

INTERMUNICIPAL COOPERATION AS A DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY AND PLANNING IN BORDER AREAS: THE EUROPEAN GROUPING OF TERRITORIAL COOPERATION DUERO-DOURO

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It is well known that the commitments between states when undertaking coordinated actions in planning and development of the territory are not always easy. The limit imposed by the border, though as a communication barrier has disappeared in the European Union, the need to adapt positions, tools and strategies to meeting development objectives of common interest, knowing that the amount of effort is beneficial for both parties without compromising their respective personalities.

The literature on the subject is vast and is supported by the great mass of experiments carried out since 1980 the European Council stresses the peculiarity of the border areas as a matter of specific relevance and critical to understanding the European space. Hence derived the European Framework Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation, signed in Madrid on May 21, 1980, further developed in the Additional Protocol of 9 November 1995 - with the aim of encouraging collaboration between territorial authorities, which also lie the bilateral treaties signed by Spain with France (Bayonne) on March 10, 1995 and Portugal (in Valença do Minho) on October 3, 2002. Either define the legal coverage that supports the implementation of such strategies by sub-administrations (Autonomous Communities and Local Government) with a will to carry them out through the creation of specific agencies or cooperation with without legal personality.

Implemented agencies respond to a wide typology, which I think unnecessary comment, and that the most important is the fact that they all have served, with varying success, to channel the aid provided by the Interreg Community Initiative, which since 1989 up to 2006 have served substantially to fund projects to strengthen those ties historically hampered by the border and are now trying to take hold with the eye toward the development of the territory.

If much could be said of the lights and shadows that have marked the history of INTERREG, the important thing - and that is the focus of the investigation - is the course

taken by cross-border cooperation in the wake of the creation of a new channel, with the name of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation, sees the light after the adoption of Regulation (EC) 1082/2006 of the European Parliament and Council of 5 July 2006. The implementation of this regulation was made by Portugal, through Decree-Law n.º 376/2007 and Spain by Royal Decree 37/2008.

This is to clarify the scope of the measure of a specific Community instrument, with legal personality and the question of overcoming the limitations and uncertainties of the previous instruments, and to serve as a fundamental support for the implementation of Objective «Territorial Cooperation» specifically designed in the strategic management of the policy of economic and social cohesion of the European Union in 2007-2013. This notion is defined as one of the essential pillars of the European structure, only understandable from the perspective of the cooperation referred to in its three dimensions: cross-border, transnational and based on the creation of regional and urban networks, with a decentralized strong intervention.

Quite a challenge, in short, to the existing authorities at these levels, forced to take to what extent the allocation of European funds to be channeled by the degree of assimilation and application of patterns inherent with territories and institutions located in other countries of the European Community area. Supported by the obligations arising from binding cooperation agreement signed between the parties, their functions are based on a statutory scheme and an annual budget subject to report certified by independent experts. The reading of the regulation illustrates the motivations and objectives that have led to its implementation while evidence of the extent of strategic change on the mechanisms of action hitherto applied.

One of the first EGTC approved in the European Union which, under the name of Duero-Douro, was formed on March 14, 2009 to be finally formalized after the publication of the Convention and the Statute in the Journal of the Republic (July March 2009) and in the Government Gazette (April 21, 2009). Headquartered in Trabanca (Salamanca), has a territorial dimension noteworthy. Members include Portuguese districts Alto Trás-os-Montes, Douro, Beira Interior Norte and the Spanish provinces of Salamanca and Zamora. Overall, the integrated 188 public entities, of which 107 are border towns in the provinces of Zamora and Salamanca, 7 Municipal Chambers, 69 parishes Portuguese border, two associations of municipalities, an autonomous body and two academic institutions: the University of Salamanca and the Polytechnic Institute of Bragança. This covers an area of 8910.27 km², inhabited by 120 143 persons, of whom 46 815 73 328 are Portuguese and Spanish. The affected boundary line extends along 356.19 kms.

Regional analysis shows that space constraints that limit the prospects of development undertaken in a piecemeal fashion and need, therefore, the backbone areas of action and a stable medium-term horizon to enable the configuration of economies of scale likely to encourage joint coordinated strategies Overcoming institutional fragmentation of the territory, which has always been a constraint and a very difficult to deal with slavery. Hence, this experience must be understood as a significant example of the possibilities associated with cooperation between municipalities, something that could be considered as one of the most complex challenges and the critical time of the contemporary land policies.

In this sense we can understand the dimension municipalized essentially making the group, and in whose genesis the councils have assumed from the outset a high degree of

prominence, which in some ways overshadowed by the involvement of the Autonomous Community. Even of the municipal people's initiative follows the assignment of this experience to articulating image provided by the Duero-Douro River, thus recovering the approach end of the nineties tried to drive the Terra program, which, among other contributions, is result in the recognition of open cooperation potential for strategic alliances that could occur within the productive system itself municipalities located along the route, although the proposals made in this line would not reach the desired embodiment.

Consistent with this approach, the municipal plot set around the Duero-Douro EGCC provides a platform capable of supporting the implementation of actions in territorial policy based on a horizontal structure, participatory. Such is the intention that is assigned to Sector Councils referred to in the Statute, which attempts to cover the six lines of action towards which the strategy is oriented coordination and therefore the projects to ensure their effectiveness. It is, in particular, to channel the performance of the Councils in the areas of Equal Opportunity, Economic Development, Research, Innovation and Development, Local Development, New Technologies, Education, Training and Employment, Environment, Sustainable Development and Agriculture and Livestock Health, Social Services and Social Action; of Tourism, Culture, Heritage, Sport, Leisure and Recreation, and Local Government, Transport and Communications. It should be noted that the enforcement of Sector Councils is articulated by the Council of Coordination and the figure of the Territorial Coordinator, responsible for ensuring a balanced and coherent territorial cooperation.

However, the long-term aims set out, as is contemplated in the Constitution, represent an ambitious horizon that can only be reached by much more modest previous steps, able to mobilize the attention of municipalities and provide a platform for projects subsequent larger. Hence, the axis on which the Association gravitates mainly in the first year since its inception focused attention on three essential aspects as priorities: on the one hand, the impulse to initiatives related to education through school activities meeting the creation of forums to facilitate stable relationship between youth and the development of cultural exchanges, or else, the promotion of activities aimed at better understanding the territory, in order to facilitate their consideration as an area of opportunity for economic investment and the implementation of actions to protect environmental values, and, finally, attention to improving the quality of existing tourism, with an eye on Accreditation of its brand image, the resolution of the dysfunctions that still suffers and the implementation of a revitalization plan focused on the potential of the Douro Arribes as emblematic representation the municipalities located on either side of the border.

Beyond the recognition that can be assigned to the relevant work carried out so far, it is clear that this is an experience to be observed and analyzed, since a field of possibilities opens unprecedented even in this sensitive section of the organization territory as is the coordination of actions for sustainable development in the context of inter-municipal cooperation in a very critical stage of the Hispano-Portuguese border.

