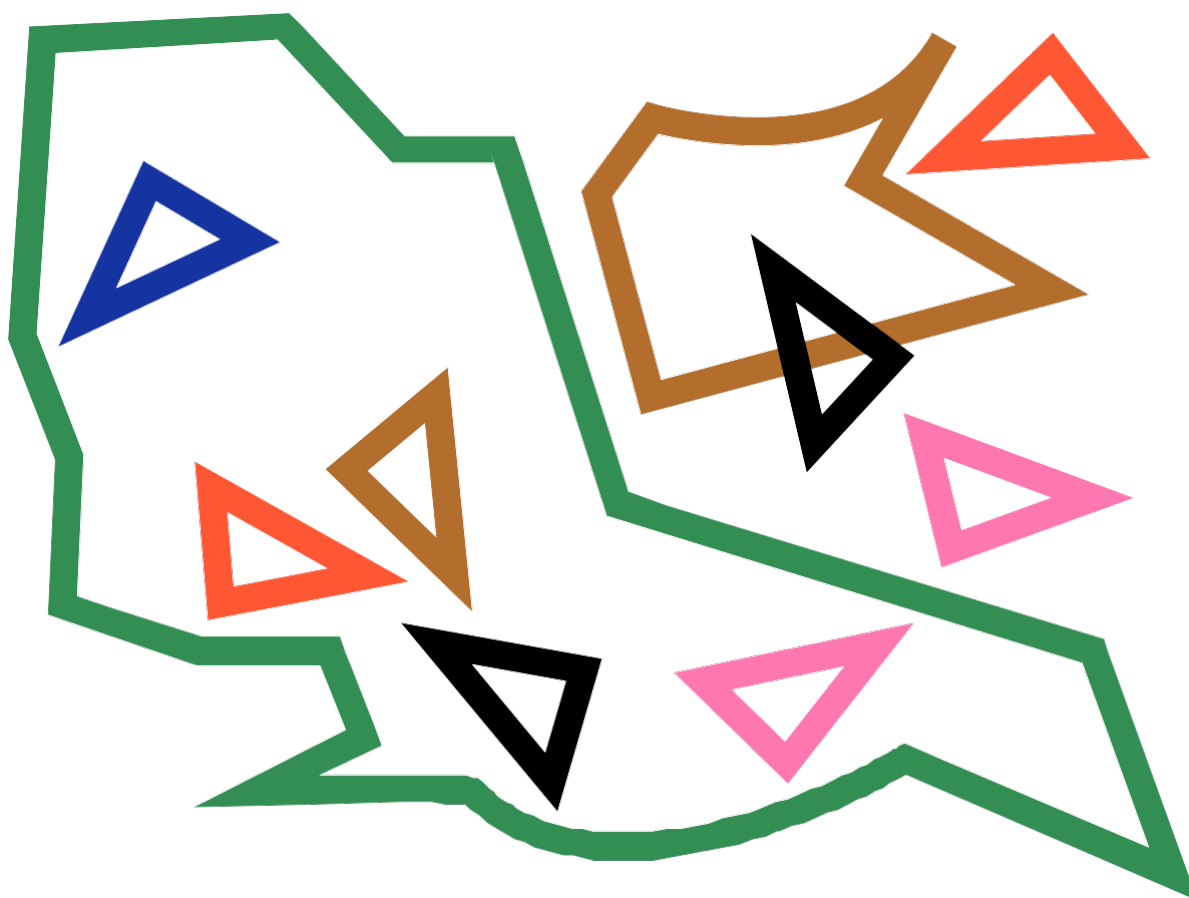


Policy Brief # 3

# Recognition of border landscapes as shared heritage

B-Shapes - Borders as central factor shaping perceptions of European Societies



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**Context**

Landscape conservation and heritage policies in the European Union are closely connected. The European Landscape Convention that was established in 2000 highlights the heritage value of landscapes and the sustainable management of landscapes. The policy underlines that a landscape knows no state borders and that landscapes are not a concern of individual states alone. Globally, the subject of transboundary multilevel governance for environmental conservation, protection and management is gaining ground as an implementational theme for policy discourse.

The recognition and protection of valuable natural and cultural transboundary areas is gaining more policy and scholarly attention. European border regions and their landscapes are specific sites where the regional and local scale adoption and implementation of landscape policy can be evaluated. Border landscapes are impacted by environmental, economic and political changes taking place in two or more countries and this applies to land, maritime and aquatic borders. The evaluation of the landscape policy requires attention to practices, knowledge and values connected with the landscape on both side of a border. Border landscapes are environments where the responsibility for a shared environment becomes visible and highlighted, and part of the perceptions of people, as well as having concrete implications for health and human security.

B-Shapes research offers knowledge of how different interests and values concerning natural and cultural landscapes as heritage are manifested in the institutionalized narratives of European border regions. It responds to the need to gain more knowledge about the incorporation of transnational and cross-border dimensions in regional and local landscape heritage perceptions, practices and policies.

**Evidence, Analysis, and Results**

Three distinct but interconnected areas of regional activities and knowledge were selected to investigate the perceptions and narratives of border landscapes as heritage: education, milieu planning and heritage, and tourism promotion. The investigation is based on material that was collected from four border regions: the sparsely populated Finnish-Swedish border region, the urbanized Swedish-Danish Öresund region, the rural Danish-German border region, and the southern Bulgarian borderland triangle with Greece and Türkiye.

