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Working Paper

**Creating the Gorizia-Goriska
Euroregion:
An European Cross-Border
Administrative Model for
Integrated Socio-Economic
Development in the Upper
Adriatic**

**Crossborder co-operation as a tool for
trans-national integration
and conflict resolution**

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Key Words

Upper Adriatic, Border, Region/Regionalism, Cross- border co-operation, Euroregion

Summary

This essay, by looking at the Upper Adriatic cross-border area within a historic and economic framework, shows the development of the concept of border and region plotting the main characteristics of cross-border co-operation and its institutionalisation: the euroregion.

Borders are not necessarily barriers, but also contact areas, with differences, based on geographic, economic and social factors, that may lead to co-operation or conflict. Within the enlarged EU, regions are developing a greater importance with a tendency to a peripheralisation of power; in this context, cross-border regions are playing a key role, merging, through co-operation, regionalism and integration. The need for cross-border co-operation arises when population and institutions realise the unifying role of borders in determining common problems. It then presents as a tool for conflicts' resolution and consolidation of fractures.

The institutionalised form of cross-border co-operation is the Euroregion, integrating areas belonging to different states through actions of economic-cultural nature. In the Upper Adriatic region, the EureGo euroregional project has developed between the Gorizia Province (and some municipalities of the Udine Province) and the Slovene Goriška statistical region, re-evoking the area's original unity. It has a role in studying, promoting, sensitising and addressing actions for interregional cross-border co-operation.

Abstract

If we portray borders as places for exchange and co-operation instead of barriers, it is straightforward to picture them as resources for re-unification and conflicts' resolution. The development of institutionalised forms of cross-border co-operation, originating from a will of populations and institutions of different states to face common problems, lead to the concept of Euroregion. In the Upper Adriatic area, this experience of cross-border co-operation gave origin to the EureGo province. The north-eastern Italian

autonomous region Friuli Venezia Giulia, located on the Italian-Slovene border, can be expected to gain substantially from the accession of Slovenia to the EU facing great opportunities to develop the economic and social perspectives of the border area while contributing to a proactive remodelling of the cross-border relations in this region.

The paper: (i) theoretically operationalises the Gorizia-Goriska Europrovince as a pragmatic small scale Euroregion; (ii) offers an operational model to develop the potentiality of the crossborder area by drawing from a common background; (iii) finds a new centrality for the crossborder area and (iv) redefines the forces linked with the “positional revenues” of a “hard border”.

Methodology: quantitative statistical analysis, network analysis, SWOT analysis.

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1. Introduction

The last wave of accession to the European Union has added to the interpretation of the Adriatic Sea in general, and of the Upper Adriatic in particular, as a strategic territory and a proactive laboratory for European integration and development. The oxymoron *liquid territory* used to depict some salient characteristics of this area does not erode the validity of the concept, identifying, in the need of any social group to organise and structure itself, the manifestation of a border social dimension. Nor does the progressive cultural disconnection from traditional customs and institutions portrayed in Bauman's *liquid modernity* exclude the parsonian reference of "boundary maintenance" to a system's need for stability.

Therefore, it seems appropriate to analyse the Adriatic Sea and the Upper Adriatic – a "territory" characterised by a past drive to the unification of its geography – in terms of borders or, rather, given the recent geopolitical changes, in terms of cross-border co-operation.

2. Upper Adriatic: a historical and socio-economic framework for EureGo

Since its "pacification" under the Roman rule, the Adriatic sea was an area characterised by the strong cultural, social and economic ties of the populations inhabiting its coasts and hinterland(s). Such ties grew even stronger under the influence of Venice. Thus the Adriatic Sea in general – even where its waters blend into the Mediterranean Sea – and the Upper Adriatic in particular, was a sea lengthening (and, thus, connecting) the coastal routes and those reaching the Apennines, the Danube Valley and the Balcanic hinterland. Being a trade area for salt, cereals, raw materials for Western European manufactures, the Adriatic Sea experienced, up to the Austria-Hungarian times, a dynamic economy which was not completely interrupted even during the XVI centuries wars between Christianity and the Ottoman Empire. The "liquidity" of the Adriatic Sea was, to some extents, reproduced in its contiguous territory: an emblematic example is that of Niccolò Tommaseo who, defined as a philologist and an Italian patriot, defined himself as deeply Venetian and proud of being Slav.

The modern interpretation of the Adriatic Sea, consequent to the creation of the Nation-State, as a divided but fixed and solid space, implied the disintegration of its original unity and the socio-economic comparative advantages. However, the fall of the

Eastern European totalitarian regimes and the European integration process, on the one hand, and the civil society growth, on the other, call for a new non-dichotomist interpretation of the area based on the past, fluid and integrated multilateral approach. From this perspective it seems possible to overcome disputes such as “the on-going vitriol between Croatia and Slovenia over their disputed maritime boundary in Piran Bay (which) increased throughout the spring and summer of 2004” (Donaldson & Pratt, 2005:413).

