

Karina Pallagst, Andrea Hartz, Beate Caesar

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Karina Pallagst, Andrea Hartz, Beate Caesar

BORDER FUTURES – CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION IN THE TERRITORY OF THE HESSE/RHINELAND-PALATINATE/ SAARLAND REGIONAL WORKING GROUP

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Abstract

The aim of the Border Futures Subsection was to shed light on the development of cross-border cooperation in the territory of the Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland Regional Working Group and to indicate future development paths. This paper introduces the focal points of the research and the approach taken, clarifies the terminology and provides an overview of the papers in this volume.

Keywords

Cross-border cooperation – spatial planning – spatial development – border area – border region

1 Why Border Futures?

Cross-border cooperation is by no means a new subject for the ARL Regional Working Group – quite the contrary: there is a long tradition of exploring cross-border issues of spatial development, which is enriched by a broad range of diverse experience (Spehl 1983; Kistenmacher/Maier 1992). The federal states of Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland border directly on France, Luxembourg and Belgium; cross-border cooperation has been part of everyday political life for decades. Administrative border regions like the Greater Region¹ or the Upper Rhine region extend far beyond the immediate border areas. While the institutional structures for cooperation were established through multilateral treaties and organisational forms, the general context of cross-border cooperation has changed in line with changing social challenges.

New needs resulting from a new energy policy and demographic change supplement established fields of action, such as mobility and commuter flows or economic and structural transformation processes. Likewise, increasing spatial polarisation trends are apparent (ESPON/University of Luxembourg 2010), which influence issues of metropolisation as well as the provision of public services in rural districts, thus affecting the further development and future viability of such border areas.

Cross-border cooperation is significantly shaped by European cohesion policy, which embarked on a new programme period in 2014. This means a new orientation for cross-border cooperation and its projects and programmes (BBSR [Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development] 2012). In addition, there are more recent options for planning and steering instruments, e.g. through the establishment of European Groupings of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) (Caesar 2015), the specific design of which is, however, still unclear in many respects.

The European metropolisation trends, and the guiding principles for spatial development in Germany adopted in 2006, which established the notion of metropolitan regions as a new level within the urban system in Germany, provided an impetus for a revision of the spatial development policy in the border regions. This gave rise, with the support of the Federation in the context of two Model Projects for Spatial Planning, to the Metropolitan Border Regions Initiative Group (2016): The *IMeG* (Metropolitan Border Regions Initiative Group) strives to better position border regions with intense interaction across national borders and with a high potential for growth and innovation on the national and European level.

In addition to the practical instruments of cross-border cooperation, greater importance is attached to the stakeholder level.

1 The 'Greater Region' abbreviation refers to the 'Großregion Saarland – Lorraine – Luxembourg – Rheinland-Pfalz – Région Wallonne – Communauté Française de Belgique und Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens' (official designation) [translated as Greater Region Saarland – Lorraine – Luxembourg – Rhineland-Palatinate – the Walloon Region – the French Community of Belgium and the German-speaking Community of Belgium].

2 Research objectives and research questions

The aim of the Border Futures Subsection was to shed light on cross-border cooperation in practice with recent research relevant to planning in border regions in the European context. The intention was to make the results of the research usable for the border areas within the territorial remit of the Regional Working Group and to make the practical experience gained in cross-border cooperation within the territory of the Regional Working Group available for a broader discussion on the further development of cross-border cooperation. The orientation of sustainable cross-border governance, new spatial functions and new planning instruments play a role here, as do the opportunities provided by the current EU structural policy programming period for border areas. The focus is on the following issues:

- 1 Which theoretical discourses current in border area research are relevant for border areas, and what are their implications for border areas within the territorial remit of the Regional Working Group?
- 2 Which concepts and strategies are being elaborated for the territorial development of border areas and regions, and are they consistent with current planning (e.g. metropolitan border regions, habits of cross-border workers)? Which insights can be gleaned from them for the border areas within the territorial remit of the Regional Working Group?
- 3 Which fields of action are relevant for the border areas given the tensions between individual problem areas (e.g. providing public services, labour markets, transport) as well as new challenges (e.g. the energy transition, cultural heritage)?
- 4 Which opportunities for and obstacles to inclusive territorial development arise from the specific situation in border regions, and how can they be exploited or overcome?
- 5 Which recommendations for action can be formulated for viable cross-border cooperation and territorial development in border areas in the future with specific consideration of the situation in the territorial remit of the Regional Working Group?

