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The concept of metropolitan border regions: Development, strategies and new directions

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Andrea Hartz

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Andrea Hartz

THE CONCEPT OF METROPOLITAN BORDER REGIONS: DEVELOPMENT, STRATEGIES AND NEW DIRECTIONS

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Abstract

In recent decades the challenges of globalisation, European integration and strengthened regionalisation have led to a reassessment of metropolitan regions. In Germany, the guiding principles issued by the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning in 2006 provided an occasion on which to rethink the role of border regions in the context of the discourse on metropolises. The metropolitan potential of border regions is far from fully exploited. This is particularly true in relation to cross-border spatial development. The concept of metropolitan border regions could be a promising way of intensifying cross-border cooperation and territorial integration. A precondition for this is that metropolisation strategies are proactively pursued using key measures and that existing structures of cooperation are further developed towards ‘metropolitan’ governance.

Keywords

Metropolitan border regions – border regions – metropolitan regions – metropolitan governance – metropolisation strategies – metropolitan areas – (cross-border) regional development

1 Introduction

From a national perspective, border regions frequently appear as peripheral spaces. National borders continue to have a barrier effect, which is an impediment to coherent spatial development aiming at functional integration. Nevertheless, it must be noted that in some border regions intense interactional relationships, i.e. polycentric structures with cross-border agglomerations and a high volume of inner-regional commuters, have developed.

In this context, the structural differences between the national sub-regions, which result from national policy and legislation among other aspects, are an essential driver for cross-border interactions. The residents of the border regions make use of the variety and diversity of employment opportunities, services, housing, leisure offerings and culture available on both sides of the border. However, even after four decades of cross-border cooperation it has become clear that national borders have essentially remained an obstacle to development. This has been felt particularly keenly in areas where functions can be identified in the various national sub-regions, which (could) be concentrated for the entire border region to become a metropolitan potential.

This chapter deals with the concept of metropolitan border regions, their spatio-structural prerequisites, the scope of action of regional stakeholders and the potential (new) orientation of regional, national and European policies to their specific needs. Among other things, the paper revisits the results of the two Model Projects for Spatial Planning on cross-border interactional areas and metropolitan border regions (Hartz/Damm/Köhler 2010; *BMVBS* [Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Urban Development] 2011, 2013¹).

2 The concept of metropolitan regions

The challenges of globalisation and European integration as well as of increased regionalisation (New Regionalism) have given rise in recent decades to a 'reassessment of the metropolitan region as a spatial category', as metropolitan regions focus on interregional economic competition (Blatter/Knieling 2009:232 et seq.). With the establishment of expansive urban regions and agglomerations, strong players have

1 In 2008, the former Federal Ministry of Transport, Construction and Urban Development (*Bundesministerium für Verkehr, Bau und Stadtentwicklung, BMVBS*) and the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*Bundesinstitut für Bau-, Stadt- und Raumforschung, BBSR*) launched a Model Project for Spatial Planning (*Modellvorhaben der Raumordnung, MORO*) in collaboration with the special purpose association of the Aachen region, the Mittlerer Oberrhein, Südlicher Oberrhein, Hochrhein-Bodensee and Bodensee-Oberschwaben regional associations and Saarland, which addressed the role of cross-border interactional areas (*BMVBS* 2011). A key result of this Model Project for Spatial Planning was the establishment of the Metropolitan Border Regions Initiative Group (*Initiativkreis Metropolitane Grenzregionen, IMeG*) on 17 March 2011 in Berlin. The initial phase of the Metropolitan Border Regions Initiative Group was accompanied for two years by another model project on the part of the federation (*BMVBS* 2013). Ever since, the Metropolitan Border Regions Initiative Group has been self-funded (www.metropolitane-grenzregionen.eu).

emerged, not merely at the national level, but also in a European and international context. They are considered ‘important drivers of social, societal and economic developments in a region and country’ (*BMVBS/BBR* [Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning] 2006: 39). Against this backdrop, the metropolitan regions in Germany and Europe have been given a ‘key role in spatial development’ (*BMVBS/BBR* 2007: 1).

In this process, functional interactions and political and administrative areas of responsibility are increasingly falling asunder. The reorganisation of space in conjunction with the choice of location made by companies and the employment market, together with sustained (sub)urbanisation of their intake area and increasing commuter flows, strengthen the emergence of new regional opportunities for action. A distinction must be made in this regard between metropolises as monocentric urban regions focused on a core city with pronounced metropolitan functions and the metropolitan region. In an analytical sense, the latter is a ‘regional location cluster of metropolitan facilities’; in a political and planning sense, it means a regional space of cooperation between cities and their regional interactional areas (Blotevogel/Danielzyk 2009: 24). The spatial outlines that result from an analysis of metropolitan location clusters generally diverge from the politically institutionalised cooperation areas (e.g. *BBSR* 2010). The metropolitan functions are essentially defined and operationalised through strategic functions: innovation and competition, decision-making and control, as well as gateway and symbolic functions (Blotevogel/Danielzyk 2009: 25 et seq.; see also Federwisch 2012: 49 et seq.).

In Germany, too, with its pronounced polycentric structure, metropolisation trends are changing the urban structure. Schmitt points out, however, that compared to France and the Netherlands, metropolises or metropolitan regions were not an issue in German spatial planning policy prior to 1995 (Schmitt 2009: 62). This process commenced only significantly later and has pursued a different approach: unlike in the neighbouring countries, German spatial planning policy relies on the large-scale demarcation of metropolitan regions and their interactional areas (Hartz/Damm/Köhler 2010: 505).

The changed role of large, predominantly polycentric agglomerations was examined (initially) from an analytical perspective in spatial planning (*BBR* 2005; *BBSR* 2010) and was actively supported through the adoption of the guiding principles for spatial development in Germany (MKRO [Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning] 2006). The concept of the ‘European metropolitan region in Germany’, which is both spatially and substantively concretised in the guiding principle of growth and innovation of 2006, gave rise to a new hierarchical level in the urban system. ‘Reinforcing strengths’ and ‘bundling and linking capabilities’ are key elements of the strategy, as much as assuming joint responsibility in the framework of (supra) regional partnerships. ‘This is expressed as the necessity of each development centre to be aware of its responsibility for its surrounding area, because development is dependent on a growing region as an economic hinterland’ (*BMVBS/BBR* 2006: 39).

The eleven metropolitan regions in Germany were acknowledged in two phases – 1997 and 2005 – by the Conference of Ministers for Spatial Planning (*Ministerkonferenz*

für Raumordnung, MKRO) and included in the concept. Both the general spatio-structural circumstances as well as the economic perspectives are quite different; this applies likewise to the established forms of metropolitan governance, which range from regional associations institutionalised by law, informal municipal associations through to joint administrative structures (Ludwig/Mandel/Schwieger et al. 2008: 183 et seq.).

As was to be expected, the concept of metropolitan regions gave rise to heated controversies. The stakeholders in peripheral areas observed the development with concern: they feared an (even) greater focus of policies on economically strong regions and a redistribution of the European and national subsidies in particular. In addition, the stakeholders in the wider interactional areas of the metropolitan regions questioned the added value of this 'label' for the overall region and its various sub-regions, especially those areas outside the core spaces. Initially, however, the efforts of many regions to gain recognition as metropolitan regions showed that they expected some benefits from the concept and the label. They initiated and undertook at times rather complex institutionalisation processes, such as in the Nuremberg region or the Rhine-Neckar region. At the federal level, the concept and its implementation were considered to be a 'success story' (BBSR 2009).

However, extensive associations for cooperation also lead to increased transactional costs, especially when the metropolitan regions are organised in a polycentric manner: 'A win-win situation is all the more difficult to achieve, the more partners are involved, the more pronounced the competitive environment is, and the more disparate the objectives of the partners are. Hence, the presence of several, similarly strong centres in a polycentric metropolitan region increases the challenge of achieving a win-win situation' (BMVBS/BBR 2007: 36). In addition, a sense of economic, political or historical competitiveness or even resentments that have evolved over time make it more difficult to arrive at win-win situations.

