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PRINCIPLES FOR DELIMITING TRANSNATIONAL TERRITORIES FOR POLICY IMPLEMENTATION

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ABSTRACT:

The concept of transnational territories for policy implementation (TTPI) is increasingly presented within the European Union (EU) as offering prospects for more efficiently tackling common development issues which affect transnational spaces. Following on from the implementation experiences of the EU transnational cooperation programmes (Interreg-B) since the mid-1990s, and the more recent (since 2009) implementation of four EU macro-regional strategies (MRS), this article explores the advantages for a transnational territorial development approach and advances and details concrete criteria to delimit those territories worldwide. These are divided into natural geographical elements (sea and river basins, mountain ranges, forests, deserts, etc.) and human related geographical features (functional urban areas, human development patterns, existing trade blocs and historical and cultural transnational connections. It concludes that natural elements will prevail when delimiting transnational territories for policy implementation, but additional human development layers should be taken into account in this delimitation process.

Keywords: Transnational Territories for Policy Implementation, Transnational Cooperation, European Territorial Cooperation, Interreg, Macro-Regions, Territorialism

INTRODUCTION

The European Union (EU) has adopted macro-regional strategies (MRS) as a way of tackling common development issues which affect transnational spaces. By 2015, the EU had approved four EU MRS (the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region: 2009; the EU Strategy for the Danube Region: 2010; the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region: 2014; and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region: 2015). This type of strategy can be regarded as the ultimate governance programme for transnational policy implementation. All these strategies resulted from the realisation that only a concerted transnational action can effectively address common challenges that transnational geographical natural spaces face.

Clearly, in all four EU MRS, the main criteria for delimiting boundaries are transnational natural geographical elements (Baltic Sea; Danube Basin; Adriatic and Ionian Seas; and the Alps), although their final delineation uses country and regional borders. The question is: are these the most appropriate criteria for delimiting transnational territories for policy implementation? If not, what other criteria should be used for this purpose? This article contributes to the field of regional studies by responding to the above questions. Additionally, it advances several reasons which support the delimitation of TTPI worldwide, based on the EU experiences.

At the heart of this academic discussion on TTPI is the need to present solid arguments for the advantages of transnational regional building in solving transnational and global territorial development challenges in a more effective and efficient manner. This paper proposes to build on the EU experiences to identify and debate a set of principles that can provide a guideline to an

appropriate delimitation of potential global transnational spaces. In this light, this article contributes to exploring a missing avenue in existing literature on transnational territorial building. The identification of the proposed principles to delimit TTPI was based on the author's academic background and research assessing EU transnational programmes and MRS, over the past decades.

The debate around global and transnational spaces, that has increasingly permeated the academic discourse, presents primary arguments based on a clear reality: key factors affecting species' survival (humans included), such as global warming, atmospheric pollution, ocean acidification, etc., do not regard national boundaries (Sachs, 2015). On the other hand, different currencies, fiscal regulations, trade tariffs, and other barriers of human and national character do not necessarily contribute to a more balanced world development. Conversely, the EU experience has shown some positive developments from the systematic mitigation of national borders over the past 30 years, in many arenas (Reitel et al., 2018).

As the world is increasingly interconnected what we do in one place will have an impact on the development in other places. This requires the consideration of a wider context when considering actions and development plans. In this regard, in his seminal work on capital in the XXI century, Piketty (2014: 572-3) proposes a progressive annual tax on capital to reduce inequalities, even though, this solution is difficult to implement, since it "requires a high level of international cooperation and regional political integration".

Continuing this theme, in his most recent book, Andreas Faludi (2018) discusses the possibility of a Europe and world without nation-states, as a way to improve the efficiency of planning and development processes. In his quest for a potential better solution which he calls 'neo-medievalism', he advances the idea that we should no longer think of territories as the privilege frames for organizing our lives. According to Faludi, territorialism stands in the way of humankind to tackling some of the challenges it faces. One bold idea he advances is to re-invent democracy for a networked world.

This idea for a global governance system is not new (see McClintock, 2010). The attempt to create a successful form of global governance, however, comes with many challenges. In this regard, Corner (2010: 1) argues that “a world divided into about two hundred different nation-states was in danger of falling apart and failing to deal in a coordinated manner with the major problems of the day”, thereby, there could be a need to create supra-national entities. In this respect, Corner presents a specific proposal for a type of world organisation that involves the sharing of sovereignty in specific areas like law, money, and trade. Furthermore, the new spatio-temporal order (digital networks) that Saskia Sassen (2006: 378) alludes to, “brings the experience of an instantaneously transnational time-space hinged on velocity and the future”, with immediate consequences to the production of new spatialities across the world, which could include transnational territories.

But why a transnational world, when former larger empires, such as the Portuguese, the Spanish, the Dutch, the English and the French, eventually collapsed, amongst other reasons, due to military conflicts, bad management and bankruptcies? (Davidson, 2011). Moreover, is there a need for supra-national territories given the recent experiences of further territorial division, such as those in Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia? What can we learn from relatively small nations, such as Luxembourg and Switzerland, outperforming larger nations from a socioeconomic development performance viewpoint? Some of the reasons are advanced in the following section, whereas the second section identifies and debates the main triggers of transnational regional building. The next section proposes and debates the principles to delimit TTPI globally. Finally, the last section is dedicated to presenting a simplified proposal for a TTPI world map, mostly based on transnational natural geographical spaces.

TRIGGERS OF TRANSNATIONAL REGIONAL BUILDING

Regional formation or regional building has been a central theme of geographical studies (Paasi, 2009; Warf, 2006). From the initial focus on identifying natural regions, geographers have gradually started to identify regions as an outcome of sociocultural processes, and as a cartographic, functional, economic, cultural, political, and/or ecological phenomenon (Tomaney, 2009). Moreover, processes of regional integration, often understood as processes of geographical integration at the supranational level (Cumbers, 2009), have been gaining increasing attention in regional studies. Regionalism may well occur irrespective of spatial boundaries (McColl, 2005), since there is no country in the world that exists totally independently from other countries (Uwazuruike & Salter, 2017).

