

**EXPERIENCE FROM GREATER REGION
WORKSHOP //**

ESPON tool for mapping soft territorial cooperation areas and initiatives

Monitoring and Tools // January 2022

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Disclaimer

The information contained herein is subject to change and does not commit the ESPON EGTC and the countries participating in the ESPON 2020 Cooperation Programme.

The final version of the report will be published as soon as approved.

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1 The Greater Region

The Greater Region lies at the crossroads of the rivers Rhine, Saar, Meuse and Moselle. It covers 65.401 km² with more than 11.6 million inhabitants from the territories Lorraine in the French region Grand Est, Wallonia, the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and Ostbelgien in Belgium, Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate in Germany as well as the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg.

The concept of the Greater Region has its origins in the intergovernmental commission set up by Germany and France in 1969. Two years later, the Grand Duchy of Luxembourg joined the commission, followed by the German federal states Saarland and Rhineland-Palatinate, the French region Lorraine as well as the Federation Wallonia-Brussels and the German-speaking Community of Belgium. Over the years the member countries established an institutional framework for cross-border cooperation. In 1995, the first Summit of the Executives of the Greater Region took place in Mondorf-les-Bains (LU).

25 Greater Region authorities, research organisations and cooperation networks have jointly elaborated a Territorial Development Scheme for the Greater Region (Schéma de Développement Territorial pour la Grande Région SDTGR / Raumentwicklungskonzept der Großregion REKGR) since January 2018¹. This process has been co-funded by the Interreg V Greater Region Programme. The project has elaborated syntheses of challenges and opportunities in five broad thematic fields: demographic change, flows of persons and goods, economic development, environment and energy and transversal challenges. On this basis, an operational cross-border strategy for the Greater Region has been elaborated. A central component of this strategy is the definition of three scales of cooperation:

- The Greater Region as a whole, e.g. for cooperation in the fields of higher education and research and development and when it comes to positioning the Greater Region as a competitive territory in Europe and beyond;
- The metropolitan region around Luxembourg, with its major cross-border functional relations and interdependencies;
- Cross-border functional proximity territories, whose challenges and opportunities may be addressed through joint strategies and measures or individual bilateral or trilateral agreements.

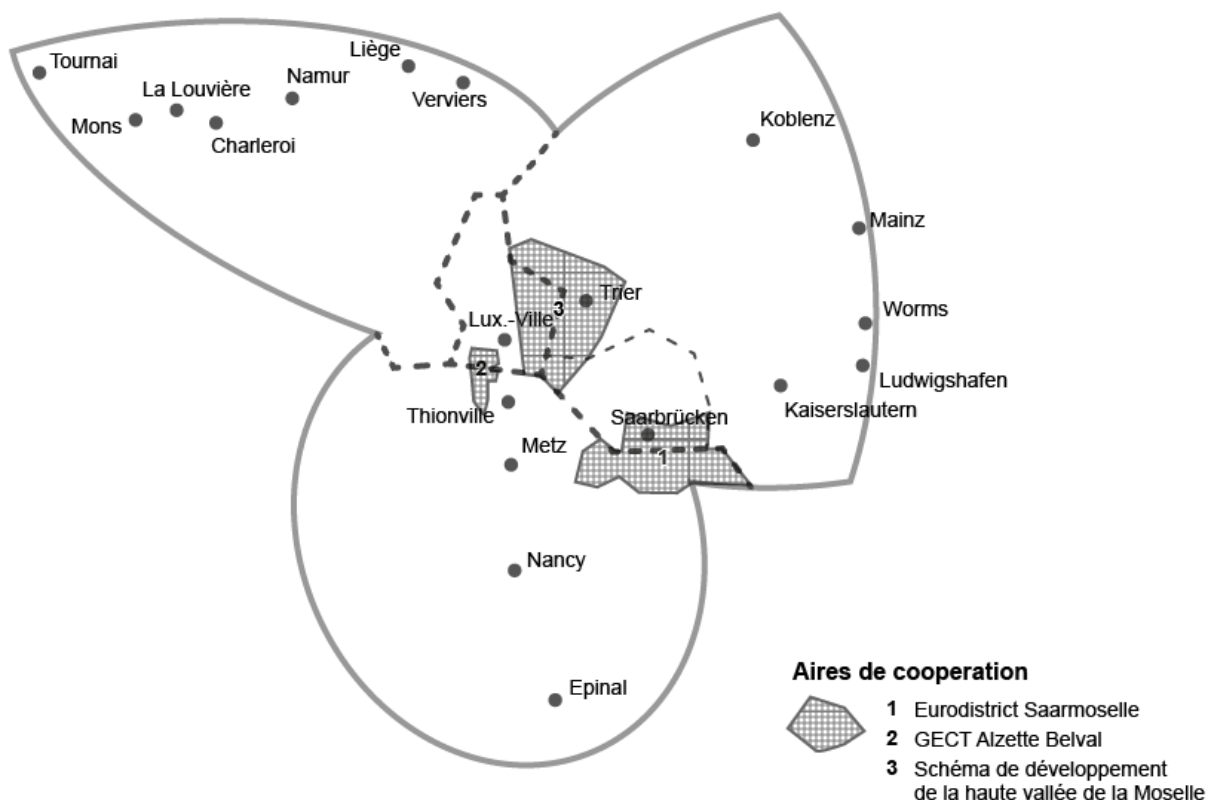
Currently, integrated territorial development strategies have been implemented for three Cross-border functional proximity territories, as shown in Figure 1. The elaboration of such strategies are envisaged for other areas:

- Rural functional area consisting of the Luxembourg nature parks of Our and Mëllerdall with the Naturpark Südeifel (RLP-LU)

¹ <https://amenagement-territoire.public.lu/fr/grande-region-affaires-transfrontalieres/SDT-GR.html>

- Functional areas on the border between Wallonia and Luxembourg (Arlon (WAL) and Steinfort (LU), Haute-Sûre (LU) and Haute-Sûre Forêt d'Anlier (WAL) nature parks)
- Cross-border area around the European Archaeological Park of Bliesbruck-Reinheim (SAR-LOR)
- Rural functional area in the border triangle "Eifel-Ostbelgien-Eislek" (LU-WAL/DG-RLP).

Figure 1 The Greater Region and current integrated territorial development initiatives at the level of cross-border functional areas



2 Workshop organisation

The workshop was organised on 17th January 2022 as a virtual bilingual event, with simultaneous translation. Participants were subdivided in three groups (respectively French, German and bilingual) (see Table 1). Each group facilitator shared his screen and drew inputs based on instructions from participants.

The workshop lasted three hours, with one short break. It had been foreseen that group work would last one hour. This proved too short, considering the wide range of subjects to be covered. As group work

lasted 90 minutes, the comparison of inputs from the different groups was more succinct than planned, and the summary of a specific component using the “consensus” tool could not be carried out.

Table 1 Participants and groups

Erik Gløersen (Spatial Foresight - Facilitator)
Laurence Ball (Euregio SaarLorLux)
Pascale Fouchs (Wallonie Region - BE)
Thierry Hengen (DATer -LU)
Benoit Leplomb (Grand Est Region - FR)
Pierre Mertz (Meuse Département - FR)

Sebastian Hans (Spatial Foresight - Facilitator)
Etienne Muller (Grand Est Region - FR)
Aude Perrot (Meuse Département - FR)
Alexandre Petit (IDELUX - BE)
Lucyna Zalas (Ostbelgien Region - FR)
Christine Zöllner (Grand Est Region - FR)
Remziye Yilmaz (ESPON Contact Point - LU)

Frederick-Christoph (DATer - Facilitator)
Sabine Kratz (Rhineland Palatinate - DE)
Cordula Schieferstein (Rhineland Palatinate - DE)
Holger Wienecke (Rhineland Palatinate - DE)
Heribert Grill (Saarland - DE)

Table 2 Workshop agenda

Start	End	Format	Content	Person(s) responsible
09h00	09h05	Plenary	Welcome message	Marie-Josée Vidal (MJV)
09h05	09h30	Plenary	Introduction to the application and the workshop.	Erik Gløersen (EG)
09h30	10h30	Groups	Work in groups	Group moderators
10h30	11h00	Plenary	Each group presents its results (5-10 minutes each), exchanges and reflections on the different representations of the Greater Region	Group moderators
11:00 - 11:10 Break				

Start	End	Format	Content	Person(s) responsible
11h10	11h30	Plenary	Example of a summary of a component of the Greater Region's simplified scheme	EG
11h30	12h00	Plenary	Part 3: Exchange on the usefulness of the proposed method and its possible future applications.	MJV and EG

3 Workshop objective, starting point and questions

The objective of the workshop was to help territorialising the strategic axes and priorities of the Territorial Development Scheme for the Greater Region (SDTGR/REKGR), focusing more particularly on the local cross-border functional spaces.

Group discussions were organised in two main parts:

- **Part 1 - General organisation of the cross-border area.**

The aim of this stage was to familiarise the participants with the tool through a some simple questions. It lays the foundations for the next two parts by identifying urban centres that structure the cooperation area, areas under urban influence and the most important urban hubs and main transport axes.

- **Part 2 - Identification of local cross-border functional spaces.**

Exchanges focused on 4 types of functional interdependencies:

- Related to the labour market and commuting;
- Related to the consumption of material goods and services, including leisure;
- Related to services of general interest (e.g. health, education, energy, water and supply);
- Related to the protection of natural areas.

The was followed by exchanges on the usefulness of the proposed method and its possible future applications third part In the plenary.

Questions submitted to participants for parts 1 and 2 are detailed below.

3.1 Part 1 - General organisation of the cross-border area

Urban centres

Question asked: Do the urban centres shown on the map accurately reflect your perception of the urban fabric of the wider region? Would you add more centres?

Urban polarisation

Question asked: Can you distinguish between areas that are highly polarised by urban centres and other areas that are less polarised?

