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BORDERS IN PERSPECTIVE

UniGR-CBS Thematic Issue 3/2020

BORDERS AND CROSS-BORDER LABOR MARKETS: Opportunities and Challenges

UNIVERSITY OF LORRAINE & UNIVERSITY OF LUXEMBOURG
Rachid Belkacem, Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth (Eds.)

EDITORS

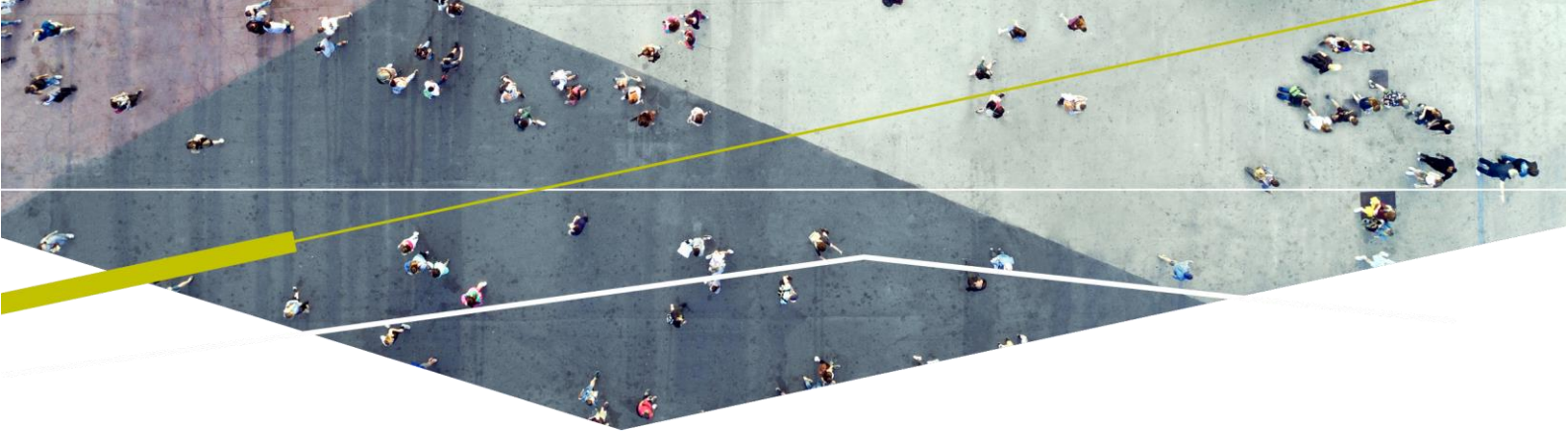
Rachid Belkacem

University of Lorraine
UniGR-Center for Border Studies
Laboratoire Lorrain des Sciences Sociales
23, boulevard Albert 1er
BP 13397
F-54015 Nancy Cedex

Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth

University of Luxembourg
UniGR-Center for Border Studies
Institute of Geography and Spatial Planning
11, Porte des Sciences
L-4366 Esch-sur-Alzette

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UniGR-Center for Border Studies

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EN The UniGR-CBS is a thematic cross-border network of approximately 80 researchers within the university grouping University of the Greater Region (UniGR) conducting research on borders, their meanings and challenges. Due to its geographical position in the “heart of Europe”, its expertise and disciplinary diversity, the UniGRCBS has the best prerequisites for becoming a European network of excellence. For the creation of a “European Center for Competence and Knowledge in Border Studies”, the Interreg VA Greater Region program provides the UniGR-CBS network with approximately EUR 2 million ERDF funding between 2018 and 2020. Within this project, the UniGR-CBS aims at developing harmonized research tools, embedding Border Studies in teaching, promoting the dialogue on cross-border challenges between academia and institutional actors and supporting the spatial development strategy of the Greater Region.

FR L’UniGR-CBS est un réseau transfrontalier et thématique qui réunit environ 80 chercheuses et chercheurs des universités membres de l’Université de la Grande Région (UniGR) spécialistes des études sur les frontières, leurs significations et enjeux. Grâce à sa position géographique au « coeur de l’Europe », à sa capacité d’expertise et à la diversité des disciplines participantes, l’UniGR-CBS revêt tous les atouts d’un réseau d’excellence européen. L’UniGR-CBS bénéficie d’un financement d’environ 2 M € FEDER pendant trois ans dans le cadre du programme INTERREG VA Grande Région pour mettre en place le Centre européen de ressources et de compétences en études sur les frontières. Via ce projet transfrontalier, le réseau scientifique UniGR-CBS créera des outils de recherche harmonisés. Il oeuvre en outre à l’ancrage des Border Studies dans l’enseignement, développe le dialogue entre le monde scientifique et les acteurs institutionnels autour d’enjeux transfrontaliers et apporte son expertise à la stratégie de développement territorial de la Grande Région.