There could be several causes or triggers for transnational regional building. Crucially, policy discourses are shaped by institutional and social contexts (Paasi, 2013). However, they can also result as a concrete response to urgent environmental challenges of transnational character (Metzger & Schmitt, 2012). This opens up a host of intriguing questions related to the effectiveness of current forms of transnational “collaborative regionalisation” (Danson & de Souza, 2012), in particular in solving profound transnational challenges (Pike et al., 2011). Ultimately, this “transnationalism process”, rendered by multiple ties and interactions linking nations and regions across boundaries (Daniels et al., 2008), is seen as a way to improve policy coordination in solving transnational issues (Gänzle & Kern, 2016).

One can question, however, the degree of transnational spatial consciousness amongst citizens living within transnational virtual constructs, at least in an initial phase. In this light, transnational territories do not necessarily convey an understanding of decentralization, in the sense of reducing the political role of the nation-state (destatization). Even so, transnational regional building can be regarded as a regionalization process, in a way that it can eventually lead to a more autonomous level of governance on the subnational level. This can be achieved via: (i)

reinforcement of multi-level governance; (ii) regional integration on the continental level; and (iii) stronger interaction between local and global actors (glocalization) (see Blatter, 2004).

Transnational regional building can sometimes lead to a new governance structure, as is the case of the EU MRS. These are often regarded as complex ‘multi-level metagovernance networks’ or ‘soft spaces’, with a goal to influence strategic decision-making and policy funding (Sielker, 2016). Sometimes considered as ‘interaction spaces’ or ‘soft planning spaces’, EU MRS are also seen as political opportunities to reinvigorate past transnational cooperation processes and geopolitical constructs (neoregionalization) (Metzger & Schmitt, 2012). As Tomaney (2009: 148) stresses “despite the focus on the region as a medium and outcome of social processes, the physical environment continues to place constraints on the human populations that occupy it”. Hence, and based on EU transnational experiences (Interreg-B and EU MRS), there could be several distinct drivers to forge transnational regional building (Table 1), which sometimes interplay with different intensities.

Table 1. Transnational Regional Building Potential Drivers

Main Policy Drive	Process	Designation
Environmentally Driven	Sustainability	Transnational Ecological Region
Economically Driven	Competitiveness	Transnational Economic Integration Region
Socially Driven	Inclusion	Transnational Social Integration Region
Spatial Planning Driven	Planning	Transnational Planning Region
Security Driven	Defence	Transnational Defence Region
Historically Driven	Geopolitical	Transnational Historical Region

Source: own elaboration

In the case of Europe, the EU has been serving as a transnational regional empowering platform. In this process, regional authorities adapt to EU policy opportunities related to available

funding, thus stimulating processes of transnational cooperation (Interreg-B). The salient point is that cooperation between regions, also known as Territorial Cooperation, has been an essential dimension of EU Cohesion Policy, by providing a range of instruments available to regional actors, for promoting territorial development across borders (Medeiros, 2018). Launched in 1997, the EU Community Initiative Interreg II-C (transnational co-operation on regional & spatial planning), resulted from the increasing economic integration and interdependence between EU member states. By 2000, it had become Strand B (transnational cooperation) of the Interreg, with the main goal of involving national, regional and local authorities “to promote better integration within the Union through the formation of large groups of European regions” (EC, 2005: 10).

In 2007, the Interreg became one of the main goals of EU Cohesion Policy, now known as European Territorial Cooperation, which continued to include the support for transnational cooperation. The selected EU transnational programmes added “an important extra European dimension to regional development, built around analysis at a European level, leading to agreed priorities and a coordinated strategic response” (EC, 2007: 8). These programmes, which started in 2014, will have continue to be supported until the current EU Cohesion Policy programming period (2014-2020), thus providing the EU transnational cooperation policy process more than 20 years of experience. Crucially, since 2015, the EU MRS has added more policy depth to this process, which justifies why both Interreg and EU MRS are used in this paper as an analytical basis to develop the principles for TTPI proposal to be applied globally.

In short, the proposed framework is sustained by the visible contributions from EU transnational territorial experiences in supporting institutional building. This has been formalised by engaging in networking, and by mobilising funding and participating in multi-level governance processes, as a way for regions to have a stronger voice (Plangger, 2018). Such a line of thought dovetails neatly with the growing popularity of views which emphasize the idea that all places compete in a globalised world. As such, the experimental nature of this type of ‘non-standard

regionalism' processes, such as transnational regional building, can result from the establishment and expansion of political and economic unions between nation-states (e.g. EU) (Dangerfield, 2016), and their associated policies (e.g. EU Cohesion Policy) (McMaster & van der Zwet, 2016).

Besides institutional gains, EU transnational cooperation experiences have triggered potential advantages associated with a transnational combination of strategic elements of spatial policies with sectoral policy aims (Stead, Sielker, & Chilla, 2016). These include environmental, socioeconomic, historical and political gains. Similarly, they have opened up avenues for implementing transnational spatial planning as a trigger for transnational regional building. In a complementary manner, as Piattoni (2016: 76) highlights, based on MRS experiences, the forging of transnational regional building can result from the consolidation of specific territorial contexts: "increased trade, better integrated transportation networks, improved environmental conditions, intensified cultural exchanges and strengthened security".

Ultimately, however, the success of this process depends on three main vectors (Figure 1). Firstly, the degree of (national + regional) political will to forge transnational cooperation. This will be largely dependent on the level of political stability and the economic integration of a given transnational region. At the same time, it depends on a common understanding of the advantages of nations and regions working together to solve common problems. Secondly, is the presence or the degree of relevancy and maturity of existing transnational strategies. As expected, the more relevant and mature, the higher the potential positive impacts are expected for the territorial development processes of the transnational region. Thirdly, the presence of a long-term planning vision for transnational development is crucial to effectively forge a fully integrated transnational region.

