



VIEWPOINT

Bernard Gaud

President of the Geneva Community of Communes,
Vice President of the Geneva Regional Cooperation Association (ARC)



What is the state of affairs within the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation?

The Franco-Geneva Regional Committee (Comité Régional Franco-Genevois, CRFG) was created over 30 years ago. During this time, our relationship evolved from one of "good neighbours" to the development of a vibrant cross-border area.

The geography of the area - with Geneva forming an enclave in French territory - encouraged cross-border flows and exchanges that have always been very strong. Nowadays, nearly 57,000 people cross the border every day. There are major repercussions, in terms of transport, housing and jobs, in both France and Switzerland.

The need to act in a coordinated cross-border manner became apparent in relation to these issues (transport, housing and urbanisation). The Swiss government played a key role in kicking off the initiative, which local governments on both sides of the Geneva border then continued. The French authorities added such issues as health, the environment, training, economics and culture to the cooperation effort in order to impart a broader structural dimension to the territory as a whole. French and Swiss actors are currently working together to prepare a "Cross-border territorial consistency plan", slated to be finished at the end of 2007.

How is governance organised? How can it evolve over time?

The CRFG is the central structure. It has the overview, leads the thinking, initiates procedures and ensures overall consistency. This structure is designed to evolve, both by incorporating Vaud Canton (which is still not included) and by expanding its role in coordination and in defining the overall strategy. These initiatives are channelled through the conurbation steering committee, which brings together all local actors.

In addition, I think that many actions or projects could work under a "contractual" arrangement, with a project manager and well-known sources of finance, as is the case with cross-border rivers contracts which are already working out very well.

A cross-border urban-planning agency could, for instance, ensure that the territorial consistency plan is adapted as necessary and that the chosen projects meet the plan's criteria.

The "Porte Sud de Genève"

Located between Saint-Julien, Archamps and Bardonnex, the "Porte Sud de Genève" is a cross-border site with a strategic role in the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation's future growth.

The site represents a junction between Geneva's downtown and the network of towns in the French "Alpine Arc". It is a highly attractive area that offers excellent road and motorway access and a well-preserved natural environment.

"Multi-site" economic development

International companies are drawn to the Archamps site owing to its border location and proximity to Geneva. Over the course of a decade, 180 companies have moved into the area and created 1,780 jobs. A convention centre, designed to host conferences and business conventions, represents the first step in a whole new economic direction. Not far off, the Cervonnex site complements Archamps by offering land that can be used for major projects and economic activities.

An international research and training centre

The strategy is built around international cooperative efforts, in conjunction with the Archamps "Centre Universitaire et de Recherche de la Technopole". Ten research and training programmes are already up and running in such fields as microelectronics, management, pharmaceuticals and physics.

In addition, a "BioPark" will bring together French and Swiss researchers involved in collaborative research efforts focusing on the theme "ageing, longevity and well-being". The first stone of the building that will house the BioPark was laid on 24 November 2006. This public initiative is supported by a number of



On the Archamps site, the "Le Forum" building will house the research laboratories and the BioPark's scientific platform.

innovative research firms linked to this field and located on the site.

A "Euro-Institut", created in 2005 by the Université de Savoie, is an example of French-Swiss cooperation at the university level. Its goal is to encourage the development of cross-border research and training projects and support their growth. This Training-Research vocation has led the neighbouring Saint-Julien high school to expand its European and scientific orientations.

Integrated development

Consideration is now being given to the best way to integrate the Archamps site into the overall French-Genevan regional planning process. The main concerns are:

- urban planning, with the adoption of a Local Habitat Programme and the preparation of the Cross-Border Habitat Management Plan, largely aimed at strengthening the Saint-Julien-en-Genevois urban centre,
- transports, by connecting the site with the Geneva/Saint-Julien-en-Genevois line,
- high speed internet access through the CERN and A40 networks.

The Jura Arc Statistical Observatory

The Jura Arc Cross-Border Statistical Observatory (OSTAJ) was created in 2005 as part of the TransJurassienne Conference action programme. The TransJurassienne Conference is the "institutional" cross-border coordination body whose purpose is to promote coherent growth in the French-Swiss Jura Arc.

The OSTAJ's goals are to monitor the consequences of the bilateral agreements, to build a cross-border statistical observation and information system, to offer a coherent perspective of the situation and of the development of the French-Swiss space, to set up a mechanism to observe and anticipate the effects of the bilateral agreements and to help in the local actors' decision-making process.

Initially, the analyses deal with priority themes: demographics and the movement of

people, the labour market and worker flows, housing, and companies.

After the first two studies were published in March 2006 on demographics and the labour market, the OSTAJ presented on 14 December 2006 two new studies on the housing market and on the most popular business activities on both sides of the border. They will be available soon on the internet: <http://ostaj.ne.ch>.

This research is similar to the work currently being carried out by the MOT in conjunction with the Territorial Observatory headed by the DIACT. The goal is to define an initial body of indicators in several regions and to lay the groundwork for a widespread information system in cross-border areas (which generally lack relevant statistical indicators).





SPECIAL REPORT



The "City Twins" network

The "City Twins" network, developed as part of the Interreg III C community programme, is composed of five cross-border conurbations in Northern Europe: Haparanda/Tornio (Sweden/

Finland, pop.: 32,646), Imatra/Svetogorsk (Finland/Russia, pop.: 45,200), Narva/Ivangorod (Estonia/Russia, pop.: 80,514), Frankfurt(Oder)/Slubice (Germany/Poland, pop.: 83,706) and Görlitz/Zgorzelec (Germany/Poland, pop.: 95,516) .

