

The discrepancy in *PAMINA* between the European image of a cross-border region and cross-border behaviour

Kees Terlouw

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Abstract Subsidizing cross-border regions is a method to close the gap between citizens and the European Union. This analysis of PAMINA, a cross-border region in the Rhine Valley near Karlsruhe, discusses some of the difficulties of this policy. There are structural mismatches between the scales of different cross-border relations. These vertical mismatches are linked to the differences in the horizontal logics of economic and administrative cross-border relations. Especially cross-border commuting, made possible by European economic integration, has improved the daily life of many inhabitants of this region. Paradoxically this regional success of European economic integration is disconnected from the EU funded cross-border region. They not only relate to different scales, but the same spatial asymmetry generating this cross-border behaviour hinders administrative cross-border cooperation in PAMINA.

Keywords Cross-border regions · European Union · France · Germany · Regional cooperation · Scale

Introduction

The EU stimulates cross-border cooperation, partly to bridge the gap between the European Institutions in Brussels and the everyday life of the Europeans. This article analyses the relation between cross-border relations and the EU funded cross-border region PAMINA¹ along the French–German border in the Rhine Valley near Karlsruhe.² The EU has an

¹ PAMINA is an acronym for the southern *Pfalz* and *Mittlere Oberrhein* region and the Northern Alsace. It covers an area with a long tradition of cross-border cooperation. PAMINA is a locally governed organisation, governed by a board of local politicians. It employs about a dozen people, who are divided over an INTERREG secretariat, the consumer information point INFOBEST, the tourist cooperation VIS-à-VIS, and an organisational bureau.

² This paper is partly based on three field trips with Master students of the department of human geography and planning of Utrecht University. We selected the established PAMINA region where cross-border co-operation and activities are important, in order to give relevant assignments to dozens of project groups working for three weeks, half of which on location. The field trips used a quick scan method. After studying general literature on the border region and specific material on their topic beforehand, our students spend most of the time in the field interviewing key actors and the local population. In this respect this fieldwork was much more extensive than that of Beck (1997) and Götschel (2004) who studied the PAMINA organisation mainly by interviewing experts and participating administrators. This top-down approach is quite common in studies of EUREGIOs (Perkmann 2003). The first field trip in 2000 focussed on the cross-border projects operating in the PAMINA framework. These were the

K. Terlouw (✉)
Urban and Regional Research Centre Utrecht,
Faculty of Geosciences, Utrecht University,
Utrecht, The Netherlands
e-mail: terlouw@geo.uu.nl

important role in the regulation of both cross-border socio-economic interaction and administrative cooperation. Both types of cross-border relations are significant and well established. But do they match? What is the relevance of cross-border administrative cooperation for cross-border behaviour in PAMINA? To answer these questions we start discussing why regional cross-border cooperation became important for an EU wanting to bridge the gap with its citizens.

European Integration and cross-border regions

Economic cooperation is at the core of the European Integration process, partly to make new wars between European states impossible through mutual economic dependence. The gradual lifting since the 1950s of the barriers between national markets stimulated the economies of the EU states (Bache and George 2006). Border regions profited from this general economic policy. A specific EU policy towards border regions is a much more recent phenomenon. It emerged as part of EU regional policy. This developed in response to several challenges European Integration faced since the 1970s. Enlargements of the EU with poorer states increased the regional disparities at the European scale. Regional policy also balanced the bias of the burgeoning common agricultural policy favouring particular states, by focussing on other states. Furthermore, European regional subsidies relieved the political pressure on governments to use national subsidies to counteract the economic downturn of the 1970s. The European

Commission increasingly used its regional policy to bypass the member states and directly influence regions. Related to its identity building projects of ‘unity in diversity’ and the ‘Europe of the regions’ it stimulated cross-border regions through the INTERREG programme partly to bridge the gap with the population (McNeill 2004, p. 15; Delanty and Rumford 2005; CoR 2006; Donaldson 2006; Götschel 2004; Perkmann 2007a, p. 262).

The rise of EU subsidised cross-border regions is part of the widening of the European integration process from international economic cooperation towards social issues affecting individuals’ everyday life. The goals of EU regional policies reflect this. The European Spatial Development Perspective regards the cross-border cooperation at the regional level as “the level at which citizens experience firsthand the results of European spatial development policy” (ESDP 1999, p. 42). Reducing the barrier of the border in everyday life is one of the main goals of the INTERREG programme for cross-border cooperation. It funds projects to stimulate cross-border labour mobility, shopping, travel and education (INTERREG 2005, p. 4). Other goals are more economical, and the current INTERREG IV programme further attaches more weight to territorial cooperation and social cohesion (INTERREG 2008).

Population involvement has also become more important for PAMINA, the INTERREG funded cross-border region studied here (INTERREG 2005, p. 11). It has identified the establishment of a cross-border employment market and socio-cultural integration through the promotion of everyday contacts between citizens as two of its five priorities (EC 2007). These locally formulated goals differ only slightly from the priorities for the entire INTERREG III programme as formulated in the guidelines from the Commission (EC 2004, p. 5). However, contrary to the other priorities, these labour market and socio-cultural priorities are hardly translated into action points (PAMINA 2006, p. 8). The labour market is only mentioned once in PAMINA’s own annual report on its activities in 2006 (PAMINA 2007).

