

Jasmina Djordjevic\*

## **IMPACT OF PLANNED AND DEVELOPMENT DOCUMENTS ON TRANS-BORDER COOPERATION OF NORTHERN VOJVODINA**

**Abstract:** By opening the funds of the European Union and by new policies, the trans-border regions were formed with an initiative to make plans and other documents. This paper gives a concept of new possibilities of the development of those regions. The concept is based on the potentials of the trans-border regions and various programs of the European Union that are directly connected to them.

**Key words:** Spatial planning, trans-border region, trans-border cooperation, Serbia

### **Introduction**

By positive changes in the international status of Serbia and proclaimed policies of approaching the EU, the problem of accessing the development of the trans-border regions is current again. However, period of forced absence from the international circles left a trail. Where there was already incoherent approach to the development of border regions in the mentioned period, the same was mostly elemental and a spontaneous one. Where it did not exist, the border regions were stagnating and slowly regressing economically, socially and by population. (Djordjevic, 1994). During this period, on the border crossings along the most important infrastructural corridors, spatially small territories along the border were going through ephemeral developmental booms mostly owing to black economy and trans-border smuggling of goods and people also.

As an outstanding developmental instrument of the realization of the state policies, the spatial planning was not immune to the circumstances mostly because the state policy of the border region development did not exist. In the Spatial Plan of the Republic of Serbia (SPRS, 1996) it was 'shyly' recommended that the spatial plans of the regions of special purposes can be done for border regions if bilateral and multilateral cooperation between our country and countries - neighbors is so much articulated that it is possible to make developmental programs. Since there has not been the cooperation, there have

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\* Senior research fellow, Geographical institute Jovan Cvijic Serbian Academy of Science and Arts, Belgrade, gijcsanu@eunet.yu

been plans neither. Even those plans that covered or touched trans-border regions, such as the drafts of plans for infrastructural corridors from Belgrade to the Hungarian and Croatian border and spatial plans of municipalities, reserved the area mostly for regions on the border for the construction of crossings, terminals, duty-free shops and similar specific contents.

In order to achieve better cooperation and development of this region it is necessary to open more border crossings, to simplify the procedure and to speed crossing the border, to remove political and economic barriers, to stimulate with national spatially-developmental policies the growth of city centers in the region, the development of tourism, agriculture and revitalization of devastated rural areas. The border regions represent a polygon for testing the European integration, due to its diversity regarding physical-geographic and political-geographic factors, history, language, culture and traditions that were encouraging integration or disintegration, according to circumstances. Market liberalization, abolition of borders, greater permissions on the local level of administration as well as common problems and potentials that can be found on every side of the border will be more effective through the trans-border cooperation. Nowadays the border regions change fast and continuously, trying to use the convenient conditions on the basis of the investments from the structural fund. Special programs, such as PHARE, are created to moderate differences among the regions. In this period the trans-border cooperation is still in a domain of the national governments and bilateral international agreements, knowing that the area is a continuum, while the administrative borders are artificial in the context of increased right to move freely and of impacts of global economic and ecological processes. It should be mentioned that mutual making of the spatial plan as a rule means that there are previously made plans from both sides of the border, what mostly is not the case. For the Europe without borders project realization, the spatial planning on the regional and local level has been chosen as the basic instrument, while for now the experiment is giving positive results.

### **Possible directions of the trans-border cooperation**

According Todorovic, et al, (2004) the crucial problem (especially in the countries of the macro-region of Southeastern Europe) is that the process of regionalization, especially the formations of the trans-border regions, is in a certain way 'imposed' by the EU, which, through various funds and especially the financial ones, helps their creation, development and consolidation. Thus some trans-border regions (formal ones) do really exist only on paper, and they play a minor role in the development and functional-territorial system of states.

What is important to emphasize, regarding the trans-border regions, is their double function in the existing spatial-functional system of states they are in. One of the functions is 'softening' the state borders and rising the level of their transparency, what makes the basic prerequisite for more significant, free, trans-border circulation of people, goods, information and capital. Their second also important function is to be transformed from the completely stagnating border regions into zones of interweaving and pervading, becoming one of the central zones of the whole intensive development from the periphery ones, namely one strong nodal center of wider area (Todorovic et al, 2004).

