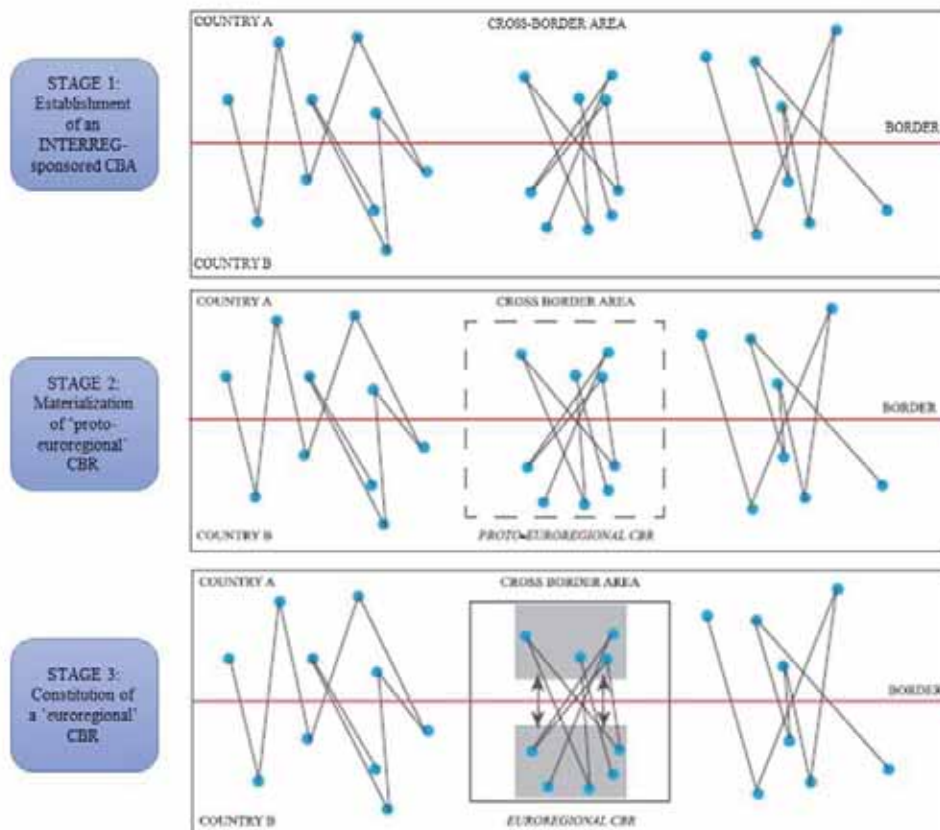


Figure 11 - Schematization of the 'CBC-publics-in-stabilization' model (Source: Publication 2, own elaboration)

In addition, my work on “proto-euroregional” CBRs brought me to an investigation of the absence of Euroregions inside the areas defined by the INTERREG programs. My sources have been the list of the 60 INTERREG CBC initiatives and the 214 ‘euroregional’ organizations identified by Durà et al. (2018) (see chapters 1.3 and 4.4). The work consisted in identifying for each Euroregion its INTERREG program of reference to later exclude them from the list. This has brought me to classify up to three different scenarios regarding the lack of ‘institutionalized’ CBRs (Table 9).

INTERREG Program	Countries (ISO Codes)	Geographical Border Typology	Examples of 'institutionalized' CBRs
<i>1. Currently inactive CBRs</i>			
France (Channel) - England	FR-UK	Maritime	Channel Euroregion (Kent-Nord-Pas-de-Calais)
Greece-Bulgaria	GR-BG	Land; Mountain	Nestos-Mesta Euroregion
Hungary-Croatia	HU-HR	Land; River	Mura-Dráva Euroregion
Italy-Switzerland	CH-IT	Mountain	Regio Insubria
Slovenia-Austria	SI-AT	Mountain	Steiermark – Northwest Slovenia Euroregion
<i>2. Overlapping of CBAs (CBRs not directly funded by the INTERREG program)</i>			
Italy-Croatia	IT-HR	Maritime	Ionian-Adriatic Euroregion (IT- GR -HR-BA-ME-AL)
Latvia-Lithuania	LV-LT	Land	Country of Lakes (LV-LT-BY)
Nord	SE-FI-NO	Land; Maritime	Mittnorden Committee (Nordic Council of Ministers)
Slovenia-Croatia	SI-HR	Land	Ionian-Adriatic Euroregion (IT- GR -HR-BA-ME-AL)
Slovenia-Hungary	SI-HU	Land; Mountain	Carpathian Euroregion (SI- HU-UA-PL-RO)
<i>3. No previous existence of 'institutionalized' CBRs</i>			
2 Seas	BE-FR-NL-UK	Maritime	N/A
Greece-Cyprus	GR-CY	Maritime (Island)	N/A
Greece-Italy	IT-GR	Maritime	N/A
Ireland-Wales	IR-UK	Maritime	N/A
Italy-France (Maritime)	FR-IT	Maritime (Island)	N/A
Italy-Malta	IT-MT	Maritime (Island)	N/A
Northern Ireland - Ireland - Scotland	IR-UK	Maritime (Island)	N/A

Table 9 - Classification of CBAs according to the absence of corresponding 'institutionalized' CBRs. (Source: Publication 2, own elaboration)

Detailed information on the three categories can be found in Publication 2. However, there is an important implication in the third category where 'institutionalized' CBRs have never been detected. Here, the classification of the geographical border typology was instrumental in returning an amount of seven CBRs marked by a maritime border area; of these, four cases also present island-territory components. This holds clear implications for Result 6 accounting for an analysis of multisectoral maritime CBC (see below).

### 3) Design of a territorial scale-based Euroregional Model

The first half of **Publication 3** has been devoted to the design of a Euroregional model with classificatory purposes and constructed upon observation of the RECOT sample. The initial hypothesis implied that the territorial scale can influence both the level of CBC activities performed *and* the governance structure of Euroregions. Thus, the work of classification began through the production of a territorial scale-based typology for CBC territorial levels. Quantitative analysis of Euroregional projects led to the idea that they

could be classified through the observation of their outcomes. The first step was to consider as independent variable the territorial scales defined by effective distance in kilometers from the border. From there, the development of the typology was focused on: *a.* the effective territorial scale upon which projects' outputs were supposed to have an impact; *b.* the predominant levels of self-government involved in partnerships; *c.* the predominating territorial objectives according to different sectoral activities (*environmental protection, socio-economic development, thematic networking or cross-border services and infrastructure*). The process led to identify three separate categories: 'Local', 'Eminently Supralocal' and 'Regional' CBC activities (see Figure 12. More details on the three modalities can be found in the publication). Having established the typology, I proceeded to testing the classification onto all CBC projects from the Euroregional sample.

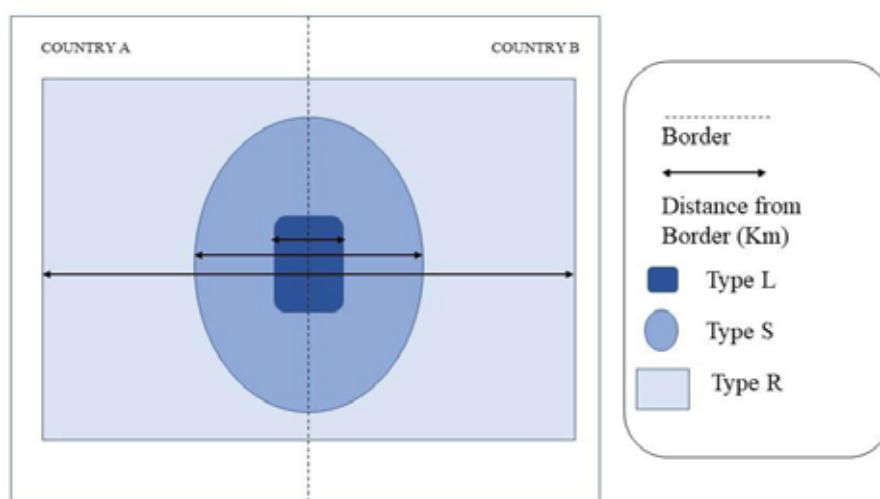


Figure 12 - Graphical schematization of a scale-based typology for classifying CBC activities (Source: Publication 3, own elaboration)

In addition, the idea that a cross-border governance structure may be influenced by territorial scale was already hinted in the Catalogue research (Durà et al., 2018, p. 58-63). However, reasoning connected to the scale-based typology led to further considering the implications between *a.* the territorial level of activities that CBC may want to achieve and *b.* the different Euroregional partnerships required for their execution. As a matter of fact, there is a strong correlation between the presence of certain actors in a CBC initiative and the degree of administrative competences entrusted to them by their national constitutions.

This is the reason why the Euroregional model exploits the *institutional density* (the total number of actors) and the predominant *levels of self-government* (local, supralocal or regional) of a Euroregion in determining the territorial level of the governance system in place. Furthermore, it also employs the newly generated typology of CBC activities as a complementary argument for a scale-based perspective. However, due to the lack of correlation between territorial scale and legal formulas, the model does not require indications regarding the typology of governance agreement to be selected (i.e. NGO, public law, European instruments) (see chapters 4.4 and 7).



The final design can be observed in the Table below (Table 10). Following the scale-based typology employed for CBC activities, the model provides three variants for existing Euroregions. Accordingly, it also provides six sub-typologies generated to better appreciate features in the different intervals of institutional density and levels of self-government involved. The inclusion of a control variable relative to approximate size in square kilometres was due to greater clarity in the differentiation between sub-typologies. Finally, the model is further reinforced by introducing on one side the 60 Euroregions provided by the sample and on the other by showing the correlation between model variant and corresponding CBC project. Further description of the model's features can be found in the publication.

Model Variants	Total of n. 60 EURs	Sub-total	Approx. Size (km <sup>2</sup> )	Euroregion Sub-Typology	Institutional density	Predominant Levels of self-government	Corresponding CBC Project Typology (n. 60)
(L) LOCAL SCALE EUR	8	3	Up to 950 km <sup>2</sup>	L (1) : Bilateral Eurocity	2	Local	L x 8
		5		L (2): Eurocity Consortium	3 to 10	Local and Supralocal	
(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	46	27	From 950 to 55.000 km <sup>2</sup>	S (1): Multilevel Euroregion (Eurodistrict, Eurometropolis)	3 to 10	From Local to Regional	S x 39 (L x 5; R x 2)
					11 to 30		
		19		S (2): Association of Municipalities	2	Local and Supralocal	
					3 to 10		
		More than 30					
(R) REGIONAL SCALE EUR	6	2	From 23.000 to 110.000 km <sup>2</sup>	R (1): Bilateral Regional	2	Regional	R x 4 (L x 2)
		4		R (2): Multiregional	3 to 10		

Table 10 - Design of a Euroregional Model through a territorial scale-based typology (source: Publication 3, own elaboration)

#### 4) Adaptation of Strategic Action Fields (SAF) theory to an INTERREG cross-border context

**Publication 4** represented a theoretical advancement of the SAF framework in the analysis of CBC processes. A general introduction to the theory of Fields was already given in chapter 3.3.1. However, the novelty of the result proceeds from two related accomplishments: *a.* the application of SAF terminology to the structure and actors of an INTERREG programme; and *b.* the introduction of new SAF terminology in the theory to refine the cross-border perspective.

Initially, the research allowed to map the role of INTERREG-involved actors inside a SAF framework. Firstly, the role of *Incumbents* has been identified in the territorial administrations entrusted with the management of the INTERREG programme. Furthermore, I hypothesized the presence of the EC as an *External Incumbent* to all INTERREG SAFs due to *a.* the supranational sponsor of the CBC programme; *b.* the official approval of their programmes; and *c.* the monitoring functions over all protocols of the programme. Secondly, the *Governance Units* were matched with the INTERREG offices (i.e. the Joint Secretariat or the internal committees) entrusted with the management of the programme and the funding of

CBC projects. Thirdly, in the specific environment of a “proto-euroregional” territory the role of the *Challengers* was attributed to all those public and/or private stakeholders pushing for cross-border institutionalization in the CBR. Of course, it must be considered that INTERREG Fields are highly structured due to the supranational dispositions from the EU. As such, any episode of external or internal shock could never bring to the replacement or discard of the programme itself. Rather, the real change pursued by Challengers should be the one of a renewed CBR where INTERREG activities do not monopolize the CBC scenario. The hypothetical Euroregion could rather become a constructive Challenger to an INTERREG programme defined by European priorities and strategies. In this respect, it could contribute into extending CBC processes over the alignment of policies or even towards the management of local cross-border issues not contemplated by INTERREG funding.

However, I also found some limitations of the theory which were adjusted by conceptually expanding the framework. Firstly, SAF theory did not provide the necessary tools for evaluating the purposes behind its formation and daily operations. To this, I responded by introducing the concept of *Field Functionality* in the analysis. Secondly, SAF theorization did not show sufficient interest in underlining the obstacles that may be hindering full capacity of the Field and that could provide reasons for Challengers’ contention. In this regard, my contribution was to elaborate the corresponding concept of *Field Effectiveness*. Finally, new conceptual focus was required to evaluate the presence of those I termed as *Field Participants*. These were understood as all the project partnerships which willingly participate to its policies through securing funding for cross-border activities. Although currently excluded from direct participation into power relations in the Field, I hypothesized that Field Participants could acquire a new role inside a coalition of challengers. The change could be brought to the Field by means of cross-border institutionalization including both political proponents and active CBC stakeholders. The biggest effect that they may produce in a “proto-euroregional” Field would be its shift from an exclusive INTERREG scenario to a “Euroregional” CBR one. In such a way, both the INTERREG and the Euroregion’s authorities could occupy relevant positions in the dynamics of CBC.

##### **5) Design of an adapted Longue-Durée Methodology for the in-depth case-study of cross-border regions**

The main purpose of **Publication 5** has been the construction of a method for the multisectoral analysis of cross-border regional territories. In accordance with the theoretical framework exposed in chapter 3.3.1 (and more in detail in chapter 9), the outcome represented an adaptation of the Longue Durée with a strong analytical component spread across three types of histories:

*a. a long-term analysis on the geohistorical and geopolitical conditions of territories throughout their entire existence. The variables included observation of individual territorial features on each side of the border versus common geographical issues as a CBR;*

*b.* a *medium-term* one which was represented by the alteration of historical cycles of political and cultural dominations shaping border populations. These were filtered through thematic comparison across several categories shaping the territories' histories: *foreign dominations, economic features, culture & identity, society & social classes, political culture & regimes*;

*c.* a *short-term* analysis focused around recent comparative history of the territories involved (Post-WWII to present day). All mentioned categories for comparison were also employed at this stage. However, due to the continued presence of the same political systems, the last section rather stressed the accent on political relationships with European institutions. This was also done in consideration of the INTERREG CBC framework in European border territories.

In the *medium* and *short* terms, I applied a separation between *Movements of Connection* (commonalities) and *Movements of Separation* (differences) across the categories. In the latter, I interpreted the *Movements of Connection* as contemporary cross-border issues that could be tackled by further CBC planning. For an example of practical application, see Result 9 dedicated to the Sicily-Malta CBR.

## **6) Analysis of Multisectoral CBC dynamics across Maritime Borders**

The observation of multisectoral CBC across maritime borders represents a complementary result whose several features appear throughout the research (**Publications 2, 3, 5**). Throughout the Dissertation, five different perspectives indicated important differences with traditional land-based CBC. These are:

*a.* *A different theoretical framework on multisectoral maritime CBC.* As explained in chapters 3.3.2 (and more in detail in chapter 7), there are currently few studies concerning multisectoral CBC across maritime borders. This is still the case despite: 1. recent claims from maritime INTERREG stakeholders for a wider variety of CBC approaches; and 2. the European Commission's debate over structural reform of maritime cooperation initiatives. The online study from MOT (2019) represented an excellent example of the different context associated to cross-sea CBC. It acknowledged that, unlike land borders, the maritime space constitutes a natural barrier that creates a territorial separation. However, despite the increased obstacles in terms of accessibility (time-cost factors for border crossing) and a less-marked cross-border culture, it is still possible to recognize a variety of issues where CBC can develop joint potential. The framework further recognized three factors associated to the organization and management of CBC in maritime spaces: 1. that CBC for coastal communities is not an immediate necessity; 2. consequently, that any long-term project needs political determination; and 3. that the governance of maritime CBC requires multilevel linkages among the different territorial levels affected by the border (see point *c.*)

In my research, I also understood that it is important to appreciate the difference between CBRs possessing maritime or coastal features from the ones where the maritime border (and effective multi-sectoral cooperation) are indeed the main concern of CBC. Under these circumstances, I employed the term "Eminently Maritime" territories to distinguish between the two.

*b. Reduced presence of cross-border governance organizations in the presence of a sea strait.* As shown by the investigation on “proto-euroregional” CBRs (Result 2), the research has identified a core of maritime areas never having showed signs of CBC institutionalization. This high incidence of cases further highlighted the necessity of a renewed focus on cross-sea CBRs. An explanation for this finding can be interpreted through points *c* and *d*.