3. Borders and borderlessness

The acknowledgment of the establishment of border is *per se* useful only insofar as it clearly distinguishes what country is on one side or the other of the border itself. However, such clarification does not tackle in the least the significance of the border or what sort of behaviour is affected by it. Similarly, the mere appreciation of the removal of a border-line tells nothing about its possible enduring permanence in people's minds, about the feasibility of a multifaceted border-crossing behaviour, and about its effects on the integration of the border area. Thus, it appears more appropriate not to conceptualise borders as self-evident lines marking differences, but rather as resources being both material and non-material; the first undergoing a constant re-configuring in terms of social relations, and the latter synthesising multifarious imagination and representation. Consequently, borders assume an active role as carriers and producers of meanings in discourses and practices (Paasi 2001).

Thus, borders – at least at the territorial level – can be defined according to the function they perform within a given system. Borders, hence, may act as barriers, filters or contact spaces characterising borderlands accordingly, varying from alienated divided borderlands to integrated borderless areas along a spectrum of border permeability and openness (Martinez 1994). Such conceptualisation is based on the interpretation of the (territorial) border as regulating the networks of relations between two systems. From this perspective a few tentative hypothesis on the differences between territorial and liquid (i.e. maritime) borders are sketched.

When considering a relation beam among subjects (or communities of) – not transcending from the abovementioned borders typologies – it is plausible to assume analytically that potential relations do not encounter other obstacles beside those linked

to national administrative/legal frameworks. It is, thus, possible to assume an almost identical potential ability for relations among members of the same community and among them and their border-counterparts. The intensity and propensity of such relations are obviously influenced by ecological variables, but it seems plausible to assume that both communities share similar structural conditions nonetheless characterised by the existence of *strong and weak ties* (Granovetter 1998). Conversely, a liquid border does mark a difference between the relations taking place on one side or the other of the border. It appears plausible to assume that interactions' potentiality is different and limited not only due to technological reasons but, especially, given the different conceptualisation of the territorial element as compared to a terrestrial border-line and, thus, seem to hinder disproportionately wide-ranging bottom-up approaches to cross-border co-operation. The propensity to co-operate of the communities inhabiting the coasts facing a stretch of sea and their interpretation of it may vary according to its historical functions, their relations to the hinterlands and to the potential development arising from a joint exploitation of its resources.

When acting as barriers, borders prevent an actor or a group from realising a given objective, limiting the resources needed for its achievement. Hence, such borders often are the cause of conflict (Johansson 1982), defined here as a function of incompatible positions of at least two parties in neighbouring state arising from the physical and symbolic aspects of the border itself, or, as Galtung puts it, as the difference between 'the actual' and 'the possible' (Galtung 1969). In fact, a border may present social and economic limiting factors not only frustrating people's efforts to achieve those values determining their thoughts and actions, but also exacerbating the differences in the ability to achieve them and, thus, transforming them in conflicting positions (i.e. ethnic, religious – state – values, material and political values).

4. Regionalism and the conceptualisation of the region

The EU's rhetoric envisaging (macro) co-operation policies in order to overcome political, economic and cultural borders, reflects the (enlarged) Europe need for a concrete political stability and economic growth dialectically linked to its internal and external regional partners. The consequent objectives and actions are variously interpreted as neo-liberal strategies for economic hegemony or as progressive "post-

Westphalian” or “post-modern” regionalism (Agnew 2001). An alternative “new regionalist” approach, combining, for instance, the contributions outlined by Hettne (1999) and Brenner (1999), depicts the role of sub-national state and non-state actors whilst recognising the importance of the state in the wake of the interdependence between states, rather than of the balance of powers, as key factor for post-Westphalian security strategies aiming to political and economic integration. Moreover, the increasing importance of regions within this process is entwined to the new forms of governance (i.e. international organizations, regional authorities and civil society and cross-state/regions/communities) congruent to the post-Fordist interpretation of modern capitalism and of post-national democracy (Mény 2003).

EU policies focusing on territorial governance stimulated a re-scaling of the state by which powers are redistributed throughout the governmental levels. Thus, they challenge the modern conceptualisation of the nation-state based on the drive to homogenise the internal structure of the state-system, whilst differentiating it to the external environment. However, such policy-led theoretical approach, whilst offering solutions to the core/periphery divide suffered disproportionately by the border areas (i.e. periphery areas) in political, social, and economic terms, seems to overlook its negative (centrifugal) consequences. In fact, this regionalist perspective endangers the relations between the central state and its border regions (and cities) in terms of legitimisation of the first by the latter, and, especially, in terms of stringent reforms contexts congruent to post-transitional restructuring of the state.

Beside the different interpretation given to the concept and impact of (European) regionalism, such approach appears useful insofar that it highlights a historical process that has been taking place – although to different extents – throughout Europe over the last sixty years, and whose importance is more than actual in the contemporary European geo-political context. The relevance of this concept could be summarised in the discourse (or conflict) interposing nation-state sovereignty to regional claims for autonomy, whose implications are extremely relevant for border regions in terms of however defined development and cross-border co-operation.

Thus, it might be useful to recall here some conceptual elements of the region in order to plot it within the framework of the cross-border context. The first conceptualisation outlines the capability of the region to create autochthony. The latter refers to the concepts of group belonging, ethnicity, mass exodus... most importantly it

implies the “embeddedness” (Polany, 1944) of the members of a community living together for centuries and for many generations, the contiguity of the living and working space, of the daily life and of local rules’ frameworks established in the traditions and forms of government at the local level. Creating autochthony is, thus, the ability to create regional identity, building on existing ethnic roots or, when lost, to “invent” new ones, thus, the solidarity arising from an autochthony experienced in the day-by-day will persist. The importance of a so conceptualised region is a key issue – in centralised nation-states – when the cultural and political importance of the region is claimed .