DE Das UniGR-CBS ist ein grenzüberschreitendes thematisches Netzwerk von rund 80 Wissenschaftlerinnen und Wissenschaftlern der Mitgliedsuniversitäten des Verbunds Universität der Großregion (UniGR), die über Grenzen und ihre Bedeutungen sowie Grenzraumfragen forschen. Dank seiner geographischen Lage „im Herzen Europas“, hoher Fachkompetenz und disziplinärer Vielfalt verfügt das UniGR-CBS über alle Voraussetzungen für ein europäisches Exzellenz-Netzwerk. Für den Aufbau des Europäischen Kompetenz- und Wissenszentrums für Grenzraumforschung wird das Netzwerk UniGR-CBS drei Jahre lang mit knapp 2 Mio. Euro EFRE-Mitteln im Rahmen des INTERREG VA Großregion Programms gefördert. Im Laufe des Projekts stellt das UniGR-Netzwerk abgestimmte Forschungswerkzeuge bereit, verankert die Border Studies in der Lehre, entwickelt den Dialog zu grenzüberschreitenden Themen zwischen wissenschaftlichen und institutionellen Akteuren und trägt mit seiner Expertise zur Raumentwicklungsstrategie der Großregion bei.



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EDITORIAL: analyzing cross-border labor markets

RACHID BELKACEM and ISABELLE PIGERON-PIROTH

The previous volume (Number 2) of the UniGR-CBS Borders in Perspective Thematic Issue focused on cross-border commuters in Luxembourg and Switzerland (Pigeron-Piroth and Wille, 2019). It dealt with employment, daily life and perceptions of the cross-border commuters in order to point out similarities but also differences between these two countries employing many cross-border commuters.

The object of the current Thematic Issue is not to focus on the individuals (the cross-border commuters) but on the organization of the cross-border labor markets. We move from a micro perspective to a macro perspective in order to underline the diversity of the cross-border labor markets (at the French borders, for example) and shed light on the many aspects that impact cross-border supply or demand.

Above all, we have to define what a cross-border labor market means:

“A cross-border labor market can be said to exist if the labor market supply consists at least partly of workers coming from the neighboring country and/or if the labor market demand consists at least partly of firms demanding workers from abroad” (De Gijssel, 1999).

The contextual elements are actually quite important when it comes to explaining and understanding why supply and demand cross the borders. Geographical elements are obvious: the proximity of the border(s), the ease of crossing the border (roads, trains, no natural barriers such as mountains, etc.). There are also cultural elements (the languages, the cultural proximity, etc.) that can explain the development of cross-border commutes. Other contextual elements to be considered are historical: the same economic activities on the two sides of the border (steel industry, for example), historical cross-border cooperation or links, and so on. From a more

economic point of view, there are push and pull factors (De Gijssel et al., 1999; Knotter, 2014). The former (push factors) are linked to the residential area and push the workers abroad (high unemployment rate, low demand for highly qualified labor, low wages etc.). The pull factors are linked to the area situated abroad on the other side of the border (the attraction of a huge employment pole, labor shortages, high wages, etc.).

Trying to understand the whole system that goes beyond the cross-border flows, the question we address in this thematic issue is about the organization of the labor markets: is the system organized in a cross-border way? Or do the borders still prevent a genuinely integrated cross-border labor market?

The aspects presented in this thematic issue were discussed in two special sessions on this topic (“Cross-border workers and cross-border labor markets”) organized by Rachid Belkacem and Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth at the Association of Borderland Studies Conference in July 2018 in Vienna and Budapest.

The approach is multidisciplinary, using different tools and methods from the fields of geography, socioeconomics, political and intercultural science and also sociology. The overview is broad: from the socioeconomic characteristics of the workers to the impacts on formation, on trade unions, daily mobilities and cross-border activity cycles.

Most of the analyses focus on the Greater Region as one of the most important cross-border labor markets. The chapters were written by academics from the University of the Greater Region and from other European universities.

Rachid Belkacem and Isabelle Pigeron-Piroth first analyze all the French borders and draw up an overview of different cross-border labor mar-

kets. They present the diversity of the characteristics of cross-border commuters according to their place of work.

Focusing on the formation in Luxembourg, **Lukas Graf and Daniel Tröhler** show how the system is organized between use of neighboring models and cross-border vocational training.

Julia Frisch studies in detail the cross-border trade union cooperation within the Greater Region SaarLorLux through the Interregional Trade Union Councils created in the 1970s. She analyzes the feasibility and the power of a cross-border trade union.

Guillaume Drevon and Olivier Klein analyze daily mobilities of cross-border commuters, applying a spatiotemporal approach, in order to show the complexity and difficulty of commuters' daily lives.

Olivier Damette, Vincent Fromentin and Marc Salesina illustrate the synchronization between financial, economic and cross-border activity cycles in Luxembourg.

We would like to thank all the authors who contributed to this thematic issue and all the colleagues from the UniGR Center for Border Studies for their support.

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