Chapter 11
The Influence of Regional Identities on Spatial Development: A Challenge for Regional Governance Processes in Cross-Border Regions

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Abstract How do regional identities influence spatial development, and what kinds of barriers do neighbouring identities create to coordinate regional programmes across borders? This paper tries to answer this question, looking at efforts to establish regional planning and development programmes along the Swiss-Austrian border. The cross-border region Alpine Rhine Valley is a meeting point for the cantons of Graubünden and St. Gallen, Switzerland, the Principality of Liechtenstein and the federal state of Vorarlberg, Austria. This work is part of an ongoing research project, based on a series of interviews of local residents in an attempt to determine their regional identities and how they relate to the broader cross-border region. The spatial structure of this area is polycentric: there is no clear central place, but a network of small and medium-sized regional centres has been established. The region shares a common cultural vernacular, but despite long-standing cross-border linkages, it has yet to develop a genuine supranational identity. Until recently, cross-border cooperation was initiated by higher levels of government, rather than municipal levels, and consisted of top-down rather than bottom-up regionalisation. More recently, municipal networks have been created, embracing governments on both sides of the border, leading to greater contacts and greater discussion. Regional identities on both sides of the border remain strong, but the growing number of cross-border planning initiatives and projects organised at the municipal rather than the regional or national level (bottom-up) seems to be slowly fostering the creation of a broader cross-border identity: the concept of the area as one region has come significantly closer, and there is a growing perception of the need to manage and develop this space jointly. However, in many ways, the region remains too large to identify with. Large regions are too far away from everyday issues and therefore barely tangible for the people! Scale makes the difference. Smaller regions are living regions. One conclusion could be that cooperation within regional development issues should focus more on small-scaled regions. People identify more readily with smaller areas and can embrace cross-regional cooperation more readily.

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Introduction

Looking closely at the spatial development of the Austria-Switzerland cross-border region, one can identify an almost "borderless space". The municipalities and small towns have become a single agglomeration. Leaving or entering a new municipality is mostly only recognisable by means of place name signs or passing through the frontier barriers (Vision Rheintal 2010).

Cross-border regions are relevant to problems of European integration and an important spatial category in Europe. In such regions, the interactive effects of administrative, functional, mental and historic barriers have to be considered. In addition, the actors' underlying comprehension of space – as territory, as an interactive system and as a social construct – not only affects their routines but also characterises their actions in cross-border regions (increasing mobility; satisfaction of daily requirements, spread over the whole region, etc.). Borders are no longer merely separating lines. Although the functional importance of national borders in Western Europe is decreasing, their mental and constructed meaning is still a great factor for the success of cross-border regional development.

To face these challenges, several programmes have been initiated in the study area (European Interreg IV programme, Swiss Federal Agglomeration programme or Vision Rheintal). These processes are supported by specialist teams and completed by public participation. The aim of these approaches is to break up the existing hierarchical, top-down structures and introduce a more bottom-up strategy, including a less institutionalised coordination of regional development – closely connected to the paradigm shift from spatial planning to spatial development. A first analysis of these cross-border governance processes at the regional level shows that financial support can be a catalyst for cooperation but also that it needs to be complemented by a number of other factors if sustainable long-term effects are to be achieved. These factors include a certain degree of institutionalisation, social interaction, as well as cooperative attitudes and a common perception of relevant regional development issues. The influence of EU policy and national policy on cross-border development is of great importance, but the local actors follow their own agendas with priorities that are often quite different from those of the superordinate levels (see also Leibenath et al. 2008). Because of that, this paper focuses on how regional identities affect these spatial development processes.

Scope of Research

The research project presented here analyses the structural and institutional conditions needed for constructive cooperation and examines how social factors influence these spatial development processes. Those factors, or soft framework conditions, are subsumed by the term regional identity – describing the intensity of local bonds, spatial orientations and identifications that play a major role for the understanding of the actors' activities and actions and furthermore its influence on governance processes.

At the beginning of the article, I want to start – in addition to a brief presentation of the region – with a discussion about the spatial development processes in the study area in general: How does spatial planning in the subregions work and what is the effect of the border situation? Furthermore, the research interest in this context is the structural conditions of regional identities and how they are related to regional interests – the lived dimension of space. That means, which units in the everyday life of the inhabitants are relevant and how do they experience "their region"? The experienced region is not the same as the "top-down" constructed units as they are defined by stakeholders and politicians, as a study in the Zurich agglomeration has shown (Reutlinger et al. 2010).

The Case Study

The work described in this chapter is based on an ongoing study. To answer the research questions, the field work included the following components:

- An analysis of functional interactions in the region.
- An analysis of regional and national programmes, particularly projects with their main focus on the spatial planning and development of the Alpine Rhine Valley. This was based on participant observation, document analysis, the analysis of the existing planning instruments and qualitative interviews with experts.
- Mental mapping, photo surveys, workshops, and interviews with the inhabitants to get to know "their" region. One special focus was on intergenerational issues and differences between immigrants and natives.

