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A Reterritorialization of European Space?  
A Study of two European Cross-Border Regions

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## **ABSTRACT**

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This thesis approaches the problem of possible reterritorialization processes of the state-centric Westphalian system from the perspective of cross-border regions over internal borders of the European Union.

The examination of this topic starts off with a review of main strands of academic debate related to the development of the state-centric perspective, to processes of reterritorialization and deterritorialization in the European Union as well as to the role that cross-border regions over internal borders of the European Union play in challenging the state-centric perspective and the furthering of reterritorialization processes.

In order to enable a coherent analysis, the theoretical framework will subsequently be introduced. The framework used in this thesis is informed by Critical Geopolitics and focuses on four main concepts: border, territory, power and order. The methodological tools used to carry out the analysis are case study method and interviews that were conducted with respondents in the EUREGIO and the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA.

The analysis will focus on the main theoretical concepts and their characteristics in the two case studies by using the interviews as a tool to introduce the specific view of each region under investigation. It will be shown that whereas the cross-border regions are no direct challengers to the state-centric system they do fulfil an important function not only with regard to their initially intended purpose but also with regard to a softening of the state-centric character of the introduced theoretical concepts.

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## 1. Introduction

My aim in this thesis is to analyze the role cross-border regions can play in challenging presumably fixed understandings of international space as being governed solely by sovereign states. The analysis will aim at answering questions connected to the role cross-border regions can play concerning the issue of redefining territory in order to open up the static, state-centred understanding of space. In connection with a possible geopolitical significance of cross-border regions their potential to function as places of redefining spaces and spheres of influence will be analysed. Here, special attention will be paid to the perception of this issue in the cross-border regions and the possibility of cross-border regions becoming active on their own in order to challenge the state-centred system.

The motivation for this approach stems from the perception that studies in International Relations<sup>1</sup> (IR) pertaining to broad issues such as a possible redefinition of territoriality, an opening up of the concept of the sovereign state as well as the role and significance of international borders have become more frequent in the academic mainstream especially in the last decade. These enrich the academic discussion in particular with regard to propositions such as the possible emergence of a post-Westphalian order, the diminishing significance of international borders and, of course, the role that the European Union (EU) and a further European<sup>2</sup> integration play in this set of questions.

However, whereas the general debate pertaining to these matters is not new to International Relations there are issues that have not been addressed thoroughly yet even though the analysis of these topics should be able to provide insights and further theoretical implications for the general treatment of the above mentioned issues. In the present work one unaddressed question is seen in the specific role that newly created territorial formations can play in the development, formulation and shaping of the understanding and approach to territoriality at the moment. In the present case these questions are limited to the example of the European Union and more specifically to established cross-border co-operation across two internal borders in the European Union. This decision is not only influenced by the need to limit the topic in size in order to be able to analyse it within the scope of this thesis, but is also based on the development of internal borders and their perceived significance in the European Union which gives the scope and function of internal cross-border co-operation

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<sup>1</sup> In the following, International Relations will refer to the academic debate dealing with international politics, whereas international relations will refer to the practice.

<sup>2</sup> The term European will be solely used to refer to matters associated with the European Union.

rather singular characteristics in comparison to other international developments regarding state borders.

Therefore, the aim in this thesis is to fill this gap by focusing on recent territorial developments within the territory of the European Union. The aim is to investigate formations already in existence with regard to their ability to shape the state-centric system instead of focusing on formations that might emerge later on. For this purpose, two cross-border regions, EUREGIO and PRO EUROPA VIADRINA, were chosen in order to explore their situation, role and development with relation to the broader discussion pertaining to a redefinition of European territory outside of the fixed category of the sovereign, territorially demarcated state.

To do so, the thesis will be structured as follows. In the following second chapter I will introduce the strands of academic debate regarding the territorial state and its centrality in International Relations, processes of redefining territoriality, and the role that cross-border regions as one aspect of European integration and as potential sites of a possible European reterritorialization are usually seen to play in this context. This will serve as basis for the introduction of the research question and for the analysis in the chapters to follow.

The third chapter will then focus on carving out a theoretical framework to guide the study. Here, it will become obvious that there are a number of concepts and approaches that could be included in this analysis, which not only proves the interconnectedness of a multitude of approaches but also shows the need to specifically limit and define what can actually be analysed within the scope of this thesis. Therefore, the broad framework which consists of Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics as approaches to the study of International Relations will be refined through the focus on the concepts of border, territory, power and order. Based on the investigation of these theoretical concepts and their characteristics their place in the broader framework of the thesis will be introduced as well as their application in the analysis of the case studies.

Chapter four serves as an introduction to the methodological set of tools used to analyse the role of cross-border regions in a possible redefinition of European territoriality. I will start out by pointing to some general methodological assumptions that inform the study; specifically these are processism, verbing and relationalism, followed by some general remarks on methodology in the study of Critical Geopolitics made by Toal. Subsequently the specific set of methods in the present study will be introduced. Alongside the introduction of the

triangular research design based on case studies, interviews and the collection of further material their connection with the research question will be spelled out.

Following these chapters which create the groundwork for the analysis to come, the analysis section of the thesis will consist of three chapters. The first of these, chapter five, will introduce the EUREGIO, a cross-border region along the German-Dutch border. To do so the creation and development of the EUREGIO will be outlined before introducing its current structure. Building on this, the analysis will focus on the shape that the four main concepts presently take in the EUREGIO. The second case study dealing with the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA region, a cross-border region along the German-Polish border will be introduced in the sixth chapter. In accordance with the outline of chapter five, a basic introduction to the development and functioning will be followed by a topic oriented analysis of the four main theoretical concepts. Following this, chapter seven will introduce the conclusions reached by analysing the specific characteristics of the cases at hand as well as allowing for a comparison of the findings regarding the theoretical concepts used to structure the analysis and the capability of the introduced cross-border regions to induce processes of reterritorialization.

In the final chapter, the analysis will switch to a more general level in order to present the broader conclusions based on the introduced case study specific research. This chapter will discuss more closely whether impulses for reterritorialization can be expected from the European cross-border regions. The main question guiding this conclusion will be whether the cross-border regions have any potential to challenge a fixed territorial understanding. Furthermore, possibilities for further research and open questions in the study of reterritorialization processes through new territorial units will be introduced alongside an identification of the place the obtained results hold in the general academic debate regarding territorial redefinition.

## 2. Research debate

This chapter aims at introducing the background to the research question by examining different subjects that are all related to the scope of the main topic. As the question at hand is a broad one it is essential to limit the scope of the field by introducing relevant research pertaining to the main subject of the study.

The present thesis will focus on the question of *possible reterritorialization processes within the European Union*. More specifically, the research question that will guide the investigation is: *What role do cross-border regions across two internal borders of the European Union play regarding the creation of new territorial formations and regarding new understandings of territory that go beyond a state-centred Westphalian understanding of territory and borders?*

When introducing the research debate it is necessary to point out one main restriction from the beginning as it will also influence the analysis and the theoretical background of the thesis. The background against which the study is developed is solely the European experience based on a political system organised through sovereign territorial states and the developments of and within the European Union. This is of importance in order to frame and limit the study, but furthermore also shapes the starting points and the concepts used for the analysis.

The experience of sovereign states that are divided from each other by seemingly impermeable borders is largely a Western European experience. (Kolossov 2005:618) Also the concept of a *borderless world* characterised by integration among states, a perceived loss of significance of state borders as well as a decreased importance of states and state sovereignty are ideas mainly supported by Western and European scholars. (Paasi 2005a:24) In the same vein, the de-emphasis of state-centred politics in favour of an approach characterised by multipolarity is a development furthered by the development of the European Union and therefore also understood to be a European experience. (Scott 2002:148) Furthermore, also the concept of cross-border networking is not universal but restricted to certain places and societies. (Newman 2006:177)

In the following, the notion of *territorial state*, especially in connection to sovereignty will be analysed. Subsequently, the focus will be put on the more general processes of reterritorialization and deterritorialization as a way of opening up the seemingly static understanding of an interrelation between state and territory. Building on this more general level of analysis, the academic discussion pertaining to European integration and cross-border regions will be introduced and connected to the debates presented earlier in the

chapter. In general, a special focus is put on the development of the current understanding of the concepts at hand and the debates in International Relations relating to them in order to analyse any shortcomings and questions which are left unaddressed. These issues form the basis for the research question and will inform the investigation as well as the analysis.

## **2.1. The territorial sovereign state and its position in the study of International Relations**

The state has for long been perceived as a central and constant concept in international politics and in mainstream International Relations.(Martin 2002:52) Most basic definitions concerning the topic or substance of International Relations put the state in a central position and connect all other aspects and concepts of the discipline back to it. Whereas there has been a vital debate surrounding for example how states should act and how they actually act, the concept of state in itself has long been off-limits in the mainstream IR debate, contributing to an omnipresence of the state in the IR debate. Tied to this general acceptance of the state and therefore of an international system composed of states is a common understanding of the state as a territorial unit limited by borders, within which the government exercises sovereign authority (Murphy 1996:81).

In order to understand how the state achieved such an omnipresent position in international relations, it is necessary to understand its development. In doing so, the consequences of this central position can be analysed while at the same time allowing for an introduction of opposing views or new approaches. Given the multiple facets of this field, a coherent and comprehensive analysis can not be given here. Then again, this is neither intended nor necessary to further the analysis of the problem at hand. As the focus will be put on chosen concepts and their development in connection to the concept of the state, it shall suffice in the present context to point out the main lines of development that are of importance to the research topic.

No matter how fixed the international state system might seem to be, it is vital to point out that the territorial state as a concept emerged only slowly. Soon, however, it was established as the main constant in international relations. This rise in influence is connected to a simultaneous development of the understanding of the main attributes attached to the state, with their definitions being highly dependent on the prevailing understanding of the state itself. Therefore, the understanding of among others sovereignty, territory and border changed continuously over time in tune with the changing understanding of the state.

A foundational principle in this respect is seen in sovereignty, as its establishing gave room for the introduction and definition of other main concepts connected to the state, such as power, territory and authority (Kuus, Agnew 2008:96). The focus on sovereignty in the present context is furthermore of importance as it is the precondition that allows for the state to be perceived as an autonomous subject. In addition this perception strengthens a territorial understanding of power which in turn reinforces the conception of the sovereign state as a territorial unit and a singular subject of international relations (Kuus, Agnew 2008:96). Therefore, the prevailing understanding of sovereignty is crucial to the established understanding of the state, its territoriality and its borders.

Linked to the prevailing concept of sovereignty is an understanding of bounded territory which typically approaches borders either as part of the territoriality of the state or as dividers between said territorial units (Häkli 2008:471). Stemming from this state related understanding of borders and from the central position of the sovereign state in International Relations theory little attention was paid to the role or nature of borders (Häkli 2008:472). Thus, just as little attention was paid to the state per se, borders were not in the centre of the academic discussion either.

Approaches to them mainly sought to classify them functionally or empirically, leaving questions regarding the nature of borders, their influence and development to be subjects of only little interest. Following the historical-geographical approach in place since the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, the functional approach to the study of borders became the dominant mode of investigation in the late 1950s. This however slowly started to change simultaneously with a rising interest in the concept of the state and following the introduction of approaches based in the political sciences. The end of the 1980s was characterized by a stronger postmodern focus, among others through geopolitical approaches to the study of international borders. (Kolossoff 2005:608ff.) Therefore, a shift in the way borders are studied can be observed. However the influence that state-centred models and concepts have on the further development of border studies has to be seen.

With regard to the starting point of renewed structures of medieval Europe and the creation of a modern state-centred political system the focus is often put exclusively on the Treaty of Westphalia (1648) which ended the Thirty Years' War. This view is based on the understanding that the Treaty of Westphalia gave sovereignty to states and implied that territory was a prerequisite to participate in the international political system; a development that after all was understood to shape Europe for the coming centuries. (Knutson 1997:85)

However, contesting views can be found that argue in favour of a continuous development process in which the Treaty of Westphalia served merely as one step towards a formalization of the political-territorial order.(Diez 2004:322)(Murphy 1996:84)

The starting point for this latter option is usually seen in the assumption that the Middle Ages lacked a concept of national territory that later on became a prerequisite for any sovereign state. However, as it is further argued, already starting in the 11<sup>th</sup> century key elements in the creation of territorial states came together, not only regarding political developments but also with regard to developments in economics such as monetization. Connected to these developments opinions can be found that pinpoint the invention of the concept of territorial state sovereignty in Western Europe to the 13<sup>th</sup> century. Resulting from this it is assumed that the territorial state was already well established in the 1600s (Sassen 2006:41f.).

Based on this it can be argued that the Treaty of Westphalia was not an exclusive starting point but just one way of formalizing existing arrangements in the political structure. The procedural nature of these developments can be supported further by taking into account the evolving debate in political philosophy regarding the role, influence and development of the state and its attributes taking into account developments at that point of time.

A prominent example for writings on the concept of sovereignty is Bodin's understanding of the term as "...the absolute and perpetual power of a commonwealth..."(cited in Brown, Nardin & Nicholas 2002:270) implying that sovereignty can only be possessed by states and is independent from changes regarding the ruler. Just as the concept of sovereignty developed in real life politics also this understanding based on the perspective of the middle 16<sup>th</sup> century was developed further in political philosophy. However, it is usually acknowledged that it was this early understanding of sovereignty that later enabled new ways of thinking about sovereignty, territory and the state (Knutsen 1997:73)

The further development of the concepts of sovereignty and bounded territory as foundational to the state was for example pushed forward by Leibniz, whose notion of sovereignty implied a stronger connection of sovereignty and territory and identified the territorial state as unit surrounded by a strong border; an understanding that more and more shaped international relations instead of being challenged by contrasting views.(Knutsen 1997:91)

The concepts concerning relations among the sovereign territorial states, their motivations for war and peace and possibilities to change these thus moved to the centre of attention.

Now that the state was seen at the core of international relations and also perceived to be the only actor on the international level, emphasis was put on how interactions take place and how they should take place. State behaviour and possible ways of explaining and predicting it, such as the *balance of power*, were at the centre of political thought.(Knutsen 1997:143) As the state moved to the centre of attention, its slow development and the possibility of further change to it became neglected in favour of seeing the existing concept of the state as a given ideal around which to organise international politics.

The system of sovereign states came to be perceived more and more as a precondition for the international system instead of seeing it as a result of developments dependent on a specific time and place. It was assumed that the Treaty of Westphalia has the capabilities to be the foundation and shaping force of the international system for an extended period of time.(Knutsen 1997:135) Still, it should be added that the implementation of the state never fulfilled the characteristics of this very ideal.(Kuus, Agnew 2008:96)

However, just as the system of sovereign states not suddenly saw the light of day also competing ideas developed alongside the rise of the dominant theory of the Westphalian system of sovereign states. Mostly those were not put into practice due to the strength of the developing Westphalian system; they did however influence and enrich the political debate. The emergence of the disciplines of International Relations led to a further theorising about international relations with certain key theories such as realism and liberalism emerging aiming at an explanation of international relations. Nevertheless, the period after World War II was still characterised by an attempt of international powers to protect the state system (Sassen 2006:148). The territorial state still remained the main actor not only in international relations, but also in the scholarly debate proven by the strength that the theory of *Realism* can muster up with regard to explaining and influencing international relations also in the following decades up to now. Yet, events like the slowly starting integration among a few states in Europe also served as first indicators for the development of theories and ideas such as federalism that posed a challenge to the widely accepted state-centred paradigms.(Knutsen 1997:278)

In addition, ideas such as the withering away of nation states or the emergence of a borderless world enrich the debate in IR (Paasi 2005a:25). However, one criticism continuously voiced at these ideas, regardless of their content, is their persistence in using categories such as state power, sovereignty or citizenship to not only analyse the present shortcomings that states are facing but also to evaluate possible solutions to these problems and future developments (Paasi 2005a:19). In doing so, these concepts are used to explain

ideas that are to supersede the state as such without touching upon the influence the state per se had in defining said concepts and the influence this should have upon their usability in the development of future models. The influence of these critical ideas on the perception and role of the sovereign state and its position in International Relations remains to be seen.

Yet, already introduced developments like European integration or the increase in transnational flows can be seen as undermining the strength of the term of the territorial state, its sovereignty and its immediate meaning for current international politics. This development is also partly reflected in the academic debate as recent thinking in political theory places a strong emphasis on the need to think outside of the fixed category of the state as a given.

The continuing importance of the state as a concept however becomes evident when taking into account that real life politics still views states as main actors. Furthermore, theoretical approaches that aim at proving the demise of the nation state or that argue that the state in general never held the central place ascribed to it, usually refer to the state as a frame of reference or seek to identify state like patterns and features in actors that are to supersede or replace the state. Even though political theorising has been showing signs of moving towards a more flexible perception of the role of the state in the international system and the concept of the state in general, the question of how change could occur and what result it would have should be focused on more.

Another point connected to the centrality of the state is the assumption that the state, under influence of globalisation and processes related to it, slowly withers away. However, this rather bold prediction of the demise of the Westphalian order is most commonly interpreted as being an insufficient analysis of the situation concerning the state. In opposition to this theory it is usually pointed out that states are not suddenly disappearing but adapting to operate in new contexts.(Agnew 1998:60) Therefore, it is of importance to focus not only on the implications of a state-centric perspective but also pay attention to processes challenging the centrality of the state in International Relations at the moment.

## **2.2. Reterritorialization, deterritorialization and the role of the European Union in the shaping of space**

When assuming that there is a shift in the way space, authority and sovereignty are understood and organised it is necessary to ask what causes this development and in which direction the process is heading. The trigger for these shifts is usually seen in the role

globalisation is playing in challenging and destabilizing the state as a dominant feature of modern International Relations. Generally (Sassen 2006:6), the options presented for a reorganization of territory consist of *detrterritorialization* and *reterritorialization*, with the former referring to a process in which the modern structure of territorially organized power is no longer the dominant mode of organisation. In the literature this is usually connected to the assumption that the value of territory is declining, that state sovereignty as a concept is loosing ground as well as a loss in significance for territorial identities (Forsberg 1996:365f.). Reterritorialization is seen as approach to reorganize space on different levels, among others the regional level. Here, an uncoupling of the concepts of territory and exclusive sovereignty is taking place in order to allow for new territorial configurations beyond the state to emerge.(Popescu 2008:419)

Whereas both approaches seem to express two quite opposing process, it is acknowledged that both can actually take place in a somewhat simultaneous fashion, that is the process of globalization is taking place alongside neonationalism or an increasing amount of territorial conflicts (Forsberg 1996:365).Forsberg furthermore asserts that the main focus should not be solely on the question of whether reterritorialization or detrterritorialization is taking place, but should also include an investigation into the characteristics of territoriality in general.(Forsberg 1996:357)

Several approaches to reterritorialization can be identified, among others the *new regionalism* and *Europe of the Regions*. In these approaches European integration is identified as a main factor that is seen as capable of influencing, strengthening and supporting a territorial reorganization of European space. The role of the EU in this process is interpreted as being vague, an evaluation based on the perception that the European Commission or the European Parliament might become powerful allies for regions and their strive for a more prominent position while others argue that especially central states are able to diminish EU influence easily .(Bourne 2003:598)

One main area analysed in the literature is the topic of spatial planning capabilities and activities. Here, special focus is put on the analysis of what kind of space the EU is aspiring to create through its multiple programmes and funding instruments for activities related to space.

Especially in connection with the trends of reterritorialization and detrterritorialization and the role the EU might play in this mix through the challenges it poses to established understandings of space in International Relations it is highly important to account for the

role the EU can play when it comes to creating and controlling space. After all, the European Union is seen by some as a “moment of deterritorialization”.(Walters 2004:676).

One proposal towards this direction is the description of *monotopia* as a possible future for European territorial organisation. As Jensen and Richardson put it

*However, probing deeper into the spatial visions and imaginations underlying the new policies of European integration we would argue that a third kind of vision surfaces-of a space of monotopia. By this we mean an organised, ordered and totalised space of zero-friction and seamless logistic flows. (...) we will argue (...) though the word ‘monotopia’ will not be found in any European plan, policy document or political speech, this idea of monotopic Europe lies at the heart of the new ways of looking at European territory.*(Jensen, Richardson 2004:3)

According to this, the European Union would aim at the creation of a monotonian space in the sense that all internal borders should cease to exist in order to allow for the creation of a unified European space. Therefore, the spatial part of European integration is growing in the significance it is perceived to have and yet the EU lacks a clear formal competency in this policy field. (Jensen, Richardson 2004:15)

When following this conceptual vision the EU should articulate, in a more or less clear way, a straightforward vision on how to organise, not only govern, European space. With regard to the lack of a clear competency it should be analysed which ways the EU uses or could use to influence not only spatial planning specifically but also European territory in a more general way. One way to influence the shape and organisation of European territory lies in the characteristics that internal European borders have. Therefore it is of importance to analyse the way the EU is supporting and influencing the creation of cross-border regions across internal borders.

The question that should be asked then is how the EU puts forward its spatial vision for Europe. Furthermore attention should be paid to how the EU uses certain concepts and projects to create some kind of perceived competency in the spatial policy across Europe. This analysis would then allow asking what role the European Union is playing in a possible reterritorialization of space. Nevertheless, all these inquiries should always try to question, whether the EU actually is on the look out for a monotonian European space as presented by Jensen and Richardson.