*c. Different dynamics of cross-sea cooperation.* Parallel to the analysis of projects through a territorial-scale based typology (Result 3), I was able to observe that partnerships willing to act through maritime borders necessarily involved a wider number of actors at multiple territorial levels. This appeared evident when noticing the patterns in local scale cooperation and the absence of exclusively local Euroregional agreements in maritime contexts. The results led me to conclude that all scales of cross-sea activities require partnerships including supralocal and regional actors. The argument was also proved by the frequent involvement of a vast array of actors such as: ports authorities; territorial administrations with different levels of national authorizations regarding maritime and coastal competences; universities and technological centres; dedicated NGOs or even private stakeholders from the maritime industrial sector.

*d. Necessary conditions for successful “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions.* A further argument for Euroregional governance in maritime contexts was derived from the observation of six cases in the RECOT sample. Firstly, they showed an absolute predominance of the S (1) *Multilevel Euroregion* sub-typology described in the Euroregional model (Table 11) in agreement with the arguments outlined above (see point *c*). Indeed, five out of six cases (*Bothnian Arc, Kvarken Council, Fehmarnbelt Committee, FinEst Link and Baltic Euroregion*) effectively relied on governance structures including partnerships from local to regional scale with a marked supralocal presence<sup>23</sup>. Secondly, the “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions presented high levels of institutionalization and a common strategic behaviour (see point *a*). On the one hand, such dedication reinforced the political commitment of areas where maritime borders do not make CBC an immediate necessity. On the other, the opposite lack of commitment would help explaining the recurring presence of maritime “proto-euroregional” territories.

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<sup>23</sup> Arguably, the only Euroregion to make an exception (the *Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee* in the Oresund Region constituting an *S (2) Association of Municipalities*) is a unique case whose maritime distance could have been reduced through the construction of the Oresund Bridge.

Model Variants	Total of n. 6 Euroregions	Sub-total	Approx. Intervals of Size	Euroregion Typology	Institutional density	Level of self-government	CBC Project Scale (n. 61)	Euroregions
(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	6	5	From 950 to 55.000 km <sup>2</sup>	S (1): Multilevel Euroregion (Eurodistrict, Eurometropolis)	3 to 10	From Local to Regional	S x 4 (R x 2)	S1: Bothnian Arc, Kvarken Council, Fehmarnbelt Committee, FinEst Link; Baltic Euroregion
					11 to 30			
		1		S (2): Association of Municipalities	2	Local and Supralocal		
					3 to 10			
					More than 30			
		S2: Greater Copenhagen & Skane Committee						

Table 11 - Identification of 6 'Eminently Maritime' Euroregions from the sample in the Euroregional model (Source: Publication 2, own elaboration)

*e. Examples of cross-border issues across maritime borders.* As a final argument, the in-depth analysis of the Sicily-Malta CBR (see Result 9 below) allowed to highlight relevant issues which could apply to other maritime borders. In broad terms, these included: the environmental safeguard of the border maritime area; the development of a common strategy in relation to foreign policy or economic trade routes; the promotion of cross-sea strategic energy connections; the preservation of common cultural heritage associated to the sea; the coordination of fishermen from both sides of the border; the management of commercial rivalry between sea-involved businesses and enterprises (i.e. boatyards and yacht repair services); the creation of a joint tourism strategy in relation to the sea; the development or refinement of transport services and infrastructure connecting the two territories.

## 10.1 Experimental Results (case-study applied)

### 7) Acknowledgement of the Sicily-Malta CBR as a “proto-euroregional” cross-border region

Following theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories (Result 2), I employed the Sicily-Malta case as an example of this typology of CBR. As shown in Result 2 and 6, the case-study was present into my investigations on the co-existence of Euroregions and INTERREG programmes. Indeed, it was included in the core maritime areas lacking signs of CBC institutionalization. In addition, the case-study responded to my identification in an intermediate state between Stage 1 and 3 of the “CBC-publics-in-stabilization” model (Result 2). On one side, Siculo-Maltese cooperation had been ignited by the first Italy-Malta programme in 2004. On the other, it clearly did not possess a political cross-border governance agreement. Notwithstanding, the discovery of two failed attempts at “Euroregionalization” in recent years provided further evidence of an intermediate phase trying to evolve towards Stage 3.



Beyond the theorization, additional features from the Sicilian-Maltese case were derived from the assessment of qualitative interviews in **Publication 2**. The main findings included:

*a.* a prevalence of rational and grant-seeking motivations for the execution of CBC activities, with little presence of normative and/or political reasons for cooperation;

*b.* a substantial number of cross-border networks (INTERREG project partnerships) constituting the “regional public” of the theorization and yet undergoing a phase of consolidation in their renovated presence for the 2014-2020 period;

*c.* an important set of obstacles of subnational territorial administrations in dealing with the projects (i.e. a general lack of know-how and protocols in dealing with CBC initiatives, hardships in outsourcing and monetarizing innovative project results). These were assumed to be symptomatic of a “proto-euroregional” CBR lacking: 1. a set of normative reasons over the EU integration process; and 2. a “Euroregional” stakeholder aiding and/or raising awareness over the matter;

*d.* a lack of wider national and international marketing strategies sponsoring cross-border results. This was mostly due to partnerships’ limitations related to deadlines and budgets. The lack of adequate dissemination can also be attributed to the absence of a Euroregion promoting successful cross-border ventures;

*e.* notwithstanding, the identification of obstacles does not come to the detriment of important outcomes achieved by the projects. To provide a few promising examples, the common surveillance system implemented to control the Sicilian volcano Etna (VAMOS SEGURO) and the experimental practices in sustainable cultures of vineyards and wine-production (PROMED, VINENERGY) even received official commendation from the European Commission. Similarly, we can also account for the development of an ambitious cross-border civil protection plan between the two islands (SIMIT), the set-up of a cross-border environmental monitoring system for the detection of oil spillages (CALYPSO), the exchange of knowledge and practices in the elaboration and commercialization of local cheeses (T-CHEESIMAL) or even the consolidation of a cross-border network dealing with breast cancer research (IMAGENX);

*f.* a set of political attitudes explaining the failed CBC institutionalization attempts. On one side of the border, there seemed to be a structural problem with Sicily’s regional identity and strategy as a European region. On the other, as a sovereign country Malta seemed to benefit from CBC policies as nothing more than an extra bonus from the ERDF. According to some partners, overcoming this grant-given motives may be possible if the Sicilian showed enough interest for introducing a concrete political proposal;

*g.* cautious opinions from INTERREG managers regarding CBC institutionalization. For example, these expressed concerns over the lack of influential actors supporting the creation of a “Euroregional” structure, the exact nature of competences to be entrusted to CBC institutions or even the presence of larger opportunities for other forms of affiliation (i.e. transnational EGTCs in a Mediterranean environment);

*h.* a strong lack of awareness from INTERREG-participating actors regarding the existence of political cross-border organizations. This finding was also quite consistent with the vision of a ‘regional public’ from a “proto-euroregional” area. However, when introduced to an explanation of Euroregional functions, their opinion was generally favorable towards political involvement and the assistance in marketing strategies.

In conclusion, all previous arguments contributed to the understanding of the Sicily-Malta case as a “proto-euroregional” territory. The lack of pro-EU normative motivations and a series of institutionalization proposals that failed to ‘travel and stick’ (Metzger, 2013) have been instrumental in keeping the CBR locked under Stage 2 of the theorization.

### **8) A SAF Mapping of the Italy-Malta INTERREG programme**

Parallel to the theoretical advancements on SAF theory (Result 4), **Publication 4** also included a practical demonstration through the Italy-Malta CBC programme. As a consequence, I proceeded in generating two sets of mappings.

The first one was dedicated to the governance structure of the INTERREG initiative. Starting from the programme documents, I reconstructed the role of Incumbents and Governance Units inside the CBC Field. Indeed, during my investigation I was not able to find any graphical representation of the stakeholders involved and of the differentiation between INTERREG offices and operational committees. Therefore, I designed my own schematization by distinguishing four groupings of actors (*European Institutions, Governmental Actors, INTERREG Structures and Operational Committees*) and by tracing the different relations among themselves (see Figure 13). Accurate description of their nature and responsibilities can be consulted in the publication.

However, I was also aware that the conceptualization of Challengers as political proponents of CBC institutionalization automatically excluded them from power management of the Field. In the case-study, I encountered a scenario where the governmental actors (The Maltese national government and the Sicilian regional government by delegation of the Italian one) represented prominent Incumbents of the field. Furthermore, they received additional legitimacy from a highly structured EU programme and an EC acting as External Incumbent to the SAF. The INTERREG offices and the operational committees (managed by both the cross-border staff and representatives from the Incumbents) constituted the Governance units of the Field. On their account, the Challengers proved to be few and isolated out of the management structure. These were represented by a very small team of the Sicilian Regional Assembly and some anonymous Maltese officers, both pursuing CBC institutionalization. Starting from the assumption that the Italy-Malta Field may be “crystallized” in into a strict top-down process, I generated a second mapping according to my expanded conceptualization (Figure 14).

Finally, I also proposed a solution to the rigid structure of INTERREG “proto-euroregional” CBRs. In my view, the Challengers should not stand alone without a strong coalition granting legitimacy in their quest for

change. Ideally, they should search for new allies among those who already possess experience in cross-border planning. This includes the Field Participants who already executed successful CBC projects in the area. For example, in the Italy-Malta INTERREG between 2007-2013 the universities obtained innovative results through basing the cooperation on solid links in the academic world. However, following the model of other multilevel euroregions it is also easy to considerate a deeper inclusion of other territorial actors. Involving the presence of prominent municipalities (such as Catania, Palermo and Valletta), revitalizing the role of the stranded Sicilian provinces or involving the historically significant municipalities from Malta may all be possible options for a Field-changing CBC institutionalization proposal.

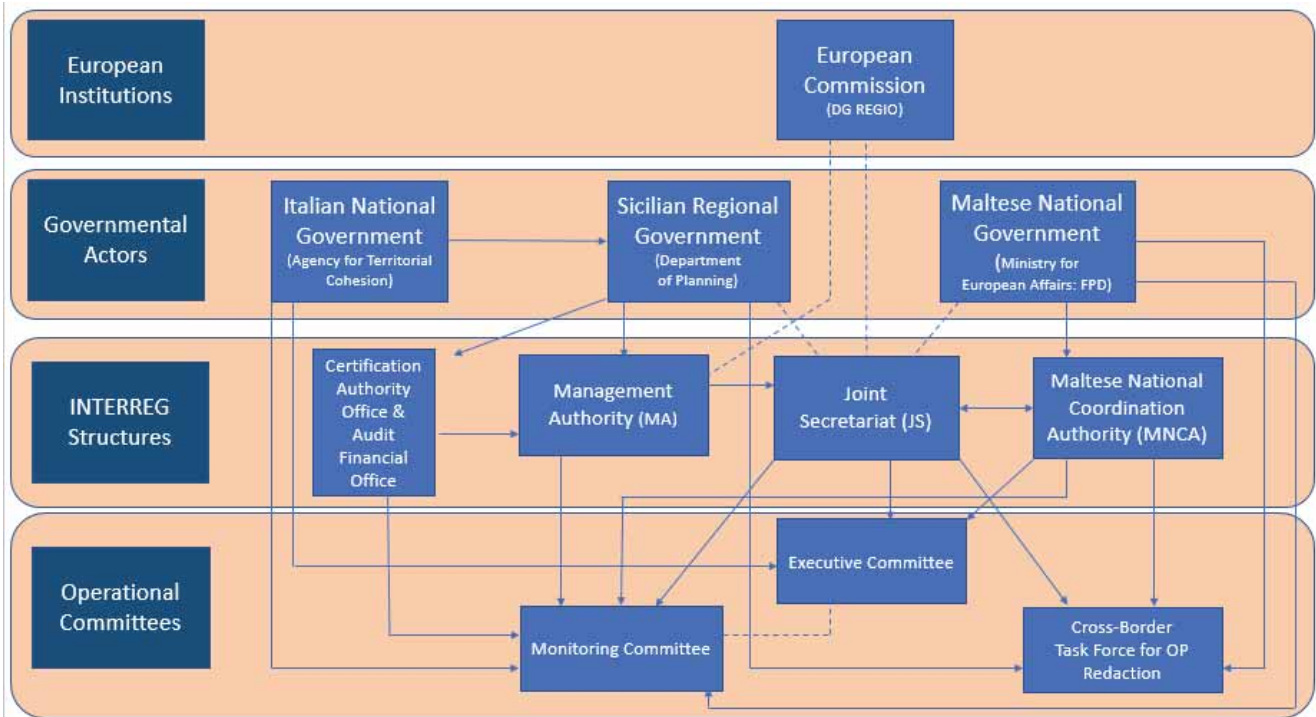


Figure 13 - Governance schematization of the INTERREG Italy-Malta Programme (Source: Publication 4, own elaboration)

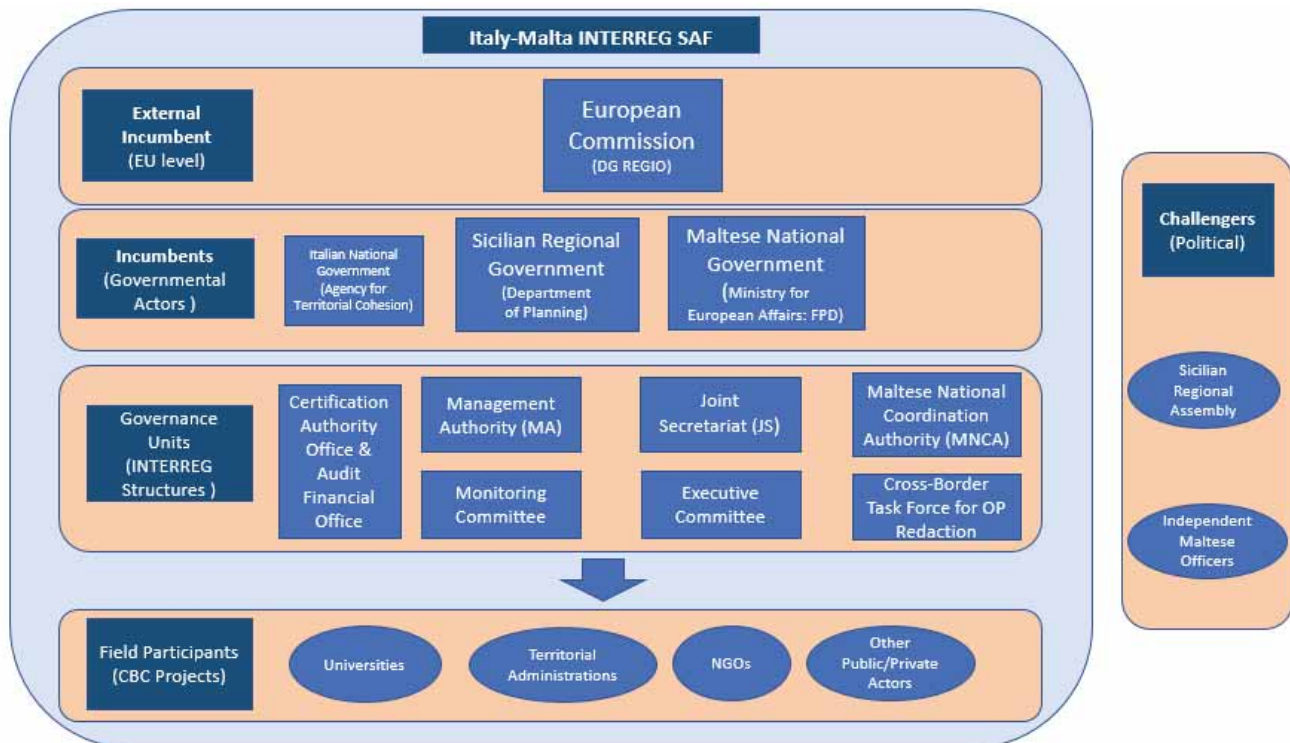


Figure 14 - Structure of the INTERREG Italy-Malta "proto-euroregional" SAF (source: Publication 4, own elaboration)

## 9) Multisectoral in-depth analysis of the Sicily-Malta CBR

**Publication 5** dealt with the application of the adapted Longue-Durée for the in-depth analysis of CBRs (Result 5). However, in the Sicily-Malta case such implementation was combined with theoretical backgrounds discussing its condition as island territories of the Mediterranean Sea. A key contribution came from Island Studies and Archipelagraphy (see chapters 3.2.2 and 9). This explains why I employed both the idea of a Sicily-Malta CBR and of a “Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago” in the analysis. Following the three historical terms, I was able to produce an abundant set of arguments supporting commonalities and differences in the cross-border territory.

