



THE KARELIA CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION PROGRAMME

A soft space on the Finnish-Russian hard borders

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Abstract

The study analyzes the Karelia cross-border cooperation programme and its activity under the theoretical framework of soft spaces, exploring the processes through which it overcomes the administrative and political boundaries of the Finnish-Russian 'hard borders'. The ability of these cross-border areas to cooperate may appear to conflict with the geopolitical context in which they embedded. The historical path, however, reveals a process where conflicts over changes of borders and political scenarios coexisted with the sharing of spatial identities and development challenges. The study demonstrates how stakeholders are motivated both by functional needs of cooperation towards regional development, as well as desires to change existent practices in the Russian side. Through informal and semi-formal processes of negotiation employed by several stakeholders, the regions attempt to overcome the clashes between EU, Finnish and Russian political and administrative discourses. Thus, it is argued that the cross-border cooperation programme constitutes a soft space in-between regional, national and supranational levels, as well as an enabler of other soft spaces in the local cross-border level.

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List of Abbreviations

BO - Branch Office
BSR - Baltic Sea Region
CB - Cross-border
CBC - Cross-border cooperation
CSO - Civil society organization
ENI - European Neighbourhood Instrument
ENPI - European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument
EU - European Union
FA - Financial Agreement
FRCUFW - Finnish - Russian Commission on the Utilization of Frontier Waters
GDP – Gross Domestic Product
JTF - Joint Task Force
JMA - Joint Managing Authority
JMC - Joint Monitoring Committee
JSC - Joint Selection Committee
JOP – Joint Operational Programme
LSP - Large Scale Project
NFRI - Northern Fisheries Research Institute
NGO - Non-governmental organization
SEFR - South Eastern Finland - Russia
TACIS - Technical Assistance to the Commonwealth of Independent States
WWII - World War II

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1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Cross-border cooperation at the outer borders of EU has evolved and gained larger importance in the policy toolbox. Some argue it could be considered “as part of EU regional (cohesion) policy” (Fritsch, Németh, Piipponen & Yarovoy, 2015, p.2583).

If CBC is, in general, seen as a means of achieving socio-economical, spatial and environmental cohesion, through the joint addressing of shared interests beyond administrative boundaries, CBC with EU neighbours may represent a struggle in itself. The regional development and cooperation values can shock not only with the values of the partner country’s actors but even with the broader (and different) aims of EU towards its neighbours.

With the completion of the enlargement wave of EU in 2004, a new area of direct neighborhood, no longer formed by pre-accession countries, has driven the EU towards the introduction of a new policy in the framework of external relations. The European Neighborhood Policy (ENP) was started in 2004 and launched through the Commission’s communication “Wider Europe - Neighborhood”, adopted one year later (EEAS, 2016).

Kølvraa (2017) points to the several dimensions of the ENP, firstly the security one, as it was brought up also as a response from EU to the new context of its borders, closer to zones of instability. Moreover, it is important to notice the ENP relation with an export of EU values to its neighbours, trying to promote several changes on its neighbours, politically and economically, according to EU democratic values (Kelley, 2006; Skenklová, 2012).

Regarding to the relations between EU and their neighbours, and the cross-border cooperation activity under the ENP, Russia stands out in several aspects. Firstly, Russia does not participate of the ENP as other neighbours, but is part of a strategic partnership agreement where four “common spaces” for cooperation were set (Kølvraa, 2017).

When analyzing further, specifically the Finish-Russian cross-border cooperation, various authors explore the singularities of these relations. It is argued that cooperation on this region is marked by a high level of detachment from historical and geopolitical issues (Fritsch, et al., 2015). These issues, on the other hand, weight heavily on the relations of actors in other levels (namely, between Russia and EU), both through many of its member states and the supranational level itself. Nevertheless, both parts, EU and Russia, show willingness to ‘shield’ CBC activities from these issues.

Fritsch et.al (2015) has also reflected on cooperation between Finland and Russia, specifically in Karelia region, as an evolving relation that, despite the challenges, seems similar to cooperation within EU, i.e. between EU members. Cooperation activity between these countries started with the fall of Soviet Union when, following the change of political contexts, Finland invested in promoting cross-border cooperation initiatives, contributing also to the growth of grassroots organizations in the Russian side of the borders (Demidov & Svensson, 2011). The experience of cooperation along Finnish-Russian borders is considered an exemplary of best practices by the EU (Ibid), and was reportedly used as a model for the ENP itself (Järviö, 2012).

The ability of these cross-border areas to cooperate across 'hard borders'¹, and its image as a successful and exemplary experience, may appear to conflict with the geopolitical and historical context of these regions and their nations. A past of territorial disputes, wars and conflicts between Finland and Russia, added by the political divergences between EU and the neighbour country, often leading to ruptures as in the sanction policy introduced in 2014, could point to a series of barriers to a process of cooperation across borders. Nevertheless, CBC activity seems to have found a path around such challenges.

It is important to notice the specificities of the cross-border region of Karelia, which may contribute to the current state of cooperation across borders. As Liikanen (2008, p.26) clarifies, the historical path of Karelia formed a region with "its own ethnic, linguistic, and religious peculiarities".

The specificity of Karelia in its history and current scenario of a transnational region justifies a deeper analysis of how cooperation has emerged and evolved, despite the challenges typical of hard borders, with a past marked by conflict. At the same time, such analysis depends on an adequate theoretical framework, which encompasses the realities of these border areas.

As introduced by Liikanen (2008) EU CBC programmes have been considered to foster a new type of regionalization through their cross-border activity stimulus. However, it is questionable to what extent these programmes create such a change of conception on the regional actors in practice. As the author convincingly points out, cross-border regionalization advocated by the EU relies on the promotion of an "Europeanness", closely related to major political goals. Nevertheless, this process tends to disregard local and regional historical understandings of the territorial scales, as well as historical building of identities, clashes and overlaps between national imaginaries. In this sense, discourses of Europeanization do not fully grasp the building of cross-border regions around cooperation, arguably even less adequate in the context of the Russian neighbour.

At the same time, the concept of soft spaces have been applied in the attempt to understand the surge of new spatial scales, based on the attempt to overcome physical and administrative barriers of institutional spheres. This approach provides a more in-depth and regional perspective to the processes involving CBC. The soft spaces concept has been used in empirical studies of CB regions between EU member States, as well as regions inside nation States.

In addition, by recognizing the importance of the history of development of Karelia CB region, we consider a perspective of conflict-to-harmony, introduced by Minghi (2014), as an approach to the studies of border regions, with focus on the changing relations between sides of the border.

Finally, this work will approach the processes through which the Karelia region engage in cross-border activity, despite the divergent political and administrative spheres forming the national and supranational levels. We herein raise the question: how do these regions, in use of the ability to overcome different (supra) national values, work towards soft spaces, even though submitted to hard borders?

¹ Hereinafter understood as the guarded borders, rationally oriented towards security and impediment to the entrance of considered threats (For more, see Rumford, 2006).

1.2 Research problem, objectives and research questions

Drawing upon the background hereinabove presented, the present work understands the usefulness and viability of the study on the Karelia CBC programme and its cross-border activity under the conceptual framework of soft spaces. Through the present research, we aim to explore the CB activity in the outer borders of the EU, as a means to fill a gap in the current theoretical and empirical studies of soft spaces, which do not offer a perspective on cross-border regions between EU and non-EU countries.

The main objectives of this study are, therefore, to understand if and how the Karelia CBC programme activity can be understood as a soft space, as well as the processes, mechanisms and actors responsible for the creation of such space. It aims, in addition, to understand the role of the programme in creating a soft space at the local levels, through the analysis of projects performed under the programme's framework.

The Karelia region is chosen for its relevance on the academic literature of cross-border region studies, as well as its often acclaimed 'success' in cross-border cooperation activity in the outer borders. Considering the historical development of the region has involved a series of border changes, conflicts and wars, added by the well-known clashes between the political spheres in which the regions are placed (i.e. the intersection of EU and Russian governance spheres), the achievement of a well-functioning cooperation activity across these borders could be seen as a development against the odds. Therefore, the analysis of such activity under the soft spaces concepts, backed by a historical perspective of conflict-to-harmony, aim to uncover a narrative that explains how CBC in Karelia is developed and advanced, despite the barriers of the 'hard borders'.

The study will be, thus, guided by the following research questions:

1. *What are the driving forces behind the emergence of the soft space of Karelia CB region?*
2. *What processes and characteristics define the flexible governance arrangements in Karelia?*
3. *Which role has the CBC played in the emergence of the soft space of Karelia?*

Sub items support the research questions, aiming to provide a complete picture of the CBC activity in the region and operationalize data collection and analysis through more specific elements:

1. a) The rationales guiding different actors and levels in the construction of Karelia cross-border soft space;
b) The issues shared and addressed across borders by the CBC Programme.
2. a) The historical path of the cross-border region and its relation to the current scenario of CBC; a description of the surge and development of Karelia CB soft space;
b) The intersections of spaces of governance, political and institutional, in the area of Karelia CBC programme, and how they are dealt with by the different actors;
c) The actors involved in the setting and development of the regional space of Karelia through the cooperation programme;

- d) How regional, national and supranational levels and stakeholders interact in the surge and development of Karelia CB region, through the cooperation programme;
- 3. a) The instruments and practices rising from the cross-border cooperation activity in Karelia and how they contribute to the overcoming of administrative boundaries;
- b) How the projects undertaken in CBC programme area reflect the creation of soft spaces in practice.

1.3 Societal and scientific relevance

The present work aims to bring a relevant contribution, by increasing the reach of empirical studies in soft spaces, as well as the understanding of the processes involved in the promotion of CBC between EU and non-EU members.

Regarding to the societal contribution, the study utilizes a different perspective on the development of CBC activity in the outer borders, as a means of proposing more adequate narratives to the context of the hard borders. Such context often cannot be encompassed by theoretical approaches currently used, as Europeanization and New regionalism.

Furthermore, the analysis provides a deeper understanding of the mechanisms and processes of governance employed by these regions in order to overcome the administrative and political barriers posed by the context of the borders. By shedding light on both the barriers and strategies to overcome those, this study can contribute to both the European Union Community and the neighbour countries, in the sense it deepens the understanding of the possibilities of improvement in the promotion of CBC activity in the outer borders.

Finally, in what relates to the theoretical contribution, the present case study and the subject chosen offer the possibility of adding a perspective not yet explored in depth by the users of soft spaces concepts. Although the soft spaces theory highlight the co-existence of both 'hard' and 'soft' institutional spaces, the case studies mostly approached under this perspective are placed within the EU or single nations. Despite the consideration of a series of 'hard' institutional spaces in these cases, they have not approached complex scenarios of hard borders here explored, namely the outer borders of EU.

1.4 Research design

Following the present Introduction chapter, the theoretical framework of soft spaces and historical perspective of conflict-to-harmony are further approached at Chapter 2. Both conceptual understandings of soft spaces and empirical studies are analyzed, proposing finally a framework for the empirical analysis of soft spaces, with a historical perspective of analysis for border regions.

Chapter 3 clarifies on the methodology chosen for the study of Karelia CBC programme as a soft space, presenting the tools and methods of data collection and analysis, as well as the limitations of the present research.

Chapter 4 explores the historical and geopolitical context of Karelia cross-border region. It approaches the changes of the physical borders, the cultural and political consequences, as well as the evolution of cooperation activity across the borders and its frameworks along time.

Furthermore, it details the relevant characteristics of the object of study, the Karelia CBC programme, and the projects selected as observational units of the case study.

Following, Chapter 5 analyses the main findings from the study, in order to understand the processes, mechanisms and rationales behind the emergence of Karelia CBC as a soft space. Finally, Chapter 6 draws a series of conclusions achieved by the study, providing recommendations to future research and acknowledging the challenges involved.

2 THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 The 'soft spaces' concept in planning and governance

Challenges in territorial planning and governance have been, in the last decades, driving the pursuit of alternative forms of governance. Theory and practice have shown that, although various areas of the planning field cannot be contained by territorial units and administrative boundaries, they often belong to formal and fixed scales of governance, as environmental, social development and infrastructural issues (Allmendinger, Chilla and Silker, 2014). The necessity to appropriately address these overarching issues, and consequent attempts to work across territorial, spatial and governance limits create, in some cases, new types of spaces that no longer belong, but coexist with the fixed spheres of planning. These are often explored in the literature as 'soft spaces' (Allmendinger, Haughton, Knieling & Othengrafen, 2015).

Soft spaces are understood as "new geographies" (Allmendinger et al, 2015) emerging for several reasons, though essentially involving the need of reaching across the formal boundaries of planning and governance. As new spatial scales, soft spaces happen amongst, outside and/or parallel to formal spaces, surpassing not only administrative divides, but also encompassing various levels of spatial governance (Haughton, Allmendinger & Oosterlynck, 2013). They may completely renounce existing territorial and political boundaries, challenging such definitions, or build upon current spaces of governance to create new ones (Othengrafen, Knieling, Haughton & Allmendinger, 2015).

Definitions of soft spaces as a concept remain, nevertheless, considerably vague and vast, with numerous attempts to further foster a clear understanding. The term was introduced by Allmendinger and Haughton (2009), when examining the process of devolution happening in the UK under the New Labour government which, in a neoliberal approach, advocated for more delivery-focused forms of spatial planning (Olesen, 2012). The authors explain these new spaces as results of such approach to spatial planning, going beyond and in-between the formal boundaries, as in the following definition:

so whilst planning still needs its clear 'fix' around set boundaries for formal plans, if it is to reflect the more complex relational world of associational relationships which stretch across a range of geographies, planning also needs to operate through other spaces, and it is these we think of as 'soft' spaces (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009, p.619).

The new spaces are, therefore, socially constructed around and across existent and formal geographies. As Telle (2017, p.94) further summarizes, soft spaces can be understood as "flexible governance arrangements that aim at overcoming institutional borders and entrenched practices by inserting new ways of doing things".

Soft spaces also often generate soft or fuzzy boundaries, as they are frequently motivated by fluid issues as cultural identities, water basins and others, requiring certain flexibility to efficiently address the intended challenges (Haughton et al., 2013). Olesen (2012) focus on this aspect to analyze soft spaces as episodes of strategy-making in spatial planning. The flexible character of these spaces allows for considerable impact on the power distribution in planning. Through their blurred boundaries, soft spaces can be based upon a selection of targeted issues and actors, drawing a very specific policy agenda.

These spaces may also create and, consequently, be embedded in new entities or institutions which do not belong to the formally established ones, but coexist with those. However, soft spaces are considered informal or semi-formal (Metzger and Schmitt, 2012), in the sense of its non-statutory character, whose governance structures, although existent, are not part of the formal democratic process of elections and representativeness.

Nevertheless, although not through the formal means, these entities are often legitimated by other forms of engagement with the governmental sphere (Allmendinger et al., 2015). It can be said that, through the interaction between hard and soft spaces, a level of 'lending' of legitimacy can happen, in which institutional and political stability is provided by the former to the latter (Telle, 2017).

Despite the apparent opposition between 'soft spaces' and 'hard spaces', the latter representing the formal spaces of policy, governance and regulation, both theoretical and empirical studies have shown the frequent coexistence of both (Allmendinger et al., 2015). Indeed, a differentiation between both concepts is crucial in the understanding of the various mechanisms of governance and planning (Ibid), but equally important is the acknowledgement of the interplay of both, in which spatial softness does not figure "as an absolute property of certain spatial entities, and not as eternal but, rather, as a contingent stage in the development trajectories of some spatial entities" (Metzger and Schmitt, 2012, p.276).

Finally, Haughton, Allmendinger, Counsell and Vigar (2009, p.52) develop four conclusions on soft spaces, which can contribute to the development of empirical studies:

1. Soft spaces represent **a deliberate attempt to insert new opportunities** for creative thinking, particularly in areas where public engagement and cross-sectoral consultation has seen entrenched oppositional forces either slowing down or freezing out most forms of new development.
2. **The 'hard' and 'soft' spaces of governance are mutually constitutive**, such that one cannot work without the other. The aim is not to replace 'hard' institutional spaces with new 'softer' ones, rather to create complementary and potentially competing opportunities for development activities to focus around, whether at some kind of 'sub' regional or 'sub' local government scale.
3. The soft spaces of governance are becoming more numerous and more important as a part of the institutional landscape of spatial planning and area regeneration
4. Soft spaces often seem to be **defined in ways that are deliberately fluid and fuzzy** in the sense that they can be amended and shaped easily to reflect different interests and challenges.

Further exploration of the soft spaces concept has been promoted by the literature since then, investigating the existence of this phenomenon under other circumstances across Europe in the context of territorial cohesion and cross-border cooperation (Olesen, 2012). Haughton's conclusions aforementioned, especially in the three highlighted concepts, provide a valuable framework for the analysis of regions as soft spaces and has been used by other authors in such studies.

Telle (2017), for instance, applies the concepts of soft spaces in his investigation of two Euroregions and their roles in addressing the issue of peripherality of the regions in question. By focusing on the characteristics of soft spaces and the processes related, as laid by Haughton, Telle shows how the path of Euroregions can be better understood when viewed as soft spaces, revealing their roles and relations with the hard spaces of national and supranational levels. Box 1 further demonstrates the process of analysis and findings of the author.

Telle (2017) proposes an analysis of two different Euroregions aiming to combat the negative impacts of peripherality through cross-border cooperation activity. In this sense, Telle defends the understanding of Euroregions as soft spaces, rather than cases of state rescaling. He argues that, as soft spaces, Euroregions have the objective of overcoming physical and administrative borders, as well as established practices in governance in different aspects. At the same time, these characteristics of Euroregions, as soft spaces, enable those to adapt to the changing contexts of national and supranational institutional, hard spaces, while continually promoting the tackling of border issues through cross-border integration.

Telle's study on the Euroregions Šumava (between Germany, Czech Republic and Austria) and Pomoraví (between Austria, Czech Republic and Slovakia), focused on the features of soft spaces as their fuzzy and fluid nature and the relations with hard spaces. His investigation has showed very different pathways and degrees of success in terms of overcoming the institutional hardness and certain governance practices.

Šumava Euroregion managed to take advantage of the external circumstances, the end of Soviet Union and EU accession funds, to create a horizontal network and enhance the linkages across borders. This ability, as the author explores, was closely connected to the relations of such soft space with the hard spaces, i.e. the system of public administration and internal politics in Germany and Austria. This has allowed the Euroregion to gain increasing importance in the CBC activity through their participation in design and selection of projects in the INTERREG CBC funded programmes.

Meanwhile, the Pomoraví Euroregion faced difficulties in terms of getting around the existent administrative barriers. The hesitating devolution of power to regional and local levels by the central governments of Czech Republic and Slovakia represented a barrier to the Euroregion in term of increasing its importance in the cross-border scenario. In Slovakia, especially, such lack of access to the domestic politics by the regions resulted in a loss of their role as CBC actors. Pomoraví, consequently, failed in becoming an important driver of CBC for those regions through the overcoming of administrative barriers, even though CBC activity did not end altogether, but continued through lesser and separated efforts of the regions.

Box 1 - Telle's analysis of Euroregions as soft spaces (Source: author, based on Telle, 2017)

2.1.1 The basis of empirical analysis on soft spaces

In order to investigate the manifestation, functioning and outcomes of soft spaces, it is necessary to go beyond theoretical constructs and analyze empirically how and why such spaces emerge. In this area, Allmendinger et al. (2015) develop an extensive investigation based on eight case studies, detecting various rationalities and practices generated by soft spaces, in different planning contexts. Such work presents a valuable set of findings, here to be used as general guidance to the investigation of soft spaces. The focus of such studies

are, as majority of the literature in the field, on regions inside EU member states and intra-EU cross-border regions.

In the following sections, and based on the work of the authors mentioned, we reflect on a series of factors to be analyzed on the empirical investigation of soft spaces - rationality, processes of emergence and evolution, relations between soft and hard spaces and consequent impacts - as well as the current findings of the literature in the field.

2.1.1.1 Rationale behind the emergence of soft spaces - 'Why'?

As the authors clarify, although literature in the field has pointed to functional needs as the usual motivation for the emergence of soft spaces, other possibilities in terms of rationale have yet to be explored. During their empirical studies, the authors have found two principal rationales, the first one related to the functional needs - a response to challenges of environmental character, local economies or even simply the use of European funds, across administrative boundaries. The second relates to the creation of new imaginaries connected to space, in a breach of the current and common forms of "thinking and doing" (Allmendinger et al., 2015, p.217) in a given area.

The Baltic Sea Region has initiated the macroregional policy wave by the EU, which built upon the idea of territorial cohesion and cooperation. Metzger and Schmitt (2012) explore the macroregions as soft spaces, through the analysis of the surge of the BSR, its development and governance structures.

