

# Creating a sustainable legal infrastructure to provide solutions for cross-border obstacles in today's European Union: debordering against the current?



Loth Van der Auwermeulen



Maarten Vidal



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Cross-Border Cooperation



PROJECT  
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# Context: Flanders as a cross-border actor

No real natural borders

Lots of economic activity at the border

Tradition of open borders: Benelux 1960 / Schengen 1985

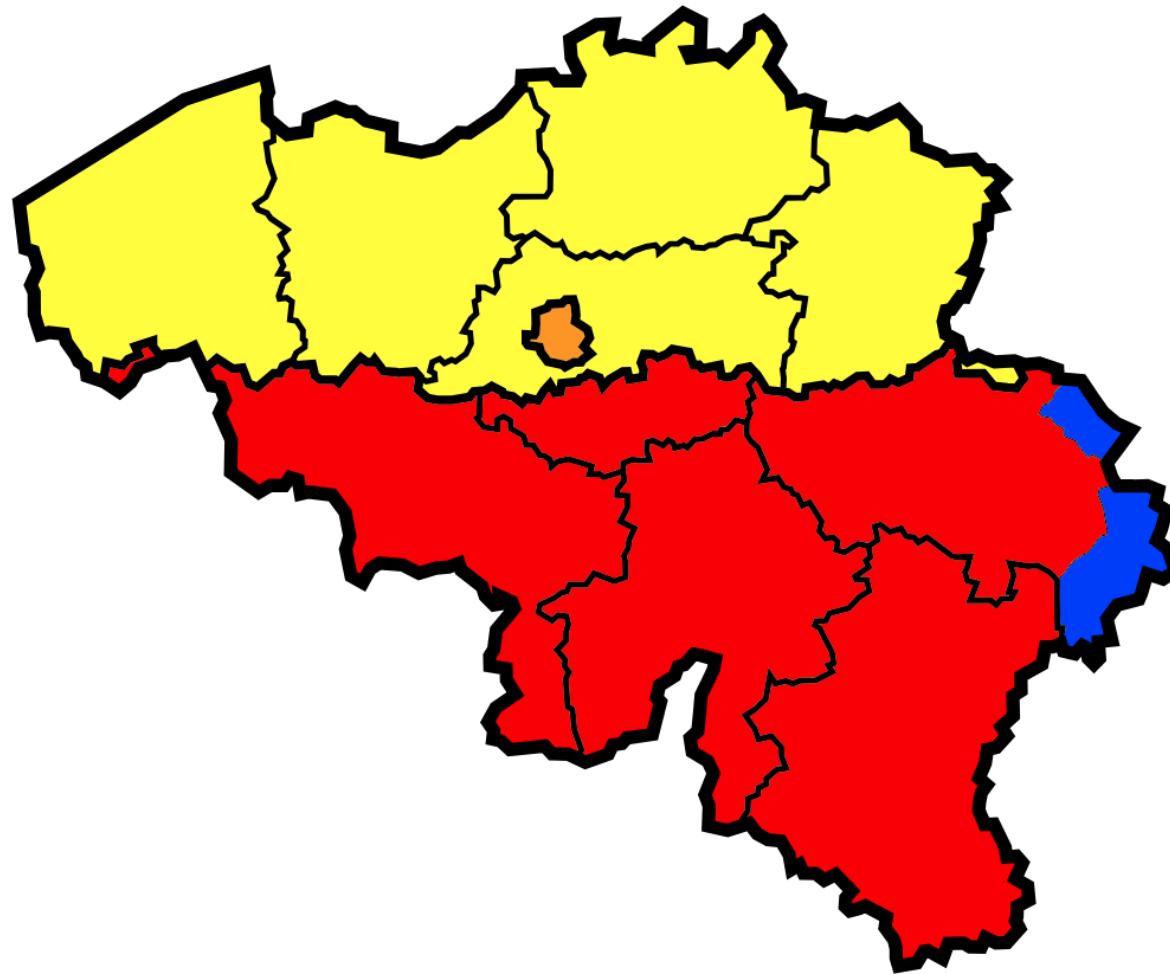
Wide international competences: diplomatic/international law approach  
(river commissions, water management, intergovernmental summits)

