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**From the "Mining Triangle" to the  
"Greater Region"**

**("Großregion"/"Grande Région").**

**The Institutionalisation of the  
"SaarLorLux" Euroregion**

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Nearly 182 million citizens of the European Union (EU) (= 37,5% of the total population) live in approximately 130 border and transboundary regions (AEBR, 2006). These regions contribute significantly to the process of European integration. This importance is documented by the Structural Funds package 2007-2013 which has been presented by the European Commission (2006a) and which was recently approved by the European Parliament (Europäisches Parlament 2006). Whereas the EU has spent some 4.875 billion euros for transboundary, transnational and interregional cooperation within the framework of the Interreg initiative for the period 2000-2006, European territorial cooperation will become one of the three objectives of the Structural Funds and will receive 7.75 billion euros (5.57 billion euros for transboundary cooperation alone) for the period 2007-2013 (European Commission, 2006a; 2006b). Apart from this, a new set of regulations for the establishment of a “European Grouping of territorial co-operation” (EGTC) has been adopted which will facilitate transboundary, transnational and interregional cooperation in the EU.

The following paper will deal with the institutionalisation, decision-making and implementation structures and policies of the “Grande Région”/“Großregion” (in the following: GR or Greater Region).

## **1. The Process of the Institutionalisation in Greater Region**

With a surface of 65,400 km<sup>2</sup> and a population of 11.2 Million inhabitants, the GR is Europe’s largest cross-border region (Fig. 1).<sup>1</sup> It unites the following five partner regions which belong to the four nation states Germany, France, Luxembourg and Belgium: the two German Bundesländer Saarland and Rheinland-Pfalz (Rhineland-Palatinate), the French region Lorraine (including the Départements Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse and Vosges), the Grand-Duchy of Luxembourg and the Belgian Région wallonne (Walloonie Region). The Walloonie Region itself includes the Communauté française de Belgique (French community of Belgium) and the Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens (German speaking community of Belgium). All partners occupy quite different territorial levels and are unequal legal entities. Whereas Luxembourg, as an independent and sovereign nation-state, is as a whole a

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<sup>1</sup> By comparison, the Netherlands: 41,160 km<sup>2</sup>, Belgium: 30,514 km<sup>2</sup>.

member of the GR, the other partner regions are only fractions of their respective nation-states. They possess very different political, legislative and administrative powers. Whereas the German Bundesländer, as members of the German federal system, have comprehensive legislative, executive and juridical powers, the French Départements are merely operating units of the central state although the power of the French regional level has been broadened by the decentralization policy adopted by France since the 1980s.

Nevertheless, there are some strong commonalities and similarities amongst the partners with regard to their political, cultural and economic heritage. The corridor stretching from the Netherlands to Burgundy, including the ancient Lotharingian Empire, was for centuries one of the most important regions linking the former eastern and western Franconian empires and their germanophone and francophone successors. This same corridor was also repeatedly the object of political conflict. With regard to the Saarland and Lorraine, alone in the last two centuries, the borders between France and Germany have changed six times (cf. Brücher/Pickart, 1989). For this reason, the language border (germano-francophone) is not congruent with the national borders. There is a transition zone which is characterized by a partly bilingual population in Lorraine, a tri- or even quatorlingual population in Luxembourg (Luxembourg, German, French (and English)) speaking population, many intermarriages and family ties which reach far across the borders with respect to space and time. These ties are strengthened by a common economic heritage. The Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg and the Wallonie were important steel industry regions which, since the very beginning of industrialisation, have been functionally interconnected: German entrepreneurs were active in iron ore mining and steel smelting in Lorraine while French, Luxembourg and Belgian entrepreneurs were running steel smelting operations in the Saarland. Luxembourg and Lorraine Minette iron ore has been the resource basis of the Saarland steel industry, and coal from the Saarland and Eastern Lorraine was traditionally used by the Luxembourg and Lorraine steel industry. As with all of the other former industrial regions affected by the coal crisis of the late 1950s/1960s and the steel crisis which started in the 1970s, each of the partner regions in the GR faced the same problems of unemployment and the pressure for structural change.

