

# **In quest of a spatial perspective to analyse the temporary reintroduction of border controls inside the Schengen Area: A literature review and exploratory empirical results**

Following the terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016), several EU member states have decided to re-establish border controls or even to build up walls inside the Schengen area. Although these decisions are temporary and legally framed by the Schengen code, their extent disrupts the free movement within the Schengen Area, in particular in border areas. While lawyers and economists have analysed the impacts of this situation, the spatial perspective remains rather scarce. This exploratory contribution aims at addressing this gap in the literature by outlining the spatial significance of reintroduced controls for border areas inside the Schengen Area. This contribution firstly undertakes a literature review of the different conceptual tools at hand. These are then confronted with a set of exploratory empirical materials (i.g. documents, expert interview and participant observation). The article focuses more precisely on the Greater Region SaarLorLux where France and Germany have reintroduced border controls. The analysis demonstrates that border acts as a filter, disturbing cross-border flows and cooperation. Also, it sheds some light on the important role played by ideational perception of the border for practitioners and decision makers. This contribution concludes by suggesting several paths for a future research agenda.

Keywords: border theory; legitimacy; filter; Schengen Area; Greater Region SaarLorLux

## **1. Setting the scene**

The Schengen Agreement is considered as being one of the greatest achievements of the European Union (Avramopoulos, 2016). It allows the free movement of people on the territory of signatory states while border controls are exercised at the external borders. Thirty years after the signature of this agreement, Europe faces the “most severe refugee crisis since the second world war” (COM, 2016). The terrorist attacks in Paris (November 2015) and Brussels (March 2016) have urged

several countries to re-establish border controls or even to build up walls inside the Schengen area. Even though several member states have used the safeguard mechanism foreseen in the Schengen Agreement in the past (DG Home, 2016), the geographical and temporal scale of restricting the movement of people as it is currently established is unique. Some analysts have therefore portrayed this recent evolution as the “dislocation”, the “dismantlement” or even the “death” of the Schengen area (Sénat, 2016: 3). The geopolitical situation on an international (e.g. the civil war in Syria and Iraq, smuggling of human beings through the Mediterranean and Balkan route) and on a European level (e.g. management of the Schengen area) partially explains the complexity of the situation. Since July 2015, several Member states have unilaterally decided to apply exception terms which the Schengen Borders Code provides (mainly article 26). Even though these decisions are temporary, limited to several months, and used exclusively as safeguard mechanisms to stabilise the Schengen system, there are discussions to allow reintroducing border controls up to two years (European Council, 2015). Although the safeguard mechanisms of the Schengen Agreement had been activated in the past, the current situation is new in its spatial extent.

This temporary reintroduction of border controls within the Schengen Area has crucial impacts on the daily functioning of border regions. Whether the reintroduction of borders is temporary or permanent, several recent studies estimated the economic consequences to several billions of euros (Bölmer & Limbers, 2016: 7-14; Aussilloux & Le Hir, 2016: 1-5). Associations representing cross-border areas (such as MOT or AEBR) have raised their voices to inform public authorities and citizens of the costs for border areas. This situation is particularly pressing in border areas where functional flows are important (e.g. cross-border commuters) and cross-border cooperation is long established (Zilmer et al. 2017: 21; e.g. the Greater Region, see: CESGR, 2016). In

addition, the European Parliament adopted a common position on this topic (EP, 2016). The Commission proposed a “Roadmap for restoring fully functioning Schengen system” to facilitate the repeal for Member states by the end of 2016 (EC, 2016b). The Commission adopted finally a proposition for a binding decision of the Council which orders the recommendation concerning the “temporary internal border control in exceptional circumstances putting the overall functioning of the Schengen area at risk.” (EC, 2016c).

