

UTRECHT UNIVERSITY

Living in multiple worlds

Constructing citizenship in a cross-border context

Research Master Thesis Human Geography & Planning
Faculty of Geosciences
Utrecht University

Nelleke de Jong

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Preface

When reading about spatial processes on a macro-level, such as European integration or the changing role of nation-states, the question that is always at the back of my mind is: what does this mean for the people who live there? In this research, I have searched for an answer to that question related to citizenship, cross-border behavior and European integration.

With this thesis, I conclude my Research Master's program in Human Geography and Planning at Utrecht University. Although it sometimes felt like an endless journey, it has been a real learning experience and I am glad I had the opportunity to do this research. However, I could not have done this research without my participants, the border surfers who were willing to answer all my questions and discuss their cross-border experiences with me. Thank you all, for your time, openness and friendliness! I would like to thank the policy officials from EUREGIO, INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands and EURES Scheldemond that were willing to answer my questions and provided me with new insights. I would also like to thank my thesis supervisor, Dr. Kees Terlouw, for his supervision and feedback during this whole process and for introducing the term *border surfers* so that I could also use it.

There are a number of people that have helped me in my search for participants. I would like to thank Mr. Ronny de Schutter, ACLVB and the organization of the IVR Schelde-Kempen seminar on cross-border labor for giving me the opportunity to talk to attending border surfers. Also, Mrs. Sarah O'Brien from EURES Scheldemond and Mrs. Mandy Morsink from EUREGIO, thank you for providing me with information and bringing me into contact with the right persons to talk to. My gratitude also goes to the Nederlands-Belgisch Centrum/Stichting Grensarbeid for including my call for participants in their newsletter.

I would also like to say thank you to everyone, both family and friends, who gave their support and showed interest in the progress of my research project, even at times when I didn't really want to talk about it. Bauke and André, thanks for driving me to Zeeuws-Vlaanderen, even during heavy snowfall! Jan, thank you for not just making fun of my grammatical errors and made-up language, but combining the laughter with so many useful comments and feedback which made this report so much better. Thanks for all your advice and support!

Finally, I want to say thanks to my sister, Masineke. You were always there for me and I could not have done it without your support. I'm not sure whether we will miss having my thesis as a subject for our conversations, but I know that we will always have something to talk about and I am glad we do.

Nelleke de Jong

Gouda, June 2012

Circuit of knowledge

What does man gain from all his labor
at which he toils under the sun?

Generations come and generations go,
but the earth remains forever.

The sun rises and the sun sets,
and hurries back to where it rises.

The wind blows to the south
and turns to the north;
round and round it goes,
ever returning on its course.

All streams flow into the sea,
yet the sea is never full.

To the place the streams come from,
there they return again.

All things are wearisome,
more than one can say.

The eye never has enough of seeing,
nor the ear its fill of hearing.

What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun.

Ecclesiastes 1: 4-9

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Abstract

Historically, the nation-state has been the central focus of the citizenship debate. However, the primacy and pre-eminence of the nation-state have increasingly been challenged. Through a process of state rescaling in which supranational and sub-national entities gain in importance and in which power is being restructured, the role of the nation-state as political entity is changing. The challenging of the primacy of the nation-state not only has had an impact on government structures, but also on the discourse of citizenship. Alternative notions of citizenship and of membership of communities have been developed and the possibility of post-national forms of citizenship has been discussed, such as European, global and urban citizenship. Also, processes of rescaling have evoked debate about a multi-layered or multi-level form of citizenship, since citizens become members of different political communities at various spatial scales at the same time.

These issues come together in the cross-border regions, where European integration and regionalism come together in a complex process of rescaling. The question arises how this citizenship is developed and constructed and what the role of citizens themselves in this process is. The citizens that are living in a cross-border area make use of the border in their daily life because they live and work on different sides but also because they cross the border for everyday activities such as shopping. This research examines the way in which these citizens, who will from now on be called border surfers, experience their citizenship within a cross-border context and discusses whether this could be considered a new form of citizenship that is both transnational and regional. To be able to understand how border surfers experience their citizenship and how they are making use of their citizenship rights in an active way, a qualitative study is conducted to see how the kind of issues that are related to citizenship are encountered by border surfers that live in a cross-border region.

Therefore, the research question that forms the basis of this research is:

How do border surfers construct their citizenship and how is this process of constructing citizenship embedded in the institutional context of cross-border regions?

There are several ways in which citizenship can be defined. A general way to do this is to look at citizenship as being a member of society. Conventionally, this refers to membership of a nation-state. In the traditional literature on citizenship, two sides of citizenship are recognized. On the one hand, being a citizen includes having certain (legal) rights and obligations, through which individuals and social groups can acquire a formal legal status. On the other hand, citizenship can be seen as a part of one's cultural identity. However, more recently a more critical approach to citizenship has emerged, which argues that citizenship is being developed mainly through practices and participation of citizens in the public sphere.

At the beginning of the twenty-first century, the idea that there is or should be a correspondence between citizenship, nationality, statehood and national identity has increasingly been challenged. New notions of citizenship have been discussed, such as

European citizenship and multi-level citizenship. This multi-level citizenship means that citizenship rights and duties do not come from one political entity or scale but instead from different combinations and interactions of scales. Within cross-border regions this multi-levelness is becoming clear since European, (bi-)national and regional scales all have an important influence on the citizen. Citizens living in a cross-border region make use of the opportunities provided by the existence of the border and their cross-border behavior can vary over time.

A qualitative research strategy was used to answer the research question and in-depth interviews with border surfers were conducted to get more insight in how they construct their citizenship. Besides that, semi-structured interviews with policy officials combined with secondary data were used to analyze the institutional context of both cross-border regions, namely EUREGIO and INTERREG Flanders-the Netherlands. Policies within both regions aim at structural improvement of cross-border behavior and want to stimulate social-economic development. These activities have mostly indirect consequences for border surfers. There is no single regional policy that regulate border surfing, but a variety of partnerships, programs and projects. Via the citizen advisory service of the EUREGIO and the EURES Scheldemand partnership, border surfers can get information and advice to make the best of their cross-border behavior.

Border surfers have different reasons for cross-border behavior. Main reasons are finding a job on the other side of the border or differences in housing prices so that they are able to buy a cheaper house. There are also smaller reasons that stimulate cross-border behavior in daily life such as price differences that stimulate cross-border shopping. Constructing citizenship in a cross-border context is an individual process and works out differently for everyone. Citizenship rights that are important in a cross-border context are mainly social rights, health care provision and access to social security and they play a major role in the construction of citizenship. Besides access to formal rights, also feelings of identity and belonging and daily practices are important for border surfers to make sense of their citizenship. In the process of constructing citizenship, citizens have a clear need for information and make use of different institutional structures to get this information.