The study is ongoing. Up to now (2012), the qualitative study has been based on 29 guided interviews with local residents from those parts of the Alpine Rhine Valley where the researched cross-border programmes are located. The interviewed people were between 25 and 91 years old. Data were also available from a previous survey on the topic "regional identities of juveniles in the Alpine Rhine Valley"

(conducted 2008) and from a street survey on the topic "the image of the Alpine Rhine Valley" (conducted 2009; 329 questionnaires). The field work for this research took place between August 2009 and April 2010. The interviews include stakeholders and politicians involved in the cross-border programmes; this survey is still in progress and to be extended.

The Alpine Rhine Valley Cross-Border Region

The Alpine Rhine Valley cross-border region is a meeting point for the Swiss cantons of Graubünden and St. Gallen (Switzerland – CH, also SG), the Principality of Liechtenstein (LI) and the federal state of Vorarlberg (Austria – A, also Vlbg). This area has a polycentric settlement system. While a clear centre has always been missing, a network of small- and medium-sized regional centres has been established. The research area is adjacent to dynamic economic areas such as Zurich, Stuttgart and Munich, but also gains some of its character from nearby rural and touristic regions such as the Appenzell Canton or the Bregenzerwald region. Despite early industrialisation (nineteenth century), the valley's settlement structure had a rural character well into the twentieth century (Broggi 2006). During the last few decades, however, changes have occurred in the economic, social and settlement structure. Rural settlement structures have been transformed by urban and suburban expansion.

This transformation can be identified on the basis of the population and employee development in the study area. As can be seen in Fig. 11.1, between 1980 and 2006, there was a population growth of 23 % and a growth of employees of approximately 33 % (Meier 2010). According to forecasts, the population in the region will increase by another 160,000, or 36 %, between 2000 and 2020. Growth on both sides of the border accelerated after 1945, but has been greater on the Austrian side of the border than the Swiss side.

These transformation processes, however, do not proceed in a homogeneous area but in a highly heterogeneous region, which is historically broken up into small districts ("small chambered") and crossed by various borders (Fig. 11.2). Thus, the region can be viewed as a living entity or a mosaic of a variety of economic, geographic, cultural and social interconnections (Obkircher 2008). Additionally, inter- and intra-regional migration leave their marks within the regional social structure. At present, the region faces new challenges within the framework of globalisation and regionalisation. Thus, the Alpine Rhine Valley has to compete with other regions, mainly with the neighbouring large metropolitan areas. Currently, the region is challenged by problems of governing and coordinating regional development in a cross-border context. To successfully implement common initiatives, knowledge about existing intra-regional orientations, perceptions and identities is a necessary prerequisite.

As noted, the settlement structures of the region are merging through a variety of interactions, and it is becoming one living space. This is one of the most important
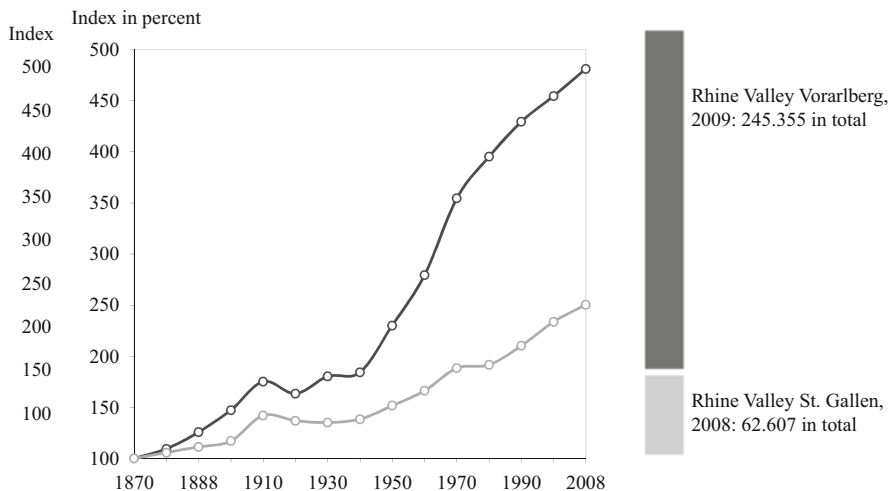
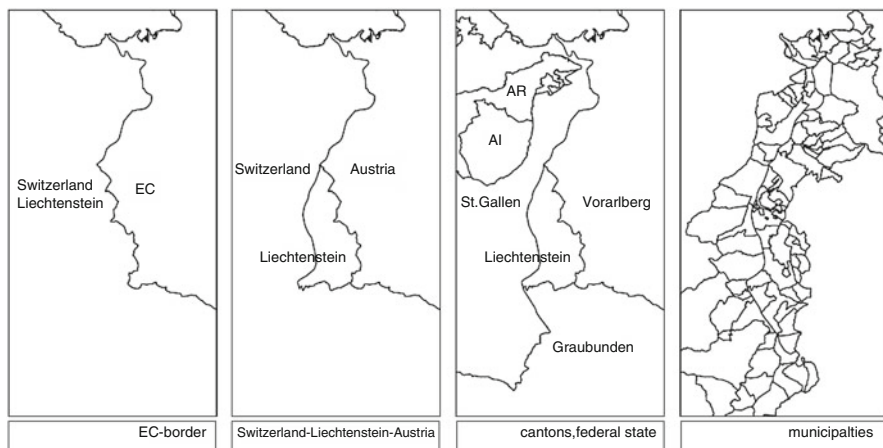**Fig. 11.1** Population development in the Alpine Rhine Valley cross-border region (www. Vorarlberg.at)