As the authors explore, the regionalization of the Baltic Sea started already through processes of building transnational cooperation, after the fall of the Iron Curtain and consequent change of political scenario in the world. Although several transnational organizations were created around pan-Baltic activities in the 90s, western and eastern counterparts did not envision same paths to cooperation in the BSR, which meant the weakening of efforts in this direction until the 2000s.

In 2007, motivated by pressing environmental issues in the Baltic Sea, the European Council conclusion set the start of the BSR strategy. The formulation of strategies from then on involved great efforts for accommodation of several related issues and concerns of different stakeholders, through open consultations processes. It has resulted on the construction of a fuzzy space, with no geographical marked boundaries, nor new instruments or institutions, but rather a space for coordination of territorial policy and facilitation of decision-making.

Another special feature of the BSR as a soft space is its process of 'hardening', in the sense that it assumed with time a spatial identity, supported by the positioning of the EU as a 'metagovernor' of the BSR strategy, the strengthening of the networks and institutional stabilization of the BSR strategy.

Finally, the study of the BSR shows the development of a soft space as a means to address a series of shared issues, through consensus and coordination among stakeholders, achieving further institutional establishment as a spatial identity, in a process of 'hardening' of the soft space created.

Box 2 - The Baltic Sea Region as a soft space (Source: author, based on Metzger and Schmitt, 2012)

The Baltic Sea Region (BSR), as approached in the Box 2, is an example of soft space emerged as a response to functional needs, in environmental protection, economic prosperity, accessibility, attractiveness and safety (Metzger & Schmitt, 2012). Additionally, as also detected by Allmendinger et al. (2015) in the investigation of functional rationales, the BSR and the following macro regional strategies have also surged motivated by the goal of creating a more efficient arena of cooperation among stakeholders and foster their capacity for doing so (Metzger & Schmitt, 2012; Allmendinger et al., 2014).

The second rationale found by the authors, regarding the promotion of new spatial identities, relates to the intention of shaping new spatial imaginaries - in political, environmental, economic contexts, and many others. Such spaces may be promoted by involved actors as a means of endorsing specific strategies or goals. In a sense, this type of soft spaces often involve an attempt of re-branding of regions and redirecting the existent vision of the area. In the context of cross-border regions, for instance, the surge of soft spaces can be based on the desire of bridging different cultures across borders and promoting a shared identity, being in this sense a “symbolic gesture” (Othengrafen et al., 2015, p.220).

The change of spatial imaginaries as part of the rationale of soft spaces promotion is identified by Walsh (2015) in the study of the cross-border cooperation path between the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. Through a series of interviews with actors involved in the spatial planning of both local and regional levels of the countries, the author approaches the ways through which soft spaces inserted and promoted opportunities for cooperation, in a scenario of former intense conflict across the current borders (Box 3).

In his study of the cross-border cooperation in the island of Ireland, Walsh (2015) investigates the roles of soft spaces in enabling the surge of cooperation across the borders between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland.

The island, separated between north and south since 1922, has faced intense armed conflict between republicans, defenders of the union of the island, and loyalists, searching to maintain Northern Ireland as a region of the United Kingdom. In 1998 the conflict came to end with the Belfast Agreement, which also marked the willingness of both areas to work together despite virtually no shared objectives in terms of the future of the region.

However, imaginaries related to spatial matters and connected political views still differed significantly. Its impact in the policy-making of the border regions represented a barrier for a new vision of the island as a functional space, rather than a divided territory. Soft spaces approaches were essential to overcome both the institutional and imaginaries divides.

Cross-border institutions were created after the Belfast Agreement, initiating cooperation in various fields as tourism, trade and minority languages, as well as INTERREG programmes in territorial cooperation. The funding provided by the latter had strong importance in promoting cross-border cooperation.

Informal processes marked the surge of cross-border cooperation in these borders, pushed by the initiative of local and regional stakeholders involved with governance of the regions. Processes of connecting interested actors across borders, creating an “epistemic community” were crucial part of facilitating activity and creating the imaginary that working together was possible. Other approaches, through the creations of spatial strategies in both sides, showed the efforts to redirect the political discourses and open the opportunity for cooperation in the area of spatial planning and cross-border matters. Such attempts were also later formalized with the creation of a “Framework for Cooperation” around spatial strategies for the island. The reframing of spatial imaginaries is also evident on the steering of cartographic and discursive directions, aiming to soften the divides and acknowledge the opportunities of cross-border cooperation.

As the authors finds, the case study of the island of Ireland shows the role of soft spaces in creating opportunities for the emergence of new actors and institutional forms of cooperation in an area of significant political boundaries and, even more significantly, former conflicting spatial imaginaries and ideological visions.

Box 3 – The cross-border Soft space of the island of Ireland study by Walsh (Source: author, based on Walsh (2015))

2.1.1.2 Processes of emergence of soft spaces - How?

Understanding the processes through which soft spaces emerge and develop are also part of the investigation of the phenomenon. Allmendinger et al. (2015) propose an evolutionary approach, in which the historical development of such spaces are analyzed in the case studies, with a focus on dynamics of top-down, bottom-up and possible combinations of both in the processes of creation and evolution of soft spaces.

Among the findings, the authors show that soft spaces are, in some cases, initiated by public bodies in local or regional levels as a response to changes in the planning scales provoked by central governments. In these cases, involved actors seek alternatives to overcome administrative burdens and promote new spaces of governance to address the challenges of

a certain area. Also in some cases, a bottom-up process can be seen to occur, in the sense that local and regional stakeholders independently define the spatial level and aims for mutual cooperation. However, both bottom-up and top-down processes often coexist in the establishment of soft places, with central government providing support for subnational initiatives and stakeholders once started in a public sphere, with various motives, according to their agendas.

Soft spaces have also shown not to be inherently an intentional strategy, but may result from coincidental circumstances which can be, for instance, converging interests of different actors leading to a process of cooperation and creation of a soft space.

More importantly, it can be inferred from the findings of empirical studies by Allmendinger et al. (2015), that the processes of emergence of soft spaces involve a multitude of actors in various levels, both public and private. New arrangements of governance or combination of existent ones are created in different forms, intersecting institutional frameworks with participation of different actors, sometimes through cooperation or even by a process of action and reaction to proposed agendas.

2.1.2 *Conclusions: a framework of study for Soft Spaces*

Literature on soft spaces has shown it to be a concept of certain ambiguity and varying definitions, considered by some highly vague (Othengrafen et al., 2015). A core understanding, however, seems to be shared by several authors, who approach soft spaces as new types of planning and governance spaces across and around formal established arrangements. Their development involves a series of context-dependent processes and, as we here consider, may not be possible to categorize and analyze as a rule.

Nevertheless, the empirical studies here explored enable the production of a basic framework for studying soft spaces. More precisely, we draw from the literature on this field the relevant areas of findings presented by the authors. Notwithstanding, the variety of ways, reasons and actors that can be found in the analysis of soft spaces and their development showcases the level of singularity of each context. Therefore, we argue that any form of analysis should not be taken as a template against which a case of soft space can be compared, but rather as a non-exhaustive illustration of relevant areas to be identified and explored when observing these objects. The following figure aims to summarize these relevant aspects (Figure 1).

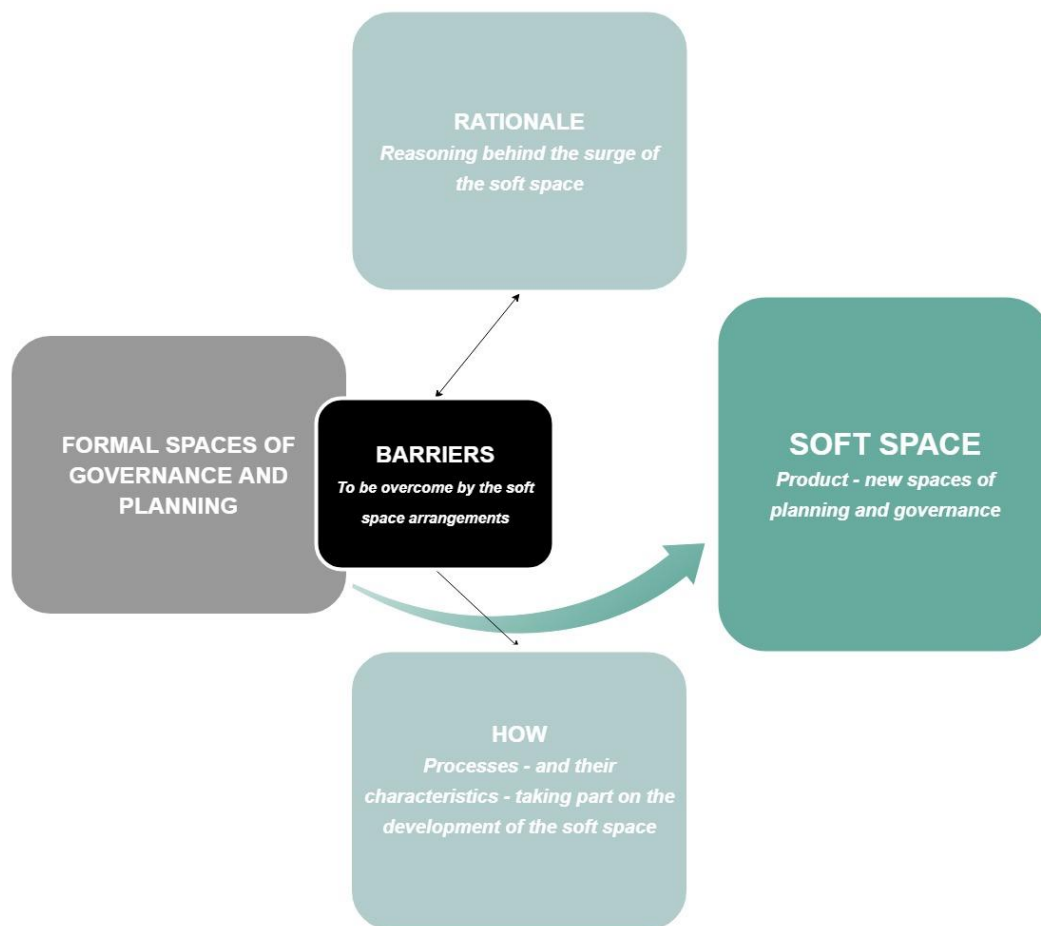


Figure 1 - A framework for analyzing soft spaces and their development (Source: author)

The fields represented in the image touch upon the basic areas investigated by empirical studies on soft spaces. Considering formal existent spaces, their institutions, entities and fixed administrative spheres, various barriers may result to areas of governance and planning that cannot be contained by territorial or administrative boundaries. These barriers, as soft spaces studies have encountered, may be of varied nature, depending of the context of a region. Examples are shown of cases where physical and administrative boundaries are barriers to the development of solutions to environmental issues, as in the Baltic Sea Region (Box 2), which the surge of a soft space aimed to overcome, along with other challenges. On another hand, political discourses influenced by intense armed conflicts figured as a barrier for the development of the cross-border region of the Ireland Island (Box 3). We can conclude, thus, that barriers are often connected to the rigidity of the formal arrangements of governance. However, the singularity of each regional path and practices demand careful investigation in order to understand the barriers there posed to certain areas of development, addressed by the soft space studied.

Secondly, behind the emergence of soft spaces, different rationales can be identified and explored, which often related to the motivation of overcoming the specific barriers posed in the context of the region. Functionality is one of the common rationales in the surge of soft spaces, relating to the need of responding to specific regional needs, as environmental pressure, in the case of the Baltic Sea (Box 2), economic downsides caused by peripherality,

and even use of EU programmes funds available, as represented by the Euroregions explored by Telle (Box 1). Other rationales already explored in the studies relate to the creation of new imaginaries for regions (Box 3) and rescaling of states. Other rationales are assumed to be possible in different cases, depending on the context in which the soft space studied is inserted.

The processes that are involved in the emergence and development of the soft space must be more extensively considered and explored. Firstly, it is recognized in the literature that soft spaces can be produced by both intentional and unintentional processes, since it can be both a result of a strategic approach towards certain goals, or of coincidentally matching approaches of different actors and/or scales.

Secondly, both bottom-up and top-down processes may take part on the development of soft spaces, often in combination, for instance, where central governments support local bottom-up initiatives that are in line with national interests or facilitate solutions as a whole. Moreover, mechanisms and attempts to stabilize or 'harden' soft spaces are also found in their process of development, where the semi-formal or informal arrangements put in place are driven towards formalization and absorbance by existent institutions.

Finally, the resulting product of these processes, a soft space *per se*, figures as a bridging mechanism between different governance, culture or planning modes. It overcomes the barriers posed by legal, administrative or political spheres through a new institutional setting for a certain region.

Although picturing possible processes and elements forming soft spaces, as explored in the literature and case studies here analyzed, this narrative cannot exhaustively account for all relevant phenomena in the surge and development of soft spaces. Nevertheless, such outline is used here as a point of departure for deeper analysis of the Karelia CBC programme as a soft space in the cross-border region between Finland and Russia.

2.2 A Historical approach to regional development - a focus on the “conflict-to-harmony” process

An observation of Karelia and its path as a transnational region reveals the need of taking careful consideration of its specificities, meaning the long and many events of historical development that formed and continuously form the Karelian physical and governance space. Along with the theory of soft spaces, therefore, a historical approach to Karelia region is to be considered here and essential to comprehend the processes currently involved in the cross-border cooperation activity in the region.

In the same direction, taking into account the history of changes in this border area of both physical, governance and ideological nature, it is clear that Karelia's development is marked by episodes of conflicts and reconciliation. In this sense, the historical approach to this region will also adopt a perspective of ‘conflict-to-harmony’, proposed by Minghi (2014) as a valuable perspective for studies of border areas.

Minghi (2014) introduces the ‘conflict-to-harmony’ approach as a perspective through which border studies can shed light on the role of the shifting relations between different sides of the borders along history. More specifically, this perspective relates to the processes where border areas faced long conflicts over boundaries changes, wars, ethnic tensions and others, but have seen the improvement of relations between neighboring states over time, up till a more harmonic stage. As the author points out, this perspective very well applies to the Western European countries and a process of increasing improvement of relations among them as a result of the need to overcome the conflicts of a post-WWII world. Furthermore, Minghi (2014) argues on the current existence of a phenomenon of “ever-closer harmony between neighbors” (p.359), with the emergence of joint groups across borders in defense of shared interests.

The first study based on the analysis of conflict-to-harmony processes was developed by Minghi (1981) when observing the region of the Franco-Italian borderlands in the Alpes Maritimes, over a period of 25 years. The author found a process of changing relations, from strong tensions and conflict over the boundaries changes in the mid of the 20th century, to increasing cooperation and harmony over 40 years later, pushed by both nations aiming to rebuild their economies in the post-war era.

Bufon & Minghi (2000) later applied the same approach to the studies on the Upper Adriatic borderland region and observed similar processes. The authors develop their approach to the region firstly by an analysis of the historical developments along the borders since the 16th century, reviewing the geopolitical changes of various types: modifications of the physical borders and their reasoning; shifting of national ruling over the territories and their social impacts; the cultural and ethno-linguistic formation along time; exchanges across borders and its drivers; and the politico-economic changes, with their effects on the social construct of these borders. Such review covers up till the 20th century, a period post-Yugoslavia, from when a series of studies and study cases (See Buffon, 1993; Klemenčič & Bufon, 1994) lay the base for considerations on the changes of society.

As the authors explored, the area has shown a long history as a point of clash between social, economic and political interests, from the context of changing physical boundaries in the 18th century, passing by a new political and ethnic divide in the post-war period, up till the end of the Yugoslavian period and final establishment of the current borders.

Along this path, the geopolitical changes led the region not only towards clashes, but also towards social and cultural exchange. Relations in the area became increasingly harmonic, with the pursuit of cooperation as a means of overcoming the barriers originated in the past. Finally, the authors identify the region as:

an interesting illustration of an apparently paradoxical process within borderlands: the greater the conflicts created by political partition of a previous homogenous administrative, cultural and economic region, the greater in the longer run are the opportunities for such a divided area to develop into an integrated cross-border region (Bufon & Minghi, 2000, p.126).

Drawing upon the perspective applied by the authors, it is possible to conclude that a deeper approach to the historical and social development contexts of border regions can further enhance the understanding of current scenarios of spatial identity along the borders. Through that perspective, the present work aims to explore the social, cultural and political changes along the borders of Karelia region, better connecting such development to the current status of relations across borders.

3 METHODOLOGY

The research methods chosen as tools for the present study were considered according to the main focus, theoretical and empirical interests, and the research questions by which it is guided. Firstly, it is worth to note the general subject of such work, which lies on the context of cross-border regions involving EU and non-EU members, encompassing the 'hard borders', and the practices of cooperation activity as part of their regional development. The theoretical interest, on its turn, lies mainly on the pursuit of how the soft spaces theory can both contribute to and benefit from the empirical investigations of the cross-border cooperation activity in the 'hard borders' regions, with special attention to the role of historical path and processes of reconciliation across borders. Finally, the combination of such themes guided the empirical nature of this research.

This empirical nature is reflected on the research questions, whose aims are to discover and describe real-life processes in the CBC activity of the aforementioned type of region and how the practical developments can be connected to the theories raised. Therefore, it becomes essential to approach a cross-border transnational region in the context of the outer borders of EU as the place and developer of CBC activity. The case-study method is, therefore, chosen as empirical investigative research tool.

Regarding to the subject of the study case, the choice for the Karelia region is guided by the existent academic literature raising attention to the various possible lessons drawn from the CBC experience of the region, as well as institutional EU and national level reports, pointing to the pioneering of Karelia in overcoming the barriers typical of the borders through CBC (See INTRODUCTION).

Karelia is then chosen as the regional context for the case study, specifically the Karelia CBC programme and the area covered by it. The Karelian geopolitical position, on the borders between Finland - and consequently EU - and Russia, as well as its long and complex history of border changes and international conflicts apparently contrast with a widely recognized capacity of cooperation. Thus, by developing the case-study on the Karelia CBC programme, the present work investigates the forms through which administrative and physical barriers are dealt with and overcome in such borders, in the light of the literature in soft spaces and conflict-to-harmony processes.

By choosing a single case-study, the research considers limitations of time and scope, while remaining able to offer additional insights to the literature of soft spaces and cross-border studies under a scenario of hard borders. Flyvbjerg (2006) advocated for the capacity of case-studies to produce valuable contribution through testing of theories. In the same line, the author also has shown that, although focused on the investigation of one object only, the information generated by single case studies can indeed provide valuable input to the discussion of a wider class of objects. In this sense, the case study on the Karelia CBC programme aims also to contribute to practical learning on how regions on the EU outer borders, while facing physical and administrative, pursue cooperation across borders.

Nevertheless, the present work comprehends that it may not produce absolute proof in relation to the theories approached, but rather takes into account the very nature of social science and the fairly common "absence of hard theory", as defended by Flyvbjerg (2006, p.7),

demonstrating that the concrete learning generated by such method should be considered of greater value.

The capacity of generalization from such case-study is also taken into account. Considering the context-dependence of objects in the field of social sciences, and the various specificities of Karelia region's current and past developments, this work admits that its experiences cannot be transposed to other regions. However, most importantly for the present work is the argument of Flyvbjerg (2006) against the reliance on generalization as the most important form of knowledge development.

Here, the choice of the case study method is motivated not by the intention of achieving general proof applicable to a series of cases. Rather, it aims to uncover knowledge valuable to the theory development and other real-life cases who might benefit from the experiences of the object studied. In this sense, this work recognizes the singularity of the case chosen, while it detects the possibility of understanding practices of cooperation under complex scenarios, which thus contributes to develop other possible approaches and analysis of various cases.

Furthermore, the choice for the methods is guided also by the research questions posed, which indicate the most adequate instruments of research. Yin (2014), develops on the need to take into account the type of research questions, defining their aims and, consequently, the most adequate research methods to achieve answers. As the author clarifies, questions focused on "why" and "how" may be best addressed by case studies, history or experiments, in the sense that such questions aim to understand the functioning of processes along time. The exploratory and explanatory nature of the research questions in this work has, therefore, guided the choice for the case study method.

Moreover, the case-study here proposed approaches different levels and, consequently, sub-cases in order to produce answers for the research questions posed. As Patton (2015) explains, case-studies may consist in various "smaller cases, or observational units", in which situation one may develop a nested or layered case study. Here, the CBC programme of the region Karelia is considered the object of the study in the macro level. It is embedded in the region of Karelia itself, whose historical, political and geographical development is analyzed as background and framework setting of cooperation in this area. Notwithstanding, another level consists of the concrete projects promoted and funded by the Karelia CBC programme, on-the-ground manifestations of the regional cross-border cooperation. Therefore, our study case becomes a multilayered one, where the projects are observational units of the overall case study, the CBC Karelia programme, which in its turn must not ignore the whole picture of the region Karelia itself.

