

# **The Clash of Territorialities. Regional Dimensions of A New Neighbourhood with Post- Communist Russia**

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## **RESÜMEE**

Der Aufsatz untersucht die sich überlagernden Territorialisierungsmuster in der Finnisch-Russischen Grenzregion. Dabei wird den Friktionen zwischen diesen verschiedenen Mustern im Rahmen von EU-Politiken vor dem Hintergrund sich wandelnder historischer Formen supra-nationaler, nationaler und regionaler Territorialisierung besondere Aufmerksamkeit gewidmet. Das Fallbeispiel Karelien stand als historische Region für mehr als tausend Jahre im Zentrum von Auseinandersetzungen rivalisierender Projekte der Staats- und Nationenbildung im europäischen Norden. Der Aufsatz untersucht u. a., welche Rolle dieses historische Erbe in der Regionalpolitik der Europäischen Union spielt und in welcher Form es in heutigen supra-nationalen, nationalen und regionalen Vorstellungen von grenzüberschreitender Regionalisierung präsent ist. Karelien kann als Paradebeispiel für das Aufeinandertreffen verschiedener Formen der Regionalisierung, der Staatsbildung wie auch der Definition der Ost-West-Konfrontation gelten. Seine Territorialisierungsmuster haben immer auch die Machtverschiebungen innerhalb des europäischen Staatensystems reflektiert. Das historische Erbe der Region umfasst seit seiner doppelten imperialen Vergangenheit bis nach dem Kalten Krieg verschiedene Formen der Bestimmung dieser räumlichen Einheit: als regionale Gemeinschaft mit eigenen ethnischen, sprachlichen und religiösen Besonderheiten; als Grenzland, das von rivalisierenden Staaten und sich überlagernden nationalisierenden Ansprüchen geteilt wird; und schließlich als Berührungspunkt und Trennlinie zwischen Ost und West. Das Ende des Kalten Krieges und die Effekte der EU-Regionalpolitik brachten neue Formen der marktorientierten Regionalisierung hervor, wobei die EU die verschiedenen territorialen Ebenen hierarchisch organisierte und in hohem Maße die wechselseitigen historischen Verbindungen, Brüche und Konflikte ignorierte. Nach dem Zusammenbruch der Sowjetunion, der Einführung der EU-Regionalpolitik, einschließlich der neuen Nachbarschaftspolitik, und der Einrichtung der Euroregion Karelien im Jahr 2000 entstanden neue Formen des Austauschs in der Grenzregion. Grenzüberschreitende Kooperation, maßgeblich geprägt durch die Verlagerung des Schwerpunkts weg von einer national-staatlich dominierten Außenpolitik hin zu Mehrebenenstrukturen und -netzwerken die von

unabhängigen Akteuren gebildet werden, hat die Rolle der mittleren Ebene gestärkt. Die Ziele der impulsgebenden Akteure dieser grenzüberschreitenden Praktiken waren dabei nicht auf die Herausbildung eines regionalen Grenzregimes begrenzt, sondern berührten auch zentrale Fragen europäischer und nationaler Identitätspolitik. Der Aufsatz plädiert für die Anerkennung der historischen und politischen Wechselbeziehungen, Brüche und Konflikte zwischen unterschiedlichen Verständnissen der territorialen Bezüge und unterstreicht die Notwendigkeit komparativer Studien zur politischen Sprache der grenzüberschreitenden Kooperation.

Modernity has been profoundly marked by border-making and a constant redefinition of territoriality. In the European North, the historical region of Karelia represents a prime example of colliding patterns of region-building, state-making and shifting conceptualizations of a broader supranational East-West divide. Since the emergence of state-like organizations in the European North, Karelia as a region has been repeatedly redefined as a result of wars and treaties between rivalling states and has been subject to both the successes and failures of state-making and nation-building projects. Ultimately, the territoriality of Karelia has reflected changes of power within the European state-system. In the construction of the idea of a »modern« Europe it has – at times – been in the centre of colliding geopolitical conceptions of what is Europe, what is »East« and what is »West«. At the turn of the new millennium, this legacy of territorial instability appeared to be a thing of the past. The 21st Century began with grand visions of a post-modern world without borders and ideas of accelerating new cross-border region-building. The collapse of the Iron Curtain, European integration and, ultimately, globalization inspired new approaches to borders that tended to question traditional geopolitical notions of confrontation between national states as well as traditional ideas of a grand divides between civilizations, the East and the West. This new spirit was clearly visible even in the discussion concerning the area of Karelia, the borderland located between Finland and Russia, which for centuries had been divided by rivalling state-structures and political communities. In connection with deepening European integration, and especially the launching of new European Union programmes of cross-border cooperation, Karelia was defined as an example of a new type of European cross-border region – able and capable of utilizing a broad set of common historical experiences and cultural traditions.<sup>1</sup>

The European Union policy documents concerning cross-border co-operation have been a major source of inspiration for debates over cross-border regionalization. At the same time, they have promoted a mode of thinking that links cross-border region-building with deepening integration and the spreading of a supra-national European identity. Coupling cross-border regionalization with »Europeanization« reflects the political goals of the EU but tends to bypass the interconnections, clashes and ruptures that have historically existed between different understandings of the territorial scales, Europe, the

1 This type of straight-forward linking of historical experience and present-day cross-border region-building was promoted e.g. by the joint programme for cross-border cooperation that was published by the Finnish and Russian authorities involved in the establishment of Euregio Karelia (Our Common Border, 2001).

nation and the region. This tendency is most obvious when discussing regionalization at the external borders of the EU.