### **2.3. Cross-border regions alongside internal borders of the European Union – Putting integration into practice?**

Institutionalized cross-border co-operation in the European Union is a relatively young phenomenon, with the EUREGIO along the German-Dutch border as first official cross-border region being established in 1958.(EUREGIOa) However, since then a multitude of differently shaped forms of cross-border co-operation have emerged resulting in over 100 cases of cross-border regions in the EU.(Euregio NRW) The main instrument that is associated with facilitating the development of cross-border contacts and changing the way of how borders are understood is the concept of cross-border co-operation. Cross-border co-operation has become a highly used concept in the context of creating deeper European integration, especially through the establishment of cross-border regions along internal borders of the EU. This approach is especially important as internal borders are seen as places where European integration is supposed to come into flesh and these borders are the most obvious meeting points not only for the member states, but more importantly also for the European citizens. In connection with this development borders and border regions have also moved from being associated with a strongly peripheral character to more central institutions that have a multitude of political efforts connected to them.

Cross-border regions and European integration are usually identified as two interconnected processes, based on the assumption that new actors enter a field of activities that has long been reserved purely for the sovereign state. Furthermore, just as European integration progressed slowly so did agreements to further and foster cross-border co-operation and the creation of actual cross-border regions. Over the decades of working on the implementation of cross-border agreements, different problems had to be overcome, mainly regarding definitions, responsibilities and limits as well as legal aspects concerning the newly created cross-border regions. (Perkmann 2003:154f.)

The conditions for governments to become main actors in cross-border co-operation were improved by the European Union, especially the European Commission, and the Council of Europe. Still, the initial creation and establishment of cross-border regions was a more informal act and mainly took place in the form of twin associations. Only in the 1980 first attempts were made to base cross-border regions more firmly in public law, especially through the Madrid Convention (1980) put forward by the European Council. These attempts to formalise and organise cross-border cooperation possibly stem from a first surge in the number of cross-border activities in the 1970s (Anderson 1983:4) and the need to react to these new developments that were seen as a chance of adjusting to economic and

demographic change in ways that transcended rigid state boundaries. Furthermore, already the 1980s saw a more diverse discussion regarding the state. However, also a confirmation of a still more state-centric view can be found. In addition, a further development of cross-border cooperation into a more coherent process was seen as problematic (Anderson 1983:2ff.), as this, according to Anderson

*“would require special jurisdictions or even an interpenetration of jurisdiction on a scale not seen in Europe since the abolition of feudal rights.”(Anderson 1983:11)*

However, the development of a further institutionalised approach to cross-border co-operation was further supported by the EU through the launching of the INTERREG initiative by the European commission in 1990 (Perkmann 2003:154f.). In order to also include the countries that were to join the EU in 2004 and in 2007, programmes like PHARE were set up in order to support cross-border co-operation across those soon to be internal borders. (Perkmann 2003:155) The PHARE programme not only helped to prepare these regions for joining the EU, it also assisted in laying the groundwork for a transition to the INTERREG programmes after 2004 and 2007.

Following the creation of these programmes and their implementation in several funding periods, the number of cross-border co-operations surged a second time after the 1970s. However, not only the number of cross-border regions rose, also the importance attached to them and the attention paid to them in the academic debate grew. A reason for the surge in numbers can be seen in the then newly created possibility to receive extensive EU funding for activities related to cross-border regions. The renewed academic interest could stem from a renewed interest in borders alongside, somewhat paradox, the rise in literature focusing on assumptions relating to the *death of the nation state* or the *demise of the Westphalian system*. However, these assumptions are usually seen as an exaggeration.(Joenniemi 1994:21)

On the practical side of implementing cross-border co-operation and accommodating new programmes and finance instruments the rise in cross-border activities and the rise of inter-regional and inter-local co-operation call for a definition as to what actually constitutes a cross-border region. The Madrid Convention put forward a first relatively loose definition, focusing on cases where neighbourly relations between territorial communities are fostered (Perkmann 2003:155) Yet, the rise of activities in different fields triggered attempts for a more detailed definition and these attempts also showed the difficulties related to defining a concept that has as many different yet related aspects as it is the case in cross-border co-operation.

The need for a definition also stems from a possible uncertainty regarding what the term actually entails. It is established that cross-border regions are seen as having potential to challenge the state (Häkli 2008:476), however in the literature it is also expressed that it is still not always clear what cross-border regions represent that is whether they are a level of governance, communities of interest, models of actions or actual threats to state sovereignty and authority. (Akinwumi 2006:856)

The central issue, especially for the EU, is the fact that through programmes and initiatives cross-border co-operations and more specifically cross-border regions receive substantial funding from the EU. Therefore their definition also influences issues of eligibility for support that in some cases might also influence the establishment of cross-border co-operation. There are two main ways to approach the problem of definition: focusing on quantitative or on qualitative terms. The quantitative definition would focus on geographical aspects, for example the distance a region has to the border in question. A qualitative definition would take historical developments, already existing economic contacts or a common culture into account. (Perkmann 2003:156f.)

Perkmann suggests four points to define cross-border co-operation. These include that the main actors are public ones and that the authorities collaborating are sub-national ones. This reference to sub-national actors also clarifies that cross-border co-operation is situated in the sector of low politics and is mainly concerned with solving problems that stem from the cross-border nature of the region. Lastly, co-operations across borders are supposed to involve some kind of institutionalization of border contacts (Perkmann 2003:156). In order to speak of a qualitative cross-border region it is seen necessary to have some kind of common features or interdependencies in the whole region, to make the formalisation of contacts necessary and to provide a common ground for actions that all involved parties can relate to. But it is also argued that these dependencies can be created through a quantitative cross-border region in a specific region that then develops to constitute a qualitative cross-border region. (Perkmann 2003:157). The main actors can be located in the region itself when it comes to pushing the development of contacts forward, yet the influence of the national framework and the EU should not be underestimated.

According to Perkmann, the main impact that the national framework can exercise on cross-border regions is the organization of territory in the nation states in question. The general finding here is that these regions can more easily develop and work in settings where communal autonomy as a concept is rooted in the organisation of the state (Perkmann

2003:165). The explanation for this can be seen in the experience that local communities have in being relatively independent actors when it comes to co-operations with other local entities. Subsequently, higher authorities are more used to deal with relatively independent sub-level actors that have means and channels to make their own position heard. Thus one could also aim at explaining the high number of cases of cross-border co-operations alongside German borders by pointing to the federal system and the decentralised structure stemming from it.

The influence of the EU stems mainly from its regional policy, even though it is debated to what extent this supranational organisation can influence cross-border regions that are perceived to be bottom-up driven (Perkmann 2003:165). Nevertheless it seems important to take into account the structuring influence the EU has on creating cross-border regions through its programmes like INTERREG or the community initiatives, not only when it comes to providing financial support to this co-operation but also in structuring the organisation of cross-border regions. Furthermore, the EU has provided major steps concerning the facilitating of developing more formal contacts across borders, as for example the already mentioned Madrid Convention or the development of its regional policy that also includes the support of cross-border cooperation, especially the highly influential INTERREG programme and the funding distributed through it.(Scott 2002:154) Additionally, also other EU actions, such as the Schengen agreement or developments in fields such as regional policy, can contribute to the creation of an indirect influence of the European Union.

The attitude of the state towards these developments is interpreted to be Janus-faced, as the economic input to the development of these peripheral regions is seen as positive while there is a clearly pronounced reluctance to vest any powers into these forms of co-operation.(van Houtum 2000:66)

Taking these assumptions into account, cross-border regions as one main type of cross-border co-operation seem to be not only widespread along the internal borders of the EU, but also incorporate a multitude of actors from different levels which could have the potential of facilitating working procedures and therefore contribute to achieving the aims of cross-border co-operation. On the other hand, this multitude of actors could lead to confusion concerning the division of tasks and the lack of central authority could make it also more difficult to bring the cross-border work closer to the local population, as they might perceive it to be overly complicated.

Nevertheless it still has to be asked to what extent these regions<sup>3</sup> are more than mere words and intentions when it comes to actually enhancing cross-border contact and promoting new forms of co-operation when applied to real border contexts. Additionally, the way of thinking shown in the approach by Perkmann described above is a highly stylized way of looking at cross-border co-operation. It still has to be seen as to whether the concept of cross-border region can also work in more complicated border situations or at asymmetric borders. Furthermore, it has to be stressed that the borders taken into consideration here are all internal borders of the European Union. It has to be expected that the situation is significantly different and more difficult when moving to external EU borders or even to other international borders.

In general it can be observed that the majority of the existing research literature mostly focuses on more traditional themes such as the creation of cross-border projects or the creation of a system of multi-level governance in the European Union. This seems viable given the initial scope of cross-border co-operation and also regarding the capabilities present in cross-border regions. However, influences of globalization, transnationalism as well as the movement of capital, goods and ideas over borders and increasing numbers of migrants challenge the traditional way of viewing territoriality. Furthermore, the already introduced pressure on the sovereign states rises as they have to find a way to “redefine their relationship with space” (Popescu 2008:419). The EU is catalyzing the process of re-territorialization in most of the European space; and cross-border regions are seen as one way to challenge the border - focused and fixed territoriality of nation states (Popescu 2008:419) Also Häkli argues that borderlands can be of interest as possible indicators of political change with transitions taking place there possibly being a signal for other political developments. However, this approach has not yet been applied to diverse European cross-border regions.

Therefore, given the multitude of international challenges it seems useful to widen the scope used when analysing cross-border activities and search for underlying potential in cross-border co-operation. The approach used here to do so is to view cross-border regions as places where spaces can be redefined and spheres of influences can be changed and newly determined. The creation of cross-border co-operation could be interpreted as the building of new geographical spaces, taken that borders are also markers of power, for example as markers of sovereign state territory. Subsequently, changes that touch upon the role of borders and their understanding could be interpreted as a challenge to the existing fixed

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<sup>3</sup> In the following, the only form of cross-border co-operation investigated further is that of cross-border regions along internal European borders. Therefore, also the term cross-border co-operation will be used when referring to cross-border regions.

systems. In this context, cross-border regions should not only be about creating cross-border activities, realising projects or increasing the contact of citizens across the border in order to decrease the dividing power a border can have.

Popescu introduces the notion of using cross-border regions as possible markers of reterritorialization processes. However the main focus in his case study is on the Romanian-Ukrainian-Moldovan borderlands.(Popescu 2008:420) Whereas the need to analyse territorial underpinnings is also articulated in the present study, the focus of the case studies will shift from the fringes of the European Union to internal, both newer and older, borders.

This possible reterritorialization of European space through internal cross-border regions then opens the question of what kind of territorial understanding would be the result. In the current academic literature, several approaches to a possible result of territorial redefinition are discussed. According to Anderson, five main visions for a changed European space can be distinguished. These are *Europe of nations*, *federal European superstate*, the already mentioned *Europe of regions*, *new medieval Europe* as well as *Europe an empire*.(Anderson 2007:9) Following Anderson, each of these configurations presupposes a specific way of defining territory and borders. In this respect, the concepts of *Europe of nations*, *federal European superstate* and *Europe of regions* would follow a more traditional way of understanding territoriality and borders as all three are based on a national, inwardly oriented conception of territoriality. On the contrary, the notions of *new medieval Europe* and of *Europe as an empire* signal a change in the understanding of territoriality as national concepts of territoriality would fail to grasp the essence of these two approaches.(Anderson 2007:9ff.)

As the aim in this work is to examine a possible reterritorialization beyond the scale of the state, the main focus will be put on the latter two conceptions of European space, *medieval Europe* and *Europe an empire*. According to Anderson, a possible medieval conception of European space is mainly characterised by the absence of clearly demarcated borders as well as a high level of heterogeneity. Furthermore, there are no claims to absolute sovereignty in a specific territorial unit. This scenario depends on a weakened or diffused sovereignty as a result of pressure exercised from above and below.(Anderson 2007:16) The model of Europe as an empire on the other hand is seen to incorporate elements of a medieval conception of territoriality as well as national forms of understanding territoriality which leads to a highly heterogeneous concept that is also able to adapt to changing circumstances. The relationship between territory and sovereignty, its strength being so decisive for the Westphalian conceptualisation of territoriality, is weak. However, unlike to the

concept of medieval territory a core can be found from which power over the territory of the empire is exercised in circles, with the power of the empire being strongest at the core and weakening with each circle moving away from this core.(Anderson 2007:19)

However, Anderson's conception is not the only approach to this problem in the literature. Browning and Joenniemi also deal with possible concepts of territoriality with a special focus on territory situated at the border.(Browning, Joenniemi 2008:522) Even though the focus in their work is put on explaining developments regarding the European Neighbourhood Policy, their basic approach to different ways of organizing territory are also of importance for the present context, especially so as they deal also more specifically with the influence a border can have on reconfiguring territoriality.

Their approach relies on a combination of geopolitical models and geostrategies that can be combined to account for changes in territoriality. Here it is important to note that the combinations can include models and strategies of different strengths as well as a melting together of seemingly separate concepts.(Browning, Joenniemi 2008:522 & 529) The geopolitical models used by Browning and Joenniemi are *Westphalian Europe*, *Imperial Europe* and *Medieval Europe*. The basic characteristics of these are similar to the characteristics introduced by Anderson. The difference, however, lies in the assumption that these frameworks alone are not enough to explain new forms of territoriality as they lack dynamism. In order to make up for this perceived lack, Browning and Joenniemi introduce geostrategies that focus specifically on the function and perception of the border. These geostrategies are *networked (non)border*, *march*, *colonial frontier* and *limes*.(Browning, Joenniemi 2008:526f.) The framing of these geostrategies takes place in relation to the external borders of the EU and the way it interacts with the outside. However the framework also deals with the general problem of how to approach borders between two territorial units. Therefore, the geostrategies also seem of use when approaching the possibility of creating a new kind of territoriality stemming from a changing border perception within the European Union.

The networked (non)border is the geostrategy that most clearly relates to the ideas of a borderless world and processes of deterritorialization evident in the debate about territoriality influenced by postmodernism. The central point is the decreasing relevance of clearly cut spatial borders and aims at a sharing of responsibilities beyond the established border concepts. The march is seen as an "indistinct zone separating entities" (Browning, Joenniemi 2008:527). The march would then be a less fixed, almost fluid zone separating the inside and the outside. So, instead of creating a linear border, the march is a kind of border area.

However, the understanding of the march as a border zone can be extended to perceive it as a buffer zone. This conceptualisation would imply the characterisation of the march as security zone that aims at keeping perceived threats originating from the outside away. The third geostrategy is the colonial frontier which is a more mobile conceptualisation of the frontier. It is interpreted to be a space of interaction between an inside and an outside that is characterised by a power asymmetry. In this concept the inside aims at expanding and at imprinting its preferences on the development of the outside. The last geostrategy introduced by Browning and Joenniemi is the limes. Also with this geostrategy no strict demarcation is introduced. This makes it somewhat similar to the colonial frontier, especially as it also draws on a power asymmetry between the inside and the outside. Nevertheless, the limes as a geostrategy does assume that the frontier is more permanent in character without necessarily aiming at expanding the territory of influence towards the outside. (Browning, Joenniemi 2008:527ff)

All of these geostrategies can then be combined with the geopolitical models. Some of these combinations seem evident from the beginning, such as connecting the march and the Westphalian model. However, Browning and Joenniemi stress that it is important to not create these combinations too quickly or interpret them as enduring or only possible ways of bringing geostrategies and geopolitical models together. The reason for this is seen in the different strength that these different strategies and models can have, depending on their location but also depending on the stage of development that they are in. In addition, the geostrategies and geopolitical models can change over time or melt into another model. This possibility for further development has to be kept in mind in order to allow for a flexible approach to understanding processes of territorialization and borders. (Browning, Joenniemi 2008:529)

The two interesting strategies for the present study seem to be the networked (non)border and the march. The reason for this is their specific characterisation that in both cases could allow for a certain degree of intermingling without a too clearly pronounced element of expansion. The importance of these models lies in their ability to allow for developments to take place. Instead of focusing on one way of explaining territoriality and fitting other concepts and processes into this way of explaining things, the conception of territoriality can develop alongside changes in other concepts.

These two strands in the literature, Popescu's approach to cross-border regions as possible locations of reterritorialization processes and discussions about models for the future understanding of European territoriality as introduced by Anderson and Browning and

Joenniemi are the main strands of previous research that lead up to the creation of the research topic in question in this work. However, instead of connecting this question to the external borders of the EU, the present analysis will focus on internal borders in order to focus stronger on the internal processes shaping European territorial understanding. This is seen as important as these internal developments in turn can also influence the way the EU is presenting itself to the outside.

### **3. The theoretical framework: border, territory, power and order in the light of Critical Geopolitics**

The chapter at hand aims at introducing the theoretical framework used in the thesis. Given the complexity of the concepts related to the research question and their far-reaching implications on a variety of further concepts not even included in the introduction of the research background, the theoretical framework helps to conceptualize what is of interest in the study and what is seen to be a particular feature that can help in analysing the research question. Of course, through the choices made when assembling the theoretical framework the character and orientation of the study will be influenced.(Cooper 2008:9) However, the already introduced complexity of the research subject at hand demands a clarification of what is under investigation and how main concepts and connections among them are understood in this context. Whereas certain concepts and their influence have to be left out, the creation of a thorough theoretical background will help in analysing and presenting the chosen concepts in a clear and stringent manner.

The main concepts used for analysing the research problem: border, territory, order and power will be located within the broader framework of Critical Geopolitics. The structure will be as follows: first, the main theoretical framework of Critical Geopolitics will be established; second, the specific theoretical concepts needed to analyse the research question will be presented and analysed; third, the theoretical framework thus created will be shown in the light of the research question in order to establish a connection between the researched topics and the introduced theoretical concepts.

#### **3.1. *Political Geography* and *Critical Geopolitics* as the main theoretical framework**

The main theoretical framework of this thesis will draw upon Critical Geopolitics. As this approach to the study of International Relations is highly intertwined with Political Geography some remarks on their connection, their main research agendas and ways of distinguishing them are in order. This will help to better localize the study in a broader theoretical context but will also allow a sharper distinction between what will be researched in the following chapters and what are connected points that are also of interest to the topic but will not be on the agenda in the approach followed.

The relationship between Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics can be characterized in two ways. A narrow approach would separate both approaches and perceive Political

Geography as mainly being occupied with the nation state and the study of its features with Critical Geopolitics on the other hand as being concerned with studying international relations from a spatial perspective. However, when adopting a wider approach, Political Geography would be interpreted as the umbrella discipline in which Critical Geopolitics specializes in the spatial aspects of political activity.(Parker 1998:7) Here the wider approach will be chosen, identifying Political Geography as the study of the relationships between power, space and place and Critical Geopolitics as adding the active process of writing space to this equation.(Painter 2008:57 & 65)

Political Geography is also seen as adding value to the discipline of International Relations as it helps to develop an approach for the study of "location". Even though this is not seen as the only merit of using a Political Geography approach in International Relations, the importance of 'bringing geography back in' is acknowledged.(Lapid 1999:896) In addition to searching for a meeting point between Political Geography and International Relations, Lapid also points to another important issue when dealing with Political Geography and Critical Geopolitics: that is to say the geopolitical tradition that has been marginalized due to the usage of the term by the Nazi regime and due to its inability to reflect upon its own spatial assumptions.(Lapid 1999:898) Only in the 1990s did a body of literature focusing on the construction of Critical Geopolitics emerge that not only moved the approach out of the margins into a more focused position but also revised core assumptions relating to a strong realist point of view or to the role of power.(Painter 2008:65) The critical approach is seen as a turning point with regard to the unquestioning acceptance of established assumptions and concepts.(Dalby, Ó Tuathail 1996:455)

Critical Geopolitics is then seen to "problematise how global space is incessantly reimagined and rewritten by centers of power and authority" (Ó Tuathail 1996:249). This 'writing of space' makes Critical Geopolitics a useful approach to deal with the research question, as Critical Geopolitics should provide an approach for dealing with the question of what kind of territorial development is induced through the creation of new territorial units and their perception on different levels. Especially border as a meeting point between states, which are one of the forms of exercising power within a confined political space, seems to provide a good starting point for creating a new spatial relationship. Therefore it is not only of importance to pay attention to how borders are used as starting points for the creation of space, but also to pay attention to what kind of space is supposed to be created.

### 3.2. The *Identities – Borders – Orders* nexus

In order to instrumentalise the Critical Geopolitics approach, the main concepts which will be used to deal with the research question also have to be defined in order to spell out how they can be connected with each other and which aspects connected to the research question will be left out.

However, before doing so some remarks on the term *concept* are in order. Toal, following Derrida, points out that in order to function and to be studied in a meaningful way a concept needs a context. The production of concepts therefore takes place within “discursive networks of difference or infrastructure” (Ó Tuathail 1996:65) and consequently usually uses another concept to either build on or to create difference through opposition. Furthermore, a concept can not be defined in a final way but is changeable depending on the context in which it is used. Therefore, in order for concepts to produce added value and insights they should neither be interpreted nor used as strictly defined term, but should rather be acknowledged as general problematic that are dependent on their context, as for example the history of a specific term. (Ó Tuathail 1996:64ff.)

These ideas that Toal uses to heighten the sensibility for the problem of defining Critical Geopolitics is also important regarding the following concepts that will shape and guide the study. The proposed content and definitions of concepts are not supposed to give an all encompassing answer but to sharpen the understanding of the concepts in light of the specific research question.

