

13 TH EDITION OF THE MASTER-CLASS « TRANS/BORDER AND DIALOGUE OF DISCIPLINES »

TWIN CITIES FOR DEMOCRACY

Presented By Sciences Po Strasbourg



Sciences Po Strasbourg

École

de l'Université de Strasbourg



SUMMARY

1. The History and Evolution of Town Twinnings

2. Modern City Twinnings in International Relations

3. Alternative to twinnings :
European Territorial
Cooperation Mechanisms in the
Upper Rhine

1. THE HISTORY AND EVOLUTION OF TOWN TWINNINGS

Origins and evolution of twinning

- refers to a partnership relationship between 2 local authorities
- 836: religious connection between Le Mans (FR) and Paderborn (DT)
- modern twinning: interwar period and momentum after WWII
- Coventry (UK) and Stalingrad (RU) = act of solidarity
- context of the European reconstruction and reconciliation

The rise after WWII

- turning point for twinning initiatives
- "La fédération" 1944
- Montbéliard (FR) and Ludwigsburg (DT)
- creation of the Council of European Municipalities (1951)
- Franco-German twinnings with over 2300 partnerships
- strengthened the European Ideal

TWINNINGS DURING THE COLD WAR

- During the cold war, twinning played a unique role in diplomacy
- supported European integration and cross-border cooperation
- 1970's : emergence of partnerships between East and West
- Bremen (DT) and Gdansk (PL) in 1976
- desire for dialogue despite political divides

DEVELOPMENTS AFTER 1990

- Accompanied the enlargement of the European Union
- supported cross border cooperation
- memory-related issues such as population displacement
- twinning expanded beyond Europe (Africa, Asia, America...)

A TOOL FOR COOPERATION AND LOCAL DEMOCRACY

- Twinning illustrates "bottom-up diplomacy"
- engagement of local authorities in cooperation project
- strengthens local democracy
- 2016: Europe had around 20,000 twinnings
- twinning is a historical tool for reconciliation and cooperation
- reflects the commitment of local authorities to transnational projects
- ability to involve citizens in concrete initiatives
- model of territorial cooperation rooted in history

2. MODERN CITY TWINNINGS IN INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

OUR OBSERVATION : Many European twinnings are not very active

WHAT ARE THE MAIN OBSTACLES TO DYNAMIC TWINNINGS?

Difficulties in involving new generations in twinning committees

→ According to the Bertelsmann Foundation study, only $\frac{1}{4}$ of (Franco-German) twinning participants are under 30

- Increased mobility among young people today (Benefits of programs like Erasmus, lower travel costs)
- Travel and exchange are now taken for granted. The memory of European conflicts is no longer a sufficient argument to sustain twinning

High costs : the EU budget for city twinning is relatively low (4.8 million euros in 2019)

Lack of human resources in municipalities



HOW CAN WE MAKE TWINNING MORE ATTRACTIVE?

Modernizing objectives : Twinning schemes need to incorporate current issues such as ecology, social inclusion and technological innovation

The use of social networks can help to promote the projects set up by twinning arrangements and make young people more interested in participating

Increased budget allocations and funding opportunities, particularly from institutional donors such as the European Commission

Networks of European cities to work together to create large-scale events on subjects linked to new challenges (sustainable development, peace...)

examples of twinning on new issues on the next slides



UNITED FOR RESILIENCE: TWIN CITIES COLLABORATE TO COMBAT NATURAL DISASTERS

- **High-risk earthquake areas:** Erlangen and Beşiktaş cooperate on civil protection and disaster control. They exchange expertise on infrastructures and training.
- **Sister City Collaboration:** San Francisco and Port-au-Prince exchange knowledge to improve earthquake resilience, sharing seismic expertise and addressing urban planning challenges in Port-au-Prince.
- **Disaster Preparedness Exchange:** U.S. and Japanese sister cities, including Seattle-Kobe and Honolulu-Hiroshima, collaborate on disaster response, covering topics such as typhoons, public communication, infrastructure, and supply chain resilience.

SOLIDARITY WITH UKRAINE: CITY TWINNINGS DURING WAR TIME

City Twinning after February 2022

- Significant growth in city twinning since the start of Russia's full-scale invasion
- Ukrainian cities actively sought new partners

Role of Twinning during the War

- Concrete Support: Humanitarian aid and refugee assistance, joint projects
- Significant challenges

The importance of twinning between France and Ukraine during the war:

- Importance of twinning to help Ukrainian refugees
- Various examples to better understand the issues of twinning in the humanitarian field (twinning between Marseille and Odessa, among others)
- Twinning has a new role in the context of this war

3. ALTERNATIVE TO TWINNING : EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION MECHANISMS IN THE UPPER RHINE

Interreg



Co-funded by
the European Union

France – Germany – Switzerland (Upper Rhine)

- **Main Objective:** Remove border obstacles to promote cross-border cooperation.
- **Focus Areas:** Employment, social inclusion, education, vocational training.
- **Mechanism:** Financial support via ERDF (cross-border, transnational, and interregional cooperation).
- **Eligibility Criteria:** Projects involving at least two partners from different countries.
- **Impact:** Balanced development and mitigation of single market impacts in border regions.



LE CONSEIL RHÉNAN
DER OBERRHEINRAT

- **Political Role:** Democratic complement to the administrative Upper Rhine Conference.
- **Missions:** Advocacy for regional interests, reduction of cross-border barriers.
- **Key Projects:** Support for bilingualism and environmental priorities.
- **Partnership:** Key collaborator of the Trinational Metropolitan Region.
- **Structure:** 71 local elected representatives engaged in active cross-border cooperation.

3. ALTERNATIVE TO TWINNING : EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION MECHANISMS IN THE UPPER RHINE



- Definition: Cross-border cooperation platforms without political authority.
- Key Example: RegioTriRhena, a pioneer in Upper Rhine collaboration.
- Objectives: Territorial integration, overcoming cultural and infrastructural contrasts.
- Financial Support: Interreg programs, including projects involving Switzerland.
- Results: 450 cross-border projects since the 1980s in the region.



- Creation: Launched in 2010 to strengthen cross-border cooperation.
- Strategic Axes: Science, economy, culture, education, tourism.
- Governance: 4 pillars (politics, economy, science, civil society).
- Objectives: Attractiveness and competitiveness, regional cohesion improvement.
- Flagship Projects: Citizen forums and transnational interconnections

3. ALTERNATIVE TO TWINNING : EUROPEAN TERRITORIAL COOPERATION MECHANISMS IN THE UPPER RHINE



- EGTC: Legal framework to formalize cross-border projects.
- Key Eurodistricts: Strasbourg-Kehl and Freiburg-Center/South Alsace.
- Focus Areas: Transportation, bilingualism, health, environment, culture.
- Excellence Example: Eucor – The European Campus, a network of 5 universities.
- Funding: Supported by Interreg, particularly for mobility and educational programs.

DEMOCRATIC IDEALS AND CROSS-BORDER

- Cross-Border Participatory Democracy Mechanisms
- Enhancing Cross-Border Electoral Rights
- Institutionalizing Cross-Border Political Structures
- Creating Eurocities/Twin Cities
- Strengthening Civic Identity
- Leveraging Technology for Democratic Innovation
- Promoting Cultural Diversity
- Democratic Reforms and Decentralization
- Encouraging Civic Engagement
- Creating a Common History Manual for the Upper Rhine
- Digital Platforms for Participation

OUR TEAM

MASTER 2 INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS: TERRITORIAL DIPLOMACY



TRANS/FRONTIÈRES - DIALOGUE DES
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Thank You

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