The official documents of EU policies (e. g. of »Wider Europe« and the »New Neighbourhood«) tend to perceive cross-border region-building primarily as a process of market-driven regionalization with little connection to earlier conflicting ideas and myths about Europe. Accordingly, the role of nation-states is not discussed. Through programmes of cross-border cooperation the EU is putting into practice nation-state-like foreign policies but avoids defining the status of the activity in regard to the foreign political traditions and institutions of the member states.<sup>2</sup> In the policies of the EU, territorial scales seem to form a hierarchical structure where national and regional identities represent a more limited scope to be widened by a new European understanding. This approach fails to see that in the border regions – and especially on the external borders of the EU – regional identity is often built on ideas and images concerning the roles of regions in the history of the nation and of Europe.

The EU encourages cross-border regionalization on its external borders by promoting common European identities based on shared European values. This, however, can contradict or even clash with the perceptions of regional actors involved in cross-border cooperation. These EU-regional tensions are most obvious in the case of Russia and the Russian post-communist understanding of what is Europe; nevertheless, at the regional level these tensions are present on both sides of the Finnish-Russian border. From both the Russian and the Finnish perspective, the »Europeanness« of cross-border cooperation programmes tends to contrast with the fact that these regions have for centuries been part of overlapping national myths and clashing histories of civilizations. The question is: can there be lasting cross-border regionalization without recognition of and open dialogue with these regional territorial images rooted in different conceptualizations of the territorial scales?

In the following I will try to outline this clash of territorialities in EU policies by analysing the historical patterns of conceptualizing supra-national, national and regional territoriality in the case of Karelia, the historical region that for a thousand years has been in the centre of rivalling projects of state-making and nation-building in the European North. In the end of the chapter I will draw some conclusions on how this historical legacy is encountered in the European Union policies of cross-border cooperation and how it is present in today's supra-national, national and regional perceptions of cross-border regionalization.<sup>3</sup>

2 J. Scott, *The EU and »Wider Europe: Toward an Alternative Geopolitics of Regional Cooperation?*, in: *Geopolitics*, 10 (2005) 3, pp. 429–454.

3 This analysis is based on data collected within the EXLINEA project supported by the EU Fifth Framework Programme for Research and Technological development. See the Finnish case study report, I. Liikanen / D. Zimin / J. Ruusuvoori / H. Eskelinen, *Karelia – a Cross-border Region? The EU and Cross-border Region-building on the Finnish-Russian Border*. Publications of the Karelian Institute 146, Joensuu 2007.

## Karelia and clashing historical patterns of territoriality in the European North

The history of the present Finnish-Russian border goes back to the consolidation of the Swedish and Russian Empires in the European North during the early second millennium. For over six centuries, the bulk of the territory of present-day Finland belonged to the Swedish Empire, and during that time the border with Russia (initially Novgorod and Kievan Rus) was frequently redefined through constant wars and peace treaties. The first state structures in the area were, however, not tools of expanding territorial states, but more like outposts built in order to control, protect and tax the trade routes connecting the Baltic Sea with Byzantium. Novgorod and Sweden tried to secure their domination of the water routes in the eastern reaches of the Gulf of Finland by establishing castles near the mouths of the Neva (Landskrona) and Volkhov (Staraja Ladoga) rivers and on the shores of Lake Ladoga (Kexholm and Nöteborg) and the Gulf of Finland (Wiborg, Vyborg). From these strongholds they gradually broadened their influence over neighbouring settlements, introducing the inhabitants to the cornerstones of European state-making and nation-building, Christian religion, forced conscription and taxation. The Treaty of Nöteborg in 1323 defined the first border line between the two emerging empires (see Figure 1). The character of the border was, however, only to a limited degree a line between two territorial states and even less was it ethnically defined. In the south, where the border was defined more precisely, there were Finno-Ugric linguistic groups living on both sides of the border. Karelia as a historical region developed on the north-eastern side of the border on areas around and between the lakes of Ladoga and Onega.<sup>4</sup> In the north, the treaty more loosely marked areas of interest, hunting and trade through forests which were mostly uninhabited. As a result of more or less voluntary settlement policies and conversion, the border gradually became a religious frontier between the spheres of influence of the Eastern Orthodox Church and the Church of Rome.<sup>5</sup>

In the 16<sup>th</sup> century the consolidation of the Swedish state as a centralized administrative and war-making apparatus was followed by military success marked by the Treaty of Teusina in 1595. The treaty introduced the basic principles of the territorial state to the area: it defined the territories under the rule of the Swedish kings and Muscovite tsars. The eastern border of Sweden was drawn roughly along the lines where Finnish (Lutheran after the Reformation) settlements had spread. During the 17<sup>th</sup> century the border was pushed eastwards, and in the Treaty of Stolbova in 1617 Sweden annexed large areas around the Gulf of Finland and on the shores of Lake Ladoga including major share of Karelian settlements. The logic of the territorial state was reinforced by settlement policies bringing a Finnish population to the newly conquered areas especially

4 H. Kirkinen, *Karjala idän ja lännen välissä* (Karelia between East and West). *Historiallisia tutkimuksia* 80, Helsinki 1970.

5 J. Korpela, *The Eastern Border of Finland after Nöteborg: an ecclesiastical, political or cultural border?*, in: *Journal of Baltic Studies*, XXIII (2002) 4, pp. 384–397.