The projects to be here considered as units of the case study proposed are chosen according to a series of factors. Firstly, practical issues were considered in order to select projects where significant information and access to the actors involved are available, consequently enabling substantial investigations. In this sense, suggestions by actors from the Joint Managing Authority of the Karelia CBC programme were taken into account in the selection of projects.²

Further considerations regarded the priorities set by the programme, in an attempt to select projects that can cover the overarching issues established by the programme. While both

² The JMA suggestions results from their judgement on well-coordinated projects, which engaged both sides of the borders in active cooperation rather than a mirroring of activities across borders.

social and physical aspects of the borders are raised by the programme documents, also the theoretical framework of the present work has demonstrated the many fields in which soft spaces can be developed, in the aim of overcoming the barriers of borders.

In this sense, the choice for the environmental project “Saving our joint treasure” (hereinafter Project A) searches for the understanding of methods to overcome physical, as well as administrative and governance barriers, led by a functional reasoning - the necessity to preserve an endangered and transboundary natural resource which, therefore, demands cooperation and joint activity.

On the other hand, the second project selected, “Mediation in Progress” (hereinafter Project B), presented a strong background of institutional cooperation in social services, motivating the choice as a sub-case where the soft spaces theoretical characteristics of enabling the change of practices across borders can be applied.

3.1 Data Collection and data analysis

Inside the case study, however, a multitude of methods of data collection is available and careful consideration must be done in order to define the most adequate ones according to the research and the questions posed by it (Yin, 2009). Here, interviews are used in order to address views of relevant actors in the CBC activity in Karelia and uncover processes occurring in the setting of cooperation in this region. The instrument of interviews is most useful in the sense of capturing the reality of people’s experiences and actions during certain events or processes (Peräkylä & Ruusuvuori, 2008), herein the process of cooperation across borders between Finnish and Russian Karelia. While policy documents and institutional reports regarding the CBC in this region may present some evidence on the matter, the first-hand experience and views of the CBC actors may not be fully expressed in formal reports. Therefore, the interviews assume essential role in capturing evidence relevant to the research questions.

The semi-structured form of the interviews is applied as a means of managing and maintaining the focus on relevant topics, nonetheless allowing the interviewees to develop on their responses in a flexible way. Careful design of the questions is done through the preparation of different Interview Guides (Annex II - Interview Guide Programme level and Annex III - Interview Guide Project level), which vary according to the nature of the interviewees’ relation to the topic.

Finally, the case study aims to integrate evidence from the various sources adopted - interviews, academic literature and programme and institutional documents) - to provide a solid comprehension of the context and consequent sound empirical findings, as suggested by Yin (2009). Table 1 presents the use of tools according to the questions posed.

Research questions / Methods	Literature review		Interviews		Analysis	
	Acad. Literat.	Institut. and policy docs	JMA officers	Expert (National level)	Project Partners	Against theoret. framew.

1. What are the driving forces behind the emergence of the soft space of Karelia CB region?

1.1 The rationale for the construction of Karelian cross-border soft space, considering a historical approach	x	x				x
1.2 Issues shared and addressed across sides of the borders	x	x	x	x	x	x

2. What processes and characteristics define the flexible governance arrangements in Karelia?

2.1 Surge and development of the Karelia CB soft space	x	x				x
2.2 Intersections of spaces of governance (political and institutional) in the area of Karelia CBC programme	x	x	x	x	x	x
2.3 Actors involved in the setting and development of the regional space through the cooperation programme	x	x	x	x		x
2.4 How regional, national and supranational levels (stakeholders) interact in the surge and development of the Karelia cross-border region, along with their respective interests			x	x	x	x

3. Which role has the CBC played in the emergence of the soft space of Karelia?

3.1 Instruments and practices rising from the cross-border cooperation in Karelia - how they overcome fixed administrative boundaries			x	x	x	x
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3.2 How the projects undertaken in the CBC programme area reflect the creation of a shared governance/spaces in practices			x	x	x	x
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Table 1 - Research questions and respective methodological tools (Source: author)

The analysis of the data collected, on its turn, is also guided by the nature of the research questions posed and the theoretical framework proposed. Firstly, it is important to acknowledge some degree of difficulty in the task of analyzing soft spaces, considering the broadness of the concept and consequent lack of strict categories. Nevertheless, grounded on the various empirical studies previously cited, the present work aims to produce a narrative that describes and explores the social construct of Karelia CB region as a soft space.

In order to produce such narrative, the analysis of data considers the various areas deemed relevant by the theoretical framework posed, when studying a cross-border region as a soft space. The historical path and unfolding events along it, consequent changes of relations across borders and related social developments are essential themes when analyzing the region under both the conflict-to-harmony and soft spaces perspective. Specifically under the latter, barriers of the existent physical and administrative boundaries, rationales for and processes of development of new governance arrangements are other themes to be approached on the study of the region.

However, it is recognizable that, if aiming to uncover all relevant factors and processes of development of this region as a soft space, one must not produce fixed categories, limiting the analysis to attribute definitions to events. Oppositely, the study must strive for an analysis that enables the rise of context-dependent elements, whose type or definition cannot be predicted by the researcher.

In this sense, the data collected from the different sources are analyzed in an interpretative form, through the methodology of coding. As Saldaña (2009) clarifies, coding is not the analysis per se, but one of the steps into the process of interpretation of qualitative data, “an exploratory problem-solving technique without specific formulas to follow” (p. 8). Through the coding, we aim to systematize the analysis of data and identify patterns to, later, comprehend how and why such patterns exist (Grbich, 2012).

The process of coding here involves a pre-selection of the relevant excerpts from interview transcripts and field notes, followed by first-cycle coding, to be refined as necessary to capture as much as possible the essence and meanings of the passages. More extensive view of the coding schemes utilized are presented in Annex VI - Coding scheme for Programme level and Annex VII – Coding scheme for Project level. The process of coding will also take into consideration the major themes and areas in the empirical studies of soft spaces, as summarized on the Section 2.1.2.

4 STUDY CASE

The following chapter presents the region, CBC programme and projects that constitute the study case herein explored. It analyzes the historical and geopolitical evolution of Karelia cross-border region, as well as the different frameworks for cross-border cooperation activity along time, through the academic literature in the field. Moreover, the Karelia CBC programme, as the object of the case study, and the projects selected are further analyzed through the programme documents and EU reports (Annex V – Programme Documents and Institutional Reports).

4.1 The Karelia region

The region of Karelia is herein considered, specifically, as the area of the Karelia CBC programme, which includes the regions of Oulu, North Karelia and Kainuu, in Finland, and the Republic of Karelia³, in Russia (Figure 2). The area neighbors two other CBC programme areas between Finland and Russia, the Kolarctic Programme to the north (which includes Sweden and Norway) and the Southeast Finland - Russia Programme to the south (TK-EVAL, 2016). The region encompasses a 700 km long border between both countries, around 250 thousand square kilometers area, 1.3 million inhabitants, and is formed by sparsely populated and low density areas on both sides (more accentuated at the Russian region), on an average of 5 persons per square kilometer (DG NEAR, 2018). Boreal forests and various lakes mark the geography of such cross-border area. Three border-crossing points connect both sides and transportation links are considerably weak, with long distances between the existent crossing points (TK-EVAL, 2016).

³ The Russian Federation is formed by units of different political status. The Republic of Karelia is one of the 87 units, and one of the 21 Autonomous Republics (For more, see: Barents Info, n.d.)



Figure 2 - The Karelia CBC programme region (Source: author)

Both sides of the border share characteristics as an ageing population, out-migration towards urban centres, high unemployment and a long history on forestry activity (DG NEAR, 2018). At the same time, disparities between both sides of the borders are evident, with an annual GDP per capita of approximately 25 thousand euros in the Finnish part, against less than 3 thousand euros in the Russian side (Ibid). Exports from the Russian to the Finnish side generally remain based on low added-value products, as round timber and lumber, even though considerable developments were promoted by cooperation, as the building of transnational clusters on lumbering in Karelia (Kolosov, Klemeshev, Zotova & Sebentsov, 2015). Also important are the outcomes of a long history of cooperation: technology transfer from Finnish to Russian areas, reallocation of production in the above mentioned sectors and increase of productivity, availability of cutting-edge technology and upgrade of academic curriculum through exchanges (Ibid).

Population decline has been a trend in the regions for twenty years, with a reduction of approximately 70 thousand inhabitants in the period of 2007-2013. The Oulu region was, in such period, the only one with positive growth (DG NEAR, 2018). Economically, the area has suffered with the crisis in 2008 and 2009, with consequent decline of industrial activity and employment rates. In the last years of the 2007-2013 programming period, however, certain recovery was observed (Ibid).

4.1.1 Historical development

The territory that nowadays correspond to Finland had been under the Swedish Empire rule for over six hundred years, and its borders with Russia were modified several times on that period (Liikanen, 2008). Historically, the region posed as an important route of East-West trade, and a remote, sparsely populated area, place of confrontation between the two Empires (Scott, 2013). The expansion of the Swedish Empire pushed the eastern borders of Finland up until the 18th century, when the Russian Empire recovered small portions of territory inhabited by Karelian and Finnish settlers, following wars and treaties. With the downturn of the Swedish Empire, the defeat to Russia in 1809 in the Finnish War resulted in the annexation of the whole territory of Finland by the Russian Empire, to which it belonged until the independence in 1917 (Liikanen, 2008). The following image shows the various changes of territorial borders in Finland (Figure 3)

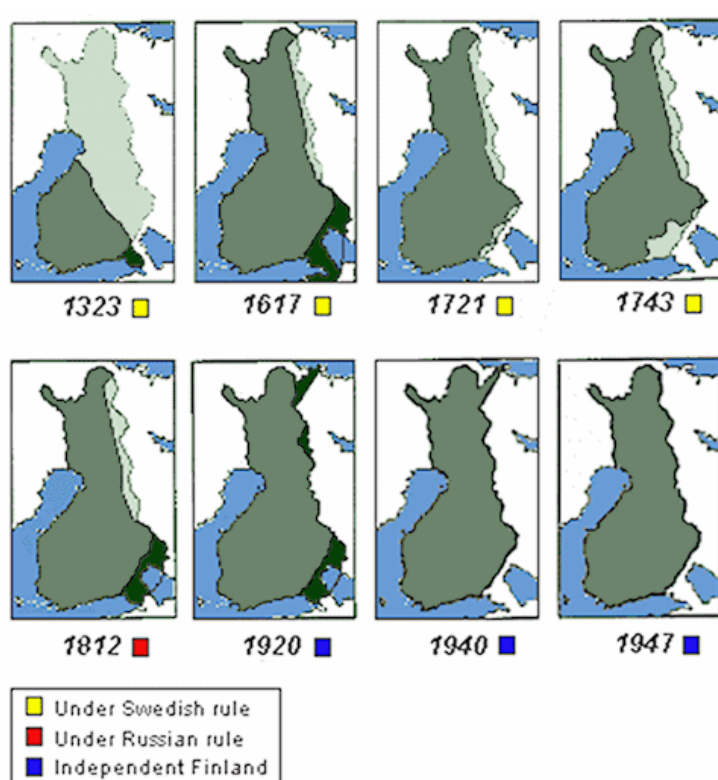


Figure 3 - The evolution of physical borders between the current Finland and Russia territories (Source: Global Security, n.d.)

The region of Karelia has passed through different processes of Russification, 'Finnishization' and Sovietization, along the various changes in geopolitical situation, resulting in several influences on the development of physical, political and mental spaces of the region (Scott, 2013).

A first phase of Russification, from 1809 to 1917, was marked by an affirmation of the Russian national power over the areas claimed from the Swedish empire, conflicting with growing nation-building efforts in Finland, which then figured as an autonomous nation-state with the status of a Grand Duchy inside the Russian empire (Liikanen, 2008; Scott, 2013). Towards the independence of Finland in 1917, the region of Karelia had strong importance as the presupposed place of birth of Finnish culture, the origins of the Ur-Finnish peasant that

overcome the strength of nature, and place of the mythological Kalevala culture, whose songs and legends were present in both sides of the current borders (Scott, 2013).

With the independence, the emergence of nationalism and appropriation of the Finnish Karelian areas through the setting of administrative systems, physical planning and architecture marked the 'Finnishization' phase, until the WWII (Ibid). Discourses of a redefinition of territorial borders under ethnic characteristics were supported by the Finnish elite in the desire of uniting Finnish and Karelians under the same state (Liikanen, 2008). Conflicts between Finland and Soviet Union, between 1939 and 1944, also strengthened the national project in the Finnish Karelia (Scott, 2013).

By the end of the war, the current territorial border between both countries was drawn, in which practically the whole area of historical Karelia became part of the Russian territory, also with the leaving of 420 thousand people from Karelia to other regions of Finland (Liikanen, 2008).

In the Russian side, narratives of creation of a Russian Karelian identity were applied, with the integration of Karelia folk culture into the formation of the Karelian Autonomous Soviet Socialist Republic in the 1920s (Ibid). Important part of the Soviet efforts, mainly in the Sovietization period between 1944 and 1991, were the attempt of absorbance and transformation of Karelian traditions, rather than denial of those, in the building of a new Karelian soviet society. These were, however, mostly symbolic, while in practice efforts from the national level were directed to outweigh Finnish claims in Karelia, by eliminating Finnish architecture, promoting inner-migration of peoples from various parts of Soviet Union and discouraging the original Karelian linguistic and ethnic presence, greatly altering the cultural landscape of the region (Scott, 2013; Liikanen, 2008). This phase of Sovietization was thus marked by overlapping claims of identity in the region, conflicting nation-building projects, regimes and divides between Finland and Soviet Union (Liikanen, 2008).

With the political changes of the *perestroika* era, in the late Soviet period, civic society organizations started to appear, focused in representing certain society groups, process that further grew after the fall of the regime (Belokurova, 2010). Even though such process did not encompass the whole of Russian civil society, it did contribute to change people's understandings of public sphere (Ibid). For Karelia, this period laid the bases of a politicization of associations and, consequently, building of certain "identification and new localism", enabled by the upcoming third sector at that point (Liikanen, 2008).

With the end of the Soviet era in 1991, the border areas faced a major change. The Republic of Karelia itself, in the Russian side, became a space of negotiation aiming to better deal with the scarce resources and local issues, in which majority of the governmental and CSO involved engaged in preserving the regional autonomy against nationalist efforts (Liikanen, 2008).

An immediate reassessment of Finnish-Russian relations came with a new treaty in 1991 and during that decade, an authorities of both countries furthered a "project-type cooperation", including other actors as NGOs (Ibid). In the first part of the 1990s, CBC in the Karelia was mainly a regional level matter, firstly approached by both sides of the region, which changed to a more national-supranational level of Russia-EU relations around and after the 2000s (Ibid).

4.2 The EU frameworks of cooperation in the Finnish-Russian borderland

With the accession of Finland in 1995, EU bordered Russia for the first time, a frontier which is still today the longest EU-outer state border (Demidov & Svensson, 2011). With that, Russia became part of the CBC programs of EU, which were then based on the TACIS program, established in 1991 and focused in providing grants in technical assistance for former Soviet states (Liikanen, 2008).

TACIS consisted in the initiative of EU in supporting the economic recovery of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Georgia after the fall of Soviet Union, with priorities in the sectors of training, energy, transport, financial services and food distribution (European Commission, 2018). Although not directed towards CBC specifically, the latter was a strong dimension of its subprograms. With the membership of Finland, TACIS funds were directed to CBC activity with the neighbor, Russia (Liikanen, 2008). Additionally, also the INTERREG was essential part of the CBC activity framework in the external borders.

The INTERREG, in its turn, was a program designed for promoting cooperation and preparing EU member states for a union without internal borders. It developed, however, to a focus on CBC on the outer borders, following a shift to pre-enlargement nature of CBC (Liikanen, 2008). Nonetheless, the INTERREG remained a tool where funding could only be applied inside EU, thus its use in programmes in the outer-borders meant the necessity of combining different mechanisms of financing for projects (Wesselink & Boschma, 2017).

As Järviö (2012) clarifies, in Karelia itself, the Finnish regions (Kainuu, North Karelia and Oulu) established the INTERREG II A Karelia programme in 1996, in which they focused on enhancing CBC activity with the Russian neighbor region, Republic of Karelia. Such programme became central to promote connections between both sides, finally opening up the contact between Russians and Finnish on a border closed for decades. Infrastructure, regional businesses, environment, cross-border traffic and social services were impacted by such cooperation across these borders.

In the same context, the regions involved in the programme started discussions on the need of strengthening coordination of CBC, increasing and maintaining the regions' political power in terms of decision-making related to regional development, which led to the establishment of the Euregio Karelia in 2000 (Järviö, 2012).

The Euregio Karelia was the first Euregio developed in the EU-Russian borders. It aimed to coordinate cross-border cooperation between the regions, including its financing through the combination of TACIS and INTERREG funding. For the Russian region of Republic of Karelia, it represented a significant development towards relations with the Finnish counterparts and EU itself, the latter mainly in what referred to the funding combination, which was by then a factor of great complications between the region and EU (Prozorov, 2004). Its model, however, went beyond the CBC facilitation, pursuing the reinventing of region-building through cross-border cooperation, in the sense that it envisioned the creation of new region identities in the process of joint decision making towards shared goals (Liikanen, 2008).

The pursuit of change of the imaginaries related to the border is visible in the initiative of Euregio Karelia, obviously together with the concrete aims in terms of border-crossing flows and promoting economic and social cooperation around the border issues. Liikanen (2008) shows such intentions through the words of Tarja Cronberg and Valeri Shlyamin, head of the

Regional Council of Finnish North Karelia and Minister for External Relations of Republic of Karelia, respectively, who expressed the opportunity of easing the historical weight of past wars along those borders through introduction of new perspective by cooperation between both sides.

Results of the pursuit of Euregio Karelia in terms of image and political approach to the borders are highlighted by Prozorov (2004), including the shrinking of Russian troops on that border in 2003 and the central Russian government discourse towards the Karelian border at that time, which saw it as a well-managed, unproblematic area. Liikanen (2008) however, points out to significant limitations in terms of transformation of the mental image of the border, considering a certain permanence of the Russian understanding of Euregio Karelia as a “revanche to the ceded areas” (p.24).

Euregio Karelia remains today a body of facilitation of CBC, while the framework for CBC itself changed, according to the changes of EU programmes. Replacing the existing frameworks for CBC in the outer borders of EU at that time, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and its instrument (ENPI) were started in 2004 and put in place in the period of 2007-2013, based on learnings of the previous programmes as TACIS and INTERREG (Khasson, 2013).

The ENP guided cooperation between Member States and 16 neighbor countries, the north African and middle Eastern neighbor countries across the sea borders of southern Europe (Algeria, Tunisia, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Palestinian territories, Libya, Morocco, Syria and Lebanon), the land border countries to the East (Ukraine, Moldova and Belarus), and the Caucasus states (Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan) (EAAS, 2016; Kelley, 2006). Russia, however, refused to participate as a partner at the ENP in 2003 and developed with the EU a special relationship, through a strategic partnership, creating four “common spaces”⁴ for cooperation, becoming a key partner in the neighborhood of EU (Kølvraa, 2017). Later, in 2007, Russia announced its national co-financing, in a sum of 105 million euros for that period, figuring as the only partner country to provide considerable allocations to the programmes (Järviö, 2011). Through such co-financing, the EU contribution to FI-RU CBC programmes is reduced to 50%, against the 90% maximum allowed. As a consequence of such investment, Russian Federal ministries have gained greater involvement in the programmes since federal co-financing must be managed by federal-level agencies rather than the regions, , according to the country’s legislation (Ibid).

Although the programming period started in 2007, disagreements over the EU regulation to be applied and the financial agreements have delayed the approval of the programmes and, consequently, the calls for proposals and initiation of projects (Järviö, 2011). Notwithstanding the simplification offered by the ENPI framework to cooperation between Finland and Russia, - as EU and non-EU member - the regulation adopted by EU leaned significantly towards external aid, revealing various inconsistencies in the context of cross-border cooperation (Järviö, 2012).

In 2014, the European Neighbourhood Policy was revised by the EU, with changes to reinforce bilateral dimension, geographic flexibility and increase participation of stakeholders in the cooperation process (Rouet, 2016). The instrument for funding ENPI was also reviewed and replaced by the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), put in place in the period 2014-

⁴ Common economic space; common space of freedom, security and justice; common space of cooperation in the field of external security; and common space of research, education and culture (Liikanen, 2008).

2020, addressing several flaws of the previous instrument by increasing the differentiation between partner countries according to their specificities (Laine, 2016).

