Order areas are often portrayed as ‘laboratories of European integration’. Beyond the discourses and symbols, what does the concept of cross-border region actually entail?

By characterising the region as the construction of an identity, a territoriality and a governance system perpetuated over time, this publication identifies and questions the specificities of these processes in the cross-border context. It distinguishes between inter and supraregional cooperation thus questioning a border area’s capacity to develop an ad hoc cross-border cooperation whose raison d’être consists in strengthening the commitments pertaining to the border area’s interests. This study is underpinned by a discourse analysis and a conceptualisation of cross-border territoriality and supraregional institution. In this respect, the significance of the EGTC (European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation), a European instrument providing a legal framework for cooperation, is analysed.

This issue is explored in depth using the emblematic case of the Greater Region, a border area that launched in 2008 a long-term strategy to develop a ‘cross-border polycentric metropolitan region’. Composed of Lorraine (France), Luxembourg, Wallonia (Belgium), Rhineland-Palatinate and Saarland (Germany), the Greater Region constitutes one of the oldest border areas (1971) and presents the highest concentration of cross-border workers in Europe.

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