

Border-Regional Resilience in EU Internal and External Border Areas in Finland

Author:

Eeva-Kaisa Prokkola

Geography Research Unit

University of Oulu

Finland

Orcid ID: orcid.org/0000-0003-3237-6953

Email: eeva-kaisa.prokkola@oulu.fi

Phone: +358 50 5568241

Acknowledgements: The research has been supported by the Academy of Finland's Strategic Research Council and Multilayered Borders of Global Security research team (#303527, #303480).

Abstract

European border regions have witnessed remarkable mobility shocks stemming from complex ecological and economic changes and geopolitical events. The experience of continuous regional and global crisis has increased interests towards the idea of resilience, the ability of communities and regions to adapt and cope with disturbances and transitions. Being inspired by the literature of regional resilience and the evolutionary approach, this paper will examine the difference that borders and geopolitical conditions make from the perspective of regional resilience and especially ‘border-regional resilience’. Particular focus will be on irregular cross-border mobilities and consequent transitions EU external and internal border towns, Lappeenranta and Tornio in Finland. The study points out that the geopolitical environment and the openness of the border partly determine the regional development trajectories and the ways for coping with cross-border mobility related changes. The border location entails some vulnerability, however, the nature of cross-border institutions and relations of trust are of crucial importance from the perspective of border-regional resilience. The paper proposes a research agenda for studying border-regional resilience in relation to various environmental and social changes and geopolitical events.

Key words: regional resilience, border region, border-regional resilience, mobility, tourism

Introduction

Border towns and regions have traditionally been understood to have specific problems of regional development because of the closeness of a border and their often peripheralized location within a country. The establishment of free trade area agreements and European integration have shifted border regions from a peripheral position to a more favourable one, and facilitated the efforts of regional growth (Hanson, 2011; Prokkola, 2019). During recent years, however, European border regions and towns have witnessed remarkable ‘mobility shocks’ stemming from complex, and often unpredictable ecological and economic changes and geopolitical events. They have become gateways to increasing numbers of migrants to which many states have responded with border closures and securitization even in the EU’s free movement area (Brown, 2017).

To respond to crisis that global warming but also the 2008 financial crash and the large-scale irregular migration are understood to exemplify, governments and researchers have turned their interests towards the idea of resilience, that is, the ability of groups, communities and regions to cope with disturbances stemming from environmental and socio-political change (Adger, 2000; Walker *et al.*, 2004). The resilience thinking has been discussed and developed further in regional studies and planning where regional resilience has opened a field of researching regional vulnerabilities and strengths from a more holistic perspective. The focus has been on factors that could possibly explain why other regions and communities succeed in adapting to changing conditions while others do not (Hassink, 2010). This study is inspired by the literature of regional resilience and the evolutionary approach (Boschma, 2015). The discussion of regional resilience is taken a step further towards an understanding of what difference borders make and geopolitical conditions make from the perspective of regional resilience.

Border towns and regions are highly interesting sites for studying resilience because the stability of border areas and fluent border crossing are understood to be important from the perspective of state security and the functioning of society in general (Longo, 2018; Ackleson, 2005; Paasi, 1996). This paper studies how geopolitical events and unpredicted, sudden changes in cross-border mobilities and consequent transitions have been coped with in the EU external border town of Lappeenranta and the EU internal border town of Tornio in Finland as well as how the regional transition can be approached from the perspective of *border-regional resilience*. It will examine irregular cross-border mobilities from the perspective of border-regional resilience in Lappeenranta and Tornio and how the regional stakeholders articulate and cope with the consequent regional transition. The key argument is that geopolitical environment and border institutions partly determine the discourses of adaptation and coping mechanism. The research questions can be defined in the following manner: First, how regional stakeholders in Lappeenranta and Tornio conceptualize the border and cross-border mobility related changes as a regional question, second, what factors have supported or hindered the adaptation and coping with the cross-border mobility and consequent regions transition and third, what particular characteristic of border-regional resilience can be identified the EU internal and external border areas in Finland?

The paper highlights the importance of paying attention to geopolitical environments and irregular mobilities in the studies of resilience. Geopolitics of mobilities are often unknown and not at the control of individual states. Both EU internal and external border regions may struggle with uncertainty and unpredicted mobility shocks caused by geopolitical turbulence and related mobility fluctuations. They present different political environments and the openness/closed nature of the border partly determines regional development and resilience, and the factors and potential for coping with political and economic changes are considerably different. However, it needs to be recognized that the usage of the term “shock” does not automatically mean that the impacts are negative from both

short and long-term perspective. A specific mobility shock may sometimes lead into a positive outcome in one industry, network or institution while simultaneously stagnating or even withering the growth factors and sustainability of some others away.

Theoretical perspectives on border-regional resilience

The popular yet contested concept of resilience has transferred from environmental studies to social sciences, and it has been theorized and operationalized differently depending on the context. In environmental science, the focus is on the measurement of the biological capacities of adaptation under the changing environmental conditions. In social sciences, the interest is on the capacity of an individual, community, region, or state to adapt to changing circumstances and recover from crisis (Adger, 2000).

Christopherson *et al.* (2010, p. 3; see also Simon & Randalls 2016) explain the popularity of the term 'resilience' by its malleability; it can mean different things to different groups of people. Resilience has rapidly become the key term in the vocabulary of regional planning and development at all geographical scales, ranging from global and supra-national to national and local communities (Coaffee 2013; Mulligan *et al.*, 2016; Wagner & Anholt, 2016; Gressgård, 2017). Even if the determination and examination of resilience factors varies in academic and policy debates, diversity, modularity, learning, collaboration, sense of community, trust and equality are often associated with resilience (Lucinda, 2018; Boschma, 2015; Hassink, 2010; Holm & Østergård, 2015; Suire & Vicente, 2012; Kotilainen *et al.*, 2015; Lowndes & McCaughie, 2013). In policy, the turn towards resilience thinking is argued to implicate a practical policy approach that underlines its instrumental

value and multiple paths to development and tends to shift responsibility to the regional and community levels and individuals (Wagner & Anholt, 2016, pp. 415-6).

The term resilience is usually loaded with positive connotations, however, critical scholars argue that the interest towards increasing regional and community resilience is a governmental strategy for producing adaptation to prevailing situations (i.e. neoliberal market rationales), and thus avoiding open resistance (Welsh, 2013; Chandler & Reid, 2016). Many regional and economic geographers are hesitating about the concept of resilience, whether the ideas of resilience are useful at all for examining regions or not. What most scholars agree, however, is that the growing interest towards resilience can be read as a response to the contemporary sense of uncertainty and as an attempt to find models for adaptation and thus survival (Christopherson *et al.*, 2010, p. 3). Regardless of the problematic and ambiguity of the ideas of resilience, it is fruitful to put some effort for clarifying the concept (Martin, 2012), and for asking in what ways it might help us to understand the social and economic development and transitions taking place in border regions.

The increasing interest towards resilience in regional studies is stemming from the fact that the opening of state borders has made places and regions more permeable to the effects of what were previously thought to be external processes (Christopherson *et al.*, 2010, p. 3). Border towns and regions are fruitful sites for studying resilience since border location entails specific vulnerability to cross-border mobility fluctuations (Hansen, 2011). Their development trajectories are strongly interlinked with border openings and closures that are often a response to geopolitical events and experienced global and national insecurity. Moreover, their economic and social functioning is often highly dependent on cross-border mobilities and trust relations. An interesting yet neglected question therefore is, how border towns and regions are coping with and adapting to cross-border

mobility/immobility shocks and whether they are able to establish new paths for sustainable regional development in changing geopolitical and economic circumstances.

The question about why some regions and border regions succeed in overcoming even rapid economic adversities while others do not is a challenging methodological question, however, because multiple factors affect regional development and their effects are highly relational (Hassink, 2010). Boschma (2015) criticizes the literature of regional resilience for its tendency to perceive the adaptability as a move away from the regional path dependence rather than seeing the historical path as a possible resource, and thus proposes the evolutionary approach as a response. In evolutionary perspective regional resilience is approached as a continuous process, instead of understanding about it merely as more or less fixed 'property', something that would determine the capacity of an entity to adapt to and recover from external stress in a way that it can resume its original configuration and trajectory afterwards (Welch, 2013: 1). From this perspective, the focus will be on the long-term capacity of the border regions to adapt their institutional and industrial structures in a continuously evolving, interdependent economic system (cf. Boschma, 2015: 735). Yet, as Boschma (*ibid.*) notes, institutional resilience and regional resilience are in many ways intertwined; the research perspective often determines which one is considered as the sing and the determinant of resilience.

The evolutionary approach pays attention to the role of human agency, institutions and structural change (Boschma, 2015; Christopherson *et al.*, 2010). It underlines that regional history and institutions are the key to understanding the ability of regions to develop the new paths of development and growth. By following this understanding, the studies of border-regional resilience need to pay attention to the ability of a border town or region to accommodate mobility shocks and to their ability to reconfigure socio-economic and institutional structures and by this means to develop new regional growth paths (Boschma, 2015, p. 734). Previous studies have analyzed how both formal

and informal institutions such as trust, norms and sense of belonging are influencing the success of cross-border cooperation and the path of border-regional development (Jakola & Prokkola, 2018). The existing institutions and networks are understood to provide possibilities, however, it needs to be recognized that the capacities of peripheral border regions in responding to sectors-specific shocks are more limited than in capital regions that usually have more skill-based industries and related industrial variety to which to build new growth (Boschma, 2015, p. 739; Kotilainen *et al.*, 2015).

In geopolitically sensitive border regions such as the Finnish/EU-Russian border, the geo-historical path of regional development is present in many ways. Yet, as Boschma (2015) underlines, history should not be seen merely as something that hinders regional development but historically formed relationships and knowledge are crucial factors that enable regional stakeholders to find solutions even in difficult conditions. The question of border-regional resilience does not merely concern the regional economic and industrial coping mechanism but includes complex social and political aspects such as the sense of security among populations and institutional trust (see Laurian, 2009). It is therefore important to pay attention to the significance of societal norms and the reality of political contestation (Phelan *et al.*, 2013, p. 202) in border regions as well as between a border region and a state center (cf. Jakola, 2016). In this study, the border-regional resilience is not perceived as something that is bound within the territorial-administrative borders of the region but from a more relational perspective (Allen & Cochrane, 2007; Allen *et al.*, 1998) which means that emphasis is given to the interconnectedness of regional resilience. In border areas, the mechanism of adaptation and coping may be linked with both the state-centered institutions and cross-border networks and institutions. Alongside the question of specific border locational vulnerability, it is important to recognize the ability of border towns and regions to take advantage of and prognosticate the transformations instead of seeing them merely as entities that are adapting to external stress (cf.

Kotilainen *et al.* 2015, p. 67). Cross-border mobility shocks create challenges in the short term but in the long-term historical perspective they may entail new possibilities and avenues, too.

Research area, material and methods

The research material has been collected in the town of Lappeenranta (73 000 inhabitants) that is part of South-Karelia region and in the town of Tornio that is part of the Tornio Valley region. The criteria for selecting the eastern border town Lappeenranta and the western border town Tornio (22 000 inhabitants) stipulated that they are areas where borders and border crossing has been constructed as a question resilience in particular ways. Lappeenranta and Tornio are both border-interdependent towns where institutions, industries and networks often extend across the border and where many lines of activities are dependent on the border for their existence. In Lappeenranta, Russian tourism forms a particular question of regional economy and development. The town of Tornio provides an interesting case from the perspective of regional planning and development due to its long-lasting cooperation and ‘borderless’ city building projects together with the Swedish town of Haparanda. The towns are used as contextual examples through which to highlight and examine the impact of political environment on regional development and resilience, the particular focus being on the specific conditions of the EU internal and external border areas. The two different yet in many ways geopolitically interwoven mobility shocks and their regional implications are scrutinized. The Lappeenranta case focuses on the implications of the rapid decreasing of cross-border shopping from Russia to eastern Finland due to the Crimean crisis and consequent sanctions. The Tornio case examines the ways of coping with the 2015 influx of migrants and asylum-seekers where the northern Finnish-Swedish border crossing in Tornio formed the key route from Europe and Sweden to Finland.

*** Insert Figure 1. approximately here

The examination is based on different sets of material: regional statistics, regional strategies and documents, open-ended interviews with regional stakeholders together provide access to the question of cross-border mobilities and resilience from a regional perspective. First, regional development trajectories are examined from the statistics and regional strategies to gain understanding of the volume of cross-border mobilities and transitions that have been taking place in the border region. Secondly, to gain understanding how the regional authorities and stakeholders conceptualize and cope with border and cross-border mobility related transitions, open-ended interviews (Bennet, 2002) were carried out in the border towns of Tornio and Lappeenranta. The interview material includes all together 32 tape-recorded semi-structured interviews (19 in Tornio, 13 in Lappeenranta) lasting approximately 1 hour) with the regional authorities, planners and the representatives of regional and civic organizations. The interviews were conducted between 2016 and 2017 and with the exception of two phone interviews the discussions were done face-to-face. The selection of the interviewees was based on optional sampling where the researcher chose the informants to be interviewed and the snowball method (Bertaux, 1981) was utilized to find more people for the interviews. However, it was easier to motivate people for the interviews in Tornio probably because they had recent experiences of the migration influx and they wanted to share their experiences. The interviews were conducted in the work places of the authorities and experts, inviting them to talk about regional development, border and cross-border mobilities/immobility, and their own perceptions and experiences of coping with the mobility transition. Each informant was encouraged to speak about the themes from the perspective of their own areas of expertise.

The transcript interview scripts have been analyzed and interpreted by utilizing qualitative content analysis (Tuomi & Sarajärvi, 2018) and contextualization. The complexity of relating resilience and

regions is recognized in the analysis. As Boschma (2015, p. 735) notes, regions consist of “individuals, organizations, industries, networks and institutions” and in empirical research it may come out that these possess their own distinctive forms of resilience in time and place. By taking two Finnish border towns as contextual examples, this paper proposes that in some sub-regions geopolitical changes may have stronger impact on regional development trajectories than in others. The recognition of sub-regional scale of resilience is especially important in the context of Nordic countries representing the most decentralized OECD countries. Finnish municipalities have had a strong regional self-autonomy for a considerable long period of time (Andre & Garcia, 2014), and local governments have possessed considerable decision-making power over public investments, land use policy and the production social services, among others. Moreover, the states often consist of more than one border between the neighboring states and the sub-regions are positioned differently in relation to these. The nature of the border affects the distinctive coping mechanisms of regional organizations, industries, networks and institutions, thus partly determining their capacities and coping strategies.

Results

The absence of Russian tourist in the border town of Lappeenranta

Cross-border tourism in the Finnish-Russian borderland has a long varied history that has been determined by ‘higher geopolitics’ and the binational relationship (Laine, 2017). The border was gradually opened after the Collapse of the Soviet Union, which boosted tourism trips from Finland to Russia and vice versa. In the early 21st century, daily shopping tourism from Russia to eastern Finland become the cornerstone of regional economic and tourism development in Lappeenranta and South

Karelia. The numbers of border crossing at the Finnish-Russian border and the overnights of Russians increased rapidly in the early 2000 decade (Figure 2) as the economy and wealth among the middle class was growing fast in Russia. The statistics do not include daily shopping tourism and overnights with relatives and family members, thus the actual numbers of cross-border tourism are even higher (Laine, 2017, p. 186; Hannonen, 2016).

**** Insert Figure 2 here.

Lappeenranta is well accessible from Russia through three international border crossing points, Imatra, Nuijamaa and Vanikkala and its location 2-hour drive distance from St. Petersburg is seen by locals as an advantage, yet simultaneously the dependence of Russian tourism brings considerable vulnerabilities. The dependence on regional development on cross-border tourism and the difficulty of being prepared for rapid fluctuations come out in the interviews:

The economic situation, the volume of tourism has considerable impact. It is one of our growth lines, and the most important lines are tourism and commerce. And simultaneously it is the threat. These international events, they cannot be anticipated.
(LPR, informant 22)

The Lappeenranta region has suffered from the geopolitical turbulence of the 2014 Crimean crisis and the consequent sanctions and cheapening of Russian rubble, immediately influencing the South Karelian tourism industry and retail. The rapid decrease of cross-border tourism mobilities emptied the city landscape and forced many enterprises to postpone their investments. For example, in Lappeenranta center the number of empty business premises doubled between 2013 and 2017. Some

shops that specialized to serve international tourist were closed down and smaller firms have moved their operation to home offices to cope with the shrinkage (Ylönen, 2014; Kemppainen, 2017).

The rents are expensive in the shopping malls. There were some shops that were specialized in Russians only, and they have had to shut up.” (LPR, informant 26)

We had enterprises that based their operational model on Russian customers. When the number of Russians decreased, and those who continued to visit here used less money, so this has had impact here and especially in retail, in specialized retail many shops shut up. (LPR, informant 29)

The development in Lappeenranta region is illustrative of how the economic crisis influenced Finland where the economic recession materialized a somewhat later than many other EU countries because of the significance of the trade relations between Finland and Russia.

In context of the strictly controlled Finnish-Russian border, the development of cross-border tourism is in many ways dependent on wider-scale political decision making and geopolitical events. This is something that local needs to adjust and take distance. The regional history was used to explain the situation and how local people are coping with these. It can be argued that the history and knowledge of the past border events presents an element that has engraved a regional culture of circumspection and waiting.

The Crimean event was a surprise or the Ukrainian event; how does Russia acts like that? Somehow, I think that when all things are considered, it was not so big surprise to people living in these parts. (LPR 23)

It came out from the interviews that local coping mechanisms are very much interlinked and depended on wider EU and national policies towards Russia. The sanctions towards Russia meant that the EU-driven cross-border programs were stagnated and delayed (Koch, 2018). The earlier optimism regarding less restricted border crossing has vanished.

Some time ago, there was a serious discussion about possibility to abolish the obligatory visa between Finland and Russia. It would make the border crossing easier. Now there is no such discussion because of this Crimean situation for example. And the abolition of the visa depends on EU decisions, so it is not going to happen. (LPR 20)

The opportunities depend on international, that is, on EU policy decisions. Of course, we are expecting that the atmosphere becomes more positive and we can return to that good growth track where we were before the Ukrainian situation. (LPR, informant 25)

At the regional level, an important way to cope with the wider political tension is to focus on practical issues and try to maintain a positive atmosphere of development and continue cooperation with those Russian regional scale actors with whom personal connections already exist.

It has been clear to us from the beginning that regardless of all crises and issues derive from state politics, people and enterprises continue dealings here at the grassroots level within politically settled frameworks. (LPR, informant 29).

The functioning of regional economy is in very concrete ways interlinked to cross-border infrastructures and the planning of services from the perspective of cross-border mobilities. Thus, in the planning of the border town, its economic and infrastructural investment, it is crucial to acknowledge the development on the other side of the border. The functioning of society and institutional stability and reliability were considered as an important part of the attractiveness of Finland as a tourist destination for Russians (see also Hannonen, 2016).

It is easy for people from St Petersburg to visit Finland and buy a product that they could actually buy with the same price in St Petersburg. But (in Finland) he can trust in the quality of the product. (LPR, informant 20).

*We are interested in the functioning of the border crossing and capacity of traffic (...)
If we have tourist, it is better that they can spend the money when they are in the town instead of waiting on the border crossing line. We have been able to improve the infrastructure, to build new lanes and various investment in the border crossings, and here we have been able to advantage of the EU-funding. (LPR, informant 25)*

Not all changes were considered negatively. Many interviewed people explained how the value of Russian tourists from the perspective of regional development and economics has crystallized. Previously, the Russian tourism was discussed in terms of ‘overtourism’, for example during the highest tourist seasons, many local people experienced and reported in the newspapers that Russian’s are blocking all parking places and considered the long lines along the border roads as a security risk. The interviews in Lappeenranta pointed out that economic change may influence our ideas of ‘others’.

Several informants explained how the regional economic recession have had a positive influence on the attitudes towards Russian cross-border shopping:

During the biggest boom, when they (Russian tourist) really were visible here, the locals sometimes behaved very awkwardly and the newspapers were full of opinion writings that “the long(register)plated” have arrived and there is a rush and thus it is not possible to go to the town or to do shopping. And when it stopped so now it feels that this complaining has stopped. We have realized how enormous impact it has had on our service sectors and employment (LPR, informant 24).

The absence of Russian tourists become a regional misery that brought up the question of border-regional vulnerability that needs to be recognized better in regional tourism planning and marketing strategies. The renewed tourism strategy of the South Karelia region can be seen a mean to cope with the changing circumstances and as an attempt to respond to the vulnerabilities of tourism and regional development. Whereas the 2006-2015 South Karelian tourism strategy (2006) emphasizes the transport connections between Finland and Russia and the growth potential of cross-border tourism, the new 2015-2022 strategy starts from the fact that the volumes of Russian tourism are unpredictable.

One response to the immobility shock is that the tourism industry and enterprises are expected to innovate and discover new strategies and growth paths that could increase the resilience of regional tourism and sustainability of tourism in the long-term (cf. Saarinen & Gill, 2019). In the new tourism strategy, the potential of the nature, especially the waterways of the region is underlined and the new target groups of tourism marketing are discussed. The plan is that alongside the potential of domestic and Russian tourism, the marketing should target more the Central-European, Sweden and Asia tourism markets (South Karelian Tourism Strategy, 2015, p. 10). Moreover, cooperation and

networking between regional tourism enterprises is seen as ways to strengthen the functioning of tourism industry and the development of tourism products. The strategic move from emphasizing the significance of Russians towards wider international cooperation and networking come also out in the interviews with the municipality authorities (LPR, informant 22), yet it was noted that the location next to the border will continue to determine the possibilities and paths regional development in the future. The historical perspective brings both optimism and anticipation.

Lappeenranta is the only place in the Nordic countries where there is 8 million people and customers within 200 kilometers (...) Although we are thinking about the new customer groups from Nordic countries and Europe and China, the volume of St Petersburg, its population is so huge (...) the same development will continue in the future, if we just can cooperate and the border stays open. (LPR, informant 25).

Long-terms trade and successful business and good partnership in that business, it is always based on trust. And trust is based on the relationship between people. In this region, we have a very long business tradition on the trade with Russians. (LPR, informant 29)

The relevance of tourism for regional resilience lies in its growth dynamics, the resilience of the tourism industry itself as well as its linkages with other regional economy sectors (Bellini *et al.*, 2017, p. 141). It can be argued that, compared with the other important industries of eastern Finland such as the internationalized wood industry (Jutila *et al.*, 2010), in tourism regional stakeholders and entrepreneurs possess more alternatives to develop tourism resilience and thus border-regional resilience. In the best scenario, regional authorities and tourism industries have developed new ways to cope with the changing tourism volumes and thus are more prepared for future changes. There is

more cooperation in regional tourism planning and more knowledge on how EU-Russian relations may influence local development as well as on how to communicate the regional interests to national and supra-national scale (cf. Koch, 2018).

Coping with the migration influx in the border town of Tornio

The EU internal Finnish-Swedish border region represent an integrated border area (see Martinez, 1994) where interaction and cooperation are well institutionalized. The border has been open since World War II and it is often referred to by locals as the most peaceful border in the world. Tornio is located next to the border and the town of Haparanda in Sweden. Two opposite border towns are often referred to as twin towns and they have established bilateral cooperation in planning and services since the 1960s, supported also by the multilateral cooperation in the frameworks of the Nordic North Calotte program (see Aalbu, 1999). Historically formed cross-border relations and their predictability has enabled the towns to develop an open border brand and attract investments as well as boosting their economic development with the help of EU-co-funded cross-border cooperation (Prokkola *et al.*, 2015; Jakola, 2016).

The meaning of the ‘borderless’ border was put into stress in August 2015 when hundreds of asylum-seekers started to arrive daily at the northern Finnish-Swedish border crossing and the town of Tornio. The situation was considered exceptional because historically Finland has not been a destination country for migrants. It was surprising for many that the migrants wanted to continue to Finland from Sweden that is considered a more attractive destination. As a response to the unexpected mobility shock (Figure 3), the Finnish government relocated hundreds of police officers, border guards and servicemen to Tornio to control the border crossing and to accept the asylum applications. All together Finland received a tenfold number of asylum applications compared with previous years,

and the number of reception centres for adults and families increased from 20 to 144 in 2015 (EMN, 2016). The government and security authorities were not the only actors taking care of and responsibility for migration reception but volunteers and nongovernmental organizations had a focal role in the process as well. Finnish non-governmental workers were able to take activities on the Swedish side with the Swedish police providing support, for example, when the migrants arrived at the bus station in Haparanda. Accordingly, historically formed extra-regional actors and neighboring relations can be considered of crucial importance from the perspective of border-regional resilience.

*** Insert Figure 3 approximately here

The interviews with local stakeholders and authorities pointed out that cooperation was an important factor that helped to cope with and manage the new situation. The informants in Tornio described the rather smooth functioning of interagency cooperation and its crucial role in the organization of the reception. Cooperation was intersectional within and across the border and each participatory group – the governmental and municipality authorities and non-governmental organizations – were able to utilize their existing networks. They gained information from their contact person in Sweden, for example, regarding the volumes of the new arrivals in time and place. Timely information and smooth communication was considered crucial for planning the reception and work schedules in Tornio. This was made possible by the long-lasting institutional cooperation. By this means, the case of Tornio provides a powerful case for international governance from the perspective of border-regional resilience:

They called from Lulea that the train is full (of migrants), that the train comes and it is full, so be prepared. It showed that we could act. We did not have any politicians who would have spoken that we need to build a wall. (Tornio, informant 1)

The Swedish police knows what we are doing in Finland and how our cooperation works (...) even if national officials have a good cooperation relationship, the activities and control are not effective without international cooperation and information sharing. (Tornio, informant 3)

There was a wide and well-functioning cooperation between the officials; police, customs, border quads and military. And then the immigration unit and the Red Cross organization had an important role. Somehow I experienced that there was a common will among us that this situation needs to be taken into control. (Tornio, informant 4)

The organization of the reception activities in Tornio border crossing point illustrates that the regional capacities and strategies are not inseparable from state institutions and infrastructures. The state and municipal actors were highly dependent on each other and their cooperation, however, the state was seen to maintain the final responsibility in the matters of border security. From the perspective of border-regional resilience, it is important that both one's "own" state as well as the neighboring state and society are considered trustworthy and institutionally stable:

The state intervened and it was a good thing. I think that the state did intervene in the matter of fact manner and the establishment of the Register Centre in Tornio is a good example of how this kind of issues can be done efficiently and with style. (Tornio, informant 1)

Nevertheless, Sweden is a stable and predictable partner to negotiate with. (Tornio, informant 14).

The success of intersectional cooperation within and across the border as well as the experience of mutual trust was emphasized by the interviewed people. The formation of trust relationships and responsibilities between the state authorities and civic organizations has a historical background in Finland where the development of civil society has occurred in a ‘top-down’ manner more than in opposition to the state governance (Häkli, 2005). Many informants who had a long experience of non-governmental organizational work explained how institutional trust did not arise from an empty ground but was partly based on the previous positive experiences and sense of trust.

I have been working in the Red Cross for decades and become familiar with the officials too (...) I know how they are operating here. (Tornio, informant 5)

Although the history of the open Finnish-Swedish border was politicized in the national media and by politicians in the course of 2015 migration influx (see Prokkola, 2018), among the local actors the peaceful history and trade relations in the border region were seen as a resource that enables them to better cope with the change and stressful situations.

For us, Sweden has always been.. including the war times and after that we went there to bring goods that were not available in the Finnish side. (Tornio, informant 3)

In this region, we have had trade since the 15th decade and even before that. And everything is based on these personal relationships and networks. (Tornio, informant 12)

”Somehow I trust that if these kind of situations will come in the future, whatever they are, cooperation between us will work. It works in small issues, so why would it not work in bigger issues as well.” (Tornio, informant 13)

An important question from the perspective of border-regional resilience is how are institutions at different scales organized and functioning in relation into each other (cf. Boschma, 2015, p. 735). This institutional relationship has significant impact on the capacities and the ways that the municipalities and regional authorities coped with the new situation. The informants emphasized the meaning of trust and clearly defined responsibilities. It was considered important that the relationship between the state and the civil society was supportive and maintained during the exceptional, stressful situation.

The border-regional impact of the mobility shock can be evaluated from short- and long- term perspective. It comes out from the interviews with the regional authorities that the reception and maintenance of the asylum-seekers boosted regional economy in the short term. However, some informants argued that the image of the borderless border was destroyed by the border securitization effort and anti-migration demonstrations. It remains open whether the sudden migration influx and consequent border securitization will influence the optimism towards the open border brand and trust relations between the twin cities in the long term. It seems that the migration influx did not have considerable long-term influence on the sense of belonging and safety in Tornio. A survey that was conducted among residents of Tornio in 2017 (401 respondents) showed that the local people consider Tornio as a safe place for living, and according to the interviews cross-border interaction and cooperation were functioning well (Prokkola *et al.*, 2017). Moreover, from the perspective of border-regional resilience, it is important that many informants saw that the region and the society in are now more prepared to respond to sudden mobility shocks and large-scale migration influxes. Many

regional authorities underline that anticipatory mechanism and intersectional cooperation have been developed and the overall national institutional capacity to handle mobility shock has increased. Also, the Registration Center that was established in Tornio proved to function well, something that was internationally recognized (Ministry of Interior, 2017, p. 51). Some interviewed people in Lappeenranta also mentioned that there is now “Tornio’s model”, that is an institutional preparedness and action model for coping with large-scale migration influxes in Finland.

The difference that the borders make

The difference between the EU internal and external border regions valorizes the difference that borders make in resilience and enables us to identify factors that are of crucial importance from the perspective of border-regional resilience. In border areas, resilience is connected with cross-border institutions and infrastructures. In the planning of economic and infrastructural investments and social development, it is crucial to acknowledge the development on the other side of the border and possible fluctuations in cross-border flows (see also Timothy, 2001). The Finnish/EU-Russian border and Finnish-Swedish border represent institutionally different border regions, the foundations of regional and national institutions are the same but from the perspective of cross-border relations and regional development paths, the border makes a difference. Both formal and informal cross-border institutions, networks and norms are different from each other and, in practice, a means of adaptation and adaptability may simultaneously contain elements from different institutions. The ways of coping with the change and disturbances at two geopolitically different border areas reveal how geopolitical environment influences border-regional resilience.

In Lappeenranta, the regional stakeholders showed adaptation to the prevailing situation and hoped that the situation would change into better. The geopolitical tension between EU and Russia was

freezing the regional scale cross-border cooperation as it partly stagnated the ongoing and planned EU-co-funded cross-border cooperation. The regional stakeholders were trying to diversify regional tourism industry more, thus trying to make the regional tourism more resilient to such sudden cross-border mobility fluctuations. The attitudes towards Russian tourism were somewhat controversial because of its vulnerability and previous experiences of overtourism, however, it was a common understanding that the attitudes towards Russian tourists had changed into a more positive and welcoming ones. The trustworthiness of Finnish institutions was a significant factor because it was seen to increase the attractiveness of Finland as a tourism destination and in general the national institutional stability was seen as providing mechanism to cope with the changes in the regional scale. From the perspective of tourism industry in general, the border was considered more as a resource than a hindrance.

Unlike Lappeenranta, in Tornio and between Finland and Sweden in general cross-border cooperation intensified at all geographical scales. Established cross-border networks were considered highly important from the perspective of the asylum reception. They helped to organize timely responses to the migration influx at the local scale, both at the institutional and non-institutional everyday levels. Whereas in Lappeenranta the border related sensitive events presented a matter that were unspoken, in Tornio the regional stakeholders were immediately contacted by and contacting the other side as well as had direct communication and information sharing about both positively and negatively experienced matters. The temporal border securitization influenced the attitudes at the local scale and some informants estimated that the border closure has damaged the imago of the twin cities and 'borderless' border as well as strengthened national and societal divisions in both countries. Yet in the Finnish regions, the institutional preparedness to respond to sudden large-scale migration has been development further, based on the experiences that were gained in Tornio and nation-widely. Authorities have learned from the experiences and developed mechanism into better respond to

mobility shocks of similar kind. In Tornio, the coping mechanisms were based on formal political relations, informal socio-cultural connections and existing business relations. The border-regional resilience has increased, yet the general societal polarization has created more internal stress may affect the adaptation to new external stresses on the border region in future.

Conclusion

Irregular migration and tourism mobilities often create vulnerability from the perspective of regional economy and societal coherence. This paper has scrutinized the impact and ways of coping with two different mobility shocks at the institutionally and geopolitically different Finnish/EU-Russian and Finnish-Swedish border regions. The study illustrates how economic crisis and geopolitical turbulence often go hand in hand which creates a double stress situation in regions, thus requiring high resilience. This means that the Finnish regions needed to cope with from two overlapping cross-border mobility related transitions, that is, the economic crisis and the European large-scale migration influx. The economic recession created more vulnerability in the EU region and worldwide and thus lowered the regional capacity to cope with the migration influx (cf. Hyndman, 2000).

By studying the implications of different mobility shocks at two different border regions, the paper has underlined the significance of borders and geopolitics in resilience. The study proposes that the impact of border location on resilience is two-fold; the openness of the border and institutionalized cross-border cooperation can increase the resilience of a region, however, simultaneously the border location makes the region more vulnerable to particular external stresses and disturbance. Some coping mechanism and paths of adaptation are at the hands of regional stakeholders but many are not, and this is partly dependent on the type of the border and spheres of development.

In the EU internal Finnish-Swedish border area, the ways of coping with sudden large scale migration are partly explained by the historically formed formal institutional and more informant trust relations, cross-border and intersectional cooperation, national and international networking and governmental predictability. In the EU external border area in Lappeenranta, the regional stakeholder's capacities to cope with the border related mobility fluctuations are limited, however, the tourism industry attempts to develop new strategies to response to the vulnerability that the border location entails. Moreover, the Lappeenranta case suggests that sometimes unwanted mobility can be turned into something that is tolerated and desired more in the region because its significance for regional economy crystallizes. It can be argued that the history of the region and the geopolitical events have impact on the ways of communication and information sharing.

The focus of this paper has been on particular irregular cross-border mobilities, however, in both Lappeenranta and Tornio regional development is dependent on many different factors and industries. In Tornio, border-regional resilience is supported by the openness of the border and institutionalized cross-border cooperation. In Lappeenranta there are many educational institutions and biotechnology related branches that bring economic growth to the region. Yet many industries in the eastern border area like the forest industry have also suffered from the vulnerabilities that unpredicted border regulations entail (Honkatukia *et al.*, 2008). The vulnerability to the geopolitical events and consequent transitions is relatively high in the region. Finally, from the perspective of border-regional resilience it is also important to pay attention to possible contradictions in the "success stories" of adapting (Phelan *et al.*, 2013). Industrial resilience and environmental sustainability may not always mean the same things, for example if cross-border tourism from St Petersburg and other nearby Russian areas would be substituted by air travel from Asia and Central-Europe. More theoretical and empirical research is needed on border-regional resilience and how irregular cross-border mobilities can be better incorporated in regional planning strategies for strengthening the sustainable development of border towns and regions.

References

- Aalbu, E. (1999). The North Calotte Committee. In H. Baltersheim & K. Ståhlberg (Eds.), *Nordic Region-Building in a European Perspective* (pp. 59-68). Aldershot: Ashgate.
- Ackleson, J. (2005). Constructing Security on the US-Mexico Border. *Political Geography*, 24(2), 165–184.
- Adger, N. (2000). Social and ecological resilience: are they related? *Progress in Human Geography*, 24(3), 347-364.
- Allen, J., Massey, D. & Cochrane, A. (1998). *Rethinking the Region*. London: Routledge.
- Allen, J. & A. Cochrane (2007). Beyond the Territorial Fix: Regional Assemblages, Politics and Power. *Regional Studies*, vol. 41, 1161-1175.
- André, C. & García, G. (2014). Local Public Finances and Municipal Reform in Finland. In *OECD Economics Department Working Papers*, No. 1121. Paris: OECD Publishing.
- Bellini, N. Grillo, F, Lazzeri, G. & Pasquinelli, C. (2017). Tourism and regional economic resilience from a policy perspective. *European Planning Studies*, 25(1), 140-153.
- Bennet, K. (2002). Interviews and focus groups. In Shurmer-Smith, P. (Ed), *Doing Cultural Geography* (pp. 151-162). London: SAGE.
- Bertaux, D. (1981). From the life history approach to the transformation of sociological practice. In D. Bertaux (Ed.), *Biography and society: The life history approach in social sciences* (pp. 29-45). Beverly Hills: SAGE.
- Brown, W. (2017). Border barriers as sovereign swords: rethinking Walled States in light of the EU migrant and fiscal crises. *Political Geography*, 59, 1-10.
- Boschma, R. (2015). Evolutionary Economic Geography: Towards an Evolutionary Perspective on Regional Resilience. *Regional Studies*, 49(5), 733-751
- Bourbeau, P. (2015). Migration, Resilience and Security. *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies*, 41(12), 1958-1977.

- Chandler, D. & Reid, J. (2016). *The neoliberal subject*. London: Pickering & Chatto Publishers.
- Christopherson, S. Michie, J. & Tyler, P. (2010). Regional resilience: theoretical and empirical perspectives. *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3(1), 3–10.
- Coaffee, J. (2013). Towards Next-Generation Urban Resilience in Planning Practice: From Securitization to Integrated Place Making. *Planning Practice & Research*, 28(3), 323-339.
- EMN (2016). European Migration Network. Key figures on immigration 2015. Published by *European Migration Network & Finnish Immigration Service*, Finland. Available at >http://www.emn.fi/files/1361/EMN_maahanmuuton_tunnusl_2015_EN_tumma.pdf< (accessed 25 October 2017)
- Gressgård, R. (2017). The racialized death-politics of urban resilience governance. *Social Identities*, doi.org/10.1080/13504630.2017.1418605
- Hannonen, O. (2016). *Peace and quiet beyond the border: the trans-border mobility of Russian second home owners in Finland*. Publications of the University of Eastern Finland. Dissertations in Social Sciences and Business Studies, no 118.
- Hanson, G. (2001). U.S. – Mexico Integration and Regional Economies. *Journal of Urban Economics*, 50, 259-287.
- Hassink, R. (2010). Regional resilience: a promising concept to explain differences in regional economic adaptability? *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3(1), 45–58.
- Holm, J. & C. Østergaard (2015). Regional Employment Growth, Shocks and Regional Industrial Resilience. *Regional Studies*, 49(1), 95-112.
- Honkatukia, J., Kallio, M., Hänninen, R. & Pohjola, J. (2008). Venäjän puutullien vaikutukset Suomen metsäsektoriin ja kansantalouteen [The impact of Russian timber tariff on the forest sector and economy in Finland]. *Metsätieteen aikakauskirja*, 3, 159–176.
- Hudson, R. (2010). Resilient regions in an uncertain world? *Cambridge Journal of Regions, Economy and Society*, 3(1), 11–25.

- Huysmans, J. (2000). The European Union and the Securitization of Migration. *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 38(5), 751–777.
- Häkli, J. (2005). Who is the Finn?: Globalization and Identity in Finland. *Journal of Finnish Studies*, 9 (2), 12-26.
- Jakola, F. (2016). Borders, planning and policy transfer: historical transformation of development discourses in the Finnish Torne Valley. *Journal European Planning Studies*, 24(10), 1806-1824.
- Jakola, F. & Prokkola, E-K. (2018). Trust-building or vested interest? Social capital processes and cross-border cooperation in the border towns of Tornio and Haparanda. *Tijdschrift voor Economische en Sociale Geografie*, 109(2), 224-238.
- Jutila, L., S, Karvinen, Leinonen, T. & Välkky, E. (2010). Venäjän tullipolitiikan vaikutuksista Suomen ja Venäjän väliseen metsäsektorin kauppaan. [The impact of Russian customs to the trade on the forest sector between Finland and Russia] *Metlan työraportteja* 155. Available at ><http://www.metla.fi/julkaisut/workingpapers/2010/mwp155.htm>< (accessed 17.10.2018)
- Kemppainen, H. (2017). Keskusta tyhjenee Lappeenrannassa. [The city center is emptying in Lappeenranta] *Imatralainen* 15.12.2017.
- Koch, K. (2018). Geopolitics of Cross-Border Cooperation at the EU's External Borders. *Nordia Geographical Publications*, 47(1). Retrieved from <https://nordia.journal.fi/article/view/71008>
- Kotilainen, J. Eisto, I. & Vatanen, E. (2015). Uncovering Mechanisms for Resilience: Strategies to Counter Shrinkage in a Peripheral City in Finland. *European Planning Studies*, 23(1), 53-68.
- Laine, J. (2017). Finnish-Russian Border Mobility and Tourism: Localism Overruled by Geopolitics. In Hall, D. (Ed.), *Tourism and Geopolitics: Issues and Concepts from Central and Eastern Europe* (pp. 178-190). Boston: CABI.
- Longo, M. (2018). *The Politics of Borders: Sovereignty, Security, and the Citizen after 9/11*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Lowndes, V. & McCaughie, K. (2013). Weathering the perfect storm? Austerity and institutional resilience in local government. *Public Finance and Public Choice*, 41(4), 533-549.
- Lucinda, D. (2018). Agency and resilience in the time of regional economic crisis. *European Planning Studies*, 26(5), 1041-1059.
- Martin, R. (2012). Regional economic resilience, hysteresis and recessionary shocks. *Journal of Economic Geography*, 12, 1-32.
- Martinez, O. (1994). The dynamics of border interaction: new approaches to border analysis. In Scholfield, C. (Ed.) *Global Boundaries* (pp. 1-15). London: Routledge.
- Ministry of Interior (2017). Mikä on Suomen kyky vastaanottaa turvapaikanhakijoita? Tarkastelu sisäministeriön hallinnonalan näkökulmasta. [The capacity of Finland to accommodate asylum seekers from the perspective of the ministry] *Sisäministeriön julkaisu 25/2017*. Available at > http://julkaisut.valtioneuvosto.fi/bitstream/handle/10024/80810/vo%20kyky%20julkaisu_netto_FINAL.pdf (accessed 16.10.2018)
- Mulligan, M., Steele, W., Rickards, L. & Fünfgeld, H. (2016). Keywords in planning: what do we mean by ‘community resilience’? *International Planning Studies*, 21(4), 348–361.
- Paasi, A. (1996). *Territories, boundaries, and consciousness: The changing geographies of the Finnish-Russian boundary*. London: Wiley.
- Phelan, L., Henderson-Sellers, A. & Taplin, R. (2013) The Political Economy of Addressing the Climate Crisis in the Earth System: Undermining Perverse Resilience. *New Political Economy*, 18(2), 198-226.
- Prokkola, E-K (2019). Border Cities. In Orum A. (Ed.), *The Wiley-Blackwell Encyclopedia of Urban and Regional Studies*.
- Prokkola, E-K, Vainikka, V. & Kaján, E. (2017). Everyday security and demonstrations in the border towns of Lappeenranta and Tornio. *Nordia Geographical Publications* 46 (3), 37-48.

- Prokkola E-K., Zimmerbauer, K. & Jakola, F. (2015). Performance of regional identity in the implementation of European Union's cross-border initiatives. *European Urban and Regional Studies*, 22(1), 104–117.
- Saarinen, J. & Gill, A. (2019) (Eds). *Resilient Destinations: Governance Strategies in the Transition towards Sustainability*. London: Routledge.
- Simon, S. & Randalls, S. (2016). Geography, ontological politics and the resilient future. *Dialogues in Human Geography*, 6 (1), 3-18.
- South Karelian tourism strategy 2006-2015 (2006). *The Council of South Karelia*. Available at: <http://www.ekarjala.fi/liitto/wp-content/uploads/2013/12/Etela-Karjalan-matkailustrategia-2006-2015.pdf> (accessed 17.10.2018)
- South Karelian tourism strategy 2015-2020 (2015). *The Council of South Karelia*. Available at: http://www.ekarjala.fi/liitto/wp-content/uploads/2015/09/Liite-1_Etel%C3%A4-Karjalan-matkailustrategia-2014-2020-vedos.pdf (accessed 17.10.2018)
- Timothy, D. (2001). *Tourism and political boundaries*. London: Routledge.
- Tuomi, J. & Sarajärvi, A. (2018). *Laadullinen tutkimus ja sisällön analyysi*. Helsinki: Tammi.
- Welsh, M. (2014). Resilience and responsibility: governing uncertainty in a complex world. *Geographical Journal*, 180(1), 15-26.
- Wagner, W. & Anholt, R. (2016). Resilience as the EU Global Strategy's new leitmotif: pragmatic, problematic or promising? *Contemporary Security Policy* 37 (3), 414-430.
- Walker, B., C. S. Holling, S. R. Carpenter & Kinzig, A. (2004). Resilience, adaptability and transformability in social–ecological systems. *Ecology and Society*, 9 (2).
- Ylönen, U. (2014). Lappeenrannan keskustan kivajalkakaupat tyhjenevät. [The basement shops in Lappeenranta center are emptying] *Yle News* [The Finnish national broadcast], 12.12.2014



Figure 1. Lappeenranta is located next to the Finnish/EU-Russian border and Tornio next to the Finnish-Swedish border. The population statistics are from 2017.



Figure 2. The registered overnights of Russians in hotels of over 20 beds in 1995-2017 in South Karelia (Source: Statistics Finland 2018; the chart is created by the author).

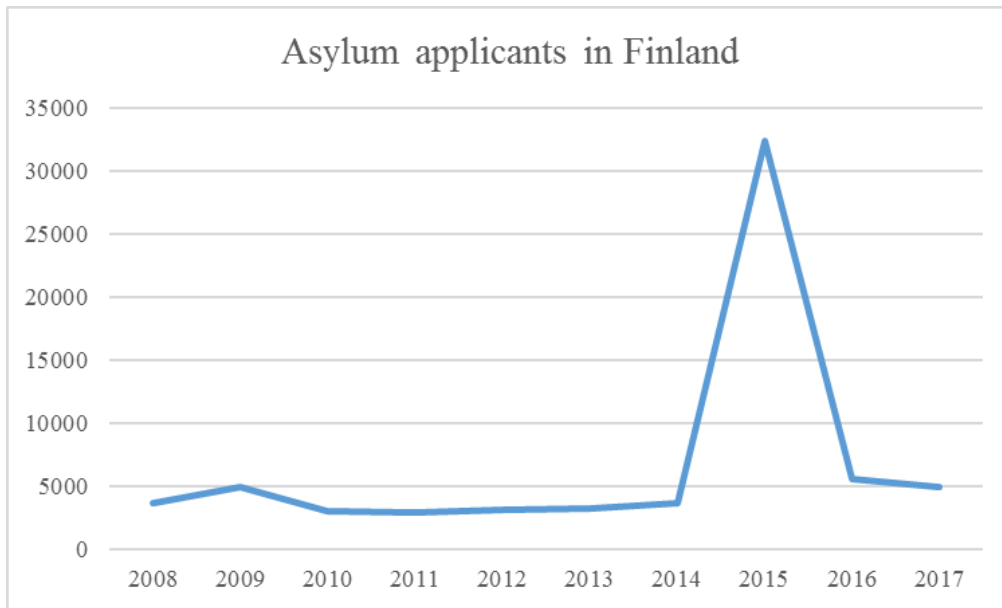


Figure 3. The number of asylum and first time asylum applicants in Finland between 2008 – 2017
(Source: Eurostat 2018; asylum and first time asylum applicants)