Also in 2014, in the context of the sanctions by EU posed to Russia following the actions in Ukraine, CBC programmes were left out of any restrictions imposed, in a clear recognition of its importance to societies on both sides of the borders (Fritsch et al., 2015). Russian Federation, on its side, has also shown no intentions to involve the CBC programmes in any reactions against sanctions imposed by the EU, demonstrating a level of political willingness from the parts involved in relation to the CBC activities at the regional level (Ibid).

4.2.1 The Karelia ENPI - ENI CBC programme

The Karelia ENPI CBC programme, whose preparations started in 2006, has drawn from the experience with the previous cooperation programs in the region. A strategic approach, with joint setting of themes and priorities guided the preparation of the programme (Järviö, 2012).

The Euregio Karelia had, in this sense, essential role in developing joint decision on the objectives of the programme, making suggestions in the directions of implementation according to its joint views (TK-EVAL, 2016). As Järviö (2012) explains, the programme is based on a combination of top-down and bottom-up approaches in different aspects: while the programme documents (Annex V – Programme Documents and Institutional Reports) establish the general framework for cooperation, guided by the joint views on priorities from the Euregio Karelia, a bottom-up approach is taken to solutions for achieving the objectives set, through further contact with regional and local stakeholders knowledge.

Projects are selected by the Karelia CBC programme through thematic calls, an innovation of Karelia in terms of ENPI programmes. Through thematic calls, the programme focus on a series of themes defined as the most significant for achieving the effects jointly envisioned (Fritsch et al., 2015). Such system also allows for promoting groups of small but well-coordinated projects, less subject to overlapping, focused on the shared goals (Järviö, 2012). On the other hand, thematic calls also run the risk of resulting in too much rigidity and consequent exclusion of valuable projects to the programme area which cannot fully fit into the categories of calls created. The ex-post evaluation of the 2007-2013 programme period (TK EVAL, 2016) has shown, however, that actors from the JSC and JMC have agreed that, in general, the most relevant themes for the region were covered by the calls launched, although themes such as environmental matters, grassroots, civil society cooperation and cross-border strategic planning were seen as under covered in that period. It is important to notice that consultations with local stakeholders are essential and part of the definition of objectives for the calls (Fritsch et al., 2015), and has been strengthened with a process of stakeholder participation in the current period of 2014-2020 (Ibid; TK-EVAL, 2016).

The management of the programme is tasked to key structures. The role of Joint Managing Authority (JMA) of the Karelia programme is tasked to the Regional Council of Oulu region, in the city of Oulu, being the main responsible for implementation of the operational programme (TK-EVAL, 2016). The Branch Office in the city of Petrozavodsk, Russia, supports the JMA on the Russian side through information dissemination and support activities to Russian stakeholders of various levels (Karelia CBC, 2018). The Joint Monitoring Committee (JMC) is tasked with the guidance and monitoring of the implementation and formed by representatives

of the central and regional government levels of each country involved, as well as an EC observer, being also responsible to appoint the Joint Selection Committee (JSC), formed by five representatives of both sides, tasked with providing recommendations to the JMC on the approval of projects (DG NEAR, 2018; TK-EVAL, 2016). Additionally, Ministries⁵ of both Finland and Russia are involved in the programme, together with coordination bodies⁶ of each region involved (DG NEAR, 2018).

The overall objective of the programme is stated as “To increase well-being in the programme area through cross-border cooperation”, which is followed by two specific priorities:

1. Economic Development: to strengthen cross-border economic cooperation and increase cross-border business
2. Quality of life: to improve the quality of life in the programme area through cross-border activities

Six thematic calls were applied at the 2007-2013 programming period (Table 2), between 2010 and 2012, a short period resulted from the delays on the programme adoption (only in September 2008) and Russian ratification of the financial agreement (only in November 2009) (DG NEAR, 2018). The programme had a disbursement of €44.2 million, from which euro €22.1 million consisted of EU funding, completed by national co-funding⁷ and project partners co-funding (DG NEAR, 2018).

Karelia was the smallest ENPI programme in terms of EU funding allocations⁸, but has also the highest rate of success for grant applications among the ENPI CBC programmes⁹ (Ibid). In the period of 2007-2013, the Karelia ENPI CBC programme contracted 66 projects, out of which 61 were Standard Projects and 5 Large Scale Projects (LSP) (DG NEAR, 2018). LSPs accounted for €19.1 million (Table 2), while Standard Projects varied in size, in terms of budget, from €50000 to €1200000 (Annex IV – Karelia ENPI CBC Programme, Projects of 2007 – 2013 period).

CALL	THEME	CLOSED AT	TOTAL BUDGET
C1	Cross-border solutions for sustainable spatial, economic and environmental development	March 2010	€4.8 mi
C2	Tourism cooperation	May 2011	€6.6 mi
C3	Forest base cooperation and sustainable energy cooperation	November 2011	€6.8 mi

⁵ Ministry for Foreign Affairs and Ministry of Employment and the Economy (FI); Ministry of Regional Development and /Ministry for Foreign Affairs (RU)

⁶ Joint Authority for Kainuu Region (FI), Regional Council of North Karelia (FI), Council of Oulu Region (FI), Ministry of Economic Development of the Republic of Karelia (RU)

⁷ Both countries match, together, the EU funding allocated, in a rate EU 50%, Finland 25% and Russia 25% (Fritsch et al., 2015)

⁸ The BSR programme has the smallest EU allocation, if discounted the ERDF allocations to each Member State part of the programme (DG NEAR, 2018)

⁹ Success rate defined as the “number of awarded projects against total number of submitted projects”; considering no data was available for SEFR and KOLARCTIC programmes (DG NEAR, 2018, p.22)

C4	Cultural cooperation	May 2012	€3.6 mi
C5	Social wellbeing	March 2012	€3 mi
C6	Sustainable use of natural resources	August 2012	€3 mi
Large Scale Projects			
Repair of Automobile Road Loukhi-Suoperya, km 110 - km 160			€4.1 mi
Reconstruction of Ikhala-Raivio-State border Automobile Road, km 0-km 14			€3.7 mi
Development of the Traffic Lanes in the International Border Crossing Point Niirala, 1st Phase			€3.7 mi
Widening of Road 89 Vartius-Paltamo, road stretches 10-13 and 13-17			€5 mi
Welfare from Sustainable Cross Border Nature and Culture Tourism			€2.6 mi

Table 2 - Thematic calls of the Karelia CBC programme and LSPs, period 2007-2013 (Source: author, based on DG NEAR, 2018)

The ex-post evaluation of the former programme period (TK-EVAL, 2016) has shown that actors from the JMC and JSC consider long-term impacts from the projects developed under the Karelia CBC programme, as in the road and border infrastructure, enhancing of commitment to cooperation across borders and promotion of new networks of cooperation.

4.2.1.1 Projects

The following section presents the projects selected as observational units for the case study of the Karelia CBC programme, their aims and activities performed. Further reasoning on the selection of such projects is presented previously in the Methodology (Section 3).

- *Mediation in progress – developing conflict resolution (KA462)*

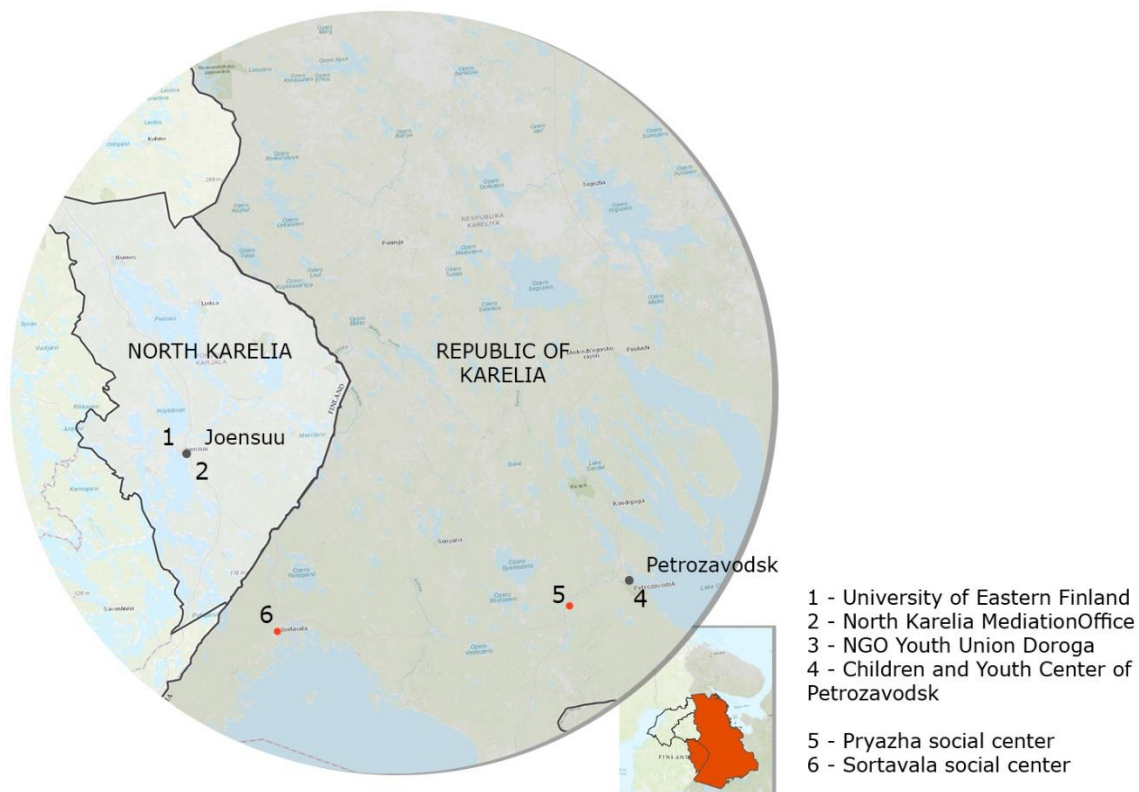


Figure 4 - 'Mediation in Progress' project - partners and locations (Source: author)

The project consisted in the development of mediation services, especially in the context of minor criminal cases involving young people. Through exchange of experiences, knowledge and techniques from North Karelia, in Finland, to the Republic of Karelia, in Russia, the project aims to institutionalize the practice of mediation in the latter, specifically for young people (CBC Projects, 2018).

More specifically, the mediation services targeted relate to practices of conflict resolution for issues between young people, or with teachers, parents or society in general, in minor cases as physical or verbal fighting, interpersonal conflict, property damage or theft, among others. (TESIM ENI CBC, 2017).

The University of Eastern Finland, in Joensuu, had the role of Lead Partner, developing the project between 31-12-2012 and 30-12-2014, together with the partners: the North Karelia Mediation Office, in North Karelia; the NGO Youth Union Doroga, in Petrozavodsk; the Children and Youth Center of Petrozavodsk; and the Ministry of Education of Republic of Karelia (KEEP, 2015). The project had a total budget of €450000 (Ibid)

The project was developed through a series of activities, firstly of education and training, through seminars and workshops in the field of restorative justice, communication and multicultural skills to existent volunteers in mediation. Study trips and training periods with actual cases were developed on both sides. In the Russian side, specifically, the project developed mediation services centres, in Petrozavodsk, Pryazha and Sortavala, as well as recruiting of new volunteer mediators and a new training programme for both volunteer and

professional mediators. An information campaign was also part of the project (CBC Projects, 2018).

In Sortavala, a local social center was renovated and mediation practices were introduced, with the recruitment and training of volunteers, while mediation services were established also in the cities of Pryazha and Petrozavodsk (TESIM ENI CBC, 2017). Over 320 people participated in the activities developed and more than 50 cases were handled by the mediation centres during the period of the programme (KEEP, 2015).

Considering its thematic of social services, the project can be considered to relate to the second programme's priority, Quality of life, as well as the specific objectives of the 'Social wellbeing' thematic call, specifically: "to find ideas and efficient activities maintaining and increasing the wellbeing of children and youth in the programme region"; "to develop and modernize the social services; and to create and develop regional operating models for welfare services" (DG NEAR, 2018, p.295)

- *Saving our joint treasure: sustainable trout fisheries for the transborder Oulanka river system (KA531)*

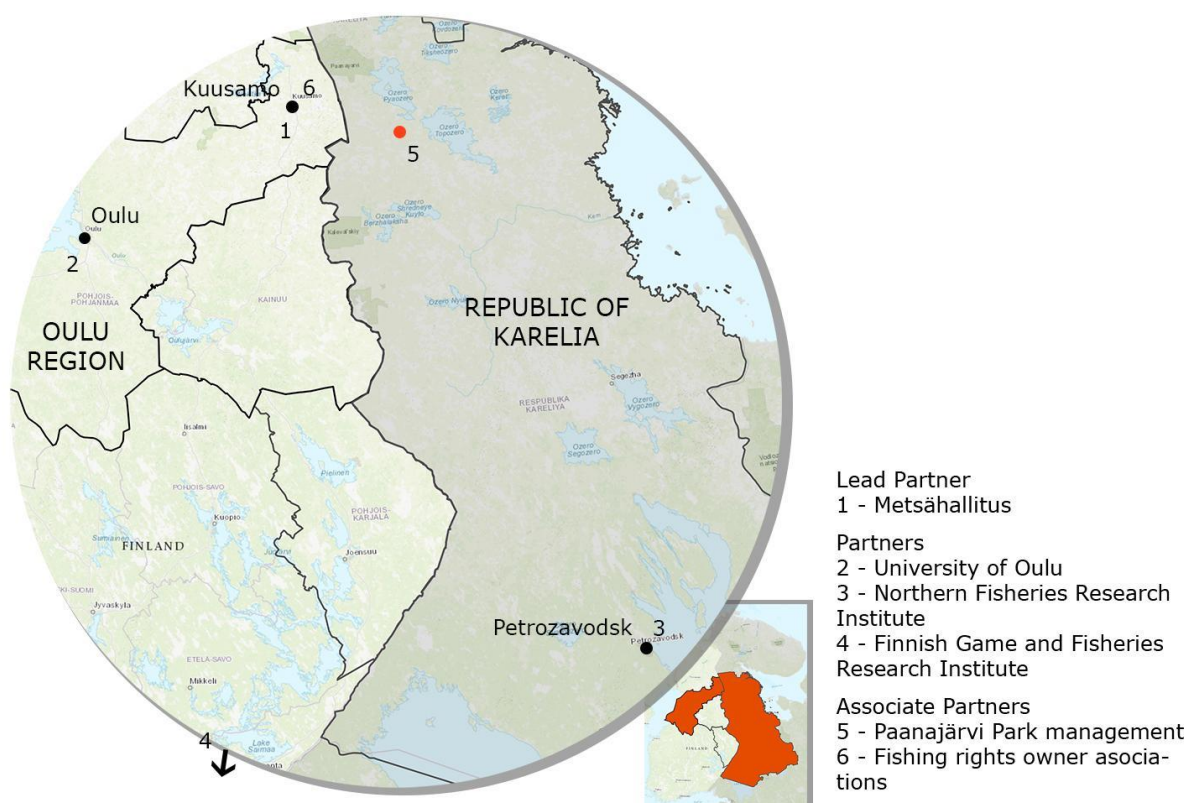


Figure 5 - 'Saving our joint treasure' project - partners and location (Source: author)

The project aimed to develop a sustainable model for joint management of the brown trout (*Salmo trutta*) populations in the Oulanka river system. This fish stock is part of a transboundary ecosystem where its life-cycle involves migration between both the Finnish and Russian parts of the river system. Such ecosystem is encompassed by Natural Parks on both sides of the border, the Oulanka Natural Park in the Finnish region of Oulu, near the city of

Kuusamo, and the Paanajärvi National Park in the Republic of Karelia, near the town Pyaozersky (CBC PROJECTS, 2018a; Metsähallitus, n.d.).

Both parks share one of the last populations of wild trout in Fennoscandia and both scientists and fishermen have seen a decline of the fish stock (EUROPARC Federation, 2018). Therefore, the project has performed a scientific monitoring and measuring of the size and movements of the migrating fishes through radio transmitters, as well as studies on the social and economic impact of the Oulanka river system for the fishermen in order to understand their procedures and the actions they could support in terms of protecting the fish stock (CBC PROJECTS, 2018a; EUROPARC Federation, 2018). Additionally, it was among the goals of the project to establish a joint management group in the field of fisheries, with the relevant stakeholders across borders, in order to further a sustainable joint approach towards the shared fishery resources. A campaign to raise awareness of the public over the value of the brown trout population for the communities and the importance of preservation was also performed (CBC PROJECTS, 2018a).

The project was led by Metsähallitus, a state-owned company responsible for the management of the natural parks in Finland, together with the partners: University of Oulu, the Finnish Game and Fisheries Research Institute (currently named Natural Resources Institute Finland), and the Northern Fisheries Research Institute in Petrozavodsk, Russia (KEEP, 2015a). As Associate Partners were the Paanajärvi National Park, through its management body, the Finnish Municipality of Kuusamo and various associations of owners of private water areas along the Finnish river system (EUROPARC Federation, 2018). The project was performed between 31-01-2013 and 30-12-2014, with a total budget of €629 201 euros.

Considering its thematic of sustainable management of natural resources, the project can be considered to relate to both programme's priorities, Economic development and Quality of life, as well as the specific objectives of the 'Sustainable use of natural resources' thematic call: "to through cross-border cooperation develop and support the sustainable use of stone and metals, land, animals and fish, maintain biodiversity and support sustainable recreational use of nature" (DG NEAR, 2018, p.295)

Finally, the project has stated as a challenge the carrying of activities "in a time when high level political relationships between the EU (with Finland as a member) and the Russian Federation were quite challenging" (EUROPARC Federation, 2018).

5 RESULTS ANALYSIS

The following section presents the analysis of data gathered through interviews, programme documents and institutional reports. In order to analyze the layered study case as proposed (See Section 3), the section develops an approach in different levels. Firstly, the analysis focus on the level of the programme Karelia CBC, as a means to understand the general rationales, mechanisms and processes driving the surge and development of Karelia CBC programme as a soft space. It enables the capturing of the processes and governance arrangements between supranational, national and regional levels in the attempt of creating a soft space.

Secondly, the data collected at the project level, herein represented by the two projects selected as observational units, is analyzed in order to provide evidence of the practical and local manifestations of the soft spaces in the Karelia CBC programme region. Such analysis draws upon the interviews to understand how the programme contributes to the surge of soft spaces in the local level, as well as the relations between the latter and the different spheres of governance in both national and supranational levels.

Furthermore, both levels are analyzed over the background of historical and geopolitical context approached previously in the last sections, in order to understand the influences of and perceptions surrounding the shared path in this region over the creation of soft spaces.

Finally, the analysis is structured, in essence, according to the proposed framework of Figure 1, where the elements of barriers, rationale, processes (how) and product pose as points of departure for the analysis of the surge and development of soft spaces.

5.1 The Karelia CBC programme as a soft space

5.1.1 *Path of Development*

The historical development of CBC activity in the cross-border region of Karelia has allowed the surge of a series of processes and relations enabling the Karelia CBC programme to play a role as a soft space for regional development.

The Karelia CBC programme area, as parts of a border region, share a history where episodes of conflicts coexisted with processes of building commonalities in culture, nature and geopolitical challenges. While parts of this region were once in history under the same territory, the geopolitical status of these areas during the Cold War was that of a buffer zone between Soviet Union and Finland, marked by military presence, scarce occupation and limitations of access (Anderson, 2014). As Interviewee C reflects, the disputed borders and their changes along time (as explored in the previous sections), resulted in the arbitrary divide of areas before inhabited as single settlements, as well as natural ecosystems that, in reality, behave as one (I.3). A historical perspective permeates the current scenario where both shared elements and divergent governance modes and spheres drive the pursuit of forms of governance that can attend the regions interests by circumventing the barriers imposed by the clash between higher levels.

As border areas, peripheral in relation to their respective countries, challenges of population decline, economic growth and environmental issues approximate the regions around a series

of shared priorities, to be jointly addressed through the CBC Karelia programme, as argued by the Joint Operational Programme document (European Commission, 2008).

Both interviews, literature review and programme documents acknowledge the engagement across borders in cooperation since 1992, with the end of the Soviet Union (see European Commission, 2008; I.1; I.2; I.3). The Neighbouring Area Cooperation, in 1992, was the first programme promoted by Finland, and led by the Foreign Ministry of Affairs, in order to engage in activities of social and economic development, as well as enhance preconditions for cooperation across borders (Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland, 2009).