Several disciplines have conducted studies against the backdrop of this ever-changing political context. Lawyers regard “the legal challenges inherent to police checks within the internal border areas as having an equivalent to border checks” (Guild et al. 2015: 1). Despite the reintroduction of such controls in many member states, they emphasise that these are “in full compliance with the EU rule of law” (idem). According to this interpretation, this situation demonstrates the capacity of the Schengen system to adapt to the situation, thus demonstrating that it “is here to stay” (idem). In parallel, several economic studies provide first assessments of the immediate, medium and long-term economic costs and agree that the impact on national economies is not to be underestimated (Bölmer et al. 2016, Aussiloux, 2016). For geographers interested in border studies, this situation questions our conceptualisation of borders, which were since the 1990s partially thought through the premise of free movement of people, goods, services and capital. Both the common market and the Schengen regulation provide the legal framework for borders to act as an interface. The literature scrutinises cross-border exchanges fostered by structural differentials (e.g. fiscal differences, labour force costs). The unpredictable character of the reintroduction of border controls contradicts the certainty of the border interface. Suddenly, border crossing is made less easy. Users (e.g. commuters, companies, students) are not in capacity to define a pattern

on how systematic and extensive the border controls will be operated. The process of cross-border integration is de facto temporarily disturbed.

This exploratory contribution intends to investigate the spatial significance of reintroduced controls in border areas. To do so, the available conceptual tools addressing the significance of such uncertain and sporadic *re-bordering* processes in border regions are reviewed<sup>1</sup>. By uncertain, we mean that it is temporarily re-established by the authorities for a specific period in time, challenging then people's habits and decision makers' ability to develop a long term strategy. By sporadic, we mean that the way border controls are exercised by the police is variable in time and space. Typically, controls are mostly conducted on main traffic roads at pic hours, less on small roads. After outlining the situation at stake, this contribution identifies conceptual tools that have been mobilised in the literature. These are then confronted to a set of empirical findings collected in Spring 2016, shortly after the refugee flows was particularly important and security measures had been renewed or increased in several countries (e.g. Austria, France, Germany). Perceptions of the situation by experts involved in cross-border cooperation at local, regional, national and European level within the Schengen area are presented. They help to grasp how the reintroduction of border controls is experienced and reflected upon on the ground. These empirical considerations help reflecting on the usability of conceptual tools and identifying avenues for future research in the conclusion section.

## **2. Grasping the complexity of the reintroduction of border controls in the Schengen area: Which conceptual tools?**

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<sup>1</sup> Since this article aims at addressing the spatial significance of reintroduced controls in border areas, it focuses on border areas within the Schengen Area and at the Member States' borders. It does neither cover other forms of border controls via registers at places of residence or databases, during transit nor control practices conducted within countries (e.g. tax inspections).

***The reintroduction of border controls: the dilemma of “managing” mobility and security together***

The reintroduction of border controls in the Schengen Area illustrates a dilemma of the 21st century between, on one hand, security requirements of controlling the movement of people to prevent terrorist attacks and/or illegal immigration and, on the other hand, spatial mobility symbolised by the Schengen Agreement. “The production of border spaces in the era of globalization is driven by the demands of quick and dependable spatial mobility on the one hand and tangible societal and personal security on the other. The former has found expression in the ‘open borders’ discourse, while the latter has come to be known as the ‘border securitization’ discourse” (Popescu, 2012: 67). This dilemma is especially significant in the European context as security and mobility are anchored in different scales of governance. The European level – and especially the Commission – is “responsible for the creation and the regulation of the internal market” which is seen in the present case through the mobility of people and goods – whereas “member states are collectively responsible for an internal security policy (justice and crime) and for an external security (foreign defence and policy)” (Hix, 2005: 22). State borders are the material manifestation of this dilemma. While in the last years, studies have shown that the security function of physical borders shifted towards airports terminals (Salter, 2008) thus emphasising borderlines’ role of interface (cross-border governance), the present situation demonstrates that the nation state tends to reinvest the physical border with its separating and closing function when it considers its security – and therefore its sovereignty – to be at threat. Marked simultaneously by the daily flows of commuters and border controls, border spaces are crossed by divergent, centrifugal and centripetal forces which manifest a friction between national territory and European territoriality. As Vladimir Kolosov and James Scott resume, “they reflect the normative power of international organizations, including the EU and