Official evaluations of the INTERREG programmes show a similar shift. Older evaluations focus on the successful creation of a cross-border organisation through administrative cooperation. Although the lack of progress on labour market issues is noticed, the earlier recommendations focus

Footnote 2 continued

INTERREG co-funded programmes on municipal cooperation, planning, education, tourism, cycling, and the museums along the Rhine. Our students explored the cross-border regional processes that were addressed by these projects. Their perspective was much broader than the official project evaluation that focuses on achieving the specific goals stipulated in the INTERREG subsidy application. Other important border related topics like identity and cross-border commuting were also studied. The second field trip in 2002 further elaborated different cross-border topics like migration, transport and cross-border experiences of the population. The role of PAMINA and the border for other administrative regions within PAMINA like the arrondissement Saverne and municipal cooperation like the Technology Region Karlsruhe were also studied. The third field trip in 2004 focussed on the role of the border for businesses, citizens and the local administration in villages and towns on opposite sides of the border covering most of the border in the PAMINA area.

on administrative improvements (Schleicher-Tappeser et al. 1997, 1999). A mid-term evaluation of the INTERREG III period noted that PAMINA was still too much focussed on administrative cooperation. The execution of the programme falls short in achieving the goals of greater involvement of socio-economic actors and citizens (Fuchs and Beck 2003).

Studying borders

The study of borders has a long tradition in geography. Initially the focus was on the historical process of border demarcation and the characteristics of the border line. These were studied from a geopolitical perspective (Newman 2006). This kind of border study disappeared with the demise of political geography after the Second World War (Flint and Taylor 2007, p. 5). The renewed interest in borders in the last two decades focuses no longer on the demarcation of states, but on the border as a contact zone in the globalising world. The focus changed to the dynamics between the national border and other, economic, social and cultural, types of borders. In Europe, the EU focussed INTERREG funds for cross-border cooperation on organisations active in specific cross-border regions. The proliferation of these EUREGIO's gave a new impetus to border studies in Europe (Newman 2006; Anderson and O'Dowd 1999). Many instances of the creation, the organisational difficulties and the consequences of cross-border cooperation have been studied, also in this journal. In western European cross-border regions new infrastructure frequently stimulates cooperation (Heddebaut 2001; Schmidt 2005; Bucken-Knapp 2001), while the process of enlargement is important for eastern European case studies (Matthiesen and Brürkner 2001; Ladysz 2006; Bertram 1998; Nagy and Turnock 2000; Süli-Zakar 1999; Stryjakiewicz 1998). Comparisons between different EUREGIO's are scarcer (Perkmann 1999, 2003, 2007b). Organisation building at the level of the cross-border region is the main focus of all these studies.

Not only the practical problems of cross-border cooperation, but also the theoretical implications of these new regions crossing national borders have generated interest in cross-border regions. They are examples of the 'new regionalism' which is mainly a reaction to the competitive pressures of globalisation and the related rescaling of the nation-state (Jones

and MacLeod 2004). Traditional regionalism is based on popular identification with a well established region. The integral character of the regionalisms of for instance Catalonia, Scotland and Flanders brings them into competition with the nation-state. The 'new regionalism' is however closely linked to the policies of the nation-state. The demise of the nationally regulated economy linked to increased globalisation, prompted states to reorganise the regulation of their territories. This 'new regionalism' is a multi faceted phenomenon involving decentralisation, location policies, European Integration, policy networks, inter municipal cooperation, urban alliances etc. Cross-border regions are part of this 'new regionalism' (Keating 2008; Deas and Lord 2006). The study of cross-border regions is affected by the same controversies and confusions related to this 'new regionalism'. Kramsch (2002) criticises conceptualisations which uncritically regard cross-border regions as territorial entities constituting a new regional scale. He favours a more relational and historical approach where borders create differences which generate opportunities for profitable cross-border relations. Others also reject a fixed Russian doll conceptualisation of scale and focus instead on the process of rescaling (Howitt 2002). Rescaling is not the shifting of power from one territorial level to the other, but focuses on the changing interscalar relations (Brenner 2004). It is about dynamic networks of actors from different scales. These are not territorial, with fixed boundaries and integrating different policy fields through hierarchical authority. They form instead diverse and fragmented regional spaces based more on changeable networks of specialists who cooperate for specific purposes. Not everybody regards cross-border regions as an instrument of the vertical rescaling of states (Kramsch and Mamadouh 2003, p. 40). For some, the creation of new cross-border territories in the horizontal dimension is the most important consequence of the rescaling of political power (Perkmann 2007a, p. 256). For others, the importance of horizontal or vertical relations changes over time and differs between different cross-border regions (Blatter 2003, 2004; Kramsch and Mamadouh 2003; Herrschel 2005, 2007, p. 482). Some typify this hybrid character of cross-border regions as 'fuzzy regionalism' (Deas and Lord 2006, p. 1865) or as 'patching up' institutionalisation (Blatter 2003, p. 50). These different approaches are not mutually

exclusive, but focus on different aspects which can be used as different entry points for more encompassing analyses of specific cases (Jessop et al. 2008). The best way to study cross-border regions is to incorporate these different perspectives. Our study of PAMINA focuses on the changing horizontal and vertical relations between different fields linked to specific scales of first of all the EU sanctioned official cross-border cooperation, secondly the international cross-border regulation and thirdly the localised daily life of cross-border behaviour.