The way in which border surfers construct their citizenship in a cross-border context is active and mainly focused on practices. It is also an individually constructed citizenship since it is highly dependent on personal circumstances, characteristics and actions. Citizenship in a cross-border context is also subject of constant change and therefore can be considered a fluid form of citizenship. This change can occur both in personal circumstances as well as in national legislation and this can have a major impact on border surfers. The way in which border surfers construct their citizenship is often by making use of intermediaries, such as private parties, associations or public institutions that offer support to border surfers. Finally, cross-border citizenship is created in a multi-level context. The border surfers experienced the impact of different governmental and non-governmental parties and discussed their use of those various scales within the process of constructing their citizenship. Especially the intermediary role (private) agencies have in this process is worth mentioning.

1. Introduction

Historically, the nation-state has been the central focus of study in the citizenship discourse. That is, if citizenship was discussed, this always concerned citizenship of a nation-state. However, the primacy and pre-eminence of the nation-state as political entity is increasingly being questioned (Painter 2002). International migration, economic globalization, European integration and the restructuring of the welfare state can all be seen as aspects of what can be seen as an increasingly post-national reality (Brenner 2004). As a consequence of the process that Brenner calls state rescaling, the central position of the nation-state in Europe has been changing because other scales have been gaining in importance. First of all, the sovereignty of the state has been partially moved to a higher scale, the supranational scale, specifically to the European Union. Secondly, there has been a growing focus on the role of the region and a downscaling of sovereignty and responsibility to the regional level (Brenner 2009; Lobao, Martin & Rodríguez-Pose 2009; MacLeod 2001; MacLeod & Jones 2007). However, those supra- and sub-national scales are not simply replacing the primacy of the nation-state as political-economic entity, but rather changing the role of the nation-state by this rescaling (Brenner 2004).

The process of state rescaling and challenging of the primacy of the nation-state not only has had an impact on government structures, but also on the discourse of citizenship. Alternative notions of citizenship and of membership of communities have developed and the possibility of post-national forms of citizenship has been discussed (Sassen 2002). The emphasis within these post-national notions of citizenship is on the emergence of other locations outside the boundaries of the nation-state. The notion of European citizenship has been discussed extensively but also other notions such as cosmopolitan, urban and local citizenship (Sassen 2002; Syssner 2011). Also, processes of rescaling have evoked debate on a multi-layered or multi-level form of citizenship (Painter 2002; Painter 2008), since citizens become members of different political communities at various spatial scales at the same time.

These issues come together in European cross-border regions, where European integration and regionalism come together in a complex process of rescaling. Cross-border regions in the European Union are sometimes seen as *laboratories of European integration* (Bouwens 2002), because it is argued that in those regions this integration becomes visible and that European citizenship develops through citizens' daily practices. Citizens living in this kind of region often transcend citizenship of just one nation-state by for example working and living in two different countries. However, in cross-border regions not just two national scales come into play, but also the European and regional scale and even bilateral policies can play an important role. This might make it necessary to see whether citizenship can also be developed in such a multi-scalar context.

The question arises how this citizenship is developed and constructed and what the role of citizens themselves in this process is. Therefore, this research examines the way in which

citizens experience their citizenship within a cross-border context and discusses whether this could be considered a new form of citizenship that is both transnational and regional. This research is focused on the active role citizens themselves play by making use of their citizenship rights and by dealing with other issues that are related to citizenship. Although much citizenship literature does not take the point of view of the citizen on their citizenship as the focus of attention, it is argued here that discussing citizenship based on the experience of the citizen is a significant addition to the debate about the developing and changing concept of citizenship.

The citizens that are the central subject of analysis in this research all live and work in a cross-border region. These cross-border regions have developed all throughout Europe and can be seen as institutionalized cross-border partnerships. They aim at improving regional economic development and promote cross-border cooperation. Also promoting European integration by demolishing the obstacles posed by national borders is an important goal of cross-border policies (Bouwens 2002). The European Union stimulates cross-border cooperation by funding through the INTERREG program. In this research, participants for the study will be selected from two cross-border regions that are bordering the Netherlands, namely EUREGIO in the area of Enschede-Gronau and the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands. These two cross-border regions form the institutional context in which the development of citizenship takes place.

The citizens that are living in a cross-border area make use of the border in their daily life because they live and work on different sides but also because they cross the border for everyday activities such as shopping. To describe those citizens who live in a cross-border area and who cross the border to profit from different opportunities at both sides, Terlouw (2012) introduces the term *border surfer*. The daily life of those border surfers takes places at both sides of the national border. However the extent to which they cross the border can vary over time. To be able to understand how these border surfers experience their citizenship and how they are making use of their citizenship rights in an active way, a qualitative study will be conducted to see how the kind of issues that are related to citizenship are encountered by border surfers.

Therefore, the research question that forms the basis of this research is:

How do border surfers construct their citizenship and how is this process of constructing citizenship embedded in the institutional context of cross-border regions?

This study fits in a recent tendency within border studies to specifically look at the influence of borders on the everyday life and experience of citizens (Newman 2006; Terlouw 2008). Analyzing cross-border behavior by using citizenship concepts can shed new light on cross-border behavior and provide new insights. From a citizenship perspective, this study provides new insights into the conceptualization of new and emerging forms of citizenship and contributes to the debate on post-national notions of citizenship. Although a lot of research on citizenship often does not take the point of view of citizens and their actual experience, this research aims to take the citizens' experience at its focal point. Since cross-

border policies are an important part of European integration policy, this study also contributes to the debate about the emergence of European citizenship and the forms that this could take. From a societal point of view, this research sheds light on how citizens experience effects of (European) policy aimed at cross-border behavior and on the obstacles they encounter when crossing the border. This research could therefore also be used to improve cross-border policies so that they become more aimed at the actual practices of border surfers who construct their cross-border citizenship through their daily life.

To answer the research question, first a theoretical exploration will be made by combining concepts from the literature about citizenship, European citizenship in particular and cross-border behavior. After that, the methodological considerations and the research design that are best suited to answer the research question will be discussed. In chapter 4, the institutional context will be examined, specifically looking at the institutionalized cross-border cooperation. This will be done for the regions in which the participants of this study live. In the next chapter, the focus will be on the ways in which citizens construct their cross-border citizenship and the elements that are important in this process of constructing. Also, the importance of cross-border institutions in that process will be discussed. In chapter 6 the research question will be answered with the conclusion. Finally, a discussion based on the literature will be made together with suggestions for further research.

2. Citizenship and cross-border behavior

To get a thorough understanding of the issues concerning cross-border citizenship, various scholarly debates are used as a theoretical basis. Concepts from the citizenship literature in general, the European citizenship debate and literature about cross-border behavior will be discussed in this chapter and related to each other.