While the added value for the core cities in the metropolitan regions is still clearly apparent, those benefits are quite questionable for the (wider) interactional areas and peripheral sub-regions. Matern (2013) outlines the benefits for the peripheral sub-regions of the Hamburg region. Improving accessibility could mitigate depopulation, and 'the negative image as a structurally weak area could be replaced by the image of a prosperous, competitive region' (Matern 2013: 330 et seq.; see Fig. 1). At the same time, Matern warns that 'metropolitan regions could promote territorial cohesion, but not compensation'. The aim should be to give greater consideration to structural differences to prevent disparities from becoming more pronounced through large-scale cooperation (Matern 2013: 355). In regard to regional economic spill-over effects, Rusche/Oberst (2010: 252) believe that within the large-scale metropolitan regions these effects are limited to the surrounding areas of the agglomeration cores and that peripheral sub-regions do not benefit from them. Instead, the latter would even have to accept that they are not able to develop their own profile due to their association with the metropolitan region.

Federwisch moreover describes metropolisation processes as 'coping' strategies used to influence temporal and spatial aspects of the development of metropolitan regions,

the success of which is jeopardised by the competing phenomena of acceleration and persistence, by integration and legitimacy deficits and by consolidation difficulties (Federwisch 2012: 213 et seq.). Even though Federwisch believes that the concept of metropolitan regions is ‘to benefit the process of collective re-embedding and to promote the resynchronisation of policymaking with the accelerated social spheres’, he identifies a ‘quasi-protectionism’ as a response to ‘border-free’ social conditions (2012: 228). In addition, ‘frantic stagnation’ (Rosa 2005) can be observed, which lacks any ambitious, targeted policy development despite an increase in activity and gives rise at the individual level to frustration effects in the sense of *frustrated regional governance* (Rosa 2005).

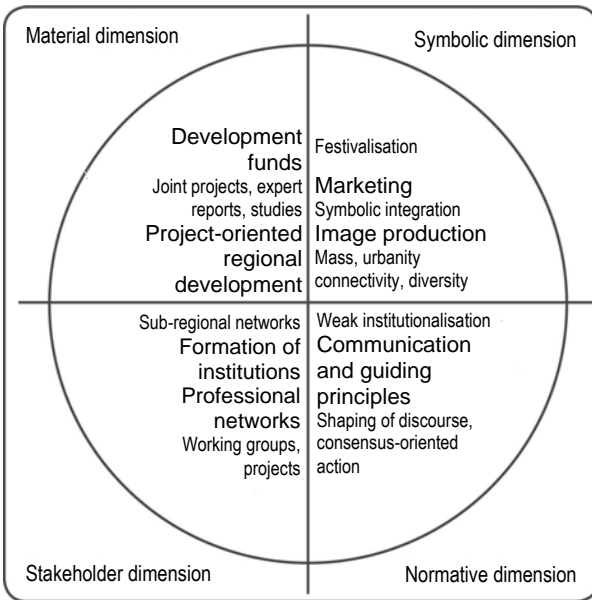


Fig. 1: Potential benefits for stakeholders / Source: Matern 2013: 330; the author

Opposition to the 2006 guiding principle of growth and innovation was also voiced from the perspective of the border regions. However, this primarily concerned the fact that the ‘strong’ border regions at the (south)western border of Germany did not feel themselves to be sufficiently taken into account (e.g. Köhler 2007). This was acknowledged at the federal level, and the need for the concept of metropolitan regions in spatial planning to be further developed was recognised in the light of the increasing significance of cross-border European metropolitan interactional areas, for example along the Upper Rhine and in the German-Belgian-Dutch border area (BMVBS/BBR 2006: 44). The first fundamental analyses used to identify and localise metropolitan functions based on a uniform set of indicators showed that a purely national view reaches its limits given that in areas close to the border important metropolitan functions are partly located outside of Germany (BBR 2005: 185). This means that the metropolitan potential of a border region can only be captured by

considering all of the national sub-regions of that border region. This assessment was confirmed in 2010 by a study on metropolitan areas in Europe conducted by the Federal Institute for Research on Building, Urban Affairs and Spatial Development (*BBSR* 2010; see Fig. 2), which examined the concentration of metropolitan functions in Europe, as well as the analysis by the Metroborder ESPON project (ESPON/ University of Luxembourg 2010: 15 et seq.) based on Functional Urban Areas (FUA). The results of the analysis supported the political initiatives at the national and European level to support the concept of the metropolitan regions in a European perspective and thus to involve the border regions (see Fig. 3). The metropolitan perspective changes the perception of Europe overall: national borders fade into the background.

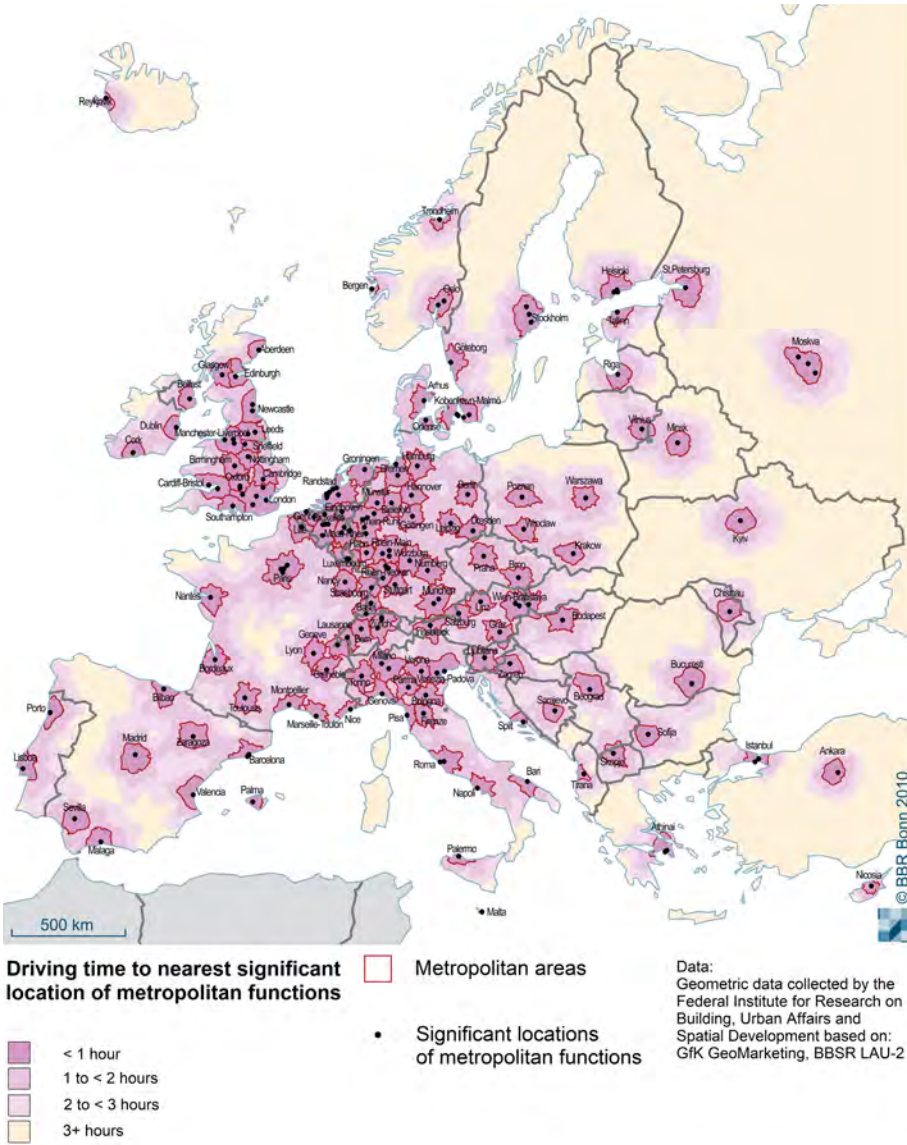


Fig. 2: Metropolitan areas and significant locations of metropolitan functions in Europe / Source: BBSR 2010: 82