Recently, borders theories give more attention to the influence of borders on local everyday life. “Borders should be studied not only from a top-down perspective, but also from the bottom up, with a focus on the individual border narratives and experiences, reflecting the ways in which borders impact upon the daily life practices of people living in and around the borderland and transboundary transition zones.” (Newman 2006, p. 143). Borders are part of processes of intermingling and the creation of complex transition zones. The national border affects different aspects of life differently. National borders have become less a barrier to physical interaction, but even in the EU, everyday life is still largely regulated through national territories. National borders have shrunk to insignificance for the liberal economic and political rights of the EU citizens, but are still important for social rights (Anderson and O’Dowd 1999). Borders generate different experiences for different individuals in different places. Not all inhabitants of the border region profit to the same degree from the new opportunities at the other side of the national border. The classical division between the populations at both sides of the national border

does not just fades away, but is replaced by new divisions based on the different role of borders in their daily life (Newman 2006, p. 143; Newman and Paasi 1998; Paasi 2005).

Analysing cross-border regions like PAMINA must move beyond the study of the processes of the administrative cooperation and the successes of their projects. This paper starts by situating PAMINA in the wider context of French–German cooperation. Then attention shifts to how cooperation in PAMINA functions and links up with different scales. After this discussion of PAMINA’s institutionalisation, we examine the relations between cross-border behaviour and border regulation at different scales. This analysis explains the limited relevance of PAMINA as an organisation and as a scale level for regulating cross-border behaviour (Table 1, Fig. 1).

Originating at different scales

Cross-border cooperation in EUREGIO’s like PAMINA or SaarLorLux, is the latest phase in the transformation of the French–German border from a line of confrontation to a line of friendship. For centuries, the bitterly contested border was drawn at different places after wars over the Alsace between the expanding French and German states. After the defeat of Nazi Germany, it became a mutually accepted legal borderline. The Élysée-treaty of 1963 intensified French–German cooperation not only in foreign policy, defence and economy, but also in youth exchanges. The for centuries contested border line became the interface connecting friends.

Table 1 Basic data on PAMINA

	PAMINA as a whole	PA (Süd-Pfalz)	MI (Mittlere Oberrhein)		NA (Northern Alsace)
			Total	Karlsruhe	
Area in km ²	6,000	1,500	2,200	173	2,300
Inhabitants	1,565,000	302,000	990,000	270,000	273,000
Population density per km ²	260	200	460	1,590	120
Percentage of population	100	19	63	17	18
Percentage of jobs (total = 365,000)	100	15	70	28	15
Commuters to the two other PAMINA regions		14,099	1,649	–	15,020
Average costs of building lots per m ²		126 €	190 €	340 €	31 €

Source: REK (2001), www.karlsruhe.de

Fig. 1 PAMINA (REK 2001)



Although the Élysée-treaty was about international cooperation, the cooperative and reconciliatory spirit of the Élysée-treaty inspired and helped cross-border cooperation at the local scale. In the PAMINA area it facilitated the joint building of a sewage treatment plant in Altenstadt in France used by both the French municipality of Wissembourg and the German municipality of Bad Bergzabern. Put in to use in 1975, long before the creation of the PAMINA organisation, it still is the largest cross-border project in the PAMINA area (Fieldwork 2000).

From the international to the regional scale

The institutionalisation of the cooperation between France and Germany started at the national state level. This not only facilitated local cooperation, but was also the basis of European Integration. Initially the institutionalisation at the international and European scale only facilitated informal cooperation at the local and regional level. The first steps towards institutionalising cross-border cooperation at the sub-national level were taken in the ‘Oberrheinkonferenz’. This was established in 1975 through a treaty between France, Germany and Switzerland. The ‘Oberrheinkonferenz’ focuses on cooperation between administrations at the first sub-national level. German federal states, French regions and Swiss Cantons use it to exchange information and

ideas to better manage the common problems in the shared living space of the Upper Rhine Valley (Oberrheinkonferenz 2000).