Analysing the development of the national administrative structures in (European) historical terms from the feudal system – mostly universal – to the elaboration of administrative gravitational systems, a second conceptualisation of the region arises. This refers to the region’s ability to develop through time a dimension organizing the territory in administrative, political and economic sub-frameworks, which are able to be sufficiently autonomous (e.g. the French administrative system).

From a more analytical economic perspective, a third conceptualisation emphasises the regional value as its potentiality for the development of a strong economy within a given small territory. The economic development is thus interpreted in the enhancement of the human resources and social capitals at the local level, but also in the transformation of the endogenous economic resources. Vital to these development is the ability of the local government to exploit the local and national synergies in order to activate developmental strategies bypassing the heavy industrialisation phase. Such conceptualisation, thus, does stress on the transition from Fordist to post-Fordist economic outlooks where small and medium enterprises, self-employment and flexible interpretation of the markets are preferred to state-centralisation and macro-economic structures (Knippenberg 2004).

Finally, any conceptualisation of the region should take into account its framework of spatial organization, thus, considering how production process, administrative organisation and dwellings are organised within it. Such exercise allows for deconstructing the area of study in terms of dwelling, roads, commercial units, industries, culture, identity... and then to recompose it as single whole at the municipal, inter-municipal, provincial, district levels and, finally, at the regional level. This

dimension enhances the effectiveness of an analysis focusing on the gravitational forces existing within a region (Gasparini 2005b)¹.

Conceptualisation based on autochthony elaboration, political-administrative identity, economic and social development, and internal gravitational organization offer an efficient framework in which to plot regions constituting a border area in order to understand their potentiality/propensity to cross-border co-operation. The so-depicted conceptual framework explores the feasibility of regional building from several perspectives which, however, do not transcend from the process of social construction of the region. Territorial and symbolic regional shaping, institutional building, and the establishment of a common identity are key elements (re-)producing the regional social reality emphasising the consciousness of the people inhabiting it (Paasi 1986).

5. The role of Cross Border cooperation and its institutionalisation

The so-called cross-border (or transborder) co-operation, is a multifarious and multifaceted process which is activated when populations of a given border-area *and* regional institutions realise borders not only divide, but also unite, creating identical problems on both sides. Its main aim is generally to overcome borders, interpreted as limits to social and economic development, in order to create areas of economic and services development, protection of the environment, and territory planning (Ferrara, 2001). Moreover, cross-border co-operation, in its European dimension, has been seen as a tool for regionalism and integration to merge in a subsidiary fashion (Gasparini, 2003). Such phenomenon has gained momentum with time, not only for people living on the borders, but also for the process of European integration itself. Thus, it appears that cross-border co-operation, whilst maintaining a predominant functional nature, has a strong political component to be found in the aspiration of local politics to project itself in a broader, and more proactive context external to national (restricting) administrative frameworks.

However, in broader terms, it appears useful, especially in an Upper Adriatic perspective, to conceptualise cross-border co-operation as the factual capability to overcome and re-compose fractures between (and within) national systems, often caused by acts of power deriving from wars, coups, asymmetric conflicts' resolution and

¹ Forthcoming

similar operations. Such fractures do appear in different forms, hereafter outlined: first of all, there are border areas which are peripheral to the national and supra-national economic systems and find border co-operation as an opportunity to overcome their own marginality. Secondly, stronger and more decisive fractures arise when border areas are prevalently managed by the political society (i.e. state agencies) and where the local and international civil society role is not only limited but also hindered. In such cases there is a strong political reliance on the military, police forces, and economic activities are limited to the action of institutionalised (shipping) agents. Thirdly, a further – and possibly more artificial - fracture between border regions is represented by the discontinuity of ideological, social and economic nature among two nation states². Finally, a fourth type of fracture is represented by the process of forced assimilation of national minorities promoted by the nation-states, either violently in the light of a strong nationalistic spirit, or as a consequence of the very recent nature of the borders.

This (non-exhaustive) list of fractures may call for several strategies and policies which, however, cannot transcend from their spatial and time context. Thus, it rather seems appropriate to state here that cross-border co-operation, in general, presents itself as an important landmark for fractures re-composition and consolidation. Furthermore, cross-border co-operation is an essential strategy which, in any case, must be based on two conditions: it must start from concrete facts, and it must be endeavoured by policies fostering the reciprocal knowledge among all the stakeholders divided by a border, in order to demolish stereotypes to de-nationalize history, and, finally, to put an emphasis to an empathic understanding of people.

The aim of co-operating for the joint development of two halves was almost ignored by the central states, but found the enthusiasm of the border regions, hoping, this way, to find new centralities for their peripheral areas, which could finally develop in each state in a symmetrical, but complementary fashion. However, such collaboration was often already in place. In other words, cross-border co-operation is not only prompted from the top (for instance, through European programs), but, on the contrary, is based on a long-lasting capability to create autochthony by the new region existing on both sides of the border, the Euroregion..