the power asymmetry between states in different fields” (2013: 41). Precisely, if integration consists in “connecting, ensuring interrelations, erasing fractures and distances between elements which nonetheless keep their being” (Brunet, 1997 authors’ translation from French), how to interpret the reintroduction border controls through physical and temporary obstacles in areas where integration is promoted and encouraged since decades?

### ***Borders as power relationship***

The track suggested by Gabriel Popescu in his book dedicated to the process of bordering in the XXIth century is enlightening (Popescu, 2012). For him, borders reflect social, economic and political realities of the XIXth century, differing from those of the XXIst century (Popescu, 2012: 69). Beside their essentially national functions, borders became progressively “denationalized” under the effect of globalisation in order to open towards the outside, to serve as an interface and to rapidly become permeable to cross-border exchanges (Sassen, 2006 and Newmann, 2006 cited in Popescu, 2012:71). Thus, the aim is to “establish how much the grasp of international limits exceeds nowadays the binary with which it was used to grasp, namely in terms of opening/closing”. “One has to learn how to manage borders that on the one hand open and close simultaneously and on the second hand disperse their reality on our territories within and beyond the lines drawn on maps” (Amilhat Szary, 2015: 153, author’s own translation).

The call to “compose with” the ambivalence of borders invites us to consider the processes which contribute to modifying border functions and effects in space. This requires examining power relationships. Oftentimes, a border reflects the will of a group (for instance state, religion, club) representing a collective to differentiate and separate itself from outside influence (Newmann, 2011: 35). By constituting a tool for separation, borders also represent a tool for construction towards external influence.

They result from power relationships and express power in space. Assessing the established power relations informs on the whys they are (re)assigned specific functions. The simultaneous and ambivalent character of this renegotiation process can be highlighted via the concepts of de/reterritorialization and de/rebordering as “mutually reinforcing” (Sparke, 2005). In this respect, the expression « zone frontière » is a useful tool allowing to investigate how neighbors handle a « border area » during and after a crisis (be it a war, security issue, public order, ideological demarcation). It helps reflecting on a process of co-construction of antagonist sovereign countries (Dullin, 387). If borders reflect power relationships, how do then they manifest themselves in space, how do reintroduced border controls work?

***Border controls: implementing “selective permeability” and transforming borders into “filters”, “membranes”***

The increased securization of borders challenges us to transcend the binary of the opening-closing prism (Amilhat Szary, 2015: 153) and to provide conceptual tools enabling to grasp the ambivalence of borders. In this respect, several expressions have been coined. By studying the rebordering process in North America and Europe, Peter Andreas writes: “borders are supposed to function more or less like filters that separate out the unwanted from the wanted cross-border flows” (Andreas, 2000: 4). Luiza Bialasiewicz summarizes the situation as follows: “borders are increasingly discriminatory and designed to allow easy passage for some while forming a barrier to the movements of others (refugees, ‘terrorists’, and traffickers) has given rise to the idea of borders as ‘asymmetric membranes’ (Hedetoft, 2003)” (Bialasiewicz, 2009: 85). The notion of “selective permeability” (Popescu, 2012: 68) expresses well the contingency of border crossing that results from normative decisions varying in time. Laure-Anne Bernes uses the word “plasticity” to assess the functioning of bordering processes that

enable legal and illegal flows to cross borders simultaneously (Bernes, 2014). She suggests focusing on the social mechanisms shaping the permeability of borders to go beyond the assessment of the intensity of border controls. She then demonstrates that the border region of the Ceuta enclave is a “fragmented and transitional space of control, which conflicts with the clear-cut division projected by the fence” (Bernes, 2014: 20).