3 Methodology, focus and terminology

In line with the objective of the Academy, the detailed discussions between academics and practitioners in this field played a decisive role in formulating common issues, in the collaborative approach to the subjects and the in-depth analysis of select fields of action.

The Subsection was composed of members of the Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland Regional Working Group at the ARL and included additional representatives from academe and practice (from the relevant border areas). The members of the Subsection examined how cross-border cooperation works in practice, the current

challenges it faces and the insights gained from this in an intensive expert discussion spanning a period of two years. In addition to the regular meetings, a Planners' Forum initiated by the Regional Working Group presented significant interim results and discussed them with a broader body of experts.

At the very outset, there was a consensus that the Subsection could not comprehensively cover all issues relating to cross-border cooperation due to the complexity of the topic; to attempt to do so would have been beyond the group's scope and capacity. Hence, the topics to be treated were defined and delineated in a kick-off meeting at the start of the work process, meaning this publication does not claim to be exhaustive.

In addition, it was agreed that the border areas to be studied should fall within the territorial remit of the Regional Working Group to the greatest extent possible. The Greater Region and the Upper Rhine region were thus identified as the principal research areas, which further focused the approach. However, it should also be noted that border areas have different characteristics and are thus not readily comparable in their (projected future) development. This means that the results of this study must be viewed in the light of the specific starting points and general conditions of the border areas investigated here (see the paper by Andrea Hartz and Beate Caesar in this volume).

It also became apparent that the heterogeneity of cross-border cooperation – if it is to be described and examined as a common field of research – would require some terminological clarifications and the determination of shared anchor points, which are briefly outlined below.

Cross-border cooperation

The German terms *grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit* and *grenzüberschreitende Kooperation* are considered to be synonymous and are both translated as 'cross-border cooperation'. Transnational or interregional cooperation are not explicitly included in the scope of this research, but in some cases they touch on important fields of actions, e.g. mobility (see e.g. Jörg Saalbach's paper in this volume).

Territorial dimension

Given the subject-specific context of the study, the focus is on the territorial dimension of cross-border cooperation. This brings spatial development and spatial planning (e.g. spatially relevant strategies and planning) to the fore. These areas extend to aspects that are clearly spatially relevant, such as energy, transport and the labour market. Aspects which are the subject of cross-border cooperation but which are not closely related to spatial planning are not covered (taxation, criminal activities, etc.). For the purposes of this study, cross-border cooperation is limited to cooperation in a functional border area or a formally defined border region.

Opportunities, obstacles and future viability of cross-border cooperation

To ensure coherence between the individual papers, the members of the Subsection have agreed to limit their focus to the opportunities and obstacles associated with cross-border cooperation, which have a decisive impact on the future viability of the

aspects and fields of action considered here, and to analyse them with a view to formulating recommendations. This ensures that each treatment of the topic concerned does not only present the status quo but also that the work is elaborated in a focused manner that offers perspectives for the future.

Language

Cross-border cooperation generally means having to navigate in a multilingual context; at the same time, a strict, consistent framework must be established with a view to the publication of the resulting papers. Given the context of the ARL and of the Regional Working Group, the working language of the working group and of the publication is German. In the light of the Academy’s aims to internationalise its work, the volume has now been translated into English. Where references are made to laws, planning processes, organs, places, etc. in France, Belgium, and Luxembourg, the original language is used.

Further clarifications relating to the sub-regions and their demarcations are provided in Part 1.

The various topics treated by the Border Futures Subsection in this publication are briefly outlined below.