In the *Long-term analysis*, I identified two variables in the reasoning affiliated to Sicily and Malta: *a.* general issues as European and Mediterranean islands in a shared geographical location; and *b.* archipelagic issues born of territorial proximity. Initially, I assessed the multiple features of European and Mediterranean islands at geohistorical level. Later, I included considerations on the two islands’ geography and over their geopolitical role at the center of the Mediterranean and at the southern gates of Europe. The list of conceptual arguments can be consulted below (Table 12).

	<b>Mediterranean/European Island Issues (Geographical Location)</b>	<b>Common Archipelagic Issues (Proximity)</b>
<b>Autonomous Island Region of Sicily (Italy)</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Autonomous island region of Italy</li> <li>• Largest island in Mediterranean, resource rich, varied landscape</li> <li>• Reduced insularity effect (proximity to mainland Italy)</li> <li>• Objective 1 region of Cohesion Policy (lagging region in the EU framework)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediterranean environmental features and their preservation (biota)</li> <li>• Safeguarding joint maritime area (Malta Channel and surrounding Mediterranean)</li> <li>• Strategic positioning at the centre of Mediterranean Sea (economic trade routes)</li> <li>• Strategic energy connections (electricity, gas, etc.) of the smaller to the larger island’s power grids</li> <li>• Southern periphery gateway to the EU (relationship with Mediterranean non-EU countries, refugee issues)</li> <li>• Mediterranean cultural heritage</li> <li>• Cross-border direct economic and population flows</li> </ul>
<b>Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leading roles and multiple commonalities in Mediterranean history</li> <li>• Vulnerability to climate change and environmental threats</li> <li>• Geographic location far from European functional economies of scale (impossibility to tag along with agglomeration externalities)</li> <li>• Poor education levels</li> <li>• Difficulty achieving sustainability</li> </ul>	
<b>Island Republic of Malta</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sovereign island state</li> <li>• Small, limited natural resources, unvaried landscape</li> <li>• Classic insularity effect</li> <li>• One of the best average economies of the Mediterranean EU</li> </ul>	

Table 12 - Long-term analysis of multiple common territorial issues for a Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago area (Source: Publication 5, own elaboration)



The *Medium-term analysis* pursued commonalities and differences in the histories of Sicily and Malta. The study allowed to divide the relational history of the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago into two main phases. Specifically, I classified an Age of Continuity (c. 5000 BC-AD 1524) embedded in mutual relations through common foreign dominations as opposed to an Age of Rupture (1524-1964) with diminished relations and different rulers. Furthermore, I have identified an important set of commonalities and differences filtered through the categories provided by the method (see Table 13).

	<b>Movements of Connection</b>	<b>Movements of Separation</b>
<b>Foreign Dominations</b>	Age of Continuity (5.000 BC-ca. AD 1530): Sicani and Siculi, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantine, Arabian, Norman, Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese, Spanish	Age of Rupture (AD 1530-AD 1964): Spanish, Bourbon, Italian (Sicily); Order of the Knights of Saint John, French, British (Malta)
<b>Economic Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Common lack of historical industrial activities until 19<sup>th</sup> century</li> <li>• Archipelagic islands as common trade routes at heart of the Mediterranean</li> <li>• Wealthy elites, the Church, and later the government as largest employers</li> <li>• Strong migration waves to escape the islands' conditions (Age of Rupture)</li> <li>• Cross-border mobility and inter-island trade flows</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Differences in natural resources, historical dependence of the smaller upon the larger (until late Age of Rupture)</li> <li>• Sicily mainly dedicated to agricultural sector throughout its history, in a capitalist exploitation system (latifundism)</li> <li>• In Age of Rupture, Malta is economically strengthened in trade both under the Knights (goods and slaves) and through the British shipyard industries</li> </ul>
<b>Culture &amp; Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Mediterranean culture traits forged by the common dominations in the Age of Continuity</li> <li>• Strong Christian influence since Medieval times</li> <li>• Common 'islander' awareness of the particularity of their own insular conditions</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Language: Semitic Maltese and English vs. Latin Sicilian and Italian. Yet strong influence in the vocabulary from the larger island to the smaller.</li> <li>• Malta: mix of Mediterranean culture with Anglo-Saxon traditions</li> </ul>
<b>Society &amp; Social Classes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditional and Mediterranean societies (cultural codes, 'honour' as fundamental value, concept of shame, gender segregation, 'friendship' networks)</li> <li>• Small number of elites ruling over the masses</li> <li>• Petit bourgeoisie incapable of prompting major cultural change</li> <li>• Illiteracy for the poorer masses (until 20<sup>th</sup> century)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malta: foreign dominations from the Age of Rupture lead to better treatment of the Maltese; vassalage to the Knights (employing slavery for exploitation) and progressive administrative autonomy through the British Commonwealth</li> <li>• Sicily: During the late Age of Rupture, manifestation of the Mafia phenomenon</li> </ul>
<b>Political Culture &amp; Regimes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Traditionally conquered lands at the service of foreigners ('servants and masters')</li> <li>• Common administration throughout the Age of Continuity: viceroys and foreign administrators</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Malta: evolution in political culture through progressive political and administrative autonomy under the British, later opportunity for independence</li> <li>• Sicily: 'Gattopardian' elitist scenario until institutionalization of the Sicilian autonomous region</li> </ul>

Table 13 - *Medium-term analysis of Connection and Separation between the histories of Sicily and Malta* (source: Publication 5, own elaboration)

Finally, in the *Short-term analysis* I addresses recent history as to obtain a landscape of current relations in the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago. Once again, I filtered the results through the categories and even included the INTERREG programme in the islands' relationship with European Institutions. However, at this stage I also gave a different interpretation to the Movements of Connection and Separation. In the latter, I described two different outlooks delineating important differences in political and economic scenarios. In the former, I profited from the extra-INTERREG relations discovered during my fieldwork and defined them as contemporary cross-border issues faced by the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago (see Table 14).

	<b>Movements of Separation (selected examples from sectoral histories of the two islands)</b>		<b>Movements of Connection (cross-border issues)</b>
	Autonomous Region of Sicily	Sovereign State of Malta	Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago
<b>Economic Features</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Historically an economically lagging region of Southern Italy ('Mezzogiorno' debate)</li> <li>'Modernization without development' process for Sicily (lack of endogenous development)</li> <li>Historical dependence on national public spending and extraordinary measures</li> <li>1950s-1960s: investments in heavy refinement industries (petrochemicals) and agriculture</li> <li>1970s onwards: surge in tertiary sector and public sector activity</li> <li>1970s-1980s: progressive economic privatization</li> <li>Strong investment stimulated by European funding</li> <li>Weak recovery from 2008 Eurocrisis: high unemployment and public debt</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1950s-1960s: UK's responsibility in reconstructing and diversifying the economy</li> <li>Post-independence, British rental of military facilities until 1979 (despite political clashes in 1970-1972)</li> <li>Strong industrial tradition in shipyards, yet a state-sustained economy</li> <li>1980s: Italo-Maltese protocol (new financial grants)</li> <li>1990-2004: Europeanization of Maltese economy (privatization, public sector reform, etc.)</li> <li>Post-EU accession: Cohesion policy funding</li> <li>Modern investments in financial services (post-EU accession)</li> <li>Quick recovery from Eurozone recession, dynamic and growing economy. Yet small size and limited resources.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Fishermen's encounters and informal coordination in the Malta Channel</li> <li>Commercial rivalry between boatyards and yacht repair services (unfair competition from Sicily)</li> <li>Tourism competition between the two islands. (Maltese exploitation of Sicilian heritage as excursion packages)</li> <li>Cruise tourism (both islands on Mediterranean routes)</li> <li>Historical retail tourism of Maltese to Catania (Sicily)</li> <li>Strong Maltese reliance on Sicilian agri-food sector</li> <li>Post-2008 factor: Increased migration tendency of Sicilians to Malta</li> <li>Regular transportation systems between the two islands ('Catamaran' ferry service, daily flights)</li> </ul>
<b>Culture &amp; Identity</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Mass education and mass media (mostly television)</li> <li>'Italianization' of Sicily from 1960s onwards</li> <li>Bilingualism (Italian as official language, Sicilian recognised only as local dialect)</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Strong Maltese national feeling after WWII (further consolidating after independence)</li> <li>'European' identity debate: cultural crossroads between North Africa and Europe</li> <li>Bilingualism (Maltese/English). Italian no longer official language, yet some knowledge among population</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-border reception of Italian media in Malta (cinema, television, music)</li> <li>Presence of Maltese and Italian cultural associations in each other's territories</li> <li>Existence of common Italian and Maltese family names</li> <li>Persisting presence of Italian/Sicilian vocabulary in modern Maltese</li> <li>Common Mediterranean cultural traits: values (family, friendship, honour) and conservative attitudes (gender discrimination, clientelism, religious beliefs)</li> </ul>

<b>Society &amp; Social Classes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lack of historical bourgeoisie</li> <li>• Legacy of a traditional, non-entrepreneurial aristocracy</li> <li>• 1950s onwards: middle-class shows mistrust of partnerships and private investment</li> <li>• Consolidation of Mafia phenomenon</li> <li>• ‘No future’ society, stimulating migration</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sensitivity to demographic changes (small size and limited resources)</li> <li>• Modern and proactive society</li> <li>• Acknowledged as a good strategic partner, reasonable and willing to achieve results in joint ventures</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Hints of cross-border criminal networking (Mafia connections to Malta)</li> <li>• Persisting migrations of islanders to other countries (mainly 1950-1980)</li> <li>• Slow but progressive secularization of civil society</li> </ul>
<b>Relations with European Institutions</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Sicily automatically joining the EC as part of Italy (founding country in 1957)</li> <li>• ‘Objective 1’ territory of the EU’s Cohesion policy regional programme</li> <li>• Strong set of investments stimulated by the European Regional Development Fund</li> <li>• Long-term obstacles in managing and spending of EU funds</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 1970: Initial agreement EC-Malta and Malta</li> <li>• 1980s onwards: national debate about entry in the EU</li> <li>• 1990: Maltese formal application to the EC (during Italian presidency of the EU Council)</li> <li>• 1990-2004: Fulfilment of criteria for EU accession (structural reforms)</li> <li>• 2003: Referendum for EU accession (90% turnout)</li> <li>• 2004: Effective entry during the EU ‘Eastern’ enlargement</li> <li>• Strategic exploitation of EU funding and new geopolitical relevance</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• 2004 onwards: Sicily and Malta both in the EU</li> <li>• 2004: Establishment of an INTERREG CBC programme</li> <li>• Participation in joint ventures (i.e. gas/electricity projects)</li> <li>• 2011-2012: First attempt to establish political CB governance structures</li> <li>• Italy (1999) and Malta (2008) both adopting the Euro currency</li> </ul>

Table 14 - Short-Term analysis of Connection and Separation between Sicily and Malta (1945-2018)  
 (Source: Publication 5, own elaboration)



## 10) Historical Excursus of the Sicily-Malta CBR

Both the analysis of the INTERREG programme (Result 8) and the conceptualization of the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago (Result 9) have influenced the production of a further complementary product of the research. Namely, I refer to the reconstruction of an historical excursus of the Sicily-Malta CBR. As mentioned before, original literature on direct relations between the two islands is rare and it often refers to partial timelines or specific events (i.e. Bonanno & Militello, 2008). By contrast, the case-study analysis provides a multi-perspective cross-border history of the island region. This includes:

*a. A history of national Italo-Maltese Relations.* In **Publication 4**, I provide a summary excursus of the relations between the two nations with a focus in their international relations. Decades before the establishment of an INTERREG programme, there is a strong detection of cultural affinities and a set of strategic interests in the Mediterranean area that contributed to close relations between the two countries. However, this has come to the detriment of formal relations between Sicily and Malta due to their political statuses (an autonomous island region versus a fully sovereign state)

*b. A recount of the Italy-Malta programme's origins.* The analysis of the INTERREG Field between Sicily and Malta also included description of its origins and of the political attitudes that motivated institutional actors at the time (**Publication 4**). Malta's accession to the EU included the country in the Cohesion policy funding scheme, thus unlocking access to INTERREG resources. Accordingly, the EC was a strong sponsor in involving both islands in cooperation and to begin an experimental phase in the years 2004-2006. The reconstructed account of events can be consulted in the publication.

*c. A cross-border history for the Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago.* As shown in Result 9, the Longue-Durée methodology has proved effective in constructing three intrinsic accounts of the case-study's historical events. The *Medium-term* and the *Short-term* analysis are particular helpful in the reconstruction of joint history, particularly in the originally defined *Age of Continuity* (c. 5000 BC-AD 1524) showing similar dominations (Sicani and Siculi, Phoenicians, Carthaginians, Romans, Byzantine, Arabian, Norman, Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese, Spanish). At the same time, they helped underlining a series of events distancing the political destiny of the two islands in the *Age of Rupture* (AD 1524-1964). These are acknowledged by: *a.* the granting of Malta to the Knights of the Order of St John by Charles V; *b.* the British presence in the Mediterranean through their subsequent occupation of Malta (and their failure to introduce a new constitutional order in Sicily during the same period); finally, *c.* the establishment of a Maltese sovereign state vis-à-vis the institutionalization of Sicily as an autonomous region of Italy (see **Publication 5**).

## 11. General Discussion

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This chapter will be dedicated to a general discussion of results in relation to the theory-based methodology (11.1) and its application in the case-study area (11.2). I will evaluate the empirical results shown in chapter 10 by showing coherent interpretation inside the investigation and through providing answers to the research questions. In the first section, I enter into the discussion of the theory-based methodology through reflection on the three stages and the required features for the design and implementation of new Euroregions. In the second section, I give way to an interpretation of the results in the case-study area. Accordingly, I provide a set of suggestions which could support the creation of a Sicily-Malta Euroregion.

### 11.1 Theoretical Discussion: A Methodology for the Design and Implementation of Euroregional Cross-border Organizations

As already shown in the introduction, the quest for a methodology inspiring the replicability of Euroregions was not devoid of theoretical and empirical basis. Quite the opposite, this doctoral research has profited from the opportunity to be developed parallel to a classification effort of Euroregional organizations. The **four years of participation in the COOP-RECOT II project have provided solid theoretical ground** such as: an operational definition of Euroregion as a cross-border organization; two databases showing a compilation of research data; a sample of 61 highly active Euroregions representing the most active CBC experiences in the internal borders of the EU; and most importantly, a comparative study performed over the sample.

It is among the features analyzed in **Result 1** that one begins to notice the clues leading to my own argument. However, in our previous work as a research team we proved difficult to establish strong statistical correlations among the governance variables proposed. In most of the calculations we had to acknowledge a significant variety of backgrounds shaping each Euroregional organization (i.e. different national traditions or administrative competences) that initially made the creation of a model a very difficult task.

However, our deductions had also encountered **similarities in geographical patterns of Euroregions across Europe**. For example, there seemed to be multiple cases of “Eurocities” of small local councils across the border. In Southern Europe, the Napoleonic tradition of wider administrative regions with a large set of competences influenced the presence of Euroregions such as the *Pyrenees-Mediterranean* or the *Mediterranean Rhone-Alps*. The analysis became more interesting when observing countries with Prussian administrative traditions. These showed a larger set of competences entrusted to a supralocal level between local and regional government (i.e. the German *Kreis*, the French *Départements* or the communities of local councils) as well as a wider variety of sizes across the central part of the continent. Indeed, while political



science correlations were not detecting accurate patterns, we started to consider that **geographical size and territorial scale could hold a new interpretation to cross-border governance structures.**

It was here that I began developing my own research questions. Initially, the core of the research was centered around quantitative data from a tested sample as to try and decipher common patterns in existing experiences. The development of a territorial scale-based typology for CBC activities and the corresponding Euroregional model (**Result 3**) are the direct product of such effort. To the best of my knowledge, they represent one of the first attempts in reconstructing model variants (and sub-typologies) providing broad indications on *a.* the approximate size; *b.* the institutional density; and *c.* the predominant levels of self-government of different Euroregions. All of these were also considered in relation to CBC strategies based either on the local, supralocal or regional scale. On its account, the authority of the model has been tested through the corresponding Euroregional projects included in the sample. In the overall majority of cases, the project scales coincided with the ones of the model variants proposed.

However, **I soon had to exclude indications regarding the governance agreement typology.** Both the results of the RECOT comparative study and my own calculations showed that the selection of a legal formula **did not represent a necessary condition for the model.** It rather proved that this kind of choice is highly associated with the preferences of actors in each CBR according to administrative and political cultures. **At most, the employment of the EGTC could be suggested to hypothetical new Euroregions** due to *a.* its increasing appearance after introduction in 2006; and *b.* the availability of use without prior national treaties between the EU countries involved. In any case, the RECOT investigation has demonstrated that the majority of Euroregions with already established institutions did not seek conversion or addition of an EGTC instrument.