The main starting point for outlining the broader theoretical framework is the *Identities-Borders-Orders* (IBO) nexus described by Albert, Jacobsen and Lapid. The reason for putting this triangle of concepts at the heart of the analysis is that not only are they “key concepts” (Lapid 2001:6), but that they can also serve as a starting point to include other related concepts, territory or power among others. Furthermore, the triangle is flexible enough to assign each component a different importance in the study. Of course it is important to justify clearly which concepts are left out and for which reasons while at the same time keeping in mind that even though they are not the subject of the study they still exercise their influence on the topic researched.

In order to ground the work related to the research question at hand, the focus will be on the relationship between borders and orders. Identity, even though it can be related to several

parts of the research question, will not be analysed. The reason for this can be found in the need to narrow the research topic down. Including identity as a main concept would increase the scope of the topic massively. Furthermore, the relationship between borders and orders, especially in combination with territory and power already provides a vast research area.

The following section will introduce the main theoretical concepts, their relations to each other and current debates relating to them.

### **3.3. Main theoretical concepts**

#### **3.3.1. Border**

The concept of *border* is at the core of the research question and it can also be located as a vital topic in Critical Geopolitics. Already the terminology shows the richness that can be found in the border debate, introducing distinctions between for example border, boundary, frontier or edge.(Newman 2003:124) In the following the term *border* will be used as indicating a dividing line between two states. The borderland surrounding the border will also be referred to as *border region*.

Borders have developed to be a highly studied subject, something that was not the case a couple of decades ago, when borders were described as being of only little interest to IR scholars and were seen as “constraints on the interaction opportunities of nations”(Starr, Most 1976:584) The traditional study of borders focuses on technical and practical questions which resulted in a descriptive, non-theoretical approach favouring the study of specific observable phenomena.(Newman, Paasi 1998:189, Paasi 2005b:663)

The main focus of border studies has shifted away from traditional themes focusing on border typology or the functional impact of boundaries to a focus on hierarchies, the influence of boundaries on the behavioural pattern of people and the management of boundaries.(Newman 2003:125ff.)(van Houtum 2005:672) This shift is connected to the increasing number of boundaries, increasing globalisation and regionalisation as well as to the increasing flows regarding economy, migrants and the like. Reason for this shift in focus was to analyse the border with respect to core social and political concepts such as nation or territory.(Paasi 2005b:665)

Borders are no longer seen mainly as markers of nation state territory but are now to a larger extent also perceived to be social institutions that incorporate a multitude of facets and

interpretations concerning their nature, strength and influence on several levels.(Scott 2006:4) Paasi further argues that the importance lies in the recognition of the unique setting of each border and not in the creation of one border theory that serves as a model for each case.(Paasi 2005b:670) This, according to Paasi, is not mainly because all borders are necessarily unique, but because a very broad theory, among others including elements such as territory, state and human agency, would be needed. This approach would be highly complicated by the deeply contextual nature of every single concept on its own.(Paasi 2005b:668)

Yet, voices arguing in favour of one coherent border theory can also be found.(Brunet-Jailly 2005:633) The attempt is made to show that the assumption that each border is unique does not hold and that a general theory of borders is indeed possible, introducing characteristics, such as economic development, alongside which integration of a borderland or developments along the border might take place.(Brunet-Jailly 2005:644)

Yet again, this seems to be a difficult approach given the diverse forms borders can have depending on their specific setting. This approach might prove to work with rather similar borders that have something in common with each other regarding one specific topic and have conditions regarding their development that are alike to each other. It seems though, that difficulties arise when the theory is to explain developments at borders that from the start are different from each other and that also develop under different conditions. When assuming from the start that a coherent border theory is indeed possible, differences between different settings might be overlooked even though they could provide fruitful starting points for the analysis of questions relating to the development of borders.

Therefore, the theoretical approach used here relies more on the argument put forward by Paasi and others stressing the uniqueness of and need for context within each border setting, which allows for comparisons and certain generalisations but still pays keen attention to the specific border context. (Häkli, Kaplan 2002:8)(Paasi 2005b:668)

Opposing views can also be found with regard to the 'borderless world' that is by some seen to emerge especially regarding the internal borders of the EU. Newman argues:

*If there is anything that belies notions of a deterritorialized and borderless world more, it is the fact that boundaries, in a variety of formats and intensities, continue to demarcate the territories within which we are compartmentalized, determine with whom we interact and affiliate, and the extent to which we are free to move from one space to another. Some boundaries may be disappearing (...) but at the same time many new boundaries (...) are being established at one and the same time. (Newman 2003:123)*

This viewpoint can also find support from the European case, as here a distinction between different kinds of borders can be found, i.e. internal and external borders. Even if the internal borders seem to soften up, the external borders seem to prove that the disappearance of borders does by no means take place everywhere. This also justifies further exploring how exactly borders change and how the nature of this change influences related concepts.

### 3.3.2. Territory

Strongly related to the concept of border is the idea of *territory*. The term *territory* is usually understood to refer “(...) to a section of space occupied by individuals, social groups, institutions, typically the modern state (...)” (Paasi 2003:109) Furthermore it is understood to be an expression of power relations.(Paasi 2003:111)

In the present context, two issues relating to territory are important. Firstly, the development process of territory to becoming a coherent unit, such as a region or a sovereign state, and secondly, the link between territoriality and sovereignty. These two aspects can also be related to the research question. The ‘production’ of territory as a bounded unit does not only help to understand how for example the current nation states came into being, it also helps when dealing with the possibility of new territories emerging. The notions reterritorialization and deterritorialization that were referred to at the beginning are also of importance in this context. New spatial developments challenging the Westphalian fixed system could be located and their progress or ability to actually overcome the current system can be evaluated.

With respect to this emergence of territoriality, Paasi proposes a framework aiming to explain the institutionalization of regions, where he understand institutionalization as

*(...) a process during which some time specific level of spatial structure becomes an established entity which is identified in different spheres of social action and consciousness and which is continually reproduced in individual and institutional practices (Paasi 1986:110)*

This process consists of four stages:

1. Assumption of territorial shape.
2. Development of conceptual shape.
3. Development of institutions.
4. Establishment as part of the regional system and regional consciousness of the society concerned. (Paasi 1986:121)

These stages that describe the emergence of territorial units do not have to take place in a strict chronological order. They are interchangeable and can also take place simultaneously.(Paasi 1986:121) Yet Paasi stresses the importance of the boundary drawing for the process of region building; therefore problems can arise when trying to apply the concept to the emergence of cross-border regions that develop with a national border running through them. This might not be too problematic when the starting point would be a world that is in any event borderless or where borders are insignificant, but with regard to the assumption shown earlier on that borders still form a vital part in Critical Geopolitics the concept runs into difficulties. However, it should be kept within the framework as it is also argued that Paasi's criteria are actually at work in the European cross-border regions, even though their characteristics are not seen as substantial enough to create firmly institutionalised regions.(Markusse 2004:653) Still, it should be investigated what the situation of Paasi's criteria for the institutionalisation of regions is in the case studies under investigation.

Connected to this the term *integrated borderland* is used as an description of a border region in which all major political differences and barriers to movement imposed by the state border have been removed.(Strüver 2004a:629)

The second issue, the assumed link between territoriality and sovereignty, is referred to as *territorial trap* meaning that the link between state, territory and sovereignty has come to dominate discussion about territoriality.(Paasi 2003:117) The term *territorial trap* has been coined by John Agnew in order to describe a state-centred account regarding the spatial aspects of power. This account is described as being underpinned by three core assumptions. The first of these is the concept of sovereignty and its requirement for a clearly demarcated territory, the second assumption is a strict division between domestic and foreign spheres of life and the third assumption identified by Agnew is an equalling of state boundaries with the boundaries of society.(Agnew 1998:49) All three assumptions are interconnected and serve as reinforcement for each other resulting in the creation of an ideal state as a starting point for the investigation of any further topics.(Agnew 1998:50) This creation of the territorial trap leads to a

*thinking and acting as if the world was made up entirely of states exercising power over blocs of space* (Agnew 1998:51).

In order to overcome this territorial trap state power should not be seen as a given, but rather as the result of a historical development. Moreover, state territoriality should be questioned and alternative territorial configurations should be explored. (Agnew 1998:65f.)

Yet to open up new ways of thinking about territory this territorial trap has to be avoided and alternative ways of dealing with territory have to be employed in the academic debate. This can be achieved by separating the concepts that are perceived to depend on one another from each other.

Forsberg also argues for a separation of the concepts and proposes a deeper investigation into the nature of territory as one important step as it is usually not investigated in a thorough enough manner but perceived as appendix to other concepts.(Forsberg 1996:356) He introduces six forms of territoriality with 'political territoriality' being of interest for the research problem at hand. According to Forsberg, political territoriality deals with the organization of space for political reasons, an approach implying that territorial action cannot be a neutral action with the state currently being the clearest expression of this kind of territoriality.(Forsberg 1996:362) However, it is also asserted that there is not only one type of political territoriality, but several forms. Instead of the Westphalian system with set territories demarcated by sharp borders also more fluid or overlapping forms are possible. Moreover, the connection between power and territory is not an exclusive one either, the alternatives being a functional organisation or personalised relationships of power. However, it is also stressed that none of these forms are mutually exclusive but can also be interconnected. (Forsberg 1996:362ff.)

### **3.3.3. Power**

Power as a concept in International Relations is used rather contradictorily. Whereas there is a vast literature discussing what kind of power is exercised, how power can be exercised or how power can be lost or gained, however, there is no agreement on how to define power, how to study it or how to measure power. (Lukes 2005:61) According to Lukes, four strands of academic thought can be distinguished when trying to unravel this. The first explanation assumes that the term power is polysemic, meaning that its understanding changes according to different settings or situations. The second proposition suggests that power as a term has a variety of single meanings that are not at all connected to each other. Power then would be a term used to describe phenomenon that have nothing else in common but the name. Another attempt at describing more clearly what power as a concept entails suggests that there are different concepts of power as a result of different local 'language games' and

that therefore there can be no single common understanding of power. The final suggestion put forward by Lukes describes power as an essentially contested concept, meaning that there actually is a single concept of power which however, according to Gallie, is characterised by continuous discussions regarding the proper usage of the term by the user of the concept. (Lukes 2005:61ff.)

Stemming from these difficulties in reaching a somewhat common understanding of what power actually entails it is not surprising that also arguments opposing the use of power as a concept for analysis in International Relations exist.(Lukes 2005:63f.) Whereas this surely seems a compelling argument it is not one that can be followed in the present context, as it would increase the scope way beyond that of the main research question. For the present purpose, the presented difficulties in defining the basic approach to power will be solved by approaching it through assuming that power is polysemic in nature. Apart from the difference in meaning stemming from different settings or situations, it also seems viable to assume, that different timeframes would see power being understood quite differently.

However, this alone does not yet lead to a working definition of power sufficient for the analysis of the research question. According to Scott, power can be viewed in two ways, the first, or mainstream as Scott labels it, being exemplified by the power of the sovereign state.(Scott 2001:6) In this view which is based on Weber's analysis of administrative structure in modern and pre-modern states, power is seen as the capacity of one actor to impose its will on other actors, even when meeting resistance from these other actors. Characteristic of this type of perceiving power is therefore not only its hierarchical, asymmetric relationships between actors and the attribution of power to those actors that are able to influence or participate in a decision-making process, but also that the result of struggle over power will result in winners and losers. (Scott 2001:6f.)

However, from its initial formulation changes in understanding have taken place regarding this mainstream understanding of power. The main change, that also holds importance for the subject at hand, is the development to understand power not only in an executive form, but to understand it as capacity. Therefore, power does not depend on being executed in order to prove that it is held by an actor, the mere capability of an actor to execute power is proof that power is vested within this actor.(Scott 2001:7)

The second, or in Scott's terminology second stream, view of power is less strictly defined than the mainstream approach to power and focuses on its strategies or techniques. In this view power is not solely centred in sovereign institutions but spread out through the whole

society. This spreading of power through society, for example institutions, can be achieved by the hegemonic actor without using power in a negative form such as coercion or repression. This spreading of power through society takes place through the formation of a dominant culture that is among others spread through schools or churches.(Scott 2001:8f.)

In this context, especially Foucault is seen as influencing the understanding of power as a concept. Foucault argues that power exists throughout all spheres of social life, not just in the political sphere. Foucault also attempts to combine studies of power to spatial aspects of his work, especially regarding disciplined spaces such as asylums or prisons. (Scott 2001:11)

Whereas much of Foucault's work is seen as influencing the study of space and also Critical Geopolitics, in the present context Foucault's approach is less applicable as it focuses on entities that have a clearly pronounced border. This understanding has also been put forward arguing that even though Foucault's work understands space and power as being mutually exclusive, Foucault's approach and premises are mainly focused on small, institutionalised spaces and leaves questions when one moves beyond these already institutionalized spaces.(Murdoch 2006:52f.)

However, both views to understand and analyse power are not totally opposite and contradictory of each other. Scott argues for a combination, a synthesis of both accounts for them to enrich each other depending on the subject that is being studied and the input each strand of thought can provide.(Scott 2001:12) It is important to notice that Critical Geopolitics argues for an understanding of power not exclusively located within the state. (Painter 2008:66)

When turning to the relationship of space and power it is usually assumed that space is a means for the organization of political power. This generally is equalled with the assumption that the state is the spatial frame within which to organize political power, however territory is just one possible effect of power.(Painter 2008:66)

However, as also Forsberg argues, it should be kept in mind that the concept of the Westphalian sovereign state and the notion of sovereignty are not necessary preconditions to organize power spatially, neither are they the only way of a spatial definition of power. Alternatives are seen in the functional organization of power and in the organization of power in personalized relationships, whereas all three kinds are by no means mutually exclusive.(Forsberg 1996:364f.)

Taking these considerations as starting points, sovereignty and territoriality can be seen as detached from each other, and the problem of emerging territorialities can be analysed in alternative ways. Furthermore, losses in sovereignty then no longer necessarily have to be interpreted as expressions of declining territoriality. Forsberg supports this by pointing out that units challenging the sovereignty of nation states, such as regions, are not non-territorial themselves.(Forsberg 1996:368) Therefore, a change in the organizing principle of territoriality does not imply a change in the importance of the principle.

Another interesting aspect with respect to the research question is the role territoriality plays in maintaining and creating power relationships. According to Forsberg changes with regard to power relationships have their base in changes relating to territorial practices.(Forsberg 1996:373) This aspect also relates to the writing of space that lies at the heart of Critical Geopolitics. Therefore, investigations into the changing nature of territoriality will also help to reveal more about power structures influencing these changes.

Also Agnew deals with the relationship between power and territorial configurations. Starting from the conceptualization of the territorial trap Agnew criticises the modern geopolitical notion of power as being coercive over blocs of space. This notion implies that power can be exercised equally within a given territory and ignores developments that challenge the assumption that all power lies with the state and not with newly emerging units such as regional governments.(Agnew 1998:53)

Allowing for different forms of territoriality that are not in need of the strict boundaries a state possesses might also help to fill the gap of Paasi's concept concerning the institutionalization of regions.

#### **3.3.4. Order**

The concept of order as introduced by Lapid with reference to the IBO nexus is highly interconnected with the concepts of territory, border and power. Again, the remarkable influence of the Westphalian system on the study and understanding of concepts can be found, as Lapid asserts that order in its common modern understanding as a relatively stable configuration of power among sovereign states is based on the Westphalian system .(Lapid 2001:8) Lapid furthermore asserts that the study of order as a concept is far less developed than the study of other concepts, such as border, as a result of the fixation with the Westphalian system as predominant order.(Lapid 2001:22)

As Lapid emphasizes, a study of the concept of order makes it necessary to focus on the concept of border as well, as “borders (and bordering) are absolutely indispensable to any notion of linguistic or social order.”(Lapid 2001:22). This however does not mean that borders and orders are inseparable concepts, on the contrary both concepts can and do vary independently of each other.

With the attempts to circumvent the territorial trap and separate the concepts of sovereignty and territoriality, developments regarding order can trigger new developments. The important issue here is to be aware that two different developments are seen as possible by Lapid: from borders-to-orders and from orders-to borders that both have their specific characteristics.(Lapid 2001:13)

The *borders-to-orders* sequence relates to the influence that developments of borders, such as transformation, inscription, diversification, exert on the political order in which they take place. This influence can transpire on a multitude of different levels. Lapid asserts that European integration can be seen as one example of the borders-to-orders sequence (Lapid 2001:14) This would mean that the development of borders, their functions and their influence would influence the way in which territory can be organised. Even seemingly established ways of organising territory can be challenged when changes in the understanding and the importance of borders take place. In the case of European integration the softening and opening up of internal borders contributes to a changing understanding of the sovereign state as the established system of political order.

The sequence labelled *orders-to-borders* is described as an essential feature when aiming at understanding transitions such as pre-modern/modern as well as modern/post-modern. Still, it is seen to be of a more complicated nature than the borders-to-orders sequence, mainly because the understanding of ordering devices, their functioning and characteristics, are insufficiently researched. However, steps have been taken to remedy this lack, and as Lapid asserts, an example for this can be seen in the understanding of the influence of the principle of sovereignty on the ordering of the Westphalian state system.(Lapid 2001:14f.) Starting from this, the influence of ordering principles on the process of bordering becomes clear. The orders-to-borders sequence implies that an ordering principle can alter the way borders are understood or perceived. Regarding the example of state sovereignty and the development of the Westphalian this means that the process of establishing sovereign territorial states implied the need for a shift from medieval, more fluid borders to an understanding of borders as strictly dividing territorial units in order to allow for exercising sovereign rights within these newly established territorial units.

Again, a high interconnectedness between the two approaches can be found. The orders-to-borders sequence would start from changes in the understanding of order, in this case the state-centred approach to international relations, in order to analyse possible changes regarding border. However, the borders-to-orders sequence is more clearly related to the research problem as a change in understanding of borders through cross-border co-operation can influence order especially through posing a challenge to the established Westphalian order. The change in the understanding of borders that could then give new impulses for reterritorialization would be catalyzed by the cross-border regions and their possible influence on the function and understanding of borders.

### **3.4. The theoretical concepts in the light of the research question**

As has already shortly been hinted at in the presentation of each concept, a high level of interconnectivity can be found as well as a pronounced connection to the research question. The concepts introduced were border, territory, power and order. They are all interrelated to a certain degree, as the introduction of the IBO nexus has shown.

The aim of this section is to draw a more explicit connection to the application of the presented theoretical concepts in the analysis of the research question. In doing so, the framework that will be used to examine each case study will be established as each theoretical concept will be connected to questions that can actually be asked from the case studies. To do so, the theoretical concepts will be situated within the more practical oriented background of the case study.

The introduced concepts each include important aspects regarding the research question. The concept of border serves as a starting point as the main focus is put on cross-border regions. From there the notions of territoriality, power and order will be connected with the concept of border in order to investigate the geopolitical writing of space that is taking place in cross-border regions.

The analysis of the concept of border will focus on the thesis of a possibly borderless world and the changing conception of borders in international relations. In order to examine this field, not only the history of the border is important but also the way in which the border is treated and evaluated in the cross-border level. Here, focus will be put on the perception of the importance and influence of the border as well as on the presentation of the border in the official image of the regions. One main question will be, whether the borders situated in the

cross-border regions are examples of borders that are slowly moving away from being expressions of a clear division between states. This aspect can be analysed through the investigation of the material published by the cross-border regions but also through the interviews that will supplement the theoretical approach with a regional viewpoint.

The focus on the border concept is not only useful as the research centres on cross-border regions, but as this also allows using spatial concepts dealing with a possible future concerning the territorial structure of the EU. Here the focus is among other things on the way borders structure this territoriality and possible reterritorialization developments. With the help of the introduced theoretical concepts and based on the case studies, assumptions can be made with regard to these regions but also with regard to a broader view on Europe.

The concept of territory will be used to analyse whether a production of new territorial units is taking place in the cross-border regions. However, focus is not only put on whether a new regional unit is being created, also the possible different stages of this development are of importance. Therefore, it will also be analysed whether a cross-border region is seen as having one coherent, bounded territory and whether this territory is seen as being composed of two national parts or one cross-border part. This analysis will focus on materials published by the cross-border regions and will for example take into account the way the cross-border region is presented on maps. The aim of this is to see whether and how the state border is shown in these official maps. Also the viewpoint of officials involved in the administration of the region will be used to analyse whether the creation of a coherent region is or was on the agenda. This possible production of a coherent region resonates with Paasi's framework for the institutionalization of regions, especially regarding the assumption of a clear territorial shape. As has been pointed out earlier, there are shortcomings in Paasi's approach when applying it to the cross-border setting. However, it still provides a good starting point to analyse the general capabilities of cross-border regions in a possible reterritorialization process.

As introduced in the previous section, power as a concept is broad, including a variety of components. One main question focuses on how power over the structure and functioning of the cross-border region is exercised. Also the ability of the cross-border regions to influence decisions related to their development will be addressed. Here, a special focus is put on funding as a means to establish and to organize power in the regions in question. Whereas power by far cannot be measured through monetary influence only, the importance of funding for the euregios is undeniable. Partly, the question is raised whether the influx of EU funding provides the regions with an "EU sponsored autonomy" (Rumford 2006:156),

therefore an analysis of funding, its sources and the dependence on it can also provide insight into structures of dependence among the actors. Furthermore, questions regarding whether and with which possible measures the border regions aim at implementing a structure that would allow a more powerful position for them are being scrutinized as a part of the analysis of the concept of power.