The purpose of the "City Twins" network is to encourage the exchange of experience and best practices in the field of cross-border cooperation which are likely to encourage the development of these cross-border conurbations. The exchanges cover many themes, such as: urban planning, economic development, mobility, health and social services, employment, education and training, and culture. Working groups were formed and regular meetings are held to pool research efforts. These exchanges are geared towards the following objectives:

- highlighting examples of best practices and innovative initiatives in cross-border cooperation,
- developing and establishing cooperation between local authorities and administrations and increasing their role in this area,
- coming up with joint models to attract investments,
- facilitating the mobility of workers and other people on both sides of the border,
- formalising communications and systematising exchanges between the various partners,
- highlighting the results, and expanding the partnership to other cross-border conurbations.

One example: Tornio/Haparanda (Sweden/Finland)

Cooperative initiatives between conurbations vary in quality. The Tornio/Haparanda cross-border conurbation is most advanced and considered a driving force for the others. Cooperation there is very integrated and the border between the two cities is nearly invisible: there is no border control and the customs buildings have been removed or adapted for other purposes (such as a convention centre).

Local actors agree that the active cross-border cooperation begun in 1987 has played an important role in the economic success of the conurbation. The coordination and sharing of infrastructures has helped save money and develop the cross-border space in a sustainable manner. As a result, there is no competition between the two cities, which share a common logo.

After 2006

Interreg IIIC projects came to a close at the end of 2006. The goal for the "City Twins" network is to secure the results achieved for three years and expand the cooperation to other cross-border conurbations. The network was formalised as an association during the project's closing conference on 13 December 2006.

The MOT, which completed a study called "Cross-border conurbations in Europe" (see News in Brief at right), shares the goal of federating urban cross-border sites in Europe.

Further information: <http://www.citytwins.net>

NEWS IN BRIEF

■ French law and EGTC

The Senate voted on 24th January 2007, in its first reading, several additional articles to the French general code for local authorities, which ensure the effective application of the regulation establishing the new European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) into French law. The EGTC is the new community instrument for territorial cooperation (2007-2013 European programming period). The articles still have to be voted by the French national assembly. As soon as published, they will allow the French partners to establish an EGTC.

The Senate also confirmed the possibility for local authorities and their groupings to be, on an experimental basis, managing authority of the new operational programmes.

■ Study on cross-border conurbations in Europe

The Regional Affairs Secretariat of the Nord-Pas-de-Calais Prefecture commissioned the MOT to conduct a study on "the governance of cross-border conurbations in Europe". This work should provide important information to the French-Belgian Parliamentary Group on the process of structuring the French-Belgian Eurometropole, Lille.

The study conducted an inventory of the best practices in governance in seven European cross-border conurbations: the Trinational Conurbation of Basel, the France-Vaud-Geneva conurbation, the Basque Eurocity Bayonne-San Sebastian, the MAHHL cities (Maastricht, Aachen, Liege, Heerlen, Hasselt), the Oresund region (Copenhagen, Malmö), the Gorlitz-Zgorzelec Eurocity and the Centropo region (Vienna, Bratislava, Győr, Brno) .

The study is available on: www.espaces-transfrontaliers.eu

Press review

■ Danuta Hübner presents implementing rules for cohesion policy 2007-2013 and asks Member States to push forward, Inforegio Newsroom, 8 December

"Regional Policy Commissioner Danuta Hübner has presented detailed rules on how the Structural and Cohesion Funds will be managed in the 2007-2013 programming period. The rules are included in a Regulation adopted by the Commission following lengthy discussions..."

■ Eurodistrict between Lille and Belgian cities: meeting of the founders committee, AFP, 28 November

"The founders committee of the Eurodistrict, an original structure that will improve cooperation between Lille and its Belgian neighbours, met on Tuesday in Lille for the first time, setting for itself the goal of creating the cross-border entity by the end of March..."

■ Lorraine wants to limit the impact of the future Luxembourg financial axis, Les Échos, 5 December

"The region fears the knock-on effect from the nearly new city being developed on the site of the old steelworks [Esch-Belval], and is pushing for a European territorial cooperation group..."

■ Agreement signed between the Saar and Luxembourg on the creation of a cross-border high school, Tageblatt, 5 December

"On 4 December 2006, in Perl-Borg (D), an agreement was signed between the governments of the Saar and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg on the creation of the cross-border high school "Deutsch-Luxemburgisches Schengen-Lyzeum Perl..."

■ Cross-border trains are back, La Vie du Rail, 13 December

"On the morning on 11 December, lines 165 and 167 of the Belgian train system - in the southern part of the country - were opened for the first time in 22 years, allowing border residents of the Belgian province Luxembourg to enter the Grand Duchy..."

■ Residents of Basel will seek health care in Germany, 24 Heures, 9 December

"The first pilot project on health care abroad will begin on 1 January. Beginning in 2007, patients in Basel will be able to recuperate in a clinic in the Black Forest. And the Germans will come to Basel. [...] For now, this pilot project includes four hospitals in the cantons of Basel-City and Basel-Country and nine clinics in the Lorrach district on the other side of the border..."