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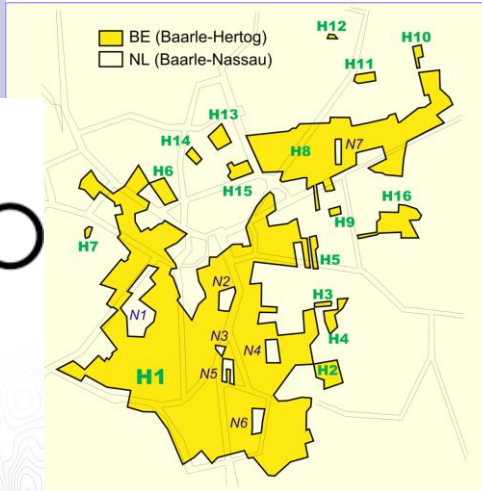


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425 km out of 458 km BE-NL  
 (+ 35 km around enclaves)

Includes cities such as  
 Antwerp, Ghent, Eindhoven,  
 Maastricht



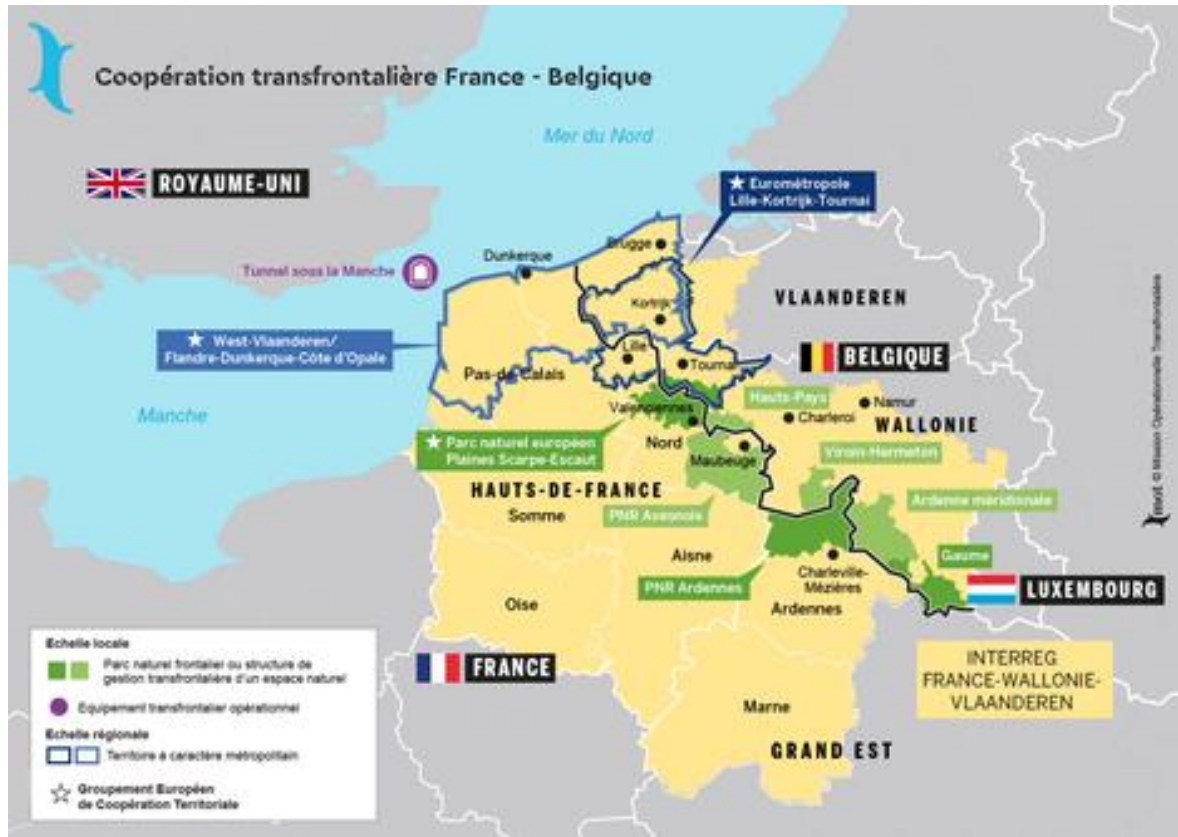
BENEGO



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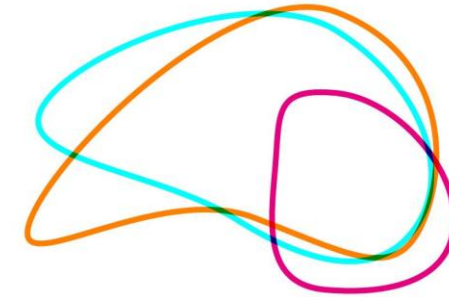


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90 km out of 620 BE-FR  
Urban area (Eurometropolis)

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**EUROMÉTROPOLE**  
**EUROMETROPOOL**  
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# Context: Flanders as a cross-border actor

Wide international competences

Diplomatic/international law approach (river commissions, water management, intergovernmental summits)

Bilateral / intergovernmental approach with the Netherlands, multi-level governance approach and technical agreements (e.g. health) with France

Shift towards a new governance aimed at solving legal obstacles, based on a transnational bottom-up approach

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# Factors spurring a new approach

FR-BE parliamentary working group: no adequate structures to take action

Donner - Berx report 2020-21 (commissioned by Dutch-Flemish government summit upon creation of North Sea Port)

(Financial) stimulus by Interreg

BRIDGEforEU and other examples of new cross-border governance

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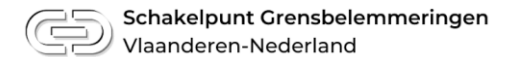
  
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# Schakelpunt Grensbelemmeringen Vlaanderen-Nederland



2024-2027, 2.2 milion euros (50% ERDF)



6 partners