When dealing with the concept of order the main focus is on the stability and rootedness of the Westphalian system in the border regions, an aspect that is of course highly connected to the development of the other theoretical concepts in use. Furthermore, the analysis aims at exploring, whether indications for an establishment of a new kind of order can be found in the data collected from cross-border regions. To do so, the borders-to-orders sequence will be employed, that is the focus will be on changes in the understanding of border that can then trigger new developments in the understanding of order. The focus will be on questions of administration in order to analyse whether the cross-border co-operation results in approaches to accommodate differences in administrative systems.

The introduction of the main theory and main concepts relating to the background of the research question have made it clear, that the topics of border, territory and power are important issues in the study of contemporary developments related to the territorial system of the EU. This specific territorial system seems to be open for change and restructuring towards forms other than the Westphalian order that has been the dominant order for several decades, one might even say centuries.

Therefore it is necessary to explore not only what different kinds of orders can be achieved and what kind of constellations theoretical concepts like border, territory and power can take in this process of change. It is also necessary to examine how these changes take place and whether they are already taking place through the creation of cross-border regions.

#### **4. The case study and interviews as methodological tools**

Given the vast amount of available methods and research strategies in combination with the theoretical background several approaches to open up the data for analysis with the theoretical framework are possible. Furthermore basic methodological assumptions have to be clarified in order to give a clear account of the connection between theory, method and the research question. For the purpose of this study the case study method in combination with data stemming from three sources: interview material, official documents and secondary literature, provide a solid basis for the analysis of the research problem.

##### **4.1. Basic methodological assumptions**

The following section will introduce some methodological assumptions that inform the use of the methods introduced later in the chapter as well as the general approach to the analysis of the research problem in the light of the theoretical framework. Firstly, the notions of processism, verbing and relationalism will be introduced. This will be followed by some points made by Toal with regard to the study of geopolitics.

Relationalism, verbing and processism are notions used by Lapid in order to break free from a view on International Relations that focuses too strongly on stability and continuity.(Lapid 2001:3ff.) These ideas are also useful points to consider for the present study. Processism or process thinking is put in opposition to positivist epistemology as it states that reality is not made up of readily defined things that are precedent to any processes, but stresses that movement and change lie at the heart of things and are the key for understanding them. Therefore the focus should be shifted to include the processes creating the perceived reality.(Lapid 2001:3) Connected to this is the notion of relationalism as it focuses on the idea that no phenomenon can be isolated from another and that the relations among phenomena also contribute to shaping them.(Lapid 2001:4) Also the last idea introduced by Lapid, verbing, is connected to the assumption that a state of rest or certainty is not attainable in International Relations theory. Verbing refers to the creation of verbs derived from nouns commonly used in the study of International Relations, such as *bordering*. Whereas Lapid describes the resulting words as “awkward verbs” (Lapid 2001:5) the usefulness of the new verbs in creating a better awareness of the constant flux and movement that once taken for granted concepts are in is highlighted. (Lapid 2001:5)

Connected to Lapid's strive for a more flexible analysis of International Relations are methodological points made by Toal regarding the study of Critical Geopolitics. One main issue here is the so-called *geographical gaze* that, according to Toal, stems from the geopolitical tradition in which the Cartesian divide dominated the approach to international politics. This Cartesian divide supported the creation of an inner and an outer reality, resulting in the understanding that the internal mind is able to objectively view an external world of objects. (Ó Tuathail 1996:22f.) Toal rightly criticises this approach as seeking to enforce a specific vision of space without acknowledging that a neutral observation and presentation of events is not possible. Furthermore he asserts that even though this approach to understanding international politics became less important from 1910 onwards, it still had left its imprint on the mechanisms of the discipline. The heritage of the Cartesian divide leads to an understanding of geography as being permanent and self-evident without being influenced by opinions about it. (Ó Tuathail 1996:35 & 50ff.) Toal therefore points out that geography and connected issues, such as the position of the geographer, and techniques, such as mapping, should not be approached simply as given, but should be subjected to a thorough analysis. The second point is that the starting point for investigation should not be seen in a geographical system administered by an authority, as for example the state system, in order to accommodate the possibility of various forms of geographical organization. Lastly, Toal points to the necessity of being able to challenge institutionalized ways of understanding space. (Ó Tuathail 1996:10ff)

These points made by Lapid and Toal have to be kept in mind not only when dealing with the theoretical background but also when choosing methods for opening up the theoretical concepts for the analysis.

#### **4.2. The case study method**

In order to answer the challenges of the research question case study was chosen as main strategy of investigation. In the following section, case study as a research method will be introduced by paying specific attention to its strengths and weaknesses and by pointing out the types of questions a case study can answer.

According to Stake, a case is defined as a bounded system, such as specific events, processes or organisations. It is acknowledged that even though a system might be bounded, this does not totally separate it from its more general context.(Stake 1995:2)

According to Yin, the case study

*as a research strategy comprises an all encompassing method – with the logic of design incorporating specific approaches to data collection and to data analysis.* (Yin 1994:13).

Elsewhere it is also pointed out that the case study as a method is able to address the complexity of an issue by focusing on one or few selected cases to be analysed with regard to a complex research problem.(David 2006: xxvii) This ability to address complexity is seen as a major strength of the case study, as well as the ability to analyse the selected cases with a focus on details.(David 2006: xxvii)(Gilbert 2008:36) Also the capacity to identify new variables or hypotheses is seen as an advantage of a case study research design.(Bennett 2004:34ff)

However, the small number of cases being the subject of case study which do allow for an in-depth analysis of the cases are also identified as a negative feature. It is commonly pointed out that the small number of cases does not allow for representative studies and makes it difficult and sometimes even impossible to draw generalizations from the results of the analysis of specific cases.(Gilbert 2008:36) Further weaknesses that are attributed to the case study method include the selection bias of cases, a lack of representativeness and a lack of independence of cases.(Bennett 2004:39ff.)

However, it is also acknowledged that the special nature of case study as a method can outweigh these points. Addressing the concern over a lack of generalisation, Yin points out that generalisation is possible but should be aimed at theoretical propositions and not at populations.(Yin 1994:10) The focus on selection bias as a negative feature of case studies is usually countered by pointing out that this in general can happen in numerous methods in the social sciences and can be avoided by a thorough approach to choosing cases and by considering alternative hypotheses throughout the research process.(Vennesson 2008:238) Lack of representativeness can be countered by keeping in mind that cases are usually chosen because of their special properties that should be analysed. No random or representative sampling takes place, but a careful process of choosing a case presenting a certain set of specific features.(Gilbert 2008:36) Concerning the lack of independence of cases, Bennett argues that the problem of dependence is not necessarily implied in the number of cases studied and it is also not amplified by knowledge of main features of the case prior to the selection. Moreover, as long as the research design allows for learning processes partially dependent cases do not necessarily decrease the value of the study as long as the discovered dependencies can flexibly be taken into account for the analysis of the case study.(Bennett 2004:44)

Taking into account the outlined properties, strengths and weaknesses of the case study method the main reasons for choosing this approach to examine the outlined problem were the possibility to focus on a small number of cases and the ability of case studies to deal with

complex relationships. As has been outlined in the introduction to the research topic and in the main theoretical background the research problem is characterized by several highly interconnected concepts that form a complex system of dependencies and interrelations. A thorough study of these concepts and their connections is needed in order to shed light on the proposed research question.

The process of applying the case study method to the problem started out with the crucial step of selecting fitting cases. As Klotz points out, the selection of cases is an essential step and should not be based merely on the number of cases, but on the concepts that can be found within certain cases.(Klotz 2008:43) The cases had to be fitting to basic criteria relating to the research question; that is being border regions over an internal border of the European Union; and should also produce a manageable workload. In order to analyse the research problem, two border regions were chosen that would allow for an analysis of the main concepts. The decision for a multiple case design implies a higher workload yet it also allows for the possibility to draw more general conclusions regarding the main research question. The problem of multiple case designs and the need to focus on specific challenges that result from them has been pointed out by Yin (Yin 1994:44f.), yet it is seen as necessary to induce the possibility of comparison into the study in order to create a more robust design.

#### **4.3. The interview as research strategy**

In order to analyse the chosen cases further research tools are necessary. One of these will be interview as it allows collecting in-depth and first-hand information regarding the chosen cases. This section shall serve as an introduction to interview as a research method by pointing out the main advantages and problems connected to interviews in general and the interviewing process. Furthermore, the choice for interview as a research strategy will be justified by pointing out the specific demands of the research problem. One problem that will be dealt with more extensively is the issue of telephone interviewing. Finally, the process of interviewing, the analysis of the interviews and the main interview topics with their connection to the research problem will be introduced.

According to Kvale, interviewing is a type of guided conversation where “(t)he subjects not only answer questions (...), but themselves formulate in a dialogue their own conceptions (...).”(Kvale 1996:11). Therefore, participants in an interview are seen as meaning makers offering interpretations about the topic at hand.(Warren 2002:83) This is important to notice, especially when it comes to the stage of analysing and utilising the interview results. Connected to this is the issue of perspective that should be kept in mind when planning,

conducting and analysing the interviews. The problem of perspective does not only apply to the interviewer but also to the respondent and is usually a mixture of various perspectives that shape the conversation. It is important to be aware of these perspectives and the fact that they are subject to change especially during the interpretation process.(Warren 2002:84)

Kvale also points out that interview as a research method is useful when the research question aims at studying how situations or processes are understood.(Kvale 1996:105) Therefore, interviews were chosen as method of research within the case study in order to gain a better picture of how cross-border regions are understood and interpreted by people administering them. The interviews can not only serve as means for getting more information about how the cross-border regions are understood, they can also serve as indication whether some concepts are seen as being connected to the development of cross-border regions or not. Here, the direct input from respondents dealing with the cross-border problematic on a daily basis should prove valuable. Also the possibility to question established images of the border region is given through the interviews. Therefore, new input is provided to the analysis of the research problem that can help to further already existing analyses into the nature of cross-border co-operation and also helps to move beyond a mere description of the image that the cross-border region is trying to create through activities, publications and the like.

Of course, just as the interview can help to open up new ways of thinking about the topic it also has shortcomings. First of all, returning to the earlier introduced issue of perspective, it has to be kept in mind that the respondents with their perspective of exactly this 'representative' of the cross-border region will most likely stay in tune with the image presented of the region through other channels. Here, the wording and content of the question play an important role in encouraging the respondent to actively participate in the interview instead of merely focusing on information also available elsewhere. Therefore, the wording of the questions is an important part of the interview process.

Further issues that might become problematic are confidentiality and informed consent as well as leading questions. Confidentiality and informed consent are important topics relating to interview research. Informed consent implies that the respondent is informed about the content of the research, about the purpose of the interview and about the usage of the interview data.(Warren 2002:89) Confidentiality also refers to the usage of data, such as names that make respondents identifiable by others. It is necessary to reach an agreement on whether respondents can be named or not before the interviewing process and it is

advised to explicitly state whether confidentiality is wished for by the respondent.(Kvale 1996:114f.)

The issue of leading question is highly debated. They are usually characterised as already implying the answer the researcher wants to hear. Yet, the opinion about them is divided. Whereas some suggest avoiding them as they do not contribute to find out the real opinion of the respondent (Simmons 2008:195) other suggest to use them as tool to check up answers the respondent gave earlier. This is seen as useful as long as the interviewer is actually aware of using a leading question and the consequences this might have for the answer.(Kvale 1996:157)

Apart from the introduced advantages and possible problems, the present research design demands a further look at the topic of telephone interviewing. Due to the distance to the regions that are dealt with in the case studies and the time and money that would be needed to travel to both of them in order to conduct the interviews, the interviews will all be held in the form of a telephone interview. The issue of telephone versus in-person interviewing is discussed in the literature and both interview types have their advantages and disadvantages. The advantages of the telephone interview are for example seen in reduced interviewer effects, in a better interview uniformity, in a greater standardization of questions and in greater cost efficiency and the faster availability of results.(Shuy 2002:540f.) These also contribute to the decision to conduct the interviews for the thesis research as telephone interviews. The main point is to be aware of difficulties that are connected to this decision in order to evaluate the influence it might have on the results. It has been reported that the in-person interviews succeed more often in creating a more natural atmosphere that triggers more honest and more self-generated answers. Also complex issues can be difficult to be conveyed over the phone and the pace of phone interviews might reduce the amount of thoughtful responses.(Shuy 2002:541ff) However, it is asserted that the choice for either process always depends on the specific research situation and that there generally is no clear solution what is best.(Shuy 2002:552) Again, the wording of the interview questions emerges as important topic, as unlike to face-to-face interviews communication will be limited to verbal interaction.

Again, it is vital not only to be aware of the advantages the chosen research design has for dealing with the research design, but to also keep limitations in mind in order to allow for a critical reflection regarding the collected data and the conclusions derived from it.

According to Kvale, the interview process is made up of seven steps: (1) thematizing, (2) designing, (3) interviewing, (4) transcribing, (5) analyzing, (6) verifying and (7) reporting. (Kvale 1996:88) This process was also followed when conducting the interviews for the present study.

One issue not specifically mentioned in Kvale's outline is the selection and contacting of respondents. The focus of the interview will be on people actively involved in the administration and organisation of the cross-border regions that can therefore act as key respondents. A special focus was put on ensuring a balance between interviews from each side of the border. For the interviews respondents were first contacted via email outlining the research and the content of the interview. If needed, further contact was made directly via telephone introducing the research topic. This briefing before the interview is not only important regarding informed consent or issues of confidentiality, it also already gives a first impression to the respondent what to expect from the interview. (Kvale 1996:112ff.)

In total eight interviews were conducted between January 2010 and April 2010 in the German branch office of the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA region in Frankfurt/Oder, in the Joint Technical Secretariat for cross-border cooperation between Poland and Brandenburg and the EUREGIO office in Gronau/Enschede. (see annex 1 for list of interviews) All interviews were conducted via phone and lasted between 30 and 60 minutes.

In this context it is important to notice that it was partly difficult to reach the intended respondent, to convince them to partake in the research and to arrange the interview in a timeframe suitable for the respondent but also fitting with the research timeline. Regarding the EUREGIO eight possible interviewees were contacted with four interviews resulting from this. For the data collection in the Viadrina region, eleven possible interviewees were contacted with a total of four interviews being conducted in the end. The response rate for the interview request was lower than initially expected; however as the interviews are not the only source of data this did not influence the research process negatively. The difference in the number of contacted persons results from a different organisation structure in each euroregion, as the German-Polish euroregion has two secretariats whereas the German-Dutch euroregion has one secretary responsible for all activities. Therefore, as it was the aim to interview representatives from both sides of the border more persons in the Polish-German euroregion were contacted. However, this proved difficult in the Polish case, where on the Polish side only interviews in the Joint Technical Secretariat could be arranged. Still, as the interviews are not the only or main source of information and as it was possible to

conduct interviews on the German side of the border as well the lack of interview data can be made up through information available from other sources.

Several interviewees requested for their answers to be treated confidentially, therefore in order to ensure conformity the decision was made to treat all interviews confidentially. In order to prevent an identification of interviewees based on their specific role in the cross-border regions, interviews were sorted according to the respective cross-border region and the date of the interview,

The interviews are semi-structured interviews and therefore the major questions are asked the same way in each interview. Still this allows for enough room to react to issues brought up by the respondent and to deepen certain topics if the situation seems to allow for it. (Fielding, Thomas 2008:246f.) At the same time, this will induce structure to the research process that can then allow comparing the results of the interviews by comparing answers to certain main topics. This approach to interviewing proved very fitting and fruitful in the research process, as it not only allowed to cover the main topics in a similar way but also gave the respondents enough room to formulate extensive answers that could then serve as starting points for clarifying interconnections among topics and for getting a better understanding of variables that were not included in the initial design of the interview.

The aim was to record and subsequently transcribe all interviews. However, for one interview this procedure was not followed as in this case no recording was produced due to technical problems with the recording equipment. However, as it was the case for all interviews, notes were taken during the interview process to prepare for such an incident and to allow for the creation of an extensive interview protocol afterwards. After recording all interviews were transcribed. Kvale asserts that transcribing can also have the negative effect of seeing the transcript as only empirical data in the project, when it should be seen more as means and not a subject matter. (Kvale 1996:163ff.) Furthermore, transcribing each interview took up a considerable amount of time. However, as the interview process stretched over an extended time period from January 2010 to April 2010 transcribing aided in keeping an overview over the content of each interview and furthermore facilitated the analysis of the interviews and the usage of quotes from the interviews immensely.

The analysis of the interview follows the process proposed by Kvale as “ad-hoc meaning generation” (Kvale 1996:203). This approach is characterized as a combination of different techniques depending on the interview to be analysed, including the description of an overall impression, the deeper analysis of specific passages that seem especially interesting,

quantifications if certain terms seem to stand out, analysis of the use of language or bringing out the basic structure of the interview.(Kvale 1996:203ff.) Especially when considering the relatively small amount of interviews and the semi-structured form of the interviews, this semi-structured approach is fitting to analyse the interviews.

The interview focuses on different subject areas that are connected to the concepts of the research question and the theoretical background. The subject matter was divided into nine broad topics (see annex 2) that are interconnected and that are additionally topics in the administration of the cross-border regions that can subsequently be used as starting points to open up the theoretical concepts for analysis.

The 1<sup>st</sup> topic deals with strengths and weaknesses of the respective cross-border region as perceived by the interviewees. The 2<sup>nd</sup> topic covered in the interview focuses on the activities in and of the cross-border region that are seen as most important and valuable. Here it was of importance to show a good knowledge of the activities taking place in order to avoid getting a mere list of actions that is also easily available on web pages of the region or the internet as the main focus was on getting an impression of what is seen as important and characteristic of the cross-border region. The 3<sup>rd</sup> area covered the field of ideas and initiators aiming firstly at getting an impression which groups are seen as vital to the creation and the functioning of the cross-border region and secondly, to question whether a geographical difference in the level of involvement can be detected. The 4<sup>th</sup> subject in the interview dealt with financing the cross-border region. The subject of finance not only relates to the structure of the euroregion, but can also serve as a first indicator to analyse power relations by analysing which actors are seen as most important in enabling the cross-border co-operation. As with the topic of activities it was important to show prior knowledge in order to avoid getting a mere introduction to basic figures easily available elsewhere. Still, too much emphasis on the role of EU funding had to be avoided in order to circumvent a possible leading question that would influence the interviewees' answer. The 5<sup>th</sup> problem in the interview schedule deals with challenges, past and present, for the cross-border cooperation. Again, showing awareness of the specific cross-border situation of the region at hand was crucial, as was the need to avoid offering a too easy answer implicit in the question. Based on the first five questions, a general picture of the euroregion can be gained. This makes it possible to compare the presentation of the euregio in official documents or web pages with opinions of the interviewees involved in the administration of the region. These first five topics in the interview gave a good foundation to then move on to the second part of the interview that involves topics that are more open to interpretation and personal impressions. The 6<sup>th</sup> topic revolves around the impact and the usage of cross-border co-operation. This

question allows investigating major actors in the development of the euregio and also deals with the question of local involvement in the activities of the euroregion. The political life with a special focus on the relationships with the federal, national and EU level as well as credibility in connection to the question of whether the cross-border region is perceived as a coherent region form topic number 7 of the interview. Here, the aim was to get further insight into how power relations are perceived on the level of the euregio. Connected to this is the topic of border perceptions and their development, yet due to their importance for the study they were not only covered implicitly in some of the earlier topics but were also dealt with specifically. This specific question relates to the concept of border and the way it is understood not only with regard to administering funding, but also regarding its perception among the local population in the cross-border region. This can be seen as an indicator of changing border perceptions in the region. Lastly, the interview put a focus on the possible future development of the cross-border region, including possible activities and relations to the respective state authorities and the European Union.

Given the semi-structured approach to the interviews and the high interconnectivity of the theoretical concepts the presented order of topics can of course not always be strictly followed as certain topics might come up already in connection with another topic. During the interviews the main aim was to cover all topics without putting focus on a specific order of covering them. This approach ensured that all needed issues were addressed while at the same time allowing for a flexible reaction to the respondents' answers and possible connections they perceive between different subjects.

In general it can be said that the interview process went smoothly. As it was mentioned earlier, the process of arranging the interviews was partly complicated; however the resulting interviews were conducted without any further problems and proved to be not only interesting regarding insights into the subject matter, but were also a valuable experience regarding the development of research skills.

#### **4.4. Further research material**

In order to utilize the advantages of the case study method to its fullest, especially the possibility to address the complexity of the researched issues, the interviews alone are not a sufficient data source. Therefore, further research material consists of previous research and official reports alongside with publications by the analysed cross-border regions.

The group of official documents consist of reports and documents in order to get a broad picture of the situation regarding the cross-border region. Additionally publications and web pages of the analysed cross-border regions will clarify the image that is desired by the region.

The secondary sources mainly encompass previous research relating to the establishment of cross-border contacts and cross-border regions, but also regarding activities and the official role of the EU, national authorities, federal authorities and local authorities. The same source also applies to the theoretical background and the concepts used to form a coherent basis for the research problem.

