

Conference Paper

Border Permeability and Drivers of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Turkish and Eu Border Region

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Abstract

With the impact of globalization, increasing flows of social, economic and political relations have begun to redefine the state borders which causes the rising of new border identities. By this redefinition process, European Union (EU)'s external wall forming the boundaries with the neighbourhood countries have also begun to be rebuilt at local and regional level. Throughout this process, new frontier identities are formed with a degree of permeability where the state's security policies act as the prior issue in the international relations.

Border permeability, that contains grey values varying from closeness to full openness, defines the degree of permeability according to the size, shape and direction of the flows. Dynamic feature of the flows converts border space into a subject of continuous social, economic and political movement. In such places, actors leading the flows appear as the basic elements of permeability and they can be described as economic, political and socio-cultural agents. At the edge of supranational and national border, actors use networks, which are connected to both local and regional levels, in order to build up cross-border cooperation in different aspects. In this context, border regions transform into a space, where local actors develop methods to overcome the restrictiveness of constraints for the flows among the supranational and the national borders.

This paper aims to evaluate the permeability between EU supranational border and Turkish national border and to define the new cross-border cooperation formed by the social, economic and political flows of the actors. In this context, the permeability and the new border identity will be assessed through three type of administrative body (supranational, national EU and national non-EU) by using the national and local level data supported by EU cross-border programmes and by in-depth interviews conducted at various actors including national institutions, local organizations and NGOs in Turkey.

Keywords: Cross-border actors, supranational border, border networks, border identity

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1. Introduction

The concept of globalization is seen as "the widening, deepening, and speeding up of worldwide interconnectedness in all aspects of contemporary social life" that implies "a stretching of social, political and economic activities across frontiers such that events, decisions and activities in one region of the world can come to have significance for

individuals and communities in distant regions of the globe" ([9]: 15). Similarly Giddens (1990: 86) defines it as "the intensification of worldwide social relations which link distant localities in such a way that local happenings are shaped by events occurring many miles away and vice versa". While it is evident that globalization has facilitated the free flow of capital, commodities and information, when it comes to regulating the movement of people, it is constrained by territorialized national borders which are built by states.

National borders demarcate the territorial limits of a state's jurisdiction and authority and regulate the movement of people, commodities, capital and information between state territories. In so doing, they simultaneously function as barriers and conduits of movement [4]. Although they act as barriers, the increasing relationships among countries in a globalizing world turn these barriers into permeable entities. Border regions, which are previously perceived as divisions or underdeveloped disadvantaged peripheries of the nation state, come to be understood as zones of interferences where a specific socio-economic milieu is constructed through interactions between groups of people across borders of the nation state. Understanding borders as structured patterns of cross-border interactions helps to identify them based more on the actual relationships between actors that can be defined as local, regional or national.

This paper aims to define the new forms of cross-border cooperation formed by the social, economic and political flows of the actors and to evaluate the permeability between EU supranational border and Turkish national border. In this context, the permeability and the new border identity will be assessed through three type of administrative body (supranational, national EU and national non-EU) by using the national and local level data supported by EU cross-border programmes and by in-depth interviews conducted at various actors including national institutions, local organizations and NGOs in Turkey.

2. Increasing Border Permeability and Cross-Border Cooperation

Globalization embodies dynamic economic, cultural, and political practices and produces new discourses of identity. When globalization is viewed as an economic phenomenon, the means of production, exchange, distribution, and consumption are highlighted. When globalization is viewed as a political phenomenon, the exercise of power, coercion, surveillance, and control over people and territories is paramount. When it is conceived as a social or cultural phenomenon, symbolic exchange through rituals, everyday practices, mass media, face-to-face communication, and cultural performances are central [17].

One of the most important features of globalization is mobility. In [5]: 595 writes that "The stock story of globalization is one of fluidity. More and more things are moving at faster and faster rates". It is the intensification of transnational spaces, events, problems, conflicts, and biographies. It is the process through which sovereign national states are criss-crossed and undermined by transnational actors with varying prospects of power, orientations, identities, and networks [3].