Identification of structuring urban centres for the Greater Region

Question asked: What are the urban centres around which the development of the Greater Region is organised?

Priority axes

Questions asked:

From the point of view of cross-border integration in the Greater Region, where are the priority axes?

- for the development of public transport?
- for the development of individual transport?
- for the development of freight transport?

Where are the main bottlenecks (congested roads, stations, hubs or railways)?

3.2 Part 2 - Identification of local cross-border functional spaces

The labour market

Question asked: How would you delimit the main cross-border labour market areas in the Greater Region?

Identify each area with a numbered sticker. Name and describe each area in the legend.

Consumption

Question asked: How would you delimit the main cross-border functional spaces related to consumption? For example, these could be commercial venues with a cross-border catchment area and leisure services for cross-border customers.

Identify each area with a numbered sticker. Name and describe each area in the legend.

Services of general interest

Question asked: How would you delimit the main cross-border functional spaces of proximity related to the provision of services of general interest? For example, these could be health services, transport, water and sanitation, communication, energy supply, etc.

Identify each area with a numbered sticker. Name and describe each area in the legend.

Protection of natural areas and preservation of natural resources

Question asked: How would you delimit the main cross-border functional spaces related to the protection of natural spaces and/or the preservation of natural resources in the Greater Region? These could be, for example, natural habitats and cross-border eco-corridors, as well as coordinated approaches to protection, preservation or enhancement.

Identify each area with a numbered sticker. Name and describe each area in the legend.

4 Experience with the use of the tool and possible improvements

4.1 Feedback on the use of the tool

The project team collected feedback from the participant during the last part of the workshop and through an online survey, to which eight participants responded.

The feedback was generally very positive on the general organisation of the workshop (Figure 2) and on the explanations provided (Figure 3). Participants also thought exchanges within the working groups were interesting (see Figure 4). They were less satisfied with comparisons between working groups, for two main reasons:

- These exchanges were hurried and superficial as a result of the longer time needed for group discussions (see Figure 5). The workshop programme proved over-ambitious considering the time available (three hours). In-depth exchanges on the broad range of themes considered would have required a full day workshop, if not more.
- Group facilitators had not understood all questions exactly in the same way, e.g. when it comes to whether participants should reply for the Greater Region as a whole, or considering their home region.

Appreciations of the user-friendliness of the web application were positive, as 6 out of 8 participants graded this aspect 5 or 6. Participant feedback (see Text Box 1) suggests that participants would have preferred to draw inputs directly. This can be done by using the “remote control” functionality of Zoom. One participant suggests that the web application is “not very attractive and communicative” and considers it “very technical”.

Facilitators reported that some groups did not consider themselves legitimate or knowledgeable enough to draw features in all parts of the Greater Region. This is partly a result of the fact that two out of three groups were monolingual, due to limited available resources for interpretation. In future workshops, it seems important to establish groups that would be as mixed as possible, e.g. by encouraging participants that can communicate in multiple languages to engage in group discussions that are not in their mother tongue.

Some participants also considered that drawing tools offered too limited options. For example, they would have liked to be able to differentiate between different modes of public transportation, or represent flows of consumers using arrows. Guidance documents for the ESPON ACTAREA web app will therefore encourage facilitators to find the right balance between limiting options of drawing tools to make outputs comparable, and offering sufficient flexibility to allow participants to represent the features and geographic patterns they think are important.

Overall, participants insist on the added value of comparing perceptions, and on the complementarity of such exchanges with expert-produced maps.

Text Box 1 Participant feedback – general assessments

Participant 1

The exercise is interesting to engage a dialogue between partners in a rather quick, neutral and non-confrontational way. The cartographic tool does not allow for all the options usually used, so this limits and slows down the representations which are determined within a given spatial framework.

There was no real time for exchanges between the different groups but rather a quick presentation of each group's representation due to lack of time. The instructions were not understood in the same way by all the groups.

Participant 2

The virtual Workshop very well organised, good group dynamics even if not the same level of knowledge of the participants and therefore not the same understanding of the questions

Comparison of contributions a bit quick and little time left for justifications by the groups

The application is not very attractive in terms of graphics and visual identity (very technical and not very attractive and communicative, e.g. in the colours), even if it is a rather technical tool to help facilitate groups

Participant 3

The participative element of the tool is very interesting for a virtual meeting. We were able to see all the possibilities that the tool offers. It allows us to report on our perceptions as actors and it is always very interesting to compare the perceptions of actors with a hands-on experience of local and regional realities with statistical and cartographic documents produced in a scientific manner. This greatly enriches knowledge and recommendations for territorial development.

Participant 4

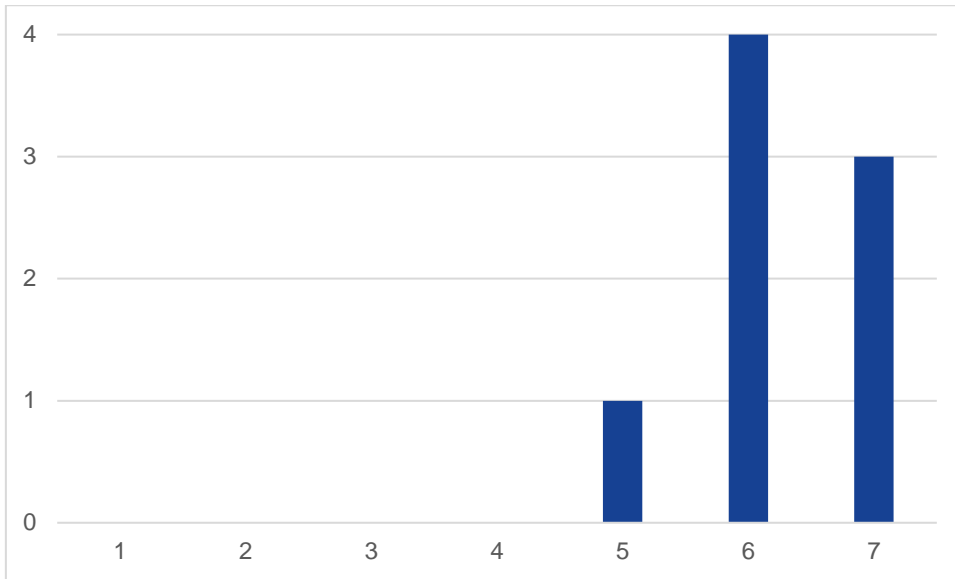
Drawing from verbal cues is difficult for the facilitator. It would have been easier if users could draw themselves.

The results of the 3 groups were not comparable at the end, because the composition of the teams and the preparation for the content-related question was not optimal. But it was still fun...

Participant 5

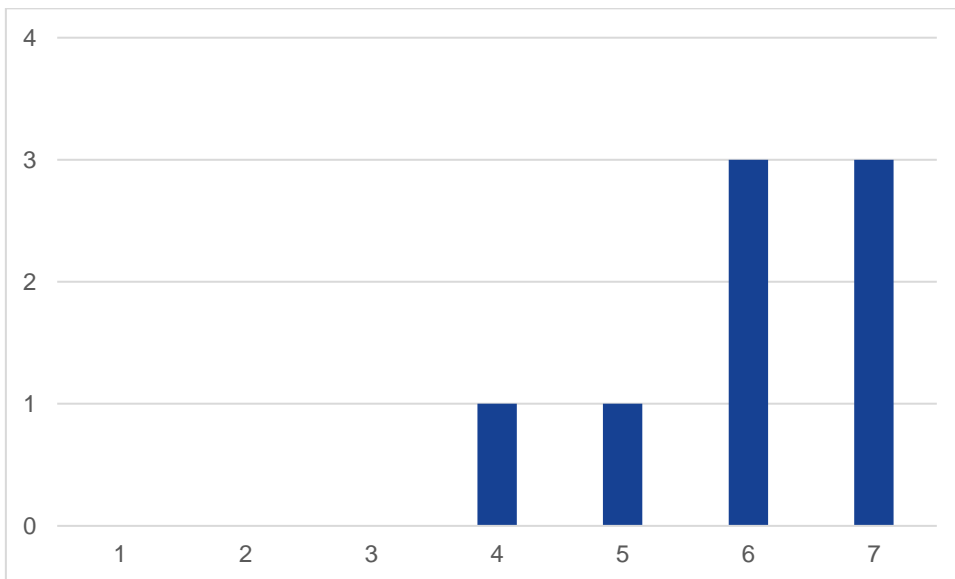
Understandable introduction and explanation; good organisation of the workshop, but it would have been good if the participants had also been given the opportunity to try out the tool; the application is a great tool to visualise one's concerns in a discussion on a spatial topic --> especially advantageous if participants are present who are not familiar with the space at stake or with spatial planning in general and for whom spatial planning concerns/discussions are often very abstract (I am thinking in particular of political decision-makers); disadvantage is: the larger the space that can be covered in the app, the more imprecise and rudimentary the drawings can only be made. So it can really only be used for (rough) illustration, it does not replace validated maps in any case (but it is certainly not intended to do so!).

