



Kehl-Strasbourg bridge © Flickr/Patrick Müller

FRANCE AND GERMANY, STRASBOURG-KEHL A Cross-Border Urban Project to Deliver Local Development

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The history of Strasbourg, capital city of the Alsace Region, located on the left bank of the Rhine River, has been determined by its role as a border-city between France and Germany. Since 1945, Strasbourg has attempted to establish links with the German city of Kehl am Rhine, located on the right bank. Lack of coordination between the cities had hindered for many years the re-development of derelict sites on both banks of the Rhine due to the administrative divide. Improvements in connectivity and environmental management had also been hampered due to the absence of a common vision for the sustainable development of border region. This was overcome when a development proposal for a factory along the shared border gathered much protest from both sides, motivating collaborative action for the vision and development of the area.

The need for collaborative governance of the border area was achieved by establishing the Strasbourg-Kehl Commission, a cooperative steered by the mayors of each municipality. This allowed for a coordinated approach in the identification and implementation of cross border projects. Projects are undertaken under the legal framework of the Karlsruhe Act, which allows both countries to use their own management team for projects or come to an alternative mutual agreement.

While the first project proposed in 1982 did not go ahead, a chain of integrative projects during the 80's and 90's subsequently led to the drafting of the joint Master Plan for Strasbourg-Kehl. The Agency for Development and Planning for the Strasbourg Agglomeration (ADEUS) has played the role of moderating disagreements and bringing together partners and stakeholders towards a common vision.

Institutional cohesion for Strasbourg-Kehl has supported spatial and territorial planning at a supra national level, maximising economic and social opportunities at a cross-border level. The cities have collaboratively established a vision for the future of the metropolitan area by understanding their complementarities, building their metropolitan functions and institutions and integrating infrastructural developments. Projects which strengthen the economic and cultural links between the area are numerous, with the success of one project leading to funding and support for the next, creating a domino effect in collaborative urban development. The project success paved the way for a trans-region Air Protection Plan and a Franco-German Tourist Office. Most recently, the Deux Rives du Rhin urban development project has created a truly integrated conurbation, providing shared public facilities such as the Jardins de Deux Rives, the Strasbourg-Kehl tramline and the pedestrian footbridge between to the two cities.