Increasing social and economic relationships among nations cause the borderlines and border regions become the main territorial entities. In general, border is seen as a dividing line between two specific areas/territories in geography. In [8] considers the border as the circumference of the territory, which has a specific entity in its ownership. In the Dictionary of Human Geography [7], the boundaries are defined as lines or zones that separate the two spatial units that are qualitatively different from each other.

As mentioned previously, the barrier characteristic of the border has been coming down by globalization. Indices show that there is an acceleration of cross-border flows which represents a transformation from a state-centred international order to a trans-national one. However, it is difficult to state that national borders are being eroded; it is frequently the case that they are reconstituted in new forms. The reconstitution of borders between many European states in the late twentieth century, for example, has been accompanied by strengthening of the political boundary represented by the broader territorial jurisdiction of the EU [1]. While borders within the EU have become more porous, the external boundary of the EU as a whole has become more 'hard-edged'. It can be said that European state borders have been transferred upwards to the jurisdictional boundaries of a European 'supra'- or 'multi-national' state [4].

Trans-national flows of capital, commodities, information, in other words cross-border interactions can be measured by the degree of permeability of borders by examining the flows across the borders. The origin of the word "permeability" goes to 1580s in French and Latin Dictionaries having basic mean of the word "passing through". In applied sciences (physics, fluid mechanics, space science, etc.) permeability, can be measured and specific definitions can be made for permeability depending on the content, but while transferred to the social sciences through analogy, a holistic framework for measuring it has not been developed.

In border studies, permeability concept is used to emphasize the intensity of the flows among countries. Border permeability is defined as the ease of interaction in the geopolitical level [15, 16] where border is conceptualized as a product of oppression created by the goods, capital and thoughts on legal, geographical, historical and social identity [16]. The degree of border permeability, varying from closeness to full openness, is defined according to the size, shape and direction of the flows. Dynamic structures of flows, along with permeability of borders, convert border space into a subject of continuous social, economic and political precession. In such places, the actors leading the flows appear as the basic elements of permeability. These actors can be described as political, economic and socio-cultural entities at national, regional or local level.

Border research generally uses the core-periphery representation of space. At the heart of the core-periphery model lays a fundamental cleavage that takes on economic, social and political dimensions. The increase of the borders' permeability is directly proportional with the decrease of the borders' dependency on cores [18]. New relationship practices have transformed territories less dependent on the core and national border territories are constructed as pivotal connectors within territory through socio-economic interactions, political practices and discourses at different scales by regional, national and supra-national borders. Thus, traditionally grasped

as divisions, borders (in particular, national borders) are currently understood as connections, a meaning sustained by border organizations and programmes.

2.1. Cross-Border Cooperation (CBC) and EU

In a general sense, cross-border cooperation (CBC) can be defined as a more or less institutionalized collaboration between contiguous subnational authorities across national borders. In more specified terms, Perkman (2003) emphasizes that its main actors are always public authorities and it generally refers to a collaboration between subnational authorities in different countries. In practical terms, CBC is concerned with problem-solving in a broad range of fields of everyday administrative life and it involves a certain stabilization of cross-border contacts over time.

Historically, CBC in Europe was started by political rationales and after gaining some success economic and socio-cultural issues came to the fore. The example of most complex forms of CBC are defined by territorial frameworks and by formal public-sector institutions with comprehensive policies covering multiple aspects of social life born at Europe [14]. Reasons behind CBC vary within time, like social and cultural issues, economy, etc. For example the first CBC in 1950s were part of France and Germany reconciliation efforts, involving informal cross-border contacts between local authorities [1]. Currently, new CBCs seek to address issues of uneven economic development among regions.

2.1.1. Interreg-A Programmes for Border Regions

In the 1980s, CBC acquired a new sense of purpose in preparation for the creation of the Single Market, which required a common European space for the free movement of goods, people, capital and ideas. As a result, under the terms of the Schengen Agreement, states removed border controls along their common frontiers, but only within a framework in which these controls are replaced with new forms of regulation. It was in a way the introduction of common standards in the management of the EU's external frontier.