Threefold link between border region and capital, Flanders and the Netherlands, government and academic expertise

Embedded in broader governance: (political) cross-border consultation board, coordinating governor + existing structures

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# Schakelpunt Grensbelemmeringen Vlaanderen-Nederland

Interreg  
Vlaanderen-Nederland



Gefinancierd door  
de Europese Unie

Public authorities  
Universities



Schakelpunt Grensbelemmeringen  
Vlaanderen-Nederland



Ministerie van Binnenlandse Zaken en  
Koninkrijksrelaties



ITEM  
Cross-border



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# LIM-EX (Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen)



2025-2029, 5.2 million euros (100% ERDF)

Proposal filed 30 April 2025 (strategic project, not subject to ordinary procedure)

10 public authorities, 5 universities, 3 knowledge centers as (associated) partners

Political steering committee, 10-15 workshops with stakeholders

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# LIM-EX (Interreg France-Wallonie-Vlaanderen)



## Public authorities



Government of Flanders



Wallonie - Bruxelles International.be



## Universities



KONINKRIJK BELGIË  
Federale Overheidsdienst  
Buitenlandse Zaken,  
Buitenlandse Handel en  
Ontwikkelingssamenwerking



ROYAUME DE BELGIQUE  
Service public fédéral  
Affaires étrangères,  
Commerce extérieur et  
Coopération au Développement



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## Common elements between the two projects

Dense pre-existing governance, tradition of cooperation, but influenced by the project

Influence of Interreg programmes: partnership, area, timing

Link between government and academia

Methodology: inventory, prioritization, analysis, commitment

Opportunity to experiment: long-term?