It is interesting that the recent transboundary cooperation between the Saarland, Lorraine and Luxembourg has its roots in this common burden. It was the former

president of the Saarland based mining company Saarbergwerke AG, together with the Lorraine mining company HBL (Houillères du Bassin lorrain) and with representatives of the German Federal and the French Government, who, in the 1960s, was strongly engaged in diversifying the Saarland and Lorraine mining industry by establishing a common transboundary chemical industry network including and integrating a refinery and a fertilizer plant in the Saarland with an oil pipeline operating company in France and a nitrogen and an ammonia processing plant in Lorraine (Rolshoven 1974; Dörrenbächer 1992; 2002). The same president of the Saarbergwerke AG can be considered as one of the founding fathers of the transboundary region of *Saar-Lor-Lux* as the successor of the old “Mining Triangle” (“Montandrieck”/“Triangle Lourd”) which was characterised by intensive cooperation in coal and iron ore mining and in the iron and steel industry in the Saar region, Lorraine and Luxembourg. The “Mining Triangle” has actually existed since the 19<sup>th</sup> century and can be considered the root of the later Greater Region.

### **1.1 Stages in the Institutionalisation of the Grande Région/Großregion**

Regions can be considered as intermediary levels not only with respect to space but also with regard to temporal and social categories (cf. Howitt, 1993; cf. Fig. 2). As to time, they are large processes which connect the temporal levels “*big structure*” / “*longue durée*” and “*small events*” (cf. Braudel, 1977; Storper, 1988). With regard to the social, they link *structure* and *action* as well as the *society* with the *individuum* in the course of social structuration (cf. Giddens, 1985; 1988; Pred, 1984; Gilbert, 1988). But structuration does not *take place* in a vacuum. It is embedded in a specific spatial setting and thereby contributes to the reproduction of spatial structures. At the same time, by linking space with place, and the global with the local level, regions are an essential stage in the course of “*glocalization*” (cf. Swngedouw, 1997; 2004); they contribute to the reproduction of spatial and social structure. Regions can be considered as discursive, cross-cultural, complex and contingent top-down and bottom-up processes (Fig. 2) interlinking spatial, temporal as well as social levels of scale. They are the outcome, as well as the process itself, of spatial institutionalisation.

In the following, on the basis of Paasi’s (1986) conception of the *stages of the institutionalisation of regions* (see also Dörrenbächer, 2003), we will examine whether

the GR, as a specific type of region, has performed all four stages of institutionalisation as differentiated by Paasi:

- 1) Evolution and establishment of a clearly defined territorial shape and of territorial rights,
- 2) Creation of regulatory institutions and organisations bound to this territory,
- 3) Existence of spatial symbols and symbols bound to this territory, and
- 4) Evolution of a regional identity and the identification of this area as a part of the system of regions from within and from outside.

## 1.2 Clearly Defined Territorial Shape

In 1969, the French-German governmental summit negotiated the transboundary cooperation between France and Germany and approved a respective bi-national committee. In 1971, the governments of the Federal Republic of Germany, the French Republic and the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg decided to establish a transboundary “*Regional Commission Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/Westpfalz*”<sup>2</sup> in order to implement the political cooperation of the Bundesland Saarland, Lorraine (including the four départements Moselle, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Meuse et Vosges), the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg and parts of the Bundesland Rheinland-Pfalz (District of Trier, western Palatinate and the county of Birkenfeld) whose locations are adjacent to the Saarland and therefore close to the French and Luxembourg border. The cooperation at that time was still loose and was actually limited to the so-called Mining Triangle mentioned above. The region of transboundary cooperation delimited by these partners was called “*Saar-Lor-Lux*” (Fig. 4). In 1980, through the exchange of notes between the foreign ministries of the three involved nation-states, the *Regional Commission Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/Westpfalz* was established as a legal entity which still exists.<sup>3</sup> In 1986, an “Interregional Parliamentary Council” (IPC), comprising representatives of the legislative entities of all of the partner regions, was established. That is why the spatial delimitation of the transboundary region had to be extended by the remaining parts of

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<sup>2</sup> Regionalkommission Saarland-Lothringen-Luxemburg-Trier/Westpfalz /Commission régionale Sarre-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trèves/Palatinat occidental

<sup>3</sup> The structure, functions and powers of the organisations established in the course of this process of institutionalisation will be discussed later.

the Bundesland Rheinland-Pfalz. At the same time, the Belgian province Luxembourg<sup>4</sup> participated in the activities of the commission and became a factual member of Saar-Lor-Lux. Finally in 1998, the Wallonie region as a whole, comprising the French and the German speaking communities, became member of the anew enlarged transboundary region which was called since then “*Grande Région/Großregion*” (Brücher, 2002).

