Another Face of Integration: City Twinning in Europe

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Abstract

Over the last two decades city-twinning became quite popular in Europe, including not only West European and Nordic countries with their long-standing cooperative experience but also the post-socialist states. Twinning is viewed by many European municipalities as an instrument available for both solving local problems and ensuring sustainable development.

This study aims at discussing the dynamics and meaning of twinning in a broader, more principal and critical perspective. It is argued that in Europe twins became city-pairs that do not just aim at bridging and intensified international cooperation as 'border cities' but also at creating – in varying degrees – communality and joint space across national borders. In particular, the question is posed whether the transnationalization on the level of cities is carried by the cities themselves linking up with various forms of regionalization, Europeanization as well as internationalization at large, or if it rather reflects the policies pursued by the states to which the cities belong.

It is also argued that the model of cities re-imagining their borders, activating them through increased cooperation and pooling resources not only impacts and changes the local landscapes but may also entail broader state-related and European consequences as well.

Keywords: City-twinning, local governments, regionalization, cross- and trans-border cooperation, European integration

1. Introduction

Regionalization has recently become a wide-spread phenomenon not only within the EU but also elsewhere in Europe, including former socialist countries. Regionalization is seen by local actors as an adequate and preferable response to numerous challenges that they face in their day-to-day life. Regionalization takes different forms and develops at various levels and city-twinning is one of them. Twinning is viewed by many European municipalities as an efficient instrument for both solving local problems and ensuring their sustainable development. Border-related resources can be utilized more effectively with cooperation extended beyond state borders, although the efficiency and scale of twinning projects varies across Europe to a considerable degree. However, according to both

practitioners and experts, the bright side of twinning prevails. The following benefits from twinning, as a form of jumping scale, may be identified (Handley, 2006: 6-8):

- Bolstering economic and business development
- Improving service delivery and problem solving
- Improving transport infrastructure
- Promoting freedom of movement of people, goods, services and capital
- Accessing EU and other financial institutions in search for funding
- Promoting community well-being
- Promoting stronger community partnerships
- Increasing global and European awareness
- Yielding more intense local government staff development and training
- Providing resources for developing education and culture
- Promoting tolerance and increasing understanding
- Enhancing youth activities

In order to pass judgement on the relationship between the concept of twinning and how city-twinning has fared in practice, we have chosen to probe some particular city-pairs (members of the City Twin Association) that employ such a departure and engage in twinning across national borders. The case study of Tornio (Finland)-Haparanda (Sweden) is specially made to examine the (reportedly) most successful twinning experience. The key question asked consists of what contributes and provides substance to such a cooperation and what, in turn, detracts from it.

Our interrogation is general in nature in the sense of being directed at probing the different conceptual departures used by the city-actors reaching out, although at the same time it remains limited in spatial terms in being focused on those cases of twinning located in Europe that share a joint border. Arguably, a qualitatively new type of city-twinning is gradually emerging in the region. More specifically, the aim here is one of exploring critically particular cases in which twinning consists of utilizing territorial proximity and escape spatial as well as political and administrative fixations through a reaching across statist borders in order to form a rather unified entity. Twinning may, in some cases, resonate with the policies of transnationalization pursued by the respective states. However, it can also feed on other forms of transnationalization such as Nordic cooperation, various forms of European integration or capitalize on options opened up by internationalization more generally. It does not, in the latter cases, have to unfold fully in harmony with the policies pursued by the states to which the cities engaged in twinning belong. Obviously, the driving logic may also vary to a considerable degree between different city-pairs, this then indicating that twinning does not rest on a uniform driving logic. It is fully possible that the underlying logic changes from case to case, and hence a comparative perspective is of value in passing judgement on the nature on city-twinning and the way it contributes to the emergence of various forms of transnationalization and internationalization unfolding in Europe.

2. Key Concepts
It is to be noted, as to the terminology to be applied here, that the very concept of 'twin cities' figures as a rather vexed question in the research literature. Different schools suggest different interpretations and use various synonyms (often of a misleading character). To summarize the ongoing academic discussion the following definitions of the concept can be identified:

In the *domestic context,* twin cities are a special case of two cities or urban centres founded in close geographic proximity and then growing into each other over time. There are numerous examples of twin cities in the US (where the term, first of all, refers specifically to the cities Minneapolis and Saint Paul located in Minnesota) and Europe (UK - Chatham and Rochester, Manchester and Salford, Raleigh-Durham; Germany - Ludwigshafen and Mannheim, Ulm and Neu-Ulm, Mainz and Wiesbaden, etc.). In some cases, twins can eventually lose their individual identity and fuse into a new

and unified city. One famous example consists of Budapest, capital of Hungary. The city originated as two separate settlements (Buda and Pest) facing each other across the Danube river to merge over time into a single city.