2.1 Citizenship

There are several ways in which citizenship can be defined. A general way to do this is to look at citizenship as being a member of society (Yeung et al. 2008). Conventionally, this refers to membership of a nation-state (Painter 2008). Citizenship can be understood as a contract that structures the complex relationship between the state, the individual and the society (Yuval-Davis 1997). This contract gives the citizen rights and entitlements but it also lays down duties and obligations to the community (Syssner 2011). In the traditional literature on citizenship, two sides of citizenship are recognized. On the one hand, this literature acknowledges that being a citizen includes having certain (legal) rights and obligations, through which individuals and social groups can acquire a formal legal status. This line of argument follows the reasoning of T. H. Marshall and can be seen as the more formal side of citizenship (Painter 2002; Syssner 2011). On the other hand, citizenship can be seen as part of one's cultural identity. In that discourse, feelings of belonging and affection and of having membership of an (imagined) community are important. Work on this part of citizenship is usually associated with work on national identity and nationalism (Painter 2002). More recently, a more critical approach to citizenship has emerged, which argues that citizenship is being developed mainly through practices and participation of citizens in the public sphere. In the next sections, the three aforementioned aspects of citizenship (rights and duties; identity; and practices and participation) will be discussed.

Citizenship rights and duties

There are different citizenship rights that are drawn from the nation-state. Among these citizenship rights are political rights, such as the right to vote and to seek electoral office. Political rights refer to participation in the public arena (Janoski & Gran 2002) and are related to the development of institutions such as an elected parliament (Painter 2002). Also, there are civil rights, which include the right to freedom of speech and movement, the rights to a fair trial and the rule of law. These civil rights are mainly procedural rights and are fundamental for and underlie other citizenship rights by creating a legal basis (Janoski & Gran 2002). The emergence of these civil rights has been affiliated with the build-up and institutionalization of the judicial system and the free press (Painter 2002). Furthermore, citizens also have social rights, which can be related to the social security system. The provision of health care, welfare and unemployment insurance are part of this (Isin & Turner 2002a). These social rights are associated with the development of institutions related to the welfare state (Painter 2002). Finally, Janoski & Gran (2002) also describe participation rights. These rights refer mainly to access to the labor market and include the right of labor market information, job placement and creation and discrimination

protection. How these rights are distributed and combined varies from one state to another but a modern democratic state is expected to uphold a combination of citizenship rights and obligations (Isin & Turner, 2002a) and the question of who has access to these different rights is an important issue in the citizenship debate (Syssner, 2011).

Besides rights, citizens also have obligations. These obligations are also part of the social contract between the state, the individual and society. In that sense, rights and obligations are intertwined with each other and should not be too sharply separated from each other (Isin & Turner 2007). The state provides access to a variation of rights, from political to social (the welfare state) but on the other hand asks from its citizens to fulfill its civic duties. One of the obvious obligations of citizens is paying taxes to the government. Citizens are also subject to the laws imposed by the government and have to obey these. One could also argue that active participation in society and the community and notions of civic virtue are part of these obligations (Yeung 2008).

Identity and belonging

Another aspect of citizenship is about identification with an (imagined) community and being accepted as a member of that community. This concept is often related to work on nationalism and national identity (Painter 2002). Individuals who lack the feeling of being accepted as part of society are likely to find it difficult to gain the full benefits of formal citizenship rights, such as discussed before. Therefore, the existence of legal citizenship rights is not enough for a citizen to actually acquire these (ibid). In that regard, a lot of research has been done on the position of migrants and minorities when it comes to the acquirement of citizenship rights and related to that on the aspect of (in)equality of citizens (see for instance Liebert 2007; Sassen 2002).

Feelings of belonging and of being part of a community also have an impact on other elements of citizenship. In general, if someone feels like being part of society, he or she will become a more active participant within that society (Yuval-Davis 1997). So, to be able to exercise one's citizenship rights and duties, one needs to be recognized as a citizen by others in daily life. This recognition often happens through the sharing of a similar identity or set of cultural values (Painter 2002). Therefore, to feel like being a part of society and accepted as a member of a community, a citizen needs some form of a common identity. In this regard, Sindic (2011) discusses the notion of psychological citizenship: the subjective sense of being a citizen. This 'experienced' identity is then seen as necessary to identify common interests of a group within society and this contributes to a positive experience of people's citizenship while it also contributes to the (perceived) legitimacy of the nation-state (ibid).

Participation and practices

In the last decades, a more critical approach towards citizenship has emerged. This approach is based on the idea that citizenship is not only about a contract of rights and obligations but also about the transformation of individual subjects in what they believed to be good, democratic or ideal citizens. Citizenship is now also seen '*as a social process through which individuals and social groups engage in claiming, expanding or losing rights*' (Isin & Turner 2002b, p. 4). These newer sociologically informed definitions of citizenship put more emphasis on norms, practices and meanings people attach to their citizenship (Isin

& Turner 2002b). Sassen (2002, p. 281) discusses in that context the reclaiming of domains of social life as sites for citizenship, such as the workplace, the economy, the family and new social movements. For many citizens nowadays, it seems more important to engage in social, cultural and economic organizations than in more traditional political organizations. According to Smith (2002, p. 112), '*it is in these other contexts that citizens find the memberships that mean most to them and in which they can act most effectively*'. It is also in this context that being a citizen is seen in light of behaving like a 'good' citizen. People who are valuable for and contribute to their community are understood to be the right citizens of those communities (*ibid*). So, this more sociological understanding of citizenship allows us to focus on the participation of citizens and on their daily practices through which they act as citizens of a community. It places an emphasis on how citizens make use of their citizenship rights and duties in their daily life and on how those formal rights and duties are being reproduced, constructed and implemented through daily practices. Therefore, it points to the notion that citizenship is not only something that is a given, but also can be constructed through practices because it is through these practices that citizenship takes its form in daily life. In that sense, citizenship also can be seen as a process, as always in becoming.

2.2 Post-national notions of citizenship

The nation-state has been the framework within which mass democracy has emerged and where the social, political and civil rights have been developed (Duchesne, 2003). Therefore, for a long time most of the scholarship on citizenship has claimed a necessary connection to the national state (Painter 2002; Sassen 2002; Syssner 2011). However, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, this idea that there is or should be a correspondence between citizenship, nationality, statehood and national identity has increasingly been challenged (Painter 2002; Syssner 2011), because it is becoming clear that '*the institution of citizenship has multiple dimensions, only some of which might be inextricably linked to the national state*' (Sassen 2002, p. 277).

This possible alteration of the concept of citizenship takes place in the context of economic globalization, international migration and European integration. The position of state sovereignty is being challenged and changed because supranational bodies like the European Union gain more influence while in the same time power is being redistributed to local and (inter-)regional levels. Also, through the process of economic privatization power is increasingly being privatized as well globalized (Anderson 2002; Brenner 2004; Painter 2002; Sassen 2002; Syssner 2011). Therefore, Isin & Turner (2002b, p. 8) argue that citizenship studies should be focusing on the place of citizenship within these dynamic relationships between region, state and global society in the modern world. In recent years, the citizenship debate has reflected this shift in focus towards other spatial entities. A lot of literature has emerged on the subject of European citizenship (Bellamy & Warleigh 1998; Crowley 1999; Delanty 1997; Enjolras 2008), but also on urban citizenship (García 2006) and even on global citizenship (Syssner 2011). Within the discussion on European citizenship, also the concept of multi-level citizenship has emerged which claims that citizenship no longer is developed at one spatial level (Painter 2002; 2007). In this study, both the concept of European citizenship and of multi-level citizenship will both be

discussed in more detail since they contribute to our understanding of citizenship in a cross-border context.