Figure 2 Appreciation of the general organisation of the workshop



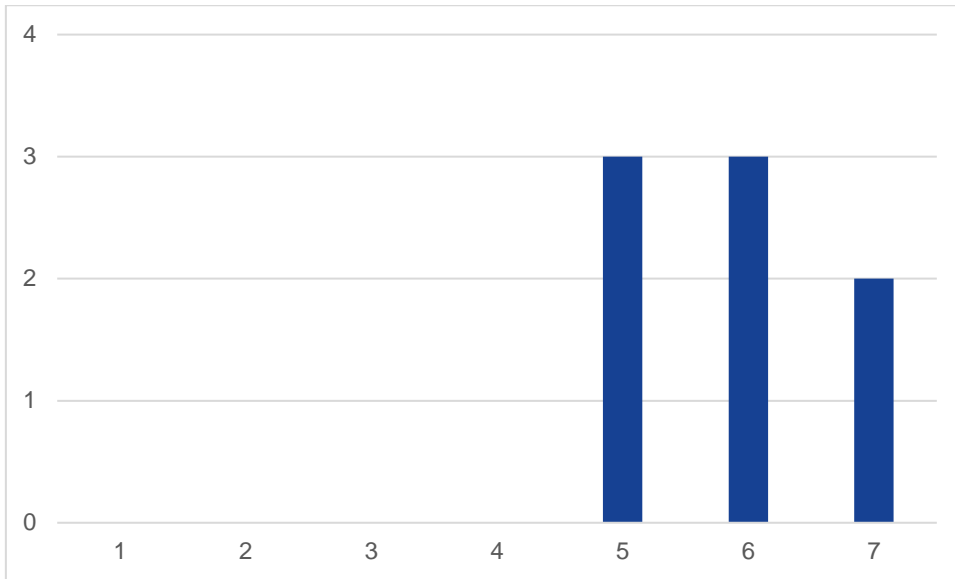
Scores between 1 (negative) and 7 (positive).

Figure 3 Appreciation of the introduction and explanations provided



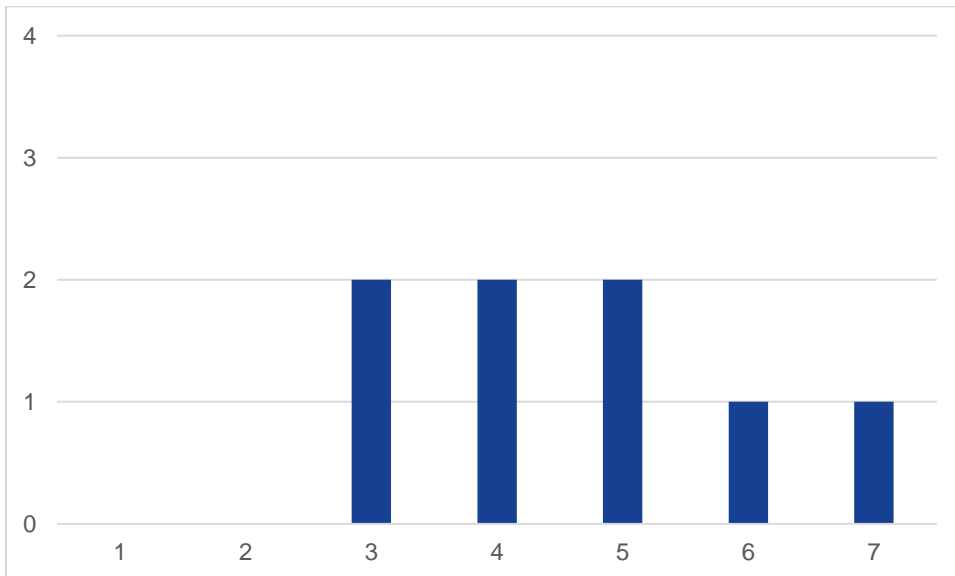
Scores between 1 (negative) and 7 (positive).

Figure 4 Appreciation of the exchanges within each working group



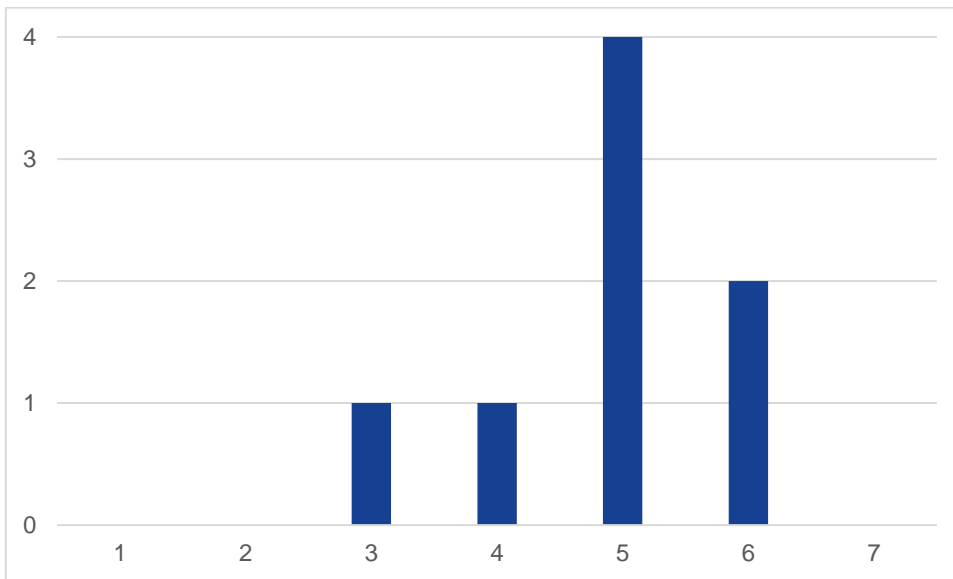
Scores between 1 (negative) and 7 (positive).

Figure 5 Appreciation of the comparison of the contributions of the different groups



Scores between 1 (negative) and 7 (positive).

Figure 6 Appreciation of the user-friendliness of the application



Scores between 1 (negative) and 7 (positive).

4.2 Proposals on future uses of the ACTAREA web app

While multiple participants expressed satisfaction with the workshop, and considered the exchanges it allowed for very interesting, some considered that it may be more appropriate to target smaller areas than the Greater Region. It was proposed to organise future workshops targeting individual cross-border proximity areas, such as the Alzette/Belval EGTC, the SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, and the Upper Mosel Valley Development Scheme (EOM).

It was also suggested that some of the questions could have been finetuned, e.g. by including airports when considering transport issues, or by allowing participants to differentiate between different modes of public transportation. An ACTAREA web app workshop could therefore usefully be prepared jointly, to allow for this finetuning.

One participant also proposed to organise successive workshop on different themes, allowing for more in-depth discussions. Their outputs could then be cross-analysed and, if needed combined in a concluding workshop.

Text Box 2 Participant feedback - Proposals for future uses of the web app

Participant 1

Organise successive exchanges on subjective spatial perceptions of specific themes. In a second step, inputs for different themes may then be cross-analysed. Examples of possible themes are shopping, culture, training, care, employment by type of job, tourism, green and blue network, kindergartens, schooling.

Participant 2

"Putting a "background map" layer to better identify places geographically and thus better position the zonings. Make available a list of simple standard drawing figures to affix and adapt, rather than having to draw freehand; diversify the possibilities of figuration more. Have the possibility to let participant draw directly in the map.

Participant 3

"To do a workshop on the different territories of proximity cooperation identified in the SDT GR (Alzette/Belval EGTC, SaarMoselle Eurodistrict, EOM, etc.)

- Sometimes have more detailed elements to characterise certain themes (e.g. to categorise the size of urban centres)".

Participant 4

Drawing from verbal cues is difficult for the facilitator, this improves with the possibility that users can (but do not have to) draw themselves. In the workshop it became clear that a common clarification of terms and tasks may be necessary beforehand in order to make the drawings comparable. Transnational working groups make a lot of sense.

Participant 5

Organise a preliminary preparatory meeting

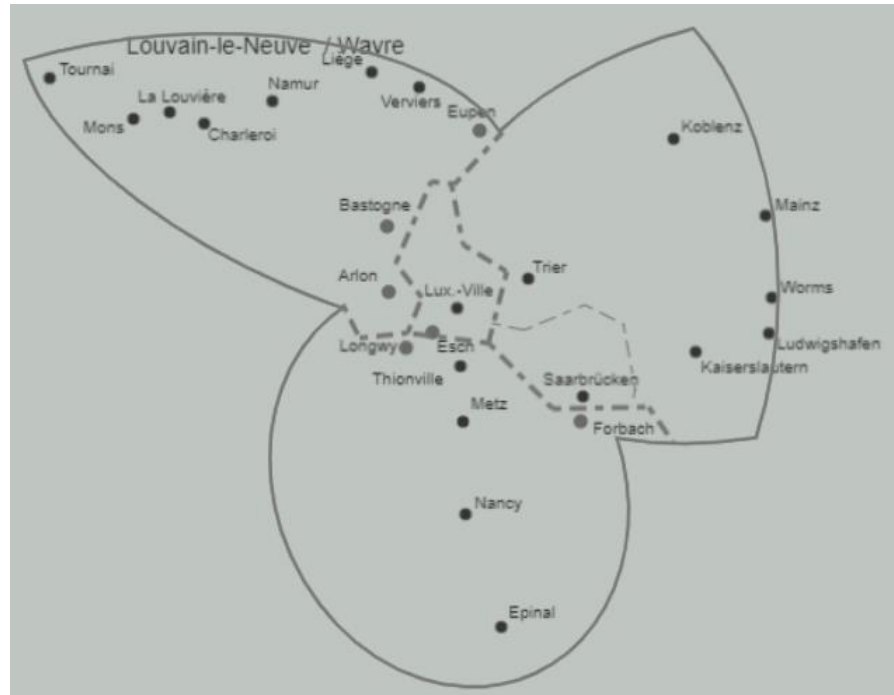
Participant 6

Ensure in advance that all working groups understand the tasks in the same way.