CBC process has been supported by the EU since 1990. The first multiannual programme (1989-1993) aimed the implementation of a strategic orientation of investments, with a special focus on the less developed EU regions, which included the border areas. Their peripheral situation and lower levels of socioeconomic development led the European Commission to launch a special initiative for border regions known as Interreg-A under the umbrella of the European Regional Policy in 1990. Since then, Interreg-A generations have been sustained in 1994-1999, 2000-2006, 2007-2013 and 2014-2020 periods [11]. Interreg-A experience, providing an opportunity for the local and regional actors from both sides of the border, aim to meet and exchange knowledge and experiences, with the purpose of presenting projects related to their field of activity, which could establish strong and sustainable bounds between both sides.

In most cases of CBC process in the EU, the initiative was taken by local and regional authorities in the attempt either to create links with global arenas or to mobilise additional resources offered by supranational and international bodies in exchange for cooperating with their counterparts located in contiguous areas [10]. Each administrative level has its own permeability, because of supra-national, national, legal and political orders. Although CBC initiatives in Interreg-A programmes are seen as bottom-up driven, EU should be regarded as an important causal factor initiating the relationships among countries [13].

2.1.2. National and Supranational borders: CBC Programmes between Turkey and EU

As noted earlier, CBC refers to cooperation arrangements between contiguous territorial authorities, resulting in the emergence of cross-border relations. While Europe is experiencing a process of state reterritorialization, its frontier non-EU borders are identified as the places of state territoriality. Building up the relationships among supra-national and national borders requires redefining their roles in implementing various cross-border cooperation projects [14]. In this part, the relationship between these concepts will be explored for the EU membership countries, Greece and Bulgaria and candidate country, Turkey.

There are various EU funded projects related to CBC implemented under Interreg A programmes among the EU countries of Greece and Bulgaria and candidate country Turkey. Currently, the main instrument for supporting CBC along the external borders of the EU is the Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) based on partnerships with the EU candidate and potential candidate countries. It supports administrative, social and economic reforms, as well as regional and cross-border cooperation.

During 2004-2006 periods, Interreg-A programmes usually supported the projects on infrastructure, tourism, development, environment and local cooperation. For the period 2007-2013, parallel with the Lisbon strategy, EU has made several innovations in the management of IPA funds. The priorities of the programme have been revised with the aim of more employment and social cohesion, sustainable economic growth and competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy. Three priority axes were decided: supporting sustainable social and economic development, improving the quality of life and giving technical assistance. For the period of 2014-2020, cross border programme has been transformed into more specialized and focused content.

Greece and Turkey started their CBC programme including economic development, quality of life, environment and culture and technical assistance priorities under the Interreg III-A in the period of 2004-2006. However, the programme could not be executed because of the budget differences between the two countries, the failure to establish the management structure and the conflicts of geographic scope [12].

CBC programme between Bulgaria and Turkey also started at 2004-2006 period as a component of IPA. For the period 2007-2013, the projects, which were co-financed by IPA, involved community support for five Bulgarian and Turkish regions locating along the borders: the Bulgarian regions of Burgas, Yambol and Haskovo, and Turkish regions

Year	Countries	Programme	Total Budget	Priority
2000-2006	Greece-Bulgaria	Interreg IIIA / Phare CBC	419.805.496 €	Cross-border infrastructure, quality of life, economic development, environment and culture, special aid for border areas, technical assistance
2004-2006	Greece-Turkey	Interreg IIIA	66.018.843 €	Cooperation, economic development, quality of life, environment and culture, technical assistance
2004-2006	Bulgaria-Turkey	CBC	39.250.000 €	Cross-border infrastructure, environmental protection and management, small projects
2007-2013	Greece-Bulgaria	ERDF	153.728.975 €	Quality of life, improvement of accessibility to structures, competitiveness, networks of cooperation, investment in human resources
2007-2013	Bulgaria-Turkey	Interreg IVA - IPA CBC	31.113.547 €	Sustainable social and economic development, quality of life, technical assistance
2014-2020	Bulgaria-Turkey	Interreg VA-IPA CBC	11.028.255 €	Environment, sustainable tourism

TABLE 1: Cross-border programmes among Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey. Source: Url 1, Url 2, Ohtamıř, 2007.