² A recent and glamorous example was represented by the Iron Curtain. Such situation, experienced through almost 50 years, has created, in the *stakeholders* living in the border area, an attitude of not-needing the counterpart living on the other side of the border.

The new *regionalistic* role of Europe revolves around various policies designed to invent, conceptualise and realize new regions, overcoming the states. Building regions across one or more borders was the aim of a new European idea: such regions, obtained by unifying a region in one state with another of a neighbouring state, needed to be somehow defined and the term Euroregion seemed the most appropriate new term best describing the visible core concept of the European integration. The Euroregion represents a phase of greater integration between border regions belonging to contiguous states. The Euroregion is made operational in an agency institutionally aiming to create favourable conditions for cross-border co-operation legitimising operators and associations with determined goals, providing expert support and services to gain from the opportunities created by EU programs, and, finally, elaborating strategies orienting civil society to create and/or support cross-border co-operation.

In concrete terms, the Euroregion is usually made up by a presidency and by an operative secretariat, which might be articulated in committees or work areas stimulating favourable conditions to such co-operation and eventually by a small parliament representing the wills and needs of cross-border regions inhabitants. Nowadays, national laws usually allow for a private law institution, but the aim is to give to the Euroregion a juridical status.

The functions of the Euroregions are of a, broadly speaking, economic-cultural nature. However, these have more specific traits or more general characteristics depending on the local situation. For matter of definition, three main functions can be identified within the Euroregion. The first takes into consideration the need to create a centrality around a Euroregion. This follows from setting the Euroregion centrally within a network of road, maritime, aerial, railroad infrastructures: linking the Euroregion to Europe, it will be possible to speak of a *Euroregion of macro infrastructure*, a Euroregion characterised by a vast territory. The second function is represented by the creation of conditions enabling firms and institutions located in the Euroregion to connect one another and synergistically operate although they are physically separated: such is the *Euroregion of the functional networks*, a Euroregion extending on a territory including the border areas. Finally, the third function of the Euroregion is that of favouring the cooperation of stringently contiguous areas, where the daily life and the civil society has a predominant cross-border nature. Such is the

cross-border Euroregion, a Euroregion limited on the cross-border contiguous territories (Gasparini, 2003).

As mentioned above, the Euroregion represents here the fullest and most advanced form of institutionalisation of cross-border co-operation given the following four characteristics: (i) the Euroregions deals on an institutional level with cross-border co-operation involving areas relatively contiguous with borders. (ii) A Euroregion tends to favour complete cross-border co-operation, comprising support for local players in the use of European and local funds, the creation of reciprocal knowledge and the promotion of the formation, activation and transformation of actions and organisation for cross-border co-operation. Its primary interlocutor is therefore civil society. (iii) The work of a Euroregion extends to economic, social, cultural, educational, service provided and institutional activity – all involving trans-national players. (iv) A Euroregion may take on a configuration that varies over time according to the objectives being pursued by cross-border co-operation players, according to legal consideration and according to the public and/or private actors belonging to it. Since at present there are no other ways – in many a case – of giving a public legal personality to the Euroregion, it may take the form of a private Association between the regional and other public bodies such as provinces and municipalities (or preferably Associations of Municipalities). From 2007 a Euroregion will be able to take the form an ECCG, provided that the regulations to this effect are approved by the European Parliament by that time and that the partner agencies are (or become) public bodies (Gasparini 2005).

6. Euroregional co-operation in the Upper Adriatic. The example of EureGo

As previously outlined, the meanings of the border are constantly negotiated and re-interpreted dialectically in the daily life of the communities inhabiting it, of the people trespassing it and of those with positive or negative perception of the “(border-) other”. The border, thus, is characterised by the tension of the meeting of two or more identities which here converge in their diversities and similarities. Further, the border area becomes a place where all identities meet on equal representative terms and they exist (and resist) because of the existence of other identities. Such perspectives shifts the focus on borders from their vertical or political nature to their horizontal or functional characteristic. In fact, a great part of the international and inter-state activities tend to

pay less attention to the geopolitical development of borders than to their attenuation and elimination. Moreover, since the concept of territoriality is entwined to that of in-group socialisation and thus the interpretation of a given area follows the group's traditional social reality, it is most important to activate forms of cultural co-operation, in order to hinder potential nationalistic or violent ethnocentric ideologies. Hence, the social cross-border space will - with time - blur the geo-political, national and ethnic-linguistic notions of border and experience an increased *market* for cultural and economic goods and services.

Such was the rationale that, in 1978, saw the creation of the Alpe-Adria – an agreement among the Italian autonomous region of Friuli Venezia-Giulia and other regions in Northern Italy, Austria, Germany, Yugoslavia and Hungary – which was the first and most fruitful international association between western and eastern regions. The fall of the Berlin Wall, and the independence of Slovenia and Croatia decreased the political relevance of the Alpe-Adria project which, today, is somewhat differently carried on by the Central European Initiative. However, in these early cross-border co-operation actions, the “Euroregion Euradria” project has moved a few tentative steps. This *macro*-Euroregion among the Italian regions of Friuli Venezia Giulia and Veneto, two Austrian *Länder* (Carinthia and Stiria), Slovenia and parts of Croatia finds its main goals in the internationalisation of the euroregional market, focusing on its bridging role on the West-East economic and transport axis. As a macro-Euroregion, Euradria focuses mostly on the need for integrated logistic infrastructures, thus favouring the economic sphere to the social and cultural ones. Such approach is still struggling to develop into a concrete planning platform whose application is shared among all partners. Therefore, it might be complementary and useful to put forward smaller-scale Euroregional initiatives stimulating not only economic collaboration, but also the daily social and cultural cross-border life. Hence, the EureGo project linking the Italian Gorizia Province (and some municipalities of the Udine Province) with the Slovene Goriška statistical region appears as an appropriate effort to re-evolve the Upper Adriatic original unity.