There are also a number of the so-called 'satellite' cities in Europe that have emerged in order to 'groom' larger urban centres and/or fulfil specific functions (to host university campuses, techno-parks, industries, transport infrastructure, military bases, etc.): Greater London, Greater Paris, Helsinki-Espoo (Finland), Sandnes-Stavanger (Norway), Severomorsk-Murmansk and Severodvinsk-Arkhangelsk (Russia) are cases in point. The craving for larger and more competitive entities is bound to increase pressures towards mergers.

On the *international sense,* there are two – broad and narrow – definitions of the concept 'twin cities/towns'. Under the *broader* understanding, the term 'twin cities' has been employed to connote cooperative agreements between cities, towns and even counties which are not neighbours but located at a considerable distance and even in separate countries to promote economic, commercial and cultural ties (Stephen, 2008). **Most town twinning unfolds between cities facing similar social, economical and political situations or sharing historical links.** In Europe, a variety of terms are used, although 'twin cities' appears as the most common one. However, also terms such as *sister, connected, double, trans-border, bi-national, neighboured, coupled, partner* and *friendship* are utilized in naming the city-pairs (Buursink, 2001; Schultz, 2002). In the case of Russia (similar to the Soviet time), along with twin towns concept, the terms of *brother (pobratimy)* or *related (porodnennye)* cities are used.

In the *narrow* sense, twin-cities are border towns adjacent to each other. According to Buursink (1994), there are two sub-categories of neighboured border towns: *double towns* that aim at cooperation and supplementing each other and *town couples* that often compete with each other.

Schultz (2002) asserts that only double towns can be seen as real twins and sets a number of criteria for selecting and pinpointing twin towns. They should not only consist, she claims, of border towns but also have the following characteristics:

- They should harbour a joint history as cities that have existed as administrative units in the past, prior to national borders separating them.
- Although previously separated by borders, this delimiting should have been traded for open borders.
- A preferable case consists of cities where a river both separates and connects the cities facing each other across the river (and, for this reason, they are called *bridge towns*).
- There should be connecting factors and features conducive to cooperation such as ethnic minorities as well as command of the neighbour's language.
- There should be a certain level of institutionalization of cooperation between the twins in terms of unified administrative structures and common urban planning. The most advanced twin towns purport themselves as 'Euro-cities' in emphasizing their European rather than national identity.

While agreeing with most of the above criteria, we nonetheless base our study on a somewhat different and more extensive definition of twin towns with adjacency and the breaking of spatial fixations in the form of national borders as our main point of departure. Whereas twinning has in most cases seen as residing in the application of a particular form of 'urban logic', our aim is to reach beyond such a departure in the sense that the rupture pertains, we stress, also to the underlying logic as twinning across borders inevitably provides the cities engaged in such activities with transnational and international features. It does so as they contribute, in varying degrees, to communality reaching beyond national configurations (cf. Joenniemi & Sergunin, 2008 and 2009).

It may further be noted that talking about twinning rather than utilizing some other conceptual departures and representations available stands out, in comparison, as something particularly demanding and challenging. It is border-breaking as such in the sense that the resorting to the concept of twinning figures as a quite ambitious move. The concept has connotations of similitude, like-

mindedness and pertains to claims of an almost identical nature of the two entities involved. In pointing to shared and rather unified space, the concept goes far beyond a mere functionalist strategy of reaching across borders. The parties involved in twinning do not just cooperate with each other while at the same time retaining their rather different being (cf. Arreola, 1996). Instead, they ride on notions pertaining to similarity from the very start and articulate, in terms of policies of representation and scale, their very being by (re)connecting the previously unconnected. Subsequently, they aim at reducing various functional restraints that tend to hide their rather identical nature and therewith the border located in-between the city-pair is narrated – instead of accepting its usual divisive impact and partitioning effects – as something to be downgraded if not abolished. The border is turned, in the context of twinning, into a connective factor and a resource for a rather unified agglomeration to emerge.