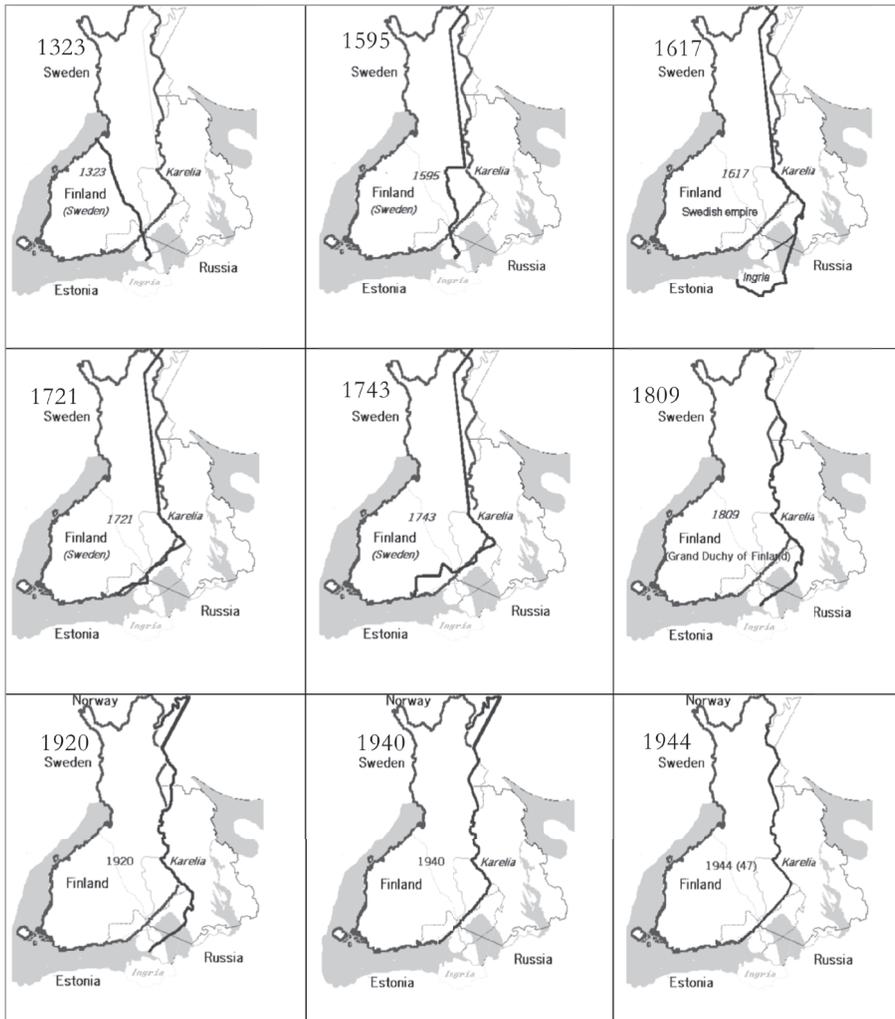


Figure 1. *The historical constitution of the Finnish-Russian border*

in the South on the Karelian Isthmus. In an administrative sense, the rise of Sweden as a great power in the European North was manifested by the founding of new cities in the captured area: Sortavala on the northwestern coast of Lake Ladoga and Nyen on the estuary of the Neva River.<sup>6</sup>

6 K. Katajala, Early Modern People(s) in the Borderlands: Linguistic or Religious Definitions of »Us« and »Other«, in: M. Hurd (ed), *Borderland identities. Territory and Belonging in North, Central and East Europe*, Eslöv 2006, pp. 331–353.

*During the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the rise of the Russian Empire was marked by a series of wars and treaties which pushed its border westward through areas settled by Karelian and Finnish population. In 1721, Sweden lost the areas at the eastern end of the Gulf of Finland that were conquered in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. During the war, Russian troops had already destroyed the Swedish garrison town of Nyen, and the future capital of the Russian empire, St. Petersburg, was founded on the opening of the Neva River. The decline of Sweden as a great power in the European North culminated with the Napoleonic wars, when the territory of Finland was added to the Russian Empire by the Treaty of Fredrikshamn in 1809. Source: <http://cc.joensuu.fi/~alma/6images/kabo-all.htm>*

As a part of the Swedish Empire, Finland did not form an administrative unit of its own. In the framework of the Russian Empire the situation changed, and Finland gained the status of a Grand Duchy with its own religious organizations, laws and administrative structures. A customs border was established with Russia, but this was neither a military nor an ethnic border. In the south, the border line left a Finnish population of Lutheran religion on the Russian side (around St. Petersburg), while on the shores of Lake Ladoga (on the Finnish side) there remained a Karelian population practicing the Orthodox religion. In economic terms, the growing metropolis of St. Petersburg had important effects on the Finnish side of the border with its constantly mounting demand for goods and labour from eastern Finland.<sup>7</sup>

The 19<sup>th</sup> century was a period of active nation-building in Finland and gradually the border was increasingly defined in terms of an autonomous nation-state. Towards the end of the century, Finnish national consolidation conflicted with Russian attempts to unify the legal and administrative system of the empire. Broad social and political mobilization within the framework of the Grand Duchy enforced the nature of the border as a political, social and cultural dividing line at the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>8</sup>

As we have seen, the historical heritage of Karelia embraces several overlapping conceptions of the area: as a regional community with its own ethnic, linguistic and religious peculiarities, secondly, as a borderland divided by rivalling states and overlapping nationalizing claims, and finally, as meeting point and dividing line between eastern and western church – and for some – eastern and western civilizations.<sup>9</sup> During the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the overlapping images of Karelia were further complicated by market based regionalization, by Finnish nation-building driven division to Finnish and Russian Karelia and by the new understanding of East-West division in terms of conflict between the socialist and the capitalist countries.