Nonetheless, I must admit a lack of satisfaction in the elaboration of the model alone. The normative reasons guiding RECOT and mine's personal motivations revealed a desire to support the implementation of cross-border organizations. This, in turn, would be associated to an optimization of CBC activities leading the borderlands in joint development through territorial integration. Such reasons eventually became the driving force behind the main research question. In my investigation, **I deliberately chose to deal with Euroregional replicability in CBRs which were lacking advanced levels of CBC institutionalization.**

The geographical context mentioned in the second part of the question is also not incidental. Early on in the research design I was already attracted by the statistically low presence of Euroregions in the Mediterranean area of Southern Europe. Of course, the presence of maritime borders could preliminarily explain the reduced numbers. However, the RECOT sample indicated the existence of "Eminently Maritime" Euroregions in the Baltic Sea from Northern Europe. The selection of a case-study which resonated with this issue also implied that I should be exploring a different (and yet, as shown in the theoretical framework, often ignored) approach to CBC. Namely, I am referring to multisectoral maritime CBC stretching beyond Maritime Spatial Planning and seeking joint development across a sea strait (**Result 6**).

Even in this case, I still did not feel to have satisfied all the requirements of what I mockingly defined “the quest for the ideal Euroregion”. My experience as a researcher had led me **to enquire about their activities and the real links to their cross-border territory**. After careful consideration, **my main hypothesis rather considered the analysis of three factors** influencing the successful development of a Euroregional organization.

The first one has been **the acknowledgement of existing networks of CBC** in the CBR. As I have argued in my theoretical framework, a Euroregion is not the leading actor of European CBC. It is but a useful supplemental tool for its stronger development. Rather, the real protagonists continue to be the networks of public authorities (sometimes joined by private actors) developing projects across borders by means of European (and in fewer cases, of local) funding. As such, a highly performing Euroregion cannot afford to work inside a CBR without extensive knowledge and a series of formal (and informal) relations connecting it to its main stakeholders. This is even more important when addressing the case of “proto-euroregional” territories where INTERREG partnerships precede the birth of the Euroregion. Inside my list, **Results 2 and 4** explicitly define the cross-border “regional public” as essential in the execution of CBC.

Once understood the nature of the actors involved, **the selection of a Euroregional typology** can be advised by **the theory-based indications of a Euroregional model (Result 3)**. As my evidence has showed, there is correspondence between the territorial scale of the projects and the scale of the cross-border institution. Therefore, the need to initially explore projects partnerships reveals why I did not consider the model as the first stage in my methodology. Furthermore, the model has also helped in demonstrating that the geographical context can affect Euroregional participation. In the example of maritime borders this was due to the different degrees of administrative competences required to enact policies through the sea. In such a way, it is extremely important to consider adequate membership for the constitution of a new hypothetical Euroregion.

Finally, my hypothesis returned to the idea that Euroregions do not exist in a vacuum and that their activities are strongly connected to the CBR’s territory. Consequentially, the third factor considered has been the **in-depth analysis of the area** where the Euroregional organization is meant to operate. Although somewhat complementary to the first stage, I understood that Euroregions need two further sets of knowledge when operating in their space. First, they must possess a general mapping of the power relations in CBC processes at the cross-border and domestic levels. This holds especially true in the relations with INTERREG managers and other co-existing organizations across the same border (and even more so in the case of “proto-euroregional” territories) (**Result 4**).

Second, Euroregional representatives must be aware of the cross-border needs from the region they serve. Ideally, they should be able to demonstrate expertise in the multiple presence of historical, economic, social and cultural ties and disparities affecting the Euroregional territory. Even further, they should dominate methods for identifying the local cross-border issues which affect the CBR (**Result 5**) and attract regional and national interest towards their consideration.

According to this reasoning, it becomes easier to conceive an answer to the final sub-question over the creation of a theory-based methodology. Likewise, the use of different frameworks and methods should appear clearer when considering how **the three stages proposed are effectively dedicated to each of the three factors identified.**

Nonetheless, it must be noted that the general argument of this Dissertation has not claimed the discovery of a Euroregional predictive theory. Rather, my general argument has been **to demonstrate that it is possible to employ existing academic theories and empirical studies for the consolidation of a theory-based instrument in the design of new Euroregional organizations.** Euroregions are and will continue to be voluntary and non-binding cross-border institutions dominated by willing stakeholders. It is up to them to show an ambition towards cross-border planning beyond the provisions and the grant-given motivations of INTERREG. As shown by “proto-euroregional” theorization, political obstacles or sufficient lack of motivation may keep the CBR indefinitely locked in an intermediate stage. It is up to the individual stakeholders to exploit broad suggestions from academia and to show the *institutional entrepreneurship* identified by Perkmann & Spicer (2007). Ultimately, it is their responsibility to turn theory-based policy suggestions into solid Euroregional organizations; they should be aiming to ensure the successful development of peripheral border areas through joint planning.

## **11.2 Case-study Discussion: Towards a Euroregional strategy for the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Region**

Thanks to the multiple reasons indicated in chapter 4.2, I have selected the Sicily-Malta CBR as the experimental field for the testing of my methodology. Even when Publication 3 focused around the modelization of existing Euroregions, I implicitly considered the case-study area by showing the effects of the maritime border over the framework. In the following text, I discuss the step-by-step application of the methodology in the Sicily-Malta CBR. At the same time, I combine the experimental results with a set of suggestions which could inspire a Euroregional strategy for the region.

In **Stage 1** of the methodology, I have identified **the case-study area as a “proto-euroregional” territory and acknowledged the existing Sicilian-Maltese CBC networks.** The first set of results were provided at theoretical level. Indeed, investigation over the absence of Euroregions in INTERREG areas has demonstrated the case study’s presence among territories without CBC institutionalization and with a common maritime border typology. Likewise, the preliminary contextualization in the “CBC-publics-in-stabilization” model derived by Metzger (2013) positively identified the CBR as a “proto-euroregional” territory in an intermediate stage towards institutionalization (**Result 2 and 7**).

The second set of results were due instead to empirical fieldwork in the CBR. Through the qualitative analysis of interviews, it has been possible to observe a number of **traits which confirmed the area as suitable ground for the development of a new Euroregional proposal**. Despite the grant-seeking motivations, the CBR has experienced **the creation of a satisfactory number of CBC networks stimulated by INTERREG funding**. On one side, some important outcomes in joint projects have shown the potential of the cross-border “regional public”. On the other, a set of obstacles from participating public actors (coupled with a lack of support in CBC services and promotion) have identified a working space for a hypothetical Euroregional organization. Overall, the results indicated **the presence of stakeholders in the CBR willing to witness further political institutionalization**. Likewise, the data showed **a potential number of ambits where the cross-border institution could operate** parallel to the existing INTERREG framework (i.e. raising awareness on public administrations’ obstacles in cooperation; performing wider marketing strategies; developing involvement and participation beyond the scope of individual projects) **(Result 7)**.

Notwithstanding, the theorization implied that the key variable for success would be encountered in adequate political support to CBC institutionalization. In this regard, I hypothesized that the two failed Euroregional proposals that I have identified in my research should not be interpreted as a sign of impossible evolution to the next stage. Rather, the flexibility of “proto-euroregional” territories could indicate that the Sicilian-Maltese CBR is still undergoing stabilization due to the relatively recent ignition of INTERREG in 2004.

Following the previous findings, in **Stage 2** I have proceeded in theorization related to the case-study. More specifically, I have provided **indications on multisectoral cross-sea CBC and on the governance structure of “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions (Result 6)**. In my line of work, I have identified the generally reduced presence of cross-border governance organizations along maritime borders **(Result 2)** and attributed this to two related features. First, I provided evidence for demonstrating the need for supralocal and regional actors with larger territorial competences in maritime CBC dynamics. Second, I have observed the six “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions from the RECOT sample. Indeed, their overall majority employed the *supralocal scale variant* of my Euroregional model and the *S (1) Multilevel Euroregion* sub-typology. Likewise, all six Euroregions responded to the presence of a strongly symbolical political commitment (i.e. production of joint strategies) possibly due to the wider border distances caused by the sea.

Although I did not explicitly mention the case-study, **in Publication 3 I also elaborated on two more factors adding to arguments in favor of Sicilian-Maltese “Euroregionalization”**. As a third case, it has been important to acknowledge that **the strong presence of supralocal actors from “Eminently Maritime” Euroregions was due to their location in the Scandinavian context**. As a matter of fact, national administrative traditions in Northern European countries would grant competences to Northern provinces (Page & Goldsmith, 1987) even in activities relative to cross-sea projects. However, **this does not exclude the opportunity for stronger regional actors from other traditions to participate in**

**“Eminently Maritime” Euroregions** (particularly in the case of Southern European authorities in the Mediterranean).

As a fourth argument, I incurred in Perkmann’s deductions (2000; 2003; 2005) over CBC institutionalization in centralized administrations (i.e. Spain or Italy). In their regard, he explicitly mentioned **the suspicions of national authorities towards a cross-border governance dominated by the regional level**. The risks for autonomist or separatist political tendencies may produce lack of support towards the initiative. In my opinion, **a possible solution to this problem could be found in the inclusive nature of multilevel governance agreements**. Against the risk of national disapproval, these would allow for a combination of competent regional administrations and local or supralocal actors (i.e. local councils, provinces, research centers, etc.) performing lobbying functions despite limited delegated responsibilities. The development of more inclusive political participation would pass the rightful image of Euroregions as soft spaces of *institutional entrepreneurship* aimed at policy formulation and implementation scenarios (Miörner et al., 2018; Telle, 2017; Perkmann & Spicer, 2007).

Keeping the four previous arguments in mind, it becomes possible to envision the structure of a Sicily-Malta Euroregion as an *S (I) Multilevel Euroregion covering all islands from the CBR*. The governance partnership could be included in **the specific range between 3 and 10 actors from the local to the national level** (the atypical national inclusion would be due to Malta’s special condition as sovereign island state). **The Maltese Ministry for European Affairs and the Sicilian Regional Government should politically head the proposal as the most competence-apt territorial actors in the maritime CBR**. Nonetheless, the arguments about multilevel governance inclusion and the further involvement of CBC networks **should inspire the participation of a wider array of public and private actors**. A few examples at hand would be: **a newly constituted network of Euroregional universities** from the CBR; **the Sicilian provinces** laying closer to the maritime border and in search of a new role and identity (i.e. Agrigento, Ragusa); even the **prominent local councils** hosting the majority of INTERREG actors and a set of services and infrastructures available for CBC (i.e. Catania, Palermo, Valletta). As already mentioned in the theoretical discussion, **the governance agreement typology would not be decisive in the constitution of the organization**. However, it is easy to imagine the constitution of **an EGTC avoiding the incumbency of a new Italo-Maltese treaty** for joint institutionalization.

According to the theory-based methodology, this is also the ideal moment where the Sicily-Malta Euroregion needs an important set of political and territorial knowledge for successful operation. **Stage 3** responds to this necessity by providing data on the many features of the joint archipelago. In terms of power relations, it is useful for the Euroregion to understand the governance structure of the INTERREG programme and its position in the CBR scenario (**Result 8**). In the “proto-euroregional” Sicily-Malta case, **it would be wiser to understand what actors to approach and what complementary function to perform** in order to avoid a suspicious welcome for a potential rival. For example, **participation of the Euroregion in the Cross-Border Task Force for the redaction of new operational**



**programmes** could be ideal, especially when considering the voicing of CBC local issues not considered by European strategies. Likewise, **the Joint Secretariat and the Maltese National Coordination Authority (MNCA) may constitute excellent interlocutors due to their cross-border dedicated staff.** Even further, **informal relations regarding the nature of partnerships and the outcomes of CBC projects could help creating new synergies** for further action.

In terms of practical expertise, Euroregional authorities would require knowledge of the many commonalities but also of existing differences between the two islands (**Results 9 and 10**). They should be able to know the *long-term* history of their cross-border territory and to understand the strategic priorities of joint archipelago planning. For example, activities may be inspired from the environmental sector in the protection of common maritime space. Likewise, economic and political considerations could spawn initiatives associated to the Euroregion's positioning in the Mediterranean. At the same time, the personnel should be highly aware of the *medium-term* history and culture that shaped the two islandic populations. The cultural common ground between Sicilians and Maltese can be inspirational to several activities as well as providing preliminary feedback to policy proposals.

Most importantly, Euroregional authorities must show awareness of the *short-term* issues affecting the CBC's daily activities. These include knowledge of the islands' performances as European territories, their strengths and weaknesses in several economic sectors as well as the sociopolitical landscapes affecting the two sides of the CBR. In addition, they must also be aware of cross-border flows and activities while promoting the creation of policy forums for their management. Ideally, they should be capable of opening policy-debating spaces for the implementation of archipelago visions as described by Island Studies (i.e. Stratford et al., 2011).

As a final remark, it must be considered that **this Dissertation does not assume the presence of a Euroregion to be the solution to all challenges.** Of course, both the managing and the project-executing actors will keep facing **the political, legal and administrative obstacles of European CBC.** Similarly, one must come to terms with **the limited financial resources provided by INTERREG programmes and with the generally small budgets associated to Euroregions.**

Nevertheless, when assembling this proposal, I rather **consider the added value that cross-border governance may bring to the two islands.** First and foremost, the will to create a cross-border platform would hold **symbolic value towards committing the territories into a joint political project.** At the individual level, it could be possible to envision **a precious experience of political empowerment for Sicily** through the consolidation of its external relations and the development alongside a partner experienced in European strategies. Furthermore, such practices would be pursued in a framework of increased efficiency and legality inspired by cooperation at the international level. **For Malta, one could consider the potential benefits provided by the alignment of territorial and economic policies.** They may be interpreted in terms of potential access to further natural and human resources of which the Maltese seem to be in need due to their island's limited size. Most importantly, the anomaly provided by the presence of national authorities

may hold the key for the sponsoring of wider strategic initiatives through intermediation at EU policy level. Provided that the political classes were to be persuaded by the reconfigurations in policymaking, the theory-based methodology reveals enough arguments justifying negotiations for a '*Sicilian-Maltese Archipelago Euroregion*'.

## 12. General Conclusion

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**This Dissertation was based upon the exposition of a theory-based methodology for the design and implementation of Euroregions along the EU's internal borders. Likewise, it has proposed a pilot application of the methodology in the case-study area of the Sicily-Malta CBR.** Awareness about the lack of extensive comparative material on the Euroregional phenomenon has justified a new approach for the classification of CBC activities and the proposal of a Euroregional model. Notwithstanding, **the acknowledgement of up to three factors shaping the successful development of a Euroregion** (*a.* the acknowledgement of existing networks of CBC; *b.* the selection of an appropriate Euroregional typology according to a Euroregional model; *c.* an in-depth analysis of the case-study area) **requested the development of a comprehensive analytical instrument for their assessment.**

From an academic perspective, the theory-based methodology has benefited from the encounter between the fields of *Regional* and *Political Geography* with the worlds of *Political Science* and *European Integration*. In addition, the cross-border perspective has also been fed by the multidisciplinary approach of *Border Studies*. **The main theoretical contribution of this study** has been the construction of a framework based upon regions, networks and borders for the identification of the roles and mechanisms of Euroregions in the current European scenario. Likewise, the employment of complementary theories (a sub-framework for the in-depth study of CBRs; another for the cross-border analysis of maritime and island territories) has allowed to expand the scope of the research and to focus into the maritime reality of the case-study area. In turn, this has unveiled the implications of multisectoral maritime CBC as an often ignored and yet potentially alternative branch from land-based cooperation. At empirical level, it is important to underline that all work of analysis and classification was based upon previous research included in the COOP-RECOT II project.

Once again, **the main objective of this Dissertation** has been the presentation of a coherent and innovative theory-based methodology for the development of new Euroregional cross-border organizations. After successfully developing a theoretical structure and proceeding to its experimental application, I believe to have provided a valuable conceptual tool for the replicability of Euroregions in further cross-border territories of the EU. In relation to the three steps of the methodology, I further resume the main results achieved.

In *Stage 1*, I have generated **original theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories** as CBRs that do not (yet) present cross-border institutions beyond the INTERREG programmes sponsored by the EU. Furthermore, I have developed qualitative analysis as to **acknowledge the existence of CBC networks constituting suitable ground for the implementation of new Euroregions.**

In *Stage 2*, I have provided a **theoretical model for classifying Euroregions according to an original territorial-scale based typology of CBC activities**. The model holds to the principle that territorial scale has an important correspondence to the type of CBC enacted through the border. At the same times, it exerts an influence over the governance structures existing in a determined CBR. In addition, this hypothesis is reinforced by introducing the territorial features derived from geographical border typology. An evident example of this has been shown in the case-study area affected by a maritime context.

In relation to this argument, I have also performed detailed **observation of multisectoral maritime CBC**. This has revealed that maritime border areas between two (or more) EU territories require specific types of governance due to different issues affecting the CBC projects' execution. In my theorization, these obstacles can be reduced by employing multilevel governance structures and involving actors with territorial competences capable to enact at cross-sea level.