This then also implies that being engaged in twinning challenges quite sharply the traditional comprehensions of borders between national states, the way borders are assumed to unfold and function as well as established identities. This type of twinning actually boils down, in one of its aspects, to a strategy employed by border-related cities in their efforts of restraining and reversing the impact of border-drawing and more generally the centripetal forces of modern nation-building. It amounts, as noted above, to efforts of circumventing and undermining the logic that has usually deprived border-related cities of any standing of their own in a transnational context. Instead of being recognized as interesting, legitimate and to some extent also important actors, they have more often than not been marginalized and seen as being located at the fringes of their respective states and subsequently also the state-dominated system of international relations. As argued by Jan Buursink (2001: 7), they have been seen as 'pitiful'. Cities located at borders have been relatively rare to start with, and if nonetheless there, they have been depicted as subordinate actors and – owing to their location in the vicinity of national borders – perceived as end stations, i.e. void of any contacts across the border. Having a twin on the other side of the border has in this context figured as something inconceivable as no conceptual and mental space has been available for any border-transcending projections premised on difference within alleged national similarity and unity.

Overall, cities located at the vicinity of the national border have, rather than coming together, been expected to stay aloof from each other and turn their back towards those on the opposite side of the border. The psychological and identity-related distance – with the construction of political space being premised on clear-cut self/other distinctions – has, in actual fact, been so wide that concepts such as twinning have been void of any credibility.

Twinning thus amounts, once utilized as a departure for locally based cross-border cooperation, to a kind of emancipation if not mutiny, and it entails element of a 'laboratory' or an 'experiment'. It does so from the very start in being transnational and not just bi-national in character. It is, in being transnational in character, very much at odds with the standard formula of nation-state building that is with similarity located inside and difference placed on the outside. The degree of alleged similarity in the context of twinning may vary – consisting either of being alike in the sense of shared citiness or having some specific bonds and 'natural' properties supporting claims pertaining to far-reaching unity – but it amounts in both cases to a breach in the standard state-related discourse. It does so in boiling down to benign and complementary forms of difference, i.e. difference within similarity in having connotations of considerable unity and intimate connectedness reaching across national borders. It exhibits, if viewed in a traditional perspective, more strongly than some of the other concepts employed by cities reaching across national borders that the logic undergirding cities coming together in the context of their border-crossing activities may to a large degree conflict considerably with the way states usually outline and constitute their borders and border-related regions.

One may thus suspect – and do so precisely because of the inherently offensive connotations inherent in the concept – that the city-pairs employing twinning as their departure amount to political dreamscapes. They stand for visions rather than exemplify cases of strong and concrete transnational integration. Arguably, they have adopted evocative names and coined tempting visions of togetherness

but the energy created and released through the use of such narratives and imagineering tend in the end to boil down to very little. Notably, the obstacles may also reside with the cities themselves due to a lack of transformative potential and preparedness to challenge their own cultural horizon and territorial belonging. In sum, naming does not automatically translate to tangible togetherness and concrete integration. Twinning may hence, due to its rather challenging nature as a cross-border endeavour, be too demanding to start with and actually belong – together with a considerable number of other proposals and visions launched since the end of the Cold War (cf. O'Dowd, 2003) – to dreams and visions almost impossible to implement in terms of actual togetherness and unification.

3. Cities as New International Actors

Looking back, the principles underpinning the Westphalian order provided little space for other actors other than states in the sphere of international relations and entities such as cities were expected to remain exclusively within the sphere of the 'domestic'. However, the prerogative of states to insert divisive borders has gradually eroded and consequently various sub-statist entities – including cities – have been able to established relations of their own and to do so even without any decisive supervision exercised by their respective states.

