

Cross border cooperation in Edirne-Kırklareli border region: New institutionalist perspectives¹

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Abstract

This article aims to elaborate the current stage of institutionalization of cross border cooperation programme between Turkey and Bulgaria using the theoretical tools of new institutionalism. The geographical focus is on the Edirne- Kırklareli border region on the Turkish side of the border. It is argued that new institutionalist approaches provide different perspectives that shade light on different aspects of cross border cooperation and at the final stage they help to establish a coherent framework for understanding the institutionalization of cross border cooperation in the region. Drawing on interviews conducted with 49 cross border cooperation related people including public officials, civil society and business representatives and civil servants; this study conducts an institutional ethnographic analysis with a new institutionalist perspective to grasp the institutionalization process of cross border cooperation in the region. The literature review part of the article consists of two chapters: first new institutionalism theory and the different perspectives its three strands, rational choice, sociological and historical institutionalism provide; and second the scientific literature on new institutionalism in the field of cross border cooperation and border regions are elaborated. After the literature review, the article analyses the current condition of cross border cooperation in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region by using the tools new institutionalism theory provides. Finally the conclusion chapter discusses how the three strands of new institutionalism can be brought together to develop a comprehensive understanding of the institutional structure of cross border cooperation in the region.

Keywords

Cross border cooperation, New institutionalism, Edirne-Kırklareli border region.

1. Introduction

"Well, they are good, but people rarely see their results. They are much more like a game played by some elites in the region" (Personal Interview, 2013).

"They are playing neighbourliness" would be a good title for the summary of 40 minutes long interview with one of the administrative officers in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region. The subject of the discussion was cross border cooperation (CBC), a phenomenon existing since 1950'ies in Europe and intensely finding place in the Turkish-Bulgarian border regions over a period of one decade, thanks to Turkey's official candidacy for the European Union (EU) membership.

The basic premise of CBC in the EU context is to contribute to the regional development of border regions while establishing neighbourly relations among border societies (Ricq, 2006). The expanding scholarly interest on border regions emphasizes their changing condition from "barriers to bridges" by stressing the increasing porosity of borders in the course of globalization that allows establishing economic, social and political links between local communities across borders (Church and Reid, 1999; Niebuhr, 2006; O'Dowd, 2003). Critiques have provided powerful arguments that a "borderless world" is rather a myth than a reality, especially in Europe, where, while internal borders are arguably diminishing, external ones are erected to fortify the "Fortress Europe" that now resembles a gated community (Johnson et al, 2011; Van Houtum, 2007). Nevertheless, cross border interactions among local border communities are not only expanding but also finding political and financial support in the EU that enables them to institutionalize and make CBC a hot topic on the local agenda (Perkman, 1999; Van der Veen and Boot, 1995). Several projects ranging from infrastructure building to people-to-people relations have been realized albeit with some scholarly and practical criticism, such as those above.

The interviewed official's criticism was a common one. During the field research on which this study is based,

49 interviews were conducted with actors related to CBC, including public officials, mayors, and NGO and business representatives. The aim was to understand the existing situation and the emerging institutional structure of CBC in the Edirne-Kırklareli border region after having more than a decade of experience. The official's criticism was shared by many interlocutors, who in general have argued that the European money coming for such projects contributed for the amusement of a small part of the society instead of local development. Although criticism was plenty, the majority of interlocutors have argued that CBC has created a significant financial resource for local, public and civil society actors and contributed to increasing social interactions between societies among two sides of the border. Moreover with the intensification of CBC and with the involvement of the EU and the central government; a multi-layered governance mechanism unprecedented to the local community has emerged in the region. Now there is room for local actors to engage in international politics and search and compete for financial resources in the European arena. Local administrations as well as civil society organizations are succeeding in raising funds for projects that are not subsidised by the national budget.

The context of CBC; the achievements realized through it; the involved and excluded actors and their critiques, from the perspective of this article, are a part of the institutionalization process of CBC. This institutionalization process is not independent from the social- political context in which it takes place, but it is also a place bound phenomenon, directly related to the local social dynamics and power relations.

This article uses the tools that different strands of new institutionalism theory provide, to perform a mind exercise for understanding the institutionalization process of CBC. It is argued that this process is a complex structure that cannot be grasped completely by a single- dimensional perspective. Therefore different and sometimes contradicting approaches have to be adopted for apprehending this

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Table 1. List of interviewed organizations.