To accomplish the creation of a useful Euroregional organization which is genuinely adjusted to the needs of the territory, in *Stage 3* I have provided **two further methods based on the reinterpretation of Strategic Action Fields theory and in the adaptation of geohistorical analysis from the Longue Durée**. This was instrumental in obtaining a multisectoral analysis (commonalities and differences in the CBR) stressing the accent on the power relations and the cross-border flows and issues between the two parts.

All of the previous results have allowed me to present the theory-based methodology for the design and implementation of Euroregions (see Table 15). At the same time, the construction of the tool has been instrumental in its application to the case-study area. Indeed, the methodology has been exploited in the Sicilian-Maltese CBR as to provide a list of suggestions derived from theoretical results. Ultimately, these constitute broad indications which may lead to the creation of a Euroregional strategy between the two islands.

To conclude, this Dissertation has shown **that it is possible to employ existing academic theories and empirical studies for the consolidation of a theory-based instrument in the design of new Euroregional organizations**. As one of the authors of the RECOT Euroregional Catalogue, I fully adhere to our manifesto declaring that Euroregions truly matter in the European Integration scenario. As a matter of fact, they are nowadays present over most of the EU borders. They represent a symbol of communal living across border areas. Most importantly, they express a common desire for cooperation and peaceful joint development among all partners involved. It continues to be our duty as academic researchers to provide valuable theories and data to society while assisting in the successful development of Euroregional initiatives.

Table 15 - The Theory-based Methodology presented by the Dissertation, its objectives and methods (Source: own elaboration)

Theory-Based Methodology	Objectives	Methods
<p><b>STAGE 0:</b> Background analysis of Euroregions</p>	<p><b>Acquiring a bird's eye perspective on active Euroregions</b> during the selected EU multiannual financial framework</p>	<p>a. establishment of an operational definition of Euroregion as a cross-border organization; b. production of two databases showing a compilation of research data; c. obtention of a sample of 61 highly active Euroregions; d. performance of a comparative study over the sample.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 1:</b> Identification of "Proto-euroregional" territories as suitable grounds for Euroregions</p>	<p><b>Acknowledgement of the existing networks of CBC</b>, specifically of CBCs located along the EU's internal borders. Focus on territories with INTERREG programme but that do not show the presence of Euroregions.</p>	<p>a. elaboration of original theorisation on "proto-euroregional" territories; b. extensive fieldwork in the case-study area; c. identification of INTERREG partnerships executing projects; d. identification of the existing networks of CBC as "regional public" interested in institutionalization.</p>
<p><b>STAGE 2:</b> A theoretical model for designing Euroregions</p>	<p><b>Selection of an appropriate Euroregional typology according to a Euroregional model</b> based on a. the territorial scale and b. the administrative competences needed to perform across the specific type of border (i.e. land, sea, mountain, etc.);</p>	<p>a. creation of a territorial scale-based typology for the classification of EU-sponsored CBC activities; b. elaboration of a Euroregional model through an existing Euroregional sample; c. application of the model in different geographical backgrounds (i.e. maritime context).</p>
<p><b>STAGE 3: In-depth case-study for further tailoring the Euroregion to the Cross-Border territory needs</b></p>	<p><b>1. Acknowledgement of existing power relations</b> in CBC processes (i.e. INTERREG programme)</p> <p><b>2. Elaboration of a multisectoral framework</b> of existing historical, economic, social and cultural ties (and disparities) in the CBR.</p>	<p>a. mapping of the INTERREG programme's governance structure; b. mapping of power relations through <i>Strategic Action Fields</i> theory conceptualization; c. extensive interviews to administrative and institutional stakeholders.</p> <p>a. elaboration of an adapted methodology for the in-depth analysis of CBR (Longue Durée); b. analysis of the three terms of the CBR's history (long, medium, short); c. obtention of a list of commonalities and differences in the CBR's territories; d. identification of cross-border issues to be tackled by CBR</p>



## 12.1 Prospects for the Research

In relation to the theoretical framework and the theory-based methodology, further work of analysis may be needed to refine the individual methods and to expand upon the results provided in this study. In this section, I provide a number of topics organized around each stage of the proposal.

For the theories and methods illustrated in **Stage 1**:

- **Further research may be required in order to refine the theorization on “proto-euroregional” territories.** For example, this may concern the further study of the CBR categories indicating where cross-border institutions are not currently present and/or active on the territory. Likewise, future research may consider the production of a refined list of mechanisms explaining shifts among the three stages of the “CBC-publics-in-stabilization” model.
- At case-study level, there is a **great potential for the application of the “proto-euroregional” filter in other CBRs.** Firstly, there should be a focus on territories not showing institutionalization but laying adjacent to the same border with other Euroregional organizations. Secondly, there is a need for the application of “proto-euroregional” outlooks on border regions shaped by other typologies of borders (i.e. mountains, rivers....) to verify if the geographical factor can stimulate the production of alternative results.

Regarding the quantitative data on the Euroregional model and the qualitative analysis provided by the maritime framework in **Stage 2**:

- The classification provided by **the Euroregional model should be applied to a wider sample of Euroregions** in order to test its global effectiveness and to demonstrate wider-scale applicability. Ideally, the research could **explore the listing of 158 active Euroregions** already provided by the COOP-RECOT II project;
- Despite the initial attempts for further cross-data analysis explained in chapter 4.4 and shown in the annexes, further refining and collection of data in **the RECOT Euroregional database could provide opportunity for testing new correlations between the variables** provided;
- **The application of the Euroregional model** to the context of maritime CBC automatically suggests **the possible influence from other geographical border typologies (i.e. mountain; river).** Observation of the governance structure among groupings of Euroregions with similar features may help uncovering other different dynamics from the traditionally considered land-based CBC. In turn, this may help towards **the development of branch studies on the different territorial conditions for successful CBC across Europe**;

- **In relation to multisectoral maritime CBC**, this Dissertation has contributed in **discovering a general lack of theories and contributions regarding the topic**. However, in light of the results, **I strongly suggest the production of further studies exclusively dedicated to the subject**. These may spawn from further theoretical perspectives on cooperation across maritime borders or from the production of new comparative material with multiple case-studies.

For what concerns the methods inspired by the complementary framework in **Stage 3**:

- Admittedly, the subject of cross-border SAFs was planned in a wider editorial project dedicated to Fields' appliance in European and North American contexts; of this, Publication 4 is already an integrating part. However, **further contributions may be developed on the specific relations between INTERREG programmes and Euroregions in SAF theorization**. Furthermore, it may be interesting to consider my own expansion of the theory (the concepts of *Functionality* and *Effectiveness*, the inclusion of *Field Participants*) for application in other case-studies as to demonstrate their validity;
- There is surely much room for **improvement of the adapted Longue-Durée methodology from Braudel**. As a matter of fact, during the phase of peer-reviewing I was brought into a relevant exchange of feedback with an anonymous reviewer (which I am sure that proceeded from the academic field of historiography). In our discussion, he forced me to reflect upon notions of historical cyclicity and a more self-conscious recognition of the adapted methodology's limitations. He made me see that, in order to achieve my strategic vision of the three-terms histories, I necessarily had to sacrifice other features such as the ecological perspective or the focus on daily life practices (with whom Braudel himself was deeply concerned). Even when the paper was accepted, he was still claiming that my treatment of history was overly oriented towards "high politics" and that the article may have been the subject of perhaps more criticism than usual. Nonetheless, he also believed that it offered something new and important that deserved to be seen and judged by the scholarly community as a whole. In the general work of my Dissertation, **I believe to have been able to successfully design the multisectoral analysis required for my methodology. I also reckon to have succeeded in producing a method for acquiring expertise knowledge of a CBR**. It may be up to other History or Border Studies scholars **to suggest either alternative or richer interpretations of the Longue Durée methodology**;
- In any case, even in its current stage **the adapted Longue Durée methodology could help inspiring a new set of cross-border regional studies applied to multiple CBRs**. Similarly, the combination of the methodology with Archipelagraphy has influenced a new set of observations on **alternative cross-border strategies for European islands**. Further employment of the double

perspective may be possible for CBRs presenting island components (a few examples are already provided by my investigation in Result 2).

Finally, it is easy to envision that **the ultimate finality of the theory-based methodology invites its full application in other CBRs. These may be directed to “proto-euroregional” territories where CBC institutionalization has not appeared or even in already existing Euroregional territories.** Scholars and stakeholders may employ all the methods or portions of them as to reassess features of their Euroregional reality. The new results could help considering adjustments in their Euroregional governance structure or even in the sectoral policies of CBC activities.

## 12.2 Knowledge-Transfer to Society

Although the primary target of the research was inspired by scientific interest in advancing the debate on Euroregional studies, during the course of the Dissertation I was always aware of **the practical implications that the methodology could hold for Euroregional and INTERREG-involved stakeholders in Europe.** While it is true that the Dissertation can only provide broad indications to a Euroregional strategy, it is also easy to consider it as an **initial roadmap for interested policymakers** pursuing the consolidation of a new cross-border organization. In this regard, **the theory-based methodology can be seen to ascribe to the Anglo-Saxon journalistic tradition of the five Ws (the *Who, What, When, Where & Why*) trying to outline all the basic traits of the new Euroregion-in-being.**

Beyond the local actors belonging to individual CBRs, it is also easy to envision dissemination of the global and partial results to further stakeholders. For example, the territorial-scale based classification of CBC activities and the Euroregional model may raise **the interest of lobbying organizations representing CBC institutions** (i.e. Association of European Border Regions, Committee of the Regions). Besides, the multiple findings in multisectoral maritime CBC are highly relevant in the recent debate over structural reforms of INTERREG cross-sea initiatives (Halleux, 2019). The research may provide **new perspectives to European institutions and to lobbies dedicated to safeguarding peripheral and maritime interests** (i.e. DGRegio, but also the Conference of Peripheral and Maritime Regions).

Finally, and much to the right of the extensive fieldwork and applied research hereby presented, I hope that **the Sicilian and Maltese stakeholders** may find an interest on what the Dissertation suggests for an improved advancement of CBC in the case-study area.

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## **Section IV: Annexes**



*Picture 4 - Photograph of the Sicily-Malta maritime area taken from space (Source: NASA Archives, <https://eol.jsc.nasa.gov/>)*

## 13. Annexes of the Research

### 13.1 Tables

#### 1) Searching for statistical correlations among variables in the Euroregional Database

This research was produced during the production of **Publication 3 and the Euroregional Model**.

Some examples of the attempted correlations through further typologies are:

- Correlation between Euroregional model variants and the declared thematic cooperation goals of Euroregions (i.e. *Energy & Environment; Health; Local Economic Development*, etc.)
- Correlation between Euroregional model variants and an originally designed typology of output activities (*Exchanges and/or training practices; impact and/or feasibility studies; cross-border services; investments and/or infrastructure*)
- Correlation among CBC projects' thematic goals, territorial scales and output activities

None of the correlations was demonstrated to be statistically relevant for the finalities of the research.

Correlation between EUR model Variants and Cooperation Goals (Weak)											
TPOLOGY	EUR Model	Accessibility and Transportation	Cohesion and Social Integration	Education and Culture	Energy & Environment	Governance	Health	Local Economic Development	R&I	Security	Spatial Planning
1: Bilateral Eurocity	L (1) = 3	3	1	3	1	1	1	3	1	1	0
2: Eurocity Consortium	L (2) = 5	4	2	4	3	1	1	5	1	0	3
LOCAL SCALE EUR	L (1+2) = 8	7	3	7	4	2	2	8	2	1	3
1: Eurodistrict	S (1) = 27	22	19	17	23	5	10	25	4	4	7
2: Association of Municipalities	S (2) = 19	15	12	17	14	2	6	19	6	3	7
SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	S (1+2) = 46	37	31	34	37	7	16	44	10	7	14
1: Bilateral Regional	R (1) = 2	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	1	0	0
2: Multiregional	R (1) = 4	2	1	2	3	2	1	3	2	0	0
REGIONAL SCALE EUR	R (1+2) = 6	4	2	3	3	2	1	5	3	0	0
ABSOLUTE TOTALS	60	48	36	44	44	11	19	57	15	8	17

Correlation between EUR Model Variants (plus sub-typologies) and Typology of Output Activities					
TPOLOGY	CBC Projects	Exchanges and/or Training Practices	Impact and/or Feasibility Studies	Cross Border Services	Investments and/or Infrastructure
L (1): Bilateral Eurocity	L (1) = 3	0	1	1	1
L (2): Eurocity Consortium	L (2) = 5	1	2	1	1
(L) LOCAL SCALE EUR	L (1+2) = 8	1	3	2	2
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 8	12.5%	37.5%	25%	25%
S (1): Multilevel Euroregion	S (1) = 27	6	8	6	7
S (2): Association of Municipalities	S (2) = 19	3	4	2	10
(S) SUPRALOCAL SCALE EUR	S (1+2) = 46	9	12	8	17
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 46	20%	26%	17%	37%
R (1): Bilateral Regional	R (1) = 2	1	0	0	1
R (2): Multiregional	R (2) = 4	1	0	2	1
(R) REGIONAL SCALE EUR	R (1+2) = 6	2	0	2	2
% of Total (Approx.)	100 % = 6	33%	0%	33%	33%

Correlation between CBC projects scale and Typology of Output Activities					
TYPOLGY	N. projects	Exchanges and/or Training Practices	Impact and/or Feasibility Studies	Cross Border Services	Investments and/or Infrastructure
Type L	L = 15	1	5	3	6*
% of Total (Approx.)	100% = 15	7%	33%	20%	40%
Type S	S = 39	8	9	8	14
% of Total (Approx.)	100% = 39	20%	24%	20%	36%
Type R	R = 6	3	1	1	1
% of Total (Approx.)	100% = 6	52%	16%	16%	16%

\* Of the 6 projects, 3 executed by Type S Euroregions and 1 by Type R Euroregion

Correlations among theme, Project CBC Typology = EUR Model Variant and Project Activity						
PROJECT THEME	Typology CBC Project = EUR Model Variant	Number of projects	Project Activity Typology			
			Exchanges and/or Training Practices	Impact and/or Feasibility Studies	Cross Border Services	Investments and/or Infrastructure
Accessibility and Transportation	L	2			1	1
	S	5		2	2	1
	R	0				
	TOTAL	7	0	2	3	2
Cohesion and Social Integration	L	1		1		
	S	3	2	1		
	R	0				
	TOTAL	4	2	2	0	0
Education and Culture	L	0				
	S	1	1			
	R	0				
	TOTAL	1	1	0	0	0
Energy & Environment	L	1		1		
	S	7		3	1	3
	R	0				
	TOTAL	8	0	4	1	4
Governance	L	1	1			
	S	4	2	1	1	
	R	1	1			
	TOTAL	6	2	1	1	0
Health	L	0				
	S	3			2	1
	R	1			1	
	TOTAL	4	0	0	3	1
Local Economic Development	L	3		1	1	1
	S	11	3		2	6
	R	1				1
	TOTAL	15	3	1	3	8
R&I	L	0				
	S	3		1		2
	R	2	2			
	TOTAL	5	2	1	0	2
Spatial Planning	L	0				
	S	2		1		1
	R	0				
	TOTAL	2	0	1	0	1

## 2) Extended classification of Euroregions from the sample according to the Euroregional Model (Publication 3)

English Name	Geographical area	Superficies (km <sup>2</sup> )	Goals & Issues (Competences)	Institutional Density	Level of Self-Government (Predominant)	EUR Model
Ionian Adriatic Euroregion	CMA	229.028	5 to 6	11 to 30	Regional	R (2)
Alzette-Belval EGTC	WE	141	7 or More	3 to 10	Supralocal	L (2)
New Aquitaine-Euskadi-Navarre Euroregion	SWE	101.661	3 to 4	3 to 10	Regional	R (2)
Baltic Euroregion	NE	86040	3 to 4	3 to 10	Local/Supralocal/Regional	S (1)
Banat Triplex Confinium EGTC	EE	3.500	3 to 4	More than 30	Local	S (2)
Bidasoa Txingudi Cross-Border Consortium	SWE	80	3 to 4	3 to 10	Local	L (2)
Bothnian Arc	NE	55000	3 to 4	11 to 30	Local / Supralocal	S (1)
Carpathian Euroregion	EE	14.002	3 to 4	11 to 30	Local / Supralocal	S (1)
Leman Council	CE	18.868	5 to 6	3 to 10	Supralocal	S (1)
Country of Lakes Euroregion	EE	359.000	5 to 6	11 to 30	Local	S (1)
Douro-Douro EGTC	SWE	9.000	7 or More	More than 30	Local	S (2)
East Border Region Ltd.	WE	7.971	3 to 4	3 to 10	Supralocal	S (1)
Euregio Egreensis	CE	17.000	5 to 6	11 to 30	Supralocal	S (1)
Ems Dollart Region (EDR)	WE	19.023	5 to 6	More than 30	Local	S (2)
MontBlanc Space	CE	2.800	3 to 4	More than 30	Local	S (2)
Poutalet Space EGTC	SWE	55.364	3 to 4	2	Supralocal / Regional	R (1)
EUREGIO (Gronau Euroregion)	WE	13.000	3 to 4	More than 30	Local	S (2)
Chaves-Verin Eurocity	SWE	685	5 to 6	2	Local	L (1)
Bayonne-San Sebastián Basque Eurocity	SWE	591	3 to 4	3 to 10	Local	L (2)
Regio PAMINA Eurodistrict EGTC	CE	6.500	5 to 6	11 to 30	Supralocal	S (1)
Freiburg Region and South Alsace Eurodistrict	CE	5.200	5 to 6	11 to 30	Local	S (1)
Strasbourg Ortenau Eurodistrict	CE	2.167	7 or More	3 to 10	Local	S (1)
Basel Trinational District	CE	1.989	5 to 6	More than 30	Local	S (2)
Saarnoselle Eurodistrict	WE	1.460	5 to 6	3 to 10	Local / Supralocal	S (2)
Lille-Kortrijk-Toumai Eurometropolis	WE	3.550	5 to 6	11 to 30	Supralocal / Regional	S (1)
Frankfurt (Oder) & Slubice Cooperative Center	NE	300	3 to 4	2	Local	L (1)
Galicia-North Portugal Euroregion	SWE	50.000	3 to 4	2	Regional	R (1)
Glacensis Euroregion	CE	4.900	5 to 6	More than 30	Local	S (2)