The spatial delimitation of the GR is well defined clear-cut since it is congruent with the spatial definition of the five participating political and administrative entities involved in the GR. The problem remains, however, that the denomination Saar-Lor-Lux, as the reference of any cross-border cooperation in the GR, is still very persistent.<sup>5</sup>

## **2. Regulatory Institutions and Organisations Bound to this Territory**

As mentioned in the preceding paragraph, the spatial shape and the delimitation of the GR derives from the territory of the partner regions and their respective legislative, executive and administrative organisations involved in the setting up of the GR and its institutions. The most important institutions and organisations bound to the transboundary GR and their missions and objectives will be listed below.

### **2.1 Regional Commission Saarland-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/Westpfalz**

The Regional Commission Saarland-Lorraine-Luxembourg-Trier/Westpfalz is the main institution of political cooperation of the regional governments of the GR.

Since December 1998, the Wallonie region as well as the German speaking community of Belgium and the French community of Belgium have had the status of observer within the commission and its working groups. The Regional Council of Lorraine (Conseil Régional de Lorraine) and the Lorraine Départements also have the status of observer and are invited to participate in the activities of the commission. The Regional Commission whose presidency rotates annually has an annual official

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<sup>4</sup> The territory of the Belgian province Luxembourg belonged to the Grand Duchy until the establishment of the Belgian nation-state in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Until now, there are strong interrelationships between the Grand Duchy and this Belgian province.

<sup>5</sup> This confusion of the terms “Saar-Lor-Lux” and “Grande Région/Großregion” is relevant especially with regard to the evolution of a regional identity and the identification of the region from within and from outside (the fourth stage of the institutionalisation of the region) which will be discussed below.

meeting. The decisions taken by the commission are prepared by permanent working and project groups ([www.granderegion.net](http://www.granderegion.net)). At the moment, the Regional Commission has 10 working groups and two services responsible for

- Education and formation
- Higher education
- Culture
- Regional development
- Security and prevention
- Social issues
- Tourism
- Environment
- Transport and traffic
- Economy

and

- Statistics and
- Surveying.

#### *Interregional Parliamentary Council (IPC)*

This council was established in 1986 and consists of seven members of each regional parliament. The IPC prepares recommendations and opinions for the executives of the respective regions. At the moment, the IPC disposes of commissions for

- Economic issues
- Social issues
- Traffic and communication
- Environment and agriculture
- Education, formation, research and culture.

## **2.2 Summit of the Greater Region**

The objective of this institution, which has had eight meetings since 1995, is to give new impulses to the transboundary and interregional cooperation. Each summit is organised by the partner region presiding over the presidency of the GR for a two year period and is dedicated to a specific subject. It takes decisions which are to be implemented collectively. Members of the summit are the Prime Minister of the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg, the Minister-Presidents of Rheinland-Pfalz and of the Saarland, the Minister-Presidents of the Deutschsprachige Gemeinschaft Belgiens (German speaking Community of Belgium) and of the Communauté Wallonie-Bruxelles (Community of Wallonie-Brussels), the President of the Regional Council of Lorraine, the Prefect of the Region of Lorraine as well as the Presidents of the General Councils of the Département Meurthe-et-Moselle and Département Moselle. The subjects of the summits since 1996 have been:

- Labour market, social dialogue, the reduction of administrative restraints (1996)
- Traffic and communication in service of the economic development of the Greater Region (1997)
- Sustainable development in the Greater Region (1998)
- Tourism and culture in the Greater Region (2000)
- Strengthening the corporate culture and a co-ordinated policy for SME in the Greater Region (2001)
- Education and training; 2020 – Vision for the Future of the Greater Region (2003)
- .We in the Greater Region! 11 million Europeans working together (2006)

The first (1995) and the last summit (2005) were not dedicated to a specific subject.