As drawn in 1947, the Italian-Yugoslav border - laden with several contrasting symbols and interpretations - opened to two different future scenarios: one of socio-economic and cultural disintegration of the border area due to the separation of the local population; and another where the traditional, cultural, and socio-economic ties of the local population would enhance a greater permeability of the border (Buffon 2002).

From 1949 onwards, and especially after 1955 with the signing of the Trieste and Gorizia Memoranda, the launching of local trade areas agreements marked the beginning of a long-term process of opening the border.

Unsurprisingly, however, the abrupt and violent establishment of the political, physical border resulting from the geopolitical developments consequent to the second world conflict, implied, along with the division of a previously united area and of its population, and the separation of Gorizia from its original gravitation area, the progressive growth of negative narratives and perceptions of the “border-other”. Nevertheless, at the local (micro-)level, due to the transitional agricultural nature of the then-Yugoslavian border area, and to the consistent economic subsidies maintaining and enhancing the traditional economic and societal structure of the Italian (urban) border area, the border was relatively permeable and non-problematic at least in the daily life (trans) actions of the population inhabiting its contiguous area and forms of cross-border co-operation at least at the familiar/friendship level did take place (Klemencic, Piry 1982). Through social investments on both side of the border, the border area became more and more urbanised and industrialised acquiring, especially on the Italian side, a particular vocation to tertiary and quaternary activities.

Today, the transformation of the border from separation line to the (non-) present infrastructure line, due to the continuous cross-border relation at the population level, and to the - somewhat unhurried - development of good neighbourhood policies and to the recent accession of Slovenia to the EU, opens to further integration goals. Whereas it could be stated that a good level of integration already exists among cross-border economic actors, local firms and even the competent institutions (i.e. chambers of commerce), further efforts are required to enact the potentialities arising from a more pragmatic political and social co-operation. Several European funded projects (especially, on the Interreg IIIA programs), have analysed and, in part, activated possible co-operation in the “service” sector (e.g. environmental protection, economic development agencies, cultural events) through the active involvement of local authorities. However, the multifarious cross-border activities seem to lack of broader co-ordination framework perspective which would enable more efficient interactions and a greater visibility and involvement of population inhabiting the border-area. In such perspective the EureGo project was launched. The EureGo structure reflects, under an institutional point of view, the different phases of transborder cooperation: a

“political” phase, an organizational phase and an active operational phase. The *political phase* is based on the needs expressed by the population and the subsequent targets drawn. It is brought about by a *General Assembly*. The *organizational phase* implies the designing of specific answers, operational strategies, and the concretisation of the strategies; basically its role is to put into action what was designed by the Assembly. The *Council* and *Work Groups* are in charge of these executive functions. In the *operational phase* a number of institutionalised functions are put into action. The *Secretariat* is responsible for such functions, such as collecting a stable core of information and archives, and it has an administrative role. This cross-border euroregion was conceived as an association of private law, disciplined by a statute in conformity with the law of the State where it is supposed to develop. It has a role in studying, promoting, sensitising and addressing actions for interregional cross-border cooperation with the purpose of urging co-ordination of the activities, undertaken by the members institutions. These can unilaterally conform their conduct to such projects. The euroregional association acts in total respect of the competence and responsibility of the territorial public institutions taking part in it (Gasparini Del Bianco, 2005). These arguments are explored in more details in the following paragraphs

6.1 EureGo in numbers

The Euroregion on the border area between Italy and Slovenia counts up to 72 municipalities, with a population of 355,127 inhabitants, living in an area of 3,804.2 kmq, with an average density of 93,4/kmq. 13 out of the 72 municipalities are situated in the Slovenian territory, with a total population of 112,098 and a density of 50.3 inhabitants/kmq. The working age population is relatively low in percentage (67.5%), as it is low the number of people between the age of 0 and 14 years (44,293) and a consequently high old age index (161) and high structural dependence (48) and old people dependence (30) indexes. Concerning unemployment, EUREGO has a comprehensive rate of 6% (7% in Italy and 4% in Slovenia). Women represent 64% of the unemployed population (67% in Italy and 51% in Slovenia).

The EUREGO territory hosts 26,775 productive unities, working in different sectors. Commerce, constructions, building and manufacturing sectors are those most developed in this Euroregion, mainly in Italy.

6.2 The Associations of Municipalities and the EUREGO Association

6.2.1. General organizing aspects

The association EUREGO, based on private law, should gather various actors, unequal in number on the two sides and of different nature (local institutions, associations for different sectors, universities, etc.). It is therefore composed of two Associations of Municipalities (Italian and Slovene), beside other public institutions belonging to Italian and Slovene polities.