Edirne and Kirkklareli. For 2007-2013 period 'Bulgaria-Turkey' IPA CBC Programme, the priority axes were decided as sustainable social and economic development, improvement of the quality of life and technical assistance priorities were. However, Interreg V-A IPA CBC programme for 2014-2020 period has started with the priority of environment and sustainable tourism (Table 1).

In the framework of Bulgaria-Turkey CBC programme 2004-2006, Turkey has launched five projects that were carried out by central government bodies. A large part of the total programme budget was spent on infrastructure and environmental protection projects, while a small portion was spent on technical assistance and social and cultural projects.

When we examine the most recently completed Turkey-Bulgaria CBC programme in details, for the period 2007-2013, it is seen that total expenditure was realized as 16.105.571 euros for 69 projects where 65% of the budget was spent by Bulgaria, while 35% by Turkey. When we consider the content of the projects, it is seen that while 28% of the budget was spent for social and cultural projects, 13% for promoting economic competitiveness, 30% for economic infrastructure projects and 27% for environmental projects. Although it is emphasized that Turkish local administrations have been more concerned about the projects than Bulgarians, Bulgarian municipalities spent 38.5% of the allocated budget, mostly for economic infrastructure projects, while six Turkish municipalities spent only 3.7% of budget. Moreover, 17% of the total budget spent by nine Turkish NGOs mostly for social and cultural projects (Figure 1).

As a result, for the CBC programmes of EU, it is seen that although the three countries try to establish social and economic networks with their neighbouring border regions,

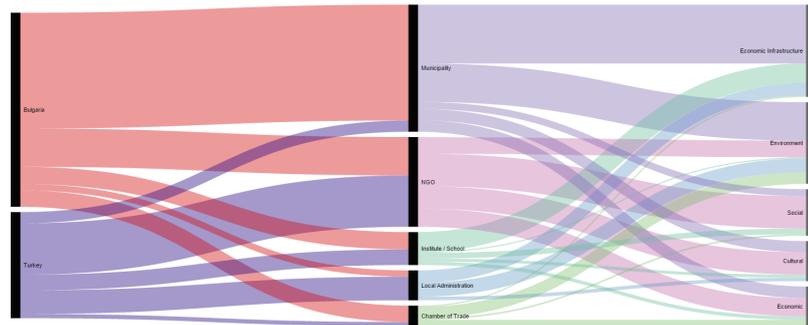


Figure 1: The budget allocation among actors and priority axes for 2007-2013 CBC programme of Bulgaria-Turkey. Source: Created by the authors with <http://app.raw.densitydesign.org/>.

some problems appear during the implementation of the support programme. Budget differences between the countries, management failures, changing requirements for the priority axes and the balance of willingness to establish the relationships are some of these problems. CBC programmes aim to support the regions by focusing on different priority axes defined by EU in each period, but as each country has different priorities and different levels of interaction among their neighbouring countries, the content and management of these support programmes should be revised according to these problems. The total of economic, social, spatial and political relationships among neighbouring countries can be measured with the permeability of borders. Thus, measuring the permeability level among EU border countries of Turkey will help to analyse the content and the degree of the relationships, which will help to decide the focus of the priority areas to be developed.

2.2. Measuring Permeability Level of Turkey - Bulgaria and Greece Borders

Apart from Interreg A programmes, permeability level of the EU and Turkish border can be measured by using different national and local data sets. Evaluating permeability levels with more comprehensive and more flexible set of indicators contribute to the comprehensive understanding of socio-economic development of border regions, which have various levels of socio-spatial interactions. Permeability level of borders can be measured by "multivariate permeability index", which takes into account of economic, social, political and spatial dimensions of border regions. The concept of border permeability perceives the border not only as a physical passage but also as a space of geopolitical, socio-spatial, socio-cultural and economic interactions.

For Greece, Bulgaria and Turkey's borderlands, socio-economic and spatial data is integrated into the form of spatially visualized permeability index. One of the goals of this index is to understand how different types of economic, social, spatial and political flows, crossing the borders, differ from each other.