### *Interregional Economic and Social Committee (IESC)*

The IESC which was established in 1997 is appointed by the Summit of the Greater Region. Its mission is to advise and to consult the summit of the Greater Region with regard to economic, social and cultural developments and concerning the regional

development of the GR. It contributes to the dialogue of the social partners of the GR. The IESC has 36 members (representing six cooperation partners) of which one third is represented by members of both the employers and the employees organization (trade-unions, employees chamber), and one third is nominated by the respective regional governments.

### **2.3 Interregional Labour Market Observatory**

The mission of the observatory which was initiated and founded by the summit of the Greater Region in 2000 is to analyse and to document the labour market in the Greater Region. The observatory cooperates with the Statistics Services in the Greater Region. The observatory itself is a network of partner organisations which are coordinated by the Saarbrücken based Info-Institut, a commercial spin-off research institute of the University of Applied Sciences of the Saarland.

#### ***Euregio SaarLorLux+***

This entity was founded in 1988 as *COMREGIO* (Consortium of Communities) and has its headquarters in Luxembourg-City. From 1995 until 2005, it worked under the name *EuRegio SaarLorLuxRhin / EuRegio SaarLorLuxRhein* because its members originated from and its activities referred to, the territory of the Regional Commission Saar-Lor-Lux-Rheinland-Pfalz/Westpfalz. More than five years after the expansion of transboundary region to include the complete territory of Wallonie, in November 2005, the Euregio also expanded its membership and mission to the whole territory of the GR and was renamed *Euregio SaarLorLux+*. The *Euregio SaarLorLux+* is not to be confused with other Euregios in the EU, because, contrary to these associations, its mission is not as comprehensive as that of other Euregios. It is only the central association of the communities in the GR whose objective is to represent the interests of the communities with regard to transboundary relations in the GR and to strengthen the cooperation of the communities in the Greater Region. Its presence in the public of the GR is therefore very limited.

*Spatial Symbols and Symbols Bound to the Territory – Identity and Identification*

One of the most important problems of the GR is its lack of identifying symbols. Even the notion “*Grande Région/Großregion*” is problematic as it does not refer to any specific area or region. There have been various unsuccessful attempts to find a common denominator for the GR which would be comprehensible in all languages spoken in the GR, which would not disadvantage any partner and which would represent the whole region. Whereas the term *Saar-Lor-Lux* (or *SaarLorLux*) has gained a significant meaning not only in the transboundary region itself but also beyond, the term *Großregion/Grande Région*, has however almost no resonance meaning. As a survey conducted by students of the Geography Department of the Saarland University discovered, most of the people interviewed in almost all regions of the GR were unable to delimitate the territory of the GR and to name the regions which belong to it. The GR seems to be too large and too uneven with regard to mentality, culture and historical heritage. The evolution of a common identity of and the identification with the GR seems to be problematic.<sup>6</sup> Sometimes, even the representatives of the GR give the impression that they too are uncertain about this question. Both cartographic symbols used for the GR on its own homepage (Fig. 4) are counter-productive with regard to the delimitation and the cohesion of the GR. In one case, strong brackets seem to be necessary to hold the artificially constructed Greater Region together, in the other case, the territory of the GR fades out into some ill-defined nowhere (cf. Brücher, 2002).

### **3. Policies of Inter-Regional and Cross-Boundary Cooperation in the Greater Region**

Apart from the institutions established in the context of the institutionalisation of the transboundary region Saar-Lor-Lux and the Greater Region as its successor (see above), many initiatives and entities were established to initiate, strengthen and to intensify cooperation across the borders of the respective regions with regard to political, economic, cultural, touristy issues (cf. Dörrenbächer and Brücher, 2000). The following list of initiatives which is far from comprehensive, demonstrates that the cooperations are concerning different levels of administrative and spatial scales as well as a wide range of subject areas:

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<sup>6</sup> Probably, the European Capital of Culture 2007 which is not limited to the city of Luxembourg but is extended explicitly to the Greater Region will result in the development of a stronger identity and identification of the Greater Region. It is the first time that the event of the European Capital of Culture is extended not only to a whole region but even to transboundary region!