CENTRAL GOVERNMENT ORGANIZATIONS:	NGO's:
NATIONAL:	PROFFESIONAL AND VOCATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS:
1. Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Edirne Province Representative)	1. Edirne Chamber of Trade and Industry (Head of the the EU and projects office)
2. Ministry of the EU Affairs (Coordinator of the CBC programme under the Department of Financial Cooperation)	2. Kırklareli Chamber of Trade and Industry (Secretary General)
3. Ministry of Development (Head of the EU economic and social cohesion department)	3. Uzunkopru District (Edirne) Chamber of Trade and Industry (Head of the the EU and projects office)
	4. Cooperative of Milk Producers (Uzunkopru, Edirne, President)
LOCAL:	5. Kırklareli Chamber of Agriculture (President)
1. Edirne Governorship	6. Edirne Chamber of Certified Public Accountants
a. Vice Governor	7. Cooperative of Milk Producers (Edirne, President)
b. Sub-Director of Division for Disasters (Ender OZDEN-Project Entrepreneur)	8. Babaeski Commodity Exchange (Babaeski, Kırklareli, CBC project responsible)
2. ABEM (the EU coordination centre) [mixed structure: responsible to the governor of Edirne, the ministry of the EU]	
3. Kırklareli Governorship	PUBLIC BENEFIT NGO'S:
a. Vice Governor	1. DEKAD (Association for Development of Demirkoy) (Demirkoy, Kırklareli, President)
b. Head of the the EU and projects office	2. DAYKO (Foundation for Protection of Natural Life) (Demirkoy, Kırklareli, Head of the Demirkoy Office)
4. Ministry of Education Edirne Province Directorate	3. Association of Young Businessmen in Edirne
5. Uzunkopru District (Edirne)	4. Luleburgaz Businessmen Association (Luleburgaz, Kırklareli)
a. Governor	5. EDROM (Union of Roma Organizations in Edirne) (Edirne, President)
b. Head of the the EU and projects office	6. Kırklareli Association of Disabled People (Kırklareli, Province President)
6. Ministry of Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Livestock (Director of Uzunkopru District Office)	
7. Meric District Governor (Edirne)	SCHOOLS:
8. Kesan District Governor (Edirne)	1. Muzafer Atasay Highschool (Uzunkopru, Edirne, Director)
9. Demirkoy District Governor (Kırklareli)	2. Luleburgaz Technical and Vocational Highschool (Luleburgaz, Kırklareli, Director)
10. Luleburgaz District Governor (Kırklareli)	
11. Babaeski District Governor (Kırklareli)	CONSULTANCY FIRMS:
12. Trakya Regional Development Agency (Mixed structure, but mainly responsible to the ministry of development)	1. Progem Consultancy (Ankara, Project Manager)
a. Edirne Investment Support Office (Head of the Office)	
b. Kırklareli Investment Support Office (Head of the Office)	MUNICIPAL/ GOVERNMENTAL UNIONS:
	1. Union of Meric Municipalities (Edirne, Secretary General)
MUNICIPALITIES:	2. Trakyakent (Union of Municipalities of East- West Thrace) (Tekirdag, Secretary General)
1. Edirne Municipality (Vice Mayor)	3. Trakab (Trakya Development Union) (Edirne, Secretary General)
2. Kırklareli Municipality	
a. Town Klerk	POLITICAL PARTIES
b. Head of the the EU and projects office	1. AKP (Ruling Party) (Head of the Provincial Office in Edirne)
3. Suloglu Municipality (Edirne, Mayor)	2. CHP (Main Opposition Party) (Head of the Provincial Office in Edirne)
4. Uzunkopru Municipality (Edirne, Mayor)	3. CHP (Main Opposition Party) (Head of the Provincial Office in Kırklareli)
5. Kesan Municipality (Edirne)	
a. Mayor	
b. Projects Responsible	
6. Kircasali Municipality (Uzunkopru, Edirne, Vice Mayor)	
7. Demirkoy Municipality (Kırklareli, Mayor)	
8. Kofcaz Municipality (Kırklareli, Mayor)	
9. Vize Municipality (Kırklareli, Head of the the EU and projects office)	
10. Babaeski Municipality (Kırklareli, Town Klerk)	
11. Luleburgaz Municipality (Kırklareli)	
a. Mayor	
b. Vice Mayor	
c. Head of the the EU and projects office	

complexity; and the new institutionalism theory allows swinging across a variety of perspectives and establishing a more coherent view of institutionalisation of CBC. The three strands of new institutionalism, historical, sociological and rational choice institutionalism are adapted to the CBC context to grasp these multiple perspectives. They are used to approach, observe and interpret the same issue from different viewpoints and reach a comprehensive understanding of this newly emerging institutional structure.

The methodological approach of the research is institutional ethnography, which aims to “discover the social, rather than theorizing it, beginning with actual people, their doings, and how their doings are coordinated” to formulate an institutional regime (Smith, 2008, p. 433). This method allows the researcher to establish links between interviewed individuals and their interpretations of institutions and the institutional structure in general. This approach enables mapping a given institutional setting with respect to

its constituent actors, however the impacts of the wider social and political factors remains latent in the interpretations of institutional actors and has to be re-interpreted by the researcher. For this purpose the institutional ethnographic approach needs to be tuned to include a “thick description” (Paasi, 1996) that establishes links, this time with the social and political factors that affect the institutional setting and also with the ways of its interpretation by the institutional actors. As mentioned above, the field research of the study is based on 49 interviews with people related to CBC in the region. The list of interviewed organizations is presented in Table 1. For the sake of confidentiality, the names of persons interviewed are identified neither on the table, nor on the citations in the remainder of this paper. The geographical context of the study was set to cover the north-western border provinces of Turkey, namely Edirne and Kırklareli. Although not every district of these provinces is attached to the border, and even some of them have denser interactions with the internal regions of Turkey, all of these districts are taking part in CBC and contribute to its institutionalization.

The remainder of this paper will have the task of exploring the institutional structure of CBC in the Edirne-Kırklareli border region using three different perspectives of new institutionalism theory. The structure of the paper will be as following: Chapter 2 describes the new institutionalism theory and the different perspectives the three main strands bring. This is followed by a literature review on new institutionalist approaches in CBC and border regions context in Chapter 3. The 4th Chapter focuses on CBC in Edirne- Kırklareli border region and explores the existing situation by looking through the different lenses of new institutionalism. The concluding chapter summarizes the discussion and comments on how these three strands can describe the same picture from different perspectives.

2. New institutional theory- A literature review

The organization of social life is done through institutions. The development

of a social order and the evolution of societies, ranging from everyday practices to the highest levels of organization are born of various institutional arrangements; and the evolution of societies is shaped by institutions and their transformation over time. As North (1990, p. 22) argues, 90% of “daily life” activities are made possible by being routinized and regularized by institutions.

Institutions are seen as both results of historical processes and powerful subjects capable of influencing the evolution of human society at the same time. As Putnam (1993, p. 7) argues, institutions are shaped by history and yet work to shape politics. This duality has been problematized under the structure and agency dichotomy. From the first point of view, the historical evolution of societies with its various aspects - including norms, practices and power struggles – determines the formation of institutions, since they have emerged as a result of this evolution in order to give a shape to it in a way that reflects these social dynamics. The contrasting approach pays most credit to individuals motivated by rational choice, who use and transform institutions (or create new ones) in order to achieve desired ends. In this respect, institutions are considered to be aggregated outcomes of individual behaviour that serve to reduce uncertainty and limit the choices of individuals in order to enable them to calculate accurately their goals and actions. Contrary to the structuralist approach, this point of view partially neglects the constraining role of structure on the choices of individuals and assumes that any rational behaviour would be repeated in the same way in any kind of structural context.

New Institutionalism emerges as a third option in this context, which ascribes a more autonomous power to institutions in contrast to both the structure and agency perspectives (March and Olsen, 1984). Without neglecting both aspects of social life, new institutionalists recognize that institutions move in both directions by imposing structural constraints on the preferences of individual actors on the one hand, and giving access to par-

ticular actors and collective actions to transform the social structure on the other (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). The political and social problems in a given setting can be viewed as part of the social structure that also influences institutions themselves. However, the perception of these problems by political actors and the methods chosen to solve problems (i.e. the preferences of institutional actors) affect the future of the public realm and its institutional structure (March and Olsen, 1994). Lowndes and Roberts (2013, p. 28) argue that the distinctive characteristic of New Institutionalism is to avoid the superficial and taken for granted understanding of institutions (as well as structure and agency), and to critically look “at the way in which they embody values and power relationships”.

Although the key role of institutions in forming social practices is commonly accepted, New Institutionalism cannot be accepted as a stand-alone theory capable of conceptualizing institutions. Using the basic points of the structure and agency dichotomy, new institutionalists have developed several strands of institutionalism, three of which have grasped the three most common positions regarding the roles of agency, structure and society in institutional contexts. These are not mutually exclusive aspects, separately conceptualizing their own institutional realities; rather, they complementarily square the circle of the agency-institutions-structure triad that allows one to fully grasp the origins of social interactions, their role in the formation of institutions and the emergence of the social structure as something more than the sum of actors', individual and institutional practices. The study of institutions also enables the adoption of a multidimensional perspective while investigating the institutionalization of a particular policy field.

The three dominant schools of new institutionalism are commonly referred to as rational choice institutionalism, historical institutionalism and sociological institutionalism (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Immergut, 1998; Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). These three strands represent the three main streams of institutionalisms, but also

are complemented by various other approaches such as normative, empirical, international, network, discursive and feminist institutionalisms (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013).

Rational Choice Institutionalism has emerged from behaviourism and rests on the basic premise that humans are rational beings who act with the aim of maximizing their self-interest through careful cost-benefit analysis. From this perspective institutions are accepted to reflect the desires and habits of the individuals who establish them. Informal relations, political leaders and their followers, interest groups, and ideologies (instead of formal modes of organizations) are among the interest areas of this type of institutionalism (Bolat and Seymen, 2006).

The role of institutions according to rational choice institutionalists is to reduce transaction costs in social and economic interactions by avoiding uncertainty and reducing risks in social relations, especially those arising from trust problems (North, 1990, Ostrom 2005). As Lowndes and Roberts (2013, p. 23) explain, from the rational choice point of view, the existence of institutions is a result of cost-benefit analysis. An institution can only exist when the costs of maintaining it do not exceed the benefits gained with it. So, larger institutions, such as the state, represent a more complicated form of social organization that has emerged from the continuous efforts to reduce transaction costs in social interactions. As North (1990) argues, by regulating the exchange relationship between two parties, institutions provide the basis of political/economic systems.

Although rational choice institutionalists consider rules that set a wider framework as well, these rules are usually either accepted as given or elaborated at a micro-level only to include those that are set by individuals or groups for the regulation of a particular situation (see for example Ostrom, 2011). Another shortfall of rational choice institutionalism is argued to be the neglect of long-term targets and calculations of actors when taking action, and assuming that the short-term interest is the dominant source of motivation in their actions (Lowndes and

Roberts, 2013, p. 37).

Sociological institutionalism, which is almost opposed to rational choice institutionalism, presumes that behaviours of actors are context-driven; in other words, social structures (e.g. cultural conventions, norms and cognitive frames of reference) determine not only the options and choices of actors, but also actors' ways of thinking and perceiving the world. Hence individuals' actions are not shaped by their own decisions taken independently to reach their desired ends, but are dependent on the prevailing social context (DiMaggio and Powell, 1991). Therefore, an actor's choices related to the same subject will vary greatly under different circumstances, which depend on the social structure in play (Immergut, 1998). Institutions constitute an "infrastructure" for society, providing the reference points for actions of actors (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013). From this perspective, individual choices are socially determined by institutions, which are also bound by practices emerging from the wider social structure. Actors, whether individuals or organizations, are "embedded" in the social structure (Amin and Thrift, 1994, p. 12) which provides a "frame of meaning" that guides their actions (Hall and Taylor, 1996, p. 947). According to March and Olsen (1984, p. 741), sociological institutionalism differs from rational choice institutionalism by conceptualizing actions of individuals as the "fulfilment of duties and obligations" instead of "individual values and expectations". As DiMaggio and Powell (1991, p. 28) argue, "cultural frames establish approved means and define desired outcomes, leading business people to pursue profits, bureaucrats to seek budgetary growth, and scholars to strive for publication".

Historical institutionalism is related to the long-term evolution of institutions in a wider context. Instead of focusing on individuals or organizations as rational choice and sociological institutionalisms do, the historical institutionalist approach investigates the wider institutional structure (i.e. the nation state or the world system) and its long term, historical dynamics (Hall and Taylor, 1996; Lowndes and

Roberts, 2013). Immergut (1998, p. 16) points to the difference between sociological and historical institutionalism by arguing that while the former is interested in "the ways in which organizational rules and procedures coordinate the action of independent individuals", the latter focuses on themes related to power and interest. Hall and Taylor (1996, p. 941) stress that historical institutionalism is interested in the uneven distribution of power, and argues that "institutions give some groups or interests disproportionate access to the decision-making process".

The term "path dependence" takes a key role in explaining the historical institutionalist approach. Path dependence argument presumes that when policymakers choose a particular path; the aggregate impact of actions taken in the aftermath produces a snowball effect, which is difficult to roll back or alter in terms of direction. Consequently, a "powerful cycle of self-reinforcing activity" is created that strongly influences the decisions of actors within institutions (Lowndes and Roberts, 2013, p. 39). Putnam (1993) refers to path dependency in his work in the following way:

...what comes first (even if it was in some sense "accidental") conditions what comes later. Individuals may "choose" their institutions, but they do not choose them under circumstances of their own making, and their choices in turn influence the rules within which their successors choose. (Putnam, 1993, p.7).

However, the intentional change or transformation of institutions and institutional structure is not accepted as totally impossible. Institutional change can and does occur throughout revolutionary moments of history, in which the "periods of continuity [are] punctuated by 'critical junctures', i.e., moments when substantial institutional change takes place thereby creating a 'branching point' from which historical development moves onto a new path" (Hall and Taylor, 1996, p.942).

Immergut (1998) stresses that, from a historical institutionalist point of view, particular events during the course of history originate from the free choice of powerful individuals; these choices, however, always bear

the burden of individual and social histories. The establishment of particular institutions in a specific moment of time, such as recognizing the right to private property during monarchical rule, is a result of other social and historical processes that motivate the transformation of the whole institutional structure.

Despite their diversified departure points, these three strands intersect in some common points in their approach to institutions. These intersections consolidate and establish a common ground of new institutionalism that, according to Lowndes and Roberts (2013), represents the “third phase” of New Institutionalism Theory. Lowndes and Roberts (2013) summarize this consolidation under five main topics:

- (1) It is commonly accepted that structure and agency have a dialectical relationship, in which neither one, nor the other is determinative on the other or on the institutional structure in general. Instead they are in continuous interaction that transforms both of them throughout the course of history.
- (2) An institutional structure is a complex system that enables institutions to operate through three main modes: rules, practices and narratives.
- (3) Whether in short or long run, institutions are subjects and objects of social change. Reflecting the dialectical relationship between structure and agency, they can trigger social change or can be affected by the structural forces that either impose or require institutional continuity.
- (4) Institutions are designed social phenomena and their design process reflects the power relations in society.
- (5) Even among institutions of the same social domain an institutional diversity always exists. This is a result of different social/ structural dynamics that prevail in the society as well as the influential agents that are in a position to take critical decisions for institutions.

These five topics do not only form the common ground of the three

strands, but also offer an exclusive conceptualization of the role of institutions in social life from a new institutionalist perspective.

3. CBC and new institutionalism

This section evaluates the scientific literature related to CBC, cross border regionalism and new institutional theory. The aim is to provide examples on the use of new institutionalism in CBC, as well as to establish a ground for discussion the CBC experience in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region with this perspective. Studies that are not directly related to CBC but are coming from regional science related disciplines are also included to extend the scope of the evaluation and provide background for further discussion.

A similar new institutionalist analysis approach previously was adopted by Helena Ekelund (2014), who demonstrated the applicability of the new institutional theory in the EU context by discussing the establishment of Frontex, the border patrol agency of the Union. According to her, “the timing of establishment; the decision on the agency’s tasks, role and mission; [and] the decision on a specific institutional design and management” (Ekelund, 2014, p. 110) can be explained by using different new institutionalist strands. From a rational choice perspective, the coordination of border-related activities of member states and the use of expert knowledge can be viewed as transaction cost-reducing activities. On the other hand, the emergence of Frontex cannot be understood solely as a cost-cutting solution. The social and historical contexts are highly influential in the institutional design process. This context is the enlargement of the EU, which requires its own institutional structure to manage the extensive functional areas of the Union. For Ekelund (2014), the enlargement waves that included southern and eastern European states are critical junctures in which crucial decisions were taken to pave the way for the establishment of Frontex.

Implications of rational choice institutionalism are most easily observed at the local and regional levels, from which Elinor Ostrom (2005) developed

the Institutional Analysis and Development Framework, which was based on a large number of local case studies across the world. Through these case studies, Ostrom and her colleagues extensively elaborate how local actors organize around institutions and use institutional practices to overcome trust problems. Extending this debate to the regional scale, Rodriguez-Pose (2013, p. 1037) argues that local institutional arrangements prove to be more effective in generating economic development than nation state governments, since “the national scale can be too distant, remote and detached in order to be effective in mobilizing organizations”. Rodriguez-Pose’s (2013, p. 1042) conclusion is that regional development strategies should be “specifically tailored to the potential of place-bounded institutions” in order to make significant interventions for development. However, as a result of the rational choice institutionalist thinking, Rodriguez-Pose’s focus on institutions from a regional development perspective suggests looking away from the institutional characteristics of a region, focusing instead on “institutional arrangements, which represent barriers for the efficiency of other factors influencing economic development” (p. 1043).

The management of common-pool resources and transaction cost-reducing roles of institutions provides considerable explanation for the role of institutions during the institutionalization process of CBC. Although in the context of inter-municipal cooperation, which does not include a cross-border aspect, Hilvert and Swindell (2013), Carr and Hawkins (2013), and Delabbio and Zeemering (2013) conceptualize cooperation as common-pool resource management. According to them, cooperation activities emerge from the need to reduce transaction costs, especially in urban management, by sharing and coordinating the joint use of resources, collaborating in infrastructure construction and creating joint institutions for providing services. This is also the case in cross-border regionalism, where grass roots, cross-border initiatives emerge to mobilize common endogenous re-

sources to solve problems and generate regional development.

Delabbio and Zeemering (2013) argue that institutional context is a determining factor for collective action. In addition, local officials prefer to take part in collective action when a cost-benefit analysis reveals different aspects of the institutional structure, such as career risks, public resistance, expected outcomes of collaboration and transaction costs. Hilvert and Swindell (2013) also argue that inter-local cooperation becomes satisfactory for decision-makers only when transaction costs arising from cooperation are exceeded by the benefits of collaboration.

One of the scholars who first interpreted CBC using a new institutionalist approach is Markus Perkmann. He argues that

... CBC has to be seen as an aggregate outcome of various relatively decentralized processes of institution building with strong involvement by non-local actors. Cross-border initiatives cannot be assumed to have single and coherent objectives. Rather, a multiplicity of actors operates in an institutional context of opportunities and constraints that is not predominantly of their own making. As a consequence of their actions, the institutional setting itself undergoes continuous changes resulting in irreversible and historically specific trajectories. Such ideas about the building and evolution of institutions can be extrapolated from a more sociologically inflected ‘new institutionalism’ recently emerging as a supra-disciplinary paradigm in a range of fields. (Perkmann, 1999, p. 660)

Perkmann departs from rational choice institutionalism and aligns his arguments with a historical institutionalist approach that links institutional change with “strategic action (path shaping) and evolution (path dependence)”. Perkmann (1999, p. 660), rejects the argument of the neutrality of institutions and argues that “they privilege certain actors, certain time and space horizons, and certain strategic agendas over others”. Institutional structure is also influential over the behaviours of CBC actors and since it is predominantly formed within the nation state framework, it remains inefficient in supplying actors with the

necessary tools for cross-border governance.

In tandem with Perkmann (1999), Church and Reid (1999) attempt to conceptualize the institutional framework of CBC between England and France using the new institutional theory. Rather than focusing on the relationship between institutions and CBC in general, they focus on two specific aspects of the institutional structure: its thickness and territorial embeddedness. Their findings suggest that although intensifying CBC activities contributes to increasing institutional thickness, the lack of genuine cooperation results in more intervention on behalf of the EU and national governments in the facilitation and supervision of CBC. With regard to territorial embeddedness, Church and Reid (1999) make two distinct observations. First, cross-border spaces mostly remain imaginary spaces, as wishful thoughts of politicians, perhaps as an impact of external influence without being supported by "economic and cultural transfrontier links". Second, spaces of CBC usually have a "flexible territorial characteristic" that releases the boundedness of administrative divisions and scales and constitutes its own spatial framework.

These two studies align with sociological and historical institutionalisms and evaluate CBC processes as context-bounded phenomena emerging from the historical conditions that both necessitate and constrain it.

Putnam's (1993) longitudinal and extensive study of Italian regional governance institutions reaches the conclusion that mirrors sociological institutionalism, though it also includes elements from historical institutionalism. Putnam (1993) investigates the establishment of local governments in Italy with a longitudinal survey. Within a period of 14 years after their establishment, regional governments in Italy displayed a diversified path of governance, which resulted in success for some and failure for others. Focusing on the reasons of that diversification and by conducting two surveys with a 10 years interval, Putnam argues that democratic traditions are among the most significant factors in determin-

ing institutional success. According to him, "the practical performance of institutions... [is] shaped by the social context within which they operate" (p. 8).

These studies demonstrate that new institutionalism theory provides efficient tools to understand the complexity of CBC. However, most of them do not intend to provide a coherent picture of the institutional structure of the subject they investigate and rather remain focused on the interpretation and critique of their problematic, usually by adopting the approach of one of the three different strands. The remainder of this study aims to choose the first path and comprehensively evaluate CBC in Edirne- Kırklareli border region from the perspectives of the three strands of new institutionalism. While doing so, abovementioned five topics in which the three strands converge will be used as reference points for interpretation and for providing a coherent view of the institutional structure of CBC in Edirne- Kırklareli border region.

4. CBC in Edirne Kırklareli border region: New institutionalist perspectives

The administrative regions of Bulgaria and Turkey that take part in CBC were part of the Thracian region under the rule of the Ottoman Empire for four centuries. Thrace was inhabited by a heterogeneous society of Muslims, Christians and Jews. The division of geographical units into administrative territories was conducted very vaguely along religious lines, also a major source of identity among inhabitants of the region. Nonetheless, cultural interaction, population movement and economic interaction were also considered a general characteristic of the region (Manos, 2005; Mazower, 2001).

The Greek and Bulgarian revolutions resulting in independence in 1832 and 1909 respectively were the roots of the tripartite hostility between these two nation-states and the Ottoman Empire. Modern Turkey, established in 1923, inherited its part of that enmity from the Ottoman Empire, although no war has been fought since the establishment of these nation states. A part of

that enmity lies in the self-perception of the Turkish nation state as the heir of the Ottoman Empire. In addition, Turks were identified with Islam, which was the source of religious enmity and accompanied political disputes that have made Turkey a “negative point of reference for [the] symbolic construction of the local political community[ies]” (Gkintidis, 2013). The refugee exchanges between Turkey and Greece and Greece and Bulgaria have caused the homogenization of the previously heterogeneous region (Karakasidou, 1997). After the establishment of new nation states, the long standing hostilities and the exchange of minorities between them, the basic characteristic of the border regions in the Thrace region during the 20th century could be described as alienation, since the dominant narrative of the respective nation states was nationalism accompanied by strong political and administrative dependence on the centre in combination with military fortification along the borders (Gkintidis, 2013; Mazower, 2001).

With the end of the Cold War the border milieu started to change slowly but significantly. First, trade liberalization in Bulgaria has increased the volume of trade as well as the cultural contacts between the two countries and bordering provinces. Second, with the official EU candidacy of two countries and Bulgaria's membership in 2007, the EU has become an important facilitator of bilateral relations. The EU's external, enlargement, integration and regional policies, programmes and funds have reshaped the context in which the border region is defined. The pre-accession instrument in general and CBC in particular have contributed to this change significantly. Regional policies of the EU and the new regionalist turn in national politics provided new opportunities and perspectives for regional development, and also forced the regions to rely less and less on decreasing central state investments and to look more towards utilizing endogenous resources. The CBC programmes of the EU emerged as one of these opportunities that encouraged border regions to turn toward the other side of the border instead to their capital cities

(Sezgin and Erkut, 2014).

The historical institutionalist approach allows interpreting CBC as a part of Turkey's alignment with EU's policies as well as a part of the wider economic and political dynamics prevailing within the EU. From the historical- institutionalist lens CBC in Edirne- Kırklareli border region collides with the EU candidacy of Turkey, which can be considered as a critical juncture in country's history. Although Turkey's orientation towards EU membership dates back to 1960's, the official candidacy status granted in 2005 marks a considerable change in Turkey- EU relations, including the rise in the EU funds. CBC in the EU is a part of the Union's European integration and regional development goals. Turkey's regional policies also have changed in accordance, shifting from redistribution of resources at national level until 1990's to entrepreneurialism and competition in 2000's (Bayırbağ, 2013; Dulupçu, 2005). In the context of border regions, this entrepreneurial position necessitated a transformation in the perception of the other side of the border, particularly at the local level. Enmity and alienation had to be replaced with a partnership perspective, since the neighbouring country and region were no longer negative reference point for national identity but an endogenous resource that holds the potential to enlarge the existing market and compete internationally.

The structure within which CBC projects are realized can best be defined with its constituting rules and regulations. The Procurement and Grants for European Union External Actions tendering procedure (PRAG) is the main EU-originated law, which affects CBC processes in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region. This law is a set of rules that define grant and procurement mechanisms of EU funds (EC, 2014). The contents of these rules are outside the scope of this study. Rather, particular importance is given to the contradictory, dual structure that has emerged over the course of the CBC projects' implementation process. Grants are allocated according to PRAG rules and the use of these grants is also subject to tendering procedures put in place

by the same rules. More concretely, spending money within a CBC project can only be done in accordance with PRAG procedures. However, local actors, particularly from the public sector, are also obliged to obey the national procurement law. In the event that PRAG rules and the national procurement law contradict each other, it is not clear how project beneficiaries should act.

During the field study, it was observed that across the board, all public project beneficiaries were under stress during the tendering process because of this contradiction. On the one hand, complying with PRAG procedures is necessary to ensure project payment, as project spending is done in advance and reimbursement of funds is completed only after inspection by independent controllers. On the other hand, public organizations can be audited anytime by national authorities, looking to ensure that expenditures are in compliance with the relevant public procurement law despite the fact that some items of which contradict PRAG tendering procedures. As a temporary solution, the Ministry of EU Affairs authorities have written official letters to the Ministry of the Interior explaining the situation and asking for the necessary understanding for project beneficiaries (Personal Interview, 2013). Despite informal efforts at the central state level, the absence of legal clarity for some interlocutors is one of the most discouraging factors in terms of participation in CBC.

Independent from the legal transformation aspect, tendering procedures have complied with PRAG criteria without a significant problem until now, and have had transformative effects at the local scale, even if not always in a positive way. Various interlocutors have described their way of doing business, the “Turkish style”, as focusing on the things that have to be done instead of the procedures themselves. They rely on informal networks and trust to accomplish their missions, and rate legal procedures as being of secondary importance. Therefore, for the sake of efficiency, even in the public sector, they are used to completing the practical work first and setting out to

“filling out the necessary paperwork” later. This is an informal relationship based on personal relations and trust in which local public and private actors openly credit each other and believe that they will act in a way that will not cause any problem in the future. Yet the procedures of CBC do not leave room for the Turkish style of doing business, which, according to most of the project beneficiaries, leads to inefficiency and an increase in the costs of projects.

Despite the legal difficulties described above, theoretically, the process of applying for CBC funding is open to any institution located in the border region. However, the laws and regulations defined by both the EU and the Turkish government constrain a large number of organizations that would otherwise participate in CBC.

The constraints include first the IPA procedures that allocate 20% of the project budget as an advance and allow for reimbursement only after tenders are completed. This is a process that practically eliminates organizations with low budgets. Second national regulations restrict organizations seeking CBC funding that owe tax and social insurance debts to the state. Third, for many public organizations, such as schools, legally it is impossible to apply for CBC funding, since their annual budget is centrally planned to cover only substantial costs such as salaries and maintenance. However, CBC procedures necessitate the allocation of internal resources, even if only temporarily.

During this field study, it was observed that most project beneficiaries have participated in more than one project and regularly apply for CBC funding. These organizations also constitute a considerable share of institutions with sufficient financial and human resources to both prepare and implement projects. Consequently, CBC remains in the hands of a limited number of people and it is difficult for a newcomer to enter the club. Organizations in the region are constrained by laws, regulations and the level of socio-economic development of the region, and only the forerunners in terms of financial and human resources manage to benefit from CBC funding.

The legal structure constituted by the EU and Turkish laws and legislations limits the institutional framework of CBC. And its interpretation necessitates the use of the sociological institutionalist lens. Accordingly CBC practices that take place in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region are constrained by the various multi-scalar factors that stretch from the EU to the national levels. At the EU level the PRAG procedures impose their own way of doing business, which interrupts the “Turkish Style” and attempts to change it according to predefined standards. This institutional change also faces considerable resistance as the Turkish national authorities hesitate to take necessary steps for harmonizing PRAG procedures and national legislation.

In a similar manner, constraints arising from the national legislation also restrict the CBC actors in the region. At this scale restriction appears as setting the legal limits that while enable some actors to participate in CBC, restrict others. Within this context, sociological institutionalism’s perspective allows interpreting CBC as a limited institutional structure in which only selected actors are allowed to take part. This perspective opposes the rational choice institutionalism by arguing that a particular institutional context is not created by and through the participation of all rationally behaving actors but by only a limited part of them. The legal system in this context represents the social structure that from the sociological institutionalist perspective determines the institutional framework of CBC. However motivations of CBC actors and the practices they have established during their personal CBC histories still contains room for rational choice institutionalist interpretation.

It is possible to conceptualize CBC as an imaginary common-pool resource where actors compete and cooperate to use and manage EU funds. Cooperation between partners displays behaviours based on trust relationships. A typical example is the partner choosing process, where organizations prefer to participate in CBC with partners they already know. Moreover, among

project beneficiaries who have managed more than one CBC project, it is common to cooperate with the same partner because of trust relationships based on previous experience. Another common practice among partners is to apply simultaneously to two projects, where one partner becomes leader in one project and the second in the other. This allows them to use their resources more efficiently, reduce the risks of not being awarded by funding and increase their share taken from the pool.

There is a general agreement that CBC funding, particularly in terms of infrastructure projects, provides opportunities for municipalities. However, not all of them can be involved in CBC and use EU funding. As mentioned above, any institution that would like to participate in CBC must not owe taxes or social insurance debts to the state. This precondition reduces the number of municipalities participating in CBC. Some of them have no choice but to abstain from CBC, since it is impossible for them to pay their debts. For the others, they face the dilemma of locating enough capital to pay their debts in order to participate in CBC (and also other programmes, such as those of RDAs) or opt out altogether. Usually officials perform a cost and benefit analysis prior to making a final decision. If they see that the benefit from participating in a project exceeds their debts they chose the first option. Moreover, the tendency towards participating in infrastructure-related CBC projects can also be (partially) explained by the same argument, since these projects are argued to be more cost effective than soft projects, which according to some interlocutors, were considered a “waste of time and money”.

5. Conclusion

The new institutionalist strands provide explanations for the institutional structure of CBC from their own perspectives. In general this study argues that CBC has emerged as a result of several socio-economic dynamics that have affected the social and institutional organizations of human societies along with CBC. The enlargement, integration and regional policies of the

EU as well as their preconditioning dynamics such as globalization and the end of the cold war, from a historical institutionalist perspective, have created a path dependent process resulting with CBC.

CBC should be understood as an integral part of the social structure of the border region in which it takes place. Although historical dynamics are influential in the formation of the social structure, the place and context based conditions vary from one border region to the other, necessitating developing a unique conceptualization for each case. The sociological institutionalist perspective allows positioning CBC in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region within its context by providing links to the EU and national laws, the contradictions between them, the given bureaucratic structure of the Turkish nation state and CBC practices. This strand of institutionalism allows interpreting CBC as a context bound phenomena reflecting the established social structure in the region.

Independent from the social context, however, CBC actors have some common motivations and expectations that the rational choice strand of new institutionalism allows to grasp. Especially the profit maximizing behaviour of CBC participants that orients them to prefer infrastructure projects over the soft ones, and to tend to cooperate with the same partners because of trust related issues are among the best examples of the rational choice point of view in CBC.

Apart from the explanations the three strands of new institutionalism individually provide, new institutionalist theory also proves to be useful in understanding the ongoing social change in the region through the five consolidation points of the three strands. The tension between the national laws and EU regulations, for example, reflects the duality between continuity and change. If a separation between the three layers of CBC governance, the supranational, the national and the regional, would be done for analytical purposes, then the national level can be defined as the one that stands for continuity against the tendency to change imposed by the supra-

national and the regional levels. Here change is imposed mainly by global dynamics that necessitate a structural transformation of the economic and political system. This transformation is capitalist in nature, hence strongly related to the global dynamics of capital accumulation. Accordingly, the concentration of political power is shifting from nation states; upwards towards global and supranational institutions and downwards towards subnational regions (Jessop, 2003; Swyngedouw, 1997). Within this context change appears as result of the path dependent processes of capital accumulation. And the resistance of nation state's institutions is related to taking control over the newly emerging policy fields, such as CBC and their related institutions.

The continuity-change dichotomy is also observed in the design of institutions. In the case of CBC, the conflict between the national and the EU regulations is a reflection of this dichotomy. On the one hand CBC in Edirne- Kırklareli has been initiated by the financial and institutional support of the EU; hence it is designed in accordance to its institutional framework, which is also applied with almost the same procedures to other candidate countries. On the other hand, a radical institutional change triggered by CBC is not possible because of the already established national administrative structure that has its own agenda and the lack of institutional capacity in the region. Instead regulation, supervision and even participation to CBC are done by existing public and civil society organizations within the national institutional framework. In this context, from a sociological institutionalist perspective CBC is representing one of the various aspects of public administration, in which existing regulations and resources, especially in terms of human capital are used; and established ways of doing business are applied. Hence actors involved in CBC are constrained by the national institutional structure which imposes its own conditions against the external pressure for change coming from the EU. As a result, although a variety of organizations are involved, an institutional diversity is hardly observable due the structural constraints that

limit and shape the general framework of CBC in the region.

However, through CBC practices a change, albeit slow in pace is initiated in the region. This change is partly a response to new regionalist policies that reduce the amount of investments of the central state and force regional/ local authorities to compete for resources necessary for their basic service provisions. In the lack of the central state investments local institutions tend to increase their profits and perceive CBC as an endogenous resource that contributes to their competitiveness in front of the internal regions and they invent methods for bypassing the institutional factors that constrain them from using it. These methods become the institutionalized practices of CBC in the region.

Change is also partly initiated by the will of local society, as a result of reduced central state control and increasing interactions among the two sides of the border. The existence of the border has become a resource, the efficiency of which can be maximized only through its mutual management. CBC, although invented and developed by the EU's institutional framework, is being used as a catalyser for that purpose. In this sense, as Elinor Ostrom (2005) has pointed out from a rational choice point of view, cooperation, rather than competition emerges as the most efficient way of dealing with the changing political and economic conditions. Practices of cooperation and competition shape the institutionalization process of CBC in the Edirne- Kırklareli border region by large, but they also have emerged as a response to the central state's control mechanisms of CBC, which in turn are a response to the EU policies that intervene to the established national institutional structure.

The institutionalization of CBC in this way comes full circle: CBC has emerged within a global and international context as a result of various economic and political dynamics. Especially at the national scale, it has been applied within the framework of existing legal structure and institutional context established for different purposes; and finally has been shaped by the institutional practices that are most

creatively invented at the local level to overcome the institutional constraints.

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Edirne-Kırklareli sınır bölgesinde sınır ötesi işbirliği: Yeni kurumsalcı yaklaşımlar

Avrupa Birliği (AB) Katılım Öncesi Mali Yardım Aracı kapsamında Türkiye ve Bulgaristan arasında 15 yılı aşkın bir süredir sınır ötesi işbirlikleri gerçekleştirilmektedir. Sınır ötesi işbirliği programının uygulandığı Edirne-Kırklareli sınır bölgesinde, il özel idareleri ve kaymakamlıklar gibi merkezi devlet kurumları, yerel yönetimler, iş örgütleri ve sivil toplum kuruluşları gibi toplumun farklı kesimlerinden aktörler proje faydalanıcısı olarak sürece dahil olmuş; AB Bakanlığı ve Kalkınma Bakanlığı başta olmak üzere farklı ulusal kuruluşlar ve AB'nin ilgili kurumları ile birlikte çok katmanlı bir yönetim yapısı oluşturmuşlardır.

Bu süreç, bölgede, sınır ötesi işbirliği programı etrafında farklı kuruluşların birbirileri ile etkileşim içinde dahil olduğu, kendi mevzuatı ve gündelik pratikleri olan bir kurumsal yapının oluşmasına yol açmıştır. Sınır ötesi işbirliğinin kurumsallaşması süreci, Edirne- Kırklareli sınır bölgesine özgü yerel dinamikler ile birlikte; ulusal ve ulus üstü düzeyde meydana gelen sosyal- politik dönüşümlerin ve tarihsel süreçlerin etkisi altında gelişmektedir. Söz konusu yerel dinamikler, güven ilişkilerine dayalı olarak yürütülen işbirliği projeleri; iki toplum arasında buna bağlı olarak geliştirilen ilişkileri; ve sınır ötesi işbirliklerine dahil olan çeşitli aktörler arasındaki güç ilişkileri olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Ulusal ölçekte meydana gelen dinamikler Türkiye'nin 2005'te AB üyeliği için tam

adaylık statüsü elde etmesi ile açılan batılılaşma süreci ve buna bağlı olarak hem bölgesel politikalar hem de kamu yönetimi alanlarında yaşanan kurumsal dönüşüm süreçlerini kapsamaktadır. AB ölçeğinden bakıldığında ise birliğin 29 üye ülkeyi içerecek şekilde genişlemesi ve bu genişlemeye bağlı olarak uyum ve bütünleşmeyi sağlayacak politikaların geliştirilmesi gerekliliği en önemli etkenler olarak ortaya çıkmaktadır. Bu çerçevede ulus üstü, ulusal ve yerel/ bölgesel ölçeklerin dahil olduğu yönetim modellerinin geliştirilmesi olanaklı olmuştur. AB'de sınır ötesi işbirliği de bu bağlamda ortaya çıkmaktadır.

Yerel, ulusal ve küresel dinamiklerin etkisi ile şekillenen sınır ötesi işbirliğinin kurumsallaşmasını araştırmak bahsedilen bu farklı ölçek ve süreçlerin belirli bir yerleşim alanı üzerine olan etkilerini anlamak açısından önem teşkil etmektedir. Bu çalışma söz konusu araştırmayı yeni kurumsalcılık kuramını ve onun farklı yaklaşımları olan üç ayrı kolunu, yani rasyonel seçim, sosyolojik ve tarihsel kurumsalcılık yaklaşımlarını kullanarak yapmayı hedeflemektedir. Yeni kurumsalcılığın bu üç ayrı kolu, toplumsal kurumlar konusunda birbirinden ayrılan ve zaman zaman çelişen yaklaşımlara sahiptir. Rasyonel seçim kurumsalcıları insanın, çıkarlarını maksimize etmek üzere hesaplar yapan ve bunun sonucunda hareket eden bir varlık olduğu kabulü ile hareket ederler. Bu bakış açısı ile toplumsal kurumlar, insanlar arasında güven eksikliğinden doğan maliyetleri minimize etmek üzere ku-

rulmuştur ve bunu başarabildikleri ölçüde toplumda yerleşirler. Tarihsel ve sosyolojik kurumsalcı yaklaşımlar bu bakış açısına farklı yönlerden itiraz etmektedirler. Tarihsel kurumsalcılara göre toplumsal kurumlar uzun tarihsel süreçler boyunca şekillenen toplumsal dinamiklerinin doğal birer sonucu olarak oluşurlar. Örneğin kapitalizm bu tür bir tarihsel- toplumsal dinamiktir. Kapitalizm tarihsel gelişim süreci içinde hegemonik bir güç haline gelmiş ve kendi kurumsal yapısını oluşturmuştur. Tüm toplumsal kurumlar da yol bağımlılığı kavramı ile ifade edilen bir zorunluluk ilişkisi içerisinde kapitalizmin kurumsal yapısının bir gerekliliği olarak ortaya çıkarlar ya da işlevlerini yitirirler. Sosyolojik kurumsalcılık ise tarihsel süreçlerden ziyade bir toplumsal yapıda mevcut güç ilişkileri ve o yapıya özgü dinamiklerin toplumsal kurumların şekillenmesinde etkili olduğunu savunmaktadır. Hem toplumsal kurumların varlığı hem de onların yönetim ve işleyişi bu güç ilişkilerinin birer yansımasıdır.

Bu çalışma, Edirne- Kırklareli sınır bölgesinde gerçekleşen sınır ötesi işbirliklerini ve bu doğrultuda oluşan kurumsal yapıyı, yeni kurumsalcılık kuramının bu üç farklı yaklaşımı açısından değerlendirmektedir. Bu çerçevede, tarihsel kurumsalcılık bakış açısı ile Türkiye'nin AB üyelik süreci, soğuk savaş dönemi boyunca süren sınır bölgeleri politikalarını dönüştüren

bir kritik kavşak, fakat aynı zamanda da Cumhuriyet'in kuruluşundan beri hedeflenen batılılaşmanın devamını imleyecek bir yol bağımlılığı süreci olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Sosyolojik kurumsalcı bakış açısı ile AB bölgesel politikalarının bir parçası olan sınır ötesi işbirliği, ulus üstü, ulusal ve yerel ölçeklerden farklı çıkarlara sahip olan aktörler arasındaki güç ilişkilerinin bir yansıması olarak değerlendirilmiştir. Sınır ötesi işbirliklerinin yasal çerçevesi ve proje başvuruları sırasında uygulanan eleme yöntemleri de aynı bağlamda ele alınmıştır. Sınır ötesi işbirliklerine katılan aktörlerin katılma sebepleri ve ortak seçme süreçleri ise rasyonel seçim kurumsalcı bakış açısı ile ve çıkar maksimizasyonu bakış açısı ile değerlendirilmiştir.

Çalışma, bu farklı kuramsal bakış açılarının birbirilerini dışlayan ya da birbirilerine zıt yaklaşımlar olmadıklarını, aksine aynı olguya farklı açılardan yaklaştıklarını iddia etmektedir. Bu nedenle bu farklı bakış açılarının sentezi, Edirne- Kırklareli bölgesindeki sınır ötesi işbirliğinin kurumsallaşmasını kavramak açısından önem taşımaktadır.

Çalışma bölgede sınır ötesi işbirliği sürecine dahil olan aktörlerden 49'u ile, sınır ötesi işbirliğinin kurumsallaşma sürecini incelemek amacı ile 2013 yılında gerçekleştirilen bir saha araştırmasına dayanmaktadır.