

NEW CIVIC NEIGHBOURHOOD:

CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION AND CIVIL SOCIETY ENGAGEMENT AT THE FINNISH-RUSSIAN BORDER

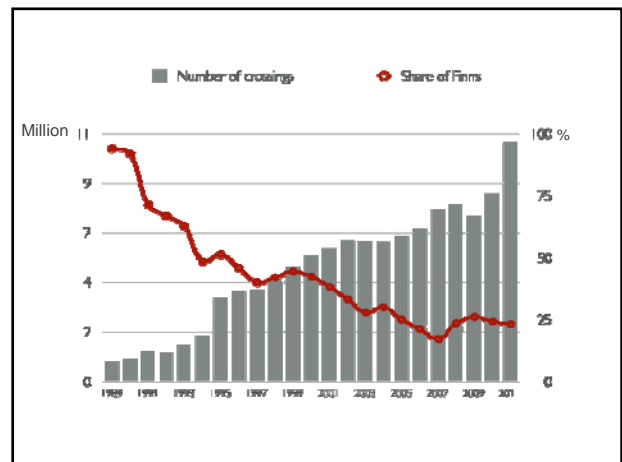

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Introduction

- Finland's post-WW II relationship with USSR/RUSSIA been both close and distant – at times both at the same time
- Shaped by the common history, Cold War realities, pragmatism, interdependencies and lessons learned from armed conflicts
- The 1948 “YYA-pact” – the principle of “official friendship”
- Friendship put in practice also through paradiplomatic links
- Collapse of USSR: More open conditions fuelled interaction, but revealed also stark differences
- EU: Bilateral CBC became a part of the broader dynamics of international politics and EU-Russia relations

Finnish-Russian Border Region

- Sparsely populated, losing population
- Long distances
- Urban centers situated far away from each other
- Cooperation through transnational networks - not necessarily, physically, across the border
- Migration increased since 1990 (29 585 Rus citizens in Fin 2011)
- In terms of trade, border region a transit zone
- Border crossings from less than a million in 1990 to 10.7 million in 2011



Understanding Borders

- **Hegelian/Darwinian** (Ratzel/Mauß): borders determined by the physical, cultural environment – ‘good’ and ‘bad’ borders
- **Historical geography and anthropology** (Bloch/Le Febvre/de la Blanche): borders are wilfully created by society
- **Scientism** (Christaller/Lösch/Hägerstrand): borders as elements of the physics and geometry of social relations
- **Neo-Kantian Functionalism** (Hartshorne/Kristof/Jones): border as a function of historical evolution - exhibit essential and necessary characteristics (consolidation of the state)
- **Marxian/Critical**: borders as a systemic element of capitalist accumulation and concomitant forms of stateness, territorial control
- Borders as **complex social constructions** (Paasi/Balibar/van Houtum) e.g. in terms of social/cultural contention, exercise of socio-political and cultural power, manifestations of irrational rationalities - fear, exclusion and paranoia

Interlinked challenges

- **Cultural**: borders as symbolic representations of cultural affinity, familiarity and “otherness” (redefining the national and European)
- **Ideational**: involving representations of Europe vis-à-vis its neighbours
- **Political**: practical consequences of EU border regimes and cross-border co-operation policies
- **Economic**: more open regional economic space confronted by securitisation policies

Borders Serve a Purpose

- The simplest way to understand borders is to examine them by their function:
 - borders limit our lives they also have an effect on how we behave in different circumstances, how we perceive different places
 - borders are about power relations; the weaker and stronger state see the border separating them from different perspectives
 - borders help us to create and perceive differences, which are indispensable for us in order to construct contexts and meanings
- Multifaceted understanding of political, social & symbolic significance of borders needed to interpret the broad socio-political transformations taking place

Reconfiguring the Transnational Domain

- Global era altered the understanding of power and agency
- "The frame of a nation-state is too small for solving the big problems and too large to solving the small ones" (Touraine 2000).
- The state not disappearing but merely organized differently
- State sovereignty and authority weakened upwards, downwards and sideways (cf. Rosenau 2004; 2005)
- Sub-state paradiplomacy fuelled by the EU's influence of blurring of the distinction between 'international' and 'internal' politics
- Transition from international (border confirming) to transnational (border eroding) relations

From State-centric to Multi-level Governance

- 'Overlapping competencies among multiple levels of governments and the interaction of political actors across those levels' (Marks et al. 1996)
- Challenges conventional structure of centralized, hierarchical national authority by dispersing governance across multiple jurisdictions
- Straddles the borders between:
 - the domestic and the international
 - comparative politics and international relations
 - public and private spheres
 - the state and civil society
- While the do formed transnational space is evidently more virtual than it is geographically bound...
 - ...most transnational actors remain "rooted" in their local conditions