When in the 1980s the EU started its INTERREG programme on cross-border cooperation, the ‘Oberrheinkonferenz’ profited only from incidental subsidies. However, the EU decided that only programmes based on cooperation between NUTS III level regions could get structural funding (EC 2004, p. 4; Beck 1997, p. 126; Perkmann 1999). This one size fits all scale for cross-border regions imposed by Brussels conflicted with the scale of the ‘Oberrheinkonferenz’. It was therefore divided into three cross-border regions. PAMINA covers the northern part of the ‘Oberrheinkonferenz’. However, the Upper Rhine Valley is a more cultural and economic distinct region than PAMINA. The regional structure at each side of the national border is also more balanced than in PAMINA (Götschel 2004, pp. 93, 151; Blatter 2004). In PAMINA the dominant position of Karlsruhe complicates administrative cooperation. European Integration changed Karlsruhe’s position from peripheral in the national context to central in Europe. New factories in Karlsruhe and its neighbouring towns like Wörth and Rastatt attract workers from the surrounding countryside, while suburbanisation from this metropolitan area penetrates these rural areas on both sides of the border.

Institutionalisation from below

PAMINA is not only a result of these developments at higher scales, but is also rooted in changes at lower scales. Regulating Karlsruhe's growth stimulated coordination at a higher scale. Migration from the Karlsruhe area in Baden-Württemberg to the rural Südpfalz just across the Rhine became important in the 1960s. In 1974 a treaty between the German federal states Rheinland-Pfalz and Baden-Württemberg institutionalised the up till then informal cooperation between spatial planners from the planning regions Mittlerer Oberrhein and Südpfalz. The main purpose of this Working Community was the joint development of territorial planning guidelines (Beck 1997, p. 115; Götschel 2004, p. 162). While Karlsruhe increasingly influenced the northern Alsace, French regional planners joined the informal discussions of the Working Community. In 1989 the French 'arrondissements' of Wissembourg and Haguenau officially joined the German Working Community which was transformed into PAMINA (Beck 1997; PAMINA 1998; Perkmann 2003).

PAMINA is the outcome from developments at both higher and lower scales. The translation of European Integration to the regional level and the Karlsruhe centred cooperation between regional planners intersected in PAMINA. It was therefore quite logical that PAMINA was one of the regions chosen for the pilot phase of the INTERREG programme in 1989 (INTERREG 2005, p. 10). Based on this long history of many INTERREG projects, PAMINA presents itself as a successful organiser of cross-border co-operation (Fieldwork 2004).

The Institutionalisation away from the Border

PAMINA is the scale where EU regional policy and local cross-border cooperation meet. This helped its organisational institutionalisation, but hinders in many ways cross-border cooperation. This section discusses why organising cross-border cooperation at this scale in a region with a German core and a French periphery disconnects cross-border cooperation from cross-border behaviour.

Initially, idealistic local politicians committed to the ideals of European Integration dominated cross-border cooperation. The horrors of the Second World

War motivated them to seek social contacts across the national border to avoid future wars (Fieldwork 2002). Not only these intrinsically motivated politicians, but also instrumentally motivated officials played an important role in the early phases of cross-border cooperation. Officials hindered in their work by the national border started informal cross-border contacts. The increasing spatial interaction across the national border affected especially spatial planners and neighbouring mayors. They cooperated informally based on mutual interests (Beck 1997; Götschel 2004, pp. 154–160).

INTERREG funding transformed cross-border cooperation in PAMINA. It strengthened the organisation of cross-border cooperation and enabled many cross-border projects. INTERREG not only generated quantitative, but also qualitative changes. Local administrations mostly lack the adequate personnel to be successful in the complicated and laborious procedures for getting INTERREG funding (Fieldwork 2004). Therefore the focus of cross-border cooperation shifts from the municipalities at the national border to regional administrative centres further away from the border. Specialisation raises the level of professional expertise, but reduces the overall view on the border problems. They focus more on similar specialists at the higher levels of their national administration than on cross-border contacts (Beck 1997, p. 257).

The dominance of the regional level also changed the logic behind cross-border cooperation (Götschel 2004, p. 160). The building blocks of the INTERREG funded cross-border regions are NUTS III level regions. As the highest administrative level directly involved in cross-border cooperation it is quite logical that they dominate PAMINA. But their interests diverge due to the asymmetrical regional structure. At the local level, close to the national border and away from Karlsruhe, these regional inequalities are less important. At the national border the villagers share a similar geographical position (Götschel 2004, p. 202). The mutual interest in cross-border cooperation is frequently present at the local level, but is mostly absent at the regional level. Voluntary cooperation between core and periphery is always problematic (Beck 1997, pp. 251–255). Equality and distributive justice are important foundations for voluntary cooperation (Homans 1961). PAMINA thus functions primarily through the

symmetrical distribution of resources in similar projects at both sides of the border. The logic behind voluntary regional administrative cooperation is based on equal distribution at the regional scale. The diversity in interests at this level hinders it being based on solving mutual problems. The policy agenda shifted from the solving border problems informally through information exchange and policy coordination, towards the equal distributing EU funds over PAMINA (Beck 1997, pp. 222, 240–242).