- Interregional Council of Chambers of Crafts SaarLorLux (it is the unique transboundary association of this type in the EU)
- Cooperation Charta of the Chambers of Industry and Commerce which operates a tri-lingual business data-base (vector.biz)
- Interregional Council of Trade Unions in Saar-Lor-Lux-Trier/Westpfalz
- EURES Transfrontaliers with EURES SLLR (Saarland, Lorraine, Luxembourg, Rheinland-Pfalz) and EURES PED (Lorraine, Luxembourg, Province Luxembourg in Belgium)
- Quattropole, the city network of Saarbrücken, Metz, Luxembourg and Trier,
- Internationale Presse – Presse interrégionale, an association of journalists of the transboundary region.

Institutions from each of the partner regions of the GR participated actively in various Interreg projects from the very beginning of this EU initiative. Most of the projects in the early phase of Interreg were situated at the local level between neighbouring communities (cf. Schulz, 1997; 1998). Even with the introduction of Interreg IIB and C and IIIB and C, which allowed the cooperation at the level superior to the local, there was no common programme integrating projects among the partner regions of the GR. It was only in 2004 that a common “framework operation” called “*e-Based Inter Regional Development*” (*eBird*) was launched under the frame of Interreg IIIC. This framework operation is managed and co-ordinated at the regional level by a Coordinating Secretariat located in Arlon, Wallonie. It integrates almost 20 different projects which are focused on the following subject areas:

- Socio-economic and spatial development (9 projects)
- Culture and knowledge ( 4 projects)
- Education and formation (5 projects).

Whereas there was a lack of integration between the partners of the GR under the frame of the Interreg initiative, the new eBird framework operation is problematic in two ways:

First, it did not really function before mid-2005 (i.e. 18 months before the end of Interreg III). This period seems to have been too short to allow productive cooperation.

Whereas some of the projects implemented under eBird actually existed before the establishment of this framework operation and did not really need this programme, some other new projects suffered under time pressure. Second, there is a forced cooperation as the eBird regulations stipulate that each project supported under this programme has to be composed of partners from *all* regions of the GR. It is evident that this forced cooperation is dysfunctional in some cases. Nevertheless, the programme following upon eBird under the new Objective 3 of the Structural Funds for the EU budget period 2007-13 will adhere to this problematic prerequisite.

## **4. Evaluation**

As was shown above, the GR can be considered as an institutionalised cross-border region with a broad spectrum of transboundary governmental and private organisations and institutions as well as of organisations under public law which are responsible for the implementation of a wide range of policies. In the following section we will check whether the GR can also be considered as an *integrated transboundary region* which has developed *innovative forms of governance*. Finally, we will discuss very briefly the main challenges to the GR.

### **4.1 An Integrated Region?**

In spite of the similar political and economic heritage of most of the regions which make up the GR, the economic disparities among the respective regions are very strong. Whereas some of the regions are still in the process of restructuration from old industrial to modern technology and service oriented economies, Luxembourg has nonetheless succeeded in developing a strong financial sector and services economy including many EU institutions. Apart from these disparities among the regions, there are internal disparities in the individual regions (e.g. in Rheinland-Pfalz and Wallonie between urbanised and rural areas or between areas adjacent or remote to Luxembourg, which attracts many commuters (see below). That is why the BIP per capita (2004) in the GR ranges from 18,588 € (Wallonie) to 56,404 € (Luxembourg) (Statistische Ämter 2006, own calculations) and the unemployment rate (2004) ranges from 4.4% (Luxembourg) to 18.8% (Wallonie)(Tab. 1).

**Tab. 1: GDP and Unemployment Rates in the Greater Region (2004)**

|                           | Saarland | Lorraine | Luxembourg | Rheinland-Pfalz | Wallonie | GR     |
|---------------------------|----------|----------|------------|-----------------|----------|--------|
| <b>GDP per capita (€)</b> | 24,672   | 21,186   | 56,404     | 23,489          | 18,588   | 23,164 |
| <b>Unemployment (%)</b>   | 9.7      | 10.9     | 4.4        | 8.1             | 18.8     | 11.7   |