In theoretical and practical studies for measuring permeability, the context of physical boundaries is often considered as the main variable. However, the permeability

concept can be identified as a function of social easiness, economic speed, spatial density and political reciprocity. This leads permeability concept towards a new methodology of creating a composite index to produce data sets that can be accessed at country level. For developing this index, after defining the patterns of interaction types at the borderlands at national level, totally 23 variables of social, political, economic and spatial data in tabular form were analysed. The group of four types of variables (economic, social, spatial and political) were rasterized and then analysed on 10*10 km grids.

Economic permeability variables basically aim to measure reciprocity, easiness and potential of formal and economically related flows between countries. Trade volume by countries, total passenger volume crossing the borders, multinational capital investment amounts, foreign direct investment in border regions, foreign trade balance, border gate types according to customs properties, commercial trade quotas for borderland cities and distance of free economic zones to borderlands are the variables used to measure the economic permeability among countries.

Social permeability variables try to reveal the possibility of social interaction levels by measuring religions and sects of communities, nationality and languages on both side of borderlands, population and densities of the settlements located within 50 km and 100 km of borderline, and social and cultural service capacity in neighbour countries.

Spatial permeability variables include slope, natural and artificial thresholds (rivers, lake, mined land), average access time between settlements, the existence of roads and paths of different categories crossing the border, their density per unit of length of the border, effectiveness and complementariness of transport infrastructure both with road and railways.

Political permeability variables are determined by national or supranational arrangements where central governments play the key role. Type of visa regulations, strictness of border security and its results, local and central undertakings at the community level for cooperation efforts are the basic variables of this set.

The results of the "multivariate permeability index", both the total permeability for Turkey-Greece-Bulgaria borderlands, including economic, social, political and spatial parameters and separately the economic permeability is shown in Figure 2. With the comparison of two figures, one can see it clearly that the permeability structure of the borderlands changes due to the content of the variables analysed for the interactions among the countries.

What is noteworthy implied by results is the fact that average permeability of economic indicators between Bulgaria and Turkey borderlands is higher than the total permeability of social, political, economic and spatial indicators, while the total permeability is higher than economic permeability between Greece and Turkey borderlands. Additionally, the results have showed a strong interconnection between economic permeability and the location of border gates. Also, spatial conditions decreases the permeability level of borderlands, thus spatial obstructs cause less permeability between Bulgaria-Turkey borderlands than Greece-Turkey borderlands.

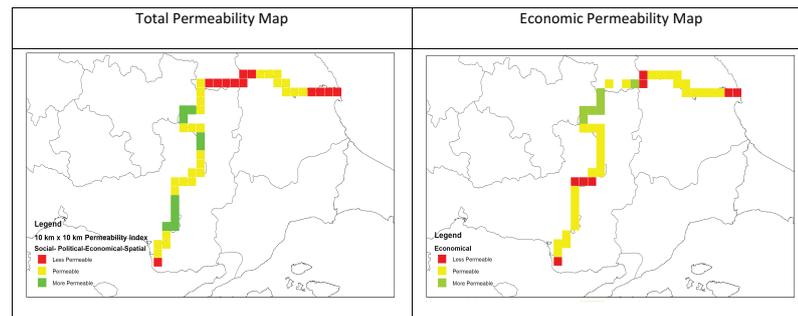


Figure 2: Spatial Visualization of Total and Economic Permeability Map. Source: Created by the authors.

Deep analyses and interviews showed that cross-border cooperation defining the permeability levels among Turkey, Greece and Bulgaria generally based on relationships that can be defined as “soft cross-border cooperation” such as bicycle competitions, festivals, sister city, sightseeing trips unless there is the support of national or supranational levels. Although the EU funded cross-border projects for three countries have local and regional scope, the main initiators appear as supranational and national bodies. Thus, it can be concluded that the decision making processes and funding are realised generally by central actors. Therefore we can distinguish the actors taking part in cross-border interaction into two: local/regional and national/supranational.

When we analyse the flows among three countries, geographical scope, the country of the project leader, allocated budget and actor type becomes important. It can be seen that territorial organizations are mostly related with local actors in all of the three countries. Municipalities, local business representatives, NGO’s and universities/institutes are common local actors for all three countries. However, decision-making procedures are generally go on with the initiative of the national or supranational bodies. Participation of central governments to the project process can affect the relationships deeply and even sometimes the programme can be postponed because of the political conditions among the countries.