Nevertheless, Finnish accession to EU, and consequent programmes of TACIS and INTERREG involving Russia and Finland cross-border regions, is recognized as the opening of regional cooperation, in the sense it enabled regionalization of cross-border cooperation, as previous forms did not allow significant space for the Finnish regions in the decision-making (I.1). These programmes were, therefore, a window for building connections and networks across borders on a regional level, which would later become essential to the development and evolving of the current CBC programme.

Considering the evolution of CBC activity between both countries since the end of 1990s, as expressed by Interviewee A, the first programmes and projects were mainly related to the building of connections across borders (I.1). From such period to the current frameworks, the aims of stakeholders involved seem to have evolved from building contacts to activating networks towards concrete projects benefiting both sides in their shared and/or specific development challenges.

The connections built along time often appear as essential steps on the process of building trust between stakeholders across borders, which is taken into higher consideration by various actors involved and represented in the projects here approached (See Section 5.2). For instance, cooperation among education organizations across both sides are pointed as examples of such lasting and evolving connections, built along the years of relations between institutions (I.3). The trust developed through joint work is recognized as one of the enablers of a constant channel for communication, negotiation and action around development goals, despite the present barriers from the hard spaces of governance.

The evolution of CBC activity in Karelia can be thus perceived as a gradual process where several conditions built along time laid the basis for current institutional arrangements and stakeholders relations that maintain the sustainability of cooperation activity in the region.

5.1.2 Rationales

Different rationales underline the development of CBC and, therefore, soft spaces in Karelia. The motivation of different administrative levels, i.e. regional, national and supranational, as well as public and private stakeholders, must be considered in order to understand the several rationales behind the emergence of Karelia as a soft space.

The border is recognized by the various actors interviewed, in both levels, as an inescapable bond and, at the same time, valuable opportunity for the development of both sides. The peripheral condition of the regions, as well as matters of economic growth, environmental

pressure and social development issues are acknowledged as common challenges and are part of a functional type of rationale guiding the formulation of strategies and projects in Karelia, as evident by the JOP document (See European Commission, 2008).

For instance, the shared nature across borders, including water bodies and forests, represent a clear demand for joint action in the pursuit of environmental protection and mitigation. The maintenance of these ecosystems is recognized as a transboundary matter which, to be effectively handled, must be negotiated across the distinct formal structures of each country. Interviewee 3 exemplifies these issues with the case of forest fires in the Russian side:

“(...) for example, forest fires are one problem in Russian side. There, the forest in Russian side are mostly in sparse populated area. So there are not so much roads and if some forest fire incurs there, then it’s very hard to go there and (...) turn it off. And that’s why there have been several projects which are doing with the mitigate the forest fire risk and things like that, and find that common cooperation between authorities (...)” (I.3)

Furthermore, issues of economic growth and social development are also addressed as shared challenges, even though they affect both sides in varied degrees. The peripheral character of all regions involved, in relation to their respective countries, is taken as a cause of lower economic development and population decline. Although economic growth may be of a bigger concern in the Russian part of Karelia programme area, considering its annual GDP per capita approximately eight times smaller than in its Finnish counterparts (DG NEAR, 2018; See Section 4.2.1), the proximity between the regions is taken as an opportunity to access other markets and drive economic growth on both sides. The border, however, also represents a limitation, as legislations, administrative spheres, customs systems limit the exchange between both countries. In this sense, the pursuit of economic growth and development becomes a rationale and driver for cooperation as a new space in-between the two separate spheres of development.

Interviewee B, for instance, when analyzing specifically the rationale of Republic of Karelia, in comparison with other Russian regions on the borders with Finland, reveal a strong functional rationale (I.2), which is also corroborated by Interviewee D on his higher level analysis.

“(...) motivation of Republic of Karelia to participate in this cross-border cooperation is stronger than in the other regions, or the northern part of Russia. For example, if we're talking about St. Petersburg, which is a bigger economic and culture city, so the role of cross-border cooperation with Finland for St Petersburg is small. And, to my understanding, the situation in the Leningrad Oblast and in Murmansk Oblast is similar, because they have another drivers of economic development, of social development in their regions. In Karelia, we have a common border with Finland, which is very long, but it should be our strong part, this common border with Finland, if we are talking about economic development of the region. That's why the motivation to participate in projects with Finland is very strong here in Karelia” (I.2)

Nevertheless, a second rationale is quite visible at both local and national level, revealed by the discourses of some interviewees at project field and national Finnish level. It consists in a pursuit of changing various practices on the Russian side, establishing another type of driver

of cooperation across borders. This change of practices has different meaning depending on the level of focus.

At a National level, for instance, this rationale revolves around the intention of provoking an “administrative convergence” (I.4), in a direction Russia - Finland, e.g. in attitudes towards rule of law, governmental practices and administrative culture. Interviewee D (I.4) hints to the importance of such motivation from the Finnish national level in pursuing the engagement of the Russian Federation into the CBC programmes:

“I think the whole idea, for me at least, and I think at least when I was working at the ministry, also for the Minister (...) was to engage the Russians in joint cooperation (...) to insist that things should be run in an orderly manner and not some sort of hullabaloo that is normally in Russia, where you... It's just anything can happen”

The motivation to provoke change of administrative practices and culture in Russia by Finland also strongly relates to security. The latter, in its national level, comprehend that by engaging with the neighbour in joint activity, the country can be aware of what happens in Russia and, eventually change undesired practices there, thus increasing security of its area:

“(...) it is safer to Finland if we understand what the Russians are doing. And, of course, you can understand what they are doing by A: engaging them, talking to them, and B: convincing them that if things are done in an orderly manner then usually the end result is better than Wild West” (I.4)

Nevertheless, in a regional and local level, this rationale focus on grassroots types of practices, as social and educational habits. It intends to introduce institutional capacity and awareness to deal with local level social matters. Examples are found in projects that aimed at introducing new forms of combating health issues such as heart diseases (I.3), or institutionalizing alternative practices in social services, as Project A exemplifies (Section 5.2.1). Also as demonstrated by the case study on Project B (Section 5.2.2), it can be based on intentions to change people's practices towards the environment. The region of North Karelia, in Finland, is pointed as a common promoter of cooperation under such rationale (I.3).

This sharing of practices, although one-sided in the sense that has Finland as departure point and Russia as a target, is strongly supported by Russian actors on the local level. As represented by Interviewee F, Russian organizations of the region are often motivated by the wish of implementing in their region practices already established in Finland, in the fields cited above. Thus, in this setting, the cooperation is seen as a tool to advance certain practices in the territory of Russia, which actors consider they could not develop, or not as rapidly or efficiently develop, otherwise.

It can be understood, therefore, that the emergence of Karelia CBC programme as a soft space is not driven by a single rationale, but by several rationales varying mainly according to the administrative levels, their respective motivations and most significant challenges.

5.1.3 Barriers

Regarding to the development of CBC activity targeting the joint challenges identified by the regions involved, barriers typical of the hard borders are visibly present, which the cross-

border cooperation programme, its actors and structures, aim to circumvent in order to promote regional development across its area.

The Russian Federation and Finland, much differently than intra-EU countries, lie under no singular frameworks of legislation, which represents a barrier for developing issues as environmental protection, social development or entrepreneurship (I.2). An example is found on the study case of the Project “Save our joint treasure”, where the different standards of fishing regulation between both countries hamper the sustainability of the specific fish stock in both sides, even if with more damage to the Finnish economic and ecological asset.

Furthermore, the customs and immigration practices are identified by some of the interviewees as concrete barriers to joint development. VISA difficulties may restrict partnerships and exchanges between people from across borders, hindering joint endeavors. Similarly, encumbering processes related to customs practices between both sides, as exemplified by the equipment transfer issue, in the case study on the Project “Save our joint treasure”, complicates material exchanges involved in joint projects.

Additionally, the different operation cultures (I.4) and mentality of people (I.2) are also cited by two interviewees as a difficulty to overcome in order to work together across border. These elements, although not explained in depth by the interviewees, may be a cultural and social construct deserving of extensive analysis. Some statements from different interviewees help to elucidate these aspects in different perspectives. For instance, Interviewee D comments on the practices of Russian Central government officials in terms of negotiation:

“I opened the meeting and said ‘Welcome everyone’ and introductions and so on, then he asked for the floor and then he spoke for 30 minutes, and he said that “if you think that by writing some letters you’re going to do some, get some progress here, you are mistaken”. (...) but it was the sort of what the Russians do, they sort of... Like what you see in the Security Council now with the Russian ambassador who said that ‘we have bombs’ and whatever” (I.4)

In the project level, however, the different operation modes across borders is cited by Interviewee H in a much positive light, rather than a barrier itself:

“I also appreciate their way of doing things, quite much, which is very different from the way that Finns... I mean, each one has their place, but often I am amazed at how, like (...) even if it looks that nothing has been done, has anyone prepared anything, then just out of the blue things happen... and the cottage is done... things happens. (...) they do things more maybe with feeling, in a way, than Finns. Finns always plan everything ahead, carefully, and consider all the problems that could come across (...)” (I.8)

In this sense, it is clear that the cultural differences are not taken as barriers by all stakeholders, and may be more significant in the events relating higher administrative and political levels.

Other several aspects demonstrate how CBC activity in Karelia often encounters the barriers related to the separated spaces of governance divided by the borders. During different periods and frameworks for cooperation, actors and institutions of CBC faced difficulties to pursue their path of interest amongst clashes between national and supranational levels practices.

A retroactive analysis can identify the frameworks of past cooperation themselves as barriers to the regional CB cooperation, in both literature and Interviews I.1 and I.4. The TACIS programme, for instance, with a framework connected to the logic of development aid, could not accommodate adequately the initiatives between Finnish regions and the Russian counterparts. Adding the INTERREG framework, under which finance could only be directed to activities inside EU members, promotion of cross-border joint action was entangled by the programmes in place then. In a sense, the limits posed by the past programmes frameworks presents a case where an attempt to create spaces of joint development despite the different spheres of governance generate itself other series of barriers to be overcome by the regions.

The sanction policy by the EU towards Russia, following the Crimean War in 2014, is another episode cited as a clear barrier to activities between the regions. Even though the CBC programmes were excluded from the sanctions, the impact is cited by several of the interviewees (I.1, I.2, I.3) in areas as business cooperation, where companies hesitate in engaging on cooperation due to doubts about the effects of the sanction policy on market opportunities. Although concrete impacts of the sanction policy in certain fields is acknowledged by some interviewees (I.1, I.2), actors in both sides are seen to have built “their own sanctions on assumptions” (I.1). More specifically, this perspective refers to a current scenario of hesitation from stakeholders, mainly companies and business related actors, who seem to refrain from getting involved in joint projects across borders due to a feeling that sanctions have harmed the market opportunities between both countries. This perspective is brought again during the interview with a project partner, reflecting in their experience with coordination of various projects across borders (I.5).

This scenario may reveal the barrier function of EU-Russia political relationships to the capacity and willingness of actors to engage in joint regional development, even though concrete impacts posed by these circumstances are not as high as they are perceived.

It can be said that CBC activity in Karelia is mainly faced with the resultant barriers from the political and administrative divergences between national and supranational levels, while local cultural and operational divergences are approached with more resilience by stakeholders in such level. Interviewee D, for instance, points to such finding:

“I have great confidence in that, if they [the regions] were let alone and do it, they have challenges obviously all the time, but they could sort it out between themselves” (I.4)

5.1.4 Processes of development

In order to promote regional development through joint activity, while overcoming the barriers posed by administrative boundaries and political divergences, the Karelia CBC programme and the actors involved utilize a series of mechanisms. Among those are frequent informal and semi-formal processes of negotiation, bottom-up and top-down processes guiding the priorities of the programme, as well as relations between soft and hard spaces that reinforce political legitimacy and importance of CBC activity in the regions.

Informal and semi-formal negotiation processes

Regarding to the relations between the programme regions and higher levels, several episodes demonstrate the creation of semi-formal negotiation and informal diplomatic efforts, in order to circumvent the barriers caused by political divergences between Russia and the EU. Through these practices, actors try to steer consensus between the higher levels, as a means to protect and advance regional priorities. Such processes may occur outside the formal negotiation talks between Finland, Russia and EU. For instance, the approval of the first ENPI CBC programmes by Moscow was achieved through “a slight of hand” of the Finnish Ministry, even though it did not comply with the Russian legislation (I.4), which seems to refer to informal diplomatic pressures and adaptation of normal procedures.

Indeed, Finland in its national level shows considerable ability to use of semi-formal negotiation with the Russian Federation level, apparently based on its knowledge of how its counterpart faces relations with the EU, in order to propose decisions it considers beneficial and get agreement on it. The specific case of national contribution, where Russia and Finland together match the European Union funding, is a singular phenomenon among the Neighborhood Programmes. According to one interviewee, it was achieved through a pitch where Finland convinced its counterparts that, by matching the EU financing (in a share of 25, 25 and 50% for RU, FI and EU, respectively), the countries would positioned themselves as equal partners, therefore “the Commission wouldn’t be able to call the shots”. (I.4)

Further overcoming of the political divide between both sides, on a high level, is part of the negotiation of the Financial Agreements, a highly complex issue between EU and Russia and cause of great delay to the start of the programmes and projects. Negotiation of the Financial Agreements through formal talks between the two actors, in the period of 2007-2013, faced great turmoil due to their divergences:

“so they [the Commission] sent to the Russians the normal template for development aid and said "sign this". (...) So they sent this template to Moscow. Moscow was not very pleased and then they continued to negotiate or... or meet at least, without coming any closer. But, Moscow was still obviously interested in reaching a solution, but they couldn't obviously accept the commission sort of regular system”.

The attitude of the Finnish Ministry, in face of the conflicts between EU and Russia on the Financial Agreements, consisted in drafting a letter to the then Prime Minister of Russia, in somehow threatening manner, making clear that Finland would withdraw from the programmes if no further progress would be reached in the discussions of the Financial Agreement (I.4). When the letter had no immediate effect, the Finnish Ministry adopted another type of soft approach as latest resource to provoke consensus, organizing a meeting in Finland’s countryside during two days, with Russian Federation actors, European Commission and other Eastern ENPI members. Although Russian authorities have then revealed displeasure with the previous letter and its tone, both EU and the Federation held a round of negotiations during this meeting and achieved consensus in the Financial Agreement.

Creating spaces of negotiation, as a means of accommodating the diverging political spheres of Russia and European Union, is not only a practice typical from the national level of Finland but also from the regional levels of the country. Following the experience with the conflictual negotiation of the Financial Agreement under ENPI, and the consequent delay to the start of

the programme, Finland has insisted to be a part on the negotiations of the FA for the 2014-2020 period, arguing that its national contribution should give it a status of equal partner and, therefore, the right to participate in the FA debate. Beyond that, Finnish regions had the initiative of hiring a consultant, who had experience in negotiating with both Russia and European Union, in the attempt to smoothen the process of negotiation of the FA to the ENI programme, for the period 2014-2020 (I.4).

The participation of the regions in these negotiations, through a consultant hired to facilitate talks, is not provisioned by the formal frameworks, in which negotiations should be held between EU and the neighbour country (I.4). This initiative demonstrates an attempt of the regions, through circumventing of the established administrative spaces, influence positively and intermediate negotiations between EU and Russia, towards benefitting the regions with a more time efficient process. Even with the process of facilitation in place, talks lasted for four years and the FA for the current 2014-2020 ENI CBC programme period was signed “at the last possible day” in the end of 2017 (I.4).

However, although signed, the Financial Agreement of the 2014-2020 period has not yet been ratified by the Russian Federation, which is expected to happen and enter in force in September 2018 (Karelia CBC, 2018a). Only after ratification of the FA by Russia, the first contracts of the current period can be granted and projects can receive funding. It means that, even though the current period has started in 2014, the programme in practice has not restarted, since no projects could be contracted before the signing and ratification of the FA, representing a delay of more than three years for the start of the current period. The programme thus have only half of the period to contract projects, disburse the financing available and perform projects.

Considering such delay, it is not possible to identify if and how the new spaces of negotiation produced are successful in producing desired results, but they are sufficient to demonstrate the creation and attempt of use of a soft space where decision-making happens across the established and separate spheres of governance.

Such events demonstrate the processes through which both regional and national levels engage in the creation of a semi-formal space of governance, in order to promote regional development interests further beyond the limitations posed by the administrative barriers between countries and supranational level.

Bottom-up and top-down natures

The processes and mechanisms involved in the development of Karelia CBC programme as a soft space present both bottom-up and top-down natures. In the setting of priorities, as one of the participants of the JMA argues, regions took a leadership role in formulating the strategy of the programme, as the holder of the local knowledge in terms of needs, strengths and weaknesses (I.1). The National levels, according to this interviewee, allow space for the regional levels to build the programme content, considering that regional level stakeholders have the most appropriate knowledge of the challenges faced by the regions. The programme document, for the period 2007-2013, further explains the structures involved, which demonstrate a joint exercise between regional, national and supranational levels, each with a certain part on the process. A Joint Task Force, formed by representatives of all the regional

levels and the two central governments was a group set to produce insight for priorities, as well as the Joint Content Drafting Team formed by the regions. Meetings at each region of the programme area were held to gather views from different regional administrative organizations, as well as potential future applicants, whose feedback was received through public hearing processes between October and November 2007 (European Commission, 2008). As Interviewee A highlights, further joint programming was performed by national, regional, and supranational level, in the process of building the Programme Document and all its provisions (I.1, European Commission, 2008).

Interviewee D expresses the view of the National level of Finland in regards to the regional autonomy to select projects based on their shared interest and local knowledge, clarifying that the Ministry did not take part in evaluating applications whatsoever, with exception of the ENI projects related to nationally relevant infrastructure (I.4). On the other hand, the interviewee explains a different procedure on the Russian side. According to him, since the Russian Federation started its national contribution, i.e. since the ENPI framework, Central level government has exercised more influence in the selection of projects through the region of Republic of Karelia.

Also through the views of Interviewee D, a different approach towards the balance between regional and national levels in each country can be seen. According to the subject, the Republic of Karelia has greater difficulty to detain decision-making power, since the Central government level of Russia Federation exercises more influence on the region than the National Finnish level seems to apply over its regions. Despite of a window in the 1990s when the Russian regions had more space of autonomous decision over regional matters, the scenario changed once again around the 2000s with further centralization of decision-making in Moscow (I.4)

Regarding to the decision in the level of projects, the Joint Operational Programme further clarifies the logic of top-down and bottom-up processes. Believing on the necessity of thorough preparation of the programme, with assertive strategies and mechanisms inspire the top-down logic, where:

“the programme document defines broad frames for the cooperation, and the practical implementation will be guided and steered more precisely. The Euregio Karelia Board has an important role in guiding the implementation in that it will give recommendations and signals to the Joint Monitoring Committee as regards the direction of the cooperation, actual needs and important thematic issues. The Joint Monitoring Committee takes these recommendations into consideration and decides about thematic calls within the programme and priority frames” (European Commission, 2008).

By defining the priorities and, consequently the themes of calls, through cross-border regional consensus, the programme considers to provide a more assertive framework where more adequate projects, in relation to the desired goals, can be promoted and steered towards higher impact (European Commission, 2008). On the same time, however, the document argues a bottom-up approach is also present, in the sense that local and regional stakeholders are those to offer “practical solutions to reach the agreed objectives”, through the projects proposition itself (Ibid, p.23).

Interactions between softness and hardness

It is important also to notice how the soft space of Karelia CBC programme interacts with other bodies of political importance, reinforcing the legitimacy of the soft space as a driver of regional development around shared interests.

More specifically, the construction of Karelia soft space involves a close relationship with the Euregio Karelia, an entity whose activity maintains the dialogue between the cross-border regions in a political level. The Euregio Karelia has provided political guidance and suggestions in terms of priorities and themes to be approached by the project calls of Karelia CBC programme (European Commission, 2008). Furthermore, the Euregio Karelia takes part in the evaluation of results and reports of outcomes of the projects performed, together with the Joint Monitoring Committee (Ibid). Interviewee 1, for instance, points out to the uniqueness of such connection, i.e. the mutual collaboration between the CBC Programme structures and the Euregio Karelia, being separated entities related by their shared territory covering. The actor reflects on the impact of this institutional exchange in the sense of strengthening the basis of relations between actors across borders.

Finally, it can be argued that the Euregio Karelia, as a body formed by political representatives and executive directors of all regions involved (Euregio Karelia, n.d.), provides the 'hardness' to the context of the soft space the CBC programme constructs. In this sense, the Euregio Karelia lends a level of political legitimacy to and enhance the importance of the CBC activity at this area in the political sphere, laying its activities over a steady ground of consensus and representativeness.

5.1.5 Products

Through the mechanisms and processes undertaken along the development of the CBC activity in the region, the Karelia CBC programme can be understood as an attempt to and often generator of soft spaces of governance for the development of the regions involved.