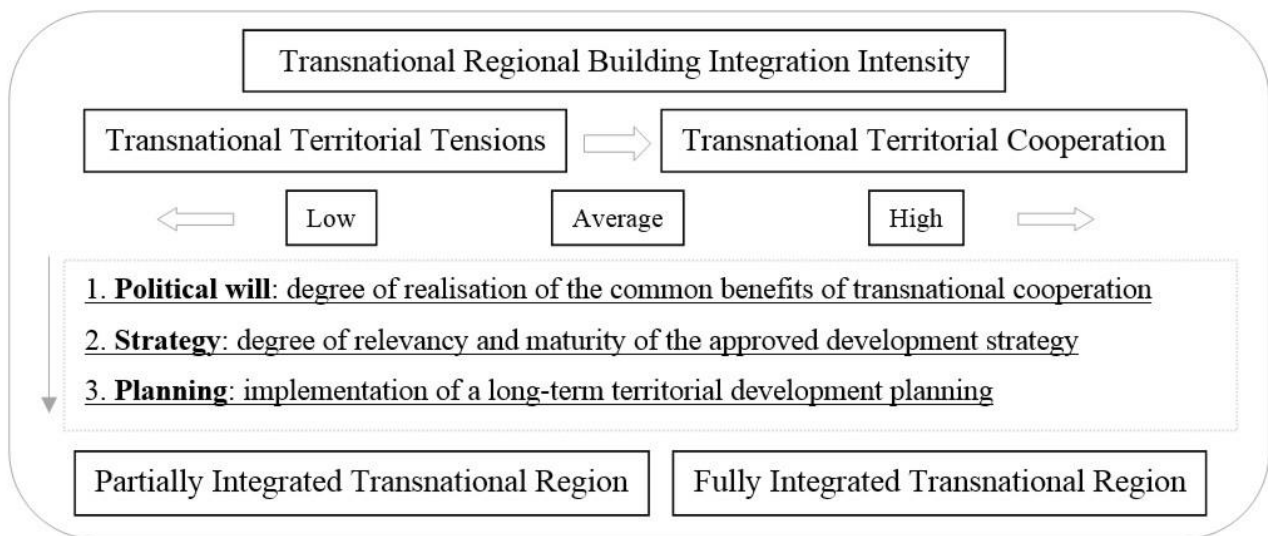


Figure 1. A typology for assessing the transnational regional building integration intensity. Source: own elaboration.

WHAT ARE THE REASONS FOR FORGING TRANSNATIONAL TERRITORIES FOR POLICYMAKING?

Political will: from economic to environmental transnational alliances

Presently, the state is the most evident global territorial unit. Clearly defined and separated by boundaries, states are marked by sharp differences in their size and population. The larger ones tend to have immense internal natural and human geography related contrasts. In several cases, their boundaries are arbitrary geometric lines, largely unrelated to natural and human elements (Haggett, 2001). On the other hand, some small countries have the need to associate themselves with others to gain a voice in the international economic and political panorama, as is the case of many EU member states (Rodríguez-Pose, 2009).

In essence, the forging of supra-national unions tends to be ignited by political and economic integration interests. In particular, these unions consider improved trade benefits expected from the mitigation of boundary effects and improved economic linkages. For Stutz and Warf (2012: 337) there are five types of regional economic integration, with progressive and additional levels of integration: (i) a free trade area with intra-trade and no tariffs; (ii) a custom union with a common tariff for offshore trade; (iii) a custom market with liberalized endowment factor movement; (iv) an economic union with harmonization of economic principles; and (v) a political union with unification of policies by common organisation. The EU is probably the most successful example of this regional economic integration in the world. Even so, according to Rodríguez-Pose (2009) it only achieved the status of a partial economic union in 1999.

Over time, with the territorial expansion of these ‘economic unions’, environmental concerns have entered deeply into their policy agendas. The upshot is that some environmental challenges are recognised as needing a transnational intervention approach to appropriately tackle them. In almost every way, world development processes are intrinsically related to environmental sustainability. As such, “development challenges are environmental challenges and one end will not be achieved without the other” (Potter et al., 2008: 272).

Strategy: from institutionalisation to transnational planning visions

As in other domains, the institutionalisation of TTPI requires the elaboration and implementation of a transnational development strategy, with clearly defined goals, targets and expected results and impacts, for a defined period of time. For this, the creation of a dedicated entity to manage the implementation of this strategy could improve its effectiveness. However, this has not been the EU decision as regards the implementation of the EU MRS, which follow a ‘three No’s’ rationale: no distinct institutional, legislative and financial presence (McMaster, van der Zwet, 2016).

In the end, a fully integrated transnational region requires more than a development strategy. In addition, it calls for deeper and longer-term collaborations on transnational planning processes, in view of the increasing economic interdependence between countries. As Nadin and Shaw (1998: 281-2) assert “significant elements of economic activity together with political and cultural relations are effectively becoming globalized and interdependent of nation states”. In Europe, these transnational planning experiences have been developed by transnational governance institutions and figures such, as Euroregions, European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTCs) and MRS (see Medeiros, 2018). Certainly, these “new channels for shaping policy decisions have been opened up providing opportunity structures for new actor formation on a transnational level” (Perkmann, 1999: 665).

As regards the added-value of transnational cooperation in promoting spatial planning, Colomb (2007) concludes that it can help in tackling specific strategic territorial development issues at transnational scales, and in solving spatial planning related problems which were previously addressed in an inefficient way. On the other hand, it can also open avenues for increasing policy transfer. Such transnational views have been gaining fresh currency following from a recognized and growing need for transnational coordination of territorial development processes across policy sectors, different levels of government, and across national borders (Dühr et al., 2010). Likewise, these transnational governance arrangements aim at establishing pooling of competences that allow increasing regional influence in global and European politics (Dühr, 2018).

Conversely, European transnational cooperation and MRS arrangements have systematically faced practical/operational challenges related to: (i) ensuring appropriate, continued or new access to EU funding in EU budget negotiations required to address flagship transnational projects; (ii) certain difficulties in reaching agreements on common priorities for cooperation; (iii) their ‘excessive’ strategic concentration on the EU ‘growth and jobs agenda’, instead of their initial goals of promoting territorial planning and cohesion processes; (iv) their struggle to mobilise strategic

projects and establish effective governance systems; (v) their continuing struggle to establish legitimacy and permanency; (vi) the verification that these arrangements are complex and still mostly bound to the territorial realities and the national administrative units and functions; (vii) their struggle to deliver tangible results, to mobilise strategic projects and to establish effective and coherent governance systems (Dangerfield, 2016; Dühr, 2018; McMaster and van der Zwet, 2016; Medeiros et al., 2019; Stead, 2014). Alongside these challenges, the implementation of such EU transnational experiments can be particularly challenging for non-EU territories, as they are also very specific and context dependent, relying on comparatively robust systems of multi-level governance, institutional capacity, integration, and specific policy funding.