As to Europe, the post-WWII logic of integration and interdependence provided the ground also for cities to aspire for togetherness breaching previous divides. They could participate in and join the endeavours of reconciliation, and did so particularly across the French-German border (cf. Wagner, 1995). It then turned out that the experiences gained in that context were equally applicable in the sphere of the East-West conflict as the Cold War was not just conducive to the emergence of a strict hierarchy, one premised on the primacy of states in the sphere of international relations. It did not merely contribute to the constitution of strictly divided and bordered political space but also allowed – towards the end of that period – cities to establish town-to-town relations. Cities could thereby contribute to the emergence of transnational spaces, although they had to do so under conditions rather strictly controlled and supervised by states. Their motivations were in the first place idealistic with cities aiming at de-polarization, the bolstering of mutual understanding and the creation of ties of friendship between people across the East-West barrier. Cooperation itself was in the first place symbolic in character and rarely driven by any pragmatic concerns and interests. In remaining primarily symbolic in essence, the contacts established amounting to meetings between local leaders, the shaking of hands, cultural events and organizing festivals but they could, in a few cases, also consist of deliveries of aid and the establishment of somewhat more permanent ties.

The contacts created and the networks brought about could be seen as representing a kind of 'diplomacy'. This is also evidenced by that concepts such as 'paradiplomacy' or 'city diplomacy' (van der Pluijm, 2007) have been coined in order to account for the relations established. It is, however, worthwhile to note that cities do in general not aim at applying and copying the principles and characteristic to state-to-state relations. They do not reach out on behalf of the state but do usually do so for reasons of their own. This is to say that they do not regard the relations established as an integral aspect of more formal 'foreign' policies. As noted by Wagner, (1998: 42), if cities try to copy the political type of relations that exist between states, they are most of the times unable to develop the necessary plurality or bring about the trans-national quality of their relations. Upholding the distinction between the statist and the local, city-related departures conceptually as well as a sphere of practice also entails that states can for their part remain quite lenient *vis-á-vis* cooperation between city-pairs. They may view the relations established as being in the first place societal and pragmatic in nature (rather than pertaining to various spheres of 'high-policy' or security-related concerns), this then allowing them to stay aloof from any references to 'diplomacy' in the context of their quite non-politicized city-to-city relations.

It may also be noted that it has become easier to distinguish between the societal and more statist departures in the sphere city-based relations straddling borders. Whereas the previous and more

idealistically premised relations remained in some sense statist and political in nature – the aim of contacts between cities being one of contributing to statist policies in a constructive manner and to complement and reproduce the conciliatory endeavours part of statist policies on a local level – the idealist features have over time basically disappeared. They have changed with economic and growth-oriented issues coming to the fore. Cities coalescence across borders in order to solve concrete and shared problems and this is done for reasons of their own and by employing the competence that they themselves harbour. They aim at adding to their strength by transgressing various borders – be they conceptual, identity-related or spatial – and do so by joining forces in the context of various regional endeavours, or for that matter, through lobbying in various broader contexts. What used to be idealistically motivated and mainly citizen-driven endeavours with issues such as peace, friendship and mutual understanding high on the agenda has more recently turned into something far more mundane and elite-oriented. In essence, the driving force, one spurred by various economic, social, cultural as well as environmental concerns, amounts increasingly to that of self-interest.

Furthermore, the logic has turned EU-related rather than remained statist. With some of the financial means available for twinning and other forms of cooperation coming from the European Union and related funds, the profile of the cities involved has become quite Europe-oriented. Previously closed and barred spaces – with cities at the edge of statist space being unavoidably seen as peripheral – are opened up as these border-regional entities aim at benefiting from cross-border networking. It may, more generally, be observed that cities have, for a variety of reasons, become part of an increasingly competitive logic, and they have been compelled to devise active strategies of their own. However, and significantly, they also seem to have the self-confidence required to do so and act in this context according to their own self-understanding and specific needs.

It may also be noted that the constitutive principles and departures undergirding citiness have some specific features. As claimed by Donald (1999), the essence of being a city consists of the art of immanence. It is premised on the ability of the citizens to be present among strangers, as us among non-us. Bauman (1995), for his part, speaks of fellow-citizens as 'inside-strangers'. Difference is taken to complement similarity and it is furnished with rather benign if not distinctly positive readings. There exists, as to social distance, both a familiar presence and an anonymous absence in the city. It should hence be relative easy, owing to these inherent properties, to push the encounter further out without bringing arguments pertaining to statist concerns and security into the discourse. Or to state it differently: the established link between space and identity may be ruptured and the essence of the city reproduced in a somewhat broader and differently bordered scalar context through processes such as city twinning. Arguably, those properties ground the competence and ability of cities to take stock of the various opportunities opening up with the changing nature of Europe's state-related borders.