Fig. 11.2 The different administrative layers in the Alpine Rhine Valley

push factors in establishing cooperative structures; it is the pressure that "you have to". But although the Alpine Rhine Valley is a geographical unit, in many ways the Alpine Rhine Valley does not yet exist as a sociopolitical entity. As a border region, it is characterised by tension between political boundaries and associated areas of sovereignty on the one hand and closely functional linkages and mutual dependencies on the other hand. Despite the limitations at different hierarchical levels, one

can find strong links between the regions. Neither economic linkages and mutual dependencies nor the action space of the inhabitants stops at border checkpoints. Functional networks in the border region have an impact on the regional self-image. The Alpine Rhine Valley is today in many parts characterised by urban sprawl, by the lack of clear spatial boundaries between provinces and by the lack of large continuous natural areas. The closeness of the intertwined municipalities of the Alpine Rhine Valley is, in everyday life, expressed by the significant number of cross-border commuters (Fritsche and Studer 2007). For example, there are 8,000 commuters from Vorarlberg to Liechtenstein and 7,500 from Vorarlberg to Switzerland (Fig. 11.3). In addition, the whole region is undergoing many changes related to the European integration policy.

In light of these developments, land-use planning in the region faces significant challenges. This is because land use and land-use change in the region are very dynamic. This change is apparent in the expansion of the suburban or "Zwischenstadt" settlement pattern and in the resolution or superposition of suburbs onto traditionally rural-influenced settlement patterns. What is the meaning of Zwischenstadt? Zwischenstadt is a rural city as well as an urbanised landscape. Zwischenstadt can be defined as "diffused city" or "dispersed city". It is neither town nor country, but
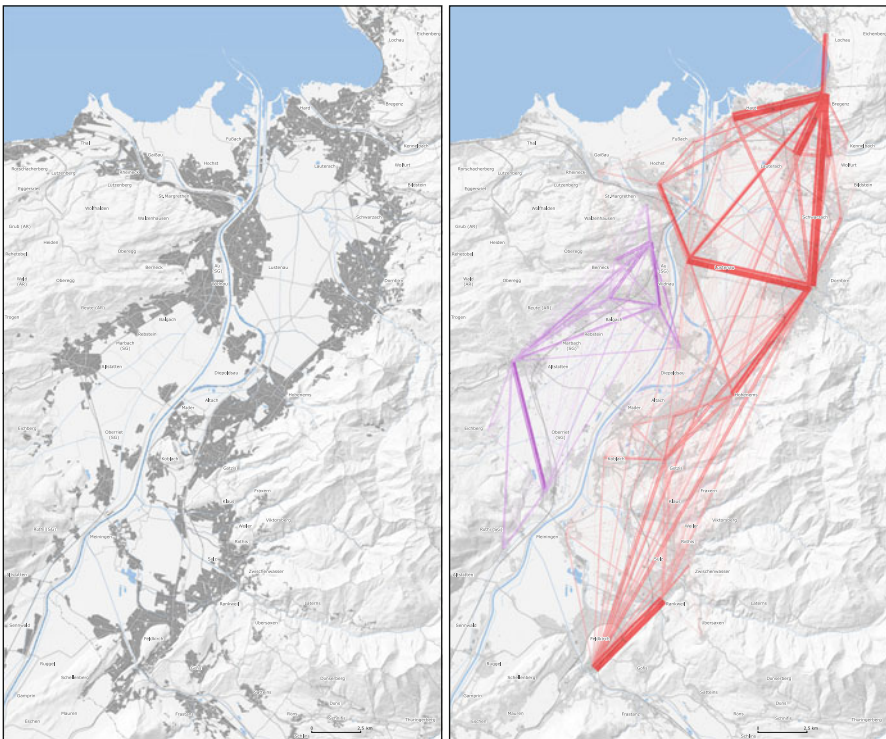

Fig. 11.3 Settlement structure and commuters within the northern part of the Alpine Rhine Valley (St. Gallen Rhine Valley and Vorarlberg Rhine Valley)

possesses characteristics of both (Sieverts et al. 2005). Local area plans in the region also clarify that today about a quarter of the Alpine Rhine Valley is already designated as a settlement area (Broggi 2006). The consequences of further urban sprawl are incalculable and associated with land-use conflicts and a need for high investments in operating and capital costs for public infrastructure (Meier 2010).

Within the European context, this is not a new problem for current spatial development processes in agglomeration areas, but before anything else, the Alpine Rhine Valley cross-border region must learn how to deal with this situation. In the past, inhabitants have been living in the country side. Now they are living in an agglomeration, next to each other – facing problems of their neighbours that are becoming their own problems.