PRINCIPLES FOR EFFECTIVE AND STABLE GLOBAL TRANSNATIONAL TERRITORIES

Following on from the previous remarks, the delimitation of global TTPI should firstly avoid ad-hoc and top-down imposition of areas, many times without a transnational territorial development coherence. In other words, in order to be widely accepted by all involved stakeholders, and to be sustainable overtime, these transnational spaces need to solve common transnational territorial development needs that otherwise cannot be solved appropriately and effectively by other territorial levels (e.g. local, regional and national). This ‘territorial transnational relevance’ principle for TTPI fits well with the EU principles of subsidiarity and multi-level governance, and contrast with the forging political process of some initial (and current) EU transnational cooperation programmes (Interreg-B), which have been eliminated, added, or changed over time due to their, sometimes limited relevance in terms of transnational territorial development within the European context. In this particular regard, the excessive territorial overlapping of such programmes and the political regional quarrels in which some EU regions refuse to collaborate with others, should be avoided

and solved in view of the potential benefits from implementing sound transnational development processes for all regions and nations involved.

A second principle for sound and effective implementation of global transnational territories is the need to establish ‘transnational governance structures’ with institutional legitimacy and administrative and financial capacity, in order to ensure the effective, efficient, and coherent implementation of the transnational planning vision and strategy alluded to in the previous topic. For that, a participatory approach from local/regional levels is required, in particular, in the elaboration and implementation of the defined strategy. Furthermore, and unlike what is currently happening with the EU transnational experiences, the financial package should be appropriately aligned with the transnational territorial development needs. Put differently, the budget for global transnational development interventions should be substantially larger than the one currently allocated to EU transnational programmes, which is clearly insufficient to tackle current European transnational territorial development needs (Medeiros et al., 2019).

Finally, a third principle would be the crystallisation of multi-annual ‘transnational spatial planning’, which would depend on a ‘continental spatial planning’ strategic guideline (if one exists). This transnational spatial plan would define the territorial development principles and guidelines for national, cross-border, regional and local spatial plans, of the affected territory. In essence, the ultimate objective of the transnational governance structure would be to achieve the main goals expressed in this transnational spatial plan. This would require a systematic and targeted policy monitoring-evaluation procedure of the implemented transnational strategy, made within the Transnational Governance Structures. In a complementary way, the United Nations (UN) could have a crucial role in supervising the effectiveness of the transnational strategy, in particular for achieving the UN Sustainable Development Goals at a transnational level, in all global transnational territories.

In all, the proposed principles to delimit global transnational spaces would be built upon the strengths and weaknesses of the EU transnational cooperation spaces experiences, but always in a flexible and adaptive manner to the distinct global territorial development contexts. From those experiences, it is possible to infer a need for delimiting a transnational area with relevant and common transnational development needs, an effective and appropriately financed governance system, and a sound multi-annual transnational spatial plan, elaborated with the participation of fully engaged local, regional and national stakeholders, as a way to combat traditional ‘top-down’ planning approaches. However, are these global transnational spaces really possible outside the EU, especially in territories facing basic territorial development needs at the national level, and with limited budget capacity? Well, the fact is that, one way or another, almost all countries in the world are already engaged in some kind of transnational agreement, of an economic or political character, as will be discussed in the next section. Ultimately, this proposed theoretical predicament can trigger new lines of research and complementary analytic frameworks which can foment the implementation of TTPI across the world in the near future, as it is seen as a potential solution to mitigate global threats, like global warming and acidification and pollution of oceans.

HOW TO DELIMIT TRANSNATIONAL TERRITORIES FOR POLICYMAKING?

Delimiting TTPI is particularly complex. The EU experience in delimiting the Interreg-B programmes has revealed the issue of territorial overlapping. Here, whilst some defend transnational programmes territorial overlapping as mostly negative (Louwers, 2018), others do not necessarily think the same, which can be testified by the current delimitation of the Interreg-B programmes. Likewise, the EU experience has shown that the demarcation of transnational cooperation areas has changed frequently, sometimes in a radical way. Amongst several factors, these constant changes occur because none of the transnational visions associated with the EU

INTERREG-B programmes has a formal status. As Zonneveld postulates (2005: 144) one method of enhancing the authority of a transnational vision “consists in having the content ratified by a politically authoritative body. However, there are none at the transnational level”. The same does not hold true for the EU MRS, which gives them some political legitimization.

Being the first EU transnational policy experiments, the Interreg-B programmes lack financial muscle, political legitimacy and strategic stability to effectively solve EU transnational bottlenecks and to make the most of the EU transnational territorial development potentials. It was in this context that the first EU MRS (Baltic Sea) was endorsed by the EU member states in 2009. This first experience was later implemented in three other European natural geographical elements: the Danube Region, the Adriatic and Ionian Region and the Alpine Region. Currently, other EU MRS are under discussion (INTERACT, 2017a).

Based on the EU Interreg-B and MRS experiences, it is evident that, for the most part, their delimitation was based on the needs of a specific transnational geographical natural area, which requires cooperation across national/regional borders to be properly addressed (e.g., management of a large river basin, a mountain area, or a sea basin). Indeed, an overview of the current EU MRS shows a close alignment between vast European natural spaces (i.e. Baltic Sea, Alps, Danube Basin) and their geographical delimitation (Sielker & Rauhut, 2018). As a way to cement these limits, the related Interreg-B programmes have exact demarcations, in order to consolidate a rich and multifaceted multinational governance landscape aiming at solving common development challenges to these geographical areas.