At large, although the networking of cities is in the first place underpinned by the logic of competition and carried by an interest in conducting a kind of local 'foreign economic policies' (cf. Wellmann, 1998: 11) the consequences of such moves reach far beyond the economic sphere. The currently ongoing economization of inter-city relations implies, in one of its aspects, that cities now basically follow a rationale of their own in linking in and networking with each other. They seem, in fact, to submit themselves less than used to be the case to departures that are in essence statist and aim instead, through new forms of signification and imagining space, at bolstering their own subjectivity also in the sphere of transnational relations.

This 'liberation' and reification is also very much visible in the form of various international town associations that have over the recent years experienced a boom in membership. Cities part of Central Europe used to spear-head this trend (cf. Wagner, 1995 and 1998), although those located in Northern Europe have been very quick over the last two decades to catch up and join the trend (Johansson and Stålvant, 1998). They have coalesced through the Union of Baltic Cities, projects such as the Baltic Palette or by joining some other networks of twinning, i.e. a rather extensive network of 'sister' cities.

4. Institutionalization of City-Twinning

Twinning has, from the very beginning, been associated with various forms of institutionalization. In the first place, the latter has been there is order to find sources of financing but also in order to coordinate various activities (on twinning arrangements in Northern Europe see appendix 1) and to gain recognition. Within Europe, town twinning (in the broader sense) is supported by the *European Union*, i.e. twinning has a recognized position as part of European integration. In fact, the European Commission has since 1989 provided financial support for activities pertaining to twinning. The current EU support of twinning is channelled for the period 2007-2013 through the program *"Europe for Citizens",* which aims to support a broad range of activities and organizations in the pursuit of "active European citizenship." The overall budget of the program is of €215 million and €11 to €14 million is set aside each year, i.e. specifically earmarked for purposes of twinning (Twinning for tomorrow's world, 2007: 28).

Five permanent priorities to be taken into account are outlined in the program in connecting twinning to European integration:

- The future of the European Union and its basic values
- Active European Citizenship: participation and democracy in Europe
- The inter-cultural dialogue
- People's wellbeing in Europe: employment, social cohesion and sustainable development
- The impact of EU policies in societies

The Council of European Municipalities and Regions (the European section of the United Cities and Local Governments, the world organization of local authorities) also endeavours at promoting twinning initiatives and exchanges between European towns and communities (http://www.ccre.org). According to the CEMR paper, twinning does not merely stand out as a tool to promote peace and stability in the region but is also depicted as a way enhancing a single European identity and citizenship (Twinning for tomorrow's world, 2007: 3). In addition to the promotion of cooperative links between the EU member states at the local level, the CEMR perceives twinning as providing a vital instrument in bringing non-EU countries closer to the EU. In general, co-financing is seen as conducive to municipalities preparing themselves to face various challenges of European integration, in particular in the context of their pre-accession to the Union. Twinning is also noted and recognized in the sense that a website dedicated to town twinning has been launched (http://www.twinning.org).

EUROCITIES constitutes a network consisting of major European cities. It brings together the local governments of 134 large cities in 34 European countries (http://www.eurocities.eu/main.php). The network's activities address a wide range of policies concerning economic development and cohesion policy, the provision of public services, climate change, energy and environment, transport and mobility, employment and social affairs, culture, education, information and knowledge society as well as governance and international cooperation (EUROCITIES Strategic Objectives, 2004).

METREX (Network of European Metropolitan Regions and Areas) offers a platform for the exchange of knowledge, expertise and experience regarding metropolitan affairs. The network has members from some 50 metropolitan regions and areas as well as partners in many others. METREX is a partner of European institutions, the research community, governmental organisations and other networks (http://www.eurometrex.org/EN/index.asp).

Also the *Douzelage* movement is connected to twinning in the sense of being the brainchild of the Granville and Sherborne Twinning Associations in 1989. Delegates of the twelve founder members, one for each European Community member state, met in 1991 in Granville to sign the charter formally bringing Douzelage into existence. The name is a combination of *douze* for twelve and *jumelage* for twinning in French (http://www.douzelage.org/index.php?id=4)**.**

In a somewhat broader and different context, the *Baltic Metropoles network* (BaltMet) represents 11 capitals and metropolitan cities around the Baltic Sea: Berlin, Copenhagen, Helsinki,

Malmö, Oslo, Riga, Stockholm, St. Petersburg, Tallinn, Vilnius and Warsaw. One of the BalMet's key priorities consists of the implementation of the recent EU Strategy and Action Plan for the Baltic Sea region in areas such as growth, employment, environment, education, competitiveness, innovation and change (Baltic Metropoles Ready to Implement the EU Strategy, 2009).