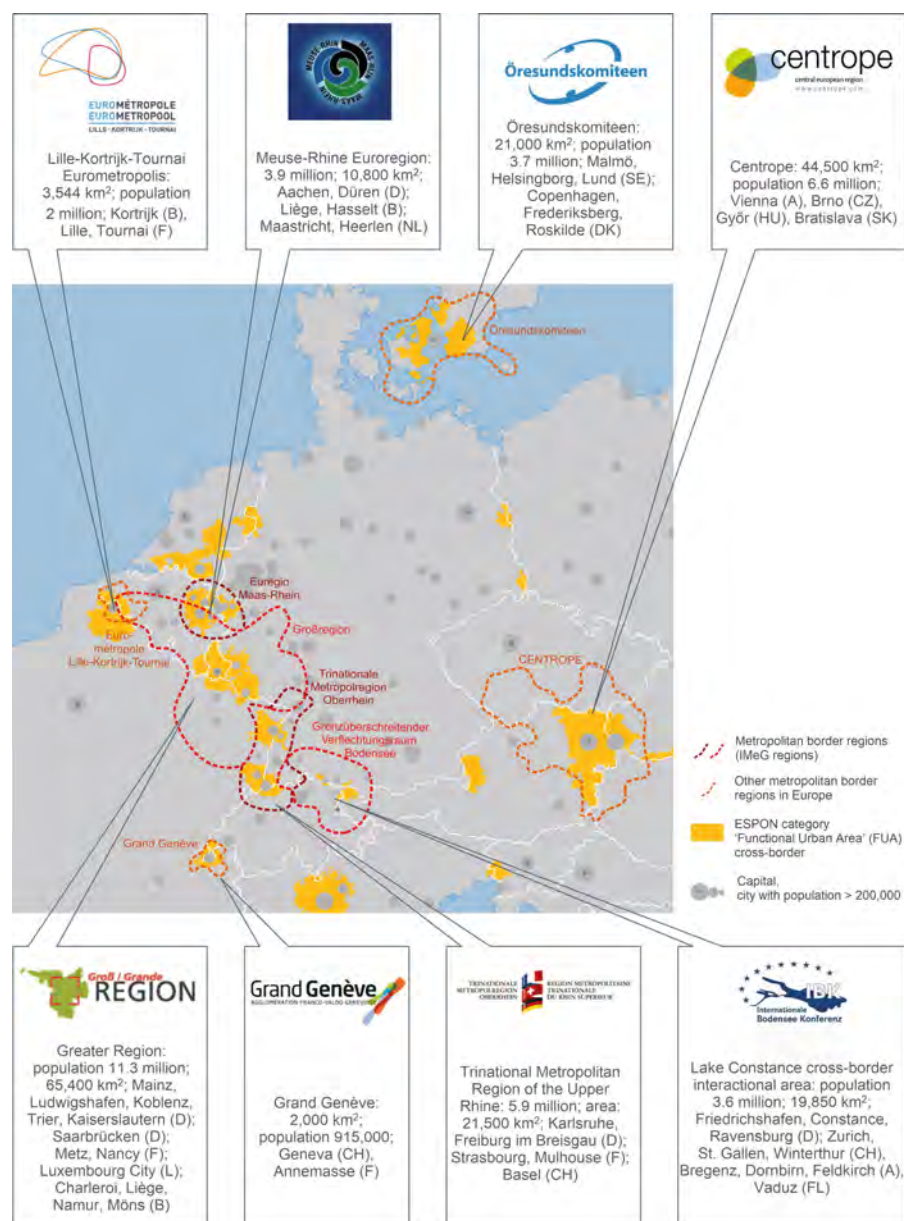
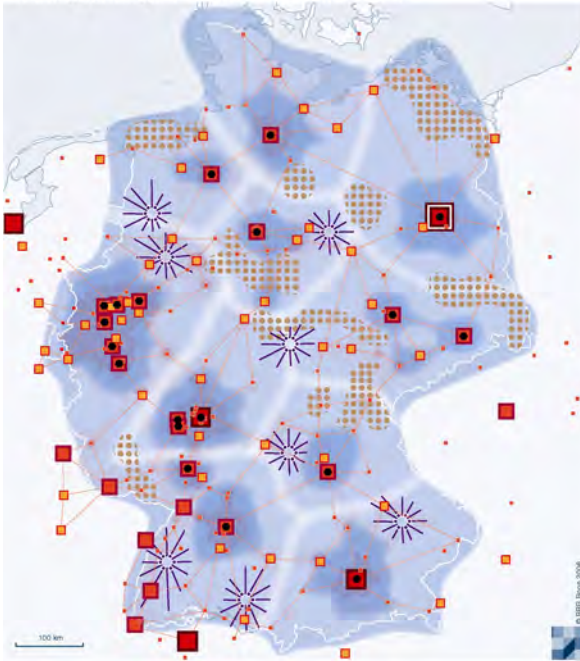


Fig. 3: The metropolitan border regions in Europe /Source: BMVBS 2013: 23

The further development of the guiding principles in Germany took these insights into account: the guiding principle of enhancing competitiveness adopted in 2016 replaced the 2006 guiding principle of growth and innovation and integrated the metropolitan border regions as a new territorial category (MKRO 2016; see Fig. 4).

Guiding principle: Growth and innovation



Metropolitan areas

- Cores of the capital region and of existing European metropolitan regions
- Other locations of metropolitan functions
- Narrow metropolitan interactional area
- Wider metropolitan interactional areas including rural areas
- Transition zone between metropolitan interactional areas

Growth regions outside of narrow metropolitan interactional areas



Stabilisation areas



Spatial structure

- High-density central areas
- Dense intermediate area

This map illustrates the guiding principle. The markings do not represent planning stipulations.

Competitiveness



The map merely visualises the guiding principle. The markings do not represent planning stipulations.

Metropolitan areas

- Cores of the capital region and the European metropolitan regions
- Other locations of metropolitan functions
- Narrow metropolitan interactional areas
- Wider metropolitan interactional areas including rural areas
- Transition zone between metropolitan interactional areas

- Cores of metropolitan border regions (IMeG, 2015)
- Narrow metropolitan interactional areas in metropolitan border regions (IMeG, 2015)
- Metropolitan border regions (IMeG, 2015)

- ↔ Examples of potential cross-border interactional areas

Rural and urbanised economic growth regions



Areas with a special structural need for action



Transport infrastructure

- (according to Trans-European Transport Network 2013)
- Road network
- Rail network
- ✈ International airport
- ✈ International seaport
- Main shipping routes
- Kiel Canal
- Maritime planning area

Fig. 4: Comparison: the 2006 guiding principle of growth and innovation and the 2016 guiding principle of enhancing competitiveness/Source: MKRO 2006, 2016

In principle, metropolitan regions continue to be planned and designed according to the national logic of spatial development: ‘The strategies of the neighbouring countries differ in part considerably from the approach taken by German spatial planning’ (Hartz/Damm/Köhler 2010: 503). The French system, for example, pursues a centralised, programme-oriented and functional approach. Current reforms focus on a national strengthening of decentralised metropolisation approaches in the regions. As part of its decentralisation processes, the French state initiated a competition to provide stimuli for metropolitan cooperation and projects – beyond the *Ile de France* – in the regions. In the wake of the competition, in 2004 15 metropolises were selected, which were to enhance their competitiveness and regional economies with national support. The metropolitan hubs (*pôles métropolitains*) were eventually established based on Article 20 of the Act on the Reform of Local and Regional Authorities (*Loi de réforme des collectivités territoriales françaises, Loi RCT*) of 16 December 2010 (*Réseau des Pôles Métropolitains [Network of Metropolitan Hubs]* 2015). Eight of them alone relate to cross-border agglomerations, for example *Sillon lorrain* or the *agglomération Strasbourg-Mulhouse* (see Fig. 5).

The Spatial Concept of Switzerland allocates priority areas for action, among them the metropolitan areas of Zurich, Basel and the Lake Geneva region (*Métropole Lémanique*) as well as the Swiss capital region (Swiss Federal Council [*Schweizerischer Bundesrat*] / *KdK [Swiss Conference of Cantonal Governments]* / BPUK [*Swiss Conference for the Directors for Building, Planning and Environment*] et al. 2012). Cross-border approaches are particularly apparent at the more specific level of the Swiss agglomeration policy, which includes a total of 50 agglomerations: a tri-national future vision for 2030 was elaborated in a cross-border context as part of the Basel agglomeration programme (Agglo Basel Headquarters 2016).

Luxembourg is currently undergoing a reorientation of spatial strategies at the state level. This concerns for example ‘a reorientation from rather rural development perspectives to an adoption of actual urban policies, including the aspiration for further metropolization of the urban landscape – both within the country (e.g. through large-scale projects such as Belval, Ban de Gasperich or the “Nordstad”) and at the interregional level (i.e. cross-border polycentric metropolitan development as guiding principle for the Greater Region – see METROBORDER’ (Chilla/Schulz 2014: 17). Luxembourg plays a key role in regard to the implementation of metropolitan strategies, not only at the national level, but also in a cross-border context (Vidal/Niedermeyer 2011; Sohn 2012).