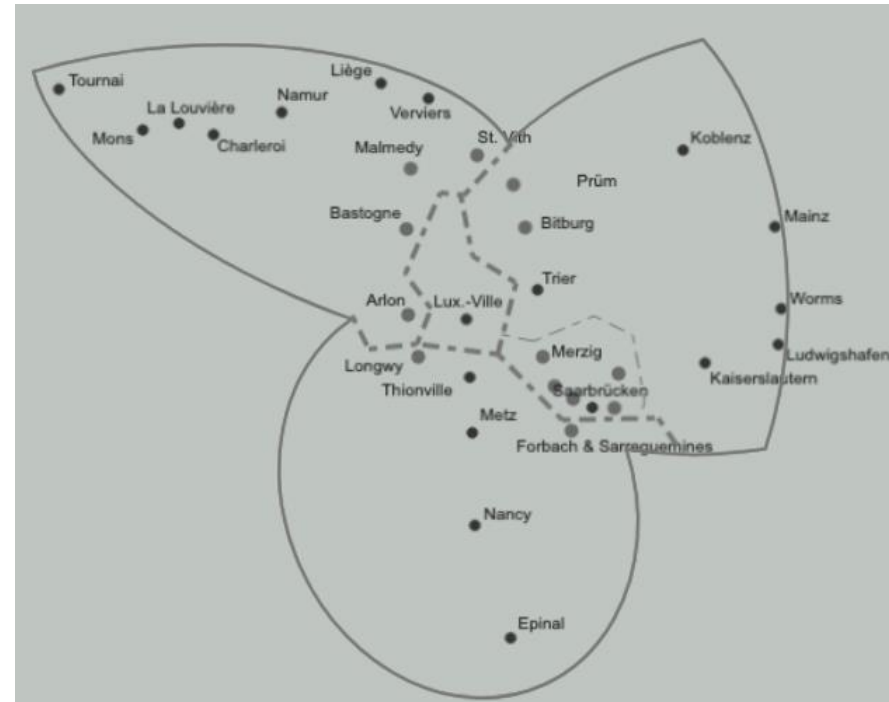
Annex : participant inputs and comments

Question 1.1.: Urban nodes

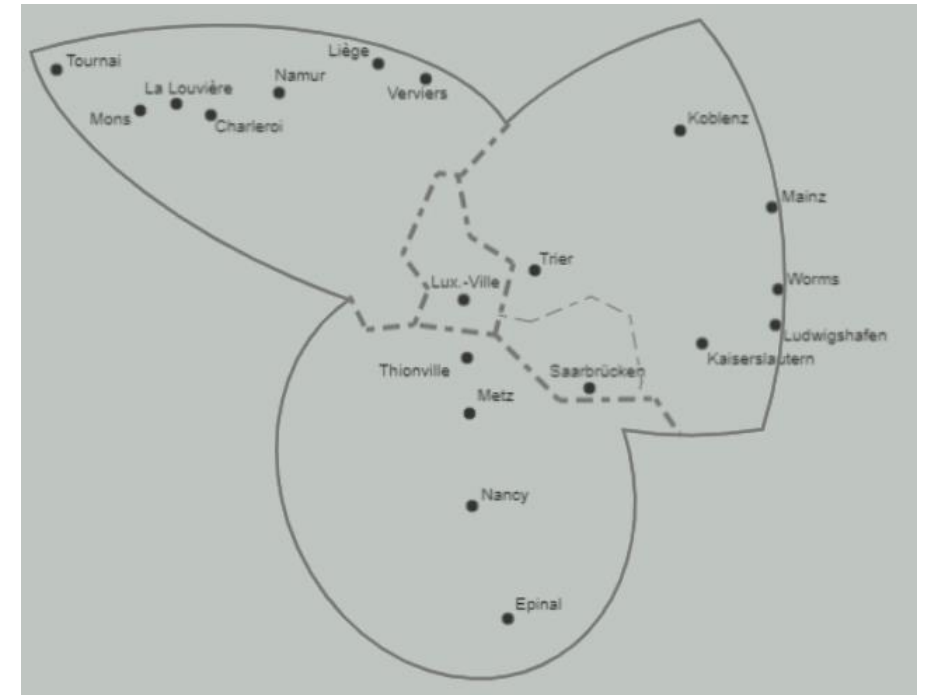
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3

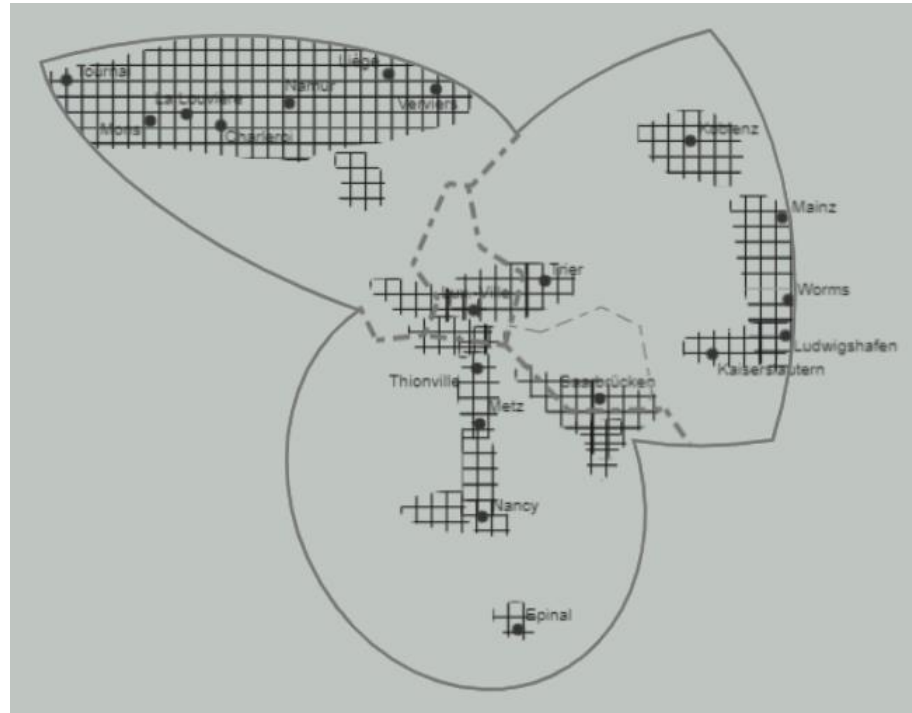


Comment

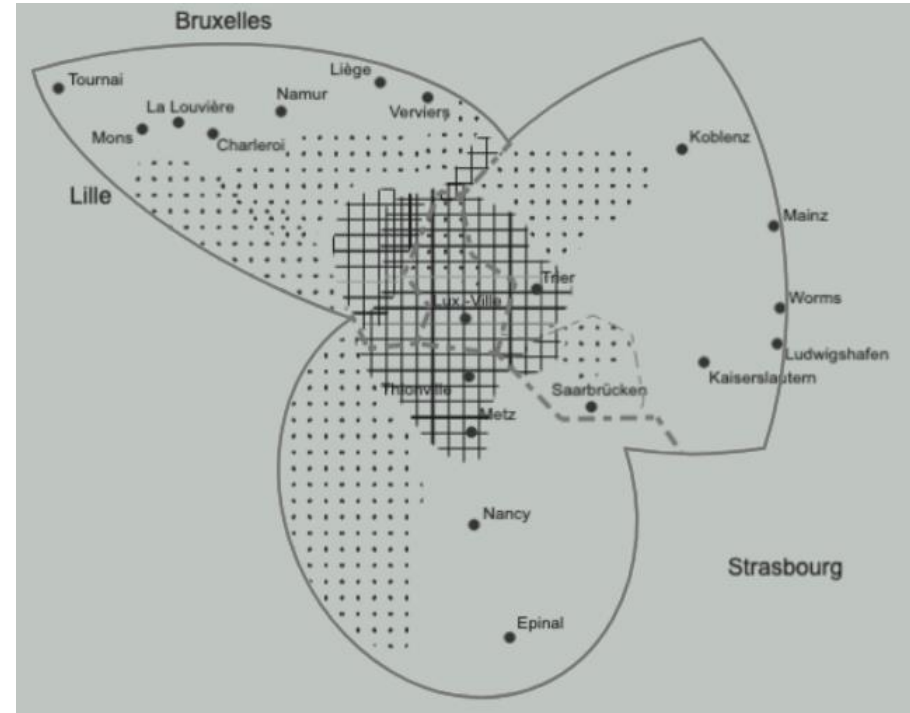
The starting point was a map with cities selected on the basis of a population thresholds. Workshop participants of groups 1 and 2 considered that a number of smaller urban nodes located close to national borders play a significant role in the development of the Greater Region, e.g. Esch-sur-Alzette, Longwy, Arlon, Bastogne, Bitburg, Forbach and Sarreguemines.

Question 1.2.: Areas under urban influence and isolated rural areas

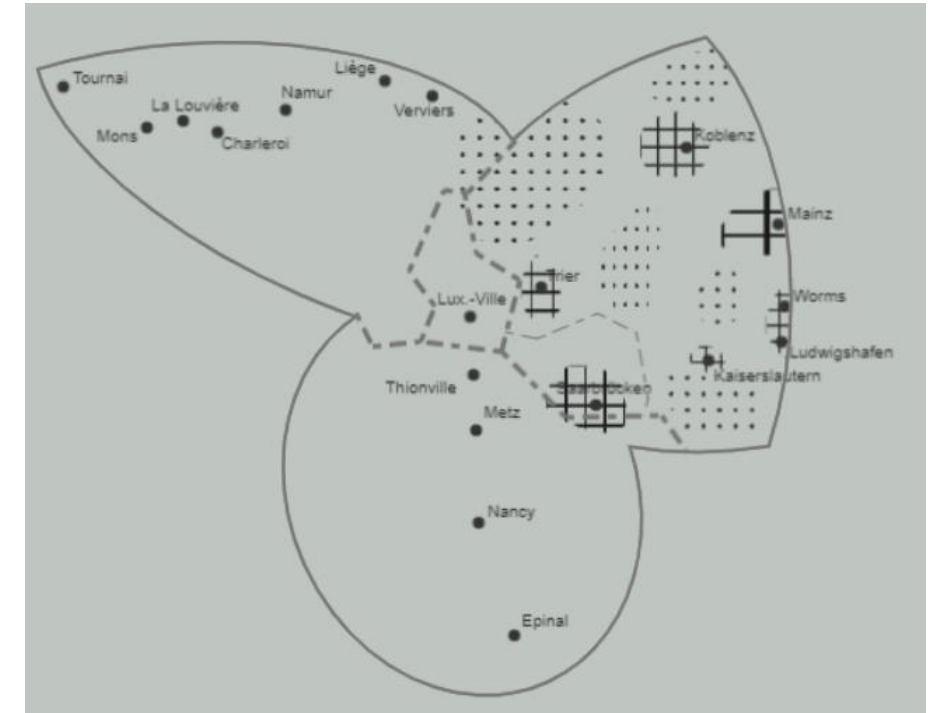
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



Comment

Participants could use two patterns: grid for areas under urban influence, and dotted for rural areas.