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# Project innovation

Based on the pre-existing governance & tradition of cooperation associated with law: application of *'legal geography'*

Individualized project approach, taking into account specific cross-border identity

Development of a sustainable legal infrastructure that is applicable in different border regions

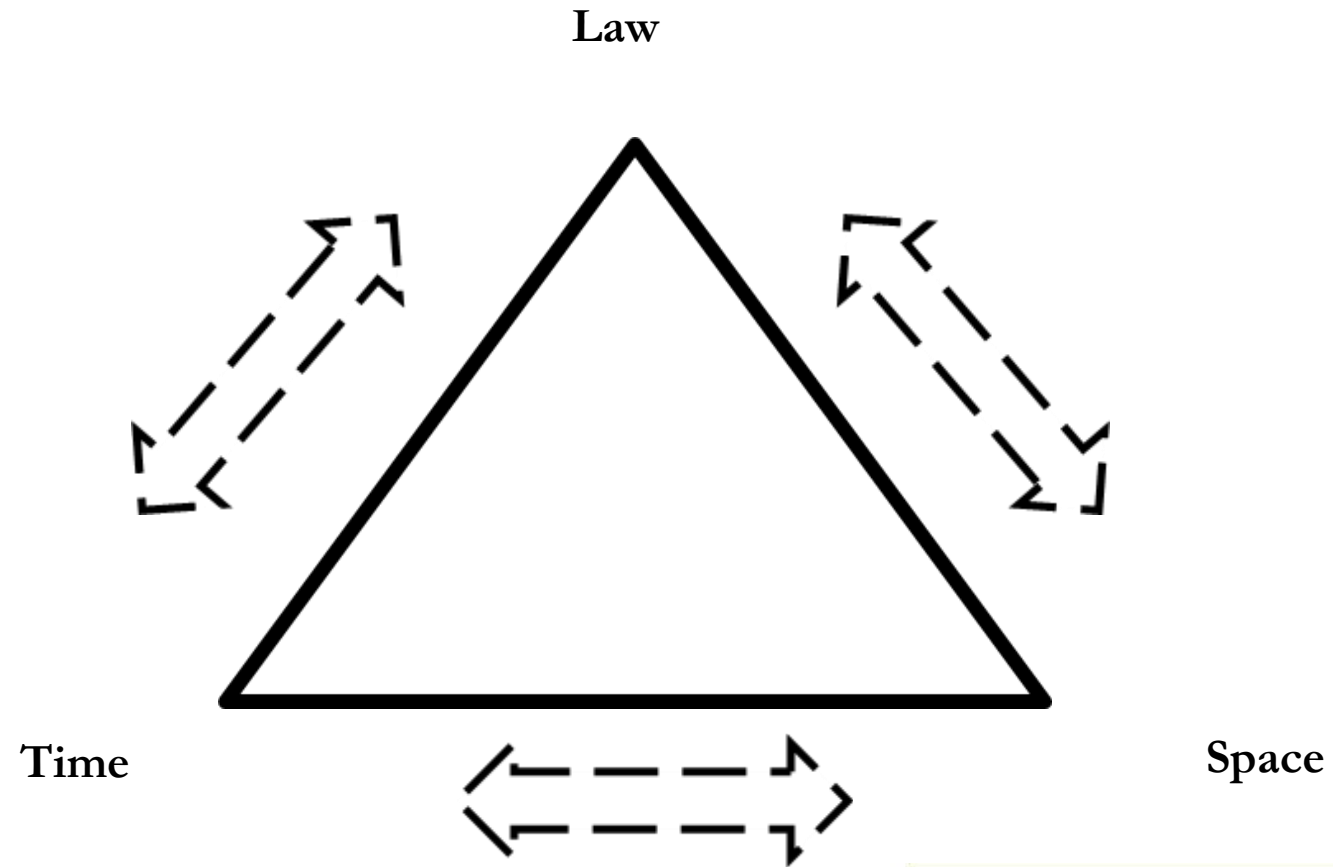
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# Project innovation



