

The RSA Research network on “Effectiveness, Added value and Future of EU Cohesion Policy”

CERI Sciences Po, DATAR, Paris

Second Workshop : “New Territorial development model: macro-regions and CBC”

THE EUROPEAN INSTITUTIONALISATION OF THE SERBIA-CROATIA
BORDERLAND FROM A LOCAL PERSPECTIVE: DISCUSSING
REINTERPRETATIONS AND REAL EFFECTS

CYRIL BLONDEL

PHD STUDENT IN REGIONAL PLANNING & POLITICS

UMR CITERES – Cités Territoires Environnement Sociétés

CNRS 6173 - Université de Tours, France

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INTRODUCTION

Research focus

To observe the impact of Europeanisation on one European space:
Croatia-Serbia borderland, from a bottom perspective

Follows Carter and Pasquier approach

How actors politically make use of EU-wide institutions (rules, norms and ideas) in their ongoing construction of the 'region' and the regional interests –and in the development of their strategies of EU engagement?

Research question

Are regional actors' reinterpretations of the EU institutionalization model contributing to interethnic reconciliation between Serbs and Croats?



CASE STUDY

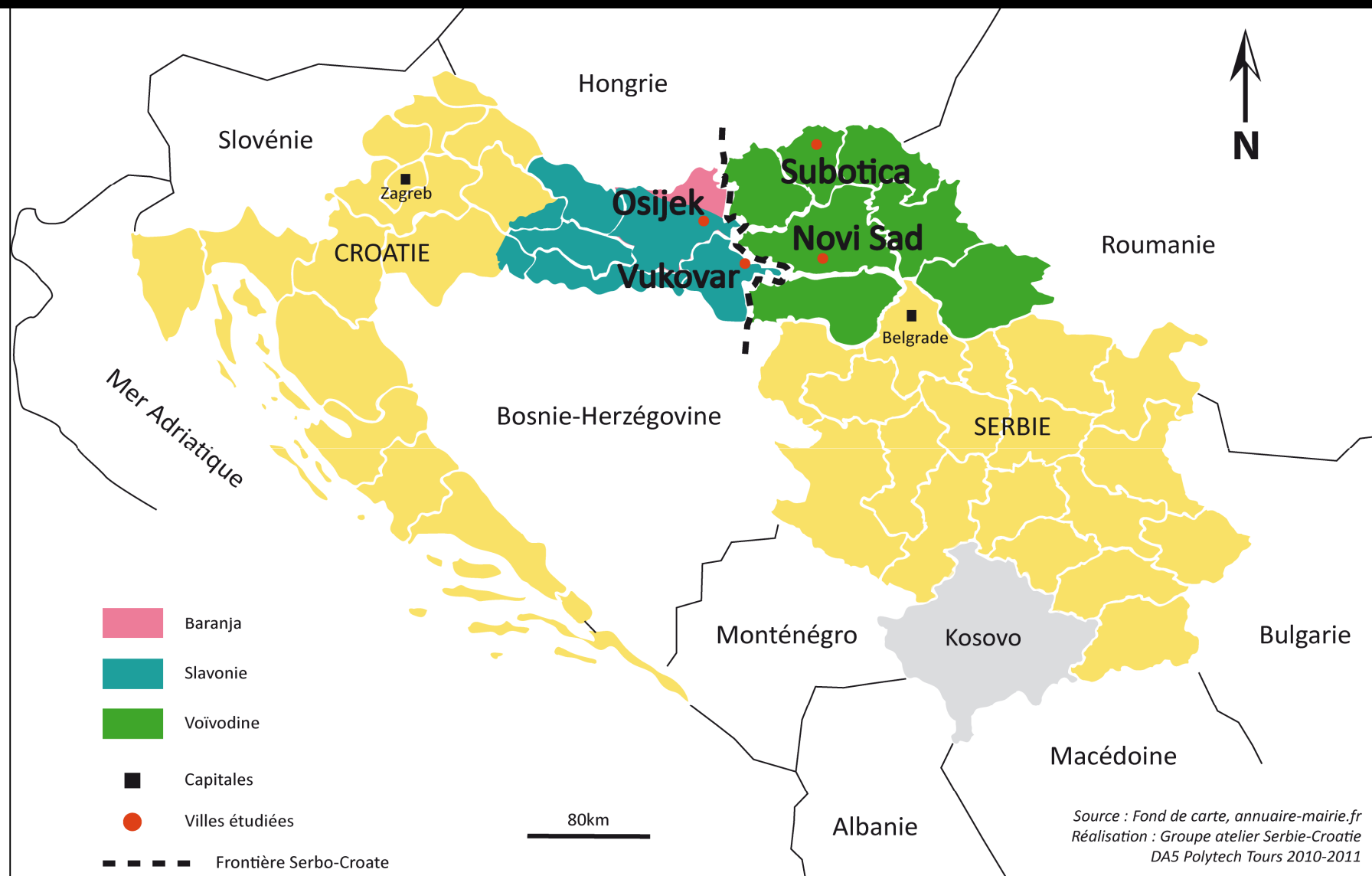


Figure 1: The Croatia-Serbia borderland. Source: Hervé, 2011; Barbier et al., 2011







RESEARCH POSITIONNING

Question the co-influence between cross-border cooperation, regional and local capacity building and interethnic reconciliation

Critical Geopolitical perspective

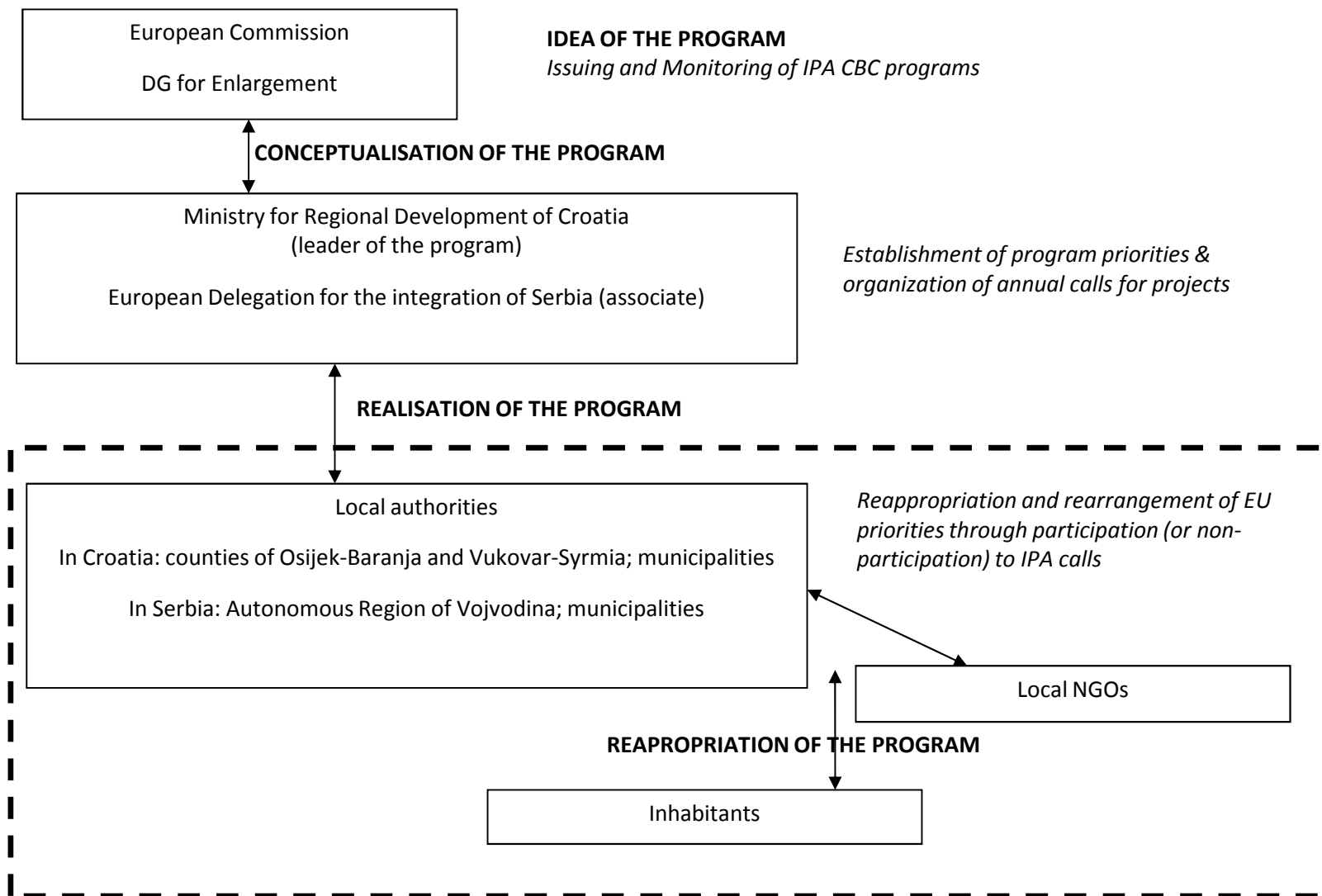
To analyse the conditions under which the power is institutionalised in regions