European citizenship

The complexity of contemporary citizenship can be seen very clearly in the European Union. While Europe is the birthplace of such modern concepts as citizenship and liberal democracy and the nation-state, nowadays it is in the EU that the simultaneous effects of multi-level governance, regionalism, migration and cultural diversity become visible (Painter 2002). In the midst of these ongoing processes that shape citizenship and citizenship practices, citizenship of the European Union was formally established by the EU. The Treaty on the European Union (TEU) was agreed on at an assembly of the European Council at Maastricht in 1991 and this Maastricht Treaty entered into force in 1993. The proposals for the Economic and Monetary Union were the center of this agreement, but the TEU also introduced the formal concept of European citizenship. It stated that: 'Citizenship of the Union is hereby established. Every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. Citizenship of the Union shall complement and not replace national citizenship¹'. Thus, to be a citizen of the EU, one has to be a citizen of a member state. The legal rights of citizens associated with citizenship of the Union are:

- To travel and reside anywhere in the EU;
- To vote and stand for election in municipal and European elections in the member state of residence, regardless of nationality;
- To have consular protection by the consulate of another member state while outside the EU;
- To petition the European Parliament and apply to the European Ombudsman (as mentioned in Painter 2008, p. 6).

The Treaty of Maastricht can be seen as an attempt to have more political integration within the European Union, as at that time the overall feeling was that more political integration was needed. A part of this was the legal, formal introduction of the concept of European citizenship. For the first time, it was stated explicitly that every person holding the nationality of a Member State shall be a citizen of the Union. However, at first glance it did not seem like much had changed. As many scholars at the time pointed out, the European citizenship as it was written in the treaty was merely reflecting existing laws, such as the right of free movement, and did not significantly add new rights or duties (Kostakopoulou 2008). Also, when compared to national citizenship, European citizenship was not very substantial and was seen more as a purely economic citizenship which did not include the affective component of citizenship (Kostakopoulou 2008; Kjaer 2010). However, as Painter (2008) argues, the most important issue with the introduction of the concept of European citizenship was not the securing of rights, but the idea of European citizenship behind it. He argues that the choice of the term 'citizenship' reflects a broader aspiration to promote relationships between the EU and the European people that are more direct and substantial than they were in the past and less mediated by the member states.

¹ Treaty on the European Union, Art. 8

The idea is that such relationships between citizens and the EU will enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the EU, increase its political legitimacy and contribute to reducing its 'democratic deficit'. The term 'democratic deficit' covers diverse issues such as the lack of democratic anchorage of EU institutions and decisions and the gap between policy-makers and citizens (Enjolras 2008; Newman 2002). When assessed in the light of these aspirations, European citizenship is not only about acquiring legal rights, but also about identity and participation within the European community (Enjolras 2008; Painter 2008). Enjolras (2008, p. 496) argues that both the issues of citizenship and civil society in Europe are perceived as crucial for the democratization of the EU, its legitimacy, and the development of a European identity. Civil society is considered essential to reducing the EU's democratic deficit. EU citizenship requires, in addition to a set of formal rights and obligations, a public sphere within which citizens can actively participate beyond the nation-state. According to Enjolras (2008, p. 497):

'European citizenship is concerned with the development of solidarity and identity at the European level. European citizenship is conceived as an institutional mediation between state and civil society, government and the people, the territorial political organization and its members, entailing new forms of participation in a European public sphere and enhancing a collective basis for a European identity beyond the nation-state'.

It has also been argued that the legitimacy provided to EU institutions by an overall feeling of European identity is necessary for the future development of the European integration process. However, given the cultural diversity within Europe the development of a shared and unitary European identity seems highly unlikely (Painter 2002).

Multi-level citizenship

Governance in Europe nowadays is being restructured and overlapping spheres of political authority are emerging at several spatial scales, such as the European, national, regional and local scale, which are sometimes conflicting and competing with each other. Therefore, the challenges the assumption that the 'political community' of which citizens are a member is the nation-state or even the EU itself (Painter 2002). Therefore, Painter argues that (European) citizenship should be a 'multi-level citizenship' which '*...reflects individuals' simultaneous membership of political communities at a variety of spatial scales (local, regional, national and European) and perhaps of various non-territorial social groups, such as religions, sexual minorities or ethnic diasporas*' (p. 93).

Arguments about multi-level citizenship emphasize the importance of an understanding of citizenship that is more complex and better suited to an era of multi-level governance and break with the assumption that citizenship and the national state territory belong together. The existence of overlapping political communities in Europe and the system of multi-layered governance make the development of multi-layered forms of citizenship and identities possible and necessary (Painter 2002). However, not much research has been done on the emergence of such multi-layered forms of citizenship, what form they take and what processes generate or undermine them (Painter 2002, p. 102). Also, very little is known about the views of citizens themselves on the issue of multi-level citizenship and identities.

In a more recent study, Painter (2008) analyzes the link between European citizenship and regionalization, by building upon the concept of multi-level citizenship and by extending it. He argues that because active civic participation as part of citizenship takes place in multiple public spheres, these practices make a trans-scalar, post-national and portfolio citizenship. Firstly, it is trans-scalar, because citizenship does not exist at one spatial level, but includes participation at multiple scales, supranational, national and sub-national. It also indicates that participation takes place in networks that do not fit in one particular scale. Secondly, it is post-national, because it challenges the link between nationality and citizenship. Therefore the concept of citizenship is taken away from the exclusive territorial nation-state model. It is also post-national because it incorporates membership of both supranational and sub-national polities.

Thirdly, Painter argues that it can be seen as portfolio because citizenship involves access to different combinations of rights and duties and the performing of practices that come from or are related to a mix of territorial jurisdictions or scales. So instead of having rights of duties that only come from the national state and also performing practices within the national framework, portfolio citizenship means that citizens have access to rights that come from different political and non-political entities, that they perform their practices on different scales or not even on scales in particular. This conceptualization of citizenship has as a consequence that one's identity as citizen is formed also through practices instead of being based on national identity solely (Wiener, in Painter 2008). For this current study, this idea of portfolio citizenship seems to be applicable when analyzing citizenship in a cross-border context, since there the combination and interaction of various scales, territories and jurisdictions becomes particularly visible.