It is recognized by the interviewees as an open channel of communication, "the door open for the discussion" (I.1), at times - past and current - when national and supranational levels have closed or tightened the space for dialogue across borders. The fact that the CBC programmes were excluded from the sanction policies by EU towards Russia exemplifies the nature of these programmes as 'open doors'.

The programme's experience is also seen as a means of developing trust, building upon the networks constructed along history, as well as its shared cultural and ethnic past, its environmental and development challenges. Trust is especially taken into account in the current scenario reached by the programme, where participation of both Russian and Finnish actors as Lead Partners in projects under the ENI is practically equal (i.e. 50% of Russian LPs and 50% of Finnish LPs). Interviewee A highlights that such scenario does not occur in other CBC programmes between Finland and Russia. Even though no explanation can be given with certainty, this phenomenon can be connected to a sense of trust between institutions and actors, a knowledge of how their counterparts operate, resulting in better conditions for taking

higher responsibilities by both sides (I.1). The continuous efforts of the JMA, whose main actor has been part of the structure since the beginning of the ENPI period, is cited by Interviewee D as an important factor contributing to the progress of the programme and relations across borders (I.4).

The soft space of Karelia CBC maintains the debate over regional development beyond the established political climate and decision-making spheres. "People will communicate with each other, they will have real cooperations with each other" (I.3) and, therefore, in a bottom-up opportunity, provide solutions for practical development challenges. Through its activity, the programme enables regions to protect and advance their agenda in face of different national and supranational relationship conditions.

5.1.6 Summary of findings

Cross-border cooperation activity in Karelia has evolved along time, adapting to different frameworks and challenges, making use of different mechanisms and processes to further carry regional development, despite administrative and political barriers posed by the context of the hard borders.

Considering the history of the regions involved, physical and political developments on the borders resulted in a series of shared challenges related to its environment, economic growth and peripheral condition, among others, laying the base of a shared interest among regions.

From the first engagements, under the Finnish Foreign Ministry frameworks in the 90s, connection and networks were built in a process of enhancing trust among several institutions, as those part of the projects selected, fostering capacity to cooperate across borders. With EU accession by Finland, however, regions gained more participation and decision-making power in the development of cross-border cooperation, which was earlier detained by the national level of Finland.

In this context, programmes such as TACIS and INTERREG after 1995 can be understood as the first opportunities to create soft spaces in the Russian-Finnish border regions, in the sense it provided finance and frameworks for promotion of development projects. However, the process was limited to a certain extent, in the sense that it provided inadequate frameworks for joint projects between an EU-member and a neighbour. In this sense, EU herein figure as both a facilitator of cross-border cooperation, and consequently of the surge of a soft space, and an impediment to further development of the processes initiated. These roles are repeatedly performed by the EU in the context of the Karelia CBC programme, constituting a driver of cooperation as a well as a barrier to the regional and even national levels.

It is possible to conclude that various rationales are present in the process of cross-border cooperation in Karelia, and consequently, in the building of a soft space. A strong functional nature is found as part of the motivation in different levels and stakeholders, which seems to results from the development challenges shared among both regions and the opportunity provided by the ENPI/ENI CBC programme in terms of finance of joint activity.

Nevertheless, a deeper analysis show that actors in different levels are motivated by the pursuit of changing various practices in Russia. While in a national level this refers to an effort

of westernizing' Russian administrative and political culture, in a local level it refers to introducing better practices for society in terms of public health, social services and education. It can be inferred from the findings that, in a local level, this rationale is shared by stakeholders across border, in a relation where both sides agree that such changes of practices are beneficial and worth to be pursued. However, in what refers to the efforts in a higher level, it appears to be a one-sided initiative, where Finland and European Union have an ideal to which Russian should fit, while the latter not necessarily share this belief.

Most importantly, the findings show a series of processes and mechanisms through which the regions and national level, through the programme preparations and frameworks, constantly try to overcome the barriers imposed by the clash between higher levels. The regions interests and programme actors are often entangled in the conflicting spheres of governance. The programme is, in this sense, a space for development of the regions according to their interests, constructed in the interspaces between both national levels and supranational level, which sometimes must be overcome and in others must be worked across.

The issues with Financial Agreements demonstrate a case where regions join efforts to facilitate consensus between national and supranational levels, i.e. to steer the processes of hard spaces involving the programme in a way that the soft space of Karelia can further develop. While such attempts may not always result in the desired outcome, as in the case of the current FA still being delayed despite the regional efforts, it has been effective in various situations, as in the agreement over high national contributions and the signing of the programmes itself back in the period 2007-2013.

Finally, the findings have shown the Karelia CBC programme as a soft space counts with its relations with other spaces to provide legitimacy and political basis, exemplified by the connection with the Euregio Karelia. It shows that, in Karelia, relations between softness and hardness constantly occur, sometimes where one represents a barrier to the other, but also at times provides additionality. The programme itself can be understood as the enabler of communication between different levels and interests, as well as a regionalization of decision-making. Its role in the creation of soft spaces in the local levels will be further explored through the projects and the analysis of the two case studies selected, presented in the next sections.

5.2 The projects under Karelia CBC programme and the practical mechanisms of soft spaces

5.2.1 *Mediation in Progress - developing conflict resolution*

The project Mediation in Progress represents in several aspects the various processes, relations and mechanisms of the creation of soft spaces through CBC in Karelia. The project has surged from the expansion of previous experiences the Lead Partner, the University of Eastern Finland, undertook with the partner Children and Youth Center of Petrozavodsk. Such connection was built through past CBC projects before the EU frameworks, under the financing of the Foreign Ministry of Finland. It is clear the importance of this connection, and the trust it generated between the LP and the Russian partner on the institutional capacity of the latter (I.5).

Other networks were also determinant in the involvement of actors in the project. For instance, the social center of Sortavala, RU, was introduced by the North Karelia Mediation Office, FI, with whom it had developed a previous project in 2011 (I.5; North Karelia Mediation Office, 2018). To Interviewee F, because this previous experience had been fruitful, the Finnish partner, when becoming part of a new project, had interest in collaborating with the Sortavala partner again (I.6).

In this sense, the project demonstrates the importance of the cooperation activity of the last decades, where experiences across borders enabled a sense of trust between organizations, and consequent reactivation and expanding of networks under new projects.

The rationales present in the development of the project, although with different underlining between both sides, revolve around the intention of changing practices in the field of justice and social services for young people in minor criminal cases, in the Republic of Karelia. Mediation services as a conflict resolution technique is already part of the practices in the Finnish side and the partners accumulate extensive experience. On the other hand, although there is legislation in Russia supporting the use of mediation techniques in certain types of judicial cases, institutional capacity for and the use of practices of mediation for youth in minor cases is not strongly established (I.5; I.6).

However, the different underlining of rationale between actors across borders mark the development of a soft space through such project. For the Finnish actors, promoting such project was a chance to export its practices, also while exchanging culturally with the Russian neighbours. One could argue such rationale is based on both a curiosity for what happens over the border, and a wish to extend considered 'best practices' on their professional field beyond such borders, as Interviewee E reflects in two statements (I.5):

"Maybe for us here in Joensuu it's because Russia is so close, we kind of want to know what they're doing, what's going on, can we learn something from them?"

"(...) very often, we developers, we are here and we think, like, 'oh, in Russia, this and this, and in Finland we have this so much better, and we could develop it in Russia'"

On the other hand, the partner in Russia is motivated by the wish to learn the skills and practices already in place in Finland, and provoke a change in the judicial and educational practices towards these issues in their region. The social center in Sortavala had previous experiences with intervention related to youth conflicts, but only in an individual approach, where the work was developed only with the youngster in case. Through the project, the center has engaged the local administration, partnering up with the Investigative Committee, the City Court, the Inspectorate for Minors and local educational institutions, in order to institutionalize mediation services as a form of conflict resolution, rather than the traditional means (sentencing or punishment) (I.6). The project was, thus, as attempt to change the traditional procedures related to youth minor criminality.

The development of such initiative consisted also in various processes of bottom-up and top-down nature. Activities were proposed and jointly agreed among partners, but the LP was responsible for the main management of the project as a whole, and of activities from the Finnish side, while the Petrozavodsk partner was responsible to coordinate all activities on the Russian side, as a way of efficiently dividing tasks and capacities (I.5). At the same time, as expressed by interviewee F, the Sortavala center had an open dialogue with the other centers

in the Russian side involved in the project, as well as the Petrozavodsk partner (I.6). On another level, the Sortavala center developed its partnerships in the town, where the courts would access the social center to propose and perform mediation services in minor criminal cases between young offenders and plaintiffs. Other partnerships involved schools and parents, to apply mediation in the educational and familiar contexts of conflicts (Ibid).

Nevertheless, with the end of the project, cooperation between these partners and the exchange of practices have ceased. The practices established in Sortavala continue through the social center, however reduced because of external circumstances, as a possible decline on the offenses by youngsters, the lack of cultural tradition in the use of mediation and the necessity of a long-term absorbance of these techniques as part of the judicial and educational system:

“I think it’s a slow process... because I think that in Finland only many years be [sic] to take this position. And for us also, I think it’s many years, and because our organization is one and our specialization is not a big part of education society”. (I.6)

Regarding to the Finnish actors, it can be argued that the project was an end-in-itself, as it aims to share Finnish practices to the partners on the Russian side and, once shared, it is achieved. When asked if cooperation with the partner in Petrozavodsk remains today, in other related areas, the Lead Partner points out to the current general barriers, the lack of finance, as well as the political situation between EU and Russia.

This shows also the role of the ENPI/ENI CBC Karelia programme in the development of such project, which seems also to represent others. The CBC Programme Karelia is one the main source of finance to support development of the projects. The interviewee, thus, cites the delay of the ratification of the current period for the CBC programme, considering it has not yet started to sign grants for new projects, since the closing of last period in 2013.

Finally, one can argue that, although the project demonstrates a joint cross-border effort at creating a soft space, where Russian practices related to youth conflicts in both judicial and educational fields converge towards the Finnish ones, with the end of the project, the cross-border nature of that space has ended. While the motivation of the Finnish actors is essentially sharing their practices, when finished the project, their participation on the process of change of practices in the Republic of Karelia also ends. It can be said that, for the duration of the project, a soft space is in creation where Finnish and Russian actors collaborate to circumvent traditional practices, but is then dissolved, at least as a cross-border space. Russian actors continue, on their region, to promote and attempt, through a soft space.

5.2.1.1 Summary of findings

The project “Mediation in Progress” represents, on the regional level, the importance of evolving modes of CBC in Karelia for the building of trust among stakeholders and consequent capacity and willingness to engage in joint activity nowadays. The networks constructed through cooperation are seen to expand and manage to involve new actors, enabling the growth of certain agendas, in this case the change of social services, judiciary and educational practices.

The findings also show the features of a rationale essentially revolving around the change of practices in the Russian side. Russian stakeholders are motivated by the idea of introducing new 'better' practices in the field of juvenile minor criminality, through the mediation services, as a means to give further opportunity for the local youth. It can be said that, the importation of those practices from the Finnish side is considered a path to build institutional capacity and change the culture of the judiciary towards new forms of dealing with these issues. In this sense, it proposes a convergence towards Finnish and European practices, as clarified by Interviewee F.

Vertical and horizontal processes mark the development of the project. It is the horizontal processes, especially the partnerships of Sortavala social center with the City Court and educational institutions that show the attempt of changing administrative practices in this type of public service. These efforts could draw upon existent legislation in Russia, even though not completely directed to the mediation services in cases of youth minor criminality, as a means of showing the opportunities to expand and institutionalize services in this field.

Nevertheless, the findings show that differences in motivation between stakeholders across borders influence the degree of establishment and durability of the soft space created. While Russian stakeholders remain on the pursuit of changing local practices, Finnish partners are mainly focused on the experience itself of sharing their methods and techniques during the project. The end of the project represents the end of Finnish participation in the pursuit of Russian stakeholders, at least until another related project would take place. In this sense, it can be argued that the cross-border soft space created dissolves and it is followed by the attempt of carrying it on only on the Russian side.

5.2.2 Saving our joint treasure - sustainable trout fisheries for the transborder Oulanka river system

The project revolves around a shared resource of significant importance for stakeholders on both sides, the fish stock of brown trout in the Oulanka transboundary river system. The necessity of joint activity in order to guarantee the preservation of such resource guides the project and its partners.

Similarly to the findings on the programme level, as well as the previous project, the "Saving our joint treasure" demonstrates the importance of connections and networks built across borders during past cooperation in enabling the start and development of new initiatives. More specifically, the scientific organizations involved, the Northern Fisheries Research Institute (NFRI), from Petrozavodsk, and LUKE (former Finnish Game and Fisheries Institute) in Finland have been collaborating since 1990s, exchanging knowledge and information on the status of fishery stocks across borders (I.7). The same is true for the Management authorities of the two National Parks across borders, the Oulanka (managed by Metsähallitus), in Finland, and the Paanajärvi, in Russia (I.8).

Such connections were built, among other ways, in the context of the Joint Finnish-Russian Commission on the Utilization of Frontier Waters (FRCUFW) (I.7), a cooperation group established since 1965 between the two countries, involving Ministries, diplomats and scientists, in the field of regulation and protection of transboundary water bodies

(Rajavesistökomission, n.d.; UN, n.d.). Through the Commission, meetings of the working group in Fisheries issues allowed the organizations across borders to establish contacts and understanding of each other capacities (I.7). These networks have provided conditions for a smooth process and successful relations among partners during the development of the project, mainly in what regards to the scientific procedures:

“(...) perhaps they knew that we can count on each other, that we don’t need to be stressed when they are there [on fieldwork], or we are there, what goes on (...). That’s perhaps the main reason that, because we knew each other already and we had together made a plan, so there was no one who would argue that ‘don’t do that’, ‘don’t go there’” (I.7)

In addition, Interviewee H also reflects on the shared past of that nature and region itself, once part of the same territory, as part of an uniting element, a sense of belonging that contribute to the involvement of people in forms of addressing the regional challenges:

“(...) this lake Paanajärvi used to be Finland previously, and a lot of the people who live in Kuusamo, they are evacuees from this, or they are descendants from the evacuees from that area. And I think they almost still think, even if they were not themselves from there, that they sort of... that this is their home, in a way. Many Finns who have been evacuated from the areas that are now part of Russia, they still have very deep belonging to this area, me included. (...) People have genuine interest in things that happen in this area, even though they were not born there themselves” (I.8)

In the context of the project, the ENPI CBC programme, once again, figured as an opportunity to develop a space where more significant results can be achieved in terms of the environmental issue tackled. On both sides, monitoring of the fish stock has happened for decades, but in a separated form, only with exchange of information between scientists and organizations across borders. With the detection of a decline on the fish stock by both organizations, parks and fishermen, a deeper and joint investigation turned necessary in order to generate more accurate measurements, understanding the causes of such decline and ultimately form a joint management group that could tackle the causes in an integrative way (I.7; I.8). However, without the necessary funds to carry such initiative, the partners have found on the ENPI programme the opportunity to finance the project and address issues that could only be tackled by joint activity (I.7).

The motivation strongly shared among partners forms a homogenous rationale and marks the project development. Both sides are said to agree on the uniqueness of the brown trout stock and its endangered situation, which could lead to the disappearance of the species if no action is taken (I.7). The owners of fishing rights in Finland and the Municipality of Kuusamo, as associate partners, also shared the interest in the maintenance of the fish stock and willingness to take necessary action, having also contributed financially to the project (I.8). As the species’ life-cycle is formed by several episodes of migration from the lake, in the Russian side, to the rivers and water bodies in the Finnish side, only joint research activity, scientific and socio-economic, could generate knowledge on the causes of and solutions for the current environmental status of the brown trout.

The project also created a space where joint activity could overcome the administrative barriers imposed by the hard borders to the specific context of the shared development issue

of fishery. To develop the electrofishing, tagging and monitoring through radio transmission, different frameworks apply on each side in terms of permits and applications, and partners count on each other's expertise to deal with the bureaucratic processes of each side and guarantee the administrative viability of the project.

Notably, the approach towards barriers related to customs demonstrate the mechanisms utilized by actors to overcome the different administrative spheres across borders, often by relying on the exchange of knowledge between the institutions involved. The sampling of fishes in the Russian park demanded the transfer of large equipment from Finland to across the borders, which would be taken by the Finnish scientists and placed on Russian territory through summer and winter, for use of the Russian scientists. Customs requirements from Russia, however, demand that any material taken into the country by an individual should exit with the same on its next cross-border passage. The issue was a complication to the performance of activities, found already when very close to such phase. The solution was achieved by suggestion of the Russian partners, who had knowledge of an adequate alternative, in this case a special contract and procedure to be started through the Finnish Foreign Ministry, in connection to the Russian Ministry (I.8).

The centralized nature of institutional practices in Russia, according to Interviewee H, have also posed difficulties to the establishment of the cooperation activity. At the first steps of project development, during the signing of partnership agreements, the autonomy of NFRI in terms of participating in international contracts became unclear. The Institute had to negotiate with its governing body, the University of Petrozavodsk, in order to be authorized to take part in the project independently. A possible obligation to pay a share of the granted contract to the University was raised already after the budget of the project was planned and defined, which would mean a significant reduction of funds for the Institution to perform the activities agreed upon. Ultimately, the Institution was able to agree with its governing body and receive the funding directly without significant loss (I.8).

The political climate is also cited as a hanging threat to the development of joint activity. In line with the findings at the programme level, although direct impact from the sanction policies were not high (besides problems with the fluctuation of the Ruble-Euro rate), a certain fear of possible consequences for the project were present:

"(...) what if this collaboration will be seen as a threat in some way from the point of view of the Russian Federation, and then they make the lives and the work of the Russian Institute difficult with us, Finns. (...) And even direct orders can come from Ministry, to an Institute that's sort of funded by the Ministry." (I.8).

The project has produced a collaboration of actors in the investigation of the status of the fishing stock, as well as an understanding of the socio-economic importance of the species in the region. Moreover, the project performed an awareness campaign that not only pointed to the endangered situation of the trout, but also helped with changing the cultural images of Finns towards Russians and their responsibility over this environmental matter:

"(...) it sort of became famous, this idea that this project is truly hardly trying to solve things with the Russians. Because, of course, Kuusamo is a border municipality, and whenever you ask someone here, even before the project, 'what is the worst problem of this trout fishing?', 'Is the Russians, you should do something with the Russians,

Russians should do this and that and then it would be ok'. So, of course, there's much to blame the locals as well (...), they take, like, 90 percent of the catches here." (I.8)

Through the publicity campaign, informing of all the meetings between Finnish and Russian stakeholders, as well as transmitting to the public the spirit of joint problem-solving between both sides, the project has raised the trust of Finnish local population on their Russians counterparts, in terms of an equal commitment to action on this matter.

Most importantly, perhaps, the project has generated a second and permanent arena for debate and problem-solving on the issue of brown trout preservation, succeeding to form a functional and ongoing soft space. The establishment of a joint group for the sustainable management of the brown trout stock was one of the goals of the project. During the project, actors took the opportunity to gather attention and involve all relevant stakeholders, as a means to promote a lasting engagement, beyond the project. The joint group was thus launched at the end of the project period and has been meeting at least once a year since 2014, drawing upon the social and scientific discoveries from the project to discuss solutions and plan activities to address the threats to the fish population. After the end of the project and respective funding, the municipality of Kuusamo has financed most of the costs of the meetings for the group in the last years, but will be also supported by the Finnish partners on the next events, who will further contribute with financial costs.

Through this group, the stakeholders maintain an open, regional and independent space for management of the resource, which mechanisms of solution-making once again often involve institutional exchanges and joint efforts to circumvent barriers. For instance, during one of these meetings, actors were asked to express what they see as the main problem for the sustainability of the species. Upon unanimous agreement on the issue - the poaching of brown trout on the Lake Pyaozero area, not covered by the Russian National Park territory - the Finnish partner Metsähallitus suggested as solution the extension of the Russian national park area, as a means to expand the control of the park guard over the lake, therefore reducing the illegal poaching:

"He suggested 'what if'... And Paanajärvi National Park manager, he first kind of rolled his eyes. And I thought 'this is never going to happen'. But then, after a couple weeks, and actually already on the next day, when I went to meet him in his office, he sort of started thinking of maybe this is really good" (I.8)

This initiative shows thus the importance of the group as a space where joint effort produces solutions and pursue the overcoming of or working across the administrative barriers, in order to achieve the goals related to the shared fishing resource. For that, institutions and actors support each other through knowledge or even exercise of influence over higher levels. Firstly, the proposition of extension of the park's territory was only raised and viable due to an ongoing process of redefinition of Natural parks limits led by the Federal Ministry of Natural Resources, which was of knowledge of the Paanajärvi management body. Through such procedure, parks could apply for an extension of their safety zones, although priority is given for those where such zones are absent.