Group 1 did not wish to single out rural areas. All areas not identified as under urban influence are implicitly rural, to different degrees. Participants highlight different axes from Luxembourg City: south, in direction of Nancy and Toul, north-east, in direction of Trier and north-west, in direction of Arlon. In addition, northern parts of Wallonia, the Rhine axis from Koblenz to Ludwigshafen/Mannheim (with an extension to Kaiserslautern) and the Saarbrücken-Sarreguémès-Forbach areas are identified as under urban influence.

Group 2 chose to focus on the wider influence area of the Luxembourg metropolitan Region. Different areas located beyond this influence area are then described as rural. This was for example the case for Northern Luxembourg, parts of the Ardennes in Belgium and parts of the Eifel Region in Germany.

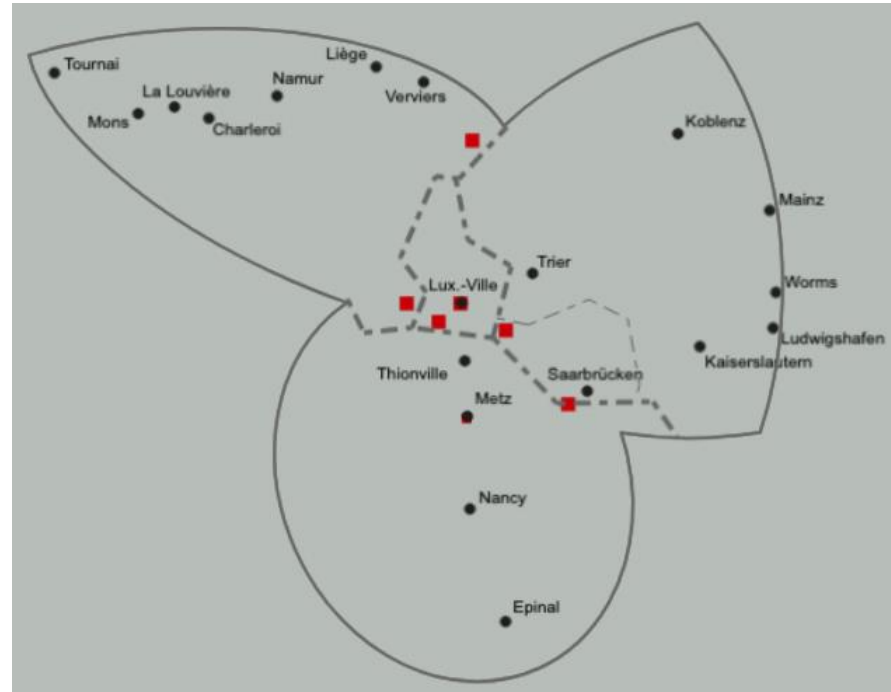
Group 3 chose to focus on describing the German-speaking part of the Greater Region. The areas identified as under urban influence are generally the same as for Group 1. Areas outside of main communication axes are highlighted as rural.

Question 1.3.: Most important urban nodes

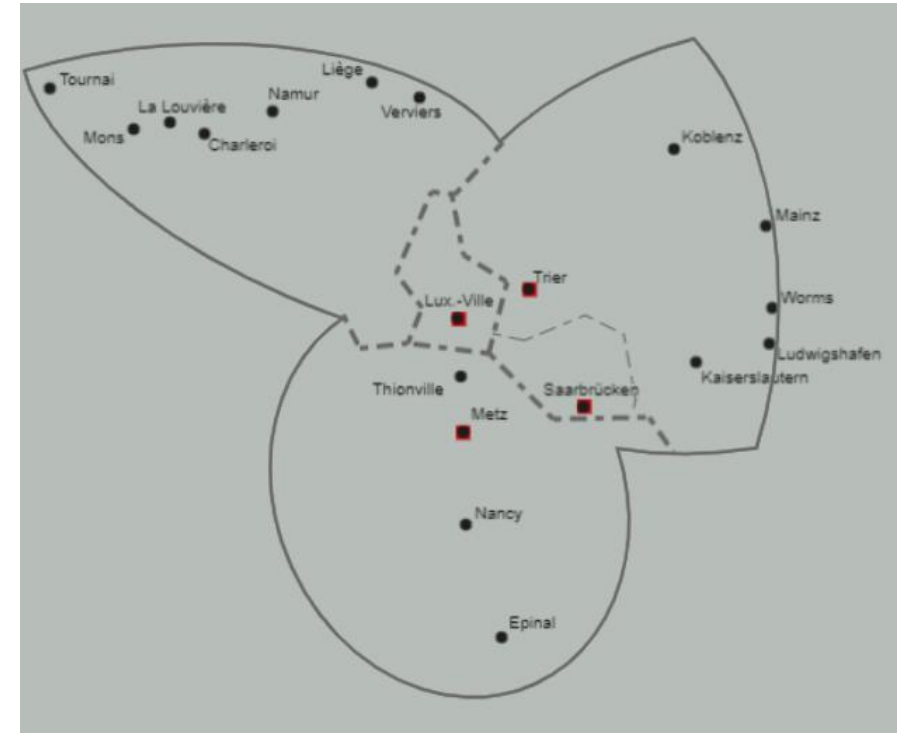
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



Comment

The initial request was to identify the four main urban nodes.

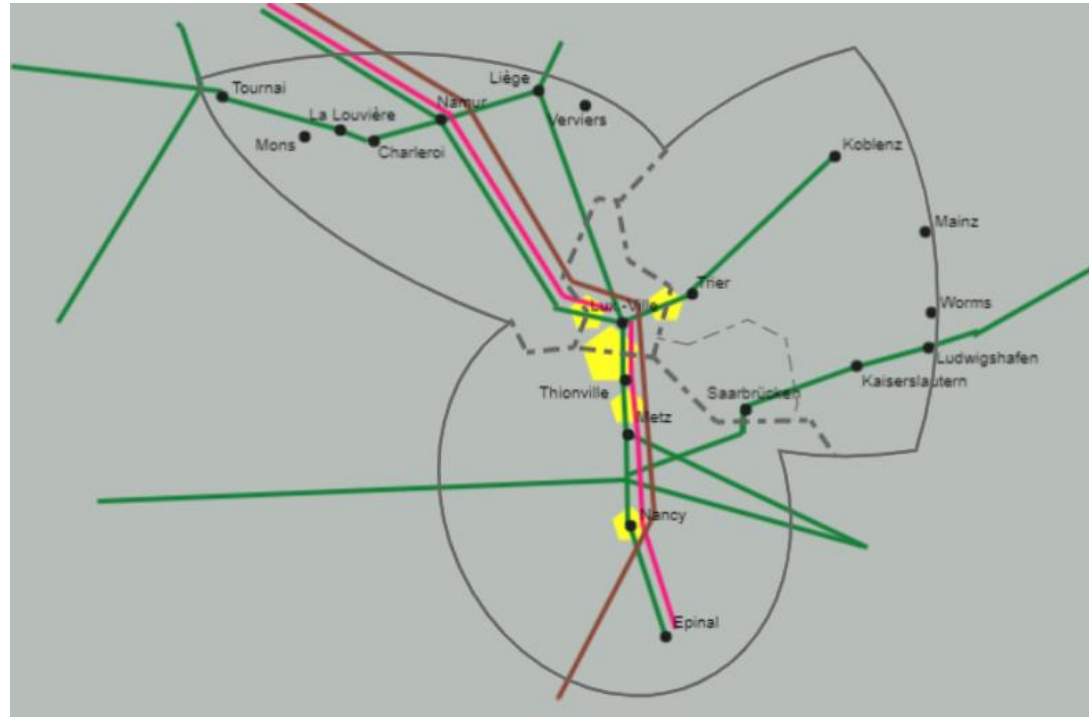
Group 1 considered that it did not make sense to consider cities and towns individually. The main nodes identified are therefore the Luxembourg metropolitan region (including sub-nodes), the Walloon system of 1st layer cities centred on Namur and Charleroi, the Rhine axis and Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines-Forbach.

Group 2 focused on urban nodes structuring cross-border relations, i.e. Luxembourg City, Esch-sur-Alzette, Arlon, Schengen and Perl, St Vith, Saarbrücken-Forbach-Sarreguemines.

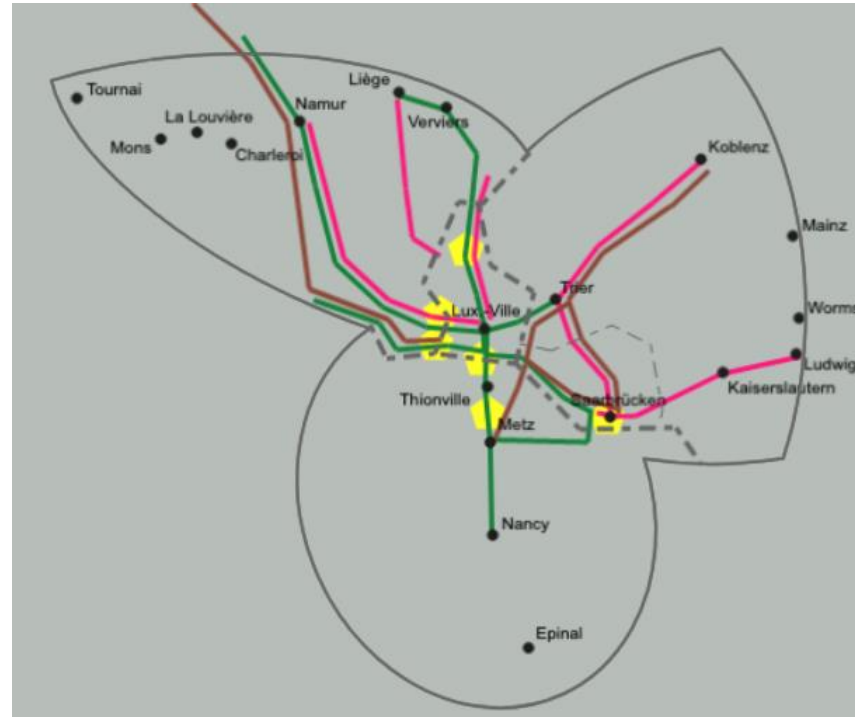
Group 3 identified Luxembourg City, Metz, Trier and Saarbrücken as the four main nodes.