The national spatial planning policies in Europe support metropolisation processes and thus pursue comparable objectives and strategic approaches: ‘the consistently low level (with a few exceptions) of institutionalisation of functionally closely interlinked urban regions is increasingly perceived as a deficit by public authorities’ (Wiechmann 2009: 127). Differences arise both in the design process and during implementation. The cross-border perspective in the concept of the metropolitan regions is based on more recent analyses, political initiatives and interventions. This, too, begs the question of the added value compared to traditional forms of cross-border cooperation: is it merely a question of *branding* regions, or does it create a

benefit for functional and territorial integration? And how can these concepts be successfully implemented as part of existing cross-border cooperation projects?

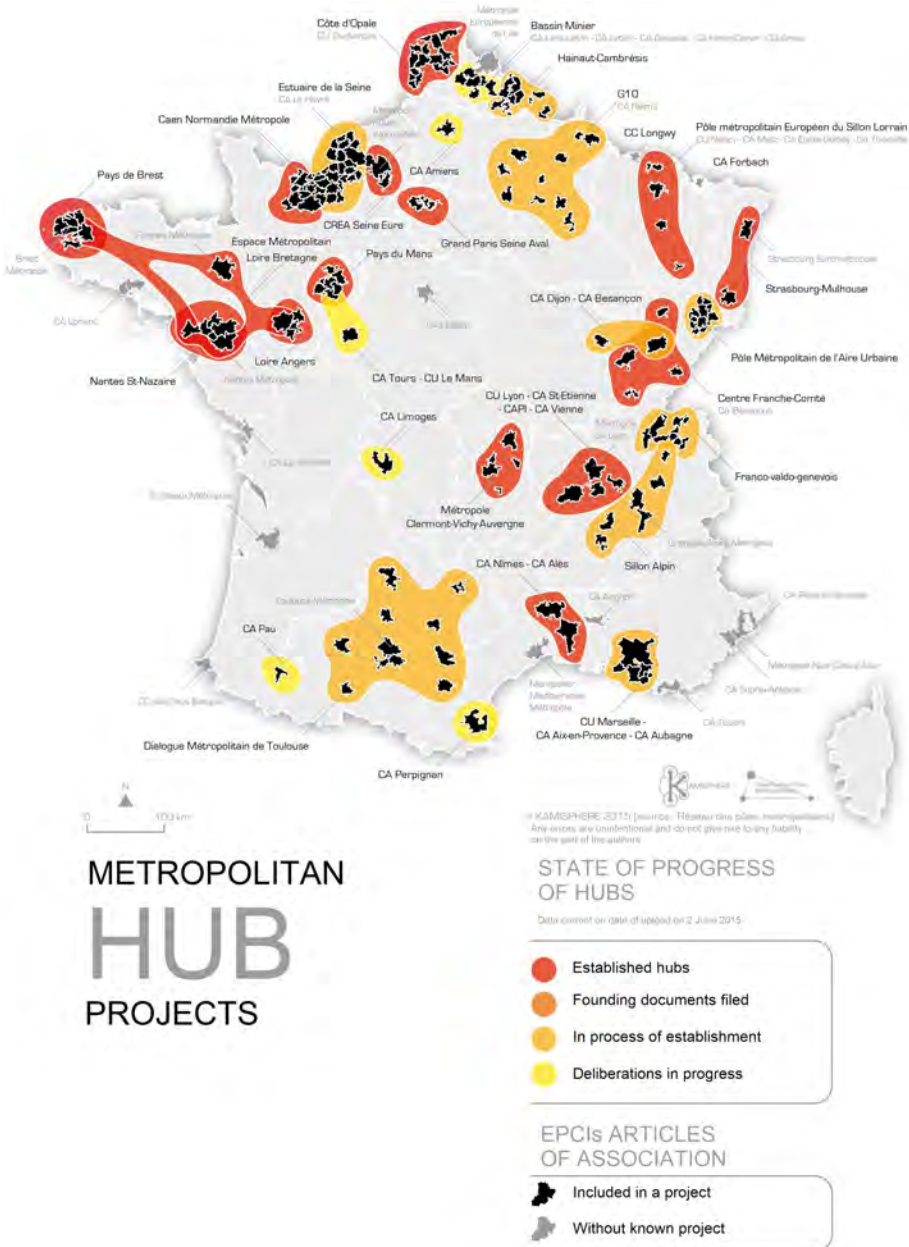


Fig. 5: The metropolitan hubs (pôles métropolitains) in France /Source: Réseau des Pôles Métropolitains 2015

3 Characteristics of metropolitan border regions

What are the typical characteristics of metropolitan border regions? This question was the focus of the first Model Project for Spatial Planning on cross-border interactional areas. It examined the Meuse-Rhine Euroregion (EMR), the Greater Region, the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine (TMO) and the Lake Constance region. Several workshops between the project partners and expert opinions provided the basis for the project (TU Dresden 2009, 2010a, 2010b; *BBSR* 2010; ESPON/University of Luxembourg 2010; *BMVBS* 2011).

The starting point was a comparison of metropolitan functions of the border regions concerned with selected European metropolitan regions in Germany (TU Dresden 2009, 2010a): 'The present results demonstrate that large sub-regions of the examined border regions show a potential that is comparable to that of smaller German metropolitan regions such as Nuremberg, Hanover or central Germany' (*BMVBS* 2011: 37; see Table 1). However, these functions and administrative powers are only of limited legal effectiveness for integrated (metropolitan) development of the border regions, because complex multi-level interactions make joint action and administrative processes more difficult, and settlement and subsidy policies for companies as well as research and development policy or transport policy continue to have a predominantly national focus (TU Dresden 2010a; *BMVBS* 2013).

In addition to metropolitan location factors, a special focus was placed on functional interactions across national borders. The commuter relations between the national sub-regions are an excellent indicator: the commuter flows in the Greater Region are the highest in Europe (ESPON/University of Luxembourg 2010: 38 et seq., 44). The other regions involved in the Model Project for Spatial Planning are also characterised by strong links between their employment markets. However, according to a study by the Technical University Dresden (TU Dresden 2010b: 8), intense functional interactions remain limited to the areas close to the border and cannot be documented from an analytical perspective for the territory of the large-scale border regions, such as the Greater Region or the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine.

The border between the national sub-regions can become a driver for the intensification of functional interactions. Strong economic locations and in particular the structural disparities between the national sub-regions are decisive drivers in this regard. Sohn (2013: 2) proposes 'that the opening-up of borders represents a fresh opportunity for urban border areas to reinforce their positions within the networks of a globalized economy and to assert their autonomy as cross-border regional entities. As harnessed by actors (e.g. organizations, groups, interests) that exploit the benefits of position or of difference, as spaces of hybridization or as objects of recognition, borders can be seen as a resource. Without minimizing their possible obstructive effects, it is helpful to recognize that borders can also represent an advantage in the composition of CBMRs'² (see Table 2).

2 CBMR = Cross-Border Metropolitan Region.

Comparison region	Capitals, state capitals	Top 500 universities	UNESCO World Heritage Sites
Lake Constance European interactional area	7 (Bregenz, Vaduz, St. Gallen, Frauenfeld, Schaffhausen, Zurich, Aarau)	3 (Constance, ETH [Swiss Technical University] Zurich, University of Zurich)	Monastic Island of Reichenau in Lake Constance Abbey of St Gall
Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine	2 (Basel, Strasbourg)	4 (Basel, Freiburg, Strasbourg, Karlsruhe)	Grande-Île of Strasbourg Fortifications of Vauban in Neuf-Brisach
Greater Region SaarLorLux	4 (Luxembourg, Mainz, Metz, Saarbrücken)	2 (Nancy, Mainz)	Speyer Cathedral Roman monuments, Cathedral of St Peter and Church of Our Lady in Trier Völklingen Ironworks Upper Middle Rhine Valley Place Stanislas, Place de la Carrière and Place d'Alliance in Nancy City of Luxembourg: its old quarters and fortifications Ship lifts on the Canal du Centre Medieval belfries in Flanders and Wallonia Neolithic flint mines near Spiennes (Mons) Notre Dame Cathedral in Tournai
Meuse-Rhine Euroregion	3 (Eupen, Liège, Maastricht)	3 (Aachen, Maastricht, Liège)	Aachen Cathedral Flemish béguinages Medieval belfries in Flanders and Wallonia
Nuremberg Metropolitan Region	0	3 (Würzburg, Erlangen-Nuremberg, Bayreuth)	Town of Bamberg
Hanover-Braunschweig-Göttingen-Wolfsburg metropolitan region	1 (Hanover)	4 (Braunschweig, Hannover Medical School, Leipzig University Hannover, Göttingen)	St Mary's Cathedral and St Michael's Church in Hildesheim
Central German metropolitan region	3 (Dresden, Magdeburg, Erfurt)	4 (Halle-Wittenberg, Leipzig, Jena, Dresden)	Bauhaus and its sites in Weimar and Dessau Classical Weimar Garden Kingdom of Dessau-Wörlitz Wartburg Castle near Eisenach Luther Memorials in Eisleben and Wittenberg Collegiate Church, Castle and Old Town of Quedlinburg

