

Joachim Beck

Horizontal Integration

An Administrative Science Perspective on
Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe



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For Gabrielle, Constantin and Jonathan

Foreword

The present publication has a longer prehistory, which ultimately began when I found my professional start at the German University of Administrative Sciences in Speyer after completing my studies in administrative sciences at the University of Konstanz in 1991. Due to my private residence in Strasbourg, I travelled weekly between the two cities – and was suddenly a European cross-border commuter whose everyday life was confronted with two political-administrative systems and two very different cultures.

From this personal experience grew an interest that not only led to the topic of my PhD thesis, published in 1997, but also had a decisive influence on my further professional and academic career: Cross-border cooperation in Europe. Over the years, this topic has led to many cooperations with institutional and academic partners and resulted in numerous publications. I have also been able to contribute to the development of this policy field in cooperation with the Council of Europe, as an expert advisor at the European Commission's Directorate General for Regional Policy, in various research and consultancy projects funded by public institutions and, ultimately, through my active participation in the cross-border cooperation within the Upper Rhine metropolitan region as Director of the Euro-Institut. Above all, these diverse experiences have enabled a practice-based analytical approach in the form of „participating observation“, which formed the basis for more fundamental scientific reflections on the subject area of cross-border cooperation in Europe.

Looking back on more than 25 years of dealing with the topic of cross-border cooperation, the idea arose to thematically bundle publications of conceptual relevance that have been published in various journals or scattered as book contributions, and to develop them further in a separate book publication under an overarching question. Although this idea had already been working in me for several years, two recent historical events gave me the concrete reason to finally start writing the manuscript. On the one hand, the temporary closure of internal and external borders in the context of the Covid19 pandemic in spring 2020 made it clear, that achievements of the European integration process that were thought to be secure, such as open borders in Europe, can evaporate from one day to the next. On the other hand, the invasion of Ukraine by the Russian army in violation of international law dramatically showed that borders

still have an important constitutive significance, but that even in the 21st century they can be violated in the heart of Europe by acts of war with fatal consequences. The resulting realisation, that European integration needs to be noticeably deepened, raises not least the question, of what roles European border regions can play in Europe in the future.

The title of this publication was deliberately chosen against this background. For some time now, I have been arguing that a horizontal European integration dimension is taking shape in European border regions, which has not yet been sufficiently analysed and conceptualised in the academic literature. Moreover, for me as an administrative scientist, the subject area of cross-border administrative relations forms the core of my research interest. And it is precisely these cross-border administrative relations that in practice play a major role in determining whether and, if so, how border regions can develop their European integration potential at all. From this point of view, too, European border regions have so far only been analysed in a rudimentary way. In this respect, this publication attempts to close a twofold research gap and at the same time to substantiate related perspectives of a transdisciplinary research approach in administrative science.

Numerous people have accompanied me on my exploration of cross-border cooperation in Europe so far, and I am deeply grateful to them. A selection must always remain unsatisfactory, nevertheless I would like to mention a few people in particular in this context. First of all, I'd like to thank Birte Wassenberg and Anne Thevenet for their loyal connectivity, academic curiosity and professional support, which are an important source of my work. In addition, I would like to thank Fabrice Larat not only for his true humanity and friendship, but also for his constant scientific and intellectual inspiration and encouragement. I thank Jürgen Oser for his enthusiastic pragmatism, which has sustained me for many years in cross-border cooperation on the Upper Rhine, even in difficult phases. Klaus König, Michel Casteigts, Franz Thedieck, Gernod Joerger, and Karlheinz Lambertz were/are constant role models and supporters. Eddie Pradier, Sebastian Rihm, Alix Weigel, Tobias Heyduk and Philipp Bauer were/are not only close collaborators to whom I owe many suggestions – they have themselves become committed practitioners or young academics - in the field of cross-border cooperation and beyond.

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Ultimately, my special thanks go to Olaf Handloegten for his loyal and inspiring friendship since the Constance times (even over times of big geographical distance) – and to my wife Gabrielle and my sons Constantin and Jonathan, who have always actively supported and sustained me over the years in the various professional and academic functions – enduring the spatial, intellectual and cultural border-crossings that have been associated with them. It is their understanding and openness that made the time available for these texts to be written.

Strasbourg, June 2022

Joachim Beck

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