Gorizia-Nova Gorica EGTC	CMA	365	5 to 6	3 to 10	local	L (2)
Greater Geneva	CE	2.000	5 to 6	11 to 30	Supralocal / Regional	S (1)
Greater Copenhagen & Skåne Committee	NE	21203	3 to 4	More than 30	Local / Supralocal	S (2)
Inn-Salzach-Euregio	CE	2.822	1 or 2	More than 30	local	S (2)
Inntal Euregio	CE	5.143	7 or More	More than 30	local	S (2)
International Lake Constance Conference (IBK)	CE	14.797	7 or More	11 to 30	Supralocal / Regional	S (1)
Irish Central Border Area Network (ICBAN)	WE	15.852	5 to 6	3 to 10	local	S (1)
Kvarken Council	NE	42755	5 to 6	11 to 30	Local / Supralocal	S (1)
Meuse-Rhine Euroregion	WE	11.000	7 or More	3 to 10	Supralocal / Regional	S (1)
Rhine-Meuse-North Euregio	WE	3.400	7 or More	11 to 30	local	S (1)
North West Region Cross Border Group (NWRCBG)	WE	6.164	3 to 4	2	Local / Supralocal	S (1)
Tri-national Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine	CE	21.000	5 to 6	11 to 30	Supralocal	S (1)
Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion	SWE	109.830	5 to 6	3 to 10	Regional	R (2)
Rhine-Waal Euregio	WE	9.000	7 or More	More than 30	local	S (2)
Salzburg - Berchtesgadener Land - Traunstein EuRegion	CE	9.500	7 or More	More than 30	local	S (2)
Scheldemond Euregio	WE	8.059	5 to 6	11 to 30	Local/Supralocal/Regional	S (1)
Sonderjylland-Schleswig Euroregion	NE	8.200	3 to 4	3 to 10	Local /Supralocal/Regional	S (1)
Svinesund Committee	NE	1.550	3 to 4	11 to 30	Local/Supralocal	S (1)
Tatry Euroregion	EE	13.700	3 to 4	More than 30	local	S (2)
EUROPAREGION (Tyrol-South Tyrol-Trentino Euroregion)	CE	26.247	7 or More	3 to 10	Supralocal / Regional	S (1)
Dunkirk- Flandre- Côte d'Opale region and West Flanders E	WE	7.000	5 to 6	11 to 30	Regional	S (1)
Ruse-Giurgiu Danubius Euroregion	EE	6.329	5 to 6	2	Supralocal	S (1)
Neisse-Nisa-Nysa Euroregion	CE	13.254	3 to 4	More than 30	Local / Supralocal	S (2)
Pomerania Euroregion	NE	35.500	5 to 6	2	Local/Supralocal	S (2)
Via Salina Euregio	CE	6.574	3 to 4	More than 30	Local/Supralocal	S (2)
Praded Euroregion	CE	7.386	7 or More	More than 30	Local/Supralocal	S (2)
Fehmarnbelt Committee	NE	9863	3 to 4	11 to 30	Local/Supralocal/Regional	S (1)
Kerkrade- Herzogenrath Eurode	WE	55	5 to 6	2	local	L (1)
Pyrenees-Cerdanya EGTC	SWE	988	3 to 4	2	Supralocal	S (2)
Vis-a-Vis LGTC	CE	590	3 to 4	11 to 30	Local	L (2)
FinEst Link (Helsinki-Tallinn)	NE	13901	1 or 2	3 to 10	Local/Supralocal	S (1)
CAWT Region (Co-Operation and Working Together)	WE	23.905	1 or 2	3 to 10	Regional	R (2)

The Euroregions marked on the left are identified as “Eminently Maritime”; the gray fields on the right are an acceptable degree of anomalies in the modelization (less than 15% of the total sample).

### 3) Comparative timeline between the histories of Sicily and Malta

Comparative timeline considered during the production of **Publication 5 (Medium-term history)**. The two tables correspond to the classified *Age of Continuity* (c. 5000 BC-AD 1524) vs. the *Age of Rupture* (AD 1524-1964)

<b>Maltese History</b>	<b>Dates</b>	<b>Sicilian History</b>
Malta uninhabited	<b>1.000.000 B.C. ca.</b>	First human settlements in Sicily
First human settlements in Malta (Sicani); construction of monoliths and stone temples	<b>5.000 – 4.000 B.C. ca. (Neolithic)</b>	Establishment of the Sicani (original population)
Sporadic invasions and settlements from Sicily's populations	<b>2.000 – 1.400 B.C. ca. (Bronze Age)</b>	New settlements from Ausori, Morgenti and Siculi populations
Minor invasions and generic settlements (i.e. Borg-In-Nadur);	<b>1.2000 – 800 B.C. ca. (Iron Age)</b>	Consolidation of existing population; creation of first commercial cities and advancements in technology
Co-existing Phoenicians and Carthaginians settlements (no absolute dominion)	<b>800 – 250 B.C. ca. (Phoenicians, Carthaginians and Greeks)</b>	Western Sicily colonized by Phoenicians and Carthaginians; from <b>735 B.C.</b> Eastern Sicily colonized by the Greeks
After Roman-Carthaginians struggles, Malta under Roman colonization in <b>218 B.C.</b>	<b>241 B.C. – A.D. 395 ca. (Roman Republic and Empire)</b>	From <b>241 B.C.</b> onwards Sicily becomes formally part of the Roman territory ('granary of Europe')
Malta already in the hands of the Byzantine in <b>A.D. 395</b> ; domination but no real strategic importance in the outpost until <b>A.D. 870</b> .	<b>A.D 395 – 870 (Byzantine Domination)</b>	At the fall of the Roman empire, brief Gothic occupation of Sicily between <b>A.D. 476 – 535</b> . Afterwards, Byzantine domination until <b>A.D. 827</b> .
The Byzantine resist invasion until <b>A.D. 870</b> . Arab domination until <b>A.D. 1091</b> when the Normans complete the liberation process started in Sicily.	<b>A.D. 827 – 1091 (Arab Domination)</b>	Sicily is the first of the two islands to fall to Arab invasion in <b>A.D. 827</b> . Conquered by the Normans in <b>A.D. 1060</b> .
Malta is always more integrated into Sicilian affairs; influence of the Christian church; strong food dependence from Sicily; administrative authorities coming from the larger island.	<b>A.D. 1060 – 1524. (Unification under the Kingdom of Sicily: Norman, Swabian, Angevin, Aragonese and Castilian rules)</b>	Sicily is at the core of the new Kingdom; Palermo as royal capital and 'stupor mundi'; Sicilian Vespers rebellion in <b>A.D. 1282</b> ; consolidation of selfish Sicilian aristocracy; shift towards a 'granary colony' regime ruled by Spanish viceroys.

<p>In <b>A.D. 1524</b>, donation of Malta by Charles V of Spain to the Order of the Knights of St. John as headquarters; Establishment in <b>A.D. 1530</b> informally taking dominion and interrupting authority from Sicily.</p>	<p><b>A.D. 1524 – 1530</b> (<b>Arrival of the Order of the Knights of St. John; Rupture of the Kingdom of Sicily</b>) <i>[Rupture Point 1 in Territorial Relations]</i></p>	<p>Sicily will firmly remain a colony under the Spanish Crown until <b>A.D. 1713</b>. Performing once again the role of a granary of Europe (mainly agricultural and underdeveloped)</p>
<p>Great Siege of Malta in <b>A.D. 1565</b> by the Turks. Once won, Malta will enjoy the prosperity of the wealthy Order until the deterioration of its power and the conquest by Napoleon in <b>A.D. 1798</b>. Continued dependence in food-related terms from Sicily (either legally by trade or illegally by piracy).</p>	<p><b>A.D. 1530 – 1798</b> (<b>Malta as the reign of the Knights; Sicily is passed on to multiple masters until the Bourbons</b>)</p>	<p>Sicily is briefly taken by the Piedmontese between <b>A.D. 1713 - 1720</b>. It is then given to the Austrians between <b>A.D. 1720 – 1734</b>. Finally, integration of the island under the Bourbons (<b>A.D. 1734-1860</b>).</p>
<p>Malta is seized by Napoleon in <b>A.D. 1798</b> but the Maltese are extremely unhappy with the French regime and ask the British for intervention, themselves conquering the island in <b>A.D. 1800</b>. British colonization will last uninterrupted until <b>A.D. 1964</b>. Strong rupture of the dependence from Sicily due to British resources.</p>	<p><b>A.D. 1798 – 1815</b> (<b>French and British Occupations</b>) <i>[Rupture Point 2 in Territorial Relations]</i></p>	<p>Due to the Napoleonic Wars, the Bourbon Kings temporarily reside in Palermo between <b>A.D. 1806-1815</b>. Napoleon never travels to Sicily but heads straight for Malta. The British militarily occupy Sicily in the same years and try to give the island a new constitution without succeeding.</p>
<p>Malta is stably in the hands of the British, ultimately favorable towards the economic and political development of the island yet maintaining strategic military presence in the heart of the Mediterranean.</p>	<p><b>A.D. 1815 – 1861</b> (<b>British Malta, Bourbon and then Italian Sicily</b>)</p>	<p>Sicily is left to the Bourbons and incorporated in the Kingdom of the two Sicilies. The movements and conflicts for the independence of Italy also arrive into Sicily. Italian unification in <b>A.D. 1861</b>; Sicily becomes a region of the newborn state.</p>
<p>Maltese constitutions, political parties' development (right wing strongly sympathizing with Italian unification), but traditional culture and society. Drastic change in attitude towards Italy due to Fascism and the siege of Malta of <b>A.D. 1940-1942</b>. After WWII, decolonization process in Malta. Achievement of Independence in <b>A.D. 1964</b>.</p>	<p><b>A.D. 1861 – 1964</b> (<b>Towards the current status-quo in the 20th century</b>) <i>[Rupture Point 3 in Territorial Relations]</i></p>	<p>Sicily as one of the poorest regions of Italy; first politicization of Sicily through national parties; brief socialist experience of Fasci Siciliani (<b>A.D. 1891-1894</b>); WWII Allied invasion of Sicily in <b>A.D. 1943</b>; Afterwards, claims of independentism from Italy. As a result, establishment of a Statute of Special Autonomy and institutionalization of the Sicilian region (<b>A.D. 1946 – 1948</b>)</p>

## 13.2 Template of Questionnaires (semistructured interviews)

### 1) Questionnaire to institutional actors involved in the INTERREG Italy-Malta Programme

- **Introducing the Organization/Actor/Project**

- Who is the interviewed and what is their professional background?
- Have you ever had any previous experiences of CBC? What about other European programmes/projects?
- The organization and its work (what are its tasks? Is it a private/public actor?)

- **The origins of the INTERREG Italy-Malta Programme**

- What were the relationships between the two islands before Malta entered the EU and before the creation of the relative INTERREG programme?
- Where does the idea about generating an INTERREG programme come from?
- What were the key institutional actors or charismatic figures that supported the creation?
- Could you please describe the process that brought upon the creation of the programme?
- Were there any relevant obstacles in the production and kick-starting of the INTERREG programme?
- Why were both the managing authority and the joint secretariat established in Sicily?

- **Governance of the Cross-Border Area**

- What kind of coordination/internal communication is in place inside the CBC organization? How does it take place? (joint strategies, meetings, approval of projects, management, vertical/horizontal relationships)
- What kind of human, technical and financial resources does your organization put in place for participating in CBC?
- Are there any plans in the future for incorporating Maltese personnel into the main INTERREG offices in Palermo?
- What kind of contacts exist with the other political actors of the region? [regional, national and European]
- Are there any specific asymmetries in the State-Region relationships for the realization of CBC?
- Do you participate or have had contacts with other networks dedicated to territorial cooperation? (AEBR, MOT, CESCO, etc.)  
(Info point, communications, technical assistance, cooperation days, seminars, etc.)

- **Obstacles to CBC processes between Sicily and Malta**

- What are the main technical deficits limiting CBC (that is, those factors that difficult the relations among the various members)?
- How do you think they could be resolved?

- **Key-factors for success and evaluation of the INTERREG programme Italy-Malta**

- What were the main results achieved through cooperation? Could you provide some concrete example of successful projects?
- Could you offer a general evaluation of the two last Operational Programmes (2004-2006; 2007-2013)?
- Which ones do you believe to be the “pillars” of cooperation?
- What were the specific reasons that pushed out of the 2014-2020 programme the cross-border infrastructure sector?

- **The future of the Sicily-Malta Cross-Border Cooperation**

- What is the future path of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme?
- Are there any plans for a further institutional strengthening of cooperation (in the sense of the creation of new cooperation structures?)
- Are you aware of the existence of Euroregions and their activities in a cross-border area? Would you consider useful the creation of a Sicily-Malta Euroregion?
- Is there any specific common strategic priority between the two territories (beyond the Operational Programme guidelines) that could not be included in the CBC programme?
  
- Finally, do you believe that I should be consulting some other contact that could help me in my research?

## **2) Questionnaire to project actors involved in the INTERREG Italy-Malta Programme**

- **Introducing the Organization/Actor/Project**

- Who is the interviewed and what is their professional background?
- Have you ever had any previous experiences of CBC? What about other European programmes/projects?
- The organization and its work (what are its tasks? Is it a private/public actor?)
- Could you provide an initial description of your CBC project?

- **Origins of the CBC project**

- How did you come to knowledge of the INTERREG funds? How did you decide to apply for funding (tools of diffusion and advertising, public authorities' websites, etc.)?
- What was the procedure in the construction of the project?
- How did you enlist all the different partners? Were there any existing contacts prior to the project?
- Could you provide some feedback on your experience in applying for the funding and the general kick-start of the project?

- **Cross-Border Cooperation Experience**

- What kind of coordination/internal communication process was established among the different partners? (General board, Leader partner as the only coordinator, separate tasks, etc.)
- What kind of relations did you maintain with the central managing authority of the INTERREG programme? (informative meetings, progressive reports, bureaucratic procedures, etc.)



- What kind of human/technical/financial resources were deployed by your organization into the project?
- Were there any obstacles in the cooperation process and in the realization of project?
- If so, what kind of solutions were suggested to resolve them?

- **Project's Results**

- What have been the main results and outputs of the project?
- Do you believe that such results could have been obtained without the cross-border element?
- Did CBC produce a transformative effect on your organization? Was there a chance for new learning?
- Could you provide a general feedback on the project and on the experience of CBC?

- **Feedback on CBC Sicily-Malta**

- Could you provide your feedback on the Italy-Malta INTERREG programme?
- Would you like to see any changes in the programme management? Do you consider that there could aspects of the programme to be improved?
- Would you be willing to repeat the CBC experience through further projects?
- What is your feedback on the INTERREG central managing authority, especially during the management of your CBC project?
- Have you ever heard of the existence of Euroregions and their activities in a cross-border area (Yes/No)? If yes, would you consider useful the creation of a Sicily-Malta Euroregion?
- Finally, do you consider that I should be interviewing any other contact you may know about my research topic?

**3) Adapted questionnaire to the DG Regional and Urban Policy Unit D2 – Interreg, Cross-Border Cooperation, internal borders (responsible for Italy-Malta INTERREG)**

- Could you describe the **technical relationship** between the office responsible for INTERREG at the European Commission and the local INTERREG authorities?
- Can you explore the **institutional relations** in place between Your Directorate-General and the relevant **national and local authorities of the INTERREG Italy-Malta**?
  - What is the level of contacts with national/regional authorities in Italy? How do you coordinate with them?
  - What is the level of contacts with Maltese authorities? How do you coordinate with them?
  - Does the particular context of an Island-State and an Italian Region with autonomous powers impact upon the coordination of the INTERREG program?

