

## **Archaeological co-operations across borders in the "Europe of the regions": taking a closer look at four examples from Basle and Lake Constance**

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Due to general globalization and a growing European spirit, transnational co-operations are increasingly sought for and supported. Keywords like “transnational” and “co-operation” are able to enhance the value of a project. Nowadays politicians and public officers, who are often to decide about financing, tend to accredit a project more, when institutions cooperate across borders. Moreover for such transnational projects additional financial resources are available, for example the INTERREG programs of the EU aiming to strengthen the European regions. Due to bilateral agreements they are also open to non EU-member states like Switzerland and Liechtenstein. The study looking at four projects from two central European regions showed that beyond these political reasons, there are also objective advantages of co-operations between institutions with similar interests and commissions: the accumulation of financial and personal resources allows the realization of other and larger projects than working alone. In archaeology there are also strong scientific reasons in many topics to look and step beyond modern national borders. The analysis of the projects showed: successful projects are in the first place co-operations of people and not so much of institutions. Ideas for projects often arise in a relaxed atmosphere after working hours and partners are chosen primarily for their professional potential and not for political reasons.

The above said holds true for all four projects in both studied regions – Regio TriRhena and Lake Constance – and might even apply beyond. The made-up term Regio TriRhena describes the southern part of the “Euroregion Oberrhein” with three countries France, Germany and Switzerland meeting at the Rhine knee at Basle. It is about as big as the Lake Constance region to the east, where four countries come together: Germany, Austria, Switzerland and a bit further inland also Liechtenstein. In the Regio TriRhena two languages have to be tackled with, while at Lake Constance German is the common language. In both regions rather large countries like France, Germany and Austria with moderate financial und human resources are confronted with the small scale unities of the Swiss cantons and Liechtenstein with rather high standards, but no common legal basis and differing mandates.

The two projects studied within each region were deliberately chosen to be different in size regarding budgets, the amount of involved partners and their duration: one of the two projects looked at in each region concerned itself with a small scale travelling exhibition and published an accompanying catalogue. The budget in both cases was moderate, the number of involved partners limited and the project to be launched and finished within two or three

years maximum. Compared to this the two excavation projects in each region cost millions of Euro, many people were involved in it on different levels and with a decade of conduct they can be called long term enterprises with wide ranging mainly scientific impact.

The results of the study suggest though, that the way partners worked together, organized the financing and expected continuation differs more by region than by type and size of project. This could be observed in several dimensions of project management: the Regio TriRhena projects have one dominant leading figure defining the aims and conduct of the project, the finances are kept separate, they partners hardly cooperate, but prefer to work on their own, keeping teams, work packages and places as autonomous as possible.

Furthermore there is no established tradition of joint projects in the Regio TriRhena to tie in nor is it planned to initiate similar projects in the near future. The Lake Constance projects on the other hand have at least two leading partners and include the other involved institutions more in the definition of the aims of the project. Finances are often pooled as well as costs divided equally between the partners. Teams will join up in one place to tackle a task too big for one of the parties to handle on its own. Lake Constance cross border projects have a long tradition and some of the partners cooperate for many years already and think of similar projects in the future.

At first sight the Regio TriRhena model of conducting projects seems less desirable. A transnational project that has a unilateral leadership and no common source of money is more likely to fall apart; partners starting new projects in a different constellation each time can not build as much on previous experiences and on personal trust. But in all cases the projects reached their goals and it is up to question whether the Lake Constance model would work in the Regio TriRhena and likewise. One of the reasons co-operation in the Lake Constance region works well is that each of the partners profits and joining forces allows them to realize larger projects. The potential partners in the Regio TriRhena start out on a more different basis of finances, personnel and objective targets. The leading party usually profits more, but also has invested more. Furthermore Regio Tri Rhena co-operations have to handle two languages: German and French. To bring it into a simple picture: at Lake Constance archaeologists sit around the lake like at a table or a swimming-pool, while in Regio TriRhena the Rhine acts still as a division: archaeologists turn their backs to each other facing away and should they turn around they tend to gaze afar beyond their immediate neighbours. For future projects anywhere it is useful to observe the existing cooperative spirit or tradition of a region first and to go on from there not copying uncritically project models from other regions.