Within the multi-layered political reality in Europe the so called functional regions play an important role. European sub-national and sub-state regions are gaining importance in both economic as well as political terms. Those functional, loosely connected economic regions are governed by coalitions of public and private actors that aim to generate economic growth and competitiveness and whose actions have considerable implications for the citizens who live in those regions. Syssner (2011) discussed the conceptualizations of citizenship within such a functional region. She found that there is limited space for the carrying out of citizens' political rights because of the absence of formal political structures. Also, social rights are not formally distributed within the functional region. The role of the citizens and their value within the functional region is mainly seen in terms of their economic contribution. Syssner calls for more research towards the effects of policies in other, overlapping political regions on the citizens in the functional region, thereby implicitly acknowledging the multi-levelness of citizenship within a functional region.

In the next section, the focus will be on to the cross-border region, which can not only be seen as a kind of functional region but also as a particular space in which different layers of governance come together. Also, cross-border behavior will be looked at in light of the citizenship literature as discussed before.

2.3 Cross-border regions and behavior

Cross-border regions

Cross-border regions in the European Union are seen by some as central to European integration and are sometimes even called *laboratories of European integration* (Bouwens 2002; O'Dowd 2002) since it is seen that in those regions that the integration process takes place on a local level and that citizens can become European citizens because of their daily practices. Border zones have become more important as sites where local governmental and non-governmental agencies are working together to promote cross-border cooperation in concurrence with national and European politics (O'Dowd 2002). This cross-border cooperation has led to the formation of various cross-border regions, that have come into existence to overcome the disadvantages that the existence of state borders provided (O'Dowd 2002).

In general, a cross-border region can be defined as '*a bounded territorial unit composed of the territories of authorities participating in a cross-border cooperation initiative*' (Perkmann 2003, p. 157). The 'regionness' of a cross-border region can be understood as the outcome of a process of social construction and therefore has to be seen as a socio-territorial unit equipped with a certain degree of strategic capacity. Because of the increasing interest in and support of cross-border cooperation by the EU, the 1990s have seen a strong increase in the number of cross-border regions all over Europe (Perkmann, 2003).

Cross-border behavior

Not all of the citizens that live in cross-border regions are very active in cross-border activities. However, living close to the national border often makes it profitable for citizens to go to the other side of the border in their daily life (Terlouw 2008). Price differences and differences in regulations can provide an advantage for citizens to cross the border for certain goods or even to migrate. Profiting from these differences and the available opportunities on both sides of the border can be a way of life for citizens living close to the border (Terlouw 2012). Spierings & Van der Velde (2008) argue that cross-border mobility is more appealing for citizens when there is a certain amount of 'unfamiliarity' with the other side. However, if this unfamiliarity becomes too large, cross-border activities could be obstructed. This makes clear that there are not only rational arguments such as price differences which stimulate cross-border behavior, but also emotional arguments that have an influence on daily cross-border behavior.

Van Houtum & Gielis (2006) specifically studied Dutch migrants in Belgian and German borderlands and they call this form of short-distance transmigration *elastic migration*. Often, the Dutch migrants move to Germany or Belgium but their social and working life still takes place in the Netherlands. This makes their transmigration very elastic. Also, aspects of their citizenship become very fragmented, both more formal issues such as the acquiring of rights as well as the affective part concerning identity and belonging. Since their daily life is still mostly taking place in the Netherlands, they also keep a very strong sense of identity and belonging to the Netherlands.

Löfgren (2008) uses the term *regionaut* to discuss transnational migrants in the Öresund region who can identify themselves with this region. The Öresund region was developed because of the construction of a bridge between Malmö, Sweden and Copenhagen, Denmark. People moved from Copenhagen to Malmö because of the price differences, but a large part of their social life still takes place in Copenhagen. Also people from Malmö started to work in Copenhagen because there were more job options. So, also in this case differences in services and price differences on both sides of the border are reasons for cross-border behavior.

To include everyone who lives in a cross-border area and who crosses the border to profit from different opportunities at both sides at the border, Terlouw (2012) introduces the term *border surfer*. These border surfers have a daily life that takes place at both sides of the border and they profit from institutional differences and regulations. However, this is not a stable phenomenon. It can change over time because of changing regulations and emerging obstacles and border surfers can be more active in their cross-border behavior at certain periods in their lifetime and less active at other periods. In this study, the focus will be on these border surfers who live in a cross-border region and also make active use of the border in their daily life, either by working across the border or by living there.

A recurrent theme within the policy of many cross-border regions is to stimulate cross-border cooperation in the field of economic development, the labor market and society. Informing citizens about possibilities in cross-border living and working is often implemented to stimulate cross-border behavior. Increasing cooperation between citizens and companies is an important part of the cross-border policy which aims to strengthen economic development, but also to promote European integration and to eliminate the barriers imposed by institutional borders (Bouwens 2002).

Van Gorp (2009) assessed the impact of borders on cross-regional spillovers and regional competitiveness for three Euregions, namely Meuse-Rhine, Meuses-Rhine-North and Rhine-Waal. He found that, despite the efforts of cross-border cooperation, these European internal border regions still suffer from lower spillovers which gives them a structural disadvantage as compared to non-border regions. Also, there was a lack of labour market integration. This can be related to the acquirement of participation rights as discussed by Jansoski & Gran (2002) in cross-border regions.

Literature about the lack of cross-border integration and behavior points in different directions to what the cause might be. Some argue that a lack of a harmonized and uniform tax structure is a huge constraint to further trans-border co-operation. Also, uneven deployment and differences in social security regulations may hinder cross-border behavior. Access to social rights is an important aspect of citizenship too. Others point at issues of public accountability because of the small number of policy-makers involved in euregional projects and the different legal ways in which co-operation is framed (Kramsch & Dimitrova, 2008) which mainly relates to political rights. There are also of course cultural and linguistic differences that make cross-border cooperation and behavior difficult.

2.4 Concluding remarks

As discussed above, the concept of citizenship is in transition and it is being argued that besides rights and duties, identities and practices also the *multi-levelness* of citizenship needs to be taken into account. The effects of multi-level governance and the influence of (overlapping) spatial scales transform citizenship into a more complex, multi-layered concept. Within cross-border regions, this becomes very visible. Not only the influence of European integration but also the influence of other spatial entities, scales and partnerships that come together in the cross-border region, make the development and construction of citizenship in a cross-border context more complicated and point to the development of a portfolio citizenship.

This study contributes to this debate by focusing on how border surfers construct their citizenship within the practice of their daily cross-border behavior. Also this study focuses on the daily practices and own experiences of citizens concerning their citizenship and multi-level practices. This point of view of the citizen is often neglected within the citizenship debate. Within the discussion on changing forms of citizenship and in particular on European citizenship often citizenship is talked about in a very conceptual and abstract way. This research makes the discussion more tangible, since it incorporates citizenship practices at a local level. It also adds to discussions on cross-border behavior, because cross-border behavior is studied here from a citizenship framework which can shed new light on border surfers' daily practices.

The next chapter will provide a methodological framework for this study in which the research design and operationalization of the theoretical concepts will be explained.