Population size became an important element in determining the equitable distribution of EU funds. To reduce the dominance of the German side, in 1995 the Saverne became part of PAMINA. Located far away from the national border and hardly affected by it, its population size made the distribution of EU funding more equal (Beck 1997, p. 302; Fieldwork 2002). But of the 1,565,000 inhabitants of the PAMINA area, 83% still live in Germany (REK 2001). The equal distribution of projects based on population size favours the regional population centres away from the border, and neglects the sparsely populated border zone, where daily life depends on cross-border relations. PAMINA's focus thus shifted away from the national border to its territory as a whole. PAMINA's difficulties in developing cross-border cooperation gave its institutionalisation an inward focus and institutionalised interests in status quo (Götschel 2004, pp. 161, 206). The limited number of state actors involved in PAMINA creates a closed network that hinders the development of cross-border cooperation (Beck 1997, pp. 296–300).

The shift from solving common border problems to equal distribution of funds made decision making in PAMINA more contentious. The resulting conflict avoidance changed the types of INTERREG projects they could agree upon. It stimulated a proliferation of feasibility studies (Beck 1997, p. 258; Fuchs and Beck 2003, p. 71). More specific projects were hardly related to these overall studies, but were predominantly ad hoc projects formulated by each of the participating regions for their own opportunistic reasons (Götschel 2004, p. 148). The most visible project was the construction of bicycle paths on both side of the border. Projects were frequently split up over the three sub-regions to avoid conflicts (Beck 1997, p. 280). For instance the project to stimulate a PAMINA wide technology transfer network consists

in reality of three similar but unrelated projects in the three regional capitals (Beck 1997, p. 154). Coordinating the increasing number of isolated INTERREG projects was further hindered by the unwillingness to delegate powers to the PAMINA office in Lauterbourg (Beck 1997, p. 256). The responsibility for the different INTERREG projects was divided among the three administrators from the three participants in PAMINA. Their workload in dealing with dispersed project partners hindered coordination between projects at the PAMINA office in Lauterbourg. Problems encountered by the local project partners could frequently not be attended by the overworked coordinators at the PAMINA office. The higher levels in the different national administrative hierarchies were mobilised instead (Beck 1997).

Horizontal cross-border cooperation has in PAMINA lost out to vertical interaction between levels of government. EU policies have strengthened more the vertical integration of policy implementation from Brussels to local government, than cross-border cooperation (Perkmann 1999, pp. 661–665). This was not just a top-down process. The regional level of government used the opportunities of cross-border cooperation in PAMINA to improve their position towards others levels of government. For instance the French Département du Bas-Rhine used PAMINA to regain some powers it lost to the Region d'Alsace, while the Süd-Pfalz used it to improve its peripheral position not only in Rheinland-Pfalz, but also in the Oberrheinkonferenz (Beck 1997, p. 310). Baden and Karlsruhe use PAMINA to escape from the focus on Stuttgart in Baden-Württemberg (Götschel 2004, p. 177). Regions at the national border use their privileged access to cross-border cooperation to strengthen their position towards their national administrations (Beck 1997, pp. 206–207).

Cross-border behaviour: scale and PAMINA's actions

Through the intensification of EU involvement in cross-border cooperation the focus of the PAMINA INTERREG projects moved away from the border. The related intensification of European Integration intensified cross-border relations in the daily life in the PAMINA area. This section discusses the role of borders and the PAMINA organisation for

businesses, consumers, identity, French commuters and German migrants.

Numerous companies in PAMINA have important cross-border relations, but PAMINA and their projects are hardly relevant for them. For instance the cross-border infrastructural problems they face are outside PAMINA's sphere of influence as they are decided upon at the (inter)national level. Relevant frameworks for economic development are either larger (Oberrhein) or smaller (business parks) than PAMINA (Götschel 2004, p. 186). The few businessmen who are familiar with PAMINA identify them with the signs along of the INTERREG sponsored cycle paths (Fieldwork 2004).

The national border provides many opportunities for the population in the border area. National differences in economic prices and regulations make it profitable for many borderlanders to use both sides of the national border in their daily life. Some of the national economic and regulatory differences the EU wants to eradicate to achieve a common market, are paradoxically also the forces behind the cross-border relations the EU wants to promote as well. Differences in prices for consumer goods, wage levels, taxation regimes and housing prices are linked to the dominance of the nation-state in economic and social affairs. A true common market would erase the differences and would reduce the cross-border relations based on these differences.

The vast majority of the population in PAMINA crosses the national border as consumers. Price differences between countries and the European common market regulate this cross-border shopping. The price of French cheeses, wines, mineral water, coffee and petrol, attract Germans to shop once in a while in large supermarkets just across the national border. Cheap German tobacco attracts French shoppers but more important is the proximity of the large urban centres in German, where many of them also work. Whereas Germans infrequently buy a limited selection of daily goods in bulk, French visit German cities more regularly for a wide variety of non-food products (Fieldwork 2002; Wiegelmann-Uhlig 1995, p. 285). PAMINA's only involvement with this cross-border behaviour is a consumer information point in its office at the border. The few people who use this service hardly associate it with PAMINA. It is one of the four INFOBEST information points in the Upper Rhine Valley. Almost all the information made

available through PAMINA originates outside PAMINA. Kehl near Strasbourg houses many cross-border consumer associations (INFOBEST 2001; Götschel 2004, p. 172; Fieldwork 2002).