Hence, from a methodological standpoint, the presence of a transnational geographical natural area, with a potential to solve transnational problems to explore transnational territorial development potentials, should be regarded as the first criterion to delimit TTPI. As a complement, the delimitation of TTPI should also take into account transnational territorial human related capital, which can be explored in a more efficient, effective and coherent way, via a transnational

development approach. All these 'human elements' would serve to refine the TTPI delimitation around the natural geographical area. They include: (i) the exploration of renewable sources of energy; (ii) the presence of transnational industrial or rural areas; and (iii) the presence of functional urban areas, etc. Moreover, historical cooperation processes and established transnational trade experiences can also contribute to delimiting such transnational spaces for cooperation and development (Fig. 2). The selection of these potential elements for identifying TTPI was based on the author experience in assessing the implementation of EU Interreg-B programmes and MRS strategies, and also on the academic background of those analysing territorial development processes.

The human related criteria would then serve to perfect the TTPI delimitation following a place-based approach, and taking into account that non-natural or human transnational elements are either being already used by several countries (i.e. participation in trade blocs) to delimit transnational cooperation processes. This analysis can be further explored by mixing other relevant human elements (i.e. transnational functional areas). Finally, the delimitation of TTPI should be adjusted to the national and regional borders of the involved countries, for practical policy implementation reasons (Fig. 3).

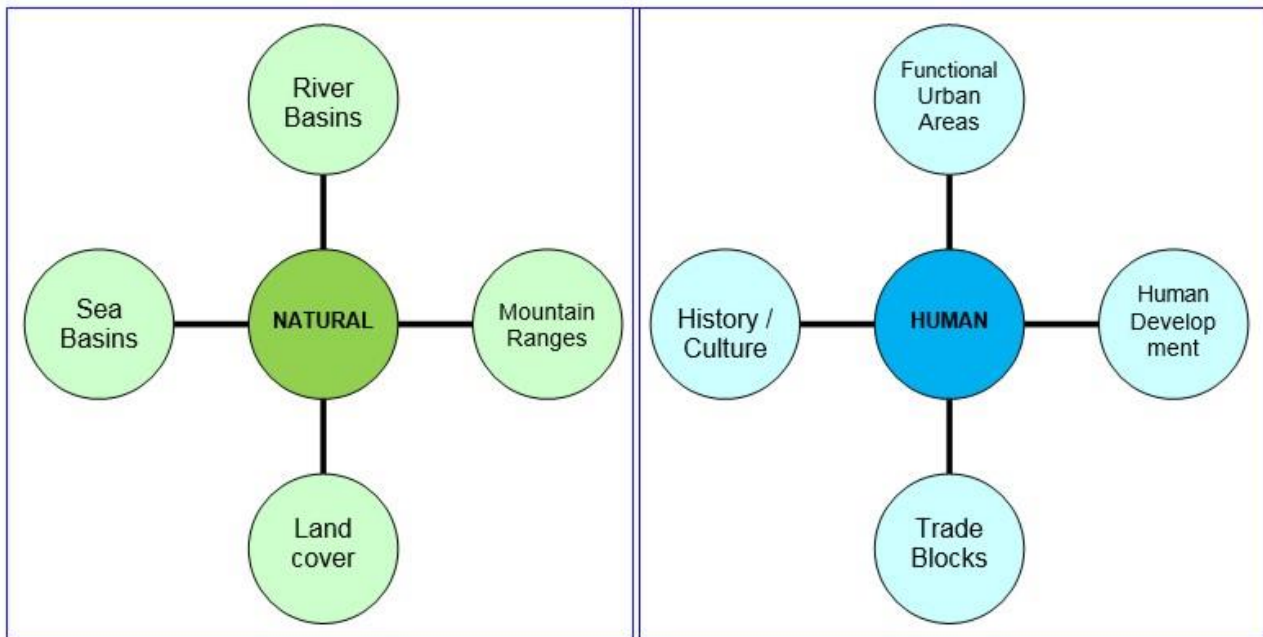


Figure 2. Potential elements for identifying major transnational territories. Source: own elaboration

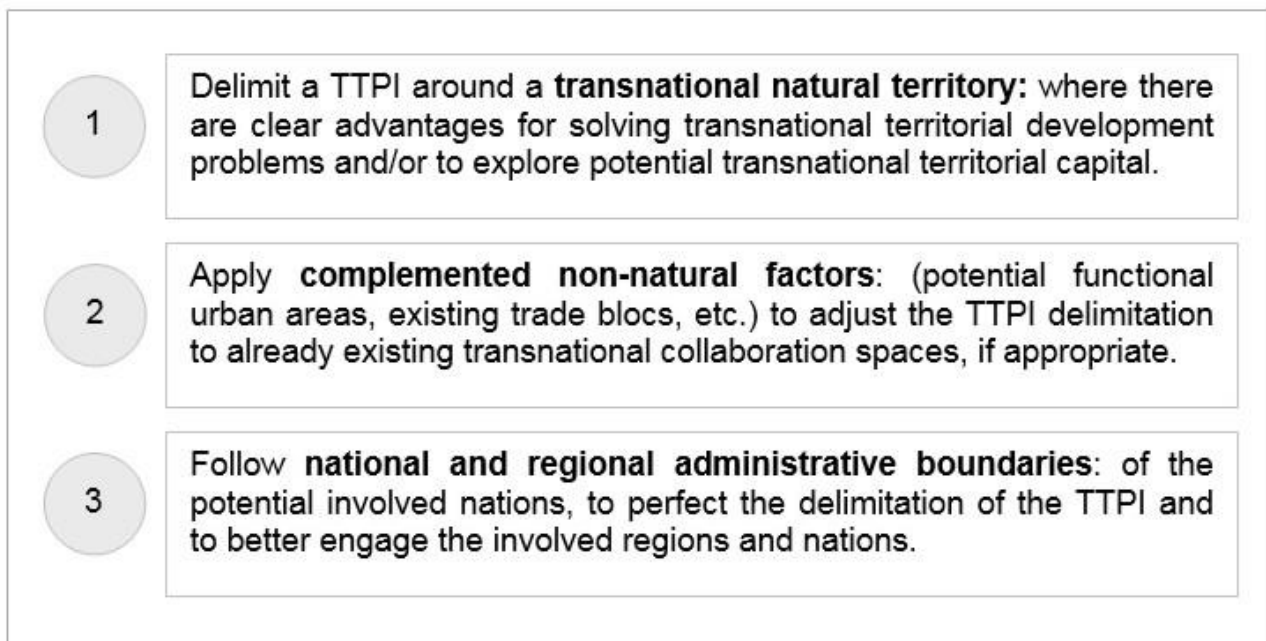


Figure 3. Criteria for identifying principles to delimit TTPI worldwide. Source: own elaboration

Natural geographical transnational elements

There are several natural geographical elements that extend national boundaries. These include river and sea basins, mountain ranges, large lakes, as well as several land cover features, such as forests, deserts, savannas, etc. It is now routinely contended that efficient management of such transnational natural elements for all the countries covered requires a transnational strategic approach (INTERACT, 2017b).