Considering the above mentioned the trans-border spatial planning is adopted as the official policy of the EU. In the perspectives of the spatial development of Europe (SDEC, 1999) it was individually defined that the trans-border cooperation develops not on the national, but on the regional and especially local level, so that an ordinary citizen can be able to take part in developmental process and directly feel the benefits of the developmental policy. On the basis of the recommendations of European Council the INTEREG III C program started on the regional level, aiming to constitute the institutions, structures and fields of effecting in the trans-border zones wherein towns and territorial collectivity on the municipal level would be stimulated to make their own economic areas, suitable trans-border transport infrastructure, but also to revitalize biotopes and sensitive ecologic systems (landscapes especially) on both sides of the borders. In that sense it is especially insisted on making the trans-border spatial plans. Besides, we consider that through these plans the regional authorities must particularly insist on better access, programs for the quality of protection of the housing fund in the rural zones of negative developmental processes, on the strategy of sustainable development of rural landscapes and the revitalization of the landscape and cultural heritage of regional, national and European significance.

Over the system of the municipal spatial plans the local authorities would provide the strategies of the economic diversification, the sustainable development particularly in the fields of multimodal transport and arrangement of the services and activities in towns, partnership and an integral approach to the development of contact zones of village and town as well as action programs for the protection and revitalization of cultural heritage in towns and the promotion of high quality architecture.

The EU Compendium on the spatially planned systems and policies (EC, 1997) defines four basic types in the trans-border spatial planning:

- 1) Non institutionalized cooperation represents the rudimentary level and the initial charge of the trans-border planning, characterized by an exchange of information, plans and other questions of borders, usually as the first step toward more extensive consultations and mutual decision making.
- 2) Formal cooperation as an approach to the trans-border spatial planning is characterized by the system of common work groups, or a council with conferences on planned drafts and policies of certain states. The results of the formal cooperation may appear as common studies which result in defining problems and determining the priority action policies. ESTIA is good example for the Balkans.
- 3) Common decision making on the basis of mutual labor during the accepting of the common policies and directives. This approach represents mostly an introduction and condition in making the real trans-border spatial plans and it may result in planned documents. This form of working is also promoted through INTEREG and TERRA initiatives, with a specific intention to induce the trans-border cooperation into a domain of the spatial planning.
- 4) The level of integration between sector policies and different administrative levels considerably vary from state to state.

It is important to emphasize that the explanations at this stadium are limited on description of the existing organizations and instruments that are trying to achieve horizontal (inter-sector) and vertical (among different administrative planning levels) integration, without attempt of the evaluation of the efficiency of these approaches. Many countries of the EU but also out of it have formed the minister and administrative structures in order to support the sector integration. One of the most important reasons is that national plans usually define the integrative developmental perspectives of the state that are formally approved and they often include the investment priorities in infrastructure. The mechanism for integration and coordination are less formal in the regional and local level, particularly if we have in mind the notorious fact that the plans of the lower rank have to be coordinated with the plans and policies of the higher level or rank, as well as the funds for infrastructure and other forms of development are mainly under control of the national or regional administration.

European Commission formed new Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA). It is about the unique pre-accession fund the Union has accepted for period from 2007 to 2013, which is going to replace the recent pre-accession programs (PHARE, SAPARD, ISPA, CARDS). The essential element of this fund is that countries users have been divided into countries candidates and countries potential candidates, and depending on their status, countries are going to have the access to certain components of the fund, namely they will be

receiving certain financial assistance. IPA will be consisting of five components, while the first two of them will be enabled both to countries candidates and potential candidates:

1. Component- Assistance in transition and in the building of capacities-will relate to process of the building of capacities and investing, associated with *acquis communautaire*; assistance to countries users in strengthening the administrative and judicial capacities; as well as measures of collaboration within the context on pre-accession, which are not decisively included into other components.
2. Component- Trans border collaboration- means the assistance in trans border activities to countries IPA users, as among themselves so among those countries and countries EU members; this component enables countries candidates and potential candidates an adequate participation in ERDF programs of transitional and interregional collaboration and/or in ENPI program of sea basins.
3. Component- Regional development- will be available to countries candidates and will most compete to ERDF and Cohesive fund, thus bringing countries IPA users closer to the Structural fund experience within the Rule on foreign assistance.
4. Component- Human resource development- available to countries candidates, it will prepare them for creation, implementation and managing the European social fund, within European strategy of employment.
5. Component- Rural region development- will help countries candidates to prepare themselves for post-accession Program of rural development, financed by EU, applying pre-accession assistance through the systems similar to those necessary for the process of post-accession.