In Russia, the *Twin Cities International Association* aims at promoting sister relations with foreign municipalities. It was established in 1991. and consists of 320 cities and regions from Russia and CIS countries (http://www.twin-cities.ru).

As far as twinning in narrow sense is concerned, the twin cities have established an organization of their own. Hence the *City Twins Association* (CTA) was established in December 2006 as a result of a City Twins Cooperation Network project (2004–2006). It is co-financed by the EU's Interreg IIIC Programme (http://www.citytwins.org) and altogether 14 cities are associated with the CTA: Frankfurt(Oder)-Slubice (Germany-Poland), Görlitz-Zgorzelec (Germany-Poland), Cieszyn and Česky Těšin (Poland-Czech Republic), Valka-Valga (Latvia–Estonia), Imatra-Svetogorsk (Finland-Russia), Narva-Ivangorod (Estonia-Russia) and Tornio-Haparanda (Finland-Sweden).

According to the CTA Strategy for 2010-2020, the association is concentrated on developing cooperation between the bordering twinning cities in the following sectors:

- Co-operation between the city administrations
- Local industrial development
- Promotion of labour mobility
- Social and health issues
- Border crossing
- Education and training
- Cultural co-operation
- Co-operation of the third sector/citizens
- Promotion of interests of the city twins at different political levels (national, EU) (City Twin Association Strategy 2010-2020, 2009).

With the implementation of the Schengen system since late 2007 and with the system also covering the new EU member states, the statist features of the transcended borders have lost much of their restrictive meaning. Instead of remaining divisive, they increasingly amounting to frontiers and shared border-spaces. Crucially, border-regions have turned much more open and fluid in spatial terms thereby also facilitating cross-border integration such as twinning.

Some of the city-pairs using the option have been more successful than others, and the association itself views Tornio-Haparanda and Imatra-Svetogorsk as belonging to the more advanced cases whereas Narva-Ivangorod is thought of as a 'rather loose' city pair. Some stand out as established and well-functioning whilst others represent more efforts of purporting themselves as attractive and visible, i.e. political dreamscapes rather than realities. Kirkenes in northern Norway and Nikel on the Russian side of the Norwegian-Russian border constitute the latest case of city twinning with an agreement signed in June 2008 between the two communities. Quite probably the Kirkenes-Nikel pair also joins, in due time, the CTA and it remains to be seen how the newcomers then succeed in making use of their recently declared connectedness across the Norwegian-Russian border. In any case, their decision to become city twins seems to indicate that the concept of twinning has retained its attractiveness (especially in Northern Europe).

Interestingly, some of the CTA's expressed aims still carry an echo of the previous ideologically loaded period of city twinning. They do so in pointing to aspirations such as those of promoting mutual respect, cohesion and understanding among the member-cities. Similarly, there are references to the advancement of neighbourliness and multiculturalism, although in the first place the aim is to share experiences in the sphere of problem-solving. Basically the aim is one of converting their border-related location usually associated with peripherality into an asset. This is to say that a rather self-centred and functionalist approach prevails with the logic outlined also pointing in general more to diversity than far-reaching unity and similarity. Thus the levelling down of differences in

living standards is mentioned as one of the more concrete and mundane tasks and the broader aims consist of contributing to a 'Wider Europe' on a local scale, although in practice the cities have to struggle with quite concrete issues. They do so above all by aiming at bolstering their share of the benefits originating with cross-border activities, i.e. activities which usually tend to serve non-local rather than local purposes.

Coming together undoubtedly adds to their visibility as local actors linked in a specific way to each other in the context of Europeanness. Moreover, it helps to anchor the concept of twinning in the public discourse by furnishing it with a distinct structural and organizational background, although the efforts of branding and networking across the border do not imply that the twin city concept would then also become more authoritative or established in legal terms.

In addition to local, regional and national (with states supporting the establishment and utilization of cross-border contacts) financing, EU's Tacis and Interreg programs have been key sources utilized in the activities of the CTA and the cooperation that takes place between the twin cities more generally. Occasionally financing has been received from various international financing institutes such as the Nordic Investment Bank and the European Investment Bank.