### ***The legitimacy of borders***

Understanding the normative and social mechanisms prompts us questioning the legitimacy of such practices (Popescu, 2012: 69). The legitimacy alights in different terms. Firstly, in relation to the recipient: who is considered “legitimate” or “desirable” to cross borders (Bernes, 2014). And the one considered legitimate today might not be tomorrow. So who decides what constitutes legitimate traffic? (Popescu, 2012: 69). In this case, borders work as filters for the separation of groups of people. Borders are but the tool of the state which thus uses one of its principal attributes (in Weber’s sense), “the monopoly of legitimate violence” (Parker & Adler-Nissen, 2012: 783). By reinvesting borders, the state aims to reaffirm - inside like outside - that it is the only depository of legitimate violence. However, as Rumford observes, “national borders, as with national sovereignty, rely upon the acknowledgement of others in order to become legitimate” (Rumford, 2012: 890). Therefore, if “border disputes may occasion war”, borders “also denote consensus” (Rumford, 2012: 890). To function, borders “need to be recognised by all parties as borders” in their existence, localisation and shape (Rumford, 2012: 890).

Facing the complexity and the variety of borders (e.g. single market, Fortress Europe, securization of border crossings), observers plead for excelling the classical opening/closing dichotomy, thus highlighting the processual character of borders.



Border “is never simply ‘present’, nor fully established, nor obviously accessible. Rather, it is manifold and in a constant state of becoming” (Parker & Vaughan-Williams, 2012: 728).

This relatively synthetic literature review shows the utility of notions such as filter, membrane, selective permeability to grasp the spatial and temporal complexity when considering the reintroduction of border controls. Furthermore, assessing the legitimacy of practices which are associated to the reaffirmation of borders enables to highlight how these are instituted and more generally accepted inside and outside. We now suggest confronting this literature review to the present situation of temporary reintroduction of border controls in the Schengen Area.

### **3. Methodology**

In our endeavour to understand the spatial significance of the reintroduction of border controls for border areas, the exploratory empirical material shall grasp 1) how they are materialised on the ground i.e. how they operate and 2) how they are considered by stakeholders. Given the exploratory nature of this study, the empirical material gathers a diverse set of materials, representative of the complexity of the issue.

Firstly, a semi-directed expert interview was conducted with a chief economist from the Chamber of commerce in Luxembourg in March 2016. This expert interview aims to grasp how this phenomenon is understood and dealt with in a country where opened borders are deeply anchored in both the economic and societal models. Given the important number of cross-border commuters in Luxembourg (163.912 workers in 2014, STATEC, 2015), the Luxembourgish economy is particularly affected by the reintroduction of border controls. Its economic, social and cultural exchanges are equally challenged. On the political scene, Luxembourg is member of the Greater Region, a cross-border cooperation platform established in the 1970’s involving

Lorraine, Rhineland-Palatinate, Saarland and Wallonia (Evrard, 2013). Approximately 90% of its industrial products are exported, of which 80% towards the EU countries (expert interview, Chamber of Commerce). The Greater Region is the cross-border area in Europe concentrating the most important number of commuters (ESPON/University of Luxembourg, 2010). In his position, the interviewed expert works in close connection with both the public sector (e.g. ministry of economy and several working groups from the Greater Region) and the private sector (small and large firms). This interview thus provides a rather comprehensive understanding of the wide-range of impacts reintroduction of border controls can have in a country highly connected to the Single Market.