The solution which is offering through IPA fund is unsuitable for countries-potential candidates because they will be receiving much less money than countries candidates, which will slow down the process of reformation and EU approaching. In order to enable countries to realize complete benefit from financing within IPA program, the preparation measures must immediately begin with. The first step would be establishing the functional System of decentralized implementation and connected institutions, necessary for the complete IPA implementation. The main challenge during the following months and when regulations on IPA take effect, will be enabling the countries IPA users to build and improve capacities, as well as to put themselves into suitable frame in order to have pre-accession assistance obtained both to countries candidates and potential candidates, according to their needs. With that aim, it is necessary to have all our institutions and bodies prepared for using of this fund in order to use the assistance completely and on the right way. This process demands introduction of training for persons who are going to participate in

carrying out the programs of assistance, certain institutional and law changes, in order to have conditions made for free implementation.

### **Trans-border action zones**

Regarding the mentioned data, it is not easy to define the priority action zones. Within VISION PLANET (2000) project the following action zones of the high priority are defined: (1) almost the whole territory of Voivodina, whether from the point of the first criterion, as a part of the Danube Basin, or from the point of the second one (the junction of three borders as the hot point where problems are more complex), the third and the fourth (Subotica-Segedin).

The identification of the priority transport action zones is just the first step in the trans-border planning. In order to be effective, the trans-border planning must include almost all the aspects of the contemporary life: labor and business, recreation, culture, social aspect, housing construction, planning etc. Contacts among the planners have to be the everyday ones, and all social groups must be presented. The cooperation must develop on all levels of administration-national, regional and local. The Association of the European Border Regions (AEBR) promoted three basic principles of the trans-border cooperation:

- Partnership
- Subsidiary
- Elaboration of strategies of the trans-border cooperation

Fields where the mentioned principles should be carried out were defined within the EU long time ago:

- revitalization and improvement of physical infrastructure within and between border regions with a special emphasis on transport and telecommunications;
- elimination of the environmental problem with common developmental action;
- cooperation with an aim of the trans-border natural ecosystem protection;
- support to diversification and development of the trans-border system of small and medium enterprises;
- support to the cooperation of governmental, non governmental, professional, social and political organizations;
- cooperation in diffusion of knowledge and information.

### **Trans-border cooperation of the regions of Serbia (Voivodina), Hungary and Romania (the Danube-Keres-Moris Tisa Euro region)**

The first official Euro region in the Balkans, consisting of four counties each in Hungary and Romania and AP of Voivodina, was founded in 1997 under the name of the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro region (DKMT)<sup>1</sup>. One of the first attempts in the formation of the Euro region of these areas was exactly this one being a logical consequence of the long-range friendly relations among these three countries. At the same time, this region represents the conglomeration of different nations placed on identical natural area.

Only one year since the inauguration of this region, four work groups have been formed where the representatives of all nine sub regions-members were included. Voivodina was placed at the head of the group for the spatial development, protection of the environment and ecology. The making of the basic document of the cooperation has also begun-The Strategic Plan of the Development through which certain priorities and problems should be systematized. This Strategy was completely planned in keeping with the existing spatial plans of the development of all three countries (means from FARE program). Each country member made the coordinative body consisting of the eminent experts for some fields of cooperation (the coordinative body of Voivodina consists of 20 first-class experts). The economic councils of the regions-members signed Declaration on joining the regional cooperation of DKMT and participating in the regional activities with an aim of developing the economic relations of the economic enterprises.