Question 1.4.: Prioritised transport axes and bottlenecks

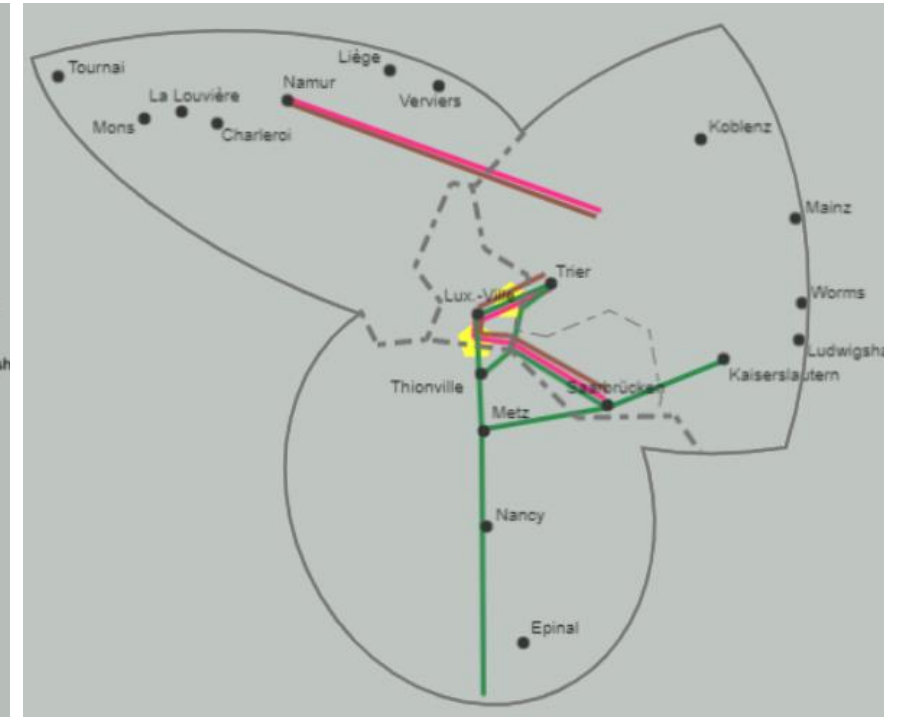
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



Comment

Groups drew priorities public transportation axes in green, individual transport axes in pink and freight transport axes in brown.

Regarding public transportation axes (Green), all groups identified the north-south axis for public transportation as a priority axis. Group 3 otherwise chose to focus on the German perspective, which explains why the northern part of this axis is not included. They show the axes between Trier and Luxembourg City and between Kaiserslautern and Metz, which are also shown by all other groups. In addition, Group 3 identified the axes between Trier and Lyon and Saarbrücken and Luxembourg City as particularly important.

Group 1 particularly insisted on the importance of considering connection to external metropolitan centres, e.g. Brussels, Lille, Paris, Frankfurt and Strasbourg. Its members regretted that there was no option to distinguish between high-speed rail and other modes of transportation. Group 2 identified the potential for developing public transportation along two east-west axes: First, the A8 motorway from Saarbrücken to the Luxembourgish border, then following A13 through Esch-sur-Alzette in Luxembourg and the N88 highway to Virton in Wallonia. Second, the axis from Trier to Luxembourg City, Arlon and Namur to Brussels.

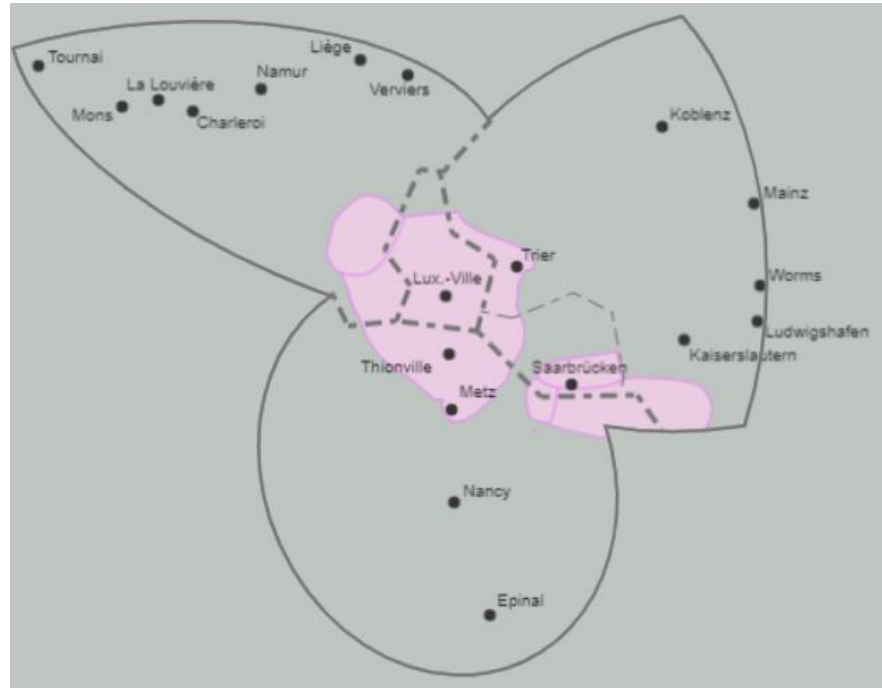
Regarding individual transport (pink), Group 1 identified the north-south axis running from Brussels to Epinal as the most important axis. Group 2 identified different axes convergence towards Luxembourg City, from Namur, Liège, Koblenz, as well as the Saarbrücken-Trier and Ludwigshafen-Saarbrücken axes. Group 3, still opting for a German perspective, highlighted the importance of the axis connecting cities of the north-Wallonia and the Rhine axis, as well as the axes from Trier and from Saarbrücken in direction of Luxembourg City.

Regarding freight transport (brown), Group 1 identified the north-south axis running from Brussels to Lyon through Luxembourg City and Nancy. Group 2 focused on the axes from Brussels to Saarbrücken and the water transport axis of the Moselle from Koblenz to Metz. Group 3 identified the same axes as for individual transport.

All groups identified transportation bottlenecks along national borders. Group 1 focused on those along Luxembourg borders, and also noted that congestion around Nancy has implications for cross-border flows. Group 2 also identified a bottleneck in the Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines-Forbach area as well as in the Northern territory of the French part of the Greater Region towards Luxembourg and along the Northern Luxembourg rail and road connection. Bottlenecks identified by group 3 are along the Luxembourg-French and the Luxembourg-German border areas.

Question 2.1.: Cross-border labour market areas

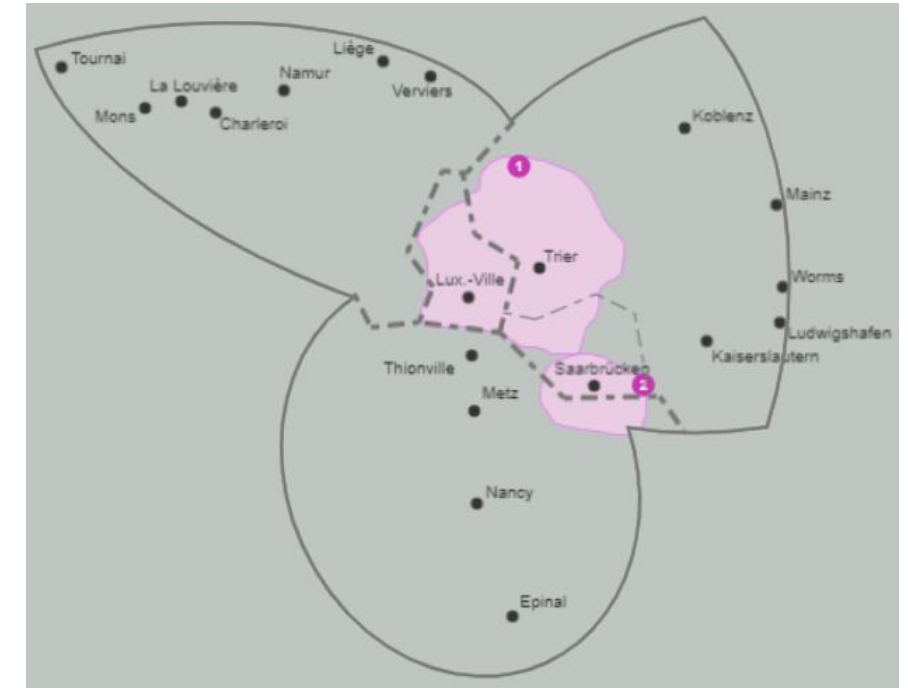
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



- 1 Legend name
- 2 Sarreguemines-SB
- 3 Legend name
- 4 Trier Lux
- 5 Bastogne-Lux
- 6 Espace s'Étend plus largement dans la Wallonie
- 7 DE-BE territoires Nord du Lux