Only some inhabitants of PAMINA have detailed knowledge of the PAMINA organisation and its activities. The vague notion that it has something to do with cross-border activities and especially cycle tracks is much more widespread. Many have never heard of PAMINA, however, after our students explained its goals to them they were generally very positive towards PAMINA. The inhabitants don't identify with the territory and organisation of PAMINA. Their cross-border identity focuses on a much higher scale than PAMINA. The majority of the population has a positive attitude towards Europe and the desirability of cross-border co-operation between France and Germany, but they hardly relate this with PAMINA (Fieldwork 2000, 2002).

French commuters

Commuting is the most intense form of cross-border behaviour in PAMINA. The everyday life of many French border communities depends on commuting to Germany. The number of French commuters has doubled in the 1990s to almost half the labour population in the French border municipalities (Götschel 2004, p. 108; REK 2001). Although only about a tenth of the Alsations live in PAMINA, half of all the commuters from the Alsace to Germany come from PAMINA (15,020) (REK 2001). The Mercedes plants in Wörth and Rastatt, located just a few kilometres from the border, attract many French workers. The easy access to the French labour market was even one of the reasons why Mercedes chose these locations decades ago. PAMINA is a relevant spatial framework for this commuting, but the administrative cross-border cooperation in PAMINA hardly affects these commuters. The factors driving this commuting and the resolution of the problems individual cross-border commuters face are outside PAMINA's scope.

The asymmetrical regional structure in PAMINA and the higher wages in Germany are structural factors behind cross-border commuting. Decades ago, a treaty between France and Germany stipulated that people living and working within 30 km from the national border pay their income taxes at home.

Social security contributions are however paid in the country of employment. As income tax is lower in France and social security is less expensive in Germany, these international regulations made cross-border commuting even more profitable. EU regulation further improved the rights of cross-border commuters (Nonn 1999; Bartels and Ehl 1999).

Cross-border commuting dominated daily life in the border zone long before PAMINA's foundation. The long history and size of cross-border commuting prompted already decades ago different national institutions to deal with the practical problems individual face when commuting across the border. For instance governmental agencies, insurance companies, banks and trade unions have special consulting hours for cross-border commuters in their offices in the larger towns. The INFOBEST information point in the PAMINA office at the national border provides however only general information about the regulations for cross-border commuters. For specific questions they refer to the institutions implementing these regulations (Fieldwork 2002). Other relevant organisations, like the EURES and the 'comité de défense des travailleurs frontaliers du haut-rhin' cover the whole of the Upper Rhine Valley and have their offices outside PAMINA (EURES 2008).

PAMINA unsuccessfully tried to do more for these cross-border commuters by organising cross-border bus services. These failed partly while the commuters come from many villages, and partly while the timetable did not fit the working hours. However, everyday many coaches packed with commuters cross the border to Germany. For decades, large companies like Mercedes, Siemens and Michelin organise and finance this cross-border transport for their shift workers. PAMINA was more successful in improving public transport at both sides of the border. However, their projects improved the public transport towards the national border, but not across that border (Fieldwork 2002).

When asked by our students, French cross-border commuters do not associate the national border with problems. In the villages closest to the border the 'frontaliers' as they are locally known, see the national border as neither as a physical border nor a cultural border. Despite the limited number of bridges over the Rhine and the missing link between the French and German motorways, border crossing has