Table 1: Comparison of the regions involved in the Model Project for Spatial Planning with metropolitan regions in Germany (capitals and state capitals, presence of Top 500 universities [Shanghai ranking], UNESCO World Heritage sites) / Source: BMVBS 2011: 34 et seq., the author

Types of benefit	Border func-tions involved	Rationales	Examples of CBMRs*
Positional benefit	Delimitation	Territorial gateway Cross-border delocalization (metropolitan overflow)	Basel, Geneva Geneva, Hong Kong, Singapore
Differential Benefit	Differentiation	Exploitation of cost differ-entials (value capture)	El-Paso Ciudad Juarez, Hong Kong, Luxembourg, San Diego-Tijuana, Singapore
Locus of hybridization	Differentiation	Confrontation of differences resulting in (1) cultural or (2) institutional innovation	(1) San Diego-Tijuana (2) Basel, Geneva, Lille
Object of recognition	Affirmation	Staging of the international character of a city-region (territorial marketing) Political recognition of peripheral actors	Basel, Copenhagen-Malmö, Strasbourg Geneva

* The list of CBMRs mentioned here is meant to be illustrative and is by no means exhaustive.

Table 2: The border as a resource / Source: Sohn 2013: 12; the author

Unlike (most) domestic metropolitan regions in Germany, the border regions in question have a culture of cooperation that has been tried and tested over decades as well as diverse, established institutional structures for cooperation. They form part of a political and administrative framework and are thus clearly defined in spatial terms. Embedding new concepts in existing structures can entail benefits, although it may prove to be a disadvantage if this cannot be achieved and existing organisations and stakeholders are critical of them or the resulting changes.

The same applies to the spatial framework of the border regions when concepts such as ‘cross-border polycentric metropolitan region’ (CBPMR) of the Greater Region relate primarily to a core area (see Petra Schelkmann’s paper in this volume). This is where the concept of variable geometry, i.e. of flexible demarcations of spaces for cooperation and action given the respective needs for action, reaches its limits: the stakeholders of non-participating, peripheral sub-regions may feel at a disadvantage if this highly symbolic concept of a metropolitan cross-border region is implemented with a heavy focus on the core area. At the same time, large-scale, heavily polycentric metropolitan areas show deficits in their perceptibility and transparency (*BMVBS/BBR* 2007: 70), as well as in bridging competing or divergent development objectives in the various sub-regions for the benefit of joint strategies. The findings by Rusche/Oberst (2010: 252 et seq.) on regional economic aspects in metropolitan regions appear to confirm these concerns and moreover suggest that very large regions are not always able to meet the expectations for their economic performance.

As part of the Model Project for Spatial Planning, the project partners agreed on key constitutive characteristics of metropolitan border regions (*BMVBS* 2011a: 9; *BMVBS* 2011: 40 et seq.; *BMVBS* 2013: 15 et seq.): ‘Metropolitan border regions are characterised by

- 1 cross-border functional interrelations and commonalities,
- 2 existing institutional agreements for large-scale cross-border cooperation,
- 3 large-scale regionalisation processes and a polycentric spatial structure, as well as
- 4 metropolitan locational factors and potentials for growth and innovation.’
(*BMVBS* 2011a: 9)

4 Metropolisation strategies in border regions

Although border regions such as the Greater Region or the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine offer good starting points for metropolisation strategies, it becomes clear that despite cross-border cooperation spanning (in many cases) decades, the barrier effect of national borders remains an obstacle to their adequate functional and territorial integration and the successful exploitation of their economic and innovation potential. Different legal, taxation and planning systems, as well as differences in administrative cultures and complex multi-level governance in the bor-

der area, competing dual structures and language barriers often present obstacles to the implementation of cross-border strategies and programmes. Many cross-border projects fail despite promising ideas and plans. These deficits in regional development become particularly clear in border regions with very closely-knit interrelations.

Which levers could be used to adapt and enhance metropolitan qualities and developments in border regions? It is certainly helpful in this context to look at the positioning of the Initiative Group of European Metropolitan Regions in Germany [*Initiativkreis Europäischer Metropolregionen in Deutschland, IKM*] (IKM, undated), which was established in 2001 and represents the interests of the domestic metropolitan regions. The Initiative Group of European Metropolitan Regions in Germany acts as a lobby group at the national, European and international level. The group sees the improvement of transport networks between the metropolitan regions in Germany and the neighbouring countries, the shaping of effective metropolitan forms of governance and of knowledge regions and knowledge management or joint regional monitoring to be important fields of action.

Particular importance is attached to the questions of accessibility and access to knowledge and information, but also to a 'metropolitan foreign policy' for representing the metropolitan region outside of the region itself and joint marketing. In principle, the metropolisation process is associated with the prioritisation of specific fields of action, which leads to a shift in the spectrum of tasks. Blatter/Knieling point out that the tasks of land-use planning, which relate to internal coordination, recede into the background, while the development of locations and marketing become more important (Blatter/Knieling 2009: 252).

For border regions, this results in additional challenges: a 'small-scale foreign policy' in the cross-border context can quickly turn into a national affair due to the direct or indirect involvement of public authorities (Euro-Institute 2010). As a result, a foreign policy for the metropolitan region, which may be par for the course for Berlin, Hamburg or Frankfurt, is an extremely sensitive political issue for border regions.

Likewise, cross-border coordination and the agreement of 'hard' infrastructure measures will collide only too quickly with national interests. While the increasing mobility in border regions is welcome, traffic and transport problems increase due to the insufficient infrastructural development of the border area and public transport systems that are not aligned with the needs of commuters.

Mobility planning in the sense of an integration of the border regions into the transnational European networks as well as the improvement of internal mobility is certainly a key policy. This aspect illustrates, for merely one among many spatially-relevant policy areas, the specific need for action in the context of metropolisation strategies in border regions.

In the Greater Region, a list of transport projects, which are a priority for the metropolitan development of the entire region, was approved (*KARE* [Coordinating Committee for Spatial Development] / Summit of the Greater Region / *WSAGR* [Eco-

nomic and Social Committee of the Greater Region] 2014: 1; see Petra Schelkmann's paper in this volume). In the same year, a Spatial Development Strategy of the Greater Region was adopted to promote economic, social and territorial cohesion for the benefit of intelligent, sustainable and inclusive growth and thus contribute to the overall strengthening of the metropolitan, polycentric and cross-border dimension (Summit of the Greater Region 2014: 5). The development of mobility was to play a key role in the regional development strategy. Yet Chilla/Schulz (2014: 13) point out with regard to the Metroborder initiative or strategies to improve the cross-border transport situation (as part of the *Schéma de mobilité transfrontalière, SMOT* [cross-border mobility scheme]): 'Nevertheless, these initiatives remain non-binding instruments of concertation. To date, these were not able to remedy the obvious "institutional void" in this cross-border context, requiring further efforts for formal "supra-regionalization" of spatial development policies (Evrard: 2013) while certain actors deliberately profit from the opportunities of an underregulated border regime, e.g. in the field of large retailing infrastructure (Affolderbach: 2013)'.

In addition, the discussions on a New Regionalism suggest that regionalisation processes, as a counterweight to globalisation and deterritorialisation, should not be limited to economic aspects. Only a more comprehensive consideration of their endogenous potential and their embedding in territorial strategies will enable (metropolitan) regions to become strong players with their own formative powers. Yet New Regionalism was likewise criticised for being too closely linked to competitive thinking and focused on optimising the economic performance of a region (Zimmermann/Heinelt 2012: 23).

5 Metropolitan governance in border regions

In the context of the successful implementation of metropolisation strategies, particular importance is attached to the elaboration of appropriate forms of governance: 'Metropolitan governance relates to a changed understanding of how an urban region is managed. Governance in this regard refers to the stakeholders, institutions and processes that characterise the development of an urban region and the manner and means of its management' (Blatter/Knieling 2009: 234). Blatter/Knieling (2009: 263) see metropolitan governance 'as a complex regulatory system with numerous parallel levers. It is characterised by the direct interaction between a task and its organisation ("form follows function"); other crucial impacting factors are its strategic orientation, geographic demarcation, functional differentiation or integration, the participation of private stakeholders from the economy and civil society, planning culture, the instruments used, integration in the multi-level governance system and contextual control.' From their perspective, two typical forms of metropolitan governance have evolved, the individual characteristics of which are consistent (see Table 3).