Spatial Development in the Adjacent Subregions

Regional planning level in the canton of St. Gallen is much more regulated than in the federal state of Vorarlberg. The different role and importance attached to spatial planning in the two subregions highlight distinctions in how we can understand spatial planning and planning cultures. Thus, a significant challenge to international cooperation in spatial planning is to first develop a common understanding of the role and tasks expected of land-use planning, as well as its practical constraints, and second to find a constructive approach to deal with the diversity of planning systems and services. Cross-border cooperation must take into account the diversity of stakeholders and planning instruments and be sensitive to different understandings of planning, planning cultures and concepts. This is a major challenge in terms of communication (Meier 2010).

Although one common planning law for the whole region and one common administrative structure dealing with cross-border cooperation seem highly unlikely under the current conditions, the analysed "planning systems" are open to more intense interaction. Therefore, it would be desirable to establish one common vision/guiding principles of regional planning and a common approach to the spatial development of the Alpine Rhine Valley.

Borders and Border Regions: A Spatial Planning Trip from the European Union to the Alpine Rhine Valley

"The Alpine Rhine Valley is a border area that separates and unites. The mobility of people and economic networking on the one hand, and the territoriality of development issues and the (planning) systems on the other hand, create a formative ambivalence" (Meier 2010, 23). Borders often divide regions and areas which are functionally intertwined. For the people in these regions, the borders can act as barriers as well as offer them opportunities, especially through taking advantage of

different framework conditions and imbalances. Borders are reflected in land use and development and are visible, for example, on traffic flows and patterns of settlement development (Meier 2010). This can be observed at all sorts of boundaries, but is particularly evident at national borders. Regions along national borders have received increased attention in Europe in recent decades. A central theme is regional cross-border cooperation, which in turn is closely linked to processes of European unification.

At the European level, it is argued that "Territorial Cohesion can only be achieved through an intensive and continuous dialogue between all actors dealing with territorial development. This process of cooperation can be called territorial governance. The private sector (especially locally and regionally based entrepreneurship), the scientific community, the public sector (especially local and regional authorities), non-governmental organisations, and different sectors need to act together in order to make better use of crucial investments in the European regions and contribute to tackling climate change" (EU Ministers responsible for spatial development 2007, 2).

This meaning of the concept of cross-border regional governance has grown in recent years, not least because it is promoted and required by the European Union. Of particular importance is that the objective of territorial cohesion is determined by the EU treaty of Lisbon: European Territorial Governance is used to interlink (spatial) actors (European Union 2007). For spatial planning issues in the cross-border region "Alpine Rhine Valley", development in the direction of territorial and regional governance is causing a paradigm shift, consisting in particular in the participation of nongovernmental organisations, economic actors and civil society. This paradigm shift is accompanied by the development of a new culture of planning, which aims to change the relationship between planners, stakeholders and inhabitants. It is characterised by the increasing replacement of static, sovereign, technocratic and restorative approaches of spatial planning by dynamic, cooperative, flexible and competitive approaches (Broggi 2007). At the same time, new approaches focus more on the process of spatial developments itself.

Challenges for Cross-Border Governance Processes in the Alpine Rhine Valley

Regional governance is often characterised as weakly institutionalised, consisting more of network-like forms of cooperation among regional actors. It regards regional development as a community task (Jessop 1998). The term governance is not to be confused with Government: "Government" refers to the state institutions and the formal rules and procedures for policy control and management. The value of "governance" approaches can be seen in the light of processes. Therefore, it is important to have a closer look at the controlling and coordinating structures of these processes. In other words, how are spatial development processes in the

Alpine Rhine Valley organised, and how can the nature of the interaction of the regional actors be described?

To an increasing degree, cross-border regions have to meet the challenges of governing and coordinating spatial development processes beyond the national frontiers. Regional governance is a basic concept for acting in a cross-border context (Diller 2005; Gualini 2003). Moreover, since the 1980s, the region as an operational level for spatial development has continually – and mainly in the field of regional development strategies – gained importance (Diller 2005; Pütz 2004; Benz and Fürst 2004). The development of the so-called new regionalism embodies the renewed significance of the regional level (Keating 1998). However, despite the recognisable "revaluation of the regional", regions remain part of a multilevel system. Knowledge about the connections and interplay of the various levels is vital for the implementation of sustainable regional development. Regional governance aims at adjusting decisions at various spatial levels in a way that enables sustainable development. In addition to decentralisation, a structural change of the forms of action, from a horizontal to a vertical structure, is necessary (Diller 2005; Pütz 2004).

Regional governance as a framework or instrument for sustainable regional development processes aims to improve state and communal activities in terms of "services for the region" and share responsibility for developing the region with private industries and civic organisations. In this context, the term "good governance" is relevant (Pütz 2007). Governance processes can cause increasing disharmony with old institutional structures and require at least a minimum of institutionalisation and even new forms of institutionalisation (Fürst 2007; Diller 2005). At the level of spatial development, governance takes on a collective and institutionalised form of regulation within which the actors participate through a formal or informal network (Pütz 2004). In this context, Diller poses the question of how far regional governance replaces or amends traditional political structures (2005). Successful governance processes may be indirectly observed through the establishment of appropriate structures and networks as well as the constellations of actors. Regional governance can only be considered durable if the inhabitants are integrated and a collective spatial reference is established.