To pay attention to the interactions between this institutionalisation and symbolical and practical aspects of territories, i.e. to people –inhabitants, groups of inhabitants, politicians– living in them

Constructivist perspective

To consider that territories are social and historical constructions operated by actors (both individuals and collectives) and may evolve
To capture the actors' real efforts to modify the political space, in particular States and the borders of nations

IPA CBC HR-SRB 2007-2013



Scheme 1: The system of actions and actors of the IPA CBC HR-SRB 2007-2013

RESEARCH METHOD

Follows Carter and Pasquier framework


Application of four analytical tools to explain regional actor EU strategies:

- The politicization of regional territory
- The framing through ideologies of EU Polity Building
- The building and usage of intra-regional networks
- The intra-state territorial politics

Empirical work

Conducted during the summers 2009, 2010 and in 2011

Consists mainly in interviews with politicians of the main cities of the regions, managers responsible for EU projects and for cooperation in the municipalities, local NGOs workers dealing with the EU funds and interethnic reconciliation, and with inhabitants of the two regions



RESULTS

The emergence of an EU Serbia-Croatia cross-border program certainly illustrates the pacification of the Serbian-Croatian relations, being at the same time a condition and a consequence of the cooperation program.

Nevertheless, until then, the regional political actors have been making use of the EU programs and norms mainly to achieve the political and economical reinforcement of their own region, Slavonia and Vojvodina, at the expense of a deepening of their mutual collaboration, and hence, of interethnic reconciliation.

RESULTS

1. The evolving politicization of regional territories

Examination of 'institutionalizations of frontiers', 'membership', 'representative actors' and 'type' of regional 'space'

2000: Democratic turn in Croatia and Serbia with the election of pro-European governments



Members of Otpor stage a silent protest in Belgrade against the Serbian regime and Yugoslav President Slobodan Milosevic, April 2000.
Source : The Guardian, UK

RESULTS

1. The evolving politicization of regional territories

Effects on the Slavonia and Vojvodina

⇒ Exclusion from national politics and criminalisation of former war heroes (Glavaš, Šešelj...)

⇒ but not their political delegitimation: reactive repositioning in regional areas (HDSSB in Slavonia: “national levels have embraced to rapidly European norms forgetting regional people interests”)



Glavaš (on the right side of the picture) during the so-called “defense” of Osijek in 1991
Source : Danas, Srbija

RESULTS

1. The evolving politicization of regional territories

⇒ pro-Human Rights NGOs have found in Europeanisation support to spread a discourse of tolerance and multiculturalism trying to offer a democratic alternative to Serbian and Croatian national political discourses of differentiation

⇒ Negative side effects of the European Convention for the Protection of Minorities Rights (ECPMR): crystallisation of the social and political dialogs around difficult ethnic relations at the local scale