Metropolitan Governance Type I	Metropolitan Governance Type II
External profile	Internal management and integration
Functional differentiation /special-purpose associations and other organisations	Functional integration /comprehensive organisation
Soft institutionalisation	Hard institutionalisation
Integration of private/civil-society stakeholders	Consultation of private/civil-society stakeholders
Selective: (Large) projects/flagship projects/festivalisation	Integrative: Guiding principles/development strategies
Communicative instruments/organisational development	Regulatory elements
Symbolic capital	Legal framework

Table 3: Models of metropolitan governance /Source: Blatter/Knieling 2009: 26; author's own illustration (modified)

A look at the eleven domestic metropolitan regions in Germany reveals the diversity of governance forms and thus their dependence on the context (cf. IKM 2013); hence, there is no indication that a compelling development towards a 'specific optimal state' of metropolitan governance exists (Ludwig/Mandel/Schweiger et al. 2008: 186). In their analysis of selected metropolitan regions, Zimmermann/Heinelt (2012: 136 et seq.) conclude that this diversity is less due to institutional and structural differences than to specific constellations of stakeholders and administrative powers. These include, in particular:

- > the 'breaking up of stakeholder constellations' to break down routines and barriers (149);
- > the development of metropolitan leadership to overcome fragmented structures and to initiate a 'basic understanding of shared challenges and options for action' (141);
- > consensus-oriented behaviour to develop management strategies. This requires platforms or 'coupling instances' 'to force the stakeholders to meet, interact and to explain or justify their respective decisions' (143);
- > positive sum games to overcome or reduce distribution conflicts between the stakeholders and various sub-regions of the metropolitan region (144 et seq.).

In addition, the range of stakeholders in regional development has continuously expanded since the 1990s due to increased collaboration with other social stakeholders, such as social and business partners, as well as through the closer involvement of civil society. In metropolitan regions in particular, with their boggling diversity of stakeholders, stakeholder networks and their arenas, this leads to increased complexity in governance processes and increasing requirements. High densities of use, competing interests and well-organised interest or lobby groups lead to a clearly

increased level of conflict. With a view to spatial planning, this means an instrumental shift, which focuses on communicative and cooperative instruments. At the same time, complex conflict situations require effective spatial planning policy instruments, in other words, a 'shadow of hierarchy' (Blatter/Knieling 2009: 238).

Zimmermann/Heinelt (2012: 151 et seq.) believe, moreover, that a 'flexible political geometry' and 'loose coupling by means of different coherence mechanisms', which include 'guiding principles and rules on the exchange of information and coordination of actions', play a decisive role in the required processes of horizontal self-organisation in metropolitan regions. Metropolitan governance is always also multi-level governance, and especially in complex, loosely coupled management systems, there is a need for a joint strategic orientation (meta governance), which sets a framework for the action of the institutions involved (second order governance) (Zimmermann/Heinelt 2012: 29 et seq.).

Von Löwis (2012) specifies the following factors for the success of metropolitan governance:

- > strong coordination in the sense of the metropolitan leadership; this is associated with effective network management and key players who create confidence
- > a 'variable geometry' – in space, time and policy, and thus stronger horizontal and vertical interactions
- > strategies which are locally and regionally relevant and have a symbolic impact
- > a translation or transfer of strategies into a specific set of references – for local and regional stakeholders – in social practice
- > a mobilisation of regional resources – material as well as immaterial and at all levels
- > rules for behavioural standards and cost/benefit compensation in the form of framework agreements or coupling transactions/relationships
- > 'structural gaps' to ensure that 'autonomous action' remains or becomes possible and to give rise to the (potential) for bottom-up activities

The border regions examined as part of the Model Project for Spatial Planning show very different contextual conditions at a regional level as well as a different logic in the development of cross-border cooperation, similar to the domestic metropolitan regions in Germany. Nevertheless, the development phases in all regions can be well parallelised (BMVBS 2011: 61; Euro-Institute 2010; see Table 4).

Phase	Period	Characteristic	Manifestation in the regions involved in the Model Project for Spatial Planning
Formation of administrative institutions	Late 1960s to early 1970s	First experimental experiences gained: establishment of individual relations led to the formation of official intergovernmental commissions with subdivisional regional committees/commissions and themed working groups or the establishment of foundations	Euroregion: Establishment of the Meuse-Rhine Foundation in 1975 Greater Region: Establishment of the Franco-German-Luxembourg intergovernmental commission on the Saarland-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/Western Palatinate regional commission in 1969–1971 Upper Rhine: Establishment of the Franco-German-Swiss intergovernmental commission (later Upper Rhine Conference) in 1975 Lake Constance: Establishment of the International Lake Constance Conference (IBK) in 1972 with its conference of heads of government and themed commissions
Governmental differentiation	Late 1980s to early 1990s	Creation of legislative bodies	Euroregion: 1995 Euroregion Council Greater Region: 1986 Interregional Parliamentary Council, followed by an interregional Economic and Social Committee Upper Rhine: 1997 Upper Rhine Council Lake Constance: 1991 Lake Constance Council
Project-oriented professionalisation	From the early 1990s	Implementation of cross-border projects	Advanced in particular through the implementation and successful execution of the INTERREG community initiative in all four border regions
Level-specific differentiation	From 2000	Establishment of Eurodistricts, city networks, Agenda processes	Euroregion: Aachen-Heerlen Eurodistrict (project) Greater Region: SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, QuattroPole city network Upper Rhine: 4 Eurodistricts (REGIO PAMINA, Strasbourg-Ortenau, Freiburg Region-Centre et Sud Alsace, Basel Trinational Eurodistrict) Lake Constance: Lake Constance Agenda 21

Table 4: Phases of the institutionalisation of cross-border cooperation in the Greater Region and the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine /Source: BMVBS 2011: 61, based on the cross-sectional analysis of cooperation structures of the Euro-Institute 2010

Overall, the financial resources provided and the extent of organisation and professionalisation are at a pronounced imbalance in relation to the diversity of tasks – there are no easy cross-border issues – and the increasing challenges of cross-border cooperation in intensely interlinked border regions. A clear dependency on the European funding landscape (particularly the INTERREG funding programme) is apparent; reliance on each sub-region's own budget is comparatively limited. Stakeholders who are engaged in cross-border activities generally remain embedded in their national political and administrative contexts; in addition, their administrative powers are in line with their national sectoral logic and are therefore greatly fragmented. One exception is the Upper Rhine region, which has implemented considerable personnel cuts in the context of cross-border facilities (BMVBS 2011: 62 et seq.).

State and municipal actors dominate cross-border cooperation for reasons of their historical development. Funding programmes such as INTERREG make these stakeholder constellations manifest. Even if business or social partners participate in cross-border cooperation as part of committee work, as in the case of the Greater Region or the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine, the integration of societal stakeholders is at a level far below that in the domestic metropolitan regions.

In addition, a pronounced multi-level mismatch characterises the border regions: in the committees of the Greater Region, national, regional and municipal stakeholders meet, which entails a considerable imbalance of decision-making powers and scope. Both in local and in (macro) regional cooperation associations across national borders, the following applies: 'Due to disparities in competences across the various borders, the political governance of local cross-border spaces requires the involvement of higher territorial levels [...]' (Peyrony/Denert 2012: 237).

The established structures display a marked persistence; hence, the principle of unanimity in decision-making processes and the ‘forced parity’ resulting from strong national constraints tend to counteract innovations in cross-border cooperation. The problem of principal agents leads to protracted coordination and feedback processes (Euro-Institute 2010: 14). There are virtually no routines for the negotiation of conflict-prone interests; instead, conflicts are avoided and attention is directed only to pleasant matters, resulting in fair-weather relations; this is not only true for the elaboration of joint INTERREG projects (Schniedermeier 2010). Control in the ‘shadow of hierarchy’ is only possible in the political and administrative context of national sub-regions: ‘When it comes to cross-border cooperation, governance has to serve as a substitute for government, because the latter remains within a national framework’ (Peyrony/Denert 2012: 236). To this extent, coherent territorial and functional integration is significantly complicated without an agreed cross-border orientation of regional development (meta governance) and of its embedding in the political and administrative systems as well as the planning systems of the national sub-regions. ‘The cooperation of autonomous stakeholders instead of integrated structures and processes as well as occasional project work instead of consolidation based on shared objectives lead, in conjunction with the lack of joint instruments, to potentially lower efficiency’ (BMVBS 2011: 65).