In addition, the attempt of exercising influence over the higher levels of government is demonstrated by the declaration produced by the group to state the scientific arguments on issues and solutions proposed by the actors, which could be used as a support to the

application by the Paanajärvi Park to the Ministry. Also a letter from one of the stakeholders of the joint group, a Russian scientific institution who has a position of official adviser to the Ministry, was sent in support of the request and is seen as a valuable contribution to the application.

Also in the context of the Joint Group, actors have been working on a new project, now related to the most pressing area of the transboundary river system, the Lake Pyaozero in Russia. In the meetings of the Joint Group, following the discoveries of the “Saving our joint treasure” project, the partners have discussed forms of decreasing the pressure of fishing on the trout in such area, reaching the proposition of a new project for application under the ENI CBC Karelia programme. It would focus on the sustainability of the increasing fishing tourism in the lake, based on diversification and innovation of the fishing tourism industry. Activities planned range from skill trainings for local stakeholders in the fishing tourism; promoting products that would decrease pressure on the brown trout, as the recreational fishing of other preferred species by Russians such as pikes; stimulus to professional fishing of small salmonid fishes for possible export to Finland; to enhancing the use of least harmful gears in fishing.

Other elements of the general context may reveal a potential importance of the Joint Group created as a soft space for development of the environmental issue. The FRCUFW is a Commission working mainly on higher levels of Ministries between countries, dealing with more general issues related to the transboundary waters rather than a local approach. In this context, the Oulanka Joint Management Group enables the input of knowledge, from the local to the higher levels, increasing the chances of making an impact on decision-making by the government institutions.

Additionally, the Commission has recently decided to terminate its activity in fisheries issues under its framework, and will continue focusing on more general aspects as water quality and water regulations. It has thus proposed a ‘memorandum of understanding’ in the fisheries field, an agreement that would form a new Fisheries working group, with a certain level of independence, even if somehow still related to the Frontier Commission. The change could allow for some regionalization of decision-making in the field of fisheries and increase the linkages between local groups and their capacity to impact on higher level decision (I.7).

Nevertheless, in the activity of the Joint Group itself, barriers related to the political decisions and institutional practices are again evident, even if indirectly. The viability of the new project now being planned, for instance, depends on the funding from the ENI CBC programme current period, which has not yet started to grant contracts because Russia has not yet ratified the agreements. Even though the calls for projects are predicted to the next August, the delays are taken as an uncertainty for the partners, which could possibly result in the absence of funding for projects (I.7):

“I think there was no fair of politics to come in that stage [during the project development], but nowadays it may be a bit more, because I don't know if Russia has already ratified this programme agreement. So we are a bit thinking that if it's... rather if it will open the call (...). It's wise to be prepared if there are some drawbacks in this application time (...).”(I.7)

Finally, the project reveals to have successfully generated an active soft space through the continuity of activities related to the brown trout population stock, now under the Joint Group

established. In this sense, the project demonstrates the capacity of permanent shared interests in feeding the functioning of soft spaces, supported by the connections and networks built along time between stakeholders and institutions across borders.

5.2.2.1 Summary of findings

The findings demonstrate how the project aims to create a soft space for environmental protection and sustainable use of fishery resources, to be established be maintained beyond the project, through a permanent joint management group formed by several of the stakeholders.

Once again, the findings show the importance of relations of trust between organizations, built along time through various cooperation activities. Here, a cooperative initiative between both countries in place since 1965, the FRCUFW, had laid a strong basis of networks between scientists and institutions across borders, involved in the matter of border water bodies. The FRCUFW can be considered a long-lasting soft space itself, resisting to various conflicts between both countries and focusing on decision-making and problem-solving connected to the joint resource of transboundary waters. In this sense, such Commission can be understood as an essential arena of discussions allowing for creation of networks, new joint projects and, consequently, other soft spaces.

The nature of the barriers posed to the development of the issues aimed by the project and the rationale shared by partners mark the processes of development of such project. As a joint resource of importance for both sides, the brown trout migrate several times between parts of the river system, crossing the imaginary lines that define the borders between countries. While such resource does not limit itself to the administrative boundaries, scientists and institutions are limited by those in terms of any type of actions or research, which makes cooperation the only form of obtaining knowledge and carrying out solutions for the decline of brown trout population. A functional rationale is, thus, shared by all partners: achieve preservation of the fishery resource and its economic and social benefits, through cooperation.

Stakeholders in this project utilize mainly of knowledge exchange and institutional cooperation in order to overcome the difficulties posed by the hard borders, as regarding to customs and bureaucracy. It has also dedicated to promote a change of imaginaries of local groups across borders, in order to facilitate dialogue and build trust that neighbours on both sides are strongly committed to the preservation of the fishery resource.

The most significant development of the project, however, can be considered as the establishment of a Joint Group for the sustainable management of the brown trout population in the transboundary river system. The project has been highly successful in generating this second and permanent soft space, where stakeholders from both sides remain discussing and elaborating further on the solutions for the fishery resource. Such success is shown by the continuous meetings beyond the project and its funding, independently financed by participants.

Through this group, new solutions have been pursued to the problems identified during the project activities, including the attempt to extend the territory of the Russian Natural Park, to safeguard areas where current illegal poaching have caused the decline of the brown trout

population. In this group, entities continue to use of knowledge exchange, as well as political influence to achieve significant results for the region in this matter.

A new project being planned for application to the current ENI period shows again the importance of the Karelia CBC programme for the development of joint activity. As the main form of finance for projects across border, partners seem to depend of the programme in terms of financially carrying out cooperation activity. In this sense, the entanglements between national and supranational levels once again pose an indirect barrier to stakeholders across borders, in the sense it leads to the delays of the application for the current period of the ENI CBC programme.

Finally, the project has been highly successful in maintaining a soft space, despite the end of the project funding from the ENPI CBC programme in 2013. The continued and shared interest in sustainable management of the brown trout population shared from the different stakeholders enable the establishment of strong and permanent relations across borders, which are enhanced by the trust built along a path of cooperation between institutions.

6 CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.1 Discussion on Findings

Driving forces

Behind the emergence and development of Karelia as a soft space, different driving forces can be identified, varying mainly according to the levels and type of stakeholders participating of the Karelia CBC activity.

The point of departure of the cooperation programme appears to be the development challenges shared by the regions, although in different degrees. As border regions, peripheral in relation to their countries, circumstances of population decline and slow economic growth hinder development and, consequently, drive the regions to cooperate in order to achieve greater results through joint activity. Furthermore, the physical aspects of a border that has previously been part of a same territory, encompassing part of the Fennoscandia green belt, results in a shared nature that demands cooperation in order to maintain the sustainability of the ecosystems.

Motivations of this nature form a functional rationale for the emergence of Karelia soft space, which can be understood as the main narrative of the Karelia CBC programme. Such rationale is also shared by actors in both national and regional levels in the public sphere, as well as private, represented by the project partners.

Nevertheless, other drivers are highly significant for the development of Karelian soft space and representative of the unique geopolitical context in which the regions are embedded. The desire for changing practices in the Russian side is a driver of cooperation in both national and local levels, and as Project A has shown, also among Russian local stakeholders.

In a national level, Finland sees cross-border cooperation as an opportunity to promote a westernization of administrative and political culture in Russia, in a way to steer its neighbour towards the mentality considered more appropriate by Finland. By engaging the neighbours in cooperation and constant joint activity, Finland expects the former to gradually adapt to the 'rule of law'. In addition, under this rationale, the element of security is strongly present, in the sense that Finland sees such cooperation as a form of being constantly aware of Russian practices and able to influence their decisions. While this work could not fully grasp how the Russian Federation level participates of such motivation, it is possible to infer that this rationale is often a one-sided effort in the interest of Finland and the EU.

In the local level, however, the rationale based on the change of practices of the Russian side happens under a different context, less related to political cultures. As the programme analysis has shown, and exemplified by Project A, local actors often are involved in the pursuit of changing traditional practices in fields of education, justice and public health. Driven by the desire to implement (considered) 'best-practices' in these fields on the Russian side, cooperation is used as a form of building institutional capacity and awareness to the necessity of such changes in society. In this context, Russian institutions figure as the recipients of certain practices, not only driven by the Finnish desire to export those, but also by their own interest in importing and absorbing these practices.

It is important to notice, however, the influence of the rationales in the degree of success achieved by the projects, specifically in the attempt to build a permanent space where issues of regional development can be further negotiated and tackled. The 'Saving our joint treasure' project has been very successful in creating a permanent arena of decision-making in the environmental field of fisheries, developing a Joint Management Group across borders that lasts beyond the project itself. Through the group, stakeholders aim to circumvent and/or work across the administrative, legislative and operational barriers posed by the border context, in order to achieve necessary results for the preservation of the brown trout population. It can be, thus, considered an established soft space. On the other hand, the project 'Mediation in progress' worked towards a soft space during its duration, but terminated with the end of the project.

The difference between the paths of such projects, in terms of its result for a cross-border soft space, is marked by the degree to which rationales were shared by actors from each side of the border. In Project B, actors share the equal motivation of cooperating to preserve the sustainability of the fish resource, in the sense that both sides recognize the impact and importance of it. However, in Project A, Finnish actors wish to share knowledge as a means to exercise their best practices and exchange culturally with the neighbours, while Russian actors are engaged in changing practices towards more socially just procedures in youth minor criminality. Since the project is an end-in-itself for Finnish actors, the end of it represents the end of the cross-border nature of this interaction, even though Russian actors remain in the attempt to change procedures in their region.

It can be said, therefore, that the shared rationale present in the case of the environmental project has enabled a permanent engagement in a cross-border soft space, not seen in the case of the project 'Mediation in Progress'.

Process and mechanisms of the governance arrangements in Karelia

The development of Karelia CB region as a soft space is marked mainly by processes of informal and semi-formal negotiation as a tool to reach governance arrangements necessary to CBC activity. It has been shown that, for regional and local stakeholders, the CBC programme is the main source of finance, as well as main institutional arrangement for coordination of cooperation across borders, which means that joint activity highly depends on the programme. At the same time, the establishment and continuity of the programme faces as major barrier the political climate and divergences between national and supranational levels. In this sense, constant informal efforts from regions and Finland national level aim to steer consensus and maintain viable the CBC programme as a governance arrangement guiding CBC activity in this area.

Such processes are exemplified by several episodes here narrated, where both the national and the regional levels of Finland have circumvented, or attempted to circumvent, the political divergences between EU and Russia. From the approval of the programmes to the negotiation of Financial Agreements for the past and current period, the Finnish Ministry and regions have used of informal diplomatic pressure and semi-formal negotiation talks. These processes take advantage of the Finnish knowledge on the operational culture and political positions of Russia in order to smoothen relations between the neighbour and EU. Although the impact of such efforts cannot be measured, as clashes between both remain evident, these attempts in

themselves can be considered part of the essential mechanisms in use to circumvent the barriers of the divergent political and administrative spheres.

It can be said, therefore, that regional, national and supranational interests often diverge in the construction of the Karelia CBC programme, and the efforts of negotiation are constantly used as a means to achieve the necessary consensus to the continuity of CBC activity in the region.

Furthermore, findings have shown that not only the hard spaces of administrative and political spheres pose a barrier to the development of Karelia soft space, but so do other soft spaces. Specifically, the frameworks of TACIS and INTERREG in the 90s, although promoters of CBC in the region, posed a series of limits for further development, since they did not fully adequate to the context of cooperation between an EU- and a non-EU member. In this sense, it can be also considered that EU acts both as an enabler and as a barrier to the soft space of Karelia. EU does provide the current framework and conditions for CBC in Karelia but has, in the past and still currently, posed a series of barriers to the settlement of adequate governance arrangements for the CBC activity in the region.

Moreover, the relations between the CBC programme with other spaces, specifically the Euregio Karelia, may be understood as a provision of 'hardness' to the soft space of Karelia CB region. With the participation of Euregio Karelia in the setting of priorities and thematic project calls, the political network and representativeness that composes the latter grants to the CBC programme a level of legitimacy, therefore increasing importance of it in the context of the regions.

Finally, in both programme and project levels, the relations of trust appear to be essential to the development of a soft space in Karelia. At the programme level, national and regional stakeholders have built along time connections and interactions that allow for open discussion and negotiation in the interest of regional development. In the project level, the networks built along the different periods and frameworks of cooperation have shown great importance in regards to the trust on the institutional capacity of organizations and, consequently, the ability and willingness to cooperate towards shared goals.

The role of CBC programme in the emergence of Karelian soft space

Cross-border cooperation activity in Karelia has a history beyond the current forms under the EU programmes, traced back to the end of Soviet Union, when the national level of Finland and the Russian border regions first engaged in cross-border cooperation. The institutional framework since then has changed several times. Firstly, under the Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs lead in the Neighbouring Area Cooperation programme, started in 1992, regions had less participation in the decision-making and carrying out of cooperation, since project preparation and monitoring were of responsibility of the Finnish National level and its sectoral Ministries. Only with the accession of Finland to the EU, and introduction of the EU programmes for cooperation across borders, regions gained a principal role in the preparation and administration of cooperation projects across borders.

The current framework of CBC activity in Karelia is set by the programme, which appears to be the main source of finance for joint projects across borders. In this sense, the ENPI/ENI

CBC programme in Karelia consists in the main enabler of projects related to the regional development across borders.

The Karelia CBC programme constitutes a soft space for its introduction of a governance arrangement focused in regional development, overcoming the existent institutional dividedness and, mainly, the political divergences between national and supranational levels. In practice, the role of the programme in the creation of soft spaces are reflected on the projects and local level. As the projects here analyzed have shown, the establishment of soft spaces, their success in terms of durability and outcomes highly vary and depend on the specific circumstances, rationales and aims of the partners involved.

Nevertheless, the 'Saving our joint treasure' project has shown the creation of soft spaces through CBC activity, where stakeholders across borders have established a permanent space for discussion and elaboration of solutions in the field of fisheries in a transboundary ecosystem. Such space aims to promote action towards the preservation of the resource, while overcoming the barriers of different legislations, exercise influence on higher levels and achieving changes in traditional procedures related to fishing. The Joint Group, therefore, shows many of the characteristics of soft spaces as approached by Olesen (2012), in the sense it figures as a very specific episode of strategy-making, with a focused agenda on the field of fisheries resource. The flexibility of its boundaries is shown by the attempt to expand its influence over the territory in the side of the Russian natural park, as a necessary exercise for addressing the issues intended.

Finally, the CBC programme can be understood as a space for overcoming barriers in both national and regional level, in order to promote development of regions that share a series of development challenges. It constitutes, therefore, a soft space in between regional, national and supranational levels, as well as an enabler of other soft spaces in the local cross-border level.

6.2 Theoretical Reflections

The present study has applied the concept of soft space to the study of the Karelia CBC programme and its activity as a means to understand how the CB region overcomes the barriers posed by 'hard borders'.

The empirical study of soft spaces, as explored in the theoretical framework, have approached several mechanisms through which cross-border regions work together despite the divergent administrative spheres. However, such studies do not often approach the context of 'hard borders', where countries do not share frameworks of legislations, nor political and operational cultures. In this sense, the present case study may add to the soft spaces literature, mainly in regards to the processes and mechanisms employed by the regions and national levels in order to overcome the barriers of the hard borders.

The experience of Karelia demonstrates once again a functional rationale, often explored in the studies of soft spaces. Nevertheless, it also presents an interesting second rationale, which can provide an addition to the studies of soft spaces. The pursuit of change of practices in the Russian side is part of the motivation of several actors, in both national and regional level, as well as the local level in Republic of Karelia. Such motivation is, therefore, a driver

for establishing a space of constant cooperation, where political and administrative practices can converge towards a certain *modus operandi*, envisioned by both Finland and EU. This specific finding points to the possibility of further exploration on how such rationale impacts the promotion of a soft space across hard borders.

Taking into account the characteristics of soft spaces by Haughton et al. (2009), the Karelia CBC programme and its activity figure as a soft space for its clear attempt to enable initiatives of solution-making for regional development issues (although the extent to which those can be considered part of a "creative thinking", as argued by the authors, is not clear). Also clearly, the Karelian soft space coexists with 'hard spaces' of governance, not only in the sense of overcoming those, in the case of the national and supranational political spheres, but it is also supported and legitimated by hard spaces, specifically the Euregio and its political dimension.

Furthermore, the perspective of 'conflict-to-harmony' introduced by Minghi (2014) is shown as especially relevant to the study of the cross-border region of Karelia. The historical path of the regions, the changes of physical borders and political ruling, as well as the processes of building spatial, cultural and ethnic identities are essential to the understanding of Karelia and the current cross-border region.

As Bufon & Minghi (2014) have also found in their empirical study, these areas have been part of changing geopolitical scenarios, from a past of military conflicts to a current context of more integrative efforts, pushed by their shared challenges and similarities.

Finally, the Karelia case provides an addition to the empirical literature on soft spaces and aims to contribute to the further development of the concept, mainly in the context of hard borders. It points, additionally, to the importance of a historical perspective on the studies of cross-border regions, with a focus beyond the macro geopolitical level, but rather focused on the social construct of regional spatial identities and its importance on the current scenarios of relations across borders.

6.3 Research Limitations

The following section explore the limitations faced during the development of this research and its possible impacts on the reach of it.

Firstly, due to time constraints and difficulties of access to reach representatives of regional and national levels of Russia, the present work show a limited view of the participation of Republic of Karelia in the processes and mechanisms of creation of a soft space across borders, here offered only by the Branch Office of the JMA of the programme, in Petrozavodsk (Interview 2), and the project partner of Project A (Interview 6).

Consequently, the study has not fully explored, for instance, the interests (if existent) of the Russian Federation in creating a space for joint regional development that overcomes the separate administrative boundaries between the countries. Perhaps more importantly, it lacks to comprehend fully the reactions and participation of Russian higher levels in the rationale of changing administrative and operational practices in the Russian side.

The absence of this perspective may concentrate the narrative on the approaches by the Finnish national and regional levels towards the administrative and political barriers of the Karelia context.

Secondly, this study has chosen a focused scope, as a means to perform a feasible study, on the aspects of governance in the region of Karelia through the CBC programme, under the concept of soft spaces. However, it has not approached more specific aspects of spatial planning, which could further benefit the analysis of the impact of the Karelian soft space on the planning practice and plans of the regions involved.

Finally, due to the context-dependence and singularity of the case study herein approached, this research recognizes its limitation in terms of generating lessons to other cross-border regions. Nevertheless, it provides a valuable perspective on the practical mechanisms and process employed by regions in the pursuit of overcoming the barriers of the borders. Therefore, it goes beyond the high level institutional discourses to provide comprehension of on-the-ground alternatives to promote joint activity and consequent regional development.

6.4 Recommendations

The limitations of this study, as well as specific findings of interest leave considerable space for further development of research on the subjects herein approached.

Firstly, the connections of the soft space of Karelia with the spatial planning discourses, plans and narratives in the regions involved deserve an in-depth study, in order to fully understand the degree to which such regions relate the cross-border cooperation to their spatial planning development goals. Such focus could provide a more complete picture of the soft space of Karelia and its practical impacts on spatial planning itself, rather than only on a governance perspective.

Furthermore, a larger study encompassing representatives of the Republic of Karelia unit and the Russian Federation level should be further developed in order to present a more balanced picture between sides of the borders. As this research has found, efforts in the pursuit of changing practices in the Russian side are strong among Finnish actors and Russian local stakeholders, represented by Project A. However, further study on the reactions and participation of Russian regional and national levels, and the degree to which they share this specific rationale, is necessary to provide a realistic and complete analysis of the forces driving the creation of a soft space in Karelia.

This aspect relates also to the security dimension of CBC found through this study. Further development of research with a focus on the security aspects and the importance of this rationale on the development of CBC to both sides of the border, can demonstrate and explore additional aspects to the existent soft spaces literature.

Finally, the present work has chosen a single case study method for reasons of feasibility and in depth understanding of the functioning of a soft space. However, it becomes clear that comparative studies of outer border regions and their cooperation activity, under the perspective of soft spaces, can provide greater lessons on how such regions overcome the hard borders and the impact of each method on their success in promoting a soft space.