Opening new border crossings would intensify and facilitate the exchange of services and goods while local border traffic would revive again. Today highway-railroad crossings function at Horgos and Kelebia, road crossings are in function at Banatski Brestovac and Cale, while the river ones at Bezdan and Kanjiza toward Hungary; road crossing toward Romania at Vitina (the most frequent one), Kaludjerovo and Srpska Crnja, Nakovo, Jasa Tomic and Vrbica and railroad crossings at Kikinda and Vrsac. Opening of several border crossings have been initiated (in keeping with the SPRS) such as Rastina, Raba and Veliki Gaj.

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<sup>1</sup> DKMT spreads on 71.879 km<sup>2</sup>, same as NUTS 2 Euro-region. Population is 5.4 million, average population density is 82 inh./km<sup>2</sup>. There are eight larger towns: Temisvar as the largest one, then Novi Sad, Arad, Segedin, Subotica etc. (Nadj et al, 2005).

The Danube River is one of the basic themes of the cooperation. Since all three countries have been the members of the Work association of the Danube Basin countries the cooperation on the improvement of river traffic, free zones, tourism and ecology on the Danube is not endangered. Using natural potentials in this area the river systems also represent the unique infrastructure complex enabling the development of water traffic as well as the valorization of the potentials for the development of fishing, hunting and nautical tourism. The river net with Hungary in the part of DKMT is, except the Danube, also directed to the Tisa River for which it is important to become navigable through the whole course, while the connection with Romania is in the function of preparing the Begej channel for the river transport.

Except mentioned courses the priority in the cooperation should also be directed to the advancement and construction of traffic and infrastructure directions i.e. modernization of highway and railroad systems. Fortunate circumstance of DKMT is that two European corridors are passing through the territory of the region. Joining the system of the European road network makes the necessity for modernization of Horgos-Belgrade road, opening the eventual alternative direction over Banat to Smederevo and road construction from Belgrade to the Romanian border. Together with geographic predispositions this would bring together these three countries and it would mark out the way towards better cooperation and other fields such as agriculture, chemical and oil industry, pharmacy and other branches of the economy certainly very important in all parts of the DKMT.

Together with Hungary, which is the EU member, the border region of Voivodina will be able to ensure the support from the CARDS funds in the following period because approaching the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro region it would satisfy the prerequisite of applying for means and promotion of the mentioned region.

Entering the EU, Hungary made significant changes in the regional and economic policy of the country, which has also started in Serbia, and having also related to the southeastern region of South Alfred, the two counties of which border with Serbia. This region has already made its strategic and operative plan of the spatial development, and it also bases its progress on the trans-border cooperation and some forms of the common planning with the municipalities of Serbia (Nadj, 2002).

Such plan has not been done for border municipalities of Voivodina, especially not the one relating the trans-border cooperation. Even the Spatial Plan of Serbia

only declaratively gives the mutual cooperation of the border municipalities with the neighboring but without mentioned actions and proclaimed programs that would lead towards it. The additional problem, at this moment, is also the lack of clearly divided integrations of municipalities and the lack of inaugurated regions with all the attributes of administration and permissions for planning. This is an objective handicap that restrains the institutional cooperation between the states on this level. On the other side, there are not law barriers for such a form of actions what the promotion of the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro regions is proving. Possible directions of future strategic and spatial planning and cooperation may be analyzed exactly on the basis of the mentioned Strategy of South Alfred and SPRS that crucially merge by planned actions with common border.

At the beginning of the 70's, common trans-border planning of the territorial development was coordinated by Yugoslav-Hungarian commission for urbanism and regional development. Questions on the development of border territories, then ecological, communal and housing questions were treated within this sphere of activity. At the end of the 80's common study on the development of the tourist economy in the border region of NR of Hungary and SFRJ was made.