3. Methodology

In this chapter, the methodological foundations and outline of the research will be discussed. The research strategy, design and methods will be justified in line with the theoretical concepts discussed in the previous chapter. First the research type and design will be discussed. After that, the recruitment and characteristics of the participants will be described together with the cross-border regions in which they live. The data collection will be outlined as well as the analysis. At the end, some methodological limitations and possible shortcomings will be discussed.

3.1 Research strategy and design

The research question that forms the basis of this research is:

How do border surfers construct their citizenship and how is this process of constructing citizenship embedded in the institutional context of cross-border regions?

To answer the research question formulated in this study a qualitative research strategy was used. Since qualitative research is an approach that allows the researcher to examine people's experience in detail and aims to explore meaning, this was the most appropriate strategy for this study. Typically, in-depth interviews are used when seeking information about individual, personal experiences from people on a specific topic or issue (Hennink et al., 2011). It is a way of gaining in-depth information of people's personal experience. Since in this research the focus is also on people's own experience of their citizenship and use of citizenship rights in cross-border regions, in-depth interviews are appropriate. Also, since the construction of cross-border research is a new topic and has not been researched intensively, this study has an exploratory character and therefore qualitative methods are best suited to get more insight in this process. To analyze the institutional structure of the cross-border regions in this research, semi-structured interviews in combination with the analysis of secondary data were applied.

3.2 Participants

Participant recruitment

This study is designed to get more insight in how citizens in cross-border regions construct their citizenship through their cross-border behavior. Therefore, it was set as a criterion for participation that participants had to work in one country and live in another, so that they would have (almost) daily experience with cross-border behavior and in that sense are active border surfers. Also, because of practical reasons, namely language skills of the researcher, the participants had to speak either Dutch or English. Since the institutional context is also taken into account in this study, two institutionalized cross-border regions were selected, namely the EUREGIO Enschede-Gronau (alongside the German border) and the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands (alongside the Belgian border). Participants had to work and live in one of these regions.

The method of sampling used is called *purposive sampling*, since participants were selected strategically (Bryman 2008). A minimum of 12 interviews was set as criterion beforehand, since according to Guest et al. (2006) after 12 interviews the point of data saturation concerning the open coding process of qualitative data is usually found, which was also the case in this study.

For both regions, different strategies were used to find participants. Within the EUREGIO Enschede-Gronau, citizens that came to a Citizen Advisory Meeting of the EUREGIO were asked if they would participate in the research, providing that they met the criteria. Other participants in the Dutch-German region were found by using informal networks of the researcher. As for the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands, with the help of EURES Scheldemond, participants were recruited at a seminar about cross-border labor organized by the interregional labour union IVR Schelde-Kempen that both Dutch and Belgian citizens attended. A number of participants was recruited then. Later on, other participants were recruited after one of the participants mentioned the *Nederlands-Belgisch Centrum*, also known by its previous name *Stichting Grensarbeid*, which is an advocacy association of cross-border migrants. Via a call for participants in the newsletter which is distributed among its members, a number of participants volunteered to take part in the research.

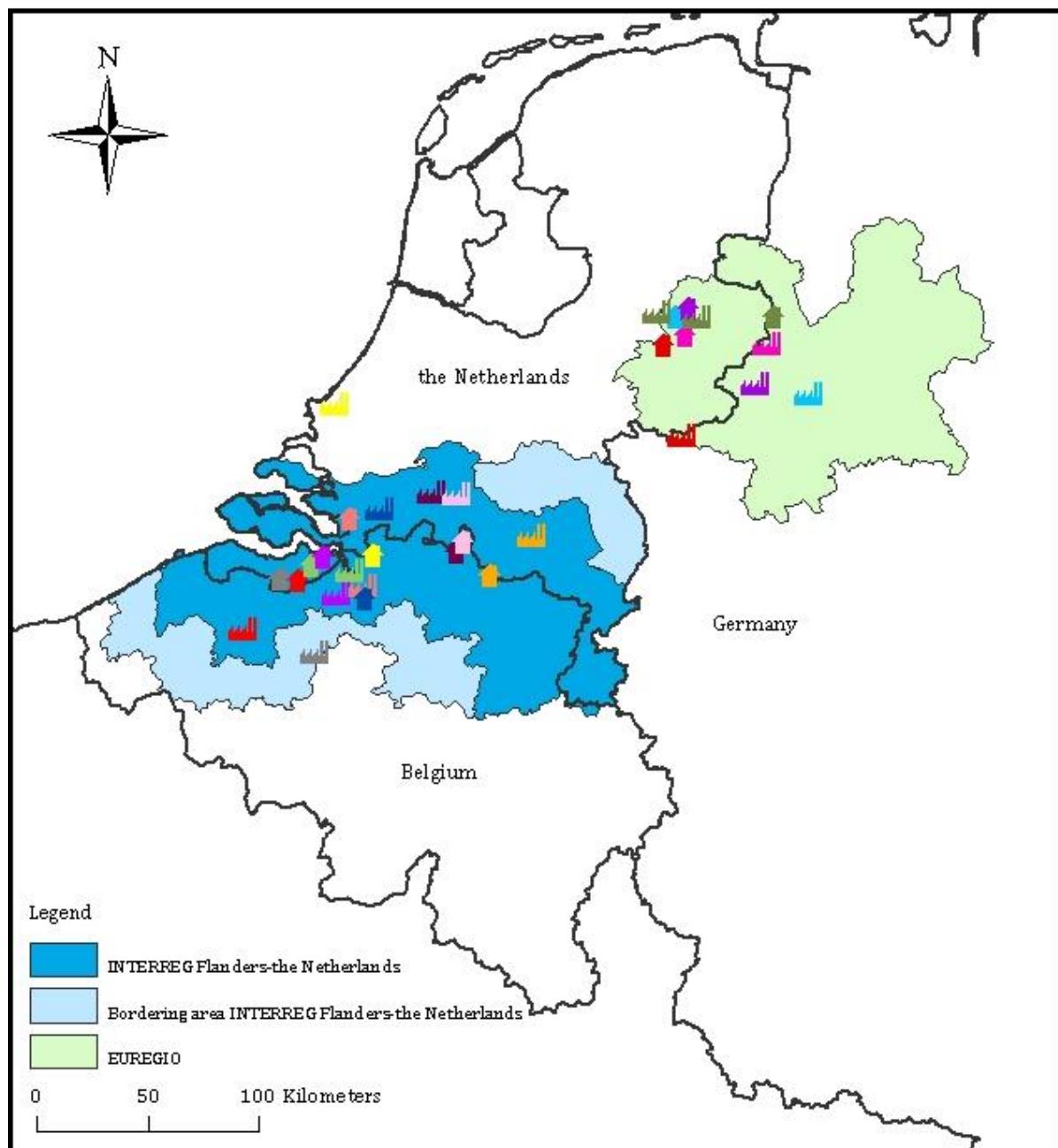
Overview of participants

Data was gathered through 15 interviews with 18 participants (three double interviews were held). Both males and females were included and all were between approximately 30 and 65 years old. Most of the participants work and live in the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands (12) and a smaller number came from the EUREGIO (6). All the participants are border surfers, but there is a diversity among the participants concerning how their cross-border commuting is taking place. Included in the sample are Belgian and Dutch citizens. The Belgian participants either lived in the Netherlands and worked in Belgium or lived in Belgium and worked in the Netherlands. The Dutch participants lived in Belgium and worked in the Netherlands, or lived in the Netherlands and worked in Germany or lived in Germany and worked in the Netherlands. See table 1 for an overview of the participants. The numbers mentioned in the table correspond with the numbers that are mentioned after the quotes in chapter 5.