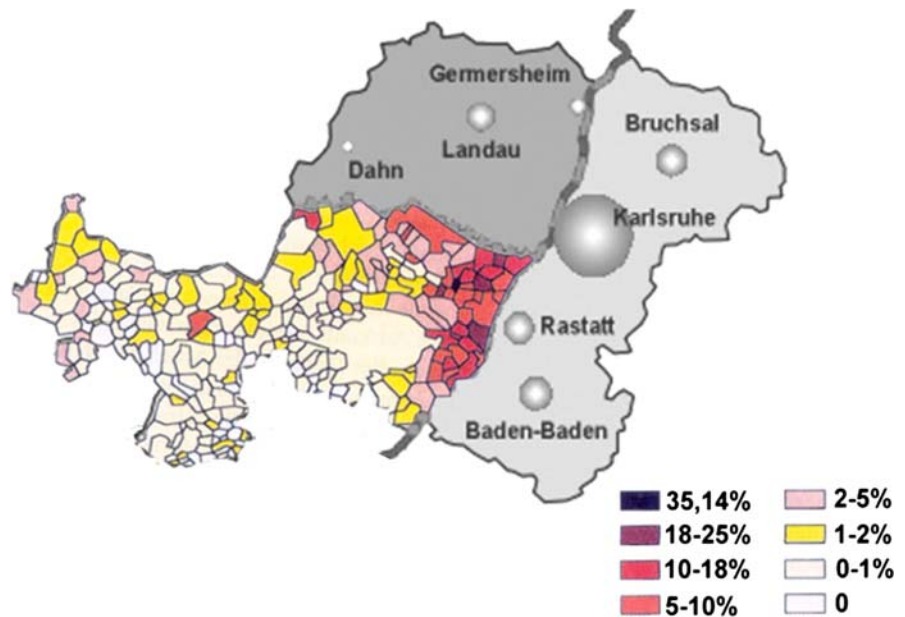
never been a problem for them. Even in the period before the Schengen agreement they did not see the border controls as an obstacle. Most French living at the border see the other side of the national border is an integral part of their daily life. Bilingualism, working in Germany, watching German TV and having German friends are not regarded as something special, but as normal facts of life (Fieldwork 2004). For instance when French cross the national border for social reasons, they predominantly visit Germans, while the Germans who socially cross the national border predominantly visit Germans (Fieldwork 2002). Many even regard it as an undivided cultural region. However, this is a one-sided regional integration while for most German villagers just across the national border it still is a barrier hardly crossed. Language skills reflect this one-sidedness. As German proficiency is a prerequisite for entering the German labour market, all *frontaliers* are bilingual. This is one of the reasons why they are quite inconspicuous in Germany and have friendly relations with their German colleagues (Fieldwork 2004). For both French and Germans the national border no longer coincides with an economic border. But contrary to the French commuters, the national border coincides for the Germans still with strong cultural, linguistic, and social borders.

The national border dominates the daily life of French villagers on the border. While they profit from the different possibilities on both sides of the national border it is a positive element shaping their lives. These villagers are very open to Germans and Germany. However, few are familiar with PAMINA and those who are, have no experiences with it beyond the bicycle paths. But almost all endorse its goals of promoting co-operation and especially cultural exchanges (Fieldwork 2002, 2004).

German migrants

PAMINA's asymmetrical regional structure motivated for decades some Germans to migrate to the Northern Alsace. A traditional old Alsatian farm in the hills and the French way of life attracted a limited numbers of Germans. After the introduction of the common market in 1992, another type of German migration became dominant. EU regulation extended the previously discussed tax privileges of the *frontaliers* to all cross-border commuters. The introduction

Fig. 2 Percentage of Germans in French municipalities (Source: REK 2001)



of the common market made it also easier to buy a house across the national border and to migrate. This enabled Germans to take full advantage of lower French house prices and to profit from the substantial tax privileges for those commuting within 30 km from the border. Comparable houses in Germany are several times more expensive, while tax levels are tens of percent higher (REK 2001; Bohn 1997; Bartels and Ehl 1999). A German manual worker can live like the middle-classes in France (Fig. 2).

As for the French *frontaliers*, the role of PAMINA in this type of cross-border relations is negligible. Employers, insurance companies, banks, lawyers, schools, municipalities, real estate agents are experienced in helping these German migrants. The volume of this migration creates a profitable market for suppliers of all kinds of specialised services (Fieldwork 2002, 2004). In every local bookshop one can buy for instance a manual for dealing with the problems of Germans migrants in their everyday life in France. This is a commercial publication (Bartels and Ehl 1999).

German housing migrants and French cross-border commuters are driven by the same spatial forces. The same asymmetrical regional structure, differences in national economies, international and EU regulations explain their spatial behaviour. Both German and French cross-border commuter's daily life is a reaction to the low French housing prices, German

job opportunities, differences in national regulation and specific tax benefits for the border zone. Both groups live in the same villages, travel the same routes and work in the same companies, but they hardly live together.

The Germans massively entered the housing market in the border zone in the 1990s. The German population in border villages ranges between a few and a few dozen percent. The amount of building plots granted by municipalities largely explains these differences (Fieldwork 2002). Villages with large new housing estates like Wintzenbach and Beinheim have the highest percentages of Germans who live concentrated in separate new neighbourhoods, sometimes depicted as ghettos (Ramm 1999). This hinders the social integration of Germans. Many regret being surrounded by fellow Germans and separated from the French (Fieldwork 2000, 2002). Although individually many German migrants want to interact more with their Alsatian fellow villagers, the sheer number and concentration of Germans makes this difficult. On the other hand, they hold on to most of their economic and social relations in nearby Germany. They not only work there, but also continue to shop there. They also continue to use German medical services because of the border regulation, and frequently more or less illegally use German schools for their children. They also maintain their social contacts in Germany. Street

interviews reflect this. Paradoxically a quarter of the interviewed in Germany and only a tenth of the French cross the national border to visit friends or relatives. But while the population in Germany predominantly visits German migrants in France, the French visit Germans (Fieldwork 2002).