7 K. Katajala, Near the Metropolis, beyond the Border. St. Petersburg and Eastern Finland before the October Revolution, in: H. Eskelinen / I. Liikanen / J. Oksa (eds), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Integration*, Aldershot 1999, pp. 297–316.

8 R. Alapuro, *State and Revolution in Finland*, Berkeley/Los Angeles 1988.

9 J. Oksa, The Changing Border and the Many Images of Karelia, in: H. Eskelinen / I. Liikanen / J. Oksa (eds), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Integration*, Aldershot 1999, pp. 285–296.

## The Karelian question and the historical underpinnings of Finnish-Russian relations

In connection to the First World War and the Russian Revolution in 1917 Finland became an independent nation-state. After an abortive Bolshevik-backed revolution in Finland in 1918, peace between the Republic of Finland and Soviet Russia was made in Tartu in 1920, and a heavily guarded, hostile military border was established between the two countries. In the newly independent Finland, demands were raised to redefine the border in ethnic terms by uniting the Finns and the Karelians within one state. During the interwar period these desires enjoyed strong support among the intellectual and military elite but were not adopted as part of official state policies.<sup>10</sup> On the eastern side of the border, the consolidation of Soviet power created a new kind of »empire«, with an international ideological mission. In Russian Karelia, an ethnically defined state structure, the Karelian Worker's Commune (later the Karelian Autonomous Socialist Soviet Republic), was founded in 1920 with the dual mission of silencing Finnish demands for Karelian autonomy and to act as a model and runway for revolution in the west. Starting with the period of Stalinist terror Soviet Karelia lost both its revolutionary mission and – in practice – its autonomy. During the decades following the Second World War, most of the Karelian (and Finnish) population on the Soviet side were gradually assimilated into the Russian speaking majority.<sup>11</sup>

As part of the Second World War, two wars were fought between Finland and the Soviet Union. The so-called Winter War was started by the Soviet Union in 1939 with the proclaimed aim of securing the safety of Leningrad. The actual war manoeuvres, however, aimed at outright occupation and the establishment of a communist regime in Finland. In the so-called Continuation War of 1941–1944 Finland allied with Germany in order to regain the areas lost in the Winter War. The currently existing borderline was drawn in September 1944 as part of the truce agreement between the Soviet and Finnish governments. Unlike most other allies of Germany, Finland was not occupied after the war. Instead, an Allied Control Commission was stationed in Helsinki to oversee the implementation of the truce, and a military base was rented to Soviet troops near the capital. The Soviet-led Control Commission remained in Helsinki until the 1947 Treaty of Paris which formalized the terms of peace between Finland and the Soviet Union. As a result of the two wars, Finland lost large areas on the Karelian Isthmus in the south, on the western and northern shores of Lake Ladoga and in the Petsamo area in the far north. More than 420,000 people (one-tenth of the population of Finland) left the ceded areas and were settled in other parts of the country.<sup>12</sup> The historical area of Karelia, remained

10 M. Ahti, *Salaliiton ääriiviivat. Oikeistoradikalismi ja hyökkäävä idänpolitiikka 1918–1919* (The contours of conspiracy. Rightwing radicalism and offensive foreign politics 1918–1919), Espoo 1987.

11 M. Kangaspuro, Nationalities Policy and Power in Soviet Karelia in the 1920s and 1930s, in: T. Saarela/K. Rentola (eds), *Communism: National and International*. Studia Historica 58, Helsinki 1998, pp. 130–133.

12 A. Laine, Finland and the Contribution of Germany to the Enemy Image in the Soviet Great Patriotic War, in: A. Laine/M. Ylikangas (eds), *Rise and Fall of Soviet Karelia, People and Power*, Helsinki 2002, pp. 133–152.

in practice almost totally on the Soviet side of the border. During the Cold-war period, the fate of the ceded areas – the Karelian question – formed the most sensitive issue of Finnish-Soviet relations. Officially, it was highly taboo to raise the issue in foreign policy debate and even domestic political discussion, but the Finnish government did over several decades attempt, unsuccessfully, to open negotiations over the issue.

In April 1948, Finland and the Soviet Union concluded a »Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance« that served as the key document for governing post-war relations between the two countries. Until the end of Soviet power, it defined the basic line of Finland's international status not only in regard to the Soviet Union, but to the Western countries as well. Significantly, it lacked, however, the paragraphs on military co-operation typical with the Soviet satellite countries of Eastern Europe. This profoundly affected the nature of the border, which remained heavily guarded between two armies not subject to a common operative command.<sup>13</sup> During the years of the Cold War, the eastern border of Finland marked in economic and societal terms a dividing line between two competing social and political systems, the communist and the capitalist – and in terms of international relations a »Finlandized« grey zone between them. The border was thoroughly militarized and heavily guarded on both sides. Border crossings were possible only at a few points which were subjected to tight visa regulations. In spite of the official rhetoric of friendship and co-operation, from a regional and local perspective, the border was a closed one. Trade connections and other forms of interaction across the border were administered by bilateral agreements between the two states.<sup>14</sup>

In political terms, the international status of Finland slowly strengthened during the period of the Cold War, which gradually changed the nature of the border. In 1955, Finland was admitted as a member of the United Nations by the UN General Assembly, and Finland joined the Nordic Council. During the same year Soviet troops withdrew from the base rented to them on the southern coast. In 1960 Finland became an associated member of the European Free Trade Association (EFTA). Finland further reinforced its role between east and west by joining the OECD in 1969 and especially by signing co-operation agreements with both the European Economic Community (EEC) and the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon) formed by the Socialist countries in 1973. The Conference for Security and Co-operation in Europe was held in Helsinki in 1975 and was considered as an important milestone of Finnish foreign relations and the Helsinki Final Act confirmed the state frontiers of European countries in order to maintain territorial integrity and peaceful co-existence.