Secondly, the transcription of the discussions held on the annual meeting of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)<sup>2</sup> platform enabled to gather the analysis from several local and regional representatives, civil servants active at the EU level and experts having a pan-European perspective. The conference took place in Brussels on the 20th April 2016 (see represented institutions, table 1). These cross-border entities - about sixty currently, spread all over Europe (MOT, 2016) – are directly affected by the reintroduction of border controls. Some of the areas they represent have seen the reintroduction of border controls without necessarily having been consulted even though their vocation is to enable cross-border cooperation. The annual meeting was dedicated to the “Impact of the Schengen Crisis on Cross-border Cooperation”. Attending this meeting and observing the participants helped

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<sup>2</sup> The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) is a European legal instrument aiming at facilitating cross-border, transnational or interregional territorial cooperation. The EC European Regulation n°1082/2006 allows public entities to cooperate within the framework of one entity with legal capacity. After having widely supported the creation of the EGTC tool, the Committee of the Regions established the « EGTC platform », as a platform of exchange for the EGTCs. For an analysis of the EGTC instrument and the extent to which it can be interpreted as a supraregional scale of governance, see Evrard, 2016.

understanding the changing role of borders and how they are perceived and managed at different levels.

#### Insert Table 1

Table 1: Institutions registered on the agenda or which have presented their views during the annual meeting of the EGTC, Brussels (20.04.2016)

Thirdly, this analysis relies on the EGTC monitoring report 2016 delivered by a team of independent consultants that, commissioned by the Committee of the Regions, contacted every EGTC and asked them among others topics to report on the impact of the reintroduction of border controls in “their” respective cross-border area.

Even though this data may be limited, it provides a rather wide range of information from the very local up to the European level. The collected empirical data helps outlining the most prominent effects of the reintroduction of border controls according to practitioners. **4. Between physical and mental barriers: how do cross-border areas address the reintroduction of border controls**

Firstly, we take the example of the Greater Region to investigate what the reintroduction of border controls means there. Secondly, we will look into policy makers and stakeholders’ way to perceive and address this situation.

#### ***The reintroduction of border controls in the Greater Region: the concepts of “filter” questioned***

The Schengen Regulation foresees different situations when border controls can be temporary reintroduced. One should differentiate on the one hand the case of “foreseeable events” (art. 24) (e.g. COP21 in Winter 2015; or for example sports competition of international scale) with on the other hand “a serious threat to public policy or internal security” (art. 23) or when Member states report “cases requiring urgent actions” (art. 25). In all cases, Member States must inform the other EU member

states as well as the Commission about their intention. They are nonetheless not required to implement the resulting consultations. A difference emerges yet in the information Member states must provide. In the first case, Member states have to inform their counterparts on “the scope of the proposed reintroduction, specifying where border control is to be reintroduced; the names of the authorised crossing-points” (European Parliament and Council, 2006: art 24.§1). In the other cases, Member States do not have to provide such detailed information. This introduces a level of uncertainty whose impact on cross-border flows is difficult to measure. Yet, first and foremost, if no additional information is provided, it leaves the neighboring authorities with a rather unclear situation on the extent to which border crossing can be affected. More specifically, if Member State A decides to temporary reintroduce border controls in application to the Schengen Code art. 23 and 25, it means that Member State A conducts border controls on incoming and/or outgoing flows and decides on which portions of the borderline the border controls shall be applied. Member State B faces disturbed freedom of movement for people, goods and services (e.g. traffic congestion, disrupted working force commuting patterns) (graph 1). Controls usually occur in an unannounced and occasional manner. They are operated by police and customs services on the most frequented border crossing transit points as well as on railway stations.

**Insert graph 1**

Graph 1: Schematic representation of borders and and flows while border controls are reintroduced in a country part of the Schengen Agreement.

The case of the Greater Region (map 1) illustrates graph 1, with several countries involved though. As map 1 illustrates, alone France and Germany have decided to reintroduce sporadic border controls at several periods in time. Luxembourg

and Belgium undergo the decision taken on German and French sides<sup>3</sup>. The use of borders is asymmetrical. While the French and German authorities mobilise borders as a filter which enables to differentiate legal flows such as cross-border work and illegal flows such as the flow of migrants and terrorists, Luxembourg and Belgium wish to enable the free movement of people and goods. By introducing reinforced border controls on the German and French sides of the border, the free movement on the Belgian and Luxembourgish sides as it is wished by the authorities is de facto impaired or even made ineffective. In the absence of dialogue between the two border states, the “filter border” on one side erases the effects of the “open border” on the other side. The legitimate decision taken on one side of the border contradicts the legitimate decision taken on the other side. Thus, the divergence between national decisions contribute de facto to “duplicate” the border which is simultaneously permeable and restrictive to crossings.

