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**‘Comparing Cross-Bordering City-Regional Strategies  
beyond Nation-States in Oresund and the Basque Country’**

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Cross-bordering implies taking into account a diverse range of factors between two regional hubs in the interest of comparing case studies. This paper contrasts two city-regional configurations: on the one hand, the Oresund city-region (or newly called Greater Copenhagen) between Copenhagen and Malmö; and on the other hand, the Basque Country between French Pays Basque, Navarra Statutory Autonomy and the Basque Autonomy. Both cases consist of two nation-states. In the case of Oresund, the city-region is configured between Sweden and Denmark. In the case of the Basque Country, the city-region is situated between Spain and France. Moreover, the two cases depict very diverse patterns of cross-bordering collaboration: in the Oresund city-region, the cooperation has been primarily fuelled by the two main cities; in the Basque city-region, although there are remarkable territorial synergies, there is not clear leadership between the three aforementioned territorial entities.

Examining the cross-border collaborations in these cases, it is noteworthy that the order and the internal network of agents in each city-regional configuration derive diverse consequences. However, this paper argues there are some structural and essential differences that point out the way in which cross-bordering strategies have or have not been implemented over the last 25 years. Despite cultural differences, this paper encourages further research at the EU level, be carried out to understand primarily how these structural conditions take place.

Thus, this paper underlines four factors that contribute to enhancing or downsizing the cross-border collaboration in the two cases as follows:

1. Political strategies of the city-regions:  
In both cases, we can distinguish two diverse political aspirations. While in the Oresund city-region there is a clear, pragmatic simplicity in favour of functional efficiency-driven strategy, in the Basque city-region, despite the effort being made from the nationalistic political parties to push forward to a politically-driven territorial configuration, the real truth is that genuine cooperation has been missing over the last three decades. Furthermore, regarding the very diverse socio-economic structure of the three Basque territorial entities, even with the political strategy remaining in pursuing collaboration, little can be said in favour of the real economic joint achievements thus far. By contrast, the Oresund city-region has regularly been achieving an outstanding cross-border cooperation in the fields of scientific, innovation, arts, and culture. Nevertheless, equally, in both these cases, over the last five years major hindrances in the administrative and, especially, tax policies have been flourishing by downsizing the referential trend.
2. Political culture of the nation-states:

The second factor is rooted in the political culture in which each nation-state has been evolving over the last half century. In the case of Sweden and Denmark, bearing in mind Oresund has been a very disputed borderland, the cooperation between the two nation-states could be portrayed, in general terms, as democratically healthy. By contrast, Spain and France, having very diverse political history, do not foster as much cross-border collaboration due to general mistrust from perceiving a loose territorial sovereignty. This is especially the case in that the Spanish constitution stresses the critical value of the territorial unity as not accepting any kind of complex cross-border cooperation in its mono-centric state configuration.

3. Nation-state recentralisation vs. devolution strategies:

As a consequence of its political culture, Spain is the most reluctant nation-state to embrace devolution, while France, little by little, is accepting it as seen by recent modifications implemented to give the municipalities in the French Pays Basque region, the right to create a bottom-up administrative autonomy. Regarding Sweden and Denmark, both are centralized countries experimenting gradually with regional devolution strategies.

4. The level of integration of the rural hinterland into the city-regional territorial configuration:

Both cases present the same low level of city-regional integration of the rural hinterland. In the case of Oresund, Skåne has permanently been avoided by Malmö, since it found a better counterpart in Copenhagen. This city-to-city strategic collaboration has left behind Helsingborg and other municipalities in the county. Similarly, in the Basque case, the polycentric capital-city system has been prioritised in the territorial development policies by forgetting the mountainous rural hinterland, one of the primary sources of the city-region's unique and ultra-local identity-driven communitarian social capital.

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Previous references:

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