During the 1970s and 1980s economic growth and the politics of building of a Nordic-type welfare-state created political stability, and strengthened Finnish claims for neutral status in international relations. Finland continued its integration into European institu-

13 J. Nevakivi (ed), *Finnish-Soviet relations 1944–1948*, Helsinki 1994.

14 V. Harle/S. Moisio, *Missä on Suomi? Kansallisen identiteettipolitiikan historia ja geopolitiikka* (Where is Finland. History and Geopolitics of National Identity Politics), Tampere 2000; A. Paasi, *Territories, Boundaries and Consciousness. The Changing Geographies of the Finnish-Russian Border*, Chichester 1996.

tions, e. g., by joining to the European Council in 1989 and by repudiating in 1990 the restrictions which the Paris peace treaty had set on the Finnish armed forces. This was balanced by bilateral co-operation with the Soviet Union, and during the last years of Soviet power, Soviet diplomacy adapted to this development by verifying the neutral status of Finland.<sup>15</sup> Finally, the collapse of the Soviet system led to a profound redefinition of the relations between the two countries, where Finnish membership in the European Union has become the new constitutive element.

Since the collapse of the Soviet system in 1991, the border is still strictly guarded but the forms of CBC have changed and new scales of interaction have emerged. On the one hand, co-operation across the Finnish-Russian border has become part of a broader dynamic of international politics and EU-Russia relations. On the other hand, new regional and local actors have taken an active role in cross border co-operation. Regional administrative units, enterprises and organizations of civil society cooperate directly across the border.<sup>16</sup> In 1995, the eastern border of Finland became the external border of the European Union, and until 2004 it remained the only land border between the EU and the Russian Federation. CBI has since been reconceptualized in terms of European integration and EU politics. The border regime was adapted to the Schengen principles in 2001. New institutional architectures have been applied in regional co-operation with Russia, and new methods of combining supranational, national and regional scales of co-operation have been developed.<sup>17</sup> All this has given boost to regional actors on both sides of the border who envision the future of Karelia as a European cross-border region.

## **Europeanization of the border regime and visions of cross-border regionalization**

Immediately after the disintegration of the Soviet Union in late 1991, Finland and Russia signed a neighbourhood agreement to replace the Treaty of Friendship, Co-operation and Mutual Assistance. Negotiations started in 1991 with the Soviet Union, but the agreement was completed with the Russian Federation in January 1992. During the 1990s, the border-crossing facilities on the Finnish-Russian border improved significantly, and several new border crossing points were established. Federal legislation as well as regional-level regulations related to the border issues have undergone dramatic changes and preconditions for regional-level CBC have improved significantly. The two countries concluded several intergovernmental agreements during the 1990s (e. g. agreements

15 R. Väyrynen, Finland and the European Community: Changing Elite Bargains, in: *Cooperation and Conflict*, 28 (1993) 1, pp. 31–46.

16 H. Eskelinen/I. Liikanen/J. Oksa (eds), *Curtains of Iron and Gold: Reconstructing Borders and Scales of Integration*, Aldershot 1999.

17 P. Joenniemi, Can Europe be Told from the North? Trapping into the EU's Northern Dimension, in: S. Pehkonen/F. Möller (eds), *Encountering the North. Cultural Geography, International Relations and Northern Landscapes*, Aldershot 2003, pp. 221–260.

on cultural, educational and scientific co-operation, co-operation with the Murmansk region, the Republic of Karelia, the city of St. Petersburg and the Leningrad region). Bilateral co-operation and financing was largely replaced by project-type co-operation organized by Finnish and Russian authorities, and by non-governmental organizations. Finland applied for EU membership in 1992 and joined the Union at the beginning of 1995. Since EU membership, Finland's Russian policy has been carried out on two levels, through a bilateral relationship and through participation in the formulation of EU policies towards Russia. The EU has assumed the position of the dominant sponsor of cross-border initiatives and promoter of the development of its border regions; Russia has remained a rather passive actor. The structural funds policies of the EU have pursued two strategic aims: one internal and one external. Firstly, it has sought to promote socio-economic cohesion throughout the Union, thus making the EU a more integrated and stable entity. Thus the EU has allocated its structural funds to support the economic development of regions, especially less developed areas, including eastern Finland. The promotion of interregional cohesion and co-operation has been promoted most prominently by the INTERREG Programme.<sup>18</sup> Given the fact that cross-border flows have been an important, yet still underutilized, resource for the further development of eastern Finland, a considerable part of INTERREG funds have been devoted to unlocking the positive potential of CBI with Russia.<sup>19</sup>