#### Insert map 1

Map 1: Asymmetry of border controls in the Greater region (between July 2015 to July 2017)

The interviewed expert expressed both his “forte **inquiétude**” and his d’incrédulité. For him, consequences are unpredictable on all levels, be they economic, social, political, cultural or identity-wise. According to him, this situation could on the long run “partially question the country’s prosperity”. For the CESGR, a consultative body gathering representatives from partenaires sociaux from the Greater Region, this situation has “disastrous consequences” for firms located in this area and for the population. Each day, tens of thousands of people cross the border to go to work,

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<sup>3</sup> Given the sensitivity of that matter, the authors have not been able to meet with representatives of the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg’s police.

develop their business, study, attend a professional training or just to do shopping. The closing of border or the reintroduction of border control would be a major break to the development of the region. The whole population would be quickly affected” (CESGR, 2016).

This demonstrates that despite the asymmetric reintroduction of border controls can have important consequences for border regions, especially where cross-border functional interdependencies are important. The concept of filter is particularly useful even though it reflects only part of the situation. Focusing on legitimacy emphasises how several levels of governance can conflict with one another. In the case of a geopolitical border, as soon as there is contradiction on how two neighbouring states decide to exercise their territoriality, the border doubles. This raises the question of how stakeholders on the ground handle the situation?

### ***Between dismay and disbelief: experts’ landmarks are questioned***

In this context, stakeholders involved in cross-border cooperation have several views and interpretations of the current situation<sup>4</sup>.

It is remarkable that experts interviewed and observed have all in the first place expressed their subjective perception of the situation, be they working on a local, regional, national or European scale. Only after having reflected on their subjective impressions, they started sharing their diagnosis and propositions to go forward. The mobilised vocabulary strongly contrasts with the usually normative discourses, which can be explained by the exceptional dimension of the situation. The feelings of dismay

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<sup>4</sup>The quotations in this section stem either from the interview with an expert from the Luxembourg Chamber of commerce in March 2016 or from experts having expressed their views at the yearly meeting of the EGTC platform on 20th March 2016. When not expressed in French, these have been translated by the translators of the Committee of the regions, during the meeting. All these have been translated by the authors from French into English.

and disbelief dominate. Experts express their “concern” and “fear” in face of the consequences of this situation for the future of the EU and for other border spaces. European integration is judged as “more fragile than one would have thought”. They qualify the present situation as an “unimaginable return back” and as “cold shock”. After expressing their personal feelings, actors attempt to draw a diagnosis. The reinstatement of border controls is understood as a “disentanglement of the achievements”. Experts identify the Schengen agreement as a cornerstone of the European construction project. “The Schengen crisis is the crisis of Europe because Schengen is the most visible face of the European dream. Reintroducing borders is going backwards and making a leap in the past of a century, to the eve of the First World War” (Brussels, 20.02.2016). The closing of borders is perceived as symptomatic of a “inward-looking policy”. This movement is implicitly judged as the opposite to European integration, it is qualified as “dangerous regression”, a “disaggregation”, a “disintegration”.