Source: Statistische Ämter (2006), own calculations

These economic disparities and the traditional relations between the individual regions belonging to the GR as well as the different costs for housing have resulted in intensive commuter traffic across the border of the GR. In no other transboundary region are there as many border crossing commuters as in the Greater Region. 164,200 (2004) commuters cross the borders of the GR daily (Statistische Ämter 2006). These are around 40% of the transboundary commuter of the EU-15! By far the largest flows are directed to Luxembourg (101,200) followed by the flows to the Saarland (43,000). But a high percentage of the commuters going to the Saarland are themselves of Saarland origin. Because of lower housing prices in France, they have moved to communities across the border in the last two decades, but continued to work in the Saarland (cf. Ramm, 1999a; 1999b; Dörrenbächer and Schulz, 1999).<sup>7</sup> When we take a closer look at the transboundary relations in the GR, this seemingly strong integration must be re-interpreted. The cross-boundary flows are mostly limited to a quite narrow corridor along the borders. Thus, more than 70% of the commuters going from Lorraine to Luxembourg in 1999 have their residences not further than 10 km from the Luxembourg border (Mathias, 2003: 6); and approximately 90% of all commuters originating in Lorraine in 2004 live within a distance of less than 20 km from the border (Neis and Guillemet, 2005: 38). Similarly, most of the residences purchased by Germans in Lorraine are located no further than 10-15 km from the German border (cf. Ramm, 1999a; 1999b).

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<sup>7</sup> For more details on transboundary commuting and the labour-market in the GR, see the comprehensive studies conducted by the Interregional Labour-market Observatory and EURES (IBA /OIE 2005; EURES/OIE 2005).

The same is true with regard to cross-border relations in general. The most intensive cooperations as “*Zukunft Saar Moselle Avenir*” (transboundary association of the communities in the Saarbrücken-Forbach-Sarreguemines conurbation) as well as the “*Pôle Européen de Développement*” (PED) in the Longwy district are confined to the communities that are located close to the national borders. And the territories of approximately ten transboundary tourism cooperation projects are also limited to areas close to the respective borders. As expressed by a former director of the Saarland regional planning administration, who was responsible for the transboundary cooperation in the GR, the GR is ballasted with too much territory. Large parts of the GR, which are sometimes located more than 150 km from the next national border, do not and/or cannot generate any transboundary relations not to mention any concern or identification with the transboundary region (cf. Brücher, 2002).

#### 4.2 Innovative Forms of Governance?

There is no doubt that over the last three decades or so, the GR has developed a wide range of organisations for the implementation of intensive executive, legislative, administrative, professional, economic and cultural transboundary cooperation. Nevertheless, the result of these organisational structures is sometimes quite poor with regard to the improvement of conditions in daily life (e.g. harmonization of social insurance systems, improvement of transboundary public transportation) and the development of a common regional identity of its inhabitants. On the basis of a strength and weakness analysis of the most important institutions of the GR (Tab. 2), Gengler (2005, 176) made the following provocative assumptions:

**Tab 2: Strengths and Weaknesses Analysis of Institutions of the Greater Region (after Gengler 2005)**

|           | Regional Commission  | Interregional Parliamentary Council  | Interregional Economic and Social Committee   | Summit of the GR   |
|-----------|--|--|---|--|
| Strengths | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ long tradition (since 1971)</li> <li>▪ composition (high level functionaries, experts)</li> <li>▪ versatility (number of working groups)</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ long tradition (since 1986)</li> <li>▪ number of members (7 per region)</li> <li>▪ a fairly even geographical and political representation</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ mixed composition (employers, unions, public sector, experts)</li> <li>▪ innovative and symbolic character (1st IESC in</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ composition (chief executives)</li> <li>▪ administrative resources (theoretically) existing</li> <li>▪ regularity of the event</li> </ul> |