Nadj (2002) emphasizes some basic postulates in the analysis of the recent cooperation:

- **Danube economic-traffic axis** (the municipalities of Apatin and Sombor) over the upper Danube Basin is directly added to the border towns of Mohac (the county of Baranja) and Baja (the county of Bac-Kiskun) in Hungary. These places, with future logistic center (RO-RO terminal), are the key ports for lower Danube Basin in Hungary, for South Alfred as well as for Voivodina. They would represent the initial point for trade towards Voivodina, especially toward economic centers in Sombor, Apatin, Subotica and Kanjiza.
- Regarding **infrastructure**, the strategic projects on the Hungarian side supported by Voivodina and the county of Temisvar within the developmental plan of the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro region, expressively emphasize the infrastructure investments in the construction of Segedin-Kikinda-Zombolj-Temisvar railroad, while by the modernization of the same from Kikinda to Belgrade, Belgrade would be connected with Segedin over Banat what would also be of use from the aspect of reviving some economic branches of the mentioned municipalities of Banat. Similar interests were shown in the Spatial plan of the Republic of Serbia (1996) and SPRIC (2001) for the needs of

western Backa development, and border territories as well. Realizing Novi Sad-Backa Palanka-Baja railroad, the border municipalities of western Backa would revive and this territory would link with the Hungarian Danube Basin and with Baranja in Croatia in perspective.

- Regarding the protection of the **environment** in the border region on both sides of the border, there is a network of the protected natural parts having local, regional and international significance. These are national and regional parks, landscaped districts, areas under protection etc. Their topographic link requires common care and protection with a need of complex rehabilitation. Imre Nadj states some of the priorities of this region in the same paper:
- Cooperation and developing the services for plant protection, and coordinating the measures against contagions, plant and animal diseases (with monitoring for the sake of prevention).
- Common coordination of activities of the Danube-Drava National Park and the upper Danube Basin in Serbia and Kopacki Rit in Croatia as well, which are extremely important tourist-ecological areas for maintaining the continuity of ecological corridor and maintaining the ecological tourism.
- Enabling three lateral and coordinated protection of the Keres-Moris-Tisa ecological corridor.
- The Danube, the upper Danube Basin in Serbia, as well as the Danube Basin in Hungary with a series of mentioned parts of nature under protection are the main sources of the potential developmental directions in tourism. The settlements are rich in historical sights, diversified ethnographic collections, customs and cultural manifestations (Apatin, Sombor, Bezdan, Baracka, Baja, Mohac). Subotica and Segedin as city centers very close to each other, may be special tourist attractions (Nadj, 2002) The first-class spas equipped with health and tourist contents, the tradition of hunting and fishing tourism that previously attracted users from the whole Europe, as well as ethno-hotel management will contribute this region be inscribed in the tourist map of Europe.

### **Cooperation among the regions of Serbia, Croatia and Hungary on the Danube**

Planned European area of the trans-border cooperation at the entrance of the Danube into Serbia relates to the cooperation among the regions of Serbia, Croatia and Hungary. In the part relating to the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro region, the future cooperation is assumed among these three countries in a domain of the protection of the environment. The municipalities of Sombor,

Apatin, Odzaci, Bac and Backa Palanka belong the northern (the upper Danube Basin in Serbia) border region of the Danube Basin of the total area of 2.883 km<sup>2</sup> and population of nearly 270 000.

This possible region significantly differs comparing the one situated among Serbia, Romania and Bulgaria or comparing the area among Serbia, Hungary and Romania. The genesis of the border region of Voivodina is colored by war conflicts between Serbia and Croatia. Common territory of one state once remains today a weakly passing through border with tendencies of improving the relations. The cooperation does not exist except establishing already initiated economic relations and exchange of goods. Bilaterally, Serbia and Croatia cooperate very well with the northern neighbor Hungary, thus opening possibilities for three lateral cooperation.

The conditions for cooperation and potential spatial integration concerning the Danube River are really good if we neglect political reasons. There are several towns that could become the bearers of the cooperation on both sides: Sombor and Apatin on the Serbian side, Osijek and Beli Manastir on the Croatian, and Mohac and Baja from the Hungarian side. These are the towns of traditionally good industry, infrastructure, rich cultural-historical contents and common problems. Also, the whole territory is covered by plans: SPRS, SP of Baranja and western Srem, and the plans from the Hungarian side as well (lower Alfred). Besides, the European tendencies are inclined to such forms of the cooperation, relying on the links once existed and for which the physical predispositions have still existed (bridges, roads) (Secerov, 2002).

As with other Euro regions, the recommendations for the beginning of the cooperation should relate to soft forms of cooperation. They could even relate on defining the common problems, protection and control of the quality of the Danube River and surrounding, cultural and artistic and sports contents, but also on establishing the communication on the level of small economy over the official channels and common influence toward European funds aimed for the development of such regions etc.