***Functional, institutional and ideal: the differentiated consequences of reintroduced border controls***

We suggest applying Durand’s definition of cross-border integration to conduct a differentiated analysis of the reintroduced of border controls. Cross-border integration can be understood as being composed of four interacting dimensions. The structural dimension depicts the spatial characteristics of each entity member involved in the cross-border area (e.g. fiscal regime) while the functional dimension refers to cross-border flow (e.g. commuters), the institutional dimension covers the cross-border cooperation initiated between public authorities (e.g. EGTC) and the “shared social and political references, the feeling of belonging to a cross-border living area, or the identification of common images and symbols” are covered by the ideal dimension

(Durand, 2014: 12). Several economic studies have reviewed the impact on functional flows (Bölmer & Limbers, 2016; Aussilloux & Le Hir, 2016). A study commissioned by the European Parliament summarises the findings of five different economic studies analysing the impact of reintroduced border controls in the EU (Europe Economics, 2016). It also outlines four scenarios, ranging from a temporary reintroduction of border controls in some countries to an indefinite complete suspension of the Schengen system (Europe Economics, 2016). In this report and in most of the others, estimations rely on existing functional flows (e.g. commuters, tourists, imports and exports). A permanent reintroduction of border controls would indeed mean a systematic inspection of commuters' and vehicles' documents which would provoke queues for people and goods. Those are used to evaluate the possible impact on the GDP growth, thus addressing partially the structural dimension of cross-border integration. All report a negative impact on both the intensity of the flows and the GDP growth (functional and structural dimensions). Aside this quantitative analysis, the EGTC Monitoring report 2016 questioned EGTC responsible on the impact on their actual work, thus reflecting upon the institutional side of the cooperation. It reports that "although the introduction of border controls across some countries of the Schengen Area has affected the territory of the EGTCs, it did not heavily affect their work (...)". According to this study, "13 EGTCs from areas affected by the reintroduction of border controls, confirmed that posing border controls had an effect in their wider territory. However, most of them stated that this did not affect their everyday work" (Zillmer et al, 2017: 19). This contrasts with other experts' statements.

For instance, a high-ranking official at the EU Commission underlines that:

"crossing between Denmark and Sweden took 30 minutes by the Øresund bridge. The time needed has doubled because of security checks. On a long term, this can have an economic impact on these regions of the two countries, without forgetting



people who live on one side and work on the other” (Panorama Magazine, 2016, p.10).

For the interviewed economist of the Luxembourgish chamber of commerce, Luxembourgish companies felt immediately the impacts of border controls; cross-border employees had to take leave or arrived late at work. He states that limiting the free flow of cross-border workers can lead to important loss in productivity, which, on the long run questions the sustainability of the Luxembourgish development model. In terms of goods circulation, logistics is the most affected sector. External trade is also affected by the perturbation of supplier chains. The economist worries about a “domino effect”, meaning that the present fragmentations of the internal market would be used in order to add barriers such as qualification and double regulations and that the EU would close on itself. Two reasons can explain this difference of interpretation. Firstly, the empirical material was collected right during what was called at that time “the Schengen Crisis”. The statements provided during the EGTC annual meeting as well as those from the chief economist at the chamber of commerce reflect a momentum. As an expert of French borderlands reported :

“In the most crossed borderlands (such as France-Germany, France-Belgium, France-Luxembourg, France-Switzerland), borders have suddenly been closed which led to long waiting time on the daily commute. This generates important problems for commuters, students, deliveries etc. Since these dramatic events, the situation is slowly coming back to normal. Most of the members (of our organisation) report that traffic is congested, that there are more traffic jams than usual but these areas are often congested anyway”.

The Annual meeting of the EGTCs in Brussels can also be a platform to be heard at EU level while at the time of the meeting they face challenging situations locally. A civil servant at the EU Commission reported:

« From my experience, I must tell that oftentimes solutions that make the difference on the ground have been provided by the local and regional authorities than by national authorities ».

A representative from the EGTC Strasbourg-Ortenau mentioned that one his objectives in this respect was to “make sure that the role and responsibilities of local authorities are acknowledged at the highest level of the Member states and of the EU institutions”.

This exploratory empirical material confirms that cross-border areas’ functioning is highly disturbed by reintroduced border controls. They materialise the friction between levels of governance; the single market free movement of people and goods (competence hold at the European level) and the need to ensure security and public order (one expression of national sovereignty hold at national level).