The interviews provide a chance to intensify the research concerning topics that have proven controversial or interesting in the previous research. Furthermore, they allow to get further insights into the functioning of the studied cross-border regions and to get in-depth knowledge regarding the attitudes and opinions prevailing at the cross-border level. Therefore, the interviews are not the main subject matter or tool for data collection, but serve to support the construction of a solid data set.

To account for the complexity of the research problem and the theoretical concepts serving as background, the case study method was chosen. This choice is based on the ability of the case study to not only address the complexity of the research problem, but to also allow for an in-depth analysis of the chosen examples in order to give enough room for the study of different interconnected concepts.

In order to conduct the case study a solid data set will be formed. This will consist of interviews, secondary sources and official documents. Special attention has to be paid to the limitations that the case study method as well as the process of interviewing have. However, as the chapter has shown in the present case these limitations are outweighed by the positive aspects both, interviews and case study, can contribute to the analysis of the research question.

It should also be noted that the in-depth, flexible approach made possible by the introduced research design also allows paying attention to the general methodological points introduced in the beginning of this chapter. The combination of different methods allows paying special attention to possible interconnections and processes that might not be detected when focusing on only one approach. Furthermore the combination of case studies and the collected dataset from three sources allow for enough flexibility to analyse the research

problem from different angles, however they also allow incorporating new perspectives or detecting variables that turn out being important during the collection of research material.

## **5. EUREGIO – A German-Dutch cross-border region**

### **5.1. The development and functioning of the EUREGIO region**

In order to allow for an informed analysis of the data collected in and regarding the EUREGIO<sup>4</sup>, the following section will shortly introduce the major steps of the development of EUREGIO. This will be followed by an overview over the present organisational structure as well as an examination of the region's functioning. Furthermore, the situation of the EUREGIO in terms of population, unemployment rate and gross domestic product will be presented.

The German-Dutch EUREGIO cross-border region was officially established in 1958 and since then, having been the first cross-border association, is not only seen as a possible blueprint for other cooperation projects (Strüver 2004b:29), but also provides an opportunity to analyse a longstanding cooperation and its development in different areas.

The German-Dutch border has been a relatively continuous border with no lasting changes since the establishment of the Treaty of Münster (1648) that was later followed by the Treaty of Westphalia in 1648.(Khan 2004:399f.) After this relatively early imposition of the border bilateral relations over this new border were soon again established, with reasons for that being mainly seen in a similarity of languages, the aim of enabling cultural exchange and economic considerations.(van Winsen 2009:154) However, these developments do not allow for the conclusion that the German-Dutch border has been an uncontested peaceful border. Struggle over territory and the exact location of the border did take place (Khan 2004:410ff.), though without producing any major changes to it. Nevertheless, especially World War II proved devastating with regard to cross-border relations. Even though the border did not change in its location after the end of World War II, the aftermath of the German occupation resulted in cross-border relations being at an all time low and distrust towards the other side especially from the Dutch population. (Strüver 2005:208)

Following 1945 the re-establishing of cross-border relations took place only gradually.(Strüver 2005:208) Based on the devastating experience of German occupation in

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<sup>4</sup> In the following EUREGIO will refer to the Dutch-German cross-border region. The term euregio on the other hand will be used to refer generally to institutionalised cross-border co-operations across internal borders of the European Union. Another term used for internal European cross-border co-operations will be euroregion.

the Netherlands it does not come as a surprise that cross-border activities only started out slowly and were mainly based on pragmatic motivations, such as a need for better infrastructural development and the on both sides of the border common experience of being in a peripheral position in their respective sovereign state. Following the initial creation of these practically oriented activities contacts between people on both sides of the border were also slowly re-established or newly created.(EUREGIOa) A first tentative formalization and deepening of contacts took place in 1954, when an association aimed at improving infrastructure and promoting local cross-border contacts was founded. This association furthermore aimed at overcoming disadvantages based on the peripheral location regarding the state (van Winsen 2009:154), a topic that was to become one of the leitmotifs of early cooperation. The year 1958 saw a further formalization of these relations through the creation of the EUREGIO, based on the earlier created association.(van Winsen 2009:154) However, even though 1958 is recorded as the year of the official founding of the EUREGIO the size, structure, funding and tasks in the early years differ substantially from the responsibilities and organisational principles that developed in the following decades and are an integral part of today's EUREGIO.

In the first years after the creation of EUREGIO the activities were mainly characterized through voluntary, local initiative of the involved communities. Within this local approach to deeper cross-border cooperation it is pointed out in documents published by the EUREGIO that also the financial burden was carried by the local communities. (Müller 2003:3)

From the start of intensified cooperation in the newly created EUREGIO the promotion of socio-cultural contacts was one of the main priorities. In order to further activities in this field, the Mozer Commission was created in 1971. The main focus of the Mozer Commission is on enabling socio-cultural cross-border contacts and projects, as well as on creating contacts among institutions such as employment agencies.(Müller 2003:25) These activities were grounded in the aim of creating as intense contacts as possible, evident from the guidelines established at its creation:

*Es gilt, eine möglichst breite intensive Begegnung und Verschmelzung niederländischer und deutscher Erfahrungen, Kenntnisse und Vorstellung als regionale Vorleistung der Integration Europas zu bewirken. Fernziel ist eine zweisprachige Bevölkerung, freie Zugänglichkeit für alle öffentlichen Dienstleistungen, Entwicklung zu einer grenzüberschreitenden, nicht nur nationalen Region in gemeinschaftlicher Organisation.(Müller 2003:25)*

*It should be aimed at creating a wide and highly intense meeting and melting of Dutch and German experiences, knowledge and imaginations as a regional precondition for European integration. As a long term goal the population should be bilingual, all public services should be freely accessible and the organization should develop to become a cross-border region*

*instead of merely being a national region with a common organization. (Translation by the author)*

These people-to-people activities intensified over the decades of cooperation across the German-Dutch border and are also nowadays part of the core of EUREGIO activities. (EUREGIOa) Another field of activities forming an integral part of the cross-border work from the start relates to cross-border commuters. Here, not only problems regarding the need to frequently cross the border, for example to go to work, were dealt with. Issues that were also brought up touched upon health or social security matters as well as emergency management.(Müller 2003:18f.)

Based on this wide range of problems stemming from the influence of the border a cross-border action programme was created that not only furthered the engagement of the EUREGIO in the mentioned fields but also strove to include the fields of economics, trade, tourism, regional development and nature preservation. Through the formulation of this specific action programme the EUREGIO hoped to become eligible for funding from the European Union as the lack of a specific programme had prevented European funding at earlier stages of cooperation. But apart from the aim of securing funding for the development of the EUREGIO, the action programme also furthered the organisational structure. After its signing in 1987 the action programme resulted in the formation of working committees in the fields of economy, schools and education, technology, tourism, culture, agriculture, social issues, environmental issues as well as everyday border problems and disaster management.(Müller 2003:20f)

Therefore, an important shift towards more diverse cooperation was taken. Furthermore this can be seen as an indication from the side of the EUREGIO to be willing to take over further responsibilities as well as showing the capabilities to not only deal with day-to-day problems stemming from the border location but also being able to take over long-term responsibilities and initiating solutions to common problems.

However, the cross-border action programme is not only of influence in the organisation of matters directly related to EUREGIO, as it furthermore is seen to have influenced the creation of the first INTERREG programmes through the EU in the late 1980s.(Scott 1998a) In the 1980s cooperation in the field of economics is moving to the forefront, a development aided, but not solely developed, by the creation of the INTERREG programme through the EU. (EUREGIOe 2003:4f.)

Connected to a widened scope of activities and a growth of areas covered by cooperation is the development of a further formalization of the cooperation. Already in 1978 another important step towards an intensification of cross-border relations and a further encouragement for the creation of cross-border activities was taken through the formation of the EUREGIO council. The EUREGIO council was the first parliamentary assembly that though without actual power had a regional, cross-border character.(Müller 2003:10) It is nicknamed 'little European parliament' and even though its decisions are only advisory in nature, it is the highest political organ of the EUREGIO and its role in making the cooperation transparent and democratic is highly valued.(van Winsen 2009:157) Preparation for the EUREGIO council already started in 1974 when Prince Claus of the Netherlands encouraged the creation of such an institution:

*Versuchen Sie, einen EUREGIO Rat zu bilden, der die Bedürfnisse der grenzüberschreitenden Region, aber auch die Bereitschaft zu gemeinsamen Anstrengungen im eigenen Kreise in Worte zu fassen weiß (...)Das Experiment müsste nun einen Schritt weiter gehen: durch eine repräsentative Vertretung der sozialen, ökonomischen und kulturellen Gruppen müsse deutlich gemacht werden, dass man in redlichem Einvernehmen gemeinsam einen Beitrag zur Entfaltung einer grenzüberschreitenden Region liefern wolle.(Müller 2003:11)*

*Attempt to form a EUREGIO council that is able to articulate the needs of the cross-border region as well as the willingness to common endeavours in the own constituency. The experiment should now go one step further: it should be made clear through a representative delegation of the social, economical and cultural groups that it is the aim to deliver a common contribution to the development of a cross-border region based on a common understanding. (Translation by the author)*

Of course it can be assumed that prior debate on the subject took place in advance to this speech, however the specific encouragement given to the region is also seen as acknowledgement of the results that had been achieved so far.(EUREGIOe 2003:3) The creation of the council aimed at inducing a democratic aspect and more transparency to the work in EUREGIO as well as simplifying the organisational structure. The lack of competences is usually not seen as a negative feature, as the EUREGIO council was seen as a support structure, a think tank so to say, to support the development of EUREGIO.(van Winsen 2009:157) The council is composed of members that are chosen indirectly. As the members of municipal councils chose the representatives for the EUREGIO council, the composition of the EUREGIO council depends on the result of these municipal council elections. In 1978 25 members per country were chosen. Nowadays the council consist of 41 members per country. The members are grouped according to their party into cross-border fractions as no euroregional party exists.(van Winsen 2009:157)

Just as with the principles guiding the establishment of the Mozer Commission, the aim of creating a relatively coherent region with as little influence from the border as possible also became clear when creating the EUREGIO council. At that point though, the organisation of activities and contacts was still located on two different offices on each side of the border.(Müller 2003:4)

Following intensified cooperation on several levels and with hopes to facilitate the exchange among the two secretariats they were moved to a common location. Later on, through an administrative reform, the double structure that had characterised the work of the EUREGIO was reformed to give way to a common structure, a development also expressed in the merging of the two secretariats into one.(Müller 2003:5)

The changes in the focus and intensity of activities as well as developments regarding the organisation and formalization of the EUREGIO have been a constant feature of the cross-border region since its establishment in 1958. However, those changes are not only based on newly available policy instruments, funding opportunities or developments within the EU towards a more extensive support of cross-border cooperation. It can be argued that most of these developments are based on a strong bottom-up approach that evolved from its initial stage through a willingness of taking on more responsibilities along the way. Therefore, instead of an ad-hoc co-operation based on existing programmes or incentives from which to develop cross-border contacts, EUREGIO developed its activities and scope alongside the creation of such incentives and is also seen as having influenced parts of these developments that later formed the basis for other, similar co-operation projects across internal European borders. Based in its development it could be argued that EUREGIO has a pioneering character which contributes to the importance of analysing this region when dealing with the meaning of cross-border regions in the European framework.

Today, the territory covered by the EUREGIO stretches over approximately 13.000 km<sup>2</sup>, with one third of the territory belonging to the Netherlands and two thirds belonging to the Federal Republic of Germany (see map 1). The number of participating cities, municipalities and *Landkreise* is currently 131 with a total number of 3.4 million inhabitants.(EUREGIOb) On the German side, parts of the federal states *Lower Saxony* and *North-Rhine Westphalia* belong to the EUREGIO. These are the Landkreis Bentheim, the city of Osnabrück, the Landkreis Osnabrück, and the municipalities Emsbüren, Salzbergen and Spelle. In North-Rhine Westphalia the members of the EUREGIO are the city of Münster and the Landkreis Münsterland. On the Dutch side parts of the provinces Gelderland, Overijssel and Drenthe belong to the EUREGIO.



Map 1: The EUREGIO across the German-Dutch border.(EUREGIOb)

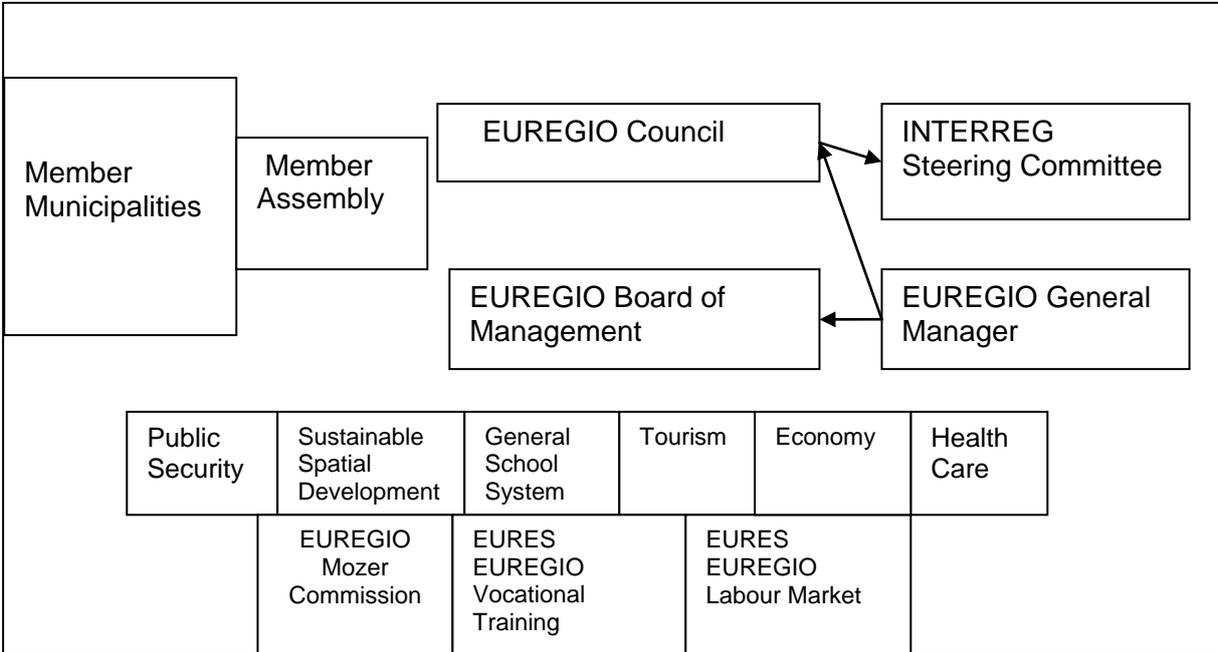
The area<sup>5</sup> covered by the EUREGIO is characterised by a strong economy and a high level of household income, both characteristics holding true for both sides of the border. The GDP per inhabitant on the German side averages between 75% and 100% of the average EU 27 GDP. On the Dutch side this percentage is even higher averaging between 100% and 125% of the EU 27 average. (Eurostat 2009:52) The average household income<sup>6</sup> on both sides of the border is similar and averages between 16000 PPCS and 20000 PPCS. (Eurostat 2009:63) Regarding the population density a cross-border comparison shows slightly varying figures. On both side of the border, the northern part of EUREGIO has a lower population density than the southern parts; however the more important figure with regard to population is the total population change. Whereas the Dutch side saw a positive population change in the period from 2003 to 2007, parts of the German side were also characterised by a modest negative population change. (Eurostat 2009: 15f) Also difference regarding employment figures can be found. Here figures are slightly higher for the Dutch side indicating employment figures of over 70% for the group of those aged 15-64. The German side has a slightly lower employment rate of over 65 % of those aged between 15 and 64. (Eurostat 2009:37) Therefore, the situation with regard to these indicators is relatively balanced across the border and no general gap regarding employment figures or prosperity is in existence. Also the differences in population development are only minor and should not lead to major differences between the involved regions. Based on this relatively equal situation across the

<sup>5</sup>The municipalities' part of the EUREGIO are described as NUTS 3 regions in the NUTS classification used by Eurostat. However, in order to allow for a comparison of statistical figures regarding economy, unemployment and population the NUTS 2 level was used as the data on NUTS 3 level was insufficient in this respect. However, it has to be taken into account that the NUTS 2 regions include further NUTS 3 municipalities that are not part of the EUREGIO.

<sup>6</sup> The household income is measured in PPCSs, that is purchasing power consumption standards. The EU 27 average for PPCS is 16200. (Eurostat 2009:62)

border it can be expected that goals and areas of interest for cross-border co-operation are similar in nature, therefore enabling a smooth process of creating projects and determining main topics in need of funding.

The present organizational structure (see graph 1) is the result of decades of development of EUREGIO. The member municipalities from both sides of the border form the member assembly which has 184 members that are responsible among others for questions dealing with the statues, the discharging of the board of management or the decision on member fees. The working committees present suggestions for decisions to the board of management that consist of 12 members appointed by the EUREGIO council out of which one is the president of EUREGIO and one has the function of general manager. The board of management prepares decisions to the council. The EUREGIO council has apart from the functions already introduced earlier on also the task to deliver suggestions for decision on INTERREG projects to the INTERREG steering committee consisting of representatives from ministries of economics, regional governments and EUREGIO. The general manager is in charge of managing the secretariat which prepares and executes decision made by the council, the board of management, the member assembly and the INTERREG steering committee.



Graph 1: Organisation chart of the EUREGIO, taken from: (EUREGIOa), Translated by the author.

Although the present funding sources of the EUREGIO are relatively diverse, (EUREGIO c) the majority of funds still stems from INTERREG funding. The amount of INTERREG funding for the period 2007-2013 is estimated to add up to over 90 million Euros. In the funding period prior to this one, lasting from 2001 to 2008 130 million Euros were allocated to the

EUREGIO through INTERREG funds.(van Winsen 2009:156) These numbers also justify questions regarding the influence of the EU on the EUREGIO and the realized projects, but also allow questioning the dependency of the EUREGIO on these INTERREG funds and its ability to realize cross-border work without the INTERREG programme as major funding source.

## **5.2. The characteristics of the main theoretical concepts in the EUREGIO region**

Building on the introduction to the EUREGIO in the previous section and in combination with the interviews and the further obtained data on the cross-border region, the following subsections aim at the analysis of the reterritorialization capabilities inherent to EUREGIO. In order to limit the scope of this analysis the main theoretical concepts introduced in more detail in chapter 3.3. will be used as points of reference. As had already been indicated when introducing the theoretical framework, the measuring or exact evaluation of all of these concepts is a rather controversial topic. Therefore, based on the methodological tools used in this study, no hard indicators will be used instead using the qualitative data gained from the interviews in order to analyse specific questions and point to possible connections among these concepts.

### **5.2.1. Border**

The border between Germany and the Netherlands is, as has already been introduced, a comparatively stable, uninterrupted border. This impression can also be supported through the data collected with the interviews. As one interviewee observes

*Die Grenze ist eine Kulturgrenze und diese Grenze existiert seit 1648. (...) Da sind wir in einer Situation anders als andere Grenzen in Europa, die jünger sind. (...)Bei uns ist das eine feststehende Sache. Allerdings weiß auch jeder, dass man leicht über die Grenze kommt, da gibt es keine Berge, keine Flüsse, die natürliche Hindernisse darstellen.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010)*

*The border is a cultural border and this border exists since 1648. (..) This makes our situation different from other borders in Europe where borders are younger. This is a stable situation here. Nevertheless everyone knows that it is easy to cross the border as there are no mountains or rivers creating natural obstacles. (Translation by the author)*

Nonetheless, importance is given to the development of the influence the border exercises on the border region in a variety of fields. Here, especially the people-to-people projects aiming at socio-cultural integration are referred to as an opportunity to not only connect inhabitants on both sides of the border but also as a precondition to then enable further

projects on topics such as economic development building on the contacts created through these socio-cultural projects.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)

Apart from the progress made in the project related work and regarding the steps taken to facilitate actual cross-border life, such as cross-border commuting, it was usually acknowledged that certain prejudices prevail.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010) In this respect the usual differentiation introduced in the interviews was that between the older and the younger generation, with the younger generation being less influenced by prejudices stemming from history.(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010)

Another distinction introduced regarding the perception of the border and the border region refers to the inhabitants in the region on the one hand and the group of people actually active in projects or the administration of EUREGIO. It is acknowledged that EUREGIO should be presented in a more open manner to the inhabitants of the cross-border region in order to create more awareness for their work but also for the milestones that were already achieved through cross-border work.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010)

This need for creating a better awareness for the cross-border work carried out by EUREGIO is supported also by further research dealing with the visibility of EUREGIO. As Strüver asserts, with regard to the Dutch-German border in total, there is no remarkable level of cross-border interaction which is explained by referring to an insufficient amount of information as one main obstacle.(Strüver 2004a:629) In another article on the same topic Strüver goes further by pointing out that borderless spheres are not reached yet and that the cross-border regionalization is a process implemented from above without the participation of the inhabitants of the border region.(Strüver 2004b:26) This lack of participation is often based on a basic lack of awareness when it comes to the existence of the EUREGIO. (Markusse 2004:653)

Whereas the interviews did paint a more positive picture, something that can be attributed to the active involvement of the interviewees in EUREGIO, the awareness of these problems and the need to act upon them by being more outreaching were visible during the interviews.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010) In this context the position of the interviewees has to be taken into account. As introduced earlier, all interviewees are actively involved in the organization of the cross-border work. Based on this it can be assumed that they are not only used to cross-border interaction in their working life, but that they are also one of the best informed groups in EUREGIO when it comes to the possibilities provided by EUREGIO.