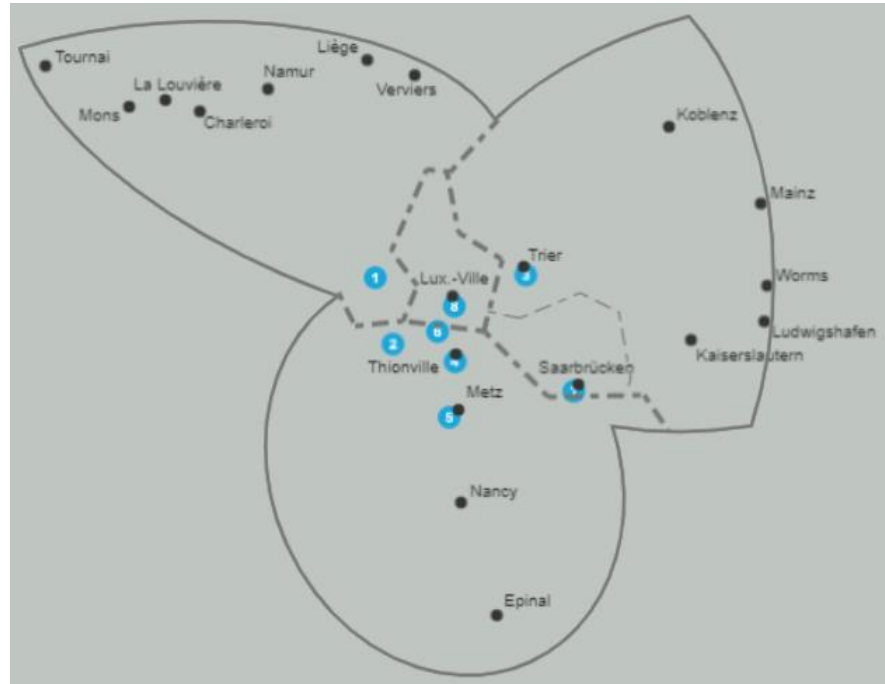
Comment

Group 1 identified two cross-border functional area: one area centred on Luxembourg City, delimited by Trier, Metz and Arlon, and another one centred on Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines-Forbach. Group 3 identified a very similar area, reflecting their German perspective with the exception that the influence area of Luxembourg City in Germany is significantly larger than for Group 1.

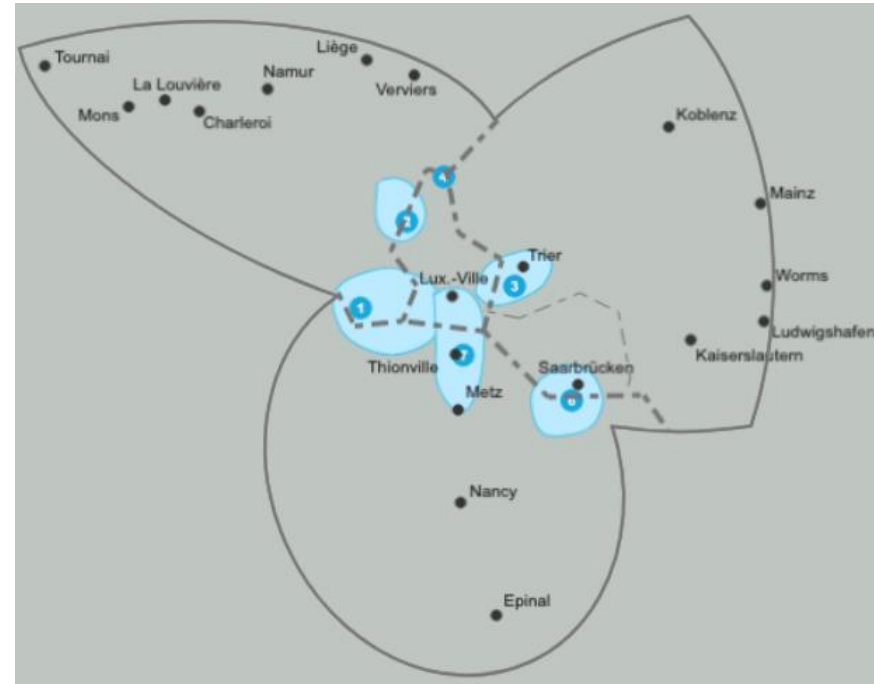
Group 2 chose to delineate a number of smaller areas. The influence of Luxembourg City extends to Nancy in France. The group also notes that a wider influence area can be identified in Belgium, although the limits of this area cannot be easily delimited as the influence of Luxembourg labour market into Belgium fades with increasing relative distance. The Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines-Forbach labour market area is narrower than for Groups 1 and 3.

Question 2.2.: Cross-border consumption-related functional areas

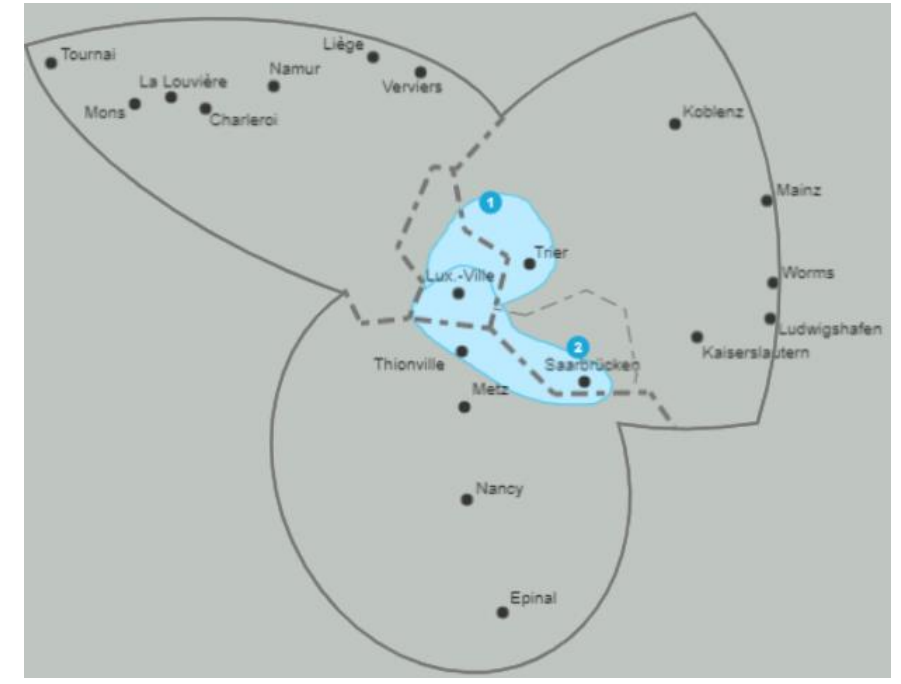
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3



- 1 FR-BE-LU
- 2 Bastogne-Lux
- 4 Lux Nord - bis nach Eupen
- 3 Trier-Ostluxemburg
- 6 Legend name
- 7 Legend name

Comment

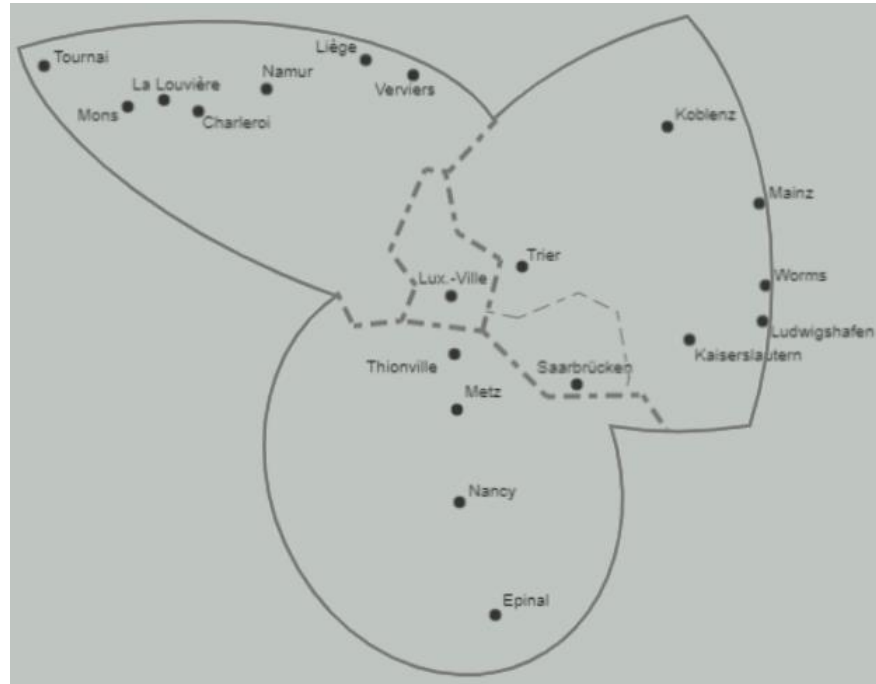
Regarding consumption, members of Group 1 agreed that delineations of cross-border consumer catchment areas could not meaningfully be drawn. They preferred to identify urban nodes around which such areas may be organised. They insisted that flows of consumer were not only from Luxembourg to neighbouring countries, but that Luxembourg City is also a major cross-border commercial node.

Group 2 identified many of the same commercial nodes, and attempted to draw some functional areas around them, e.g. a north-south axis from Luxembourg to Metz, the commercial catchment areas of Bastogne, Trier and Eupen extending into Luxembourg and the Saarbrücken-Sarreguemines-Forbach functional area. Individual shopping centres in rural parts of the Northern Greater Region have a significant reach and cover vast rural areas.