Cross-border governance processes, such as territorial cohesion, cooperation and integration, pose challenges. These are included in the concept of "Europeanisation". In the study area, several programmes have been initiated to deal with these challenges. The two programmes analysed for this study are presented in detail below.

After the adoption of the agglomeration policy *Agglomeration Programme Rheintal* in Switzerland in 2001, cooperation among Swiss and Austrian municipalities was launched. The aim was to enable the sustainable development of urban areas and to coordinate cross-departmental themes within those agglomeration areas (according to ARE – Bundesamt für Raumentwicklung 2010). Development must be implemented by the canton and the municipalities of the agglomeration together, and the creation of a cross-border assembly (for cross-border agglomerations such as the Alpine Rhine Valley) is a compelling requirement. The Swiss federal government explicitly welcomed the inclusion of foreign partners in border

regions. The agglomeration programme is a prerequisite for possible co-financing of spatial planning projects from Swiss federal infrastructure funds. The project is coordinated by an internal regional manager. It is based on the following guiding slogan: "One living space (Swiss and Austrian Rhine Valley), cross-regional cooperation, river Rhine as a connecting element, networked polycentric region, regional awareness and identification".

In 2004, the Austrian federal state of Vorarlberg launched the project *Vision Rheintal* (Vision Rheintal 2010), a regional development process which is shared among the federal state and its municipalities (Austrian municipalities). The aim is to break down existing hierarchical structures. In a two-year participative process, a mission statement for spatial development and regional cooperation was developed. At the end of this phase, the state and the municipalities strengthened their joint responsibility for the region by signing the *Rhine Valley Contract*.

In this context, the regional assembly is an important instrument for dealing with regional issues. Once or twice a year, the members of the state government, the members of the state parliament and the mayors of 29 municipalities meet to discuss the latest results of implementation and to advise on the next steps. The project is coordinated by an internal and an external regional manager. The aim of this compact or project is to create a networked polycentric region, promote cooperation within the region, promote cross-border cooperation and create an interconnected living space, foster and enhance a regional awareness and regional identity.

Regional Identity in the Adjacent Subregions

In the context of regional development processes in the Alpine Rhine Valley region, especially those with cross-border characteristics, the importance of regional identities is stressed. On the one hand, the target is to strengthen common identities, and on the other hand, a regional identity is supposed to be an essential catalyst for undertaking joint actions within the (border) region.

In Alpine Rhine Valley cross-border region, the varying spatial orientations, perceptions and thus regional identities are of great importance in everyday life and economic life. They strongly affect the chances of implementing sustainable regional development. However, little information exists as to how regional identity and orientation patterns in the Alpine Rhine Valley vary and about the factors by which they are influenced or altered. As well, there is less information about how regional identities are constituted and how they influence regional development processes in the cross-border region. Until now, these issues have not been considered in political and planning decisions within the Alpine Rhine Valley. Nevertheless, a stronger consideration of these topics is a prerequisite for improving the acceptance and chances of implementing realisable development concepts not only at the local and regional levels but also in cross-border contexts.

What is Regional Identity?

This work is based on a three-dimensional understanding of space as a territory, as an interactive system and as a social construct (Reutlinger et al. 2010). But what does this mean? Space as a social construct is understood as a relational space, which is established through a (common) regional identity. This view treats the region as a product of interactions and perceptions (Löw 2001; Läpple 1991), where the physical environment and regulative aspects, like national laws, have to be considered. This constructed space manifests itself in a common culture and common attitudes and approaches. The image of the region is the communicated symbol of it.

What is regional identity? In times of social heterogeneity and a diversification of lifestyles, the region has the potential to be an adequate scale for action and an appropriate anchor for social relations (Reutlinger et al. 2010). Regional awareness and regional identity are discussed in social geography from different angles. Among other things, this includes what Blotevogel et al. (1989) have described as "die Gesamtheit raumbezogener Einstellungen und Identifikationen, fokussiert auf eine mittlere Maßstabsebene" (the totality of spatial attitudes and identifications, focused on a medium-scale level). In this concept, regional identity has an affective dimension. Regional identity depends on the intensity of bonds, spatial distances and social differentiation. This understanding of regional identity is, however, a priori reduced to one-dimensional, spatial conditions. Sociocultural issues, such as communication and other social activities, can hardly be taken into account. Furthermore, this attempt to locate regional identities in a territorial space risks the problematic consequence of a generalisation of the social world within a territorial cutout. One example is the commonly held view that the inhabitants of the Alpine Rhine Valley are reticent and unapproachable. Therefore, the geographer Gerhard Hard suggests that we approach regional identity not through the abstraction of space but on substantive characteristics (1987). In other words, the challenge is not to extrapolate a regional identity from the region but rather to extrapolate from the regional identity to the region – to allow the regional identity or identities to define the region. "Der Raum, auf den sich Regionalbewusstsein bezieht, ist nur dessen Symbol, aber nicht dessen Inhalt" (the space which is the subject of regional awareness is merely a symbol of the actual components which make that space) (Bahrenberg 1987, 150). Using this framework, the "region" becomes a socially constructed region, and regional identity is readable as part of social processes. "Regional identity is, in a way, an interpretation of the process through which a region becomes institutionalised, a process consisting of the production of territorial boundaries, symbolism and institutions" (Paasi 2003, 478).