In addition to the perception of the border expressed in the interviews or through other studies it is interesting to also take a look at its presentation in maps of EUREGIO that can be found easily on the EUREGIO web pages (such as map 1 used in this text). It is striking that these maps usually lack the state border. Whether this could be interpreted as an indicator for aspiring to a coherent perception of the EUREGIO territory will be further discussed in the following sub-chapter.

### **5.2.2. Territory**

As introduced earlier, one way of looking at the development of territory at the European level is to analyse whether new forms of territoriality emerge. In the context of EUREGIO one main question in this regard is seen in the possibility of presenting and perceiving the EUREGIO territory as a coherent clearly demarcated region.

In its mission statement from 2004, EUREGIO formulates its vision as the bringing together of European states based on its regions. However, it is simultaneously acknowledged that the specific values and difference that exist on both sides of the border are taken into account in the cross-border work.(EUREGIO 2004f) In contrast to this, earlier statements still included the aim of melting Dutch and German experiences together, as the guidelines for the establishment of the Mozer commission introduced earlier on have shown. The question is to what extent these goals of a melting together of experiences still shape the work of EUREGIO several decades after their initial declaration or whether new, more pragmatic views have taken over.

The official position presented in the interviews conducted for the thesis did not introduce the concept of a *coherent region* as a goal for the development of EUREGIO. Even though it was asserted that this approach was part of the discussion regarding the future development of EUREGIO it was also concluded that

*Das ist keine einheitliche Region. Das haben wir mal vor 10 Jahren oder 20 Jahren diskutiert, das ist aber nicht so. Es gibt keine gemeinsame Identität und das ist auch kein Gegenstand von (...) Regionalmarketing.(Interview Euregio 4.2.2010)*

*This is no coherent region. This was part of the discussion 10 or 20 years ago, but that is not a reality. There is no common identity and this is also no topic in (...) regional marketing. (Translation by the author)*

Therefore, it can be concluded that the official approach to regional cross-border work shifted over the last decades. Furthermore, the assumption of a territorial shape, one of the criteria

for regional institutionalization introduced by Paasi, can therefore not be supported with the data obtained through the interviews and the present publications of the EUREGIO.

Connected to this aspect of investigation it was usually stressed that instead of aiming at creating or presenting a coherent region, the focus is put on the multifaceted character of EUREGIO in order to differentiate it from other units. The differences induced to the region through the border should, according to one interviewee, not be blurred (Interview Euregio 21.04.2010) or, as another interviewee put it “They are what makes the border region attractive.”(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010). It becomes obvious, that the establishment of a regional consciousness, one of Paasi’s criteria introduced in chapter 3.3.2., is not a development goal for EUREGIO. Instead of attempting to create a common identity and consciousness, EUREGIO aims at utilising the differences induced through the border in order to convey a picture of a multifaceted region influenced by a both sides of the border.

A concept not introduced in the interviews but nevertheless existent in the debate surrounding the future of EUREGIO is the concept of a “European region” introduced by Winsen. Unlike the information obtained through the interviews, Winsen also asserts that the two main principles guiding the development of EUREGIO are firstly, the disappearance of social, cultural and economical borders and secondly the principle of *one region*.(van Winsen 2009:154) This shows that even though the official position might not include or support them, a variety of models for the future development of EUREGIO exist.

Even though a coherent region is not supported as a model for the development of EUREGIO, as has already been introduced in the previous subsection the map used on the webpage of EUREGIO (map 1) clearly lacks the border between the Netherlands and Germany. Of course this alone is no sufficient evidence for supporting the assumption that EUREGIO strives to present itself as one single region, however it could be seen as an indicator.

In connection with the border separating the German and the Dutch parts of EUREGIO it also became clear that the territory of EUREGIO presented on the map does not represent the territory in which it is seen as being active. According to the information obtained through the interviews the amount of cross-border activities channelled and organized by EUREGIO is highest in close proximity to the border and decreases with increasing distance from the border. (Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010)

One interviewee stresses

*But what we do see is that people who live closer to the border are more into cross-border co-operation than the people who geographically live further away from the border.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)*

This, however is not interpreted as a negative characteristic of the border, as the same interviewee furthermore asserts

*I don't think it makes so much sense also to involve people who live further away from the border because in their daily routine, in their daily life they are not so much influenced by the border.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)*

Therefore, a distinction between an official territory and an 'active' territory becomes obvious. In this distinction the official territory consists of all members of EUREGIO whereas the active territory is the part of EUREGIO in which it is seen as most active in the cross-border work. This active territory is identified as being smaller than the official territory as it does not include those parts of the official territory that are the furthest from the border. This distinction in the definition of the region and the multifacetedness introduced by it resonate with Anderson's *medieval Europe* model. Whether this can generally be applied to EUREGIO and to other internal cross-border co-operations will also be the subject of further subsections. Furthermore, this distinction between the official and the active territory does not support the creation of a clearly demarcated territorial shape, another indication that the process of institutionalization as described by Paasi is not clearly pronounced.

However, this difference between the official territory and the active territory is also influential regarding the discussion to possibly widen the membership in EUREGIO by including further sub-territorial units. In this respect it was acknowledged that a widening of the territorial scope behind the present situation would increase the workload in such a manner that it would no longer be suitable for the current structure. (Interview Euregio 21.04.2010) When also taking into account the limited geographical reach of projects introduced above, it becomes clear that an increase of territory is not on the agenda for the EUREGIO.

Furthermore, the interviewees showed an interest in pointing out that the concept of EUREGIO should not be loaded with too many different meanings but should rather focus on its character of being a political-administrative concept with a special focus on the European Union. (Interview Euregio 4.1.2010) Again, this does not support the thesis of an institutionalization of EUREGIO as a region nor its transformation into an *integrated borderland*. Emphasis is put on perceiving the EUREGIO as an administrative, not a territorial unit.

### 5.2.3. Power

One main way of exercising power over EUREGIO can be seen in the availability and distribution of funding as well as in the role and influence each actor involved in cross-border co-operation has in this process.

The importance of European funding is illustrated in one interview by stressing that approximately 90% of the projects could not be realised without funding from the European Union. This is connected with the higher costs that cross-border projects have when compared with similar projects situated and realised within one state. (Interview Euregio 4.1.2010) The increased costs become more obvious when taking into account that cross-border projects might require among others translation services and an increased administrative effort that has to deal with two different national levels. Therefore, these additional costs require a funding instrument that already includes the cross-border component and the connected additional costs which explains one of the reasons why the INTERREG funding is so integral to EUREGIO.

One fear connected to this is the possibility of declining funds from the European Union especially. A possibility of some kind of national safety net in case of larger losses in European Union funding is however not seen as a possibility to provide support needed to continue with the cross-border work. (Interview Euregio 11.1.2010, Interview Euregio 22.01.2010) However this is not interpreted as negative but is more seen as a responsibility of the EUREGIO to prepare for a change in the funding process and availability of funding not only through diversifying its income but also through ensuring that the positive impact of the EUREGIO work is introduced into any debate aiming at reducing funding.

As already introduced in chapter 5.1. EUREGIO has already made steps towards having a diversified income, something that is also acknowledged in the research literature. (Perkmann 2007:258) Furthermore, the numbers indicating the level of European funding already showed a decline in funding from the EU during the transition between the last and the current funding period. Therefore, the question is how EUREGIO can further diversify its income in order to avoid a too strong dependency on INTERREG funds.

One possible development in order to counter this dependency on just one type of funding is seen in a greater awareness for and use of other subsidies from the European Union. Further steps in the diversification not only of the funding in general but of the European Union funding in particular is perceived not only as an opportunity to depend less on one

specific source of income but also as a chance to break free from the strict frame of the INTERREG funding periods.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)

With regard to the funding received from the European Union the ad-hoc character of funding decisions for a relatively short period of time is introduced as a negative aspect that should be changed in order to allow for a more structured process of funding.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010) This would also entail a further consolidation of the work of the cross-border region and could allow a further focus on structural developments. In the same vein, it was seen as important to develop a more structural approach in order to an approach to cross-border work that does not solely rely on fixed-term projects.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010)

A structure of dependence with regard to European funding is definitely recognisable, also through the allocation of INTERREG funding according to specific thematic funding priorities that strongly influence the use that can be made of funding. However it should also be pointed out that EUREGIO already succeeds well not only in diversifying its income, but more importantly in its efforts to voice alternative approaches to a too one-sided funding income.

Nevertheless, power as a concept is of course not only related to monetary decisions and influence in the area of funding. Another aspect is the type of relationship forged with the national and the European level as well as the ability of the EUREGIO to decide over internal matter or influence the other levels in a way favourable to it.

According to the interviews, the respective national levels do not fear to lose influence in the border regions as a result of intensified cross-border co-operation. Moreover, the situation seemed to be almost opposite to this. When asked about the relationship with the respective national levels and their interest in influencing the cross-border work one interviewee asserts

*I do think there is a lack of interest.*(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)

In another interview this disinterest from the side of the national level was seen as another threat to continuous funding as the opinion was voiced that only by keeping the different levels interested in what is happening in EUREGIO and by pointing out that these activities play an important role on several levels can EUREGIO prove its existence.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010)

Again, a difference with regard to distance on the German side was asserted. According to one interviewee the capitals of the German federal states, being closer to the border, have a more active and positive attitude towards the EUREGIO, whereas Berlin is described as indifferent.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010) On the Dutch side the relationship is seen as difficult regarding the fact that co-operation is organised through the respective ministries which can complicate the achievement of consensus.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010)

One main aim concerning the relations with the respective states was seen in the development of a formalized process regarding the creation of new national laws and their possible influence on the specific cross-border regions. The goal of this would be to cross-check each new national law with regard to possible negative influences it can have on cross-border regions and to ensure that these parts of the law are reworked in order to prevent these possible negative consequences from coming into force.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010) This understanding of the different national administrations and laws is also a main challenge for cross-border cooperation identified by the Association of European Border Regions (AEBR).(Gabbe 2006:6)

Another aspect regarding the relationship between EUREGIO and the European Union introduced through the interviews is the perception that Brussels is not aware of the specific situation in the cross-border region. Here, the importance of the EUREGIO council was seen in its ability to reflect the local situation in EUREGIO which therefore should justify a strengthening of the position of the council.(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010)

Moreover, EUREGIO aims at improving its position through networking activities with other similar bodies, here especially the other German-Dutch-Belgian border regions.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010) Another aspect that can be seen as a sign of increasing willingness of EUREGIO to take on further responsibilities and to strengthen its portfolio is the inclusion of new fields of activities. One example for this mentioned in the interview is the aspect of energy.(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010)

#### **5.2.4. Order**

The high connectivity of the concepts of power and order has already been made visible in the chapters 3.3.3. and 3.3.4., therefore this obviously also translates to multiple links when applying the theoretical framework to the practical aspects of the study.

Law, as an expression of order, is seen as another main source of conflict that EUREGIO tries to solve while at the same time not having any power to actually influence the respective national laws and their possible influence on the border region. These concerns were voiced in several interviews. One interviewee expressed concern over a lack of awareness of the cross-border situation in the respective national levels.

*We see that in Berlin or in The Hague the national governments don't always think of the problems new legislation has or the impact it has on cross-border co-operation.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010)*

Furthermore, it is not seen as enough to merely pay attention to the current problems with differing laws on both sides of the border influencing life in EUREGIO as new laws could create new situations influencing EUREGIO negatively.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010) This aspect can support the borders-to-orders sequence by Lapid introduced in chapter 3.3.4. Here, changes made to the role of the border, in this case specifically the influence they have on the life of the citizens living in the cross-border region could influence the state level and the way laws are made. Whereas it is difficult to say how likely the creation of the proposed extra check in the law-making process is, it is already important that these needs of the cross-border regions are voiced as this alone can induce a new way of thinking on the state level which would give more prominence to cross-border problems.

Another aspect is the already introduced difference in the political systems that meet in the administration of EUREGIO. The steps needed to make projects and initiatives are in reality quite different on both sides of the border based in this different structure. The German federal system is seen as being better equipped to allow for smooth and time efficient decisions as the lower levels of government on the German side have a considerably higher amount of autonomy than the involved partners on the Dutch side.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010)

Within EUREGIO however, structures of project development and funding are becoming more stable with the result that the main lead partners as well as the main content of their proposed projects are relatively similar from one funding period to another.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010) This stabilisation of the internal order of EUREGIO should also allow focusing on aspects such as the future development and characteristics of EUREGIO.

Apart from the stabilisation of cross-border work organised in projects, also the internal organisation of EUREGIO is becoming constant. Often, based on its long-standing

experience in cross-border co-operation, EUREGIO is referred to as a model or blueprint of co-operation that should shape co-operations across other borders as well. However, a possible model function of EUREGIO is interpreted critically. Whereas a general support for other cross-border co-operations through an exchange of experiences and practices is seen as positive feature, a too strong focus on EUREGIO experience is actually seen as hampering as this specific experience cannot grasp the characteristics and preconditions of other regions.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010)

One specific feature of the internal order is the EUREGIO council. However, based on its lack of specific competences its importance is not as high as one might assume from the start. In one interview the reason for this was seen in the fact that the council has a passive function and is situated at the end of processes in EUREGIO.(Interview Euregio 22.01.2010)

One point regarding the internal structure of EUREGIO refers to the question of possible elections in EUREGIO in order to strengthen the direct influence of the inhabitants and also in order to allow for a further visibility of the organisation of EUREGIO in the region.(Interview Euregio 11.1.2010) This could also be seen as a step towards a more confident EUREGIO that would be able to clearly formulate its own position in relation to the nation state and could also become more active in influencing its own future development instead of waiting for changes on the national or European level.

It has to be noted though, that this will to strive for more responsibility and autonomy is seen as a move that should be restricted to aspects of administration and organisation.(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010) Further political independence was not an aspect of the EUREGIO that was seen as worth striving for as it was seen to overload the basic principle of the EUREGIO instead of focusing efforts to strengthen the existing competences and simplify structures and procedures.(Interview Euregio 21.04.2010)

In another interview this was described as

*Die Euregios dürfen sich auch nicht zu eigenen Verwaltungseinheiten entwickeln. Das muss so bleiben, dass die eigentlich zuständigen Behörden ihre Zuständigkeit behalten und dann eventuell über die Vermittlung oder die Unterstützung einer Euregio es im Sinne von einer Informationsdrehscheibe dazu kommt, dass sie miteinander kooperieren.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010)*

*The euregios need not develop to become proper units of administration It has to stay so that the agencies actually responsible keep their responsibility and that a euregio supports and connects, much like a switchboard, in order to enable co-operation. (Translation by the author)*

One point that was made during the interviews also with regard to the relations with the state level is the need to enable EUREGIO to take the function of stimulating European political thinking within the respective states.(Interview Euregio 4.1.2010) In this way EUREGIO is seen as capable of taking a position that would aim at influencing the state level in order to incorporate also a European viewpoint in its policy making processes. Here, its long-standing experience, its stable internal structure as well as its innovative approach to cross-border co-operation equip EUREGIO with a certain amount of authority. Based on this the borders-to-orders development could be supported by EUREGIO through making its position heard on the state and the European level.

Regarding the thesis of a borderless world it can be observed that this is no longer part of the official agenda of EUREGIO, even though it was part of the discussion in the earlier decades of the cross-border co-operation. The same applied to an understanding of EUREGIO as a coherent region. Even though this was on the agenda in the 1970s and is still part of the wider discussion today, the official position does not see this as a goal EUREGIO should aspire to. On the contrary, it is pointed out that the multifacetedness of EUREGIO contributes to its attractiveness. With regard to the concept of territory, a further distinction is of importance in EUREGIO, which is the distinction between the official territory and the active territory situated in close proximity to the border. These points allow for the conclusion that the stages of regional institutionalization, especially the assumption of territorial shape and the creation of a regional consciousness, as introduced by Paasi are not clearly pronounced in EUREGIO. Concerning the concept of power, a structure of dependency especially with regards to the European level based on funding is recognisable. However, EUREGIO is actively striving to limit this dependency. A structure of dependency is also recognisable regarding the influence of national laws on the cross-border region though EUREGIO is working on concepts to address this. However, it is clearly pointed out that the issues addressed are solely related to the functioning of EUREGIO as an administrative unit and do not aim at furthering a more independent development in opposition to the EU or the respective state levels. The stabilising internal order contributes to making EUREGIO more confident in addressing a lack of attention from national levels for the specific situation of the cross-border situation. Here, small-scale capabilities for the borders-to-orders sequence can be found, however these activities are again mainly related to the basic task of EUREGIO and do not aim at furthering its position in opposition to the EU or state level.

In conclusion, the analysis of the theoretical concepts in the light of EUREGIO indicates that EUREGIO is not pursuing an active strategy of catalyzing reterritorialization processes in the European Union. The EUREGIO is not only lacking the ability and power to do so but does also not have any pronounced interest to start processes that would change the current

territorial order massively. However, that is not to say that EUREGIO has no other capabilities apart from serving as a funding distribution unit. It creates awareness for non-national approaches to solve regional problems and also helps to establish a more European viewpoint on the national levels of government which in turn can contribute to changing processes on those levels.

## **6. PRO EUROPA VIADRINA – A German-Polish cross-border region**

### **6.1. The development and functioning of the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA region**

In a historical perspective, the German-Polish border has been the source of conflicts for a long time and first major shifts in the location of the border were due to the developments in the Polish kingdom and geopolitical interests of Prussia, Austria and Russia in the second half of the 18<sup>th</sup> century, most notably expressed by the three partitions of Poland. In the 20<sup>th</sup> century the loss of territory to Germany continued in World War II and only in 1945 the German-Polish border was shaped the way it exists today through the Potsdam Treaty.(Gorzela 2006:196)

Nevertheless, even after a formal decision on its location the German-Polish border still had crucial problematic points connected to it. Firstly, a transfer and change of population took place, with Poles mainly migrating to Western Poland from Eastern areas that had been lost to the Soviet Union. Based on the Potsdam Treaty, the German population of Western Poland was asked to leave these territories or to be forcibly expelled.(Gorzela 2006:169ff.) But not only changes in population influenced German-Polish cross-border relations. Even though the new Polish-German border was widely recognized on the international level, West Germany acknowledged it only in 1970 and a final Polish-German treaty was only signed in 1991. This legal uncertainty also influenced the cross-border relations, especially on the Polish side as proposals for Germans receiving compensation for expropriated property were extremely unpopular.(Gorzela 2006:169ff.) Additionally, the uncertain situation regarding the position and duration of the border contributed to a reluctant attitude on both sides to actively invest in the development of the immediate border region.(Scott 1998b:610)

Furthermore cross-border contacts were not encouraged during the existence of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), therefore there were also hardly any cross-border relations or attempts to develop economic or political networks to build upon after the collapse of the communist system.(Scott 1998b:610) A chance to actually establish cross-border cooperation on a local level and among communities on both sides therefore only arose after 1989.

In this difficult situation, the signing of the German-Polish border treaty is widely acknowledged as a turning point in German-Polish relations. After all, this treaty was the prerequisite and basis for the subsequent German-Polish Friendship and Cooperation Treaty

that clarified a comprehensive set of new policies, especially regarding the then slowly emerging cross-border cooperation.(Morhard 2001:55)

Based on this border development, the conditions in the German-Polish cross-border region were less than favourable for the creation of active cross-border co-operation, an evaluation that can also be supported by the differences in economic standards, investments and infrastructure on the sides of the border due to the uncertainty concerning the permanence of the established border. The differences in status and prosperity, a factor that should not be underestimated in German-Polish cross-border relations, also continued after 1990 when the former GDR joined the Federal Republic of Germany. The support programmes granted by the FRG to its own regions highly contributed to the development of the German regions and increased the gap when compared to Poland. (Scott 1998)

Nevertheless, first attempts to create a cross-border region already took place in 1991. However, they did not develop as well as anticipated a development also based on the asymmetric nature of the German-Polish border.(Scott 1998) Still, in 1993 one of today's four German-Polish cross-border regions, PRO EUROPA VIADRINA<sup>7</sup>, was created. (PRO EUROPA VIADRINA 2006:3)

The legal basis for Polish-German cross-border region in an EU framework was set subsequently under the PHARE programme in 1994 and in the following years mainly the sectors of transport and environmental protection received support. These initiatives were interpreted as positive from the point of view of the involved institutions on both sides of the border. (Gorzela 2006:199f.) After Poland's accession in 2004, VIADRINA became part of the INTERREG programme and later part of the community initiative launched in 2007. (DG Regional Policy 2010a) The members of VIADRINA on the German side are the *Landkreise* Märkisch-Oderland, Oder-Spree as well as the city of Frankfurt/Oder. From the Polish side, the voivodeship Gorzów belongs to VIADRINA. (see map 2). Apart from the strong focus on infrastructure and environmental protection, other projects included economic development, mainly with regard to tourist infrastructure and projects aimed at the development of human resources, with the university in Frankfurt/Oder-Slubice probably being the most successful and best-known example.(Gorzela 2006:210)

Attempts to establish VIADRINA and organize its structure and functioning as a euregio were strongly based in the experience gained in the German-Dutch EUREGIO by using organizational principles applied in the German-Dutch context also at the German-Polish

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<sup>7</sup> In the following, the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA will also be referred to as VIADRINA.