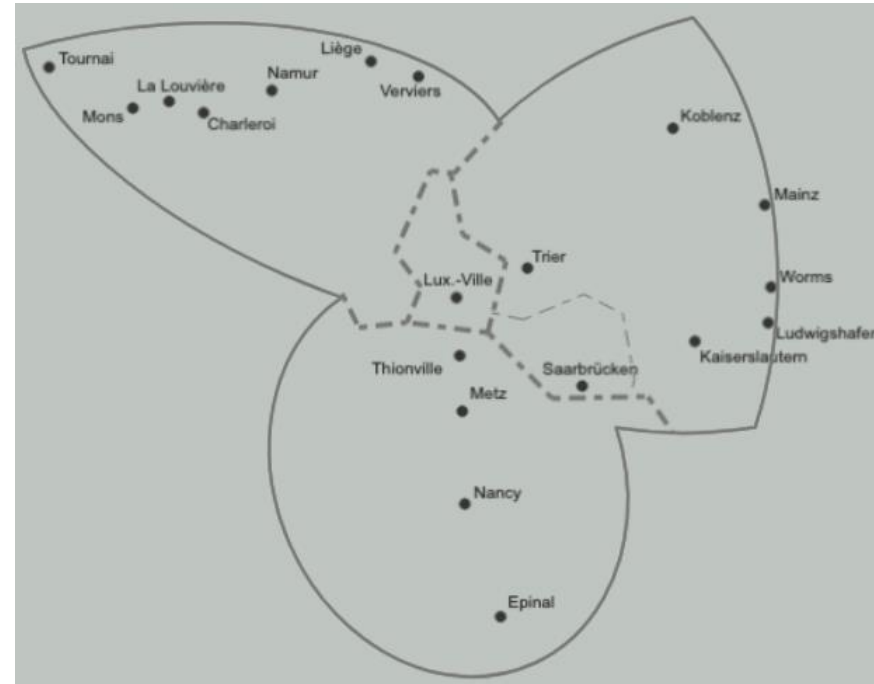
Group 3 considered two larger areas from the German perspective along the Luxembourg-German and Luxembourg-France-German borders. These areas reflect participants' knowledge on cross-border commerce areas of German clients or of Luxembourg and French clients travelling across the border for shopping.

Question 2.3.: Cross-border SGI-related functional areas

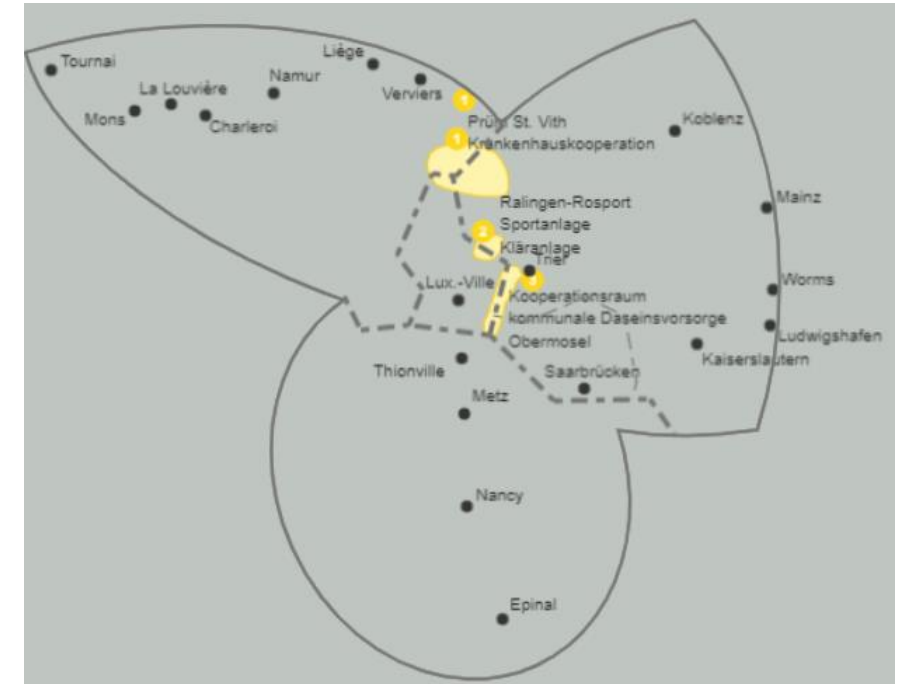
Group 1



Group 2



Group 3




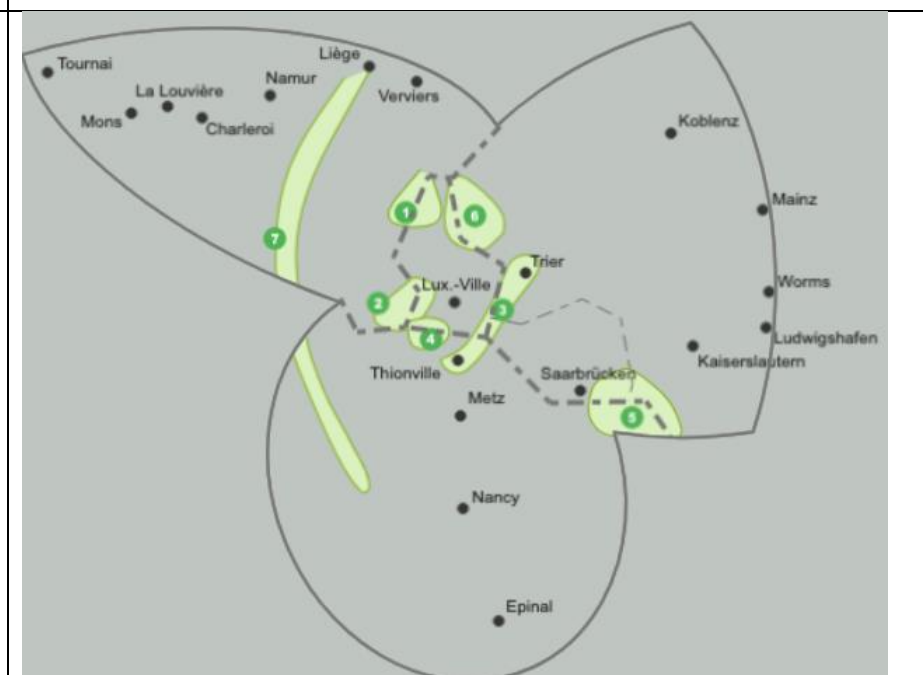
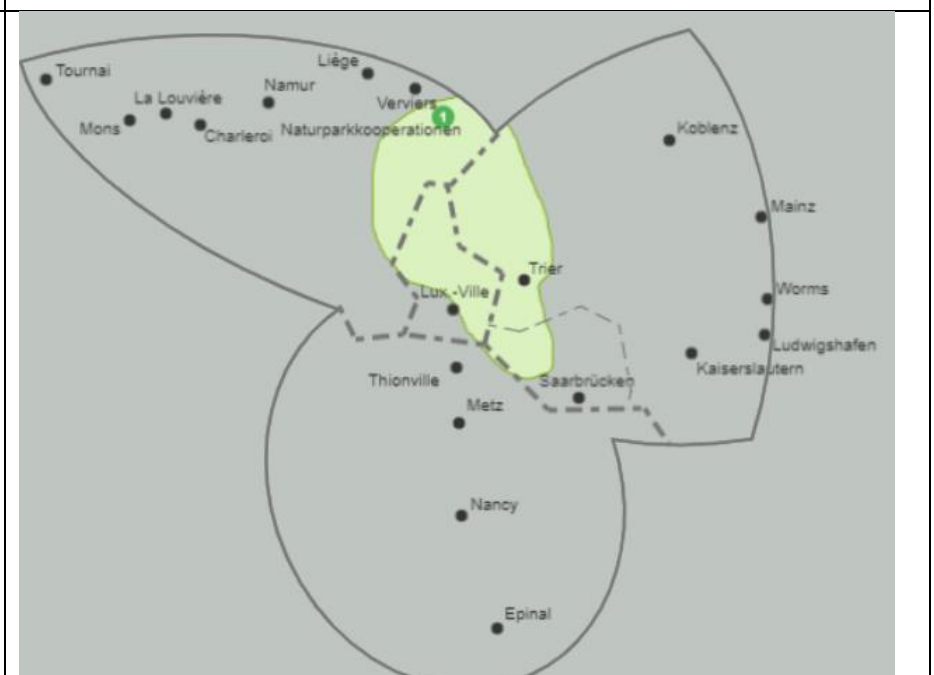
Comment

Groups 1 and 2 considered that it is not possible to draw functional areas relating to services of general interest at this scale. They argued that such an exercise could more meaningfully be envisaged at the level of individual cross-border areas for integrated territorial development. Concrete needs for implementing cross-border public services can, according to these participants, be identified at that scale.

This need to consider local relations along the border is also reflected in the contribution of Group 3, which mentions hospital cooperation between Prüm (Rhineland Palatinate) and St. Vith (German-speaking Community in Wallonia), the Ralingen-Rosport sports facilities and the Upper Mosel valley cooperation² on public services.

² Entwicklungskonzept Oberes Moseltal (EM)

Question 2.4.: Cross-border Nature protection and resource preservation-related functional areas

Group 1	Group 2	Group 3
 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Vallée de la Sâre 4 Bassin Houiller 5 Bassin ferrifère 6 Legend name 	 <ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 Obermosel 4 Parc naturel Gaume 5 Nordvogesen 6 Legend name 7 Vallée de la Meuse 1 Lux-BE Nature Park 2 Arlon-Lux protected areas 	
<p>Comment</p> <p>Although delineations of areas are bit different, Groups 1 and 2 adopted similar approaches and identify many of the same areas, e.g. the Mosel valley, the natural parks of northern Luxembourg and adjoining areas on the other side of the borders to Wallonia and Germany. Group 2 represented the Meuse valley, while Group 1 insisted on the importance of nature protection and resource preservation in connection to the Lorraine coal and iron ore basins.</p> <p>Group 3 identified one large functional area that includes the Luxembourg-German nature park cooperation, the Eifel-High-Fens and the Saar-Hunsrück nature parks.</p>		