However, the importance of the physical-material environment in establishing regional identities must not be entirely ignored. For example, the intensity and quality of identification with a region is related to interaction within the physical area of people's own spaces of action. This is based on localisation which does not per se equate with regional identity. The objectively existing, "real" region is affectively

connected with pictures and symbols: dialect, emotion, sound, etc. "Mit jeder Ortsbezeichnung werden nicht nur Lage- und Sachinformationen, sondern in der Regel auch Wertzuschreibungen, Emotionen und Präferenzurteile assoziiert" (each name of a place is not only associated with its position and factual information but usually also with the value given to it, emotion and preference ratings) (Weichhart 1992, 43). These physical and material structures serve as a kind of carrier of social messages and thus constitute a fundamental feature in the construction of regional identities. Conversely, if political-administrative or functional boundaries limit the experiences, actions and social relations of people, the physical structure of places and regions cannot act as a carrier. This becomes obvious in border regions, where the boundaries of a regional identity, however, it is constructed, overlap with national borders. Often, an identifying relationship with the neighbouring region hardly exists (Obkircher 2010).

Regional identity can give people a perception of stability and security. The concept of *creating regional identity* is relevant here. Similar to the concept of "alltägliches Geographie-Machen" (Werlen 1997), where ongoing human interactions constantly (re)create our geographical space, it is necessary to promote the symbolisation "hidden" behind the geographical cutouts and to connect it with a more active understanding of identity. Shared everyday experiences and actions can support the development of common regional identities. Social relations within places of action help to create a regional identity around these places and regions (Nohl 2006).

Stakeholders and Their Perception of the Region

To illustrate the characteristics of regional identities in the context of the Alpine Rhine Valley, I want to outline two explorative examples: first, the perception of responsible stakeholders and politicians, and second, the regional identity and regional awareness of young people in the region.

The *mental map of the stakeholders from the federal state of Vorarlberg* has a clear pole, Lake Constance (see Fig. 10.3; illustrated as a star). In addition, the river Rhine is more or less perceived as a constraint on intra-regional interaction and as a borderline. Accordingly, the stakeholders in Vorarlberg refer almost exclusively to their own state, from their point of view in the valley, while the neighbouring country is largely unknown (Sauter et al. 2002).

The *mental map of the stakeholders from the canton of St. Gallen* shows, however, a weaker perception of the border compared to the Vorarlberg point of view. Although the St. Gallen Rhine Valley region is most familiar, the neighbouring sub-region Vorarlberg Rhine Valley is known as well. The city of St. Gallen (which is outside of the Alpine Rhine Valley) and Lake Constance form two important poles; the connecting axis (see Fig. 11.4; the city and the lake are illustrated as a star) is an important element of their mental map (representing Sauter et al. 2002).

"Die in unseren Köpfen fragmentierte Landkarte des Alpenrheintals erschwert die Kooperation über Grenzen hinweg: weiße Flecken auf unserer mentalen
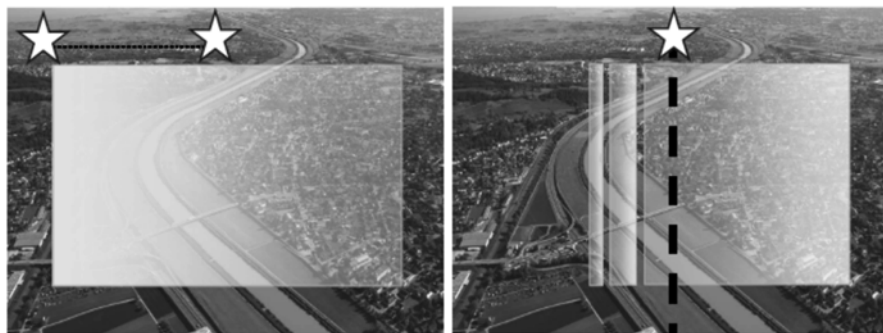
Fig. 11.4 Mental maps of stakeholders and politicians (*left* = Swiss, *right* = Austrian)

Landkarte lassen uns gemeinsame Chancen nur undeutlich erkennen" (the fragmented mental map of the Alpine Rhine Valley complicates cooperation across boundaries: white spots on our mental map allow us to only vaguely recognise common opportunities and potentials) (Sauter et al. 2002, 11). It is of great importance to keep in mind such differences in the perception of the region and borders if cross-border cooperation, especially in the field of spatial planning, is to be realised in the near future.

This leaves one question unacknowledged: To what extent are the regional identities and mental maps of the inhabitants similar or different? This is all the more relevant for future cooperative projects. On the basis of these investigations, we can determine if the Alpine Rhine Valley and its subregions are viewed as a unified territory within people's perception and awareness or if the region is just a planning division (top-down constructed).