5. The Case of Tornio-Haparanda: a Success Story?

The two cities are situated on either side of the border consisting of the Torne River in the northernmost part of the Baltic Sea region. The town of Tornio was initially established by the Swedish King in 1621 on the western side of the Torne River, to become part of the Grand Duchy of Finland in 1809. On the Swedish side a new town, Haparanda, was established in 1821 as a replacement of the loss of Tornio. In this sense Haparanda came into being precisely because of the appearance of the border. It is also to be noted that in terms of historical memory the Tornio-Haparanda configuration stands out as a case of 'duplicated cities' (Buursink, 2001; Ehlers, 2001). They do not have a joint history in the sense of having been part of a unified whole – except that prior to Finnish and Swedish state-building the region was a rather unified one consisting of Finnish-speakers and a Saami population – and, over time, they have also varied in size as well as wealth, although more recently the differences in living standard have been leveled out.

Tornio with its 25.000 inhabitants is larger than Haparanda which has some 10.000 inhabitants, although the relationship is in most respect quite symmetric. Tornio also has a rather coherent Finnish-speaking population (some 20 percent speak good or very good Swedish (Zalamans, 2001) whereas the population is more mixed in Haparanda with three different language-groups basically of similar size. There are the 'Tornedalians' who are the native population with Swedish citizenship, albeit with Finnish or 'Meänkieli' (usually seen as a particular dialect of Finnish) as their language, the purely Swedish-speaking Swedes, and then the native Finns with Finnish as their language, although with a competence in Swedish and perhaps also 'Meänkieli' (cf. Lunden and Zalamans, 2001; Zalamans, 2003). Tornio-Haparanda is hence, in being culturally quite diversified, more than just a 'bi-national city' premised on Finnishness and Swedishness. Overall, cultural differences transcending nationally premised unity have been there already for a considerable period of time, and has constituted – particularly in the case of Haparanda – an integral part of the essence of the cities from the very start.

Similarly, the exploitation of vicinity and borders as a resource is not a new phenomenon in the case of Tornio-Haparanda. Being divided only by a stretch of wetland, and with a tradition of many informal contacts on the level of the inhabitants reaching far back in history, the two cities started formal cooperation already in the 1960's through the establishment of a joint swimming hall. Since then interest in cooperation has gradually amounted to developing a very explicit strategy of transboundary cooperation, including joint planning and organization (*Provincia Bothniensis*) in 1985 (Kujala, 2000). This is to say that a twin city strategy was coined in a top-down manner and has been implemented from 1987 onwards, and it has over time brought about a considerable degree of mutual trust and well-functioning relations of cooperation. These have been conducive both to the identity of

the entity created as well as the solving of a considerable number of rather practical problems. The latter range from a joint rescue and ambulance service, a tourist service, employment information agencies, joint schools, educational facilities and a common library with citizens also provided with the choice of picking the facility to their liking.

In particular, the parties pride themselves of a hotel complex with a bar table stretching across the national border and on a local golf course straddling not just the national boundaries but also the difference consisting of Finland and Sweden belonging to different time zones (the story being that "even the shortest putt may take an hour to complete"). These properties have often been viewed as the very expression of the common space created through endeavours of city-twinning.

The more recent developments pertain to a new and joint city core that bridges the two cities in a very concrete fashion. Significantly, the two towns have gradually succeeded in attracting a considerable amount of investments and businesses. The newly established IKEA furniture mall as part of the city core is a case in point.

On a very concrete plan, a unified area and a joint core have been created by constructing unifying roads and connecting pathways as well the establishment of a common circle bus line. A further example of cooperation of a rather practical and functional kind consists of the installment of letterboxes of the neighbouring postal administration with letters consequently being treated as domestic mail (and therefore not circulated by sending them first to the capitals to be delivered according to the usual border-dependent rules). The establishment of such a short-cut through moves of re-scaling and de-bordering is, of course – in addition to the more practical gains – loaded with considerable symbolic significance in pointing to the far-reaching unity. In other words, the divisive effects of national borders have been radically circumvented as a consequence of twinning.