In sum, this project provides for the creation of three private law Associations

1. Association of the Italian border municipalities
2. Association of the Slovene border municipalities
3. Association EUREGO.

The associations of municipalities should guarantee the selection of participants in the General Assembly of EUREGO, without binding too strictly the number of participants from each side to the demographic density of the area they come from.

Moreover, the historical subareas should be taken into account in the distribution of representatives, making sure that the needs and aims of EUREGO are coherently taken into account.

It would be useful, for more deeply pursuing the aims of EUREGO, to guarantee some sort of direct support, consent or participation of the territorial communities in the activities EUREGO promotes, for instance through the nomination of representatives by the local population. The municipalities should also nominate an adequate number, equal for both national partitions, of representatives of civil society, such as organizations, associations and institutions from the transborder area. The association of national municipalities counts within its members every municipality of the national border area. They constitute an assembly, electing its President.

6.2.2. The association of the Italian border municipalities

The association of the Italian border municipalities nominates or designates 45 representatives in the General Assembly: 15 for the 59 municipalities, 15 for the population and 15 for the organisation of civil society.

6.2.3. The Association of the Slovene border municipalities

The Association nominates or designates 45 representatives with the same modalities as described for the Italian Association

6.2.4. The EUREGO Association

EUREGO is an association based on private law, created in conformity with the regulations of the country where it has its legal seat, the one indicated in the statute, that is to say Italy and Slovenia.

The signatory members of EUREGO are:

- the Association of the Italian border municipalities
- the Association of the Slovene border municipalities
- the Province of Gorizia
- the Province of Udine
- the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia
- the Slovene State or, whenever they would come into existence, the Slovene Province and/or Region including the 13 Slovene municipalities.

Each member nominates its representatives in the General Assembly; the representatives can express the positions of the institutions they belong to, so to guarantee that the issues and aims of the single mesoareas are brought forward and to stimulate an intense and qualified transborder cooperation.

EUREGO has a role in studying, promoting, sensitizing and addressing; it promotes the subsequent agreements and actions for interregional transborder cooperation, also with the purpose of urging coordination of the activities, undertaken by the member institutions. It can design projects of common interest for the members. The associated institutions can unilaterally conform their conduct to such projects. EUREGO acts in total respect of the competence and responsibility of the territorial public institutions taking part in it. The strength of EUREGO lies in its political willingness to realize common actions for cooperation.

The noteworthy characteristics of EUREGO are:

- 1) Its organs are the General Assembly, the President and Vicepresident, the Council, the Work Groups, the Secretariat and the Director of the Secretariat.
- 2) Its aims can be distinguished into general and specific (see table).

Aims Box									
<p><i>General aims</i></p> <p>To support and implement transborder cooperation, using the institutional tool "EUREGO" .</p>	<p>6) To put into practice projects and actions, translating strategies into schemes for projects and actions</p>								
<p><i>Specific aims</i></p> <p>1) To identify the needs of the transborder populations that may be satisfied through cooperation</p> <p>2) To transform the needs into objectives for the EUREGO institution</p> <p>3) To indentify the time sequenze for putting into practice these aims within EUREGO: first economic and concrete cooperation, then cultural and social cooperation</p> <p>4) To define the aims through specific projects and actions</p> <p>5) The niche for these definitions are Work Groups</p>	<p>7) To put projects into practice with strategies for: - training - activation - transformation</p> <p>8) To spur others to action, keeping for itself a role of assistance, stimulus, information</p> <p>9) To administer concrete actions</p> <p>10) To monitor their realization</p> <p>Specific aims are carried through by:</p> <table><tr><td>Assembly</td><td>1, 2, 9</td></tr><tr><td>Council</td><td>3, 4, 9</td></tr><tr><td>WG</td><td>5, 6, 7, 9</td></tr><tr><td>Secretariat</td><td>7,8</td></tr></table>	Assembly	1, 2, 9	Council	3, 4, 9	WG	5, 6, 7, 9	Secretariat	7,8
Assembly	1, 2, 9								
Council	3, 4, 9								
WG	5, 6, 7, 9								
Secretariat	7,8								

3) The specific sectors where EUREGO may intervene are defined within the competence of the municipalities taking part in it, with regard to other territorial institutions involved.

4) The seat of the Association is the same as the legal one, generally in the country where the President is a resident, guaranteeing a rotation and a greater

involvement of both sides of the border. The same kind of rotation should be done for the Secretariat.

5) The working languages are Italian and Slovene. Until the knowledge of both languages on both sides is not satisfying, there is a need for interpreters.

6) The financing of the Association comes from the funding of the 72 municipalities of EUREGO, the Provinces of Gorizia and Udine, the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, the Slovene state, as well as public and private institutions and European programs.

7) The duration of the cooperation depends on EUREGO's capacity to put into action the aims of transborder cooperation. It could be useful, in order to monitor the functioning of the Association, to set a five year period for the Association itself, then renewable.