At this moment we cannot assume to what direction this cooperation is going to move to and when it is going to be realized. The speed of occurrences and often unexpected changes of this part of Europe show that nothing is claimed with certainty. In spite of that, it is not meant on the negative side of uncertainty but contrary-the rapid tempo of the integration. For now the fulfilling of several of the suggested forms of the cooperation would mean a lot in starting the stopped

mutual cooperation of this region, and it may depend on individuals, experts and businessmen, and politicians in all three countries.

### **Conclusion**

Border regions are almost always on the lower developmental degree than those in the provinces. The reasons of economic and social periphery are above all strategic and secure ones (placing industrial and other capacities at the bottom of own territory). Nowadays, as viewed from the perspective of developed Europe where borders stop, while the areas next to them become attractive, the trans-border cooperation is becoming the necessity and possibility to have all these regions developed and advanced. From the proclaimed regions for such a form of the cooperation it is obvious that the part of Voivodina was being developed and planned in completely other circumstances than Central Serbia and it has a significant advantage in relation to others that are traditionally predetermined for periphery.

Trans-border cooperation will be done through decision making on important 'European themes' (corridors, visa regimes, global protection of the environment) while concrete cooperation will develop on the regional level. Such cooperation enables free development of the territories along the border which are mostly in developmental disproportion in relation to the inner part of the country. The availability and data application would be of the crucial importance for the realization of planned ideas, as well as marketing, the popularization of this region through the media, internet, printed material etc. Opening of ports and duty-free zones, tourism development and cherishing local customs and tradition can introduce these regions into integrated Europe. In period that follows the border region of Serbia toward Hungary (without determining the width of the border region) will be able to provide for itself the support from the funds of CARDS (Voivodina is valid member of the Danube-Keres-Moris-Tisa Euro region) that is compatible with PHARE funds for the development of certain activities of the importance for the border regions of Serbia. Special priority of both states was given to the highway construction Belgrade-Subotica-border (on the territory of Serbia) and Kiskunfeledezhaz-Reska-border(on the territory of Hungary), as well as to the Belgrade-Budapest-Vienna railway construction. The development of this trans-border region demands a connection of Subotica-Baja up to Austrian border and Sombor-Apatin-Subotica-Kanjiza on the Serbian side as well.

Above infrastructural corridors in the border regions, parts of nature under protection are of great importance, having local, regional and international

significance. Their position demands common care and protection with a need of revitalization, so that these areas need the mutual usage of the natural resources and the creation of such an environment that suits the basic developmental aims of the areas of Hungary and Serbia, as well as the standards of the European Union. The most productive and most directed cooperation, until now, was realized between Institute for Nature Conservation of Serbia and department of NP Kiskunsag (Keckemet, Hungary) where special reservation of nature Selevenjska barren area and park of nature of the forest of Subotica on the territory of Serbia and the river basin of Keres brook in Hungary were united in concrete, synchronized protection as an international natural property.

We should not forget the agrarian policy in some priority steps of the cooperation of Hungary and Serbia where the cooperation within agricultural production should be insisted on, the coordination of measures of plant and animal disease spreading, the usage of various remedies and other chemicals in agricultural production. It is necessary to carry out the monitoring for the quality of waters of the Danube and Tisa, as well as for the air pollution in the area around Subotica, Segedin and other towns.

On the basis of many common-European documents, positive practice of the trans-border cooperation and objective need of the local communities we may say the stated hypothesis that the spatial integration represents the way of cooperation by which more rapid growth and development of the border regions is enabled is correct. It is clear that the cooperation does not automatically mean the spatial integration. It is its necessary condition but not also the sufficient one. The examples from Europe show it can be realized but with great and persistent efforts of all the regions, actors on the given area. Nevertheless, with started cooperation, mutual actions and work the real spatial integration and consolidation of the area relating to natural resources, objects and economic capacities regardless political and other barriers and borders may realize. This confirms the second part of the hypothesis which claims that after the regional cooperation it comes to greater cohesion and more balanced development of Europe as a whole.

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