4 Brief outline of the individual papers

The publication examines the future viability of cross-border cooperation in four key areas (see Figure 1).

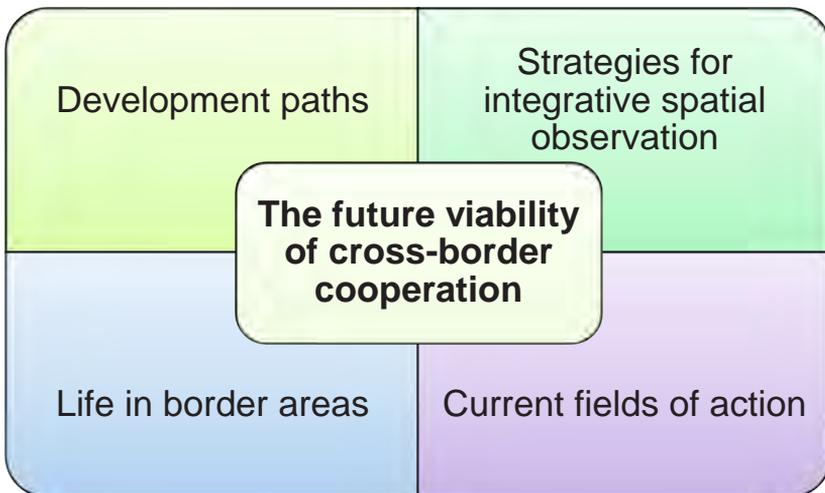


Fig. 1: Structure of the volume /Source: The authors

Part I outlines the development paths, theoretical anchor points and challenges of cross-border cooperation.

At the outset, **Beate Caesar** and **Karina Pallagst** provide an overview of the status quo and the development of cross-border cooperation in Europe. They address funding instruments and discuss the general challenges and opportunities for cross-border cooperation and its particular implications for spatial planning.

This is followed by a consideration by **Karina Pallagst**, **Peter Dörrenbächer** and **Thomas Weith** of the impact of European integration, regionalism and governance on the development of cross-border cooperation and their significance for European spatial development.

Andrea Hartz and **Beate Caesar** then provide a brief discussion of the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine region, as these areas fall within the territorial remit of the Subsection of the Regional Working Group; they were also the areas on which the research focused.

Part I is rounded out by **Gerd-Rainer Damm's** paper, which provides a more concrete view of the challenges in cross-border cooperation based on surveys conducted among stakeholders in the Greater Region.

The three papers in **Part II** addresses strategies of cross-border cooperation in the context of integrated spatial development.

In the first paper, **Karina Pallagst** and **Andrea Hartz** shed light on the significance of cross-border cooperation in spatial planning and describe the different planning styles of the nation states in the Greater Region and along the Upper Rhine. They also provide an overview of the planning instruments designed specifically for cross-border cooperation in the two border regions.

Andrea Hartz then explains the concept of metropolitan border regions, highlighting their spatial and structural characteristics, metropolisation strategies and governance mechanisms. She also discusses the role spatial planning can assume in this context, and concludes by outlining the future opportunities for the development of cross-border metropolitan regions.

In her paper, **Petra Schelkmann** addresses the subject of metropolitan border regions and describes the process by which the Greater Region is endeavouring to develop a cross-border, polycentric metropolitan region (CBPMR).

Part III interrogates the border area as a living environment. In the first paper, **Antje Schönwald**, **Annette Spellerberg** and **Florian Weber** introduce theoretical concepts and the correlations between borders, identities and the sense of home, focusing on the Greater Region to illuminate aspects of identity in this border area.

In the second paper, **Annette Spellerberg**, **Antje Schönwald**, **Katharina Engelhardt** and **Florian Weber** explore perceptions of the border and the sense of home in cross-border areas based on a survey carried out in four twin locations at national borders within the Greater Region.

In their paper, **Christian Wille** and **Ursula Roos** provide an overview of the practical implications of daily border crossings at the Luxembourg border. Based on social contacts, the everyday activities of cross-border commuters and residential migrants on both sides of the border, they argue that a unique type of cross-border living environment is evolving along the Luxembourg border.