Perceptions of the People Living in the Alpine Rhine Valley

Below, in Figs. 11.5 and 11.6, I show how people perceive "their region", using some examples from the photo survey. Of course, their perception is not about the objects shown on the pictures but about the symbolism, the social meaning and the content of these pictures. This information was supplemented through additional interviews. Social life in the analysed border region corresponds neither to the image of the more socially distant neighbourhood conditions of a city, perhaps described as "anonymous co-existence", nor to the image of close interpersonal relations – "they know each other" – in the countryside (see also Fig. 11.5; showing the Zwischenstadt). Important personal relationships are less and less localised within the immediate surroundings, and the network of personal relationships is spatially dispersed (see also Reutlinger et al. 2010).

This can be seen in looking at the mental maps of juveniles. The *mental map of Swiss juveniles* is different to the *mental map of Austrian juveniles*. Swiss juveniles

Fig. 11.5 Symbolisation of the Alpine Rhine Valley (Compiled by author)

Fig. 11.6 Mental Maps of juveniles (*left* = Swiss, *right* = Austrian; results from the survey 2007)

perceive the state-border as weaker and describe favourite places and highlights in the neighbouring subregion (see Fig. 11.6; the cities of Dornbirn and Hohenems have an important function – illustrated as a star). Austrian juveniles have a strong connection to the Vorarlberger Rhine Valley, but their Swiss neighbours are hardly known. The official language in the Swiss Alpine Rhine Valley and the Austrian Rhine Valley is German, but the Swiss dialect is different from the Austrian dialect. Although the juveniles are aware of this, it does not affect the formation of a common regional identity. However, one important inhibiting issue is the lack of information about the other side of the border.

Nevertheless, the valley is to some extent still seen and perceived differently, depending on the origin of those interviewed. For instance, political boundaries and conditions such as access to recreational areas and historical roots play important roles. These alignments and connections are not static but subject to change, especially due to political and infrastructural developments.

Effects on the Spatial Development Processes

There is evidence of significant functional interaction in this cross-border region. Settlements are merging, and a polycentric settlement structure is visible. There is also evidence that some regional identities go beyond the borders of municipalities and (in Switzerland) cantons and even extend across the river Rhine (the border between Austria and Switzerland; the EU-border). But cooperation within this region still does not seem to be successful and long-lasting. The failure to achieve successful cooperation raises several questions. Are alternative approaches to regional development needed, and if so, why? Have regional governance processes already been established in the region? Is there any evidence of bottom-up processes? Finally, in what way do regional identities influence the governance of regional developments in cross-border regions? In other words: What is the importance of regional identities for the success of regional development processes?

Spatial planning depends on information, which "..…Wirklichkeiten beinhalten, um angemessene zukünftige Möglichkeiten zu erschliessen und kreativ zu verwirklichen" (examines realities in order to appreciate appropriate future opportunities and creatively develop them) (Breckner 2006, 440). These realities – those lived and perceived, in everyday life – are in turn crucial when attempting to draw conclusions on the development and construction of regional identities in the Alpine Rhine Valley region and thus to understand and assess the impact of identities on regional development. "Soft factors" such as personal emotional ties to a region and existing social relations, as shown in the border region of the Alpine Rhine Valley, may constitute an important basis in this context.

First Conclusions

The results of the research in the Alpine Rhine Valley are based on those surveys of the cross-border spatial development processes analysed so far.

The Alpine Rhine Valley is an ideal study area. As has been demonstrated, many small-scale political units meet and overlap in this region. Pilot studies have revealed the complexity of the spatial references (Obkircher 2008; Meier 2010). Within the Alpine Rhine Valley, there is a diverse network of cooperation between (space relevant) actors. Nevertheless, there is a great need for improvement because those networks and existing attempts at cooperation cannot yet resolve conflicts nor "hit

the hot topics" due to their largely informal and under-institutionalised structures. On the other hand, neither formalised, cross-border institutions nor institutionalised projects in the Alpine Rhine Valley are able to develop common regional strategies. They are too often held back by their own administrative structures, by competitive factors and, especially, by different regional perceptions and awarenesses (in other words regional identities).

One side product of analysing regional identities is that one can visualise the symbols, or in other words the *unique selling points* of a region, which in this case is a "spongy Zwischenstadt". The Alpine Rhine Valley is neither town nor countryside, but still special in the perception of the inhabitants. The defining characteristics of the Alpine Rhine Valley listed by respondents were similar, regardless of age, location on either side of the border or immigrant background.

The range of institutional structures and cross-border projects in the Alpine Rhine Valley is large. They cover different administrative levels (local, regional and national) as well as diverse geographic units. Although only a few institutional structures are directly connected to spatial planning, many deal indirectly with space-related issues and therefore complement the range of cross-border cooperation in the field of the spatial development of the Alpine Rhine Valley (Meier 2010). In general, the perceived motives for cooperation are funding or a relative level of disadvantage. However, the long-term reliability of these as motivating factors in regional cooperation is questionable. In this context, all projects concerning the Alpine Rhine itself are particularly important for cross-border cooperation in the region. The motivation is unique: the River is a "vital line" and of great importance to a common identity. Thus, it is easier to start programmes regarding the reduction of hazard risk or water supply.