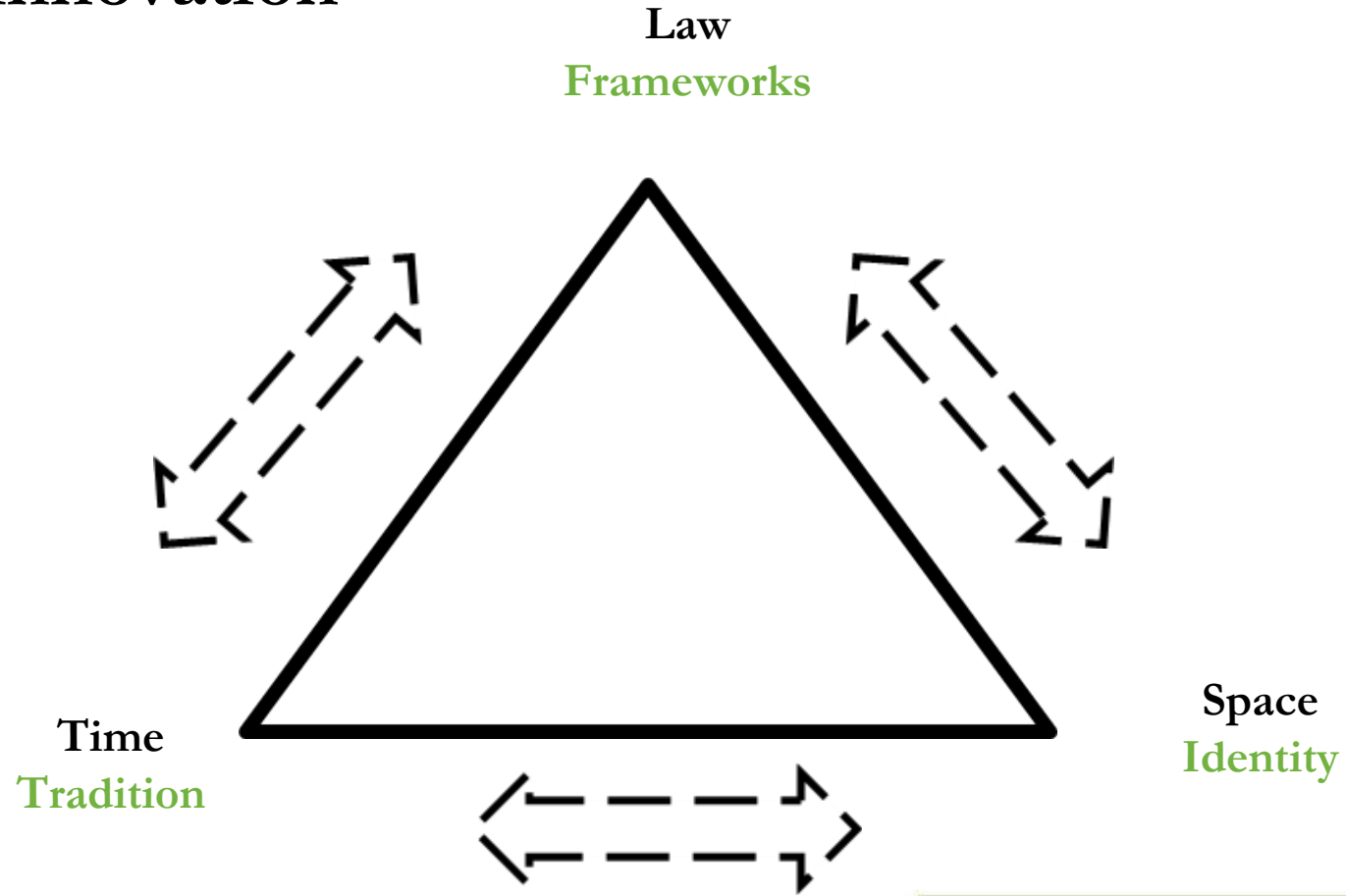
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# Project innovation