Creation of local minority councils: a parallel system that, instead of permitting a better inclusion of national minority members in regional societies, conducts in reality to foster the separation and to some extent the exclusion of minorities of social and political forums

RESULTS

1. The evolving politicization of regional territories



Bunjevacka paint in the Croatian National Minority Council in Subotica / Source : personelle, automne 2011



Road sign in Bogojevo (Western Vojvodina, near the Serbian-Croatian border, near the “Croatian” villages) – *Serbia* written in Cyrillic alphabet instead of Osijek next to a call for a *new wave*
Source : personelle, automne 2011

Ex-post impetuses of European integration policies and Council of Europe norms have produced mitigated results on Croatia-Serbia borderland. If it has certainly contributed to changes in the politicisation of the regional territories, it seems that some of European recipes are maladaptive to the post-war context, but also that regional actors, faking to play European rules, are still perpetuating interethnic divisions

RESULTS

2. A projected Europeanization between enthusiasm, opportunism and disillusion

Whether regional actors hold or not a “vision”, an “ideology of EU polity building”

⇒ Institutional actors' opportunism

Integration project = economic development of their own region ; European Union being reduced to an economic portal

⇒ Inhabitants disillusion / scepticism

Mixed between the hope for social stabilisation and economic progresses and fatalism that EU effects would not reach them

RESULTS

2. A projected Europeanization between enthusiasm, opportunism and disillusion

⇒ HR NGOs workers enthusiasm

Integration project = peace between peoples (pacification of Serbian-Croatian relations) ; Active participation to the diffusion of European values in the borderland region

The day of Europe in Subotica, May 2011

For Mr. Sasha Vucinic, Mayor of Subotica, Mr. Slavko Parac, Spokesman of the city assembly, Mr Janos Babic, Consul of the Republic of Hungary in Subotica and Ms Vesna Peckalj Njikos, Consul of the Republic of Croatia in Subotica, promotes Subotica as a “heart of the EU”.

Source : Danas, Srbija



RESULTS

3. The slow and fragile building and remobilisation of cross-border intra-regional networks

To what extent regional actors use institutionalised networks to ‘problematise’ and ‘legitimise’ regulatory problems and their solutions in order to empower their position inside arenas elaborating EU policies

Mitigate results of IPA CBC HR-SRB programme

⇒ Success in the development of the programme: institutionalisation of a CBC governance; numerous answers to the first call for projects (more than 100 for 10 projects supported); mobilisation of pre-existing intra-regional networks (NGOs, economical and university actors) and creation of new institutional intra-regional spaces of cooperation

⇒ Cooperation limited to some institutional ‘micro-niches’, weak lever effect of cross-border cooperation on the population ; economical windfall effect that call into question the sustainability of CBC; difficulty to overcome post-war distrust (no participation of minorities, no cooperation between former ‘enemies’)

RESULTS


4. The increasing Slavonia and Vojvodina claims for autonomy in reaction to Serbia and Croatia persisting centralisations

Set of norms and rules which shape interactions between regions and central governments

Slavonia and Vojvodina rising claims for regional autonomy (to have better capacity, to invest more in the social and economic development of their region, to be more competitive in the European market)

⇒ Regional use of European norms to support their claims to readjust economic, political and maybe symbolical (looking for a kind of past greatness) balance in favour of Slavonia

⇒ Regional use of territorial specificity in Vojvodina (richness, multicultural identity, former regional autonomy during socialist Yugoslavia time)



RESULTS


4. The increasing Slavonia and Vojvodina claims for autonomy in reaction to Serbia and Croatia persisting centralisations

“Je suis voïvode”

Affiche de la campagne de la Région Autonome de Voïvodine durant le dernier recensement en Serbie
Source : personnelle, automne 2011



A nationally-driven CBC programme that have reinforced their claims and make Slavonia and Vojvodina to set up an alliance to defend together their autonomy at the European level (but not to defend a common Euroregion project)



CONCLUSION

Thank you for your attention