Discovery of Civil Society

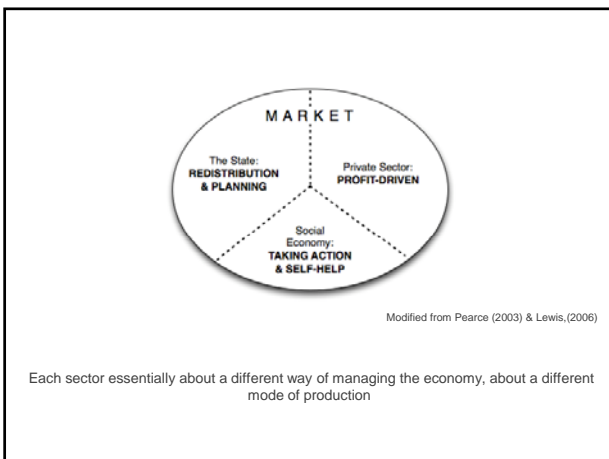
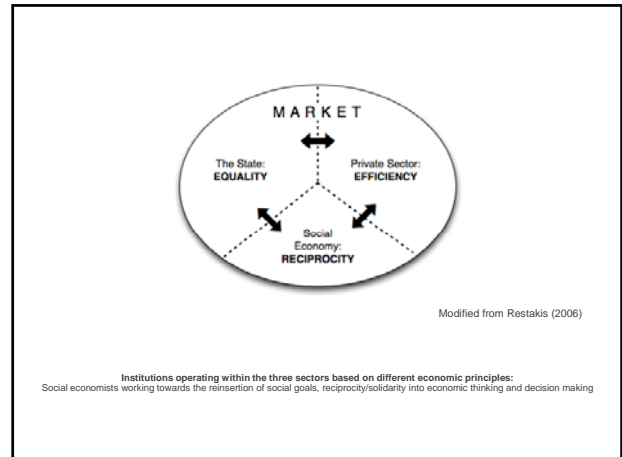
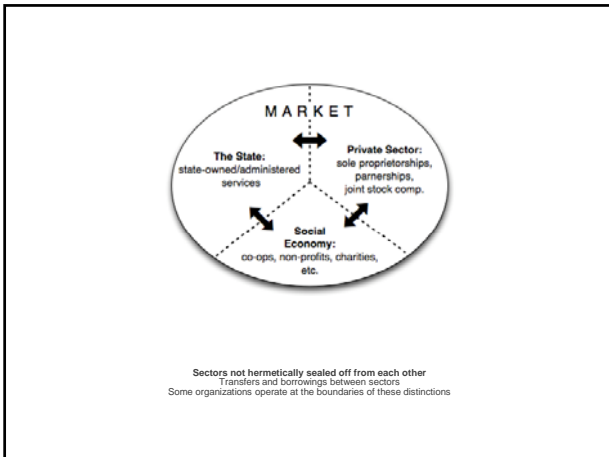
- CS as a political force central in modernizing and democratizing EU governance
 - ↳ Civil society dimension in vogue also in connection to CBC
 - ↳ Elicited the centuries-old interface between Western and Eastern notions of civil society
 - ↳ Contextual expression of civil society
- CS not a stand-alone concept, paired with the concept of the state
 - ↳ EU attempt to promote civil society cooperation involves also an indirect agenda of reshaping political institutions
 - ↳ Risk of being taken as intrusion, trying to impact domestic policies

Why CSOs?

- CSOs encompass a number of qualities, which emphasize their aptitude for CBC
- EUs motivation to engage with CSOs based on the CSOs:
 - **input** (providing information & knowledge)
 - **throughput** (in Parliament's Committees, Commission's consultations or DG's working groups),
 - but increasingly on the **output** in importing Europeaness
- EU's transformative power exercised not only through explicit policies, also through more subtle and informal channels
- CS as a contextually contingent force for change
 - opens up underexploited potential by the EU within its ambitious project
 - increase the overall societal significance of the EU acquis beyond its borders
 - take neighborhood building beyond the merely symbolic or political expedient

Social Economy?

- The part of the economy neither private nor public, but consists of constituted organisations, with voluntary members, undertaking activities for local benefit
- Working for the greater good of local communities, led by people in the locality
- Uses market mechanisms to pursue explicit social objectives
- Often referred to as 'the third sector' and broken down into three sub-sectors;
 - 1) the community sector (usually small, local, modestly funded and dependent on voluntary effort)
 - 2) the voluntary sector (formal, independent, not-for-profit and strong volunteer input) and,
 - 3) the social enterprise sector (businesses with primarily social objectives, surpluses principally reinvested for that purpose in the business or in the community)
- To improve the quality of personal/community life, helps the capacity of individuals and local communities to identify and meet their own social and economic needs



CBC and Spaces of Social Economy Development

- CBC influences the social conditions that affect local development
- CBC create spaces of CS engagement. Seek to:
 - find new and innovative solutions to issues
 - satisfy the needs of those ignored by the private or public sectors
 - improve the quality of personal & community life
 - support the capacity-building and networking actors who individually lack resources
 - help individuals & local communities to identify and meet their own social and economic needs
- Attenuates our tendency to think normative

Concluding thoughts

- Despite the forces of globalization, national borders have remained imperative
- Cross-border networks an important resource for the development of Russia's social economy, eroded the image faceless image of Russia in Finland
- Evolution of CBC suggests that processes of institutional learning have increased the effectiveness of CSOs on both sides of the border
- Enabled CS actors to learn how to operate in new international co-operation environments
- More than transfer of 'best practices', has promoted new ways of seeing CSOs as actors whose roles and activities reflect their social and political embeddedness
- Challenges: securing the financial viability; sustainability of CSOs; and promoting the legitimacy of social enterprises as providers of public goods
- SE conception particularly important in peripheral regions with limited prospects for short-term 'returns', where multiple support mechanisms are needed
 - to reduce grant dependency, to establish greater rapport between CSOs and local governments
- A cross-border space for social contracting and social welfare policies through CSOs?