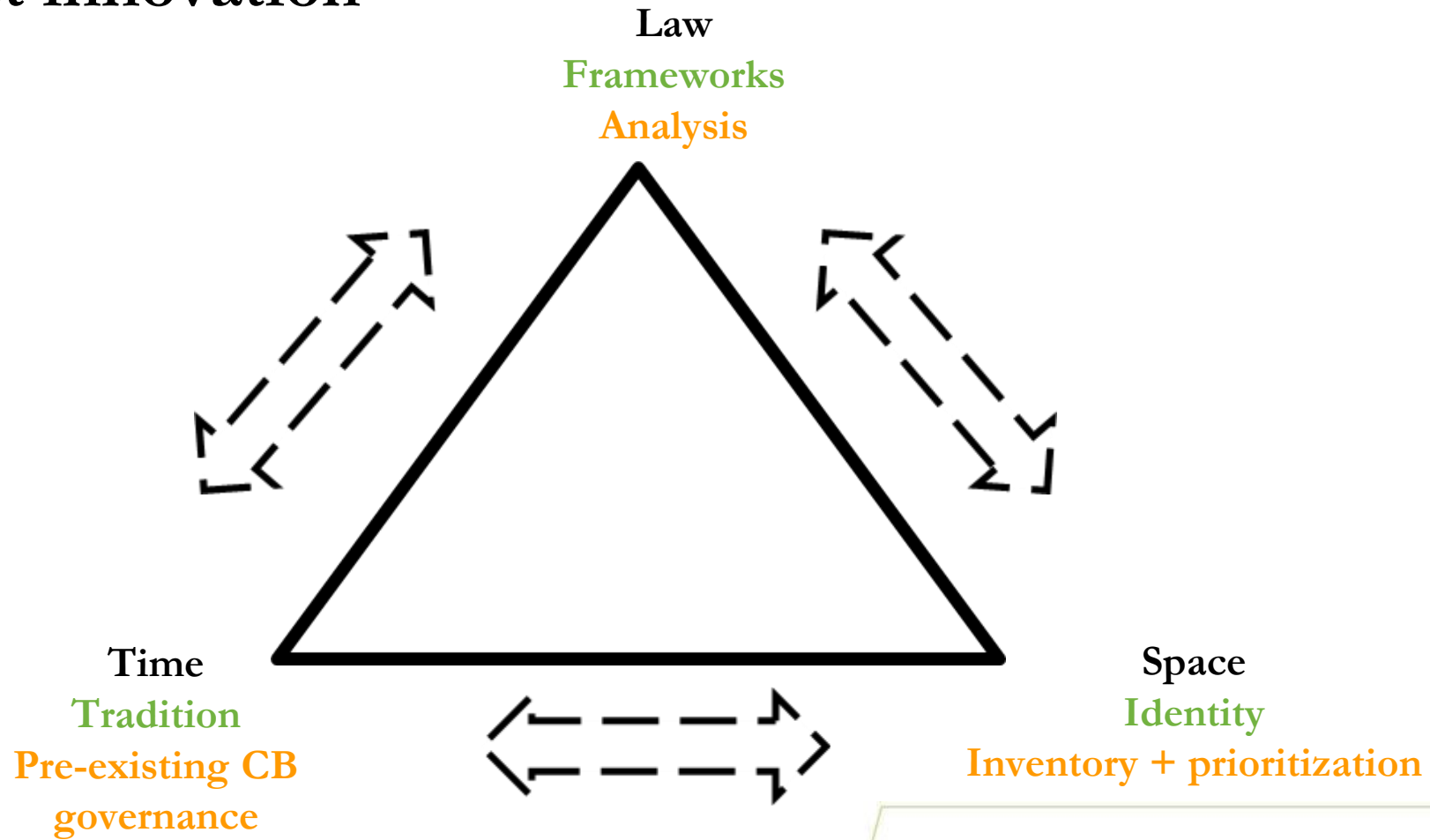
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# Project innovation



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# Project valorization

Aim to establish a sustainable legal infrastructure for both border regions

Aim to found a flexible - but sustainable - methodology to overcome obstacles in border regions

Utopian?

No, in line with EU evolutions Interreg & BRIDGEforEU

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THANK YOU! KÖSZÖNÖM!  
DANK U WEL! MERCI! DANKE!  
MULTUMESC! ĎAKUJEM!  
HVALA! ХВАЛА! ДЯКУЮ!



Do you want to discuss further?



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