- Can we look at **the origins of the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme** from your perspective?
  - Could you elaborate on the set-up of operations and the process of negotiations of Italy (and Sicily) and Malta with the EC?
  - Who were the key-actors? Was it a smooth process? Were there any beginners' obstacles to the set-up of operations?
  - What were the decisions on the political agenda regarding the topics for cooperation?
  
- Could we elaborate an **assessment of the last two planning periods** (O.P. 2004-2006 / O.P. 2007-2013) of the Italy-Malta INTERREG?
  - What were the main obstacles to the realization of the programme?
  - Were there any particular strong points in the cooperation process?
  - Was there a need for specific resolution mechanisms?
  - How would you describe the relationship between the partners at the two sides of the borders?
  - What were the main decisions about the agenda of cooperation? How did the two partners negotiate the decisions?
  
- Could you elaborate on the production of **the current INTERREG strategy** for the O.P. 2014-2020?
  - What were the main issues agreed between the two territories?
  - Are you aware of the Cross-Border Task force initiative taken by the INTERREG authorities for the production of the new Program? Could you evaluate its efficacy?
  - Why was the strategic infrastructure aspect of the strategy excluded in the new planning of the INTERREG program?
  
- Could you elaborate a **final, global assessment perspective** on the INTERREG Italy-Malta programme?
  - What are the main results and strengths of the program so far?
  - What areas could and should be improved?
  - Do you think there should be more space for further institutionalization inside the program (creation of a Euroregion, for example)?
  - In your opinion, what is the vision for the future of the program?

## 14. Dissemination Article (ITA)

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**CAMONITA, Francesco** (2017). «Una Euroregione per l'area transfrontaliera Sicilia-Malta?». *Strumenti RES, Rivista della Fondazione RES, Anno IX, 1, Luglio 2017*.

### **Abstract**

Il seguente articolo rappresenta una riflessione generale sullo stato della questione della cooperazione transfrontaliera europea in atto tra la Regione Sicilia e la Repubblica di Malta. Concepito come un estratto degli studi di ricerca dottorali dell'autore, si descrive in primo luogo la presenza di un programma operativo INTERREG Italia-Malta sovvenzionato da fondi europei provenienti dalla politica di coesione. Tuttavia, considerata l'esistenza di strumenti di governance e gestione di politiche transfrontaliere maggiormente sviluppate sul territorio europeo (specialmente nel caso delle Euroregioni), è possibile poter ipotizzare delle interessanti linee d'azione future per il raggiungimento di una maggiore interazione strategica congiunta tra le due isole.

### **Keywords**

Cooperazione Transfrontaliera; Euroregione; INTERREG; Sicilia; Malta

## Una Euroregione per l'area transfrontaliera Sicilia-Malta?

Francesco Maria Camonita

### POLITICHE PUBBLICHE

*Il seguente articolo rappresenta una riflessione generale sullo stato della questione della cooperazione transfrontaliera europea in atto tra la Regione Sicilia e la Repubblica di Malta. Dopo aver descritto il programma operativo INTERREG Italia-Malta sovvenzionato da fondi europei provenienti dalla politica di coesione, si avanzano alcune ipotesi su future linee d'azione future per il raggiungimento di una maggiore interazione strategica congiunta tra le due isole.*

#### **1. La Cooperazione Territoriale Europea (CTE) e la programmazione comunitaria INTERREG**

Sebbene il fenomeno della cooperazione territoriale sia presente in numerose realtà politiche mondiali, oggi non esiste accademico o stakeholder coinvolto in questo tipo di politiche che non riconosca la sua fondamentale importanza dentro il progetto generale di integrazione europea, nonché il suo continuo sviluppo sul territorio del vecchio continente. La cooperazione territoriale europea (CTE), di fatto, costituisce uno dei due obiettivi generali della politica comune di coesione della Unione Europea (UE). Grazie ad essa, le istituzioni europee propongono una serie di strumenti per l'attuazione congiunta di azioni e politiche attraverso la cooperazione di attori di tutti i livelli di governance territoriale provenienti da più paesi. Con l'obiettivo generale di uno sviluppo sia economico che sociale, la CTE prende forma attraverso il suo programma INTERREG che si sviluppa in tre ambiti diversi di cooperazione: interregionale, transnazionale e transfrontaliera (Commissione Europea; 2017).

Nonostante i primi tentativi di cooperazione territoriale europea risalgono addirittura alla fine degli anni cinquanta del secolo scorso, sarà necessario attendere tutta una serie di sviluppi giuridici e di accordi interstatali di cooperazione per assistere alla nascita definitiva del programma INTERREG nel 1990 (a questo proposito, vedasi l'interessante lavoro di ricostruzione cronologica della CTE proposto da Oliveras, Durà e Perkmann; 2010). E, sebbene rapido, esso passerà a sua volta attraverso una fase di evoluzione dal suo lancio

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sperimentale finanziato da 1 miliardo di euro nel periodo 1990-93 (INTERREG I) fino ad arrivare all'attuale fase INTERREG V, comprendente più di 100 diversi programmi di cooperazione con un budget di 10,1 miliardi di euro (per informazioni più dettagliate, vedasi lo schema riassuntivo della Figura 1).



Fonte: EC Website, 2017

[http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/cooperation/european-territorial/)

Oltre l'evidente eccezione delle frontiere esterne della UE rappresentata dai programmi di cooperazione con paesi terzi (attraverso lo Strumento di Assistenza Preadesione [IPA] e lo Strumento Europeo di Vicinato e Partenariato [ENI/ENPI]), le tre modalità territoriali (A-B-C) possono inizialmente apparire all'occhio meno esperto come simili, sebbene esistano delle marcate differenze. Volendo decifrarne la natura, è importante distinguere la distribuzione dei differenti attori nell'ambito della cooperazione. Nel primo caso (INTERREG A Transfrontaliero), gli attori territoriali coinvolti devono trovarsi in una zona con loro confini adiacenti allo scopo di attuare politiche e progetti di abbattimento dell'effetto frontiera. Nel secondo (INTERREG B Transnazionale), il programma coinvolgerà una serie di paesi adiacenti in una determinata zona geografica (come ad

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esempio l'intero insieme dei paesi adriatici o baltici) interessati da determinate tematiche comuni impossibili da risolvere individualmente (come nello spesso citato ma sempre fondamentale caso della salvaguardia del medio ambiente). Finalmente, nel terzo caso (INTERREG C Interregionale), gli attori territoriali interessati non apparterranno a territori adiacenti o frontalieri, ma sfrutteranno piuttosto l'accomunarsi di determinati interessi e/o preoccupazioni per realizzare dei progetti di sviluppo comune per affrontare tematiche condivise non affini per natura strettamente geografica (vedasi per esempio l'iniziativa sperimentale dei 4 motori economici per l'Europa o il programma per la gestione urbana INTERREG URBACT).

Come membro attivo della comunità UE e fervente partecipante alla politica (e ai relativi fondi) di coesione, la Repubblica Italiana è attivamente impegnata in 19 programmi di cooperazione territoriale alla data dell'attuale fase di programmazione INTERREG V 2014-2020 (8 transfrontalieri tra frontiere interne, 3 per frontiere esterne, 4 transnazionali e 4 interregionali)<sup>1</sup>.

A sua volta, la Regione Autonoma Sicilia è coinvolta in quanto ente territoriale in 8 di questi programmi:

- INTERREG A: ENPI CBC Italia -Tunisia; INTERREG Italia-Malta
- INTERREG B: Adriatico-Ionico; Mediterraneo
- INTERREG C: ESPON; INTERACT; EUROPE; URBACT

Sebbene ciascuno di tali programmi apra potenziali porte per linee individuali di ricerca, ci soffermeremo esclusivamente sulle possibilità introdotte dal programma di cooperazione INTERREG nell'area transfrontaliera Sicilia-Malta, già oggetto di analisi in quanto caso di studio principale della tesi dottorale dell'autore<sup>2</sup>. Dopo tale introduzione generale alla programmazione europea in questioni di cooperazione territoriale, provvederemo ad una necessaria descrizione delle caratteristiche del Programma Operativo Italia-Malta nei suoi tredici anni di attività, della sua struttura attuale di governance e del territorio da esso

<sup>1</sup> Si sottolineano alcune imprecisioni nel conteggio della pagina web generale della commissione europea, riviste alla luce della Decisione di esecuzione della Commissione 2014/388/UE del 16 giugno 2014 che stabilisce l'elenco delle regioni e delle zone ammissibili a un finanziamento del Fondo europeo di sviluppo regionale nel quadro dell'obiettivo di cooperazione territoriale europea per il periodo 2014- 2020. [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/en/atlas/programmes/?search=1&keywords=&countryCode=IT&regionId=ALL&themeId=ALL&programType=ALL&objectiveId=ALL&periodId=3](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/atlas/programmes/?search=1&keywords=&countryCode=IT&regionId=ALL&themeId=ALL&programType=ALL&objectiveId=ALL&periodId=3) Per una lista più soddisfacente consultare <http://www.sportelloeuropa.comunevittoria.eu/programmi-di-interreg-che-coinvolgono-italia/>

<sup>2</sup> Alla data di stesura di questo articolo, l'autore ha trascorso un periodo di tre mesi come ricercatore visitante presso l'Università di Palermo (Dipartimento di Scienze Politiche e Relazioni Internazionali) per l'esplorazione del caso di studio principale della propria tesi (P.O. INTERREG Italia-Malta).

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coinvolto. Il ragionamento proseguirà introducendo ulteriori esempi di governance transfrontaliera (tali come le Euroregioni) come strumenti ideali per una evoluzione strategica delle cosiddette politiche *cross-border*. Finalmente, elaboreremo alcuni argomenti preliminari in favore della creazione di una Euroregione Sicilia-Malta per lo sviluppo economico e sociale di tale regione transfrontaliera isolana situata nel cuore del Mediterraneo.

## 2. Il programma INTERREG Italia-Malta

Il programma operativo INTERREG Italia-Malta nasce ufficialmente nel 2004 per volontà congiunta dei territori coinvolti e delle stesse autorità europee. Non a caso, quello stesso anno le istituzioni comunitarie danno il benvenuto alla Repubblica di Malta nella famiglia della UE dopo il relativo processo di adesione e l'esito positivo del referendum decisionale del 2003<sup>3</sup>. Nonostante il periodo di programmazione europea settennale 2000-2006 si trovi già ben oltre la metà del suo ciclo di attuazione, questo non previene l'attuazione di una fase "sperimentale" iniziale per gli anni 2004-2006 con un budget ridotto all'incirca a 7 milioni di euro (contributo FESR<sup>4</sup> € 5.124.654). Ovviamente, nei grandi numeri dei finanziamenti europei tale cifra potrebbe apparire ai più come irrisoria, ma tenendo conto della relativa inesperienza previa di entrambi i territori in tale tipo di azioni e della necessità di costituire le prime forme di partenariato ed i vincoli necessari di fiducia, i 13 "piccoli" progetti finanziati appaiono oggi come un primo tentativo di approccio per l'inizio della cooperazione ed il superamento delle prime difficoltà (Commissione Europea 2008, p. 29). In ogni caso, le istituzioni responsabili della gestione manifestano un rinnovato interesse ed una maggiore spinta verso una pianificazione congiunta più efficace per il nuovo periodo di programmazione 2007-2013. Tali cambiamenti si dimostrano evidenti nel nuovo programma operativo sia a livello di strategia (adesso maggiormente integrata e con chiare linee di azione per il raggiungimento di obiettivi tematici specifici) che di finanziamenti, raggiungendo un finanziamento totale di circa 42 milioni di euro (contributo FESR € 30.148.017). Per il 2007-2013, ben 24 progetti vengono finanziati dal programma

<sup>3</sup> Esiste un interessantissimo dibattito letterario sull'adesione dell'Isola-Nazione al club degli stati europei, segnalando un esperimento di europeizzazione a carattere fortemente partecipativo da parte dei cittadini maltesi (con una affluenza alle urne relativa all'adesione pari al 90,9% della sua popolazione ed un voto a favore totale del 53,6%). Per ulteriori informazioni Harwood: 2014, Tabone & Nardelli, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> Fondi Europei di Sviluppo Regionale, comunemente conosciuti come Fondi di Coesione. Le informazioni sui fondi sono consultabili qui: [http://www.italiamalta.eu/component/option,com\\_docman/task,doc\\_download/gid,600/Itemid,1/lang,en/](http://www.italiamalta.eu/component/option,com_docman/task,doc_download/gid,600/Itemid,1/lang,en/)

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INTERREG. Sebbene nelle maggiori pubblicazioni accademiche e nelle analisi della cooperazione transfrontaliera a livello europeo tendano a mancare dei riferimenti espliciti all'INTERREG Italia-Malta, il programma comincia tuttavia a fare capolino nello scenario europeo. È questo il caso dei progetti esemplari ammessi allo showcase dell'European Cooperation Day 2013, in cui si rimarca l'originalità di progetti come il VAMOS SEGURO<sup>5</sup> (con il suo innovativo sistema radar per il monitoraggio vulcanico delle ceneri dell'Etna utile per l'aviazione) o del progetto CALYPSO<sup>6</sup> (che sfrutta un sistema per il monitoraggio per le correnti con la finalità principale di identificare perdite di petrolio ed agenti contaminanti nel canale siculo-maltese). Le analisi e le interviste accumulate dall'autore, inoltre, denotano la presenza di interessanti output di progetto non ancora messi sotto i riflettori ma non meno rilevanti. Si prenda l'esempio del progetto SIMIT<sup>7</sup> per l'elaborazione di un sistema integrato di protezione civile transfrontaliera tra le due isole in caso di disastro civile o ambientale, o ancora gli interessanti sviluppi prodotti dal network di ricerca biomedica transfrontaliero nel progetto IMAGENX<sup>8</sup>, generatore di una nuova interessante gamma di cellule staminali utili nella lotta contro il cancro mammario.

Ulteriori passi avanti sono stati inoltre realizzati per il nuovo Programma Operativo 2014-2020, presentando delle marcate differenze rispetto ai suoi predecessori. Prima di tutto, il programma ha seguito una linea evolutiva che lo ha portato ad aumentare il contributo FESR in dotazione dell'autorità di gestione dei fondi. Per quest'ultimo periodo di programmazione, il totale dei fondi europei corrispondenti raggiunge un ammontare di € 43.952.171 (con un totale complessivo all'incirca attorno ai 51 milioni di euro). Tale incremento è stato raggiunto per la programmazione 2014-2020 grazie al superamento del criterio territoriale di accesso limitato ai fondi per alcune province siciliane. Infatti, nelle precedenti programmazioni l'area transfrontaliera siciliana eleggibile era stata principalmente delimitata nelle province meridionali siciliane, con partecipazione eccezionale al 20% del finanziamento per i territori di Catania e Palermo. Secondo il nuovo regolamento, dunque, tutto il territorio dell'arcipelago siciliano è adesso eleggibile per la partecipazione nei vari progetti di cooperazione (l'arcipelago maltese era sempre stato incluso nella sua totalità). Finalmente, importanti cambi strutturali sono stati dettati dall'esperienza di programmazione. Scompare, con rispetto alle edizioni anteriori, la

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<sup>5</sup> <http://www.vamosseguro.eu/>

<sup>6</sup> <http://oceania.research.um.edu.my/cms/calypsoweb/index.php?lang=it>

<sup>7</sup> <http://sit.protezionecivilesicilia.it/simit/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://www.KEEP.eu/keep/project/38104>

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distinzione tra progetti ordinari e strategici (ovvero, con protagonismo degli enti regionali o dell'ente statale quale leader partner dell'azione) per procedere a una programmazione a due fasi (ovvero a due bandi) più simile ad altre esperienze INTERREG sul continente. Una situazione simile si presenta per la strutturazione degli obiettivi, che seguendo una chiara matrice strategica europea scegli di concentrare gli assi tematici d'azione del programma nell'ambito di: 1. Innovazione e Ricerca; 2. Competitività della zona transfrontaliera; 3. Tutela del medio ambiente e gestione sostenibile delle risorse. È interessante inoltre denotare la rimozione di un asse tematico dedicato a trasporto ed infrastruttura per la gestione 2014-2020, molto probabilmente dovuta all'esiguità dei fondi disponibili e alla scelta deliberata di investire su queste politiche unicamente a livello individuale attraverso l'apposito fondo di sviluppo regionale.