Regarding to the geographical scope, local associations working for cross-border relations established in border cities of Turkey can be classified as small scaled initiatives funded mostly by national governments and EU funds. The first cross-border cooperation experience between Bulgaria and Turkey mostly involved central governments and the postponed cross-border cooperation programme between Greece and Turkey in 2004-2006 period, forced the local actors to find a partner from the other side of border. This caused most of the associations with the neighbouring countries built in an unofficial way and later these relationships helped both sides come together in other projects. Such kind of cross-border relationships, built among actors within a geographical scope range approximately 50 to 100 km in width, are defined as “micro cross-border region” [13].

Intensity of flows differs according to the upper level policies and sometimes according to the coverage of operational programmes. For instance, EU funds for cross border projects in 2014-2020 period only support sustainable tourism and environmental protection issues. This framework restricts the project development capacity, thus

intensity of flows between those countries. Also unequal visa regulations restrict the mobility of people, thus intensity of flows cross the border area.

As a result in the case of the supranational and national cross-border relationships, it is seen that the content of relationship is generally decided by the supranational policies within the framework of cross-border projects. Thus, although developing some environmental, social and cultural projects between EU and candidate countries, the main objective of the cross-border projects generally fulfils the economic issues. As national and supranational policies steer the flows cross the borderlands, the degree of permeability on borderlands is generally defined by these policies. The climate of mutual trust, obstacles of bureaucracy, language and asymmetrical project development capacities are the main issues determining the levels of flows of border regions. It is seen that in border regions, despite the fact of supranational direction of decision-making, local actors try to develop methods to overcome the restrictiveness of constraints in different ways mainly using small scale CBC projects.

3. Conclusion

The results of this study entail significant implications established by networks and relations among the supranational, national and local actors crossing the borders. Precisely, flows on borderlands vary according to the level of governments, political relationships, economic development levels, ethnic, cultural and linguistic configurations. Therefore, permeability levels on borderlands change according to these factors.

Within CBC, it is understood that Bulgarian Municipalities build up more connections with Greek Municipalities than Turkish Municipalities. This is probably related to the budgets allocated to the countries. For the 2007-2013 period, although total budget allocated for Greek and Bulgarian municipalities was similar, there was a big difference in the budget allocated for Turkish and Bulgarian municipalities. Also the leading actors differ. Under the same supranational structure projects can be realised easily by local governments/municipalities. However, not being under the same supranational authority, instead of local governments, NGOs take the leading role of municipalities as in the case of Turkey. In addition, while Greek and Bulgarian NGOs mostly prefer social and cultural projects, Turkish NGOs develop diversing projects including economic and environmental issues.

As a conclusion, it should be emphasised that the historical and spatial dynamics of the geographical borders have shaped by some economic, social, spatial and political issues. It can be said border regions are not only functional spaces, but also spaces handling various institutions and socio-spatial processing units that have strategic capacity. Cross-border cooperation initiatives, including different types of projects and different partners from both sides of the border constitute economic flows. Economic flows undertake a catalyst role to ensure the development of border regions in multiple dimensions and to overcome the effects of border as being a barrier. However, the permeability identity of borders is not formed only by economic flows mainly based on supranational funds and their multiplier effect, but it is a dynamic identity,

including historical processes that emerged in the determination of geographical conditions, social relations and national policy decisions. This dynamic identity develops various defence mechanisms at the local level despite the security-prioritized supra-national and national policies and tries to reach the required convergence by networks being established at the local level. The most striking example of this situation is the permeability level of the Greece-Turkey border. Although currently there is not any economic cooperation programme carried out with Greece, the total permeability (economic, social, spatial and political) results higher than the Bulgarian border. Overall, the economic flows which is tried to be supported by CBCs, remain one-dimensional to create the desired convergence atmosphere at the border. Thus, this one-dimensional and doubtfully sustainable approach should be transformed into a governance model specific to borderlands for covering other aspects of relationships proposed with this study. It is necessary to develop new methodological approaches able to grasp new meanings of borders as connectors, as interface areas.

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