In total, 104 documents have been collected and investigated, including 40 documents in tourism, 37 in milieu planning and heritage, and 27 in education. The number of investigated documents per border region was: 32 documents from the Swedish-Finnish border region, 24 documents from the Swedish-Danish border region, 31 documents from the Danish-German border regions, and 17 from Bulgarian borderlands.

The planning and heritage documents which were examined in the course of this exercise included national and regional level documents in nature and landscape conservation, produced mainly by

ministries and other authorities. The educational material consists of material that are used at the local schools and educational institutions of the border regions (schoolbooks, leaflets, museums' exhibition material, etc.) The educational material was available directly from the local schools and some were available from the Internet. The tourism material was collected from the tourism destination homepages and brochures connected with the border regions.

Despite the border regions in question having their own specific contextual geographic and demographic characteristics, the findings point to analogies in the ways of perceiving and valuing border landscapes as heritage.

### **Key findings:**

**National scale is dominating the narratives of borders and border landscapes as heritage in all border regions.** Cross-border perspectives and shared history and nature are present but usually viewed from a state-centric point of view. For instance, many planning documents focus on one side of the border and the cross-border perspective is often in a rather marginal role.

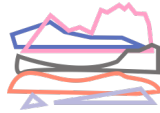
**The extent and means of how common regional and cross-border heritage is included in education varies between and within the border regions.** Many border region schools lack place-based education. If place-based education is not determined in the national level curriculum, the inclusion of the regional and local themes and perspectives depends on a school and individual teachers. In some schools, in minority schools in Danish-German border region, for example, the border heritage is included in curricula.

**Common natural and cultural heritage forms an asset for local tourism development but there is still untapped potential.** There are many examples of European border regions where cross-border area-based tourism is well-developed and where the totality of a cross-border functional area is jointly developed and promoted in tourism terms. In many border regions, especially in the Finnish-Swedish border area, a cross-border dimension of heritage is highlighted. This concerns especially the binational tourism destinations that have gained EU Interreg funding for cross-border cooperation. In some other border regions, the heritage and historical narratives of the border regions are used in tourism marketing and branding, but a cross-border dimension to such narratives remains limited. Regional competition hinders motivation for cross-border cooperation such as that based on territorial complementarity and release of added value through cross-border approaches. This is visible in tourism and heritage sectors where local companies located on different sites of the border often compete for visitors.

**The role of Europe, Europeanness and the European union is limited within narrative material.** In all material that was examined, Europe is referred mainly in historical context, such as war history and European explorers who have visited the border region. The significance and meaning of "Europe" today is manifested through European Union and connected with funding opportunities or specific regulations and directives.

**The role of minorities in the material is evident in some regions, while not in others.** The minority perspective is evident and strong in material collected in the Danish-German border, especially in the educational- and tourism material directly related to cross-border relations. In the Finnish-Swedish border region context, Sami people and Meänkieli linguistic minority are relatively often visible in tourism and in educational and planning materials. Sami heritage is presented as a key tourism attraction of this northern region. Hence, when considering border regions as living spaces, minorities or interculturalism appear to be extremely important in some regions, while it is not very present in others. This finding seems relevant for the design of EU and other policies in border regions, as recognition of cultural diversity- itself more common in border regions by virtue of their history as places with higher levels of intersectionality within local identities and multiplicity of cultural identity

within the population of a place - appears to be the key to more inclusive heritage policies in the regions where they are given relevance.



### **Policy Recommendations.**

#### **Promote the acknowledgement of cross-border dimensions of border landscape as heritage at regional and local scales.**

- Promote transnational landscape and heritage plans and programs
- Promote phenomena-based holistic and inclusive policymaking
- Promote a specific focus on supporting place-based landscapes narratives which create space for the expression of intersectional identity in border regions as an asset for development and inclusion
- Include border landscape as heritage in national curriculums and at different educational levels
- Offer recourses and opportunities for local schools in the border regions to develop place-based teaching and relevant excursions (such as nature reservations, museums, historical sites) as part of their curriculums
- Promote cross-border co-operation and initiatives at schools and other local and regional organizations
- Emphasize the landscape and heritage aspects more strongly in funding schemes (e.g. INTERREG), including better connecting cross-border heritage with the UNESCO world heritage label
- Promote different stakeholder events and inclusion of various actors across the border
- Promote the use of minority competencies and inclusion of minorities in policymaking for border regions

#### **Raise awareness of the European Union and its role in landscape heritage planning and conservation**

- Discuss the European Union's heritage from the different perspectives of everyday life, shared culture and values. Widen the representation of the EU in:
  - Media
  - Culture events
  - Funding schemes

**Promote inclusive planning, heritage-making and regional branding activities.** The narratives of border minority communities and their landscape as heritage need to be designed by, supported with resources, and agreed together with and between the communities whom they concern. The emphasis on experiences of minorities in border regions could be a way to promote more inclusive heritage policies, as can taking account of those border regions which have more advanced intercultural and cross-border narratives underpinning civic, heritage-related, cultural and tourism-related activities

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