Per quanto concerne la struttura di governance dell'area, il programma implementa delle istituzioni di stampo nettamente comunitario e specificamente disegnate per la realizzazione del programma. Esso infatti dispone di una Autorità di Gestione Unica dei fondi (direttamente finanziata dalla Commissione) e di un apposito Segretariato Tecnico Congiunto dedito all'esecuzione della programmazione, entrambi situati nella capitale siciliana di Palermo. Ciononostante, il governo maltese è anch'esso rappresentato ed attivo nelle operazioni di cooperazione attraverso dei membri ministeriali appositamente assegnati all'Autorità Nazionale di Coordinamento Maltese del programma, sebbene ubicati nella capitale maltese della Valletta. È interessante notare come, in occasione della preparazione della programmazione 2014-2020, un ulteriore esperimento di governance sia stato elaborato attraverso la creazione di una task-force transfrontaliera congiunta per un approccio maggiormente multilivello verso le future politiche frontaliere. Attivo tra il 2012 ed il 2014, ha incluso tra i suoi partecipanti 1 membro della autorità unica di gestione siciliana, 1 membro del governo italiano, 1 membro dell'autorità di coordinamento maltese e 1 membro del segretariato tecnico congiunto, stimolando la presenza ad hoc di ulteriori enti pubblici o privati direttamente interessati dalle politiche rilevanti in elaborazione (INTERREG Italia-Malta Website, 2017).

Sebbene l'intero iter descritto anteriormente riconosca con merito il progresso di un programma di cooperazione transfrontaliera giovane ed in espansione come quello dell'area Sicilia-Malta, è importante notare che esistono tutt'ora determinate complicazioni che ostacolano il pieno potenziale della programmazione. Tuttavia, il discorso è indubbiamente più trascendentale al di là dei discorsi abituali (sebbene giusti) sugli eccessi di

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burocratizzazione europea e sulle difficoltà di realizzazione della progettazione. Nella realtà, i veri ostacoli tendono ad andare anche oltre l'operato delle istituzioni e del personale addetto ai lavori del programma operativo, in grande maggioranza valutato con un feedback nettamente positivo sul loro operato nel corso delle interviste realizzate dall'autore. Come elabora chiaramente Robert Leonardi (2016) in un suo recente scritto sulle difficoltà di gestione dei fondi strutturali da parte della Regione Sicilia, sia lo Stato italiano che la Regione autonoma presentano dei chiari sintomi di malessere nei confronti della programmazione europea. Si prenda l'esempio del ritardo di due anni dello Stato italiano nell'elaborazione dei nuovi documenti strategici (l'Accordo di Partenariato ed il Quadro Strategico Comune) necessari per accedere ai Fondi di Coesione 2014-2020 e che ha pesato con dei grossi ritardi per tutta la progettazione a partecipazione italiana (p. 286-7). Inoltre, nel caso della Sicilia, si consideri la critica mossa verso una programmazione regionale settoriale e singola, orfana di una visione strategica integrata che metta maggiormente in relazione le varie azioni europee finanziate. Sempre secondo Leonardi, una ulteriore critica andrebbe rivolta alla sottovalutazione dei legami con l'esterno da parte della Regione che, sebbene svolga le proprie mansioni standard e menzioni la centralità della Sicilia nell'ambito mediterraneo e nel mercato europeo, agisce successivamente in minor misura nell'affermazione di strategie concrete senza mettere reale enfasi su assi portanti della politica di coesione, come ad esempio nel caso della cooperazione transfrontaliera (p. 291-295).

### **3. Metodi innovativi di Governance transfrontaliera: le Euroregioni.**

Come menzionato nella introduzione dell'articolo, esistono chiaramente più di un centinaio di programmi di cooperazione territoriale, molti dei quali ricoprono virtualmente tutte le frontiere interne della UE. Sebbene i meccanismi europei standard per i finanziamenti derivino dall'innesto di un programma INTERREG sulla linea di frontiera, è pur tuttavia accertato che tali strumenti istituzionali non sono gli unici presenti nello scenario della cooperazione territoriale, perlomeno a livello transfrontaliero. Al contrario, esistono numerose organizzazioni denominate Euroregioni nel territorio europeo che catalizzano ulteriormente le politiche di cooperazione transfrontaliera<sup>9</sup>. Attraverso l'attività di ricerca

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<sup>9</sup> L'autore forma parte di un gruppo di ricerca interdisciplinare dell'Università Autonoma di Barcellona (Spagna) denominato RECOT (Rete Europea di Cooperazione Territoriale) che ha accumulato più di 10 anni e 3 progetti di ricerca (2 Nazionali e 1 internazionale) nell'ambito della cooperazione transfrontaliera. Le parti di questo articolo inerenti al tema euroregioni procedono dall'ambizioso progetto COOP-RECOT II, basato



della rete accademica RECOT di cui l'autore forma parte, è possibile oggi affermare l'esistenza di circa 150 euroregioni attive sul territorio UE (Camonita, F.; Berzi, M.; Durà, A.; Noferini, A. 2016a, 2016b, 2016c).

È importante definire però che le Euroregioni non rappresentano alcun livello addizionale di governance al di fuori di quello inserito nei sistemi territoriali statali. Al contrario, si tratta di accordi politici realizzati dai vari enti territoriali il più delle volte a livello sub-statale (comuni, province, regioni) che si alleano con altri attori simili dall'altra parte della frontiera per favorire la nascita di un territorio transfrontaliero integrato attraverso politiche comuni settoriali (siano esse basate su temi tipici come: economia locale, cultura, educazione, medio ambiente, trasporti e accessibilità, ecc.). Tale associazionismo si presenta inoltre spesso in una dimensione multilivello: ciò significa che l'accordo è possibile non esclusivamente sullo stesso livello territoriale (comune-comune o regione-regione) bensì anche su diversi livelli (ad esempio tra una associazione di comuni e una regione, o nel caso dell'INTERREG Italia-Malta tra uno Stato e una Regione). Sebbene tale pratica sia considerata in maniera positiva per la sua flessibilità nella produzione di politiche più inclusive per tutti gli attori territoriali coinvolti, bisogna tuttavia ricordare che le differenti divisioni territoriali ed amministrative presenti negli Stati Membri attribuiscono differenti poteri e responsabilità settoriali delimitate dalle loro costituzioni giuridiche. Pertanto, è sempre essenziale capire alle basi dell'accordo quali tipi di politiche settoriali è possibile affrontare congiuntamente in una futura strategia euroregionale.

Al di là dell'accordo politico, stabilire quale tipo di forma giuridica adottare nella creazione di una nuova euroregione a lungo termine rappresenta una ulteriore sfida nell'adozione di suddetta struttura di cooperazione. Senza alcun dubbio, la creazione del denominato Gruppo Europeo di Cooperazione Territoriale (GECT) da parte della Commissione Europea nel 2007 ha generato un interessante trend di convergenza per le euroregioni di più recente creazione<sup>10</sup>. Ciononostante, e in special modo nelle euroregioni meno recenti e con altri tipi di accordo già stabiliti, i GECT possono soltanto rappresentare un braccio operativo accoppiato ad altre istituzioni euroregionali preesistenti. È questo il caso ad esempio della Euroregione Pireneo-Mediterranea (che include la Catalogna e la recente costituita Occitana), dove il GECT esegue strettamente funzioni di ricerca e gestione di

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sulla definizione e catalogazione delle Euroregioni esistenti sul territorio europeo

<http://blogs.uab.cat/recot/research-projects/>

<sup>10</sup> L'unità derivata da tale forma giuridica deriva dalla possibilità per degli attori pubblici di differenti stati membri di uniformarsi in una sorta di attore pubblico transnazionale per la gestione di fondi comunitari.

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fondi europei in progetti specifici, data l'esistenza attiva di un segretariato e di una direzione euroregionale a Barcellona ed a Tolosa. La seconda forma legale prevalente nella maggior parte delle euroregioni europee è rappresentata da associazioni e consorzi di diritto pubblico o privato normalmente ascritte nei registri legali degli stati membri (e soggette al diritto nazionale rilevante). Una terza deriva infine dalla costituzione legale di fondazioni o ONG ad hoc con partecipazione dei vari enti territoriali, ma appare ovvio che quanto meno vincolanti i legami giuridici tra i vari partner, quanto più l'Euroregione dovrà dipendere esclusivamente dalla volontà a cooperare degli attori coinvolti. Inoltre, tali strutture soft molto probabilmente mostreranno delle ulteriori complicazioni nella eventuale gestione di fondi europei e delle asimmetrie nella gestione dello staff dell'organizzazione euroregionale.

Volendo entrare più in dettaglio sui tipi di strutture formali assunte dalle euroregioni, esse possono variare da un duo minimo composto da un organismo decisionale ed un agente esecutivo fino ad arrivare a organizzazioni molto più strutturate che includano una struttura collegiata esecutiva (board esecutivo), un segretariato tecnico, una serie di commissioni ad hoc per la discussione delle varie politiche transfrontaliere e persino un ufficio di rappresentanza congiunto a Bruxelles. Ovviamente, non esiste un unico modello predefinito ex-ante ma una moltitudine di situazioni che si adeguano ai diversi contesti territoriali selezionati. Infine, nell'implementazione di una nuova struttura euroregionale non si suggeriscono esclusivamente espansioni istituzionali destinate ad aumentare i costi di coordinamento. Di fatto, esistono chiari casi di cooperazione transfrontaliera in cui sono stati coinvolte strutture amministrative preesistenti appartenenti ai membri delle euroregioni (per esempio nel caso delle commissioni tematiche, dove i membri coinvolti provengono dalle rispettive amministrazioni territoriali).

#### **4. Una Euroregione per l'area transfrontaliera Sicilia-Malta?**

Nonostante il nome formale dell'accordo INTERREG nomini l'Italia come membro protagonista in virtù delle autorità statali, è certamente utile realizzare come tale programma sia in realtà dedicato a una regione transfrontaliera composta dall'intero arcipelago Siciliano e dalla totalità dell'arcipelago Maltese. Con la sua superficie totale di 25.956Km<sup>2</sup> ed una popolazione totale di circa 5.400.000 abitanti, tale area transfrontaliera presenta delle affascinanti caratteristiche politico geografiche. Innanzitutto, lo stesso territorio transfrontaliero è situato a ridosso delle frontiere dell'estremo sud dell'Unione

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Europea. Entrambi i territori che lo compongono sono isole situate nel centro del Mediterraneo, separate da uno stretto marittimo di circa 92Km. Da una parte, la regione Sicilia è una delle regioni più grandi dello stato italiano e possiede uno statuto economico con ampi poteri (sebbene spesso ignorati e sottovalutati, come ricordato in Armao e Saija, 2016 o Cangialossi, 2015). Sfortunatamente, la regione non riesce a realizzare il suo potenziale economico e produttivo a causa di determinati deficit strutturali che ne limitano lo sviluppo (la Sicilia continua ad essere una delle grandi protagoniste della “questione meridionale”, il deficit del sud-Italia caratterizzato, tra i molteplici fattori, dall’assenza di un tessuto industriale forte, un tasso elevato di emigrazione e la sfortunata presenza di episodi di corruzione e di inefficienza politico-amministrativa).

D’altro canto, l’isola-nazione di Malta, sebbene in condizioni generali finanziarie relativamente migliori di quelle della sua isola vicina, è tuttavia minacciata degli effetti di una globalizzazione fuori controllo e del suo status di micro-nazione nel seno dell’Unione Europea. È innegabile sul suolo maltese la presenza di un reale potenziale turistico, industriale e relativo ai servizi finanziari, nonché di una eccellente capacità di progettazione europea, capace di dichiarare Malta come l’economia più in crescita e con migliori risultati del Mediterraneo (Commissione Europea, 2015). Nonostante questo, l’ubicazione geografica in condizione di insularità e le dimensioni reali di questa piccola isola-stato le impediscono di raggiungere autonomamente livelli elevati assoluti di sviluppo (Programma Operativo INTERREG 2014-2020 Italia-Malta, 2014).

Nella realtà dei fatti esistono dunque delle serie potenzialità nell’idea di un progetto euroregionale di cooperazione transfrontaliera tra le due isole. La chiave di tutto il processo giace però nella fondamentale differenza di introdurre un chiaro messaggio politico di azione nella creazione di una struttura euroregionale Sicilia-Malta. Essa non deve affatto sostituirsi all’attuale programma INTERREG o all’operato delle sue attuali istituzioni. Al contrario, una euroregione rappresenterebbe chiaramente uno strumento di sinergia in cui incanalare un forum politico di dialogo e di proposte congiunte per poi successivamente tradurle in idee progettuali da sottoporre alle relative autorità INTERREG. La presenza di un board esecutivo e di commissioni tematiche ad hoc sulle varie politiche da poter allineare a livello delle due isole potrebbe persino spingere ad azioni congiunte finanziate però ai rispettivi livelli di Piani Operativi Nazionali (PON) e Piani Operativi Regionali (POR) dei due territori, accedendo quindi alla seconda sezione più sostanziosa dei fondi FESR. Inoltre, l’Euroregione potrebbe ricoprire funzioni ottimali di marketing e diffusione

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dei risultati transfrontalieri, nonché informare delle possibilità del lavoro congiunto tra i due territori nel marco di ulteriori programmi comunitari.

Un elemento fondamentale per concepire tale proposta politica si evince dalle antiche radici che accomunano le due isole. Volendo trascendere gli ultimi due secoli di storia che hanno portato i territori ad “allontanarsi” (prime tra tutte l’assimilazione della Sicilia al Regno d’Italia da un lato e l’epoca del protettorato britannico dall’altro), persistono chiaramente delle origini comuni a livello storico, socio-culturale e persino linguistico. È inoltre innegabile il collegamento geografico e ambientale che accomuna le condizioni di isole nel cuore del mediterraneo, e per il quale una strategia congiunta tra una Regione con possibili ampi poteri autonomi ed uno stato membro della UE servirebbe indubbiamente per stimolare un rinnovato ruolo di protagonismo nel Mediterraneo. Anche volendo essere cinici e rifiutare il discorso idealista sul passato comune delle due isole, esiste chiaramente una serie di argomenti che detterebbero una logica *win-win* per l’associazionismo di entrambe le isole nelle loro scelte strategiche. Dal canto suo, la Sicilia potrebbe mettere in gioco le risorse ed il suo potenziale territoriale non debitamente sfruttato in una rinnovata ricerca identitaria del suo ruolo come regione europea in una Europa che dona volontariamente delle opportunità concrete ai propri enti sub-statali. Malta, dall’altro lato, potrebbe avere diritto di accesso a queste risorse contribuendo alla maturazione politica regionale della sua isola vicina, forte del suo status di stato membro della UE. Quasi tutti gli accademici concordano nell’affermare che la cooperazione territoriale non sia la panacea immediata per tutti i mali di un territorio, ma questo non è indubbiamente un motivo per trascurarne i potenziali effetti benefici. Di fatto, le pratiche europeizzanti derivate dal perseguimento delle politiche territoriali UE potrebbero portare a una rinnovata enfasi nella responsabilità derivante da un lavoro congiunto con un vicino internazionale. Inoltre, potrebbero a sua volta comportare una riduzione nelle ricadute verso l’inefficienza amministrativa e gli infausti episodi di corruzione e sprechi nella gestione delle risorse attraverso un lavoro di scrutinio congiunto. Di fatto, Malta è notoriamente conosciuta in questo campo come una campionessa di europeizzazione, forte delle sue trasformazioni necessarie per l’accesso nell’Unione e per la sua gestione generale delle risorse UE.

È indubitabile che le riflessioni qui proposte formerebbero parte di un ambizioso progetto politico e di una scommessa a largo termine da parte delle istituzioni politiche di entrambi i lati della frontiera. Ma è altrettanto vero che una strategia politica di questo genere deve essere intrapresa dalla Regione Sicilia in quanto simbolo di un reale desiderio di svolta. È la

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Regione Siciliana a necessitare realmente il riscatto dalla sua condizione di regione “rossa” nella politica di coesione, quell’agognata uscita dall’eterna questione meridionale italiana. E, in quanto tale, deve essere essa a poter presentare un piano appetibile per il governo di Malta, altrimenti interessato unicamente a realizzare gli obiettivi unici proposti dal relativamente “piccolo” programma INTERREG Italia-Malta. La traiettoria è già stata tracciata da decine di esperienze euroregionali in tutto il territorio UE, e la nuova sfida verrebbe presentata dalla creazione di nuovi percorsi di cooperazione transfrontaliera davanti ad una frontiera marittima e con ai due lati uno stato-nazione ed una regione ad ampi poteri autonomi ed amministrativi.

L’attuale programma INTERREG e le sue relative istituzioni portano avanti la programmazione europea con incoraggianti risultati, ma senza una reale strategia politica ed una seria presa di coscienza identitaria da parte della Regione, le critiche mosse verso una programmazione regionale isolata e fine a sé stessa non potranno mai essere realmente superate. Gli strumenti europei sono tutt’ora disponibili e le istituzioni europee potranno solo ricompensare un maggiore sforzo regionale per uscire dalla zona di recessione. Ora più che mai, avendo subito gli effetti disastrosi della recente crisi economica, è il momento per la l’Autonomia Siciliana di concepire una svolta verso un ruolo di regione europea realmente partecipe nelle politiche di coesione.

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