Table 1: Cross-border behavior of participants

| Nr. | Nationality | Sex | Main reason for cross-border behavior | Duration of border surfing |
|-----|-------------|--------|---------------------------------------|----------------------------|
| #01 | Dutch | Male | Lives in Germany | 5 years |
| #02 | Dutch | Female | Lives in Germany | 5 years |
| #03 | Belgian | Female | Works in the Netherlands | 3 years |
| #04 | Dutch | Male | Works in Germany | 3 years |
| #05 | Belgian | Male | Lives in the Netherlands | 29 years |
| #06 | Belgian | Male | Works in the Netherlands | 15 years |
| #07 | Dutch | Female | Works in Germany | 12 years |
| #08 | Dutch | Female | Works in Germany | 1 year |
| #09 | Dutch | Male | Works in Germany | 7 years |
| #10 | Belgian | Male | Lives in the Netherlands | 1 year |
| #11 | Belgian | Male | Lives in the Netherlands | 5 years |
| #12 | Belgian | Female | Lives in the Netherlands | 5 years |
| #13 | Belgian | Female | Lives in the Netherlands | 7 years |
| #14 | Belgian | Male | Works in the Netherlands | 18 years |
| #15 | Dutch | Female | Lives in Belgium | 7 years |
| #16 | Dutch | Male | Lives in Belgium | 6 years |
| #17 | Belgian | Male | Lives in the Netherlands | 22 years |
| #18 | Belgian | Female | Lives in the Netherlands | 22 years |

In map 1 a schematic overview of the cross-border behavior of the participants is shown. Indicated are the two cross-border regions where they come from. In the map, the location of where the participants live is marked together with their location of work in the same color. So the cross-border commuting of the participant is shown by a symbol for living (the house) and a symbol for working (the factory) in the same color. When the participant did not work in one specific location, an indication is given of the broader area in which he or she works or the location of the main office was indicated. For two of the three couples that were interviewed, one of them worked in the place of residence and therefore his or her working location is not showed separately on the map. The one participant that worked far outside the boundaries of the cross-border region (the yellow symbol) has worked in various parts of the Netherlands, mostly within the INTERREG region, but at the time of the interview his office was located outside the cross-border region. In general, this map gives a good indication of where the participants came from and where their cross-border commuting takes place.

Map 1: Cross-border behavior of participants

3.3 Data collection

Interview design and operationalization

An in-depth interview design was selected to explore the experience of citizens in cross-border regions concerning the construction of their citizenship. The interview guide was developed using and operationalizing concepts from the literature (see Appendix I for the topic guide that was used). First, participants were asked about their experience with cross-border commuting, the reason why they chose to work or live across the border and what advantages and disadvantages they experience. After that, the focus was on daily practices through which people construct their cross-border behavior. This is related to the aspect of practices and participation within the citizenship literature. Topics for discussion also

included aspects concerning the acquirement of and access to citizenship rights and aspects concerning identity and feeling of belonging. Finally, the citizens' notion of Europe was a part of the topic guide. Although there were certain topics that were covered during every interview, open-ended questions and a flexible structure of the interview were used to give participants the opportunity to tell their own story and raise issues they considered important. Participants were encouraged to reflect on their cross-border experiences and share their ideas within the interview. Every interview lasted for approximately one hour.

Semi-structured interviews and secondary data

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with two policy officials in each region. The purpose of these interviews was to get more insight in what the goals and aims are behind the regional policy and how citizens and the process of constructing citizenship fit therein. Also, these interviews were used to get more knowledge about the institutional borders and problems that still exist when citizens cross the border on a daily basis. From the EUREGIO, an interview was conducted with the head of the department of Culture and Mobility of which the citizen advisory service is a part and with a citizen advisor about the specific problems citizens can encounter. From the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands, the managing director of the Technical Secretariat was interviewed. With the co-chairman of Eures Scheldemond, which aims to promote mobility in the European labor market, an interview via e-mail was conducted to learn more about the actual cross-border behavior of citizens in the region. See table 2 for an overview. The codes mentioned in table 2 will be used in chapter 4, to identify information based on the interviews with the mentioned officials.

Table 2: Overview participants semi-structured interviews

| Code | Function | Organization |
|---------|------------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| EURCM | Head Department Culture & Mobility | EUREGIO |
| EURCA | Citizen Adviser | EUREGIO |
| INTDIR | Managing Director | INTERREG Flanders-The Netherlands |
| EURESCH | Co-chairman | EURES Scheldemond |

The information gathered through the interviews was combined and compared with information gathered from policy documents of both regions. The INTERREG Operational Programs for both regions were examined, as well as the websites and the mission statement of the EUREGIO, together with the website of EURES Scheldemond. This information was used to create an overview of the institutional context of the two cross-border regions regarding citizenship issues.

3.4 Data analysis

The open-ended in-depth interviews were all recorded and transcribed verbatim after which they have been subjected to content analysis. The analysis of the data was accomplished by using the qualitative analysis software program QSR NVivo 9. The analysis process was iterative, as the data was analyzed in different steps. First, the interviews were read for general themes and codes and a summary was made for each interview. A number

of codes appeared from the interview guide and literature (deductive) but there were also codes that emerged from the data itself (inductive). A codebook was developed, for each code a definition was given and a ‘when-to-use’ and ‘when-not-to-use’ section was included. Coding was done to break down the data into discrete units of analysis and labeling different units as concepts. A next step in the analysis process was taken to formulate and create themes out of the data. By doing so, a higher level of data conceptualization could be reached. Memos of codes and themes were written, which were then connected with each other to make sense of the results.

The semi-structured interviews with the policy makers were recorded and transcribed verbatim after which they were summarized and the main points were highlighted. Also the Operational Programs were analyzed and the aspects that concern border surfers were taken into account, together with information provided by the websites of EUREGIO, INTERREG Region Flanders-the Netherlands and EURES Scheldemond.

3.5 Methodological considerations

Choosing a particular design or method always creates certain limitations to a study and making a different choice could have led to other outcomes and this is important to keep in mind when interpreting the results. For example, the choice for in-depth interviews means that this study does not discuss actual practices, but instead focuses on citizens' *ideas* and *representations* of their practices. Also, recruiting the participants via institutions such as EUREGIO and the Nederlands-Belgisch Centrum means that participants were selected from a very specific group of citizens who already were actively involved in making the most of their cross-border behavior. Border surfers who do not know about these institutions are therefore underrepresented in this research. As a consequence of the limited time and resources available for this research, the two chosen regions are both border regions with the Netherlands and this research also does not cover the experience of German border surfers.