Part IV explores current fields of action in cross-border cooperation.

Energy is a potential cross-border field of action, hence in their paper, **Frank Baur** and **Barbara Dröschel** illuminate the strategies and projects in relation to energy policy within the Greater Region.

Most border regions are still burdened with numerous barriers to cross-border transport that must be overcome. **Beate Caesar** and **Jörg Saalbach** report on EU policy objectives and instruments and examine their impact on selected cross-border transport flows. This is supplemented in the paper by **Michael Heilmann** and **Werner Schreiner** with experience gained in cross-border railway transport between the Palatinate region and Alsace.

In the next paper, **Jörg Saalbach** describes his experience of cross-border, transnational cooperation along the Rhine corridor as part of the CODE24 project. Cooperation in relation to transport and spatial development was launched as an INTERREG project and is now being perpetuated through the establishment of an EGTC.

Kirsten Mangels and **Julia Wohland** argue that the provision of public services in rural border regions is a potential field of action for cross-border cooperation. There are certain challenges, however, due to different administrative systems and responsibilities for safeguarding the provision of public services on either side of the border. A close look at the situation in the Greater Region illuminates these issues.

Peter Dörrenbächer describes the significance of cross-border vocational education and training in border regions against the backdrop of current trends and the economic disparities between the national subspaces. He examines previous and future endeavours between Saarland and Lorraine in this regard and considers their potential.

Patrice Harster and **Frédéric Siebenhaar** present strategies, projects and experience gained in and with the Eurodistrict PAMINA to create a cross-border labour market and to eliminate obstacles to cross-border cooperation.

Frank Schaffranski's paper discusses cultural heritage and tourism as potential factors for the joint development of border regions. He furthermore describes EU funding programmes and exemplary projects from the Greater Region and the Upper Rhine region.

In their concluding remarks, the editors **Karina Pallagst**, **Beate Caesar** and **Andrea Hartz** discuss the future viability of cross-border cooperation.

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The authors

Prof. Dr.-Ing. Karina Pallagst (b. 1969) is Professor of International Planning Systems at the TU Kaiserslautern. She was previously project coordinator at the Center for Global Metropolitan Studies (GMS) at the University of California at Berkeley and project manager at the Leibniz Institute of Ecological Urban and Regional Development (Institut für ökologische Raumentwicklung, IÖR), Dresden. She is a member of numerous advisory boards and think tanks in research and political consulting. She is the deputy spokesperson for the university department of interdisciplinary studies on 'Region and City' at the TU Kaiserslautern, a member of the Steering Committee of the Center for Border Studies at the University of the Greater Region and a member of the Advisory Board for Municipal Development of the federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate.

Dipl.-Geogr. Andrea Maria Hartz (b. 1962) is a geographer from Saarbrücken and a registered urban planner (Saarland chamber of engineers), and is a partner in the firm of agl | Hartz • Saad • Wendl | practitioners of applied landscape, urban and spatial planning since 1993. Her work focuses on urban and regional development, transformation processes and location conversion, cooperation/conflict management in spatial planning and civic participation, as well as transnational and cross-border cooperation. She is a member of the Academy for Territorial Development (ARL) and the German Academy for Urban Design and State Spatial Planning (Deutsche Akademie für Städtebau und Landesplanung, DASL).

Dipl.-Ing. Beate Caesar (b. 1987) is a researcher in the field of International Planning Systems in the Department of Spatial and Environmental Planning at the TU Kaiserslautern. In 2018 she obtained her PhD with her thesis on ‘The Influence of Trans-European Transport Networks and European Territorial Cooperation on Cross-Border Transport’. Her research interests include Cross-border spatial planning, transport and planning culture. She is a member of the Hesse/Rhineland-Palatinate/Saarland Regional Working Group as well as of the ‘Junges Forum’ (forum for young professionals) of the ARL and the UniGR Center for Border Studies.