Language is an important factor in their continued orientation towards Germany. Two-thirds of Germans living across the national border don't speak French (Bohn 1997). In their previous visits to the Alsace they experienced that most Alsatians speak German. However, while multilingualism can be taken for granted, the willingness of the Alsatians to speak German in the social context of their own village is questionable. Some Germans learn French and integrate socially. But especially for many modestly educated, the language barrier becomes higher over time. The reality of the social hurdle of only speaking German slowly sinks in. The language border becomes more important when over time Germans depend more on French institutions for welfare provisions. Especially when their children reach school age, many decide to return to Germany.

Besides language, there are other misconceptions that cause many to return to Germany. The less regulated life and looser (building) regulations attract Germans, but when living in France they are confronted with the fact that there are also regulations in France, which they as foreigners are unfamiliar with, and are hard for them to master because of the language. After a strong increase in Germans living at the other side of the national border in the 1990s, their numbers have stabilised in recent years in PAMINA (Fieldwork 2002, 2004; Bökenbrink and Vetter 2001).

The isolated German enclaves are not seen as a big social problem on the French side. In some communities like Wintzenbach local actors have even actively encouraged German migration. Germans generate taxes and higher revenues from real estate. Many see the German influx as outside their control. It is seen as part of normal life close to the border, from which they profit in many other ways. The resentment of those suffering from German competition on the housing market has abated as many Germans have returned in recent years (Fieldwork 2004).

The French and German commuters dominating the border villages and operating in a single economic spatial setting do not share an identity.

PAMINA is no part of their identities. The shared focus on Germany is divisive. Most French living close to the national border have no problem with their daily life on both sides of the border. They are inconspicuous in Germany and their national and regional identity is quite weak (Fieldwork 2004). Border spaces are in general hiding places of identity (Kramsch and Dimitrovova 2008, p. 41). In contrast, the difficulties of the Germans migrants experience in French everyday life make them more aware of being German and being out of place, causing many to return home. The French cross the national border towards Germany, while the Germans cross the national border with their backs to France. Although sharing the same space and travelling the same routes, the everyday life of both groups living in the same border region differs widely, hindering the emergence of a shared cross-border identity in PAMINA.

Conclusion: scale and cross-border regulation

There is no fundamental discrepancy between PAMINA's borders and the cross-border relations. Unlike many other cross-border regions PAMINA is hardly burdened by arbitrary borders incongruent with functional economic and political spaces (Deas and Lord 2006). However, while administrative cross-border cooperation and everyday life in converge, PAMINA is not an integrated cross-border region. PAMINA's organisation and projects are detached from the strongest cross-border relations of French commuters and German migrants. The spatial scale of the PAMINA organization is the scale least relevant for cross-border behaviour. The mismatch between the official EU border region PAMINA and cross-border behaviour is the result of different logics of interaction operating at different scales.

At the local scale the interaction is based on wage and house price differences across the border. Proximity to the national border intensifies these general differences between Germany and France. PAMINA's specific regional structure dominated by a German core and a French periphery further stimulate cross-border relations. The bi-national tax benefits for the French in the border zone, extended to German migrants after the creation of the EU common market, regulate and strengthen these differences. The nation states still

dominate the regulation of cross-border behaviour (Kramsch 2002, p. 189). This regulation can be direct, like for instance through social security and education, or indirect, through for instance international tax treaties and European Integration. Cross-border behaviour is regulated far away from the national border and PAMINA.

Cross-border cooperation between neighbouring local authorities sometimes solves specific problems based on mutual advantage. Most problems with local infrastructure and emergency services were solved before the establishment of PAMINA. Similar problems at the scale of PAMINA like highways and the Rhine bridges depend however on the national or international level.

The same pressures from the wealthy German core on the French periphery which drive cross-border behaviour hinder cross-border administrative cooperation in PAMINA. These regional inequalities are much weaker at the national border where geographical position and forces are largely similar. The mutual interest in horizontal cross-border cooperation is frequently present at the local level at the border, but is mostly absent at the regional level which is the focus of the cooperation in PAMINA. There mutual interest in cross-border cooperation is based on strengthening the influence of the regional level towards both higher and lower levels at each side of the border. Access to horizontal cross-border cooperation is an asset in the vertical rescaling of state powers. But the spatial asymmetry in PAMINA hinders projects based on horizontal cooperation. States manage similar spatial inequalities within their territory at the national level. But without this kind of hierarchical pressures, the voluntary cross-border cooperation between regional authorities can only be based on equality. The symmetrical distribution of resources in similar projects at both sides of the national border is therefore crucial for PAMINA's functioning. The vertical redistribution of EU, national and regional resources is disguised as horizontal cooperation. The logic of administrative cooperation is based on redistribution at the regional scale, which favours regional population centres away from the border. The sparsely populated border zone, where daily life depends on cross-border relations, is therefore neglected. The logics of cross-border behaviour and cross-border administrative cooperation do not match. The same asymmetrical regional structure which stimulated the former hinders the latter.

The EU created and regulates the cross-border behaviour in PAMINA upon which everyday life of many at the French side of the national border depends. The attempts of the EU to make the relation with its citizens more direct through EUREGIO's are less successful. PAMINA is the wrong scale for regulating socio-economic and administrative cross-border relations.

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