Before turning to the actual experience of the border surfers, the next chapter will outline the institutional context. This is necessary in order to be able to fully understand citizens' construction of their citizenship in a cross-border context.

4. Institutional context: cross-border cooperation

The focus of this chapter will be specifically on the cross-border regions and policies since this is the institutional context in which border surfing takes places and therefore it is necessary to understand this in order to be able to analyze cross-border behavior. First a general overview will be given of the development of cross-border cooperation in the European Union. After that the current policies and activities of the cross-border regions where the participants of the study live will be analyzed. For the analysis the Operational Programs of both INTERREG programs (Germany-the Netherlands and Flanders-the Netherlands) have been used, together with websites and documents of the EUREGIO, the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands and EURES Scheldemond. Besides that, information has also been gathered through interviews with policy makers and actors in the cross-border regions.

4.1 Cross-border cooperation in the European Union: an overview

After World War II, economic integration was seen as an important tool to secure lasting peace between European countries and to stimulate economic development. To encourage this economic development, demolishing obstacles that were imposed by national borders was seen as an important aspect. From the beginning of European integration, the free movements of people, goods, service and capital were the principles of integration and the Treaty of Rome in 1957 already lists those principles as characteristics of the intended common market (Bouwens, 2002).

The 1950s also witnessed European integration on a local level, with policy makers in cross-border areas starting to think about cooperation and joining forces to overcome common problems. The first initiatives appeared with the creation of the first official cross-border region, the EUREGIO, that was established in 1958 on the Dutch-German border, in the area of Enschede and Gronau. Since then, such 'Euroregions' and other forms of cross-border cooperation such as inter-state agreements on cross-border cooperation and organizations like the Association of European Border Regions have developed throughout Europe (INTERACT 2011a).

During the 1970s and 1980s a more specific European policy towards border regions emerged as part of EU regional policy. One of the reasons was that the European integration process faced various challenges such as increasing disparities between regions due to enlargement of the EU with poorer member states (Terlouw 2008). Therefore the need to support action in the field of cross-border cooperation was increasingly acknowledged by European institutions. In 1985 the Schengen Agreement was signed, which abolished border controls between participating European countries. The 1992 Maastricht Treaty which entered into force in 1993 marked the next important stage in EU integration by setting the aim to create the Economic and Monetary Union and the single European currency (INTERACT 2011a).

Since the early 1990s, EU regional policy has been specifically aimed at internal border regions as potentially key sites of economic dynamism because of economic integration and enlargement of European space. The aim of this regional policy is to stimulate trans-European cooperation, to increase and stimulate European integration and to promote a more evenly distributed (economic) development. In 1990, the INTERREG program was officially launched, which was dedicated to cross-border cooperation and since then cross-border *euregios* have become suitable for INTERREG funds in the co-financing of local cross-border initiatives (Kramsch & Dimitrova, 2008). INTERREG I supported actions in the field of development of and support for small and medium-sized firms, tourism, provision of local water, gas and electricity supplies and local telecommunications, and rural development, among others (INTERACT 2011a).

INTERREG I was succeeded by INTERREG II in 1994 and was extended from cross-border cooperation to include transnational cooperation. However cross-border cooperation remained the main component and new areas of intervention were opened: education, health, media services, language training. Towards the end of the INTERREG II programming period, in 1997, the Schengen Agreement was incorporated within EU law, thereby taking another significant step in EU integration. From 2000-2006, INTERREG III was operative and this period was characterized by the enlargement of the European Union and the consequent increase in the number of cross-border INTERREG programs (INTERACT 2011b).

For the period 2007-2013 the European Territorial Cooperation program is active, which is a successor of INTERREG III and is informally also called INTERREG IV. This Territorial Cooperation is a fully integrated part of the European Cohesion Policy, which aims to strengthen economic and social cohesion in the EU by correcting imbalances between its regions. ETC includes cross-border cooperation, transnational cooperation and interregional cooperation. The programs within the cross-border cooperation dimension help to develop regions located on either side of internal and external borders of the EU by encouraging actions in the fields of entrepreneurship, improving access to transport and communication, developing joint use of infrastructure and administrative cooperation and capacity building, among others (INTERACT 2011b).

To receive funds from the European Territorial Cooperation cross-border regions have to write an Operational Program in which they state the goals, aims and projects they want to implement and achieve. In the next section the main points of the Operational Programs of the INTERREG IV programs of both Germany-the Netherlands and Flanders-the Netherlands will be outlined.

4.2 Operational Programs INTERREG IV 2007-2013

INTERREG IV-A Germany- the Netherlands

The development area of the complete INTERREG IV-A Germany-the Netherlands program reaches from the North Sea coast to the Lower Rhine. The cross-border region EUREGIO is responsible for the regional management of the whole INTERREG program. The INTERREG

program is mostly aimed at structural improvements and sustainable, regional development, based on the Lisbon and Gothenburg objectives. Themes that are mentioned in the Operational Program that have specific relevance for the cross-border regional development are 1) economy, technology and innovation, 2) infrastructure and environment and 3) societal integration. The first two themes aim at improving structures, for instance to enhance the sharing of knowledge and the connection of different public transport systems.

Within the third theme, societal integration, issues that are mentioned are health care, consumer protection, labor market and cross-border workers, education and culture. Improvements that are sought for are on a structural level, such as the establishing of an integrated regional labor market and cross-border cooperation between (higher) education institutions. With making *Integration and Society* a main priority, the INTERREG IV aims to create a harmonic and stable integration so that citizens see themselves as part of Europe. Promotion of cross-border health care, consumer protection, a cross-border labor market and integration through education and culture are seen as the ways through which this is done.

INTERREG IV Flanders-the Netherlands

The Operational Program of INTERREG IV Flanders-the Netherlands is quite similar to the Operational Program Germany-the Netherlands. In this Operational Program the focus is also on improving structural elements that hinder cross-border development. The INTERREG Program has three main points of interest: the economy, the environment and people. Within the *economy* area, the focus is on companies, knowledge infrastructure and innovation. Within the *environment* part the use of sustainable energy is seen as important, among other things. The focus within the *people* component is on social integration and aims at creating equal opportunities on the labor market and concerning education. Also, welfare and health care are listed as priorities. The focus is on providing facilities and access to services. In the next section the goals, projects and activities of the cross-border regions will be discussed.

4.2 Cross-border regions: EUREGIO and INTERREG Flanders-the Netherlands

Administrative context

The EUREGIO was founded in 1958 and focuses on the construction and strengthening of cross-border structures and cooperation in the Dutch-German border area. The EUREGIO is located in the area between Enschede and Gronau and is a partnership of more than 130 German and Dutch municipalities. The EUREGIO wants to contribute to cross-border cooperation of citizