



CLLD, Urban Agenda and Borderland. Governance and Innovation for the Sustainable Development of the Eurocity of Guadiana (Portugal-Spain)

J. Felicidades-García¹ (✉)  and F. J. Pazos-García²

¹ University of Huelva, 21071 Huelva, Spain
jesusfe@uhu.es

² Instituto de Desarrollo Local G.I, Campus El Carmen, 21071 Huelva, Spain

Abstract. Governance, innovation and spatial planning are recognised as dimensions of the territorial development process in the European Regional Policy. This paper explores the joint possibilities of Community-led Local Development (CLLD), as an approach that encourages the participation of local actors in sustainable urban development, and the EU Urban Agenda, as a strategic spatial planning instrument, applied in the cross-border area of the Eurocity of Guadiana. It draws on existing literature and the empirical development of the INTERREG EuroGuadiana 2020 project to define the objectives of the process and the key components of the territorial governance scheme. It shows that the urban governance formula for cross-border cities, based on the combination of European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC), CLLD and Urban Agenda, represents an opportunity both to strengthen the organisational capacities of partnerships and to implement inclusive and participatory action plans. It is concluded that the Eurocity of Guadiana must overcome limiting factors such as community resistance to change, as well as the paradox of planning across borders and the demands of cross-border governance.

Keywords: Community-led local development (CLLD) · Urban Agenda · Eurocity of Guadiana

1 Introduction

Sustainable urban development is at the heart of EU regions and Cohesion Policy. Cities need to develop local responses to some of the most pressing social and environmental problems facing European communities. These responses follow the guidelines of the 2030 Agenda (especially SDG 11: sustainable cities and communities) [1, 2], the current EU Urban Agenda (Pact of Amsterdam, May 2016) [3] and Community-led Local Development (CLLD) [4, 5]. The latter initiative was first implemented in rural and coastal areas under Leader programme and Axis 4 of the European Fisheries Fund (EFF), and since 2014 it has also started to be applied at local level in terms of cross-border cooperation. In this respect, when Regional Policy introduced local development as a paradigm

for territorial development, it enhanced its dimensions of governance, innovation and spatial planning [6, 7], achieving greater participation and better coordination between actions and decision-making [8, 9].

In the scenario of cities and urban areas to be described, the novelty consists of incorporating the EU Urban Agenda into the CLLD equation, as a new integrated and multisectoral territorial planning instrument linked to the action of partnerships as new management tools. The EU Urban Agenda was launched in May 2016 with the Pact of Amsterdam [10, 11], but it is not the first document of its kind at European level – the European Territorial Strategy (1999), the Leipzig Charter (2007), the European Territorial Agenda (2007, 2011) or Toledo Declaration (2010) could be mentioned. However, its implementation is different, as it introduces the ‘partnership approach’ as a new working method that specifies, unlike the rural development action groups, clear rules of participation, priority themes, working methods and expected results [12], which can ensure the creation of links between European policies and actors at different spatial and participatory scales, from the European to the local level.

First, the growing importance of cross-border governance in urban policy is evidence of its capacity to engage with a wide range of actors in different territories, including borders and small cities. In this sense, the Urban Agenda can also be understood as an example of the evolution towards ‘soft’ European spatial planning and urban development, and the creation of ‘soft spaces’ [13], as the EU continues to promote through the Interreg programme. Moreover, this makes the cities new actors in the European policy debate towards the green and digital transition to resilience and sustainability through an integrated urban development model, putting the Urban Agenda at the centre of strategies and action mechanisms. Changes and transitions can be seen, together with preservation, as central elements of the principle of sustainability through the management of specific, usually material resources in a combined ecological and economic approach. Sometimes social and cultural capitals are added to this approach, through specific political institutions or the concept of local identity. The latter is particularly relevant in places such as cross-border regions because it enables community commitment and social integration, and is therefore considered a key resource and factor for innovative and sustainable urban development [14].

The ‘border condition’, what makes borderlands unique, implies particular and valuable modes of observation and coordination and, in turn, a specific setting for cross-border governance, but without erasing the internal logic of previous governance on each side of the border. This means that the Urban Agenda and cross-border governance are intended to be a place of ‘tension’ and integration of urban, rural and coastal policies and activities. This tension contributes to the complexity of governance at the border, as a place of intense contact and interaction between groups of people, ecosystems, trade flows, etc. It is these dynamics that particularly define the Spanish-Portuguese border landscape in the *Bajo/Baixo Guadiana*, especially the clear separation of different modes of organisation, decision-making, resource management and governance mechanisms at the border (often distant, unfocused or poorly applied), challenged by local identities, territorial imbalances and changing materialities in economic, environmental and socio-cultural terms.

This situation encourages reflection on cross-border governance and its future challenges from the perspective of urban CLLD. Hence, this paper aims to assess the challenges of governance ‘on the move’, with reference to cross-border conditions and the possibilities of the Urban Agenda, through the case study of the European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) *Eurociudad del Guadiana*. In this sense, the Eurocity emerges as an innovative formula of applied geography, a laboratory of resource-based cross-border governance, which recombines and enables the management of the territory’s resources since cross-border local identity and appropriation. In a very short time, the Eurocity has been able to adapt the initial organizational scheme of the EGTC from a grouping restricted to the local authorities of three municipalities, to an enlarged multi-stakeholder partnership. From a spatial point of view, the challenge of this Eurocity is to unite a cross-border space that responds to both coastal and rural socio-territorial resources, while designed on the basis of urban logics. The analysis of problems (social and territorial imbalances), risks (adaptation to climate change, impact of the COVID-19 pandemic) and potentials (environment, tourism, circular economy, social innovation, cultural heritage) are common activities of strategic planning, as well as some of the critical success factors of the Eurocities on the Iberian Peninsula [15]. The cross-border Urban Agenda aims to be the appropriate scenario to consolidate a successful constructive project in a cross-border territory.

Specifically, the research questions are: (i) What are the key components of the cross-border urban CLLD framework? (ii) How have they been implemented in the Eurocity of Guadiana? (iii) Which developments does the Urban Agenda imply in the identified process of cross-border regionalization? Our hypothesis is that the application of the CLLD-Urban Agenda scheme is a formula for cross-border cooperation that enables the construction of new territories at the local and urban level. This approach provides an evolving, strategic, innovative and shared socio-territorial vision, an expression of the collective will to create new spaces, new scales of organisation and new horizons of action for sustainable urban development as a long-term goal.

This contribution is organised as follows: the next section provides a review of the academic literature and details the theoretical approach. This is followed by methodological considerations and a presentation of the study area. The empirical section presents the case study on the governance process within the *Bajo/Baixo Guadiana* cross-border cities. A critical discussion of the CLLD-Urban Agenda- cross-border governance scheme is included. Finally, some concluding remarks are offered.

2 Governance and Sustainable Local Development of Urban Areas: Borders, Eurocity and the Urban Agenda

Territorial and socio-spatial analysis of borders at the local level, and how they affect people’s daily lives, has been gaining significance. At the end of the 20th century, the partners in the European project designed a Europe without internal borders, unifying the market and eliminating fiscal and mobility obstacles. As early as 1974, Paul Claval pointed out that the transformation of the role and conceptual depth of European borders presaged a profound alteration in all territorial behaviour and organisation, asking whether “we are on the eve of a new geography of enclaves, of discontinuous zones and interpenetrating

spaces” [16, p. 21]. European cities, including small and medium-sized ones, face the challenge of achieving prosperity and sustainability, meeting energy challenges and pursuing environmental quality. To this end, they must look beyond administrative borders and focus on functional regions, on their integration into a polycentric and balanced territorial development model in a broad sense, at cross-border level [17]. This confirms the definitive shift towards a spatial approach in European policy [18], the influence of relational space on debates and the emergence of new regional spaces that cross-cut the territorial map that prevailed throughout much of the twentieth century [19].

Cross-border regions, including so-called Eurocities, according to the EU and relevant literature, are characterised by homogeneous features and functional interdependencies, otherwise there would be no need for cross-border cooperation [20]. Some of these areas fit well with geographical units (urbanised areas or hydrological basins), but sometimes not. While some (such as cross-border urban regions) seem to exist prior to their institutionalisation, others may not until the actors planning to manage them have established their territorial boundaries [21]. This suggests that there is a nuclear link between cross-border cooperation and the cross-border region. Further, cross-border spaces, as new sites of action and intervention, are raising the question of how they should be governed [22].

Eurocities refer to cross-border territorial structures that derive from the Euroregions, but on an operational scale with a markedly local character. They are part of the process of Europeanisation and resignification of European borders, with a strong spatial planning component [13, 23]. As cross-border micro-regions, they have become the recent ‘leading roles’ of Spanish-Portuguese cross-border cooperation, with the constitution of 7 projects based on very significant historical, cultural and socio-economic links [15, 24]. They have been agreed with the common denominator of focusing cross-border cooperation on the central population centres involved – irrespective of their size and entity. The principle is to share resources and synergies, in order to structure the proposed territory and organise it to promote local development processes based on endogenous resources and the attraction of investments related to the nearby regional, state and community scales. The Iberian Eurocities are part of the European impulse of the ‘Europeanisation Laboratories’, in the new spatial concepts of spatial planning (soft spaces), in the creation of and access to real common services based on Eurocitizenship (as is already the case, for example, in Eurocity Chaves-Verín), or in innovation resource-based management and cross-border governance. Territorial structuring based on connectivity and accessibility and problem solving from strategic approaches of proximity, social cohesion based on identity and governance based on institutionalisation, in an evolutionary process of mutual learning, are the basis of activity of Eurocities [25].

European territorial cooperation has revealed a considerable mobilisation of the potential of the cities where it has been implemented [26]. Their regular integration into national, regional and local development strategies is associated with the convergence between functional regions and local development, where cities apply integrated multi-level governance approaches, involving local and regional authorities, strategic sectors and social groups [27]. The deployment of new strategic spatial planning documents (such as the EU Urban Agenda) also contributes to reaffirming borders as laboratories

for European integration, and it rethinks the spatiality of spatial planning and territoriality to which the EU aspires, from the concepts of soft planning and soft spaces [28, 29]. The dimension of governance in terms of place-based policies means that the object is the territory, and that the objective is to regulate, govern and manage territorial dynamics by piloting a multiplicity of actors [6, 30]. It also implies that these ‘soft’ spaces, sometimes with ‘fuzzy boundaries’ are understood as units endowed with a certain degree of deliberate strategic capacity on the basis of certain political and organisational arrangements [28, 31]. This notion should take the form of local action groups representing the community, which can then take charge of preparing and implementing local development strategies, and defining geographical areas of intervention – in short, fostering the integration of the three key elements of CLLD: space, partnership and strategy [32]. This is the basis on which the applied CLLD cross-border urban framework is built.

In this context, the EU Urban Agenda emerges as a tool that breaks with the rigidities associated with formal scales and normative plans. In this respect, it improves the understanding of how EU spatial planning finds its way into national planning systems through cooperation and mutual learning [10, 12]. Governance thus becomes one of the main determinants of territorial development [33], with the capacity to mobilise endogenous potential in a new framework of social and political relations [34]. Its link with the territory can be explained insofar as it is built-in governance with two-way feedback.

The constructive project of cross-border territory (see Fig. 1) requires the implementation of an evolutionary process that encompasses the three dimensions of ‘cross-borderisation’: space (scales and articulation), actors (governance institutions) and cross-border representations (identities and discourses) [20, 22]. The project makes it possible to observe the interaction of these dimensions, which actively contribute to the processes of structuring, appropriation and institutionalisation existing in the cross-border region. The proposed scheme provides a strategic, innovative and shared socio-territorial vision, an expression of the collective will to build new scales of territorial organisation, create new projects and consolidate new institutions.

The theoretical approach provides an interpretative framework for Eurocities, with socio-institutional processes and territorial units built on governance. It derives from the new regional geography approach, which incorporates the debate on soft spaces [13, 19, 21]. The approach connects with the concept of the functional region, and with keywords such as networks, corridors, flows, relational spaces, etc. It also brings to the fore strategic planning and provides spatial planning with a powerful tool. Moreover, the approach combines Evolutionary Governance Theory (EGT) with the strategic framework of the CLLD-Urban Agenda. EGT understands governance as a continuous, changing and therefore evolutionary process of interaction between its constituent elements (actors, identities, institutions, knowledge, materialities and strategic interests) [35]. In spatio-temporal terms, the EGT approach suggests that territory and governance are co-dependent [36]. In turn, in local development, EGT recognises that the spatial configuration and its new forms of planning and governance could be defined in an intentionally open-ended way, in the sense that they can be modified and (re)designed to reflect different interests and challenges.

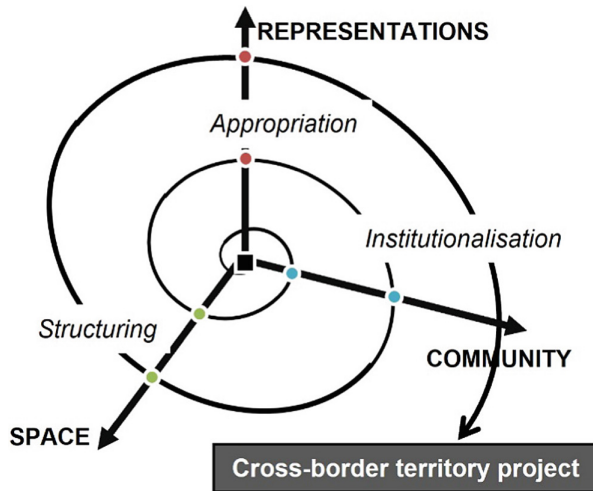


Fig. 1. Dimensions of 'cross-borderisation' over time. (Authors' own work).

3 Methodological Considerations and Area of Action

Two methods of data collection were adopted. Firstly, a detailed analysis of the documentation related to the framework of the 2030 Agenda, Urban Agenda and INTERREG VA programme (EU legal texts, operational programmes, strategic area plans, reports, projects and website information) was carried out. Secondly, semi-structured interviews and workshops were carried out with those responsible for the coordination of the EGTC, and with the beneficiaries of the EuroGadiana 2020 project funds.

The methodological work was developed in three phases:

1. Analysis of the background to the implementation of the Eurocity of Guadiana, the selection of objectives and the establishment of the areas of intervention.
2. Analysis of the pre-planning phase carried out by the EGTC: to detect the obstacles to cooperation, to shape the inclusive partnership and to design the local development strategy.
3. Evaluation of the role of the Cross-Border Guadiana Observatory (OTG) within the EGTC's organisational scheme, as well as in its capacity for adaptation within the framework of local governance. In particular, an analysis of the adoption of the priority themes of the Urban Agenda, based on the participation in discussion groups within the framework of the territorial diagnosis debate.

To assess the cross-border construction process, the methodology followed was that developed by Perkmann (2007) in relation to the EUREGIO cross-border region [22].

In the Iberian border section of the *Bajo/Baixo Guadiana*, between the autonomous community of Andalusia and Portugal, cross-border spaces of variable geometry are overlapped. The Eurocity of Guadiana (see Fig. 2), established in 2013 and converted into EGTC in 2018, has coexisted since 2010 with the Euroregion Alentejo-Algarve-Andalusia (EUROAAA), after several generations of INTERREG cooperation projects.

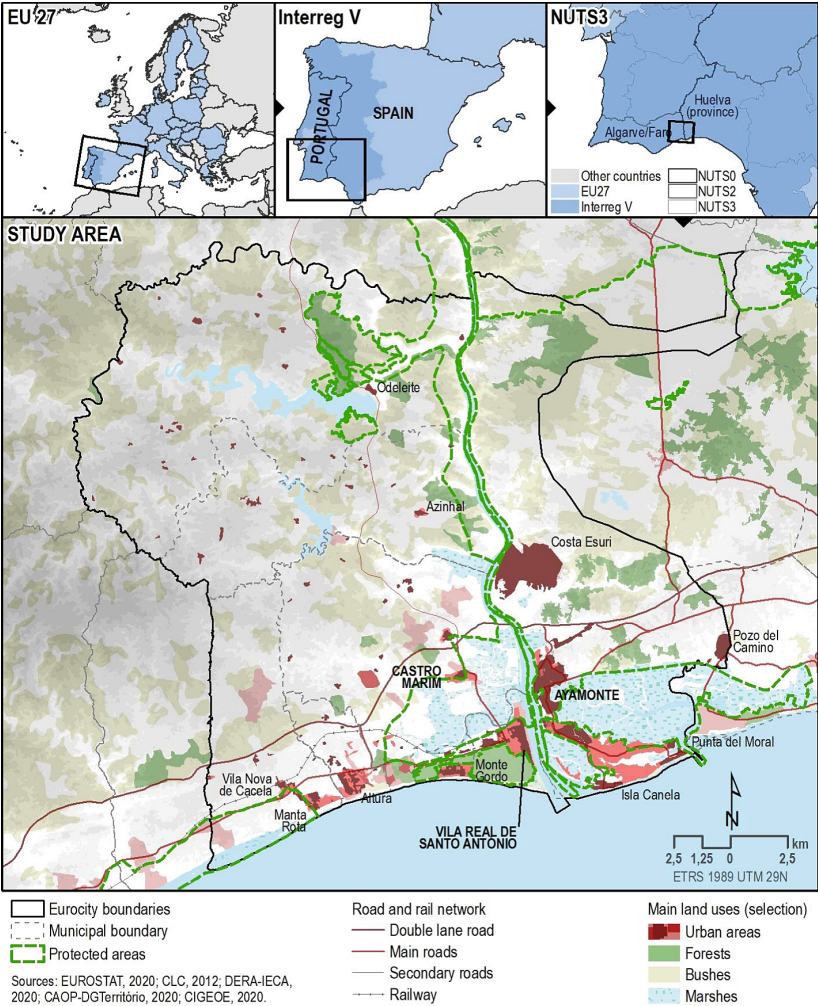


Fig. 2. Eurocity of Guadiana in its territorial context. (Authors' own work).

The Eurocity of Guadiana is made up of the municipalities of Ayamonte, Castro Marim and Vila Real de Santo António, totalling about 46,000 inhabitants in almost 505 km² (90 inhabitants/km²), and including 26 linear kilometres of border. The three main urban centres, named after their municipalities, are home to more than 31,000 people, but there are other secondary centres with between 2 and 4,000 inhabitants each (Altura, Vila Nova de Cacela and Monte Gordo, all on the coast).

The main economic activities pertain to the service sector – urban commerce and coastal tourism – and to the primary sector – irrigated agriculture and a globalised agri-food system – together with marine aquaculture and the persistence of once flourishing small-scale fisheries and their associated canning industry [37]. Its spatial evolution as a functional corridor linking the urban centres received a definitive boost in 1991 with the

international bridge over the Guadiana River. This remains the only land connection and has favoured the extension of the corridor across Andalusia and the Algarve to connect the cities of Huelva and Faro, and ultimately integrate it into the Seville-Lisbon axis. While the border appears unfocused in the immense territory of the EUROAAA (larger and more populated than mainland Portugal), the Eurocity of Guadiana is undoubtedly the cross-border entity with the greatest legitimacy among the border municipalities to carry out sustainable and participatory local development strategies [24]. At present, the Eurocity is preparing the documentation for the Urban Agenda within the framework of the INTERREG VA 'EuroGuadiana 2020' project, financed with an ERDF contribution of 805,496.25 € (1,073,995 € in total).

4 Cross-Border Local Area Development Scheme in the Eurocity of Guadiana

4.1 The Framework and Political Mobilisation

The Eurocity of Guadiana project has been built on very evident socio-territorial foundations, as a territorial unit aligned with urban approach, even for places that do not usually fit easily into urban policies (rural spaces or intermediate and small cities). Geographical factors, such as the Guadiana River and its essential role in the processes of territorial appropriation, alongside structuring, historical, cultural, and economic factors, as well as the landscape heritage, together represent solid constructive resources on which to build the Eurocity as a space capable of leading a CLLD strategy. To address its management, three fundamental framework components were necessary: (i) to organise a system of actors and a formal institution close to the needs of the cross-border space; (ii) to have a management tool, such as the cross-border Urban Agenda, inserted in the INTERREG EuroGuadiana 2020 project (2019), in which the Urban Agenda is inserted; and (iii) to delimit the spatial scope of the intervention, made up of the EGTC partner municipalities.

An initial territorial framework was established including the twin towns of Ayamonte (Spain) and Vila Real de Santo António (Portugal). Months later, also in 2013, the agreement incorporating the third municipality, Castro Marim (Portugal), which provided the purely rural component, was signed. Political mobilisation took place through the creation of a collective action of local authorities on both sides of the border of the Guadiana estuary. The initial interest was to create a cross-border cooperation structure that would harness the joint power of these authorities with the intention of attracting resources to the area. This met with the approval of the higher authorities (regional governments of Andalusia and Algarve – *Comissão de Coordenação e Desenvolvimento Regional*) and the EUROAAA. With the reinforcement of CLLD in the Regional Policy and the increasingly important role of local actors, the political partnership was mobilised to create (and try to maintain) a governance structure that would address the cross-border space as a new unit of intervention. For the time being, the actors-partners of the Eurocity are exclusively the local authorities, with little participation or interest from other collectives in the territory.

4.2 The Construction of Governance

Until its conversion into an EGTC, the activity of the *Eurociudad del Guadiana* focused on the tutelage of local initiatives in the cultural, sporting, and educational fields. The previous experience in INTERREG projects by the Eurocity partners, and the successful application of the ongoing project ‘Laboratory of Cross-Border Governance: EuroGuadiana 2020’, aligned with the general discourse of the Regional Policy, welcoming the bottom-up participatory process as a reference for action. The CLLD takes the form of an Urban Agenda, with the political commitment of the EGTC, and with the aim of building an inclusive and integrative governance process. It is the first Iberian cross-border local initiative of the Urban Agenda.

EuroGuadiana 2020 activities in the field of tourism and sustainable mobility are framed in the coordination space with the Urban Agenda. The constitution of the Cross-Border Guadiana Observatory (OTG) will mark the main milestone in the renewed governance of the Eurocity, playing a decisive role as network mediator, project animator and knowledge carrier. Both the local cross-border partnership and the higher-level network (EC, regional governments, and intermediate authorities) are highly interdependent, especially in terms of financial resources and organised projects. Thus, the governance aspect of the Eurocity, with the design of the Urban Agenda as a spatial planning document and its action plans, highlights the multi-level dimension of the strategy. The Eurocity of Guadiana meant constituting a ‘grassroots’ agency operating on a ‘grey’ governance and planning scale. This implies maintaining the relationship between ‘soft spaces’ and ‘hard spaces’, raised earlier as a planning paradox. This also allows us to reflect on its role in the reconfiguration of dominant territorial imaginaries, institutions, and the emergence of cross-border collective identities, in an attempt to move away from state-centred ‘metageographies’ [27, 28].

4.3 Strategic Unification in the Eurocity of Guadiana

The constitution of the system of actors based on thematic partnerships, the organisational foundation of the governance process, was created on the basis of participation in *ad hoc* workshops/focus groups and roundtables within the framework of discussion of the territorial diagnosis prior to the design of the local strategy. The questions of what problems affect us, what problems we can solve together and how to draw up the main strategic lines of the planning document provided the basis for proposing the priority themes of the Urban Agenda action plans (see Fig. 3). This participatory phase (territorial diagnosis and Urban Agenda guidelines) is the basis of the organisational mechanisms of the Cross-Border Guadiana Observatory (OTG), whose general mission is to favour the participatory process of analysis and continuous monitoring of the plans and projects that the Eurocity implements in the context of the Urban Agenda.

The strategic unification is inspired by a shared vision of development, based on a cross-border functional construction. The Eurocity of Guadiana EGTC was conceived of as a tool-object of intervention through development approaches already put to use in the Leader programme. The elaboration of the Urban Agenda is being recognised as a key factor for the stability of the EGTC. In a way, the Urban Agenda strategy reinforces not only the administrative level, but also the symbolic level, as a representation of a socially

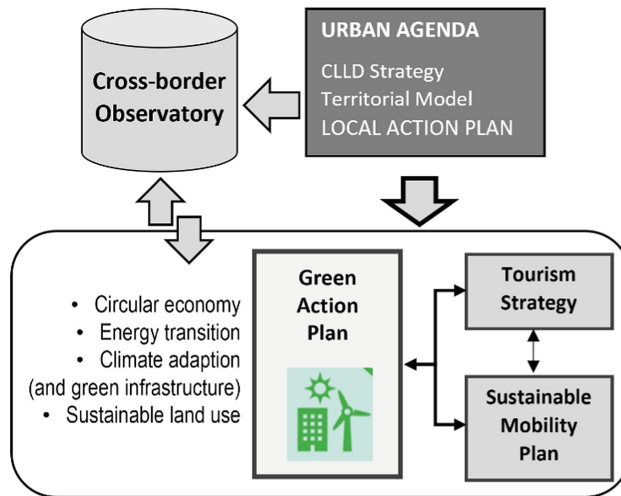


Fig. 3. Governance scheme of the Eurocity of Guadiana based on the Urban Agenda. (Authors' own work).

constructed space. Indeed, spaces are constructed by associating human meanings with real or imagined places [38].

Table 1. Evolutionary scheme of the Eurocity of Guadiana (2013–2021). (Authors' own work, based on Perkmann, 2007).

Stage	Property	Feature
1. Political mobilisation	Administrative	EGTC (2018)
2. Governance building	Stakeholder policy network	Cross-Border Observatory of Guadiana (OTG) (2021)
3. Strategic unification	Cross-border functional space	Urban Agenda: Actions Plans (2022-)

The Participatory Focus Group Process. Three participation workshops have been held up to now, convened through the OTG. Each of these focus groups was held in one of the main urban centres of the Eurocity (municipal capitals), addressing a total of 6 main themes (roundtables): culture and heritage (1), productive sectors (2), demographic challenge (3), environment (urban and territorial sustainability: green infrastructure, energy transition, climate adaptation and sustainable uses) (4), mobility in the Eurocity (5) and governance and shared services (6).

The procedure proposed was clearly propositional. Non-directed workshops (but guided and moderated by the technical team), based on the methodology established in the Strategic Design workshops of the former Helsinki Design Lab (HDL Studio Model),

based on ‘people, problem and place’ [39], an approach with many points in common with community-based participation placemaking (Jane Jacobs, William H. Whyte), and even with the PPP Negotiation Model (problem, people and process) from the business world.

The sequence was as follows: first, all participants contributed their ideas for the diagnosis (challenges or key elements) at the thematic working tables, to be added to the debate. All these elements were subsequently prioritised, as each focus group participant was able to vote on which elements are considered to be the highest and which the lowest priorities. Secondly, specific proposals (projects, tasks) to address the problems identified were discussed, focusing the debate on realistic and feasible strategic solutions (Eurocity’s framework of competence), and to take into account the complexity of the problem in a scenario of environmental, economic and social sustainability. Participants were also asked to express briefly what their expectations of the Eurocity are and what the Eurocity means for them (see Fig. 3). Finally, the third activity worked on two large maps to locate areas or spaces of opportunity/strengths or territorial vulnerabilities.

Preliminary Results (Advance). The results obtained are currently being processed, and the results of other participatory activities developed by the OTG (sustainable tourism strategy and sustainable mobility plan) are awaiting incorporation.

New Elements of the Diagnosis. The strategic plan pre-diagnosis has been clearly enriched with 79 new elements, while the hierarchy also gives us clear clues as to the issues that are key for the community.

Culture and heritage are already one of the key pillars of the EGTC’s own activity (which has so far been focused especially on the development of cultural, sporting and recreational activities), but clearly, they also deserve special attention in civil society. Thus, identity and territory (natural, ethnological and historical-artistic heritage) has been the area where most ideas and new diagnostic elements have emerged, as well as the demand for new activities and events. The importance given to the Guadiana river as the backbone of the Eurocity was also highlighted in several round tables regardless of its central theme. Another element that stood out during this process was a “general lack of knowledge of the geographical structure of the Eurocity”, and, also in relation to this, the need to improve communication, dissemination and communication of the activities already being carried out in the area, but also the need to create and/or strengthen networks and to establish alliances between different sectors, essential to create synergies.

Sustainable mobility is the area in which a greater number of new diagnostic elements were incorporated. This topic was present in almost all the working groups, pointing out its horizontal nature, but also because it is one of the aspects in which the Eurocity is clearly deficient (there is only a land connection limited to the traditional vehicle and scarce public transport offer). For example, in the roundtable on demographic challenge, three of the most voted elements deal with mobility. At the environmental roundtable, sustainable mobility together with the demand for urban greening were the main topics, followed by elements linked to the lack of control over environmentally damaging activities and several aspects linked to adaptation to climate change, many of them also linked with mobility and/or greening aspects.

In terms of governance and cooperation, the asymmetries between the administrations on either side, especially in the management of common or border areas (natural areas, river) were clearly identified as key elements, together with the need to strengthen multilevel strategies and fund-raising, and secondly, the need to incorporate the cross-border reality at all levels of planning and to increase citizen participation in decision-making processes.

Identity and Representations About the Eurocity. Without claiming that the identity and expectations of the Eurocity reflected by the participants in the focus groups are representative of the general feeling (the bias is evident from the mere fact that these are people who are participating in the process), the truth is that the ideas expressed offer interesting conclusions (see Fig. 4). The Eurocity is seen by citizens as a common project, but above all as an opportunity for the future with a marked identity accent strongly linked to their territory. Expectations are equally high, very focused on making the most of the territory's potential through cooperation, transparency (information, integration, cohesion) and citizen participation.



Fig. 4. Wordclouds generated from participants' answers on "What is the Eurocity for you" (left) and "What are your expectations of the Eurocity" (right). (Authors' own work).

Territorialising the Problem. The participants had also to point out on the Eurocity map those places and elements that they consider important or where there are impacts to be taken into account. However, the main conclusion obtained is the wide lack of knowledge that the population of the territory encompassed by the EGTC has (something that, on the other hand, was already pointed out in the participatory diagnosis.). Practically all the items and spaces indicated on the maps are limited to urban areas and their surroundings, and it is also clear that the residents of each town hardly indicate spaces outside the towns they live in (not only of the other two municipalities, but even of their own).

In any case, it remains to enrich these maps with the joint work of the technical drafting team of the Urban Agenda and the municipal technicians, with whom we hope to create a series of thematic 'heat maps' with which to represent the entire territory.

Citizens' Proposals. A total of 49 proposals or projects that the Eurocity should undertake or promote were collected. Among the issues that stand out (see Fig. 5) are those

linked to the improvement of governance and common management (especially in natural areas, cultural activities and transport). The second most repeated theme is mobility. It is very remarkable that half of the proposals in this field were not proposed in the focus group specifically dedicated to mobility in the Eurocity. For example, in the workshop on the demographic challenge, three of the four specific proposals revolve around this theme, as do three of the six proposals in the specific focus group on the environment. Also noteworthy were the numerous proposals relating to the enhancement of heritage and cultural activities, one of the fields that generated the greatest participation. Likewise, surprising was the large number of proposals linked to the need to improve communication and information, a theme that emerged also in practically all the working groups.

Other issues with special weight in the proposals are those linked to the productive system, education and training, protected natural spaces and the navigability of the Guadiana river, an element whose paradoxical role as a physical border, landscape resource and nexus of union and identity of the three municipalities of the Eurocity is highlighted.

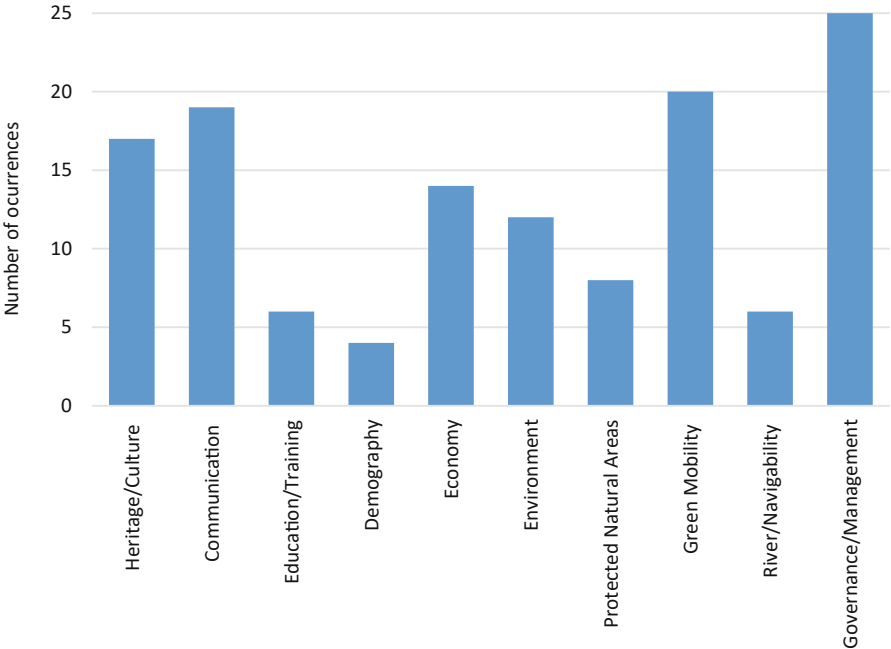


Fig. 5. Fields of action directly affected by the 49 proposals of workshop participants. (Authors’ own work).