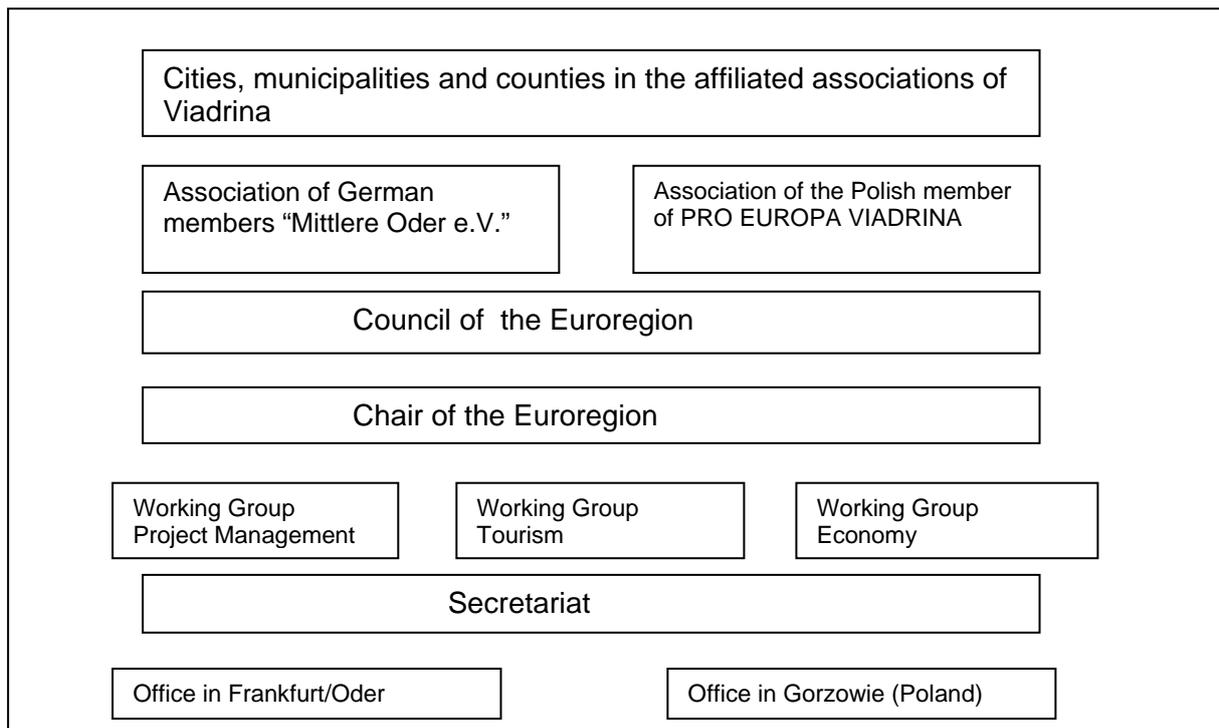
border and by establishing a similar structure to govern cross-border work.(Scott 1998b: 610ff.)

When applying the distinction between a qualitative and quantitative definition as introduced in chapter 2.3 to the development of VIADRINA it can be concluded that initially the region was best defined using quantitative terms. This early quantitative definition mainly resulted from the historical development that did not allow for qualitative features to develop.

The current situation regarding the economical situation still shows differences between the Polish and the German sides. The GDP per inhabitant on the German side is above 75% of the average EU 27 GDP; however, the GDP per inhabitant on the Polish side is less than half of the EU 27 average GDP. (Eurostat 2009:51) The same situation also holds for the household income on both sides of the border. Here, the average on the Polish side is below 8000 PPCSs, whereas the average on the German side is between 12000 and 16000 PPCSs. (Eurostat 2009:63) The population density on both sides of the border is on equal levels. However the population development between 2003 and 2007 shows some differences. Whereas the German side suffers from a slight negative population development, the Polish side shows a small positive population development. (Eurostat 2009:16) Also the employment figures indicate a different situation for the Polish and the German side. The German side has an employment rate of over 60% whereas the employment rate on the Polish side is only over 55%. (Eurostat 2009:37)

Especially the differences in GDP and household income point towards a different economic situation on both sides of the border with the German region being better-off. However, the population development indicates a better situation for the Polish side as a slight positive population development can be found. Still, also the employment figures show a difference between the regions with the German side being in a better situation. Apart from the differences across the border, the numbers introduced above also show that in a European comparison both regions would be classified as weaker regions. Therefore, this situation can provide a common starting ground to develop common goals and programmes regardless of the economic differences on both sides of the border.

The current structure of VIADRINA is introduced in graph 2.



Graph 2: Organisational Structure of PRO EUROPA VIADRINA. (PRO EUROPA VIADRINA 2006)

The Council of VIADRINA is composed of ten members from the German and Polish side each and constitutes the highest decision-making board. The council furthermore appoints the chair of VIADRINA which consists of two German and two Polish members that represent the VIADRINA region. The work of the euroregion is coordinated through working groups that are appointed by the chair and are active in the fields of project management, tourism and economy. In these groups suggestions for project related work are produced. The coordination of these groups is the responsibility of the secretariat that is represented in two offices on both sides of the border. Apart from this coordination function it is also taking care of the active business.(PRO EUROPA VIADRINA 2006:36ff.)

With regards to the financial support the INTERREG funds are highly important, not only relating to the amount of funds received by VIADRINA, but also concerning the power EU support has in triggering the release of domestic funding for the creation of projects and activities in the co-operation. (Gorzolak 2006:201) The importance of the EU funding becomes obvious when taking into account that the EU contribution to the cross-border region was more than 124 Million Euro in the last funding period. (DG Regional 2010b)



Map 2: The VIADRINA region across the German-Polish border (☆ - office of the Euregio, □ - border crossing)

## 6.2. The characteristics of the main theoretical concepts in the PRO EUROPA VIADRINA region

Following the analysis of the theoretical concepts in EUREGIO this chapter will focus on the same concepts and their characteristics in the VIADRINA region. The scope and method of analysing data and interpreting the interviews will also be following the distinctions introduced in the theoretical framework.

### 6.2.1. Border

The perception of the border as strictly separating is giving way to a more open perception, especially after the abolition of passport controls when crossing the border. (Interview VIADRINA 20.02.2010) In addition this act contributed to an increasingly pragmatic view on the cross-border co-operation. (Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010) The transformation of the border into a Schengen-border made it easier to cross and therefore contributed to a less strict perception of the border. The important issue is that no specific action, here the

showing of a passport, is needed to cross the border. This not only contributes to an easier creation of links in the economy and research as well as in education, but also has the potential to change the view on the border and its influence on daily life among the inhabitants of the border region.

Another factor that can influence the perception of the border is its historical development introduced earlier on. However, the historical background underlying the creation of the German-Polish border is not seen as an influence shaping relations considerably. Here, especially the younger generation is seen as being unaffected by negative sentiments based on historical events. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) However, especially the topic of expulsion is seen as important as it affected populations on both sides of the border and also contributed to a lack of long-term connection with the region. Also the topic of the German "Federation of Expellees", an association representing the interests of Germans who fled their homes in Central and Eastern Europe or were expelled after World War II, is seen as having little negative influence on the day-to-day work in the border region.(Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010)

However, the border is still perceived in its function as separating two states even though less negative perceptions are attributed to it and it is seen as becoming more open in the sense of enabling various cross-border contacts.(Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) The influence of the cross-border work is usually perceived on two levels, idealistic and materialistic. The first level finds its expression in people-to-people projects aimed at socio-cultural exchange whereas the materialistic level aims at investments in fields such as infrastructure developments, economical developments and co-operation in education and science.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010)

According to one interviewee the border is less and less perceived in daily activities but is still stronger perceived in the heads of people.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010) Based on this it can be concluded that the assumption of territorial shape, but also the creation of a regional consciousness as introduced by Paasi as steps towards the institutionalization of a region are not clearly pronounced in VIADRINA. The influence of the border is still perceived, in the daily life as well as in the minds of people, and developments that can decrease the intensity of border perception are only slowly showing their effects. Furthermore, the data also does not support the approach of a borderless world. However it does support the assumption that borders are being transformed especially with regards to their function as dividers between states. Even though the perception of the borders as a state border is still obvious in VIADRINA it can also be observed that it is no longer seen as

hindering contacts. Here, especially the transformation from an external to an internal border has helped to influence changing perceptions as it opened new ways how the border can actually enrich the regional life through creating more possibilities for exchange.

### 6.2.2. Territory

The question of territory was approached through the possible perception or development aim of a coherent region despite the state border cutting through it. The main viewpoint expressed in the interviews was that such a constellation does not exist at the moment. One interviewee asserted

*Also diese Verflechtungen sind sicher da, aber eine einheitliche Region – da würde ich sehr vorsichtig sein, das so zu bezeichnen. (Interview VIADRINA 20.02.2010)*

*Well, these interrelations are definitely there, but a coherent region – I would be very careful to label it as such. (Translation by the author)*

However, apart from the current situation that stresses existing connections but does not speak of a coherent region, another interviewee asserted that the aim for a further development of this point is indeed a topic in the VIADRINA. This viewpoint is expressed by introducing a slightly different concept, that of a common region. As is explained in an interview

*(...) die Oderregion als Grenzregion aber auch jetzt als gemeinsame Region zu begreifen. Das hat immer noch nicht funktioniert und da sollte auch weiter Geld reinfließen, das man auch den Leuten das nahe bringt. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010)*

*(...) to understand the Oderregion as border region but now also as common region. That has not worked out yet and more money should be invested in order to bring this idea closer to people. (Translation by the author)*

The interesting point in this perception is not only the concept of a common region, instead of a coherent region, but also the simultaneous understanding of the region as such and as a border region. This allows for the border region to have multiple related concepts attached to it without having to clearly choose and support one. Instead, the understanding of the border region would be made up of overlapping territories, here the state territories but also one border region territory, without putting them into competition with each other. Therefore, VIADRINA would be enabled to present itself a multifaceted instead of relying on more traditional understandings that would follow an either/or approach. For that reason, this multiple understanding can also be seen as supporting a move from more traditional,

exclusive conceptualisations of territory to a more diverse, overlapping understanding of territoriality.

However, a distinction made is the one between the city of Frankfurt and the surrounding members. The perception is that developments in Frankfurt (Oder) and Slubice progress well, as opposed to the other units where co-operation has not reached such an elaborated level yet. (Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010) This might be based on the fact that those towns are located in proximity to each other and have an infrastructure that facilitates the crossing of the border (see map 2). Another distinction with regard to the territory within which VIADRINA is active can be observed with regard to the distance from the border. It is acknowledged that those parts that are further away from the border are less involved than areas situated in the vicinity of the border. This is especially pointed out for the German side where areas further away from the border usually orient their activities towards Berlin and not towards the German-Polish cross-border cooperation. It is stressed in one interview that a more active attitude from these parts of the border region would be something to aspire to. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) Here, the distinction between an official and an active territory that was already introduced with regard to EUREGIO can be observed again. However, here the situation is not only dependent on the proximity to the border. Berlin is located in relative close proximity to the margins of VIADRINA and can be seen as an attractive location and partner that can easily compete with the border region.

Even though the aim of being perceived as a common region has not been achieved yet (Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010), it is acknowledged that some areas of co-operation are further developed than others. One of these fields being pointed out by one interviewee is consumption, followed by co-operation among smaller associations, fire fighters, the police and tourism. Problems are seen when moving from this project level to a more abstract level and taking developments in administration or political differences into account. Here, the aim of a common region is seen as being further away. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) Furthermore, a territorial distinction is introduced

*Bei uns ist es so, dass kann man auch territorial abgrenzen, das der nördliche Bereich der Euroregion, also alles was nördlich von Frankfurt ist, ist stärker aktiv im deutsch-polnischen Kontext. Das liegt aber einfach daran, dass eben südlich von Frankfurt die Infrastruktur fehlt. Also da gibt es keine Grenzbrücke, um jetzt praktisch auf leichten Weg nach Polen zu kommen. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010)*

*Here it is also possible to make a territorial distinction, so to say that the northern part of the euroregion, that is everything north of Frankfurt, is more active in the German-Polish context. This however is based on a lack of infrastructure south of Frankfurt. There are no border bridges in order to reach Poland easily. (Translation by the author)*

Again, the influence of the infrastructure on the way the border is perceived is obvious. In the case of VIADRINA the lack of opportunities to cross the border also leads to less awareness for the cross-border problematic.

Another approach to the analysis of the topic of a possible coherent region is the examination of material used to introduce VIADRINA by the region itself, here especially the already introduced map 2. The role of the border is quite prominently pointed out on the map, as are the border crossings. However, this might also be due to the situation regarding the difficulty in actually crossing the border as this at the same time always means crossing the Oder which in turn requires a bridge or a ferry as a means to do so.

Based on these observations it can be concluded that the assumption of a coherent territorial shape has not been taking place in VIADRINA. However, this does not mean that no development in the understanding of territory is taking place. The understanding of territory in the cross-border region is shifting to include a more multifaceted understanding of territory that allows to see the region not only as composed of two state parts but also aims at creating an understanding of the cross-border region as a whole. Furthermore, the territory of VIADRINA is not clearly bounded, an observation that can again be connected to the model of a medieval Europe as it indicates an absence of clear outer borders as well as a high heterogeneity in the understanding of the territorial form of the region.

### **6.2.3. Power**

The understanding that one aspect of power is related to the availability and distribution of funding also holds for the analysis of the VIADRINA region. One aspect introduced in the interviews is the need to clearly point out the importance of the cross-border work without continuously referring to funding as a source of activities in the region. This justification of the cross-border work is seen as taking place in two different, yet related, areas. Firstly, the development of VIADRINA to become an institution that is not only noticed in connection with funding and secondly, the understanding that cross-border work is something that is in general of importance to the region, independently of the amount of funding attributed to it. These concerns were voiced by one interviewee as follows

*Man muss sehen, dass die Euroregionen einen Stellenwert erlangen, was nicht immer der Fall ist, der sie auch unabhängig von Fördermitteln als wichtige Institution der grenzübergreifenden Zusammenarbeit reifen lässt.(Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010)*

*One should aim at giving the Euroregions a high significance, something that is not always the case, which also allows them to develop independently of funding into important institution of cross-border co-operation. (Translation by the author)*

Furthermore it was asserted that

*Aber das ist so die Herausforderung, zu sagen die grenzüberschreitende Zusammenarbeit läuft nicht bloß, weil so viel Geld da ist, sondern es ist halt ein Anliegen, was uns als Region wichtig ist unabhängig von Fördermitteln. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010)*

*And this is also a challenge, to say that cross-border co-operation is not just taking place because of the high amount of funding but that it is a concern that is important to our region independently of funding. (Translation by the author)*

This is also in tune with the aims for the future voiced during the interviews. The main aim for the future development of VIADRINA is described as a possible stronger emancipation process from the state level and a stronger direct co-operation with the European Union in order to enable the euregio to be more influential when it comes to the administration of funds and the general development of VIADRINA. Of course, also multiple obstacles are identified in the realisation of this vision, specifically stemming from a lack of strong and more similar structures on both sides as well as the need to formalize processes in a way that not only creates a new body in the euregio but actually contributes to an active development. (Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) This shows a strong dependency on the state and EU level, not only regarding funding but also concerning the lack of possibilities to decide more independently about the future development of the VIADRINA.

The influence of European funding on the realisation of cross-border co-operation is seen as high. The option of a safety-mechanism in case of declining European funding is not seen as a viable option especially when taking into account the financial situation of the member communities which quite often is so strained that there would not even be a possibility to take over cost for further projects. (Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010) In one interview this situation was described as follows

*Und aus eigenem finanziellem Hintergrund heraus schafft das die Region auch nicht, also schaffen es beide Seiten der Grenzregion nicht, das zu entwickeln. Wir hängen hier ganz schön am Fördertopf der EU. (Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010)*

*Based on its own financial background the region, that is both sides of the border region, is not capable of developing this. We are quite dependent on the EU funding. (Translation by the author)*

Moreover, an interviewee adds, the differences in the administrative system would also make it difficult to decide who should create a safety mechanism in case of decreasing funding from the European side. Again, the need for a consolidation of structures instead of a solely

project oriented work is stressed as a main point the VIADRINA should aspire to in order to secure sustainable development.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010) Again, this shows a high dependency on the EU as a funding source and also points to the prominent role that the states, through the administrative difference, and the EU, through setting funding priorities, have on the conceptual development of the VIADRINA. However, no clear proposals were introduced on how to give more importance to VIADRINA in the process of organising cross-border work or how the financing of cross-border work could be less dependent on INTERREG funds. This could partly be based on the relatively short time during which cross-border work was actively pursued as structures and processes of project work might not be established enough to allow focusing on further areas of development for the cross-border region.

The relation between VIADRINA and the respective state levels is generally described as good. Nevertheless it is mentioned as well that a further development of structures might become a problematic issue as it would change the format of cross-border co-operation that the states are accustomed to. Therefore, while the states are familiar with the current processes of cross-border co-operation they are definitely not seen as a driving force in furthering the development of cross-border regions beyond the present scope of activities and the present management and administration structure.(Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010) The relationship with the European Union is criticised for its passiveness and lack of direct contact.(Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010) However, the establishing of a direct connection is named as one measure of bringing the European Union closer to the citizens. Apart from this however, no specific activities were mentioned that could improve the position of the VIADRINA in order to establish its position regarding the states and the EU.

#### **6.2.4. Order**

The basic idea behind first initiatives aiming at the creation of the euregio was to create a cross-border initiative based on the already existing examples in Western Europe. (Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010)

The most influential problem is the internal organisation of each state.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010) Again, the favourable conditions for cross-border co-operation in the German federal system are stressed, whereas in comparison the model of the Polish central state is seen as providing a less favourable starting situation.(Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) However, influence from higher state or federal levels is seen on both sides, only with the distinction that whereas on the Polish side this influence stems

directly from Warsaw, on the German side it stems from Potsdam. Another aspect of this is that the knowledge about the specific regional situation is better the closer an administrative unit actually is to the region. Therefore it is asserted, that the long distance to Warsaw and the lack of specific regional knowledge, as opposed to Potsdam being closer to the region and more aware of the specific regional situation due to this proximity, can contribute to a slowing down of processes in the euregio. The voivodeships in Poland also have to make clear to the higher levels in the system that they can handle more independence in their regional administration. The goal here is seen in achieving pragmatic solutions that would allow for aspects of decentralisation to take place without questioning the Polish central state as a whole.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010)

The issue of the offices of VIADRINA is an aspect relating to the inner administration of the euregio. Currently there are two offices, a result of the development of VIADRINA across a former external border of the European Union. Whereas a possible common office is seen as an important symbol for VIADRINA, the administrative aspects, the necessity of funding as well as a possible struggle over where to locate such an office result in a careful approach to this topic.(Interview VIADRINA 15.02.2010) It is furthermore acknowledged that while a common office might have a function as a symbol and could also simplify communication between the German and the Polish side, the separation of offices does have advantages for the population as it makes it easier to reach an office from different parts of the euroregion as well as increasing the visibility of the euregio.(Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010)

Conflicts between the German and the Polish side concerning the use of funding mainly stem from the different situations on each side. Whereas the German side received extensive funding after 1990 in order to modernise structures, this was not the case for the Polish side. Therefore, focus is quite often put on infrastructure projects as opposed to the aim of the German side to move beyond these investments and change the scope of the funding to other topics. According to one interviewee this could negatively influence the chance of certain projects to be realised as a project needs partners from both sides to be realised.(Interview Joint Technical Secretariat 4.2.2010) This problem is however not seen as influencing the future development of the euregio decisively as it is expected that a shift in focus will happen also in Poland.(Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010)

The internal order and administration of the VIADRINA region is slowly consolidating in certain areas of co-operation. It is asserted in one interview that the actors involved in the creation and realization of projects, here especially cost intensive long term projects, are

recurring just as the main fields covered by these projects. This is explained by one interviewee as follows

*(...) wenn ein gewisses Projektvolumen erreicht wird, dann handelt es sich um einige (...) wiederkehrende Akteure, die dann die Projekte auch machen, weil sie also dann auch den finanziellen Rückhalt haben. (Interview VIADRINA 20.02.2010)*

*(...) once a certain project volume is reached a certain number of recurring actors (...) realizing the projects can be identified as those also have the financial resources to do so. (Translation by the author)*

Impulses mainly stem from small associations and from larger organizations working in economic development and investment in the region. However, here a division between the German and the Polish side of the border can be identified.

However, these plans to further the process of creating of a more solid structure for the cross-border work is made more difficult through a stagnation of the development of cross-border co-operation experienced in the euroregion. (Interview VIADRINA 22.01.2010) However, it should be pointed out that this consolidation of internal structures and processes is of high importance for VIADRINA in order to address the problems introduced in this section. In order to emancipate itself further from a strong dependency on the state and EU level it is necessary to show its capabilities by not just dealing with short-term project oriented cross-border work but also with a long-term development of the cross-border regions as a whole. This would then also allow space for the borders-to-orders sequence as this can only take place when VIADRINA is actually enabled to influence the development of the border as a whole.