8) The staff of EUREGO is:

- I. backing staff for organisational and administrative functions, such as the organization of meetings of the General Assembly and other organs.
- II. stable staff of the Secretariat and Work Groups
- III. expert staff for consultancy, when needed, especially for Work Groups

6.3 The organizational structure of EUREGO

The organizational structure of EUREGO is summarized as follows:

6.3.1 General Assembly

Structure

The General Assembly is composed of 94 members:

- 45 nominated by the Association of the Italian municipalities
- 45 nominated by the Association of the Slovene municipalities
- 1 President or a delegate from the Province of Gorizia

- 1 President or a delegate from the Province of Udine
- 1 President or a delegate from the Region Friuli Venezia Giulia
- 1 representative for Slovenia

The President and Vicepresident belong to different national groups and rotate in their role, continuing in office for two years. They are elected amongst the mayor or their delegates. The working seat of the Assembly is in the municipality or state of residence of the President.

Aims and functions

The functions of the Assembly are very general; it coordinates activities within the Association. The general Assembly defines the aims and the modalities for putting them into practice, and coordinates and evaluates their progress.

Such aims can be summarized as follows:

1) cultural and economic definition of the general contents of reciprocal acquaintance between the border areas, and coordination of the Euroregional definitions given to the contents of reciprocal acquaintance. This knowledge should focus on stimulating a perception of indispensability of cooperation.

2) identifying the general needs satisfied by transborder cooperation in their general priorities and their optimisation. The mentioned needs are: knowledge of the reciprocal potential; indication of the economic objectives; coordination with the higher Euroregional institutions; sensitisation and information on the developments and advantages of transborder cooperation, solicitation towards the governments of each country and the European Union.

3) The Assembly transforms the needs first into general aims, then into specific aims.

In particular, the Assembly 1) devises the ways to satisfy the needs and for transforming these needs in general aims; 2) gives instructions to the executive organ (the Council), so that the latter collects and steers resources to technically realize the aims, controlling the results. Clearly, such specific needs and their translation into aims have to be linked to a more general need or aim of transborder cooperation.

In sum, the role of the Assembly is: 1) to transform general aims into specific aims; 2) to entrust the Council, being the concrete actor, with the realization of the aim, guaranteeing a mandate and the necessary resources; 3) to control the Council's efficiency in accomplishing its task; 4) to withdraw the mandate or substitute a concrete actor, whenever his/her actions is unappropriate; 5) to extend the mandate for a concrete actor to new specific aims: 6) to reduce the range of aims, once they are put into practice, or when they cannot be realized within a time previously set .

It becomes clear how the Assembly has an active role; that is to say, within this organ of EUREGO, the operational translation from general ideas of people and the Assembly itself to the executive organ (the Council) take place. To be more specific, the first function of the Assembly is a very complex one in itself (cf. Transborder cooperation in the Balkan-Danube Region). It is not only to concretely identify the aims, but also to put them into a hierarchy, trying to satisfy the single needs rather than maximize them, finally optimising the result.

6.3.2 The Council

In other experiences of European Euroregions, the executive organ was differently named (Council, Presidency, Council of Presidency, etc.). Under a more substantial point of view, such organ must guarantee the following functions:

1) effectiveness in carrying out the administrative and executive functions, that is to say,

2) on an organizing level, the capacity of putting into action the mandates (the mix of values/aims) it was given by the General Assembly of EUREGO –as described above-, periodically showing the progression of the activities to the Assembly, which can confirm or withdraw the mandate

3) the capacity of effectively using the resources and tools it is given; the Council can delegate certain activities under its own control, when needed, to a qualified third party; in evaluating the modalities for intervention, the Council conforms to the subsidiarity principle, putting into practice only those activities which cannot be more efficiently realized by others.

There are three advantages that can be obtained with such a system: 1) there are no extremely complex, costly and slow administrative machineries; 2) the new or renewed organizations in charge of the different activities are directly involved in the carrying through of common decisions with a social relevance; 3) the associative basis of the EUREGO area (population and civil society, in the first place) can be largely involved, inducing an active and constructive “reciprocal acquaintance”.

Many of the existing Euroregions subdivided this executive functions between a Presidency and Precidency Office and Work Groups (on the model of national ministries and regional councillorships). In the case of EUREGO, the most adequate choice of organizing system will be done based on the political negotiations between the promoting institutions (Italian border regions, provinces, and municipalities, Slovene municipalities, etc.) when the constituting act is signed.

The Council is structured in the following way:

- President and Vicepresident of different nationalities
- Stable Secretariat, working as a direct operator within the planning action of the President, and, at the same time, supporting the Work Groups
- Councillors, acting as chairperson of a Work Group. Each Councillor has a Vice Councillor of different nationality.
- Work Groups. They are the same number as the Councillors. In EUREGO, they will be seven, at the beginning. Each Group is composed of 4-6 people, being members of the Assembly and experts.

The Work Groups correspond, in number, to the aims EUREGO sets for transborder projects. The distribution and functions of such Groups can evolve with time, based on the necessities of cooperation itself, such as expressed by the territorial communities.

The Council could create, for example, the following Work Groups:

- 1) General and Financial Affairs (EU Programs)
- 2) Local Transport and Infrastructures
- 3) Local Tourist projects, initiatives and festivals
- 4) Transborder promotion of economic and labour market activities
- 5) Coordination of social services
- 6) Agriculture, projects for the protection of the territory (Collio/Carso), if needed
- 7) Cultural promotion aimed at deepening a reciprocal acquaintance.