The cross-border concept of regional governance may be understood as consisting of ways to reach an inward consensus and an outwardly competitive orientation. This is important, because regional differences in the Alpine Rhine Valley are usually found in institutional and administrative structures and less in topographic or economic disparities.

Current regional governance processes are especially influenced by their respective administrative systems (St. Gallen and Vorarlberg). Legislation in both countries allows only a limited amount of self-organisation (e.g. bottom-up organisation and participation) within regional development processes. Public administrations and institutions influence the implementation of cross-border spatial planning. They can serve as a basis for understanding the "imprinting pattern" of the region.

This can be seen in the projects which were examined in the region. Austrian project partners are from the region itself, while Swiss project partners are external. Therefore, different priorities can be seen as a consequence of different regional affiliations. These differences obstruct everyday work. To guarantee a successful regional partnership, at least one project partner per county should come from the region. This will ensure that goals better reflect local priorities and ensure that any actions are more robust.

Individual and exceptional relationships between stakeholders define cooperation and networks in the Alpine Rhine Valley. This implies the need for appropriate

financial and political support for these "region-makers". Region-makers can be understood as being people who are to a great extent committed to the needs of the region and understand this task due to an often exceptional cross-border regional identity without regard to either side of the Rhine.

Of course, it should be noted that not every project can be self-organised or self-governed. There are limits. The reason is a limited knowledge of the factors which affect the cross-border region Alpine Rhine Valley and the fundamental desire to protect one's own subregion. Programmes such as "Vision Rheintal" or the "Agglomeration Programme Rheintal" can reduce these barriers and build up a common regional awareness and possibly a common regional identity. According to our findings, they already do so.

The broad participation of stakeholders and inhabitants is a central pillar of these new forms of governance for regional development. The ability to act depends on the diverse actors of regional development in the Alpine Rhine Valley and in particular on the quality of participatory approaches. There are three requirements. The first is that there must be an open design process: it is not just about approval procedures and master plans. Collaborative tools such as regional conferences can be helpful for developing new, creative solutions.

The second is that the region must be established or given more powers as a spatial unit with the ability to act on its own, without recourse to a higher level of government. However, regions must not become institutionalised units and just another level of government. It is important to preserve institutional flexibility so as to adapt to ongoing spatial development processes; otherwise, the regional level becomes just another administrative unit, creating just another kind of segregation.

The third is that the perceived, mental space of inhabitants must be taken into account. In other words, the regional identities of the inhabitants must be recognised. If you can identify yourself with your region, you will be more willing to take responsibility for it. This is a crucial factor in regional governance which determines the ability of the region to act as a region. Regional identities are an essential catalyst for activating (border) regions.

To underline this hypothesis, I want to refer to the following insight. Spatial planning projects in the St. Gallen Alpine Rhine Valley have a strong quality of codetermination. People can decide on the project contents, but in Switzerland, participation during the creation and design phase of projects is lacking. That means participation is viewed as part of the decision process (e.g. information meeting, referendum). The planning process is not based on a two-way discussion or consultation. By contrast, in Vorarlberg, participation is more like a process of creating choice (e.g. the Wisdom Council). The Vision Rheintal process, for example, is considered a best practice example – "citizens plan their region". This promotes trust and responsibility for the region and helps create a core spirit which helps create and strengthen regional identities.

Finally, according to the initial research results, *regional identities relate to regional governance processes* in different ways.

Firstly, prior information about "the mood or atmosphere within the region" helps to adjust the methods of participation and can greatly simplify efforts to

promote engagement. For example, at the beginning of a policy-making process, planners can identify historical conflicts between municipalities which still influence the recent regional identity of the inhabitants and which may affect the success of an ongoing project.

Furthermore, the research results suggest that a region's capability for action is limited by the size of the region itself. Successful regions relate less to territorial or functional areas, but rather to a socially constructed cognitive space. The whole Alpine Rhine Valley is too large to identify with. It is too far away from "everyday issues" and therefore hardly tangible for the people!

A "region" on a map is not necessarily a region in the minds of residents or in a cultural, economic or even political sense. Size makes a difference. Large regions can be too diverse, but smaller ones can become a living region. One conclusion could be that cooperation within regional development issues should focus more on small-scaled regions. Within those regions, the inhabitants have the identification required to make a true region. This increases the chance of implementing cooperative projects, particularly when it comes to sensitive issues, such as merging public services such as schools or nursing services.

Looking at the results to date, it appears that within the study area, the concept of the "region" has come significantly close to embracing the Rhine Valley as one living space, and there is a growing perception of the need to manage and develop this space jointly. Furthermore, local residents' identification with the broader region has increased as border crossings and regional cooperation have grown. Various interlinked cross-border projects have been initiated or are currently in the starting blocks. However, there will certainly be challenges in the future, including the question of the nature and strength of regional identity.

To conclude, I want to thank Josiane Meier for a professional exchange and for the opportunity to review and share her research results. In her research, she is analysing spatial planning structures in the cross-border region Alpine Rhine Valley. Her findings have provided valuable additions and new perspectives for my own research. In addition, it should be noted that the results presented in this chapter are only a preliminary insight. Further evaluation is needed.

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