The conclusion is quite sobering: the tradition and practice of cross-border cooperation appear to be difficult to reconcile with the demands of metropolitan governance. However, it must always be taken into account that the known obstacles are also and have always been the triggers and drivers of cross-border cooperation.

Previous experiences show that the reorientation of cross-border governance must be a focal point in order to successfully implement metropolisation strategies. The recommendations based on analyses and discussions as part of the Model Projects for Spatial Planning (BMVBS 2011: 67 et seq.; Euro-Institute 2010) relate to

... the strengthening of the cross-border strategy context (as a negotiation process in the framework of meta governance): Even if strategies exist for all the border regions in question, their binding effect on the stakeholders in the national sub-regions remains insignificant. ‘In practice, a sectoral policy approach specific to each individual project prevails in which the wider context of integrated, cross-border spatial development often recedes into the background compared to initiatives focusing on individual issues’ (BMVBS 2011: 67).

... a subsidiary differentiation of levels of action: This is combined with a vertical division of tasks, which takes the various levels and functional interactions into account. The benefits of a variable geometry must be interpreted not only in a spatial but also in a temporal perspective. Initial approaches are apparent both in the Greater Region and the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine: ‘the former through the structuring of the INTERREG programme into an overall regional programme line and five sub-programmes, the latter through the conceptual differentiation between the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine and the Eurodistricts or the urban network’ (BMVBS 2011: 68). Yet, the cross-border context quickly reveals that ‘defining and concretising a perimeter of action is a

sensitive topic. In particular, the differentiation between institutional perimeter and the political focus can be crucial' (ESPON/University of Luxembourg 2010: 10). In addition, national competences cannot be transferred without further ado to cross-border institutions in border regions, often for constitutional reasons: 'In most cases, it would be helpful if the responsible actors could agree to facilitate integrated cross-border agencies for the tasks which are still nationally defined and under the auspices of the national authorities' (BMVBS 2011: 67).

... a differentiation of the stakeholder structures: In a national context, it is already common practice to involve business and social partners as well as civil society in governance processes at different levels. In a cross-border context, this step requires numerous preconditions to be met, not only due to language and cultural differences, but also due to the historical development of the cooperation relationships. This would, however, allow for a better counterbalancing of the dominance of public stakeholders in the cross-border cooperation. In addition, proactive and systematic interactions between the various stakeholder and decision-making arenas is necessary to minimise the *principal agent* as well as the *multi level* mismatch issues.

... a further development of the existing institutional structure in the direction of 'metropolitan' governance. From the perspective of the Euro-Institute (2010), different models are open for discussion (BMVBS 2011: 72):

- > 'the integrated central model: the bundling of all management powers at the overall regional level with loosely linked, decentralised, project-related units at the sub-regional level of implementation
- > the vertical cascade model: the concretisation of formative powers across the various levels of action, from the overall regional to the sub-regional and local levels
- > a model of decentralised concentration: the bundling of the primary management and implementation powers at the sub-regional level, mediation of good practices, an exchange of experience and shaping of general conditions at the overall regional level
- > a model of functional interaction: synergetic networking of existing organisations and initiatives without an actual institutional management at its core.'

The 1996 Karlsruhe Accord on cross-border cooperation between territorial authorities and public bodies signed by France, Luxembourg, Germany and Switzerland created essential stimuli in the border regions concerned for the intensification and institutionalisation of cooperation (Dörrenbächer 2014: 170). The Regulation of the European Parliament and of the Council of 5 July 2006 on establishing a European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) charted an entirely new course for the European Union. The opportunities offered by the EGTC as a legal basis for territorial cooperation in Europe create new impulses for restructuring legally established border regions. It is hoped that this instrument will 'place cross-border cooperation on a permanent, stable basis' (Gabbe 2011: 99). More recent research on the Greater

Region shows, however, that there is fundamental scepticism on the part of stakeholders about the transfer of competences to cross-border institutions (Henn 2016: 226).

In January 2008, the modernisation discussions on current cross-border cooperation gave rise to a resolution of the 11th Tri-Nations Congress to develop the Upper Rhine region into the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine. The founding document was signed on 9 December 2010. The collaboration was structurally and institutionally designed to create a network comprising the four pillars of policy-making, the economy, science and civil society. A vertical division of responsibilities is to apply between the level of the metropolitan region (interregional) and the Eurodistricts (intermunicipal) (TMO 2010; Fig. 6).

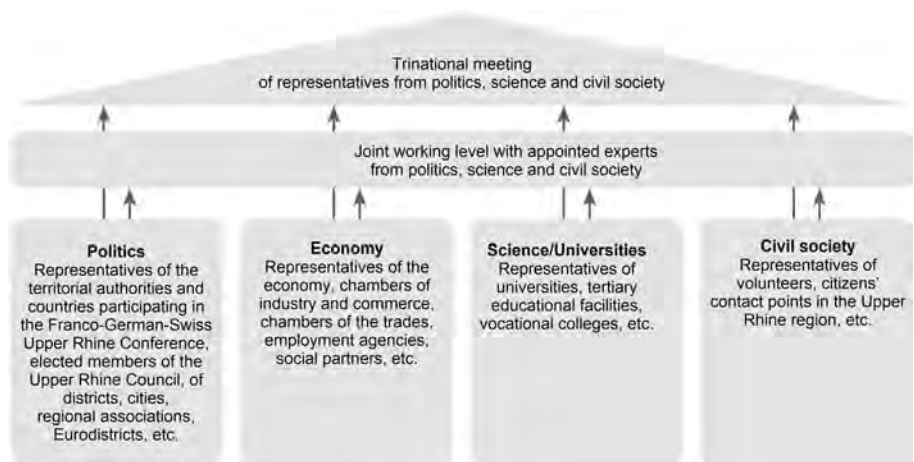


Fig. 6: Institutional structures of cooperation in the Trinational Metropolitan Region of the Upper Rhine /Source: BMVBS 2011: 31, based on data from the Franco-German-Swiss Upper Rhine Conference, modified

After initial euphoria, disillusionment quickly set in: the implementation of crucial aspects of metropolitan governance proved to be impossible. Instead, the (new) governance processes remained steeped in the traditional problems. As Frey (2010: 343 et seq.) observed, 'at the regional level competences have not yet been transferred to interstate or cross-border coordination structures': due to the principal agent problems related to such a transfer, the resolutions of cross-border coordination structures would frequently exceed the boundaries of the powers of the individual partners in the national context; moreover, the principle of consensus is said to lead to 'a pronounced culture of (preliminary) negotiations and compromise'.

In the Greater Region, too, the CBPMR concept and a potential concentration of metropolitan governance in the core region (see Petra Schelkmann's paper in this volume) give rise to controversial discussions. Although the key role of Luxembourg in

the Greater Region – as an economic driver and a location for metropolitan functions – is widely acknowledged, the stakeholders within the governance arrangements are critical about the focus on a core area around Luxembourg (Henn 2016: 221).

The conclusions of Megerle (2009: 37) on the institutional reorganisation of the metropolitan regions apply especially to the border regions: ‘the problem that German metropolitan regions have in attaining the ability to act both externally and internally is largely due to their comparatively weak institutionalisation (*BBR* 2002: 127), as well as to the lack of interest of the German administrative culture in integrated, interdisciplinary planning (John 2006: 676). In order to reveal the full strengths of the metropolitan regions “institutional restructuring of these regions” would be required (Adam/Göddecke-Stellmann/Heidbrink 2005: 418)’.

6 The role of spatial planning

The active shaping of metropolitan regions as attractive living environments with the aim to balance ecological, economic and socio-cultural aspects in the sense of sustainable spatial development requires suitable management mechanisms and instruments. The question of the functions and role of spatial planning arises in this context. Preising (2013: 188 et seq., 200 et seq.) distinguishes between opportunities, risks and potential functions of spatial planning in a metropolitan region based on four fundamental dimensions of action (cf. in this regard Blatter 2005: 126): norm-oriented action, benefit-oriented action, communicative action and dramaturgic action. Against this backdrop, Table 5 addresses the specific opportunities of and obstacles to spatial (development) planning in metropolitan border regions.