It should be noted, however, that some broader developments have in the first place facilitated a lowering of the border. In fact, the border has not been much of an obstacle since the 1960's owing to intense Nordic cooperation. It has been quite easy for Nordic citizens to transgress, and with Finland and Sweden joining the EU in 1995 the border became almost invisible. EU-membership has further spurred cooperation by labeling various endeavours as European rather than local. Likewise, increased EU financial means have been available to promote twinning.

Yet it is also to be noted that the locally premised togetherness of Tornio-Haparanda has grown so intense that it actually challenges various forms of administrative and legal departures premised on nationness. Finnishness and Swedishness have, in the case of Tornio-Haparanda, to compete seriously implying that it then also tests the ability of the locals to project themselves beyond their usual linguistic, cultural and political borders.

This was indicated by the fact that the epithet of a 'twin city' has on occasions been substituted by the one of 'EuroCity' with the latter being employed for a while since the beginning of the 1990s. The usage of such an alternative marker quite obviously points to efforts of developing an alternative to the concept of twinning as the latter seemed at least initially to meet considerable local resistance particularly on the Swedish side. Commonality could hence be purported in less site-specific terms and presented instead as part and parcel of a broader Europeanness. This approach was in particular applied by *Provincia Bothniensis* as a marketing strategy in aspiring for added visibility and closer commercial ties and the efforts of anchoring oneself in Europeanness rather than nationness, nordicity or just pointing to detached local entities coming together as city twins. It may be noted, however, that the concept of twinning has returned as a key marker. It has again become dominant over the recent years as the initial resistance to togetherness in the form of twinning has by and large faded away.

The efforts of creating a far-reaching commonality have also been restricted by that Finland has gone over to the Euro whereas Sweden has stayed with its national currency. This state of affairs implies that Tornio and Haparanda remain divided due to the existence of different national currencies. However, considerable efforts to bridging this divide have taken place as the Euro seems to have turned into a valid currency also on the Swedish side of the national borders and the Swedish crown is equally a valid currency on the side of Tornio. Moreover, Haparanda has locally made the decision to

use Euros extensively in its calculations and budgeting, among other things in order to facilitate the planning and implementation of joint projects with Tornio. Both issues – the toning down of the label of a EuroCity and the bolstering of the position of the Euro as a joint currency – have profound symbolic importance in allowing the re-imagined cities to be increasingly seen as being integrated and unified along the lines of broader a European development.

Obviously, the projecting of oneself into a new and far-reaching unity has not been easy and the problems seem mostly to have been discernible among the Swedish-speaking inhabitants of Haparanda. They tend to feel that the down-playing of differences favours too much the Finnish-speakers on both sides of the border. Lundén and Zalamans (2001: 36) also point out that there is a legacy on the Swedish side to view Finland as "poor, dangerous or irredentist". To re-read the previous otherness and to incorporate it into a joint we-ness in the context of twinning is thus a demanding challenge.

In other words, although the whole trend is positive, the twin city does not fully function – at least not yet – as a unified city in a proper sense of the word. Accepting that the previously divisive border now predominantly connects and facilitates cooperation and hence invites for a projection into the we-ness on which twinning is to some extent also met with resistance.

6. Conclusions

As follows from the research above, many city-pairs present in Europe do not just aim for bridging and intensified cooperation as 'border cities'. They also display efforts of creating – in varying degrees – communality and joint space, this then providing the ground for the usage of the concept of a 'twin city'. A rather broad repertoire of other representations remain available as well but it seems that there exists increased space and interest in employing precisely that conceptual departure, and to do so despite the various quite demanding and challenging connotations attached to the one of 'twinning'.

Overall, the experiences gained in Europe of twinning can be assessed as being positive. The introduction of the concept – one allowing for the difference of the other to be viewed as benign and complementary in nature and positioned within a broader sphere of commonality – has enabled several cities to use their location at contiguous borders in order to opt for new forms of being and acting. The providing of a new and broader twist to the concept of the twin city and reproducing it in a trans-border context constitutes one specific aspect of a changing and an increasingly integrated political landscape. The coalescing of cities adds, in a form of its own, to the strengthening of communality, mutual trust and cooperation in the region and provides border-related cities as relative small entities with the option of impacting a broader setting. Twinning adds, in view of the more recent experiences, an interesting notion to the understanding of 'Europe', and it does so as one way of extending EU-related Europeanness beyond the borders of the EU. It also testifies, in a broader perspective, to the potential inherent in the concept of city-ness as particularly prone to cooperation transcending statist borders.

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