Existing transboundary river basins cover around 50% of the world's land area. In certain continents, such as Europe, Africa and South America, the majority of the territory is covered by transboundary river basins. These alone would justify the establishment of transnational strategies, as they are home to a high proportion of global biodiversity, and linked by a complex web of environmental, political, economic and security interdependencies.ⁱ In addition, as Wolf et al. (1999: 387) assert, "it is becoming acknowledged that water is likely to be the most pressing environmental concern of the next century. Difficulties in river basin management are only exacerbated when the resource crosses international boundaries".

In the EU, the Danube MRS is an eloquent example of a transnational strategy delimited around a large European river basin that incorporates territories from several countries. Based on existing literature, one can extrapolate that this experience has brought several positive political, institutional, territorial, and policy specific achievements, which include "new dynamics towards a more effective policy-making and cooperation into the Danube Region" (Chilla & Sielker, 2016: 11) and a new governance framework, which facilitates cooperation processes (Sielker & Rauhut, 2018).

As with the Danube River Basin, the EU led the way in forging a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR). Again here, only a concerted strategy between countries geographically linked to a sea basin can effectively meet the common challenges and allows them to benefit from common opportunities facing the region (Harff et al., 2011). Currently, the EU also supports the EU Strategy for the Adriatic and Ionian Region, and the Interreg-B programmes for the North Sea, the

Atlantic Area, and the Mediterranean Area, alongside the two programmes covering the area of the Baltic Sea and the Adriatic-Ionian Seas.ⁱⁱ

The idea to forge the first EU common strategy for a Sea Basin (Baltic Sea) was expressed in a European Parliament report published by the end of 2006 (Medeiros, 2013). The EUSBSR is now considered to be of primarily relevance for EU European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes (Sielker and Rauhut, 2018). At the very least, environmental questions top the agendas for such types of transnational sea basins (Tynkkynen, 2015). These and other issues are included in the six EU sea basin strategies (Baltic Sea, Black Sea, Mediterranean Sea, North Sea, the Atlantic and the Arctic Oceanⁱⁱⁱ). There is a vast scope to forge similar transnational sea basin development strategies across the world. Some of them, like the Caribbean Sea, have recently experienced major environmental disasters caused by or related to oil drilling exploration. In other seas, other problems like overfishing, concentration of plastic, pollution, and coral bleaching require a transnational policy approach to effectively mitigate or solve them.

Alongside river and sea basins, vast mountain ranges can extend their territories across several countries, which might require a transnational strategy to solve common challenges. In this stance, the EU has supported one Interreg-B programme located in the Alpine Area. By 2015, the EU MRS for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) was finally established, cementing a first step to other potentially similar experiences worldwide. Taking the case of the Alpine Area, it presents not only ecological vulnerabilities, but also a precious cultural heritage, a remarkable touristic attraction, and a diverse and unique ecosystem which needs to be managed with a transnational approach (ESPON ALPS2050, 2018).

According to Dax and Parvex (2006) the Alpine transnational cooperation experience in spatial development has contributed to raising awareness of regional problems and supplemented the sector view with integrated spatial approaches, which were absent prior to that. Moreover, the transnational cooperation experience has provided scope for policy implications and has increased

interest and participation by local actors. Also, amongst key transnational issues for mountain areas are the potential impacts of climate change, which could have tremendous consequences for tourism activities (Cavallaro et al., 2017). Other key issues include additional environmental elements (water management, natural resources, hazards, desertification, etc.), infrastructure (tunnels, communications, energy), socioeconomic development, cultural aspects, and institutional issues (see Price et al., 2004).

One can observe several global transnational elements besides river/sea basins and mountain ranges. These include vast territorial strips of forests, deserts and polar regions, which run across thousands of kilometres and, sometimes, would benefit from a transnational development strategy for their sustainable exploration and management. In this regard, The Interreg-B programme Northern Periphery and Arctic can serve as one illustrative example of a transitional strategic approach focused on one landmass characterized by climatic and ecological similarities. But more importantly, when it comes to the Arctic, it is considered an important region for the entire global climate system (Koenigk, 2015).

Crucially, ensuring sustainable oceans and seas is vital for the well-being of the planet (Narula, 2015), and this task cannot be possible without a transnational approach. The same goes for vast forest areas, in order to control and mitigate deforestation processes which, according to McCarthy and Tacconi (2011) contribute about 17% of the annual emissions of greenhouse gases. Equally important is the desertification process, as a result of overgrazing, logging, urbanization, and technological exploitation, which leads to increases in dust-storm activity and reduction of farmland and water resources (Laity, 2008). Then again, only a concerted transnational development approach can effectively mitigate and invert such ongoing processes.

Human transnational elements

Taking this analysis further, an extra layer of complexity was included in the transnational territories' delimitation, by adding other elements related to human activities. These include the presence of vast metropolitan areas which, sometimes, extend across national boundaries. Moreover, some socioeconomic development (poverty) and cultural (language) patterns can justify transnational actions which might increase policy intervention efficiency. Finally, already existing trading blocs are taken into consideration as potential transnational platforms for international collaboration.

As regards the importance of functional urban areas, when large urban agglomerations are formed, sooner or later, metropolitan governance structures are established in order to manage common challenges, such as the need for an integrated public transport system. According to Sciara (2017), more than 400 metropolitan planning organizations operate in the United States, as prevalent forums for regional planning considering several issues: socioeconomic development, security, transport and connectivity, environmental sustainability, system management, tourism, etc. In this stance, when large metropolises extend their influence to the other side of the borderline, the establishment of cross-border or transnational development plans become justifiable (Medeiros, 2014).