The diverse opportunities of spatial (development) planning in metropolitan border regions are faced with significant obstacles, which are partly owing to the general structural circumstances of cross-border cooperation. It must be assumed, however, that without overall regional objectives for cross-border regional development, the implementation of ambitious metropolisation strategies does not appear to be promising. At the very least, the desired added value cannot be achieved and/or imbalances in the border region are reinforced.

While formal regional planning in the sense of German spatial planning law is hardly applicable to border regions, overall regional development strategies can offer a basic strategic framework and a coordinated action programme for cross-border cooperation despite the lack of a binding legal effect. This depends on the decision-making bodies in the national sub-regions accepting the need to agree on the thematic and spatial focal points and on key projects for the metropolitan region. Controversial topics must also be addressed, and a road map or at least options for their resolution must be indicated. A prerequisite in this regard is that the acting stakeholders (can) agree on integrating and compensatory approaches and develop ‘package deals’ to balance interests. In addition, as part of joint (informal) spatial planning it must be indicated how the metropolisation strategies and recommended actions for spatial development should be reflected in the formal planning measures of the national sub-regions. In the Greater Region (as in other places) the benefit of informal planning

strategies has been recognised, and the drafting of a spatial development perspective for the Greater Region (REKGR) has been initiated (see Petra Schelkmann's paper in this volume).

Opportunities	Obstacles
Benefit-oriented action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A joint look at the border region to identify challenges, potentials and fields of action for the entire region in regard to cross-border spatial development • Jointly dealing with spatially-relevant issues as a stimulus for building up cross-border data and shared expertise • Identifying relations between the (national) sub-regions as a basis for collaborative and integrative approaches as well as strategies for package deals • Agreed guiding principle, objectives and strategies as a basis for an accepted regional profile and a coordinated frame of action in the sense of an 'Agenda for the Border Region' • Bundling of (sub)regional resources; national and European funding for joint key projects that support metropolisation strategies • A concerted framework for action for the border region to create investment security for public and municipal stakeholders, enterprises and the population, for the coupling of spatial development and funding policies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Complex structures of cooperation with protracted work processes and necessary link back to national decision-making structures • Imbalances in the multi-level governance system between the national sub-regions (e.g. national level meets the municipal level) • The dominance of public stakeholders and reduced representation of social and economic partners as key actors and resources for metropolisation strategies • The size of metropolitan border regions and their complex spatial structure with non-transparent stakeholder constellations and competing interests • Insufficient availability and compatibility of data on the assessment of the potential of cross-border spatial development
Norm-oriented action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An accepted guiding principle for the border region as 'identification core' and policy guidelines with objectives for the entire region as a 'counterweight' to sub-regional and national interests • Joint spatial (development) planning as a roadmap for cross-border spatial development policy for the embedding of metropolisation strategies and as a reference level for themed or sub-regional network and project work 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Policy of the smallest common denominator' as the result of resorting to informal spatial development perspectives because formal, binding spatial (development) planning in border regions will hardly be feasible • Differences in planning law, planning systems and planning cultures of the national sub-regions, which significantly impede reaching agreement on spatial planning strategies • Insufficient acceptance of spatial and thematic focal points given the concerns that the disparities between the core and the peripheries will increase in border regions • Insufficient involvement of municipal stakeholders in cross-border cooperation across the entire region as 'fault lines' in the planning hierarchy • Insufficient provision of resources for planning projects across the entire region relative to the complexity of the planning task in border regions
Communicative action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In-depth understanding of different (planning) cultures and decision-making routines, the perception of problems and the setting of agendas in the Greater Region through planning for the entire region • Communicating the added value of the concept of the metropolitan border region internally through a coordinated spatial development policy, specific action programmes and key projects • Joint spatial (development) planning as a point of contact for spatially-relevant and metropolitan region issues to bring the responsible stakeholders of the national sub-regions together • Broadening and solidifying the planning dialogue through participation processes which take the strategies for the entire region or for metropolisation to all planning levels and stakeholder arenas 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Resistance to new themes and strategies (e.g. metropolisation strategies) because of a traditional understanding of cross-border cooperation and the associated strategies • Resistance to opening up to an expanded group of stakeholders through building up existing cross-border committees, dialogue and coordination processes • Language barriers, different planning and dialogue cultures as well as the size of the established border regions as specific obstacles to a common understanding in relation to spatial development, as well as to the communication of spatial development strategies
Dramaturgic action	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Strong symbolic effect of joint spatial (development) planning and a shared spatial vision that garner attention and contribute to the formation of identity • A strong internal signal for strategies coordinated across borders and across issues for an increased focus on action across national borders and different planning levels • Joint external representation of interests in the European and national context through visible spatial (development) policy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Impression that there is no binding effect or political enforceability through informal spatial development perspectives • Impression of a standstill when negotiating hard or controversial topics and thus of protracted coordination processes, especially in a cross-border context • Shifting of focus to core spaces, especially in the context of metropolisation strategies with the result that imbalances can arise between the stakeholders in the border region or are perceived to do so

Table 5: Opportunities and obstacles of spatial (development) planning for metropolitan border regions / Source: the author

The key actors of spatial development should be regularly included in an ongoing planning dialogue by means of a consistent communication process. Their responsibility is to develop forms of dialogue that provide better access for business and social partners and for municipalities and the population.

In the analysis of border regions, the question arises of the availability of the basic data that is required to achieve reliable results: ‘At present, there exist no relevant statistical indicators for most of the cross-border territories. Such indicators are nevertheless essential for performing appropriate analyses of these territories, their handicaps and assets, as well as for establishing evidence and making shared diagnoses on which to base joint policies and actions’ (Peyrony/Denert 2012: 231). In particular for cross-border interactional areas, consistent data foundations must be made available across borders as a starting point for a shared notion of space and coordinated regional development. Projects were launched several years ago in the Greater Region and along the Upper Rhine: in the latter region, GeoRhena replaced the previous geographic information system for the area of the Upper Rhine (GISOR) in 2015 and has offered its own geoportal since May 2017. In the Greater Region, various databases have been compiled in recent years as part of the ‘geographic information system for the Greater Region’ (GIS-GR) project and numerous sets of maps drawn up. A meeting of representatives of both information systems took place in November 2015, where an intensification of the strategic cooperation between both projects was agreed (GeoPortal of the Greater Region 2015). Since the end of 2015, the exchange on cross-border spatial observation has also been strengthened on the federal level. To this end, the Model Project for Spatial Planning on ‘Spatial observation in Germany and adjacent regions’ was conducted (2015–2017). The federal state of Rhineland-Palatinate and the Upper Rhine region were selected for a model project; they have elaborated strategies for the cross-border provision, processing and harmonisation of data and communicated their experiences with the federation and the other model regions.

7 The concept of metropolitan border regions as an opportunity?

In a cross-border context, the concept of metropolitan regions generally offers the opportunity to adapt cooperation structures and spatial development to the needs of an increasingly interconnected world, a converging Europe and increasingly intra-regional competition. The shared guiding vision of a metropolitan border region can also lay the foundations for adapting (national) spatial development policies to a greater extent to the needs of closely-interlinked interactional border regions with a high volume of cross-border commuters.

Nevertheless, the most recent decade has shown that metropolisation strategies in border regions come up against substantial structural and political obstacles. The concept of metropolitan regions is only sluggishly implemented in a cross-border context. For the Greater Region, Lorig (2016: 2) comments that ‘it has not yet been possible to achieve the objective of seeking to represent the best practice for European regional policy’ and that there are indications that the political and practical significance of the Greater Region project is waning. He raises the question of the

extent to which the redefinition of the *Grand Est* region in France can be reconciled with the guiding principle of the Greater Region, and also to which extent the concept of the cross-border polycentric metropolitan region (CBPMR) means a continuation of or de-parture from the previous objectives of cross-border spatial development.

The fundamental criticism of the concept of metropolitan regions (see section 2) also applies in the context of cross-border cooperation: What transactional costs does the concept entail? How are peripheral or structurally weak areas integrated? How can a consensus-oriented balance be struck between the different sub-regions? Where do legitimacy deficits occur, and how can they be counteracted? These (unresolved) issues currently arise both in the Upper Rhine region and the Greater Region (see Petra Schelkmann's paper in this volume).

The concept of metropolitan border regions is thus not a sure-fire success. Its successful implementation will not be possible without broad-based political support, proactive implementation of key measures, metropolisation strategies and the courageous further development of existing cooperation structures all the way to 'metropolitan' governance.

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