|            |  |   |  |   |
|------------|--|---|--|---|
|            | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ and subjects)</li> <li>▪ some interesting studies conducted in the last 30 years</li> </ul>   |   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Europe!)</li> <li>▪ IESCs do exist in most of the Greater Region's sub-regions</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ tradition (8 summits until now)</li> <li>▪ strong mediation</li> <li>▪ principle of rotation</li> </ul>  |
| Weaknesses | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ absence of clearly defined directives</li> <li>▪ varying composition (in space and time)</li> <li>▪ language problems</li> <li>▪ uneven competences</li> <li>▪ cumulation of functions</li> <li>▪ (poor) performance of some working groups</li> <li>▪ no budget</li> <li>▪ no common secretary</li> <li>▪ missing coordination</li> <li>▪ plenary sessions style (ritualised)</li> <li>▪ missing visibility of output</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ small competences, i.e. purely consultative</li> <li>▪ no real legislative competence</li> <li>▪ no obligation of result</li> <li>▪ no electoral sanction, no direct election</li> <li>▪ little transparency of the designation of the delegates</li> <li>▪ unstable composition</li> <li>▪ unstable approach rather "national"</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ entities such as IESC do not exist in Germany</li> <li>▪ excessive number of members (72)</li> <li>▪ plenary sessions very inertial</li> <li>▪ too strongly oriented to the summit of the Greater Region</li> <li>▪ rotating presidencies (missing coherence)</li> <li>▪ no obligation of result</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ very uneven competences of members</li> <li>▪ internal rivalries (e.g. Lorraine, Wallonie)</li> <li>▪ diverging interests</li> <li>▪ geographical distances</li> <li>▪ number of delegations</li> <li>▪ agendas too long and complex</li> <li>▪ discussion time too short</li> <li>▪ pre-formulated declarations</li> <li>▪ no permanent office</li> <li>▪ no obligation of result "one</li> <li>▪ avoidance of conflict issues</li> </ul> |

- 1) The principal problem of the GR is an existential one: It does not really exist, i.e. it is nothing but a sample of institutions which are more or less dynamic, successful in taking more or less important decisions which have only more or less tangible results.
- 2) There are too many committees, commissions, councils, working groups etc. They are not equipped with the necessary executive, legislative power and financial resources by the governments of the respective partner regions to complete their mission. Another problem is that there is a lack of mutual information, confidence and trust which hinder a fruitful cooperation.
- 3) The tangible results of the cooperation are too limited. As Gengler (2005, 176) states, the executives of the respective partner regions do not really attach much importance to the declarations and decisions taken by the summits which are prepared and organised, each time, by the region which presides over the GR in a rotating system. The declarations themselves are very often nothing but empty statements.

- 4) The GR has an image problem. The development of a common identity is hampered by the strong internal disparities. Contrary to the position stated in this paper, Gengler does not consider the delimitation and the missing label of the GR as a problem. But it seems very probable that mutual concern and identification is hardly feasible between neighbouring partner regions which are sometimes more than hundred kilometres away from one another.

#### **4.3 A Vision of the Future 2020 – A New Structure of the Greater Region**

Conscious of these institutional weaknesses and the performance problems of the GR, a political commission, which was directed by the former president of the EU commission, Jacques Santer, presented a development strategy for the Greater Region to the 7<sup>th</sup> Summit of the GR in 2003 which was then under the presidency of the Saarland. This “Vision of the Future 2020” (Großregion / Grande Région 2006) not only studied the potentials and risks of the following eight priority issues:

- Culture,
- Education and continuous formation,
- Science and research,
- Economy and employment,
- Social networks,
- Transport and mobility,
- Environment and regional planning,
- Institutional structure.

With regard to the institutional structure, the commission developed a new institutional architecture for the Greater Region (Fig. 5) which clearly differentiates between the following levels:

- consultative
- political
- coordinative
- operative.

Whereas there is no or almost no change with respect to the consultative and political level, the most important and valuable innovation is the planned establishment of a coordinating Secretary of the Interregional Council. The operative level will be strengthened by the establishment of five agencies which will be responsible for the most important policy sectors multilingualism and culture, science and research, tourism and marketing, economy and employment and transports.

This architecture is similar to and recursive with the institutional architecture of the EU, including its Council, Commission and Directorates-general.

#### **4.4 Challenges of the Future**

It seems to be evident that the transboundary Greater Region will become a success story only if the following challenges are mastered:

- 1) The vision of the Future 2020, including its institutional architecture, must be implemented.
- 2) The coordinating and operational institutions of the restructured GR must be equipped with the necessary executive, legislative and administrative powers as well as the necessary financial resources to implement their missions.
- 3) The institutional architecture of the GR has to be adapted to the necessities of the daily transboundary relations.
- 4) There is a strong need to support the evolution of a dynamic identity within the Greater Region not only with regard to the development of the Greater Region itself but also in view of its stabilizing effect under conditions of intensive contingency in a “*glocalised Lebenswelt*”.

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