Concerning potential transnational patterns of human development, it is clear, for instance, that poverty is not confined to national boundaries. The UN uses the Human Development Index as a simplified measure to compare human development patterns and trends across the world (UN, 2016). It is true that this index has been criticized as being redundant because of its high correlation with per-capita income (Ranis et al., 2006). Even so, its cartography across the world enables the identification of several transnational territories with similar development patterns. The goal here would be to make human development the overriding goal of development policies, in contrast with that of economic growth, which has long been accepted as the dominant objective worldwide (Stewart, 2019). This could be linked with a novel notion of 'transnational development territories'

vis-à-vis the current notion of ‘developmental state’ (Anderson, 2014). In this regard, for instance, vast African territories could benefit from transnational policy implementation approaches to mitigate/eradicate poverty.

When it comes to existing international trade blocs, it is fair to say that the idea of establishing transnational cooperation trade agreements is not new. Indeed, there are several international trade blocs covering the large majority of the world. These include the EU, NAFTA, Mercosur, ASEAN, etc. So why should existing international trade blocs be taken into consideration when considering delimiting TTPI? Firstly, because they are already established. Some for a long period of time, like the EU, which is the world’s largest trading power (Carbone and Orbie, 2014). Therefore, in each existing trade bloc there is a history of an institutional relationship that has been forged already, and adapted to specific territorial development contexts; and secondly, because most have a clear transnational character and relationship with adjacent countries. However, in most cases, these criteria will only serve as an additional layer for the selection of transnational territories.

As happens with established trade blocs, some former empires, such as the British and Portuguese established associations of countries that used to be former colonies and now share a common language. The most well-known example is the Commonwealth of Nations, which consists of 53-member states, most of them former territories of the British Empire. To Kirby (2011), this entity provides positive links in terms of law, language and tradition. As stated, a similar experience was adopted by the Portuguese speaking countries (Comunidade dos Países de Língua Portuguesa – CPLP), created in 1996. Despite some positive advances in promoting the Portuguese language and culture, and economic cooperation, the Portuguese language has had a hard time to impose itself as the main business language, even in these Portuguese speaking territories (Gomes, 2017). Be that as it may, these international entities, as well as the presence of similar cultures and languages across national boundaries could serve as additional elements to delimit TTPI.

WORLD TRANSNATIONAL TERRITORIES: A SIMPLIFIED PROPOSAL

As previously stated, the bulk of the delimitation of TTPI should be based on the presence of a transnational natural geographical element. This would not pose too many problems if one looks at the world map (Fig. 4). As seen, this proposal is only based on the first criterion for the proposed framework to delimit TTPI worldwide (see Fig. 3). The human related criteria would then serve to perfect this delimitation following a place-based approach. Being aware that the presented proposal for delimiting several world TTPI is rather generic, it could serve as a basis for further improvements. As can be seen, there is little or no territorial overlapping in this proposal as can, sometimes complicate the implementation of territorial strategies. On the other hand, on certain occasions it can be necessary, as some regions are located, for instance, within both a transnational river basin and a mountain range (i.e. southern Germany). Moreover, parts of these regions could have functional links at the urban level with other regions that are not affected by either the river basin and/or the mountain range. In synthesis, in some cases, there could be a mosaic and interplay of different territorial patterns interfering in the most appropriate selections of the transnational territory.

From the reading of figure 4, it is also possible to infer that the sea basins dominate as the main criterion to define such transnational territories. This is mainly due to the fact that, in most cases they encompass several countries and coordinated transnational action is required to tackle many of the opportunities and challenges associated with them: to promote the exploration of renewable energy at sea (offshore wind), aquaculture; combat pollution, overexploitation of fish stocks, and marine litter; support tourism and water sports, as well as blue biotechnology and maritime monitoring/surveillance. For the world's oceans, a more global strategy is required, which could be coordinated by the UN.

In addition to sea basins, transnational strategies could benefit the territorial development of desert areas (e.g. exploration of solar energy, reforestation), forest and savanna areas (combating deforestation, forest fires, pollution and protecting local indigenous populations), river and lake basins (combating pollution and floods and exploring sustainable tourism), mountain areas (combating pollution, dealing with glacier melting and exploring sustainable tourism), and polar areas (tackling ice melting processes). Larger transnational areas, such as the Pacific Ring of Fire and the Mid-Atlantic Ridge, could also be delimited to face natural risk situations like earthquakes, tsunamis and volcanoes.