In general, VIADRINA is characterized by a changing understanding of border and territory. This new conceptualization departs from traditional understandings and no longer sees the border as a mere line dividing states. Furthermore it supports a multifaceted understanding of the territoriality of the region. Regarding the power structure, a clear dependency on the state and EU level can be found. This dependency is based on funding decisions and on the lack of influence VIADRINA can muster up with regards to the differences in the administrative systems of the state. Here, a further stabilizing of the internal order, that is taking place and is seen as one main goal, can help to establish VIADRINA as an actor that is able to contribute more directly to the development of the border region. However, no active interest in supporting a reterritorialization in Europe can be found in VIADRINA. Whereas it is trying to assert its importance for the border region, it is still lacking clear capabilities to actually influence other levels in favour of a further development of the region.

## **7. Analytical comparison of EUREGIO and PRO EUROPA VIADRINA**

### **7.1. Basic structure and functioning**

Before even starting the process of carefully comparing both cross-border regions and their specific characteristics it is necessary to again point to the considerations put forward by Paasi and Häkli introduced in chapter 3.3.1. As has been clarified there this thesis is informed by the assumption that no coherent border theory applicable to every single border setting is attainable based on the differences induced by every specific border context. Whereas the possibility to actually reach a stage where findings can be compared was one main motivation behind the case selection this does not rule out the specific background of each case. The case selection aimed for similarity with regard to the border, in this case a peaceful internal EU border, and with regard to one basic mode of organisation, the acquisition of funding from European Union sources, here especially the INTERREG programme. However, as is already evident from the basic introduction to each border region, there are notable differences that of course also influence the development of the border co-operation so that all comparisons should be carefully justified. Whereas the basic structure and the main source of funding, INTERREG support from the EU, are helping to establish a basis for comparability, the differences in the historical background and the length of the cross-border co-operation are different for both cases. In this context, EUREGIO is characterised by long experience in the cross-border work. Furthermore, the Dutch-German border has been relatively constant for centuries. VIADRINA however has developed over a comparably short time and had to deal with a more complicate border situation influenced not only by the border development but also by decades of neglect of any cross-border activities.

### **7.2. Main theoretical concepts**

#### **7.2.1. Border**

One result that can be drawn from both case studies in an equal fashion is the result that borders under investigation in this study can be characterised as being in the middle ground between assumptions regarding a borderless world and state-centric assumptions focusing on the role of borders as strict dividers between sovereign territories.

Whereas in both cases the analysis showed that special emphasis is put on the development of the border's influence it is also acknowledged that the border is nevertheless still perceived in its function as separator between sovereign states. The diminishing of the

influence of the border in day-to-day life is in both cases attributed to the importance of socio-cultural people-to-people projects. It is furthermore acknowledged that prejudices prevail. However, it is also asserted that the main dividing line for the existence of prejudice is seen between the older and the younger generation, an observation used to stress the importance but also the success of cross-border activities in the regions. However, whereas a low significance is attributed to prejudice, it is acknowledged that the border is still present in the minds of people, an observation supported also by Strüver (2004a).

Therefore, the general conclusion is based on a perception of a decreasing influence of the border with regard to practical matters and an ongoing perception of the border as a divider with regard to the perception of the border region inhabitants. However, it was also made clear that a borderless region is not only not perceived as a development possibility it is also not desired from the position of the respective euroregions.

### **7.2.2. Territory**

The study of the concept of territory followed two highly interlinked strands. The first question relates to whether the euroregion is seen as one coherent region indicating a diminished role of the state border and secondly, the possibility of a demarcated area of influence for the border region.

The proposed concept of a coherent territory was neither seen as a goal nor as a viable option of the development of the cross-border regions. However, a difference in the evaluation of this topic can be found in EUREGIO and VIADRINA. Whereas in EUREGIO the proposal of a coherent region had been put forward several decades ago, it was not seen as a viable option anymore at all, with reference to the understanding of the border as an aspect intensifying the multiple facets of the region and therefore its attractiveness. A different proposal was put forward in the VIADRINA region. Here, it was asserted that even though a coherent region is not a goal it is striven to develop VIADRINA to be a common region. This concept of a common region includes a dual understanding of territory, that is the understanding of the region consisting of two parts from different states but also the understanding of the border region as a whole. This process is not completed; however with regard to the German side it is seen as being further in proximity to the border and larger cities as well as in lower level project activities. This also shows that from the side of the euroregions, a *monotopia* as described by Jensen and Richardson (2004:15) is not on the agenda for the future development. This can of course be explained by the lack of influence they can actually level on the state and EU level, however Jensen's and Richardson's

*monotopia* would also not reflect the ideas of an overlapping territory and the multifacetedness introduced by the border to the region that were seen as vital in the interviews.

One distinction that was common in both regions is the distinction between an official territory formed by the members of the euresios and an active territory in which the activities of the cross-border regions are most pronounced. Therefore, no clearly bordered territory of influence can be identified. Thus, Paasi's criteria regarding the assumption of a territorial shape are not realized in the cross-border regions as no clear territory combining members and a stable level of activities can be identified. The lack of a clearly demarcated territory of the cross-border regions does not necessarily express a lack of reterritorialization dynamics with regard to the euroregions. It can also be seen as a step towards reterritorialization as it supersedes the need for a clearly demarcated area to organise functions. Therefore, these developments could help to avoid Agnew's territorial trap as no clearly demarcated territory is in existence while at the same time the state boundaries are no longer equalled with borders of the society. Furthermore, an imposition of a strict border to the outside would also be a somewhat ironic border as the main purpose of the cross-border regions is to create connections and flows across borders instead of creating new borders.

One point made with regard to both regions is the need to pay attention to the attributes directly connected to the cross-border regions. An overloading of the concept with several different meanings and functions is seen as a threat to the fulfilling of the basic tasks and roles attributed to the enabling of cross-border activities. Therefore, activities to achieve further independence are mainly connected to shaping the form of cross-border activities or to being able to decrease border effects in real life.

### **7.2.3. Power**

In both cases power was approached firstly on the basis of funding sources. Here, not only the dependency on external funding mainly provided by the European Union was of importance in the analysis. Another important factor was the position the euroregions have with regard to the state level and the European level.

The importance of European funding, specifically INTERREG, was observable within both regions as well as the opinion that the creation of a safety net on the state level was not a viable option to react to declining funding. In the case of EUREGIO, ideas and initiatives for a reaction to declining funding were already further developed and included the need to have a

diversified income that does not rely to strongly on the INTERREG funding but also includes other European funding sources. However, both regions acknowledge the need to move from a project focused approach to the development of structures that can help to open up new sources of funding and stabilise the activities of the cross-border region also financially. Here, especially the need to widen the scope for other EU funding programmes was presented as an alternative. However, this approach would only lessen the degree of dependence on the INTERREG funding, it would not allow becoming more independent from EU funding in general.

The aim of establishing more institutionalised processes was also introduced with regard to the relationship with the state level and the European level. Whereas neither relationship was described as negatively influencing the possibility to work as a cross-border regions, also room for improvement was identified. One aspect pointed out in VIADRINA was the need to clarify, especially to the federal and state level that the cross-border region is not just about funding but also an interest that apart from monetary incentives is of importance to the involved members as a whole. Here, a stronger direct connection with the European Union was also introduced as a means to strengthen the local position of the cross-border region.

However, the analysis of the concept of power clearly showed the structures of dependency that do exist. The cross-border regions depend on EU funding in order to keep their work up. Furthermore, they also depend on the states' willingness to facilitate the cross-border co-operation and to react to proposals that help to accommodate differences in the respective national administration.

#### **7.2.4. Order**

One main problem perceived in both regions with respect to order is the influence of the internal administration of the involved states on the administration of cross-border work. In the Dutch-German case special focus, especially in the interviews, was also put on the problems arising from different state legislation and possible approaches to solve this problem. The need to create a more structured approach, also at the level of the legislative state level, were seen as important in order to work on fixing difficulties arising from existing laws but also in order to prevent the creation of further difficulties arising from newly created laws.

It can be observed in both regions that the influence of the federal system of Germany is favourable for the creation of cross-border co-operation as it not only enables regional actors

to make their own decisions in a certain framework but also allows for decisions regarding the cross-border work to be taken on levels closer to the region where the knowledge about the regional situation is seen as higher than on the levels further away from the regional administration.

The internal structure of the regions is slowly consolidating, a development favourable for the stabilisation of activities, but possibly negative for the incentives to introduce new procedures in order to further the development. However, it was pointed out in both regions that all developments regarding the internal structure should be checked carefully for the added-value they can actually provide for the work in the region. With regard to EUREGIO this question relates to possible elections for the council, in VIADRINA discussion regarding the internal order touch upon the issue of having two secretariats and possible advantages and disadvantages of combining these secretariats into one.

Generally, it can be concluded that the influence of the state level through laws and administration but also on the possibilities to further the development of the cross-border work were not perceived as something that should be valued in terms of positive or negative but as a given that has to be dealt with in order to obtain positive results for the region. Therefore, the state was not seen as an entity that is slowly giving way to other ways of organizing order, but as a framework within which to organize the cross-border work. However, the cross-border regions were also seen as actors that can slowly induce change on the state level, by lobbying their interest and by creating awareness for their specific situation. As a result, the cross-border regions could be seen as one factor that slowly changes the classical conception of the state without trying to eradicate its basic function as organizational principle in politics.

### **7.3. Reflections**

A comparative viewpoint on EUREGIO and VIADRINA reveals differences with regard to the different starting situation of the co-operation as well as regarding the different processes of shaping the co-operation in its present form. Another point of difference can be identified when applying a comparative perspective on topics such as the economic situation in the cross-border regions.

The main difference between EUREGIO and VIADRINA can be identified in the time frame and creation of the respective euroregion. Whereas the developments in the EUREGIO, especially in retro perspective, are interpreted as forward looking and resulting in a unit

acknowledged for far more than a mere distribution of INTERREG funds, the VIADRINA is all too often perceived as one of many cross-border regions that mushroomed after the establishment of the European funding opportunities. Thus, the specific situation of the VIADRINA region, as well as the head start of the EUREGIO, is often not taken into account as much as they should be. It could be said that VIADRINA is somewhat lagging behind when being compared with the 'model example' of European cross-border co-operation, this however would omit the huge strides taken by the VIADRINA in its development.

In this context it is interesting to point out that the basic topics of importance identified in both euroregions are, to a certain extent, similar. These topics are the differences in law and administration on both sides of the border and their influence on the cross-border work, the development and stabilisation of the internal order as well as the issue of funding, specifically the dependence on EU INTERREG funding. It can be noted however, that larger steps towards a conceptualisation of solutions to these issues were taken in EUREGIO. This however does not mean that solutions were already implemented or agreed on. Nevertheless, the possibility of EUREGIO to refer to its longstanding development and its ability to initiate cross-border contacts prior to extensive EU funding programmes also equipped the region with more experience regarding different ways of co-operating over the border and strategies to overcome problems. The historical background of the VIADRINA however meant that cross-border co-operation had to start from zero in the early 1990s and this relatively short time of developing the cross-border region can also be seen as influencing the attention that can be paid to finding solutions for the identified issues when the top priority is to create a functioning co-operation in the existing framework.

This can also be seen as influencing the capabilities these regions have when it comes to challenging the state-centric system. Based on the differences introduced above it could be concluded that the EUREGIO has a stronger standing regarding capabilities to present itself as a confident cross-border region that is able to take on new responsibilities and influence the state level as well as the European level to consider its proposals.

This however does not mean that it is positioning itself in opposition to these levels and demands further autonomy. On the contrary it was asserted in the interviews that the concept should not be overloaded and rather focus on developing in tune with the state and European level, but exactly this developing in tune can be seen as the way promising most success when it comes to influencing these levels to take the situation at the borders more into account. This would then not be seen as a direct challenge to the state-centric system but as taking a position that allows transforming some parts of the current organisation in

order to account for the changing position of the borders as influenced from the cross-border organisation.

As introduced earlier, this position would assign weaker capabilities to the VIADRINA region, based on the current lack of ability to focus on solutions to current challenges to the future development of the cross-border work. However, it should also be pointed out that the existence and successful implementation of a cross-border programme already serves as a means to point out weaknesses of a solely state-centric approach as it highlights problems that are best solved in a cross-border manner. Therefore, capabilities can also be detected in the VIADRINA region but it can be assumed that they are still in a different stage of development in comparison to the more established EUREGIO.

The analysis of the main concepts has also shown that the IBO-nexus is applicable to the study of reterritorialization capabilities of cross-border regions as it allows dealing with main concepts associated with the study of reterritorialization but still leaves room to assign individual importance to each of the three concepts included in it. In the present case, this meant focusing on border and order and complementing these with the highly related concepts of territory and power. Especially this flexibility of the proposed IBO nexus makes it a fruitful start for the investigation into reterritorialization.

With regard to the concepts for a future development of territoriality within the European Union introduced in chapter two the results obtained from the case studies show tendencies that would favour the approach of medieval Europe introduced by Anderson as well as Browning and Joenniemi. Based on this, a high level of heterogeneity and the absence of clear borders can be expected. (Anderson 2007:16) The absence of clear borders is expressed in the contribution of cross-border regions to diminishing the influence of the border running through them without simultaneously creating a clear border concerning their territory, as the distinction between official and active territory has shown. This distinction between official territory, that is the members' territory, and the active territory, that is the territory in which the cross-border region is most active and known by the citizens, does not allow setting a clear outer border for the region. Also heterogeneity is seen as a characteristic of the border regions that should be incorporated into the concept of the region instead of aiming at the creation of a homogenous unit in opposition to other units. However, the development towards this medieval conception of territory is not fully realized in the border regions, as for example a diffusion of sovereignty is not pronounced in the case studies even though the cross-border regions could be identified as actors applying the

pressure from below. Furthermore, the states still manage to exercise considerable influence on the cross-border regions.

Based on this, the development of a medieval understanding of territory would be in the making based on the currently still more pronounced characteristics of sovereign states. In order to appoint a role to the cross-border regions in this development, they could be classified as showing signs of the networked (non) border introduced by Browning and Joenniemi. This idea stresses the increasing turn towards borders that are not clearly cut and aim at a sharing of responsibility (Browning, Joenniemi 2009:527) and the work of the cross-border regions can be seen as resonating with that. Especially the dynamics introduced through the use of geostrategies to complement geopolitical models is useful in the study of cross-border regions. However the current state of affairs would favour to describe it as networked border instead of using the term networked (non) border. Even though the borders under investigation are changing they are not yet in the state where they would not still act as separating. Therefore, they are still in the process of becoming (non)borders without having yet reached it. This shows that it is indeed possible to attribute a role in possible reterritorialization processes to the cross-border regions under investigation. However, the need to pay special attention to the specific border context and the stage of development that the border region is in, become obvious again.

## **8. Conclusion – Reterritorialization through cross-border co-operation?**

In this thesis the main focus was on possible reterritorialization processes evident in the European Union. As one form of a possible reorganisation of European territoriality cross-border regions across internal borders of the European Union were investigated. The main interest in this subject stems from the discussion pertaining to the concept of the state and its possible loss of sovereignty, partly even understood to be a demise of the modern state concept, an approach that is in contrast to the states' omnipresent position in International Relations.

The introduction of previous research in this thesis regarding possible processes of reterritorialization started with the introduction of a discussion regarding the role of the state. Here the focus was not only on the states' modern understanding in International Relations but also on its role in shaping understandings of territory and processes of reterritorialization and deterritorialization. Using the European experience and the possible role of cross-border regions in processes of reterritorialization as focal point, a field not yet researched in its full potential was introduced. Simultaneously, this specification also limits the scope of the thesis in order to avoid overloading the content of the thesis with additional concepts and approaches. Creating a basis, Critical Geopolitics and the Identities-Borders-Orders nexus were introduced as main theoretical framework to inform the study and the use of concepts. This decision was influenced by the focus on spatial aspects of International Relations, specifically reterritorialization. Through the application of this framework to understanding the concepts and the questions that can be asked an investigation into the possible creation of new territorial configurations was made possible. Based on this theoretical framework and the application of case studies and interviews as tools of investigation, two cross-border regions across internal EU borders were analysed in order to shed some light on the role these units could play in a possible reterritorialization of Europe.

Of course, the focus on only two border regions in connection with the limitations regarding a comparative approach to border studies introduced in chapter 3.2.1. also limit the applicability of the results obtained through the analysis. It cannot be claimed that a general insight into reterritorialization capabilities of cross-border regions across internal borders of the European Union has been achieved. However, based on the limits regarding comparative border studies the focus on single case studies is needed to then carefully single out points of comparison. Nevertheless the two cross-border regions under investigation enable the analysis to provide some conclusions of a more general nature with regard to the topic of

reterritorialization through cross-border regions and regarding the possible development of European territoriality.

One main conclusion of the present thesis is that cross-border regions are not actors that in opposition to the state pursue an agenda of acquiring further autonomy or responsibilities that could be evaluated as a clear sign of reterritorialization taking place. This is not only due to the strength the states have in restricting cross-border activities, for example passively through differences in administration, but also due to the perception in the border regions that the concept of euroregion should not be overloaded and rather focus on its main functions in co-operation with the state and the European level instead of pursuing a development that would inevitably lead to a clash of interests.

Nevertheless it can also be concluded that even though the euroregions are not active reterritorialization actors, they do have the capabilities for inducing change to the state-centric system. These capabilities are mainly seen in the function of inducing a stronger European perspective to the political thinking on the state level. However, these capabilities are evident in different stages of development depending upon the nature of the cross-border region and the ability to actively deal with these problems after they have been identified. This can be a challenge when all resources are tied to the implementation of the present cross-border programme.

In addition, the analysis of the two case studies has shown that characteristics of concepts dealing with the possible development of territoriality in Europe can be identified with regard to the influence of the cross-border regions. These are the concepts of medieval Europe and the networked (non) border. However, as it was also pointed out, these concepts have not translated into empirical realities regarding all of their features yet. Therefore, the concept of networked (non) border was described as networked border in order to portray the current stage of development. As they can only be identified in a stage of development and furthermore depend on the specific situation in the cross-border region, the identification of tendencies does therefore not allow the clear conclusion that these territorial formations will eventually be reached. However, the abstract models are still useful when researching as diverse phenomena as cross-border regions because they allow, to a certain degree, the possibility to evaluate developments.

This thesis ties in with research aiming at the analysis of the development of European territoriality. It furthermore combines this with research dealing with the development of border in this process, as the starting point for the investigation of possible reterritorialization

processes is seen in the existing European cross-border regions and their capabilities to support a possible process of reterritorialization.

Further research relating to the introduced cross-border regions should also focus on the other euroregions established alongside the German-Dutch and the Polish-German border. This would not only allow for further insights into the capabilities of euroregions by widening the number of cases under scrutiny but could also serve as a basis for testing the results obtained in the present study in relatively similar environments when it comes to administrative differences and modes of organisation. In this context it can also be researched whether the distinction between an official and an active territory is a feature of other cross-border regions as well. This could serve as a starting point to further analyse the influence this division has on the work of the cross-border regions and on the presence of the models of medieval Europe and the networked border.

Apart from a widening of scope with regard to the analysed cross-border regions, the examination of EUREGIO and VIADRINA could be widened in order to incorporate other levels into the analysis as well. This could not only include the respective state levels and their view on cross-border regions and the interaction with these units, but should also include a stronger focus on the opinion put forward by the European Union. Also a deeper probing into the cross-border regions could enrich the debate. Apart from an investigation of opinions of inhabitants also the attitude of the main actors creating the projects could be examined in order to gain a better insight into the evaluation of the capabilities and capacities of the cross-border regions. These insights could be used to further the analysis of the position attributed to the euroregions that is whether they are mainly perceived in connection to funding or as active actors shaping the cross-border region.

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## 10. Annexes

### Annex 1: List of Interviewees

EUREGIO Council, 22.01.2010  
EUREGIO Council, 21.04.2010  
EUREGIO Secretariat, 11.01.2010  
EUREGIO Secretariat, 04.01.2010

PRO EUROPA VIADRINA Secretariat (German side), 20.02.2010  
PRO EUROPA VIADRINA Secretariat (German side), 15.02.2010  
PRO EUROPA VIADRINA Secretariat (German side), 22.01.2010  
Joint Technical Secretariat, 04.02.2010

### Annex 2: Main Interview Topics

#### 1. What are the main weaknesses and strengths of the cross-border region (CBR)?

What would you describe as the most distinctive or prominent feature of your cross-border region?

#### 2. ACTIVITIES

Given the range of activities connected to the cross-border region which activities would you highlight as especially important for the cross-border cooperation? Why?

#### 3. IDEAS/INITIATORS

Which groups were the driving forces in the creation of the CBR and which groups were less involved in the process?

Which groups can be identified as main initiators of projects? Is there a geographical difference regarding the border?

#### 4. FINANCES

What methods of financing are the most important ones in the CBR for projects and administrative tasks?

#### 5. CHALLENGES FOR THE CROSS-BORDER COOPERATION

Which issues would you identify as main challenges for the creation and the fostering of cross-border activities?

Does the history of the cross-border region still influence perceptions and possible co-operations?

#### 6. IMPACT/USAGE

In which fields can the biggest impact of cross-border cooperation be seen?

Which are the biggest user groups?

#### 7. POLITICAL LIFE/CREDIBILITY

To what extent has the cross-border region developed to be seen as a coherent region?

How would you describe the relationship of the cross-border region to the involved nation states and to the EU?

### **8. BORDER PERCEPTION**

What development can be seen in the perception of the border on both sides?

What role does the border play in today's activities?

### **9. FUTURE**

How would you describe the future of the CBR?

How would you describe the future role of the CBRs regarding your specific region and the more general development in relation to the nation state and the EU?