Secondly, through its policy in respect of Russia, the EU has sought to influence Russia's development trajectory in order to ensure that Russia remains a stable and friendly country engaging in mutually beneficial co-operation with the EU. The TACIS Programme has been the main EU instrument in this field. More specifically, the purpose of TACIS has been »to provide technical assistance and know-how to Russia to facilitate the country's transition to a fully fledged market economy founded on the core principles of democracy, respect for human rights, freedom of speech and rule of law«. <sup>20</sup> Since its inception in 1991, the EU has allocated approximately 2.7 billion euros to Russia in the form of TACIS grants. In recognition of the fact that CBC can contribute to achieving the overall objectives of the programme, TACIS has been supplemented with a targeted sub-programme aiming to promote cross-border initiatives.<sup>21</sup>

Although quite successful in many respects, INTERREG and TACIS were from the outset poorly co-ordinated on both the level of EU administration and that of practical co-operation of joint Finnish-Russian projects. INTERREG only provided funding for activities on EU territory, TACIS only on the territory of Russia. It proved to be very difficult to obtain funding from both programmes to carry out projected activities on

18 See the official internet site of INTERREG III: [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/INTERREG3/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/INTERREG3/index_en.htm).

19 I. Liikanen/P. Virtanen, *The new neighbourhood: a „Constitution“ for CBC?*, in: J. Scott (ed), *EU Enlargement, Region Building and Shifting Borders of Inclusion and Exclusion*, Aldershot 2006, pp. 113–130.

20 Taken from the documentation of the TACIS film series »Cooperation that Counts« (<http://www.europeaid-tacis.tv/overview.html>).

21 TACIS CBC Programme: [http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis\\_cbc\\_spf/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/comm/europeaid/projects/tacis_cbc_spf/index_en.htm)

both sides of the border.<sup>22</sup> In order to resolve the administrative and practical problems, in 2004 the EU introduced the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI) as part of its new policies of external relations defined in the Wider Europe document and the New Neighbourhood policy frame.<sup>23</sup> With the introduction of the ENPI, four Neighbourhood Programmes will be set up on the Finnish-Russian border: Kolarctic, Karelia, Southeast Finland and the Baltic Sea Region. The »Neighbourhood programmes« permit a single application process, including a single call for proposals covering both INTERREG and TACIS operations, as well as a joint selection process for projects. The extended management committee of the INTERREG programme acts as a joint selection committee, with balanced membership from both sides of the border.<sup>24</sup> In parallel with INTERREG, TACIS and ENPI, the EU has elaborated its policies towards Russia as part of the Northern Dimension (ND) policy presented in a Communication of the Commission in 1998. In the Action Plan the Council of Europe presented in 2000, the ND was defined as seeking to improve co-ordination and consistency of the EU's approach to its northern European external relations and cross-border policies.<sup>25</sup> Following quadripartite negotiations among the EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland in 2005, a decision was taken to make ND a common policy framework of all involved parties. Now ND is seen as the regional expression of the four EU-Russia Common Spaces in the North with its own specificities: membership of Norway and Iceland, welfare of indigenous peoples, public health and social well-being, and a special accent on environmental protection and culture.<sup>26</sup> Recent developments seem to indicate that the EU is to some degree willing to switch from unilateral to bi- and multilateral mechanisms of cross-border governance. The EU has also influenced Finnish-Russian CBI through the Schengen acquis maintaining strict visa requirements for Russian citizens visiting Finland. It should be noted, however, that these requirements do not differ much from the pre-Schengen Finnish visa regulations. In this respect, the introduction of the Schengen visa regime has not in practice weakened the terms of border-crossing for Russian citizens on the Finnish-Russian border.

Besides the EU's programmes and policies, there have been a number of other international region-building initiatives, funded mostly by national and regional governments, as well as by the EU. At the Finnish-Russian border such initiatives include Imatra-Svetogorsk twin city, joint commission on CBC between Southeast Finland and the St. Petersburg region, Euregio Karelia that coordinates CBC between eastern Finland and the

22 T. Cronberg, *Euregio Karelia: In Search of a Relevant Space for Action*, in: L. Hedegaard/B. Lindström (eds), *The NEBI Yearbook 2003*, Berlin 2003, pp. 223–240.

23 Full texts of these documents are available at: [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03\\_104\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_104_en.pdf) and [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03\\_393\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/pdf/com03_393_en.pdf).

24 I. Liikanen/P. Virtanen, *The new neighbourhood* (note 20). See also <http://www.intermin.fi/intermin/home.nsf/pages/6837C313368811A7C2256FB3004835B3?opendocument>, accessed 22. 11. 2006.

25 L. Heininen, *Building a partnership – Russia as a part of Europe*, in: L. Heininen (ed), *Northern Borders and Security – Dimensions for Regional Co-operation and Interdependence*, Turku 2002.

26 See also *Northern Dimension Policy: Factsheet*, [http://www.delrus.cec.eu.int/en/images/pText\\_pict/529/NDspace.doc](http://www.delrus.cec.eu.int/en/images/pText_pict/529/NDspace.doc).

Republic of Karelia and joint commission on CBC between Lapland and the Murmansk region, as well as some multi-lateral institutions such as the Arctic Council, Barents Euro-Arctic Region and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. As a rule, these institutional frames have been designed *inter alia* to guide and facilitate interaction in their respective areas. From the Finnish point of view, the formulation of Russia's Northern policies, partnership with the EU and possible membership with the World Trade Organization (WTO) as well as her relations with NATO and the OSCE will have significant implications on bilateral cross-border co-operation.<sup>27</sup>

### **Euregio Karelia – a step-board for cross-border region-building?**

On the Finnish side of the border, CBC practices have been shaped most notably by the gradual move from nation-state dominated foreign politics (typical to the Cold War period) towards multi-level administrative structures and networks formed by independent actors. New actors, enterprises and civic organizations, have entered the field that was earlier controlled by bilateral agreements between the states. In an administrative sense, the regional councils (which were formed as confederations of municipalities in 1994) have been granted a new role in implementing EU programmes and administering EU funds.<sup>28</sup> From the regional perspective, the EU-funded programmes, INTERREG and TACIS, have become an important part of promoting CBI and have thus reduced the importance of state led policies of co-operation with the neighbouring areas and in many respects surpassed the traditional »friendship town« co-operation practiced by the municipalities.

This development has reshaped the power balance of Finnish administrative structures which traditionally have been characterized by a combination of strong central power and broad local self-government. The strengthening of the intermediate (i. e. regional) level in the administration of EU funds and programmes has in this sense occurred outside the contours of traditional Finnish politics. Although the national level continues to play the leading role in this field, the institutional structures connected to CBC are marked by ongoing redefinition of duties between national, regional and local administrative levels.

Traditionally, Finnish municipalities have been politically and economically independent actors with a broad taxation right and self-government. Local political life has been the object of public discussion and political control through elections. In contrast to this, regional level administration in Finland has traditionally been centrally governed without direct democratic control and popular legitimacy by vote. The towns and municipalities

27 P. Joenniemi/M. Lethi, The Encounter between the Nordic and the Northern. Torn Apart but Meeting Again?, in: M. Lethi/D.J. Smith (eds), Post-Cold War Identity Policies. Northern and Baltic Experiences, London 2003, pp. 128-157.

28 P. Kettunen/T. Kungla, Europeanisation of Sub-national Governance in Unitary States: Estonia and Finland, in: Regional and Federal Studies, 15 (2005) 3, pp. 353-378.

still have an active role in cross-border co-operation through their own programmes and resources. On the more general level, however, it can be said that the adaptation of new CBC instruments has, to some extent, taken place outside the traditional institutionalized structures of Finnish politics and administration – and the ever-watchful public eye.

On the Russian side, the main factors affecting CBI are connected to post-Soviet transition, the creation of democratic institutions and the privatization of the economy, which have been retarded by old power blocs and new oligarchic structures. As part of the reconstitution of the Russian state, the federal government has initiated organizational reforms on all levels of administration, but at times this has only worsened unclear responsibilities and unbalanced power relations in Russian regions. Regional and local actors suffer from weak resources and inadequate co-ordination. The ongoing consolidation of the Russian nation-state is reflected in a desire for the centralized administration of cross-border relations. All in all, problems connected to the collapse of the Soviet system and the slow and partial stabilization of the Russian economy and political and administrative structures have chiefly dominated the agenda of regional CBC.<sup>29</sup>

Since 1993 the Republic of Karelia has participated in the activities of the Barents Euro-Arctic Region Council, and the Council of the Baltic Sea States. As an example of a regional institutional framework for future CBC it is important to mention Euregio Karelia, which was founded to promote regional co-operation and especially to co-ordinate INTERREG and TACIS CBC projects. Euregio Karelia was established in 2000 by three Finnish regions (North Karelia, Kainuu and Northern Ostrobothnia) and the Republic of Karelia on the Russian side. The governments of the Russian Federation and Finland were involved in the agreement and, as such, Euregio Karelia forms an interesting example of efforts to co-ordinate supra-national, national and regional cross-border co-operation policies.<sup>30</sup> At the outset, the leadership of the Karelian Republic participated actively in the initiation and innovation of the project, e.g., by drafting the joint programme for CBC (Our Common Border 2001–2006). Putin's federal policies have later weakened opportunities for independent initiatives by dismantling the Ministry of Foreign Relations of the republic.

In this situation, an initiative like Euregio Karelia has become part of a manifold identity politics, the construction and reconstruction of European, national and regional identities. As stated above, the key figures behind the Euregio Karelia initiative promoted the new institutional structure from the beginning as a new European model. The idea was that as the EU enlarged eastwards, joint administrative structures with Russian regional authorities would gain broader European significance.<sup>31</sup> This argument

29 S. Prozorov, *Understanding conflict between Russia and the EU: the limits of integration*, Basingstoke 2006.

30 T. Cronberg, *Euroregions in the Making: The Case of Euroregion Karelia*, in: P. Ahponen / P. Jukarainen (eds), *Tearing Down the Curtain, Opening the Gates. Northern Boundaries in Change*, Jyväskylä 2000, pp. 170–183; T. Cronberg, *Euroregion Karelia* (note 23)

31 T. Cronberg / Shlyamin, *Euroregion Karelia – A Model for Co-operation at the EU External Borders*, Oulu 1999.

was, however, not limited to establishing a new kind of border regime but rather it was introduced in terms of a new kind of cross-border region-building:

*The Euroregions are bridges between countries. They form new links between former enemies based on culture, sometimes a common language and a common history. In a way they are crucial for developing the European community, and they help to promote integration and a common identity for the regions.*<sup>32</sup>

In this respect, the aims of the initiators were not limited to organising a regional border regime, but touched on key questions of European and national identity politics. In their article ›Euregio Karelia – A Model for Cooperation at the EU External Borders‹, Tarja Cronberg, head of the Regional Council of Finnish North Karelia, and Valeri Shlyamin, the Minister for External Relations of the Karelian Republic, initially set the goals of the project in fairly concrete terms. The coordination of Interreg and Tacis programmes on the regional level was presented as the core of the new administrative model. Yet even at this stage, easing border-crossings and increasing economic, social and cultural cooperation were discussed in connection with questions of security and attitudes to the border:

*The benefits of Euregio Karelia for the EU would comprise a more intensive and effective use of funds, which now flow to both sides of the border and which are not coordinated. The benefit for Russia would be increased cooperation across the border, which later would also imply more economic activities [...] From the Finnish side, the benefits would comprise changing attitudes towards the border and removing the historical burden. The Karelian question in Finland is on the agenda and a number of people work for actual physical changes in the border. A cooperative zone would remove the historical burden or at least provide a different prospective.*<sup>33</sup>

The benefits were many: for the EU, the coordination of aid programmes; for Russian Karelia, economic progress; and for Finland, stability and the removal of historical burdens. The final aim was expressed in rather grandiose terms – even for a para-diplomatic document between sub-national governments:

*By providing a continuous process for cooperation towards more integrated structures in economic and social development, Euregio Karelia would show that borders no longer separate but rather form both historical and future-oriented bonds between people, communities and regions on both sides of the border.*<sup>34</sup>

For the initiators of the Euregio model, refashioning mental borders was obviously a major aim behind the initiative – at least on the level of declarations. In this respect, the obstacles have probably proven to be larger than expected. In the case of the Karelian Republic, the consolidation of the Russian nation-state has since strongly affected the

32 Ibid., pp. 25–26.

33 Ibid., pp. 28–29.

34 Ibid., p. 29.

political climate, and from the perspective of Russian nationalism cross-border region-building can easily be seen as a source of discord, or even a threat. This has led to the paradox that while in Finland the concept of Euregio Karelia has been promoted as an alternative to nostalgic post-war Karelianism (and to the marginal militant Karelia activism as well), in the Russian discussion it has sometimes been connected precisely to ideas of *revanche* in regard to the ceded areas. On both sides of the border there is obviously a great discrepancy between the image given to Euregio Karelia in official documents and the traditional definitions of territoriality.

### **Conclusions: European and comparative perspectives on cross-border regionalization**

In Finnish public discussions, questions concerning Karelia have seldom been conceptualized in terms of regionalization or cross-border region-building.<sup>35</sup> During the post-war period, the area was strictly divided by the Iron Curtain, and issues related to Karelia were associated with the major taboos of Finnish foreign politics.<sup>36</sup> Opening the Karelian question, discussing areas ceded to the Soviet Union after the Second World War or the position of the Finno-Ugric minorities in Soviet Karelia were considered harmful for securing Finland's international status in Cold War conditions. Karelia was chiefly kept on the political agenda by a few politically isolated individuals who actively demanded the return of the areas that »belonged to Finland«. Major political parties avoided the subject and public discussion was adjusted to Cold War realities by framing Karelia mainly in nostalgic terms as the »lost land«. Notably, official silence, activist claims and publicly displayed nostalgic longing were, to a large extent, all based on a similar kind of understanding of national interests and ethnic ties as the main factors guiding politics. Only gradually after the collapse of the Soviet Union has this heritage given way to new perspectives common to the Western European political discourse.

The adaptation of new European perspectives to cross-border cooperation has, however, not proceeded without problems. As the results of the study of Finnish-Russian border carried out in the frame of the EXLINEA project indicate, attitudes towards cross-border co-operation in Russian border areas are for the most part very positive. Similarly, on the Finnish side the actors involved in cross-border interaction see the future prospects very positively. This positive engagement has, however, not been followed by strong patterns of common identification, neither in the sense of common cross-border identity nor in terms of broader European identification.<sup>37</sup>

The perceptions of local actors involved in cross-border co-operation in the Russian and Finnish border areas do not testify for the birth of a strong regional cross-border

35 P. Joenniemi, Ways of Managing Border Disputes in Present-Day Europe: The Karelian Question, <http://src-h.slav.hokudai.ac.jp/sympo/96summer/joenniemi.pdf>.

36 H. Eskelinen / I. Liikanen / J. Oksa (eds), Curtains of Iron and Gold (note 17).

37 I. Liikanen / D. Zimin / J. Ruusuvoori / H. Eskelinen, Karelia – a Cross-border Region? (note 3).

identity. On the contrary, participation in cross-border co-operation seem to be motivated on both sides primarily with reasoning connected to intra-state centre-periphery relations, to nation-state bound ideas of sovereignty and citizenship and even to a variety of clashing conceptualizations of broader cultural divides. These are all present in the regional identification of the actors, and more intensive cross-border cooperation can hardly be seen as a proof of new European cross-border regionalism. Rather the new situation, where traditional national, state-bound perceptions of cross-border relations have been challenged by new supra-national and regional perspectives, could be understood as a starting point for a dialogue between the various – clashing – conceptualizations of territoriality.

In this situation there is an obvious need, both on the level of EU policies and every-day practices of cross-border cooperation, to recognize the interconnections, clashes and ruptures between the different understandings of territorial scales. Instead of promoting a normative and predetermined sense of Europeanness from the top-down, there is a need for comparative study of the political language of cross-border cooperation. Such comparative undertakings could help map the many European ways of combining regional, national and supranational perspectives and help to overcome the clash of territorialities embedded in present-day European policies of cross-border cooperation.