5 Discussion and Conclusion

An in-depth assessment of the strengths and weaknesses of the CLLD-Urban Agenda-Eurocity equation cannot yet be made. It is too early to calculate the added value in terms of governance at local level, to determine the effectiveness and durability of the partnerships planned in the Cross-Border Guadiana Observatory aimed at generating synergies between actors in the territory, or to measure the degree of complementarity with other local development initiatives coming from other local action groups (LAGs, FLAGs). Nevertheless, the current Eurocity of Guadiana is a projected entity in the organisational structuring phase that is making progress in local 'cross-border thinking', in the open dialogue on territorial development at the borders of Europe, and in its planning and governance strategies (see Table 1).

In this sense, the Eurocity is a radically evolving constructive project that translates the three dimensions of 'cross-borderisation' and its associated processes of structuring, appropriation and institutionalisation. Firstly, it does so on the basis of the spatial relations of the Eurocity of the Guadiana, as a new geographical object, delimited by local political agreement and EU support. The Eurocity is articulated in the (pre)existence of a cross-border 'micro-network' or of socio-economic mechanisms and processes and of certain horizons of action and change that translate the multiplicity of scales and the complexity of the interactions that take place in the *Bajo Guadiana*. Secondly, the shaping of the Eurocity may be mobilising cross-border identities and consolidating new representations, discourses and renewed imaginaries around which social support for the projects and the legitimacy to consolidate new agreements and institutions, such as the EGTC itself and the Cross-border Observatory, are being obtained. There is therefore the option of redefining the Eurocity and applying the CLLD management scheme of the Urban Agenda on the basis of a radical recombination of resources, materialities and identities, realised through services and products (territorial marketing, tourism, cultural agenda, mobility, etc.), and institutions (governance scheme on common competence agreements by the three local authorities of the Eurocity). Finally, the Eurocity is a territorial process that is intensifying cross-border interaction, the effects of which must be considered in terms of governance, the forms and formulae that it adopts and applies, and the changes and transitions that it promotes. The stages detected in such a short time reflect the will of the local authorities and the most active actors, but also demonstrate the co-dependence between territory and governance.

The Eurocity plans are proving that they can provide important lessons for the future in achieving a sustainable approach to territorial development. Our case study analysis has found that the implementation of the CLLD framework is serving to reinforce synergies between actors in the environmental management sectors with those in the productive sector (aquaculture-fisheries, tourism, trade), taking advantage of the heritage as a resource. In this way, the border provides cities and communities with an identity, as well as strengthening the economy. In summary, the focus groups raised the following key lines and issues in this regard:

- Adopt the resource of cross-border territorial identity through communication and information dissemination mechanisms about the Eurocity, or the continuation of purely participatory activities, based on extensive previous experience in the cultural, sporting and recreational fields.

- Reinforce or extend the connectivity and accessibility of the Eurocity territory to channel latent and potential flows and mobility, and structure the resources of the physical and human space with sustainable land uses and priority productive activities, such as tourism and trade, as well as other Nature-Based activities and solutions.

- To promote the strategic unification of the Eurocity through the implementation of the cross-border urban governance scheme (Cross-border Observatory and Urban Agenda), a strong spatial strategy and a joint and orderly planning between the 3 component municipalities. To boost action plans aimed at solving problems and challenges, it is necessary to develop thematic partnerships linked to tourism and cultural heritage, sustainable mobility and to ensure that changes in urban areas and in the territory of the Eurocity of Guadiana produce green, compact, resilient and energy efficient cities.

But this work also aims to highlight aspects to be improved and uncertainties to be resolved in the next ERDF programming period 2021–2027. These aspects are related to guaranteeing the role of the Eurocity as an agent of local development in the face of the interests of the political and economic powers. In this regard, the Eurocity of Guadiana must play a leading role in the design of its areas of intervention, in order to move from being project-based regions to functional and coherent areas, in which the local population becomes the promoter of participatory development processes. Naturally, it must face the challenge of the ‘planning paradox’, in which strategic planning, which must think in terms of open borders, must at the same time coexist with urban and territorial planning confined by regulatory frameworks and political units delimited by borders. The Eurocity of Guadiana should seek to draw attention to spatial planning, cooperation in horizontal and comprehensive strategies linked to the intrinsic values of the border, and the development of socio-territorial capital based on specific local skills, knowledge and resources that may not be easily replicable.

The main challenge for the Regional Policy on urban development is to create and maintain an integrated approach to the different dimensions of urban life (environmental, economic, social and cultural), promoting stakeholder participation and partnership, and ensuring that changes in urban areas (growth or regeneration) are environmentally friendly, improving the quality of life. The sustainable development of a cross-border region cannot be achieved without the promotion of critical factors in the organisational areas of the EGTC (actors, instruments and governance processes), or the cross-border representations (identities and discourses), such as the promotion of connectivity and achieving a city-city and urban-rural territorial balance, the design of a solid territorial strategy, the guarantee an offer of common services and facilities based on *Eurocitizenship*, the improvement of access to European funds, the promoting of public participation alongside Eurocity geomarketing.

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