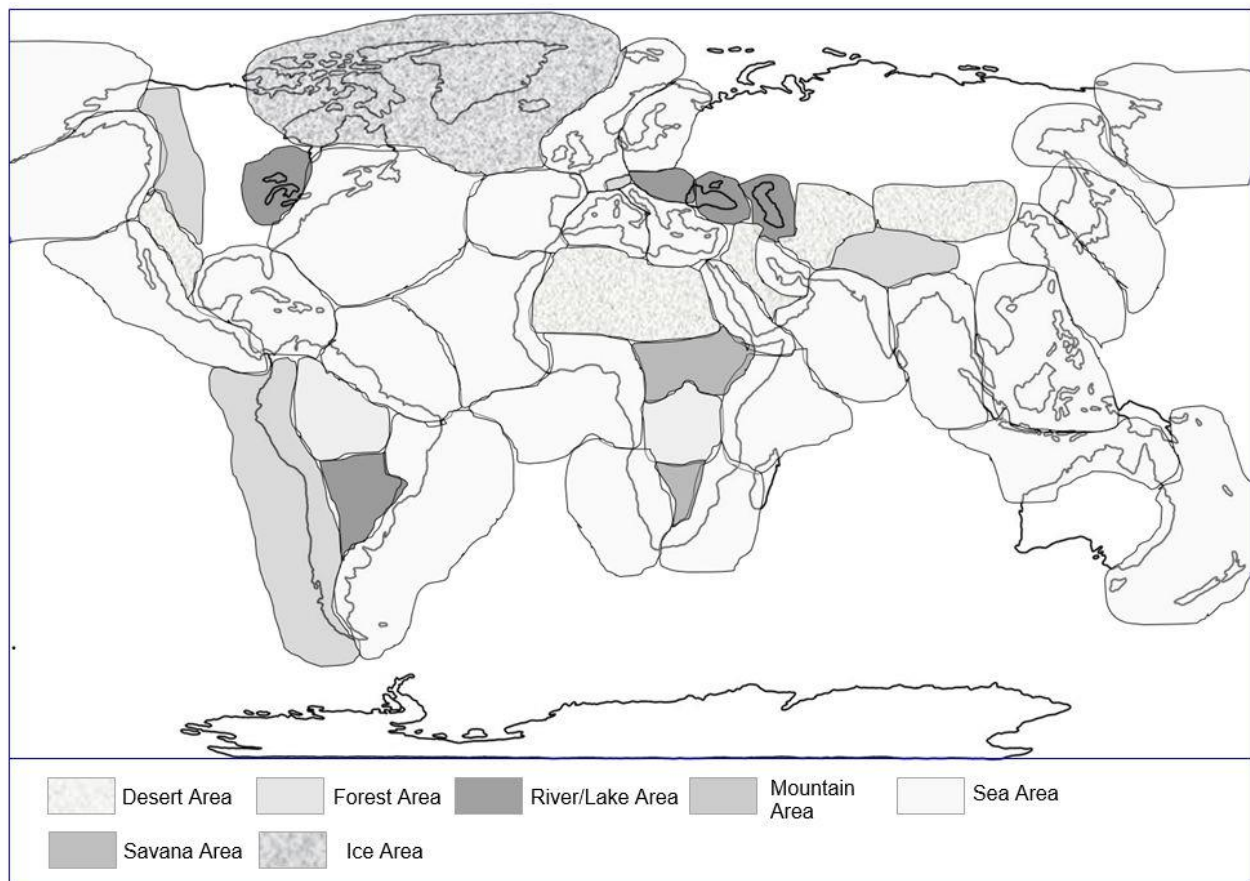


Figure 4. Proposal for Global Transnational Territories based on natural geographical elements. Source: own elaboration

Conclusion

As Faludi proclaims, currently, territorialism still shapes our perceptions of the world and national identities (2018: 35). Indeed, and taking the example of the EU experience, despite 60 years of multiple political collaborations, the national state level continues to prevail when it comes to central governing questions like spatial planning. Even so, the EU can be portrayed as a transnational entity which has successfully supported transnational programmes since the mid-1990s, and MRS since the late 2000s, not to mention the ever increasing cross-border cooperation programmes and entities located in the EU territory (Medeiros, 2010; 2011; 2018). These trends show that, when local, regional and national authorities are committed to solving transnational challenges, they are willing to forge transnational development strategies. Therefore, now that these experiences are starting to show their muscle, why not extend them to the rest of the world?

From this position, this article aims to provide an academic contribution to help identify the most appropriate territorial transnational principles which can be used to delimit TTPI worldwide. In particular, and based on research carried out by the author in assessing EU transnational cooperation and MRS experiences, the paper proposes that these TTPI should be firstly built around the aforementioned transnational natural geographical elements that share common development challenges. Moreover, supported by the arguments presented in the text, the research suggests some human related geographical elements as additional selection layers that can be used in a complementary way – or in a specific manner in concrete cases – for the delimitation of potential TTPI. These include, for instance, functional urban areas, trade blocs, and areas characterized by extreme poverty, which share similar policy challenges. Finally, for practical reasons related to policy implementation, these global transnational spaces should be closely aligned with existing national/regional administrative boundaries. One major issue resulting from this delimitation process is the potential territorial overlapping between two or more TTPI. In this case, as long as

the territorial development process is not affected, there should be no problem having more than one transnational development strategy in operation in one particular region.

For this territorial transnational governance to happen it is necessary to develop global and transnational level governance processes, in a way that nation states perceive them as clear added value for their own territorial development. The good news is that many regional trade blocs have already been established. This scenario could contribute to facilitating the establishment of transnational development agreements in the specific aforementioned transnational spaces facing common challenges. In a way, these potential global TTPI could be seen as intermediate territorial governance spaces of a potential 'world government', with specific development targets that can only be efficiently achieved at transnational level. Beyond a certain point, these TTPI could benefit from the current globalizing dynamics as long as they prove to have transformative capacities to provide sounder territorial development trends, and act as key enablers and enactors for more cohesive (inclusive, sustainable, polycentric and efficient) territories.

For these TTPI to become a reality worldwide, following the current examples being implemented at the EU level, a wide variety of macro, meso and micro-governance processes need to take place. From a macro level, functional government and legal systems need to be in operation in a peaceful atmosphere. This is still a major hurdle to sound transnational cooperation processes in many less developed parts of the world. At the meso level, the regional level should be involved in these transnational development strategies, in order to render long-term and sustainable transnational commitments. At the micro-level, local actors and populations should also be involved in the implementation of transnational development strategies to bring the benefits of a place-based approach.

As a final remark, the author is well aware that the formal interstate system is here to stay, as long as it provides the best government architecture for implementing democracy. That does not signify that complementing supra-national governance processes cannot operate in the same time-

spatial framework. Indeed, as the EU transnational cooperation experiences have shown, it is possible to implement TTPI in a sustainable and effective way. In this regard, the implementation of four EU MRS is a concrete example of the willingness of subnational and national entities and actors to develop transnational sustainable and effective strategies and networks to tackle common challenges. It is true that the EU is a 60-year-old entity. However, many of the member states have been in the EU for no more than 15 years. This shows that as long that there is a will and visible mutual gain, there are real possibilities for all countries in the world to forge TTPI. However, pure will is not sufficient as a fully integrated transnational region also requires the presence of a mature transnational development strategy and a more effective and long-term transnational planning vision. Only time will tell if the EU transnational experience can be successfully implemented elsewhere as an intermediary step to consolidate a world government which promotes wellbeing for all its citizens.

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ⁱⁱⁱ https://ec.europa.eu/maritimeaffairs/policy/sea_basins_en