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ANNEXES

Annex I – List of conducted interviews

INTERVIEW NUMBERING	INSTITUTION / LOCATION	INTERVIEWEE CODE	PROJECT CODE
Interview 1 (I.1)	Joint Managing Authority of Karelia CBC programme / Oulu	A	
Interview 2 (I.2)	Branch Office of JMA / Petrozavodsk	B	
Interview 3 (I.3)	Joint Managing Authority of Karelia CBC programme / Oulu	C	
Interview 4 (I.4)	Consultant, Former participant of the Finnish Foreign Ministry / Helsinki	D	
Interview 5 (I.5)	University of Eastern Finland, LP of Project A / Joensuu	E	A
Interview 6 (I.6)	Sortavala Social Center officer (CPMSS) / Sortavala	F	A
Interview 7 (I.7)	Natural Resources Institute Finland (LUKE) / Kuusamo	G	B
Interview 8 (I.8)	Former participant of Metsähallitus, LP of project B / Kuusamo	H	B

Table 3 - Interviews conducted (Source: author)

Annex II - Interview Guide Programme level

(Interviewees A to D)

Brief statement of the purpose: *The region of Karelia is well-known for its intense cross-border cooperation activity, commonly seen by the EU as an example of best practice. On the same time, the region is in a complex geopolitical scenario, between different national and supranational levels and interests. Notwithstanding, CBC activity in Karelia shows an important development and abilities to address shared goals. In this sense, we intend to investigate the Karelia CBC activity to comprehend how the region overcome administrative and physical boundaries, creating a shared space across borders.*

Main Research questions	Interviewee questions (in order)	Intended information to be gathered
	I would like to start with your general view on the history of cross-border cooperation activity in Karelia.	Do they trace CBC to the past history, or to EU-led cooperation programmes?
POSSIBLE PROBE QUESTION	How do you relate the capacity of cooperation currently between Finnish and Russian actors in Karelia to the historical development of cooperation in the region?	In his/her opinion, how this capacity relates to the past of the region. What are the influences of this past in the current picture? (e.g. Is it easier for them to cooperate because of their shared history, or the past of conflict means usually a barrier to the cooperation)
IF NOT ANSWERED ON FIRST ONE:	And how would you say this current framework differs from the ways in which cooperation happened in the past?	In his/her experience, what has changed in the form of cooperation between both sides of Karelia
How regional, national and supranational levels (stakeholders) interact in the surge and development of the Karelia cross-border region?	Can you tell me a little a bit the administrative and political nature of the CBC programme?	Get to know the general picture of governance in this area.
What is the rationale behind the emergence of a transnational cross-border region of Karelia and its cooperation activity, considering a historical approach to its development?	How would you describe the main reasons of Russian and Finnish parts of Karelia to engage in cooperation?	In the JMA experience, what are the reasons for engagement in cooperation, considering different actors - are reasons mostly economic/cultural/use of funds? Do different actors have different motivations - public regional levels (e.g. Regional councils)/project applicants (public, private, CSOs)? Do both sides have the same reasons for the cooperation?)

	I understand that the programmes priorities and practices are established through a joint agenda, between national and regional levels	
How has the cross-border cooperation region of Karelia surged and evolved since its origins? What are the characteristics of the processes in the development of such region up till and including the current cooperation programme frameworks?	In this sense, could you tell me more about the process of joint decision-making between regional and national levels?	<i>Were there conflicts between regional, national and supranational levels, in the process of setting priorities and practices? Are there needs of conciliating or preserving some interests against others? How did the levels reach consensus on agenda?</i>
	Now I would like to focus on the level of projects. So, considering the projects undertaken, and even the ones submitted but not approved	
What are the interests (problems) addressed in the region of Karelia by the cooperation activity between both sides of the borders? Which instruments and practices rise from such cooperation and how (if) they overcome fixed administrative boundaries (i.e. hard borders) to create a space around shared solutions?	What do you see as the main challenges projects face when cooperating across borders in Karelia?	<i>Possible administrative barriers coming from Finland, Russia or EU issues. (Are the hard borders an issue, the EU intentions, the sanctions to RU, the different views of Russia on society or etc a barrier? Are there decisions or processes of the higher levels that block Karelia interests? How the CBC programme overcomes these barriers - social debate, Lobbying, contacts with politics? (example, ask on the fact that FI helped EU to talk to RU about financial agreement, is Karelia involved in this negotiation?) How Karelia keeps out of the EU-RU field and preserve its interests?</i>
How (and if) do the projects approved and undertaken in the CBC programme area reflect the creation of such opportunities in practice?	And in your experience, what were the main contributions projects have offered to the region?	<i>In practice, what do projects mostly address? Does he think they are indispensable for the region, or they could happen despite the programme? Are they coming from shared needs or use of the money simply, etc.</i>
	How do you see participation of Russian and Finnish actors in the project level?	<i>In his experience, is engagement in cooperation equally strong in the project level, among Russian and Finnish actors?</i>
	About the projects we talked before, "Saving our	<i>Ask for an initial word on the projects selected, why he indicated</i>

	joint treasure” and “Mediation in progress”. Do you think their trajectory is very representative of the projects in general?	<i>those, what they represent for the region, are they representative of all the projects in general</i>
	Finally, I would like to end our interview with your views on the lessons that Karelia may bring for CBC activity. As I see, Karelia has important challenges in terms of regional development - such as peripherality, sparsely populated areas, environment, and security. On the same time, the highly complex geopolitical context of the region could represent a huge barrier, but is somehow overcome in the regional level.	
Which (if existent) lessons does the Karelia cross-border region offers to the comprehension of soft spaces	What do you see of unique in the Karelia region, in terms of promotion of CBC?	
DEBRIEFING	Are there any other things you would like to highlight?	
	May I contact you, if there is any additional question?	
	Thank you for your cooperation.	

Table 4 - Interview Guide for programme level (Source: author)

Annex III - Interview Guide Project level

(Interviewees E to H)

Briefing: Thank the participant for his time, introduce myself (name, origin, Masters studies). Present the formalities involved (confidentiality, current recording, semi-structured open questions). Ask how much time they have.

Brief statement of the purpose: *The region of Karelia is well-known for its intense cross-border cooperation activity, commonly seen as an example of best practices. On the same time, the region is in a complex geopolitical scenario, between different national and supranational levels. The projects performed under the CBC Karelia programme represent the regional capacity of cooperating across borders despite the difficulties of administrative and physical borders.*

In this sense, we intend to investigate the ways through which the projects of Karelia CBC programme promote joint action, overcome administrative and physical boundaries, and create a shared space across borders.

Main Research questions	Topic of the question (or question as phrased)	Intended information to be gathered
	<p>“Well, as a start, could you tell me about your experience with CBC?”</p> <p>“Now talking about the project, what is it mainly about?”</p> <p>Anything about the application process</p>	
What are the interests (problems) addressed in the region of Karelia by the cooperation activity between both sides of the borders?	The motivation for the project - why addressing this matter?	
What is the rationale behind the emergence of a transnational cross-border region of Karelia and its cooperation activity, considering a historical approach to its development?	The motivation for cooperation across borders - why is this developed in cooperation and not just by your organization on this side?	
Which actors are (and were) involved in the setting and development of the regional space through the cooperation programme, on both sides of the borders?	About the participation of all beneficiaries - each one's role on the project, if there were other actors essential for the project (not beneficiaries), how was the work together	

	Was the project based on previous experiences on cooperation? Could you tell me more about these partnerships?	
Which instruments and practices rise from such cooperation and how (if) they overcome fixed administrative boundaries (i.e. hard borders) to create a space around shared solutions?	<p>The project has ended in 2014. Which activities and practices remain?</p> <p>Has this experience changed something in the cooperation level?</p> <p>In general, what would you say were the main challenges the project has faced (in practice)?</p>	
How regional, national and supranational levels (stakeholders) interact in the surge and development of the Karelia cross-border region?	In terms of organizing and setting the cooperation, together with the regional level and the CBC programme structure itself, did you have any challenges to overcome?	<i>Ask for possible challenges of local, regional or national origins; her view on the CBC as a whole</i>
Which (if existent) lessons does the Karelia cross-border region offers to the comprehension of soft spaces	The Karelia region in general has been well known by the cooperation programme and the projects developed. I would to ask you, as a participant of this project, and part of the Karelia region, do you see something of unique in this region and the actors involved, considering their high capacity of cooperation here?	<i>Ask for possible differences between Karelia coop and other regions of FI-RU borders;</i>
DEBRIEFING	Are there any other things you would like to highlight?	
	May I contact you, if there is any additional question?	
	Thank you for your cooperation.	

Table 5 - Interview guide for Project level (Source: author)

Annex IV – Karelia ENPI CBC Programme, Projects of 2007 – 2013 period

Project Name	Budget (euros)	Thematic1	Thematic2	Project start and end
Better life for Karelian villages	50000	Waste and pollution	Construction and renovation	14/04/2011 – 13/04/2011
Sheep husbandry in the Kalevala District	75000	Agriculture and fisheries and forestry	SME and entrepreneurship	13/05/2011 – 12/05/2012
«Dancing whirlpool»	120000	Cultural heritage and arts	Tourism	28/02/2013 – 30/08/2014
Together We Are Stronger - A Full Life With Diabetes	140000	Health and social services	Education and training	28/05/2013 – 27/12/2014
Learning Lab for Accessibility in Built Environment	270000	Health and social services	Social inclusion and equal opportunities	18/01/2013 – 30/12/2014
Improvement of the environment and living standards is the basis for modern rural development	279000	Water management		28/02/2011 – 27/02/2013
Life-long learning in cultural management to promote creative industries and tourism	284059	Cultural heritage and arts	Education and training	07/02/2013 – 06/10/2014
Music: education for inspiration	284134	Cultural heritage and arts	Education and training	26/03/2013 – 25/12/2014
Ground water supply in Sortavala district	284869	Water management		12/04/2011 – 11/04/2013
Journey planner service for disabled people	285000	Social inclusion and equal opportunities	Health and social services	05/05/2013 – 04/11/2014
Devising models, methods of forest health forecasting based on the Earth remote sensing technologies	296390	Sustainable management of natural resources	ICT and digital society	02/04/2013 – 30/12/2014
Museum for family	302438	Cultural heritage and arts	Education and training	11/01/2013 – 30/12/2014
Libraries Make a Difference: New Forms of Library Activity for Local Communities	330000	Cultural heritage and arts	Institutional cooperation and cooperation networks	21/03/2013 – 30/12/2014

Increasing the competitiveness of SMEs through energy efficiency	339400	Energy efficiency	Sustainable management of natural resources	30/10/2012 – 29/04/2014
Functional Families - Evidence Based Welfare Models for Family Work in Finland and Karelia	350000	Health and social services	Education and training	01/02/2013 – 30/12/2014
Cross-Border Move for Health	364097	Health and social services	Education and training	04/02/2013 – 04/12/2014
Lifelong Wellbeing	365501	Health and social services	Education and training	21/03/2013 – 30/12/2014
Rock Art Bridge	380000	Cultural heritage and arts	Tourism	15/02/2013 – 14/11/2014
Developing Cross-Border Knowhow on the Prevention of Social Exclusion of Children and Youth	383509	Social inclusion and equal opportunities	Health and social services	25/01/2013 – 25/01/2015
KareliaTicket	396000	Cultural heritage and arts	ICT and digital society	28/02/2013 – 29/11/2014
Development of cross-border biofuel infrastructure	404000	Energy efficiency	Green technologies	16/11/2012 – 16/11/2012
Integrated landscape planning for sustainable use of nature resources and maintaining the biodiversity	429889	Sustainable management of natural resources	Regional planning and development	04/02/2013 – 30/12/2014
Mediation in progress – developing conflict resolution	450000	Health and social services	Social inclusion and equal opportunities	31/12/2012 – 30/12/2014
Development of disease prevention and health promotion in two Karelias 2013-2014	451652	Health and social services	Education and training	31/12/2012 – 30/12/2014
Environmental Monitoring Concept for Pulp, Paper and Mining Sector	452638	Waste and pollution		05/04/2013 – 30/12/2014
Green cities and settlements – Sustainable spatial development in remote border areas	461386	Energy efficiency	Green technologies	18/03/2011 – 17/03/2013
Social services on both sides of the border	488474	Health and social services	Social inclusion and equal opportunities	04/04/2013 – 04/01/2015

Development of cross-border e-tourism framework for the programme region	494989	New products and services	Tourism	25/05/2012 – 24/11/2014
Restoration of transborder salmonid rivers	505997	Waterways, lakes and rivers	Sustainable management of natural resources	09/04/2013 – 30/12/2014
Establishing the cross-border cooperation to safeguard the declining wild forest reindeer population	533327	Sustainable management of natural resources	Climate change and biodiversity	18/07/2013 – 30/12/2014
Ground heat solution for the village hall and the school buildings of Vuokkiniemi	540000	Renewable energy	Green technologies	19/06/2013 – 18/12/2014
New Business Model between Kainuu and Karelian wood industries	540000	New products and services	Sustainable management of natural resources	04/10/2012 – 03/10/2014
Intellectually driven management of natural resources of Green Belt of Fennoscandia	543400	Sustainable management of natural resources		22/04/2013 – 30/12/2014
Product development and development of market insight and e-marketing of rural and nature tourism	544000	New products and services	Tourism	29/06/2012 – 28/08/2014
PoCoBus - The Possibilities of Cooperation, Business and Trade across the Border between enterprises	554541	SME and entrepreneurship	Cultural heritage and arts	18/02/2011 – 17/02/2011
Complex development of regional cooperation in the field of open ICT innovations	557120	ICT and digital society		08/04/2011 – 07/04/2014
Addressing challenging health inequalities of children and youth between two Karelia	585385	Health and social services	Education and training	31/12/2012 – 30/12/2014
Eco-efficient tourism	590000	Tourism	Sustainable management of natural resources	18/04/2012 – 17/04/2014
Promotion of low-cost and youth tourism in the cross-border areas	591372,8	Tourism	Education and training	31/05/2012 – 29/11/2014

Contemporary old city: Enhancing cultural tourism across the border	602526	Tourism	Cultural heritage and arts	31/05/2012 – 30/12/2014
Quality for Crossborder practices in ecotourism	603818	New products and services	Tourism	05/04/2014 – 04/04/2014
Karelia - developing competitive tourism resort with collaborative platform	605298	New products and services	Tourism	31/05/2012 – 30/05/2014
Cities by the water - new opportunities for business development	610000	Clustering and economic cooperation	Regional planning and development	11/03/2011 – 10/03/2013
Sustainable utilization of water resources in the Republic of Karelia	625901	Renewable energy		25/02/2013 – 24/12/2014
Saving our joint treasure: sustainable trout fisheries for the transborder Oulanka River system	629201	Waterways, lakes and rivers	Sustainable management of natural resources	31/01/2013 – 30/12/2014
Craft & Design Business Incubator	640000	New products and services	Cultural heritage and arts	02/04/2011 – 01/04/2013
Support to sustainable development of Sortavala town for the improvement of environmental situation	668245	Water management		?
The Ontrei Malinen's Kantele Tourist Route	686640	Tourism	Cultural heritage and arts	10/05/2012 – 09/12/2014
MULTIple Eco-Friendly FOREst use: Restoring Traditions	718008	Sustainable management of natural resources	Energy efficiency	01/10/2012 – 30/12/2014
Development of an efficient support network and operation model for the municipal energy sector	722130	Renewable energy	Green technologies	29/10/2012 – 30/12/2014
Cross-border Tourism Development in Northern Finland and the Republic of Karelia	734373	Tourism	New products and services	29/10/2012 – 30/12/2014
Clean Ladoga	746811	Green technologies	Soil and air quality	12/01/2013 – 30/12/2014
Aquatic resources for green energy realization	775000	Green technologies	Sustainable management of natural resources	15/10/2012 – 14/06/2014

Mining Road	797010	New products and services	Tourism	20/04/2012 – 19/12/2014
Matka.ru	800000	New products and services	Tourism	31/08/2012 – 29/11/2014
Novel cross-border solutions for intensification of forestry and increasing energy wood use	900000	Energy efficiency	Green technologies	30/09/2012 – 30/12/2014
Development of tree plantations for tailings dumps afforestation and phytoremediation in Russia	917585	Renewable energy	Sustainable management of natural resources	08/10/2012 – 30/12/2014
New cultural models in the peripheral areas – Network of Ethno-Cultural and Heritage Organisations	980000	Cultural heritage and arts	Tourism	08/02/2013 – 30/12/2014
Euregio Karelia: Museum Hypertext	990000	Cultural heritage and arts	Innovation capacity and awareness-raising	07/02/2013 – 06/10/2014
The biofuel power in Kostomuksha	1099660	Renewable energy	Green technologies	17/01/2013 – 30/12/2014
Improving the gravelroad Kostomuksha-Kalevala	1200000	Infrastructure	Improving transport connections	04/05/2011 – 03/05/2014
LARGE SCALE PROJECTS				
Welfare from Sustainable Cross Border Nature and Culture Tourism	2533000	Tourism	Sustainable management of natural resources	24/09/2012 – 23/12/2014
Reconstruction of Ikhala-Raivio-State border Automobile Road, km 0- km 14	3680000	Infrastructure	Improving transport connections	09/11/2012 – 30/12/2014
Development of the Traffic Lanes in the International Border Crossing Point Niirala, 1st Phase	3700000	Infrastructure	Improving transport connections	31/12/2012 – 30/12/2014
Repair of Automobile Road Loukhi-Suoperya, km 110 - km 160	4055000	Infrastructure	Improving transport connections	09/11/2012 – 30/12/2014
Widening of Road 89 Vartius-Paltamo, road	4982000	Infrastructure	Improving transport connections	31/12/2012 – 29/11/2014

stretches 10-13 and 13-
17

Table 6 - Karelia CBC programme projects, period 2007 - 2013

Annex V – Programme Documents and Institutional Reports

PROGRAMME DOCUMENTS

ENPI CBC Joint Operational Programme Karelia 2007-2013, EC (2008)

Ex post Evaluation of the Karelia ENPI CBC Programme, TK-EVAL (2016)

EU REPORTS

Ex-post Evaluation of 2007-2013 ENPI CBC Programmes, DG NEAR (2018)

INSTITUTIONAL REPORTS

Neighbouring Area Cooperation, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Finland (2009)

Annex VI - Coding scheme for Programme level

CATEGORY	CODE	SUB CODE
1 Historical Development	1.1 Building connections along history	Building contacts through INTERREG/TACIS
		From building contacts to activating networks for projects
		Built relationships enhancing trust
	1.2 Regionalization of CBC	
	1.3 "So much in common still"	
2 Rationale	2.1 Shared development	Environmental issues
	2.2 Opportunities	For economic development
		From the proximity
		To cooperate with EU (for RU)
	2.3 Share practices to RU side	
3 Barriers	3.1 Administrative barriers	Bureaucracy
		Customs
		Different legislations
		VISA problems
	3.2 Political Climate	Sanctions
		Imaginaries surrounding sanctions
	3.3 Previous programme	
	3.4 Language	
	3.5 National prioritization	
	3.6 Different mentality of people	
	3.7 Bad condition of roads	
	4.1 Trust	

4 How	4.2 Interaction with hard spaces	Euregio Karelia
	4.3 Cooperation outside the	
	4.4 Bottom-up/Top-down	Bottom-up and Top-down
		Bottom-up
	4.5 Balance of participation on	
5 Product	5.1 New arenas for communication	New spaces for exchange
		New networks
	5.2 New arenas of negotiation	
	5.3 New spaces for	Economic growth

Table 7 - Coding Scheme for programme level interviews

Annex VII – Coding scheme for Project level

CATEGORY	CODE	
	Project A	Project B
1 Historical perspective	Past shared history and interests	Building contacts through Frontier Commission
		Feelings of belonging
2 Rationale	Be an Explorer	ENPI money as opportunity to continue cooperation
	"Can we learn something from them?" / "We want to know what they are doing"	Preservation of shared resource
	ENPI money as opportunity to continue cooperation	Regionalizing decision making
	Learn the culture and thoughts / Learn other ways of seeing life	Shared resource
	Teach the Russians / To develop some good practice in RU	to establish a group beyond the project
	To protect the youth	
	Willingness to learn new things and exchange	
	Wish to expand cooperation	
3 Barriers	ENI delay	Change of staff of institutions in Russian side
	No money without ENI	Concentration of power in RU side
	Political climate	Currency fluctuations
		Customs barriers
		Different practices of environmental
		Elimination of previous spaces of

		Fears related to political climate
		Political climate as a current barrier
4 How	Experience of coordinating with Russians	Importance of built relationships with Russians
	Imbalance of benefits on both sides	Informal debating and negotiation
	4.3 New contacts through past ones / Use connections to plan new projects	Sharing Institutional knowledge to deal with administrative issues
	4.4 Trust on each other capacity / Trust on existent partner on RU	Strongly shared motivation
	4.5 Use existent framework of RU	Trust relations
	4.6 Using experience to overcome language barriers	Using institutional influence over government levels
5 Product		Attempts to change legislative aspects
		Continuous participation of stakeholders
		Joint management group for decisions
		Local awareness
		Next possible project

Table 8 - Coding Scheme for project level interviews (Source: author)