The running of the Work Group turns out to be quite complex in its functions, but simple in its operating, because it does not act directly, but charges other organs for its actions and tasks, indicating guidelines, encouraging the creation of organizations, controlling, distributing funds, etc.

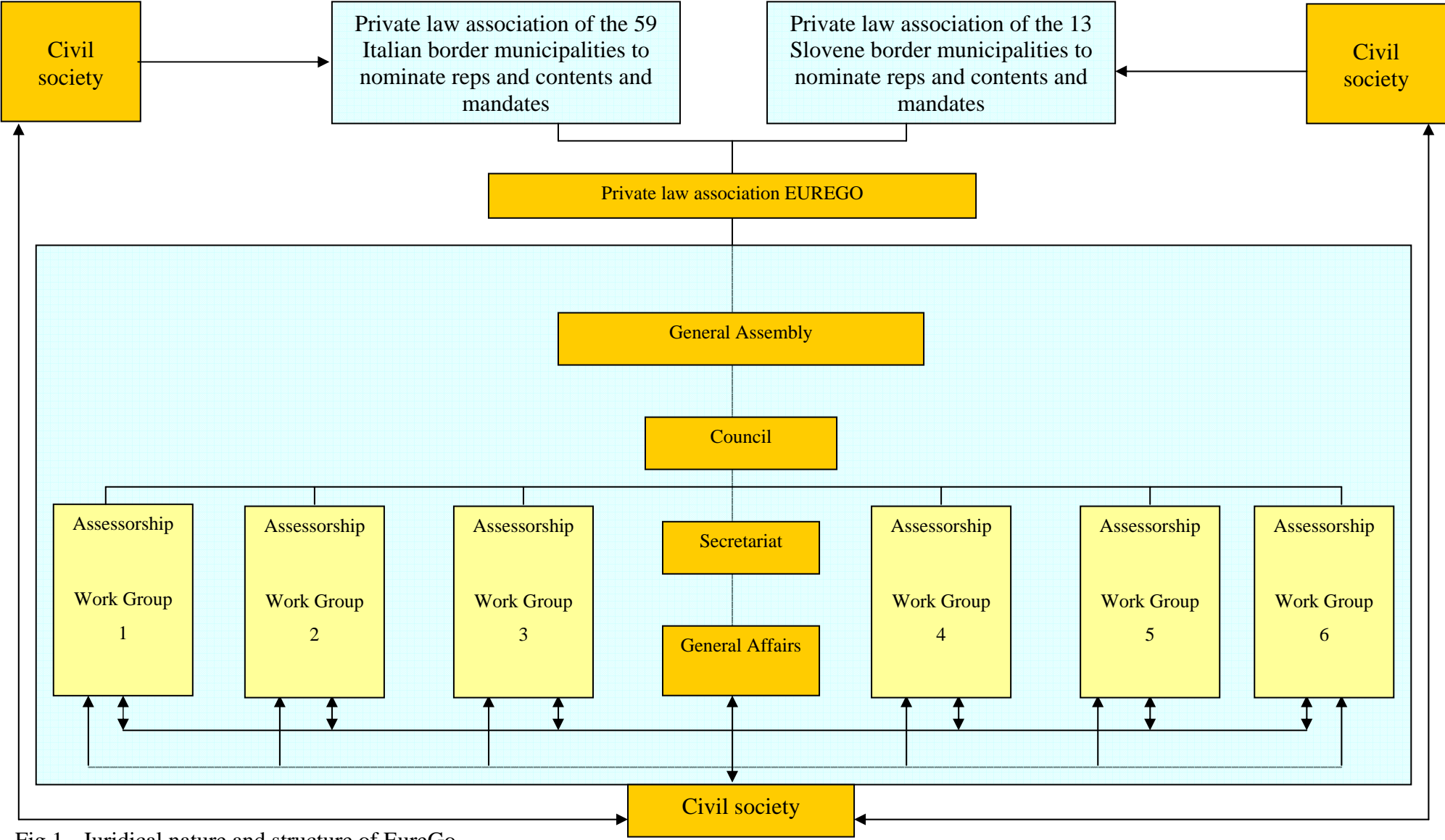


Fig.1 - Juridical nature and structure of EureGo

7. Concluding remarks

The EU has favoured and indicated this model of cross-border integration since its origin, as a prototype of European integration. There is no doubt that putting together parts of different states, prompting their reciprocal trust, encouraging their reciprocal knowledge, having them to co-operate on many things starting from the most concrete ones where cross-border co-operation usefulness can be experienced first hand, is the stroke of genius on the concept of Europe. Such geniality must remain rather implicit, whereas clearly explicit were the economic advantages reaching those who “dared” making projects and joint actions together and with a reciprocal usefulness.

In 1953, Fernand Braudel saw in the Adriatic the most coherent of maritime regions. Such geographic, social, ethnic and economic coherence should be, once more, found here through cross-border co-operation. The Suez channel is not anymore a possible future bridge between Venice and the Ottoman Empire but a real opportunity to link Europe to the Far East. In such a perspective the Adriatic could become, on the one hand, the Sea of the New Europe, and, on the other, a united social *liquid territory* where degenerated and false conceptualisations of *self-determination* endanger the peaceful coexistence of the Adriatic populations.

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