When it comes to the ideal perception of reintroduced border controls, the exploratory empirical material demonstrates that it plays a crucial role in the experts’ interpretation of the situation at stake:

“The moment citizens are used to work together and this disappears suddenly, many things will disappear in the same time. The behavior of individuals will change – be it sports, cultural activities, shopping or work” (Brussels, 29th March 2016).

“Today, one can always cooperate across the border, one can also cross it in order to go to work or to live on the other side, but the risk is that suddenly, one gets back to having negative anticipations: this company that will not answer to a public tender because the border is too complicated, this person who planned to buy a house on the other side of the border and who eventually decides to stay on this side of the agglomeration” (Brussels, 29th March 2016).

More generally, the most significant worry of the experts relies in the reassessment of “living together” which cooperation programs contributed to promote since their creation.

“As a result of regional elections which ran (in the same time as border controls), we had, on the French as well as on the German side a quite strong breakthrough of right extreme parties. Beside of the physical borders which were reintroduced, one should look at the borders in people’s heads” (Brussels, 29th March 2016).

After attempting to understand the significance of the impacts on border spaces, the experts propose several actions. On a European level, wishing to “find back the Schengen spirit”, they propose to concentrate the control of the external borders of the Schengen Area and to help the states which are the most exposed to migration flows. This recommendation aims to avoid asymmetry of the policy pursued on a national level, judged to be “inconsistent” and disadvantageous for border spaces. On a transfrontier level, they propose to maintain cross-border cooperation in accordance with local specificities and claim recognition of the strategical character of their cooperation for a European social and territorial cohesion.

## **5. Conclusion**

Since several decades, European integration has in particular contributed to “connect, insure interrelations, erase fractures and distances” (Brunet, 1997 authors’ translation from French) between border spaces. The progressive reintroduction of border controls on a national level imbalances this process. The economic, societal and political signification of this process are important; spatial and territorial impacts depend largely on the duration, intensity of control and their predictable character. While being exploratory, the empirical and conceptual data underlines several aspects that would require further research.

The study programme on European spatial planning defines integration as “a system of links between territories which is the emerging result of concrete social, economic, and cultural relationships” (de Boe et al, 1999). The proposal to keep four

dimensions to analyse cross-border integration processes (Durand, 2014) allows to structure the empirical analysis and to assess the interactions between institutional, functional, structural and ideal dimensions. As the empirical study has shown, individual representations of borders can evolve following the reintroduction of border controls. Changing perceptions of borders can influence how individuals live in borderland, thus influencing the other dimensions (functional, institutional and structural) of spatial integration. Conceptualizing the ideal dimension more precisely would enable the investigation of induced changes caused by the reestablishment of border controls on cross-border integration.

Furthermore, the reintroduction of border controls in many member states in a relatively short time period shows that borders remain a marker of identity and security which reveals to be an essential component in the contemporary definition of European states. If the situation under scrutiny in this contribution seems to illustrate the renationalization of security functions for some borders, this situation appears to be transitory given its lack of uniformity. When taken unilaterally, the legitimate decision to reintroduce border controls on one side of the border challenges the legitimate decision of implementing free movement on the other side of the border. Both decisions lose their effectiveness. The border “splits into two”. Even if boundary delineation remains uncontested in the EU, border management reveals to be highly complex. On the long term, it appears essential that member states agree on where the place and security function of the borders is applied, be it by reinforcing the Schengen Agreement, emphasizing the securization of the external borders of the Schengen Area, or by the renationalization of national borders. In this case, a more accomplished reflection on the operationalization of the filter concept appears essential in order to limit the impacts on free movement of Community nationals. These considerations illustrate how entangled

cross-border, national and European scales are. A global reflection on the complementarity of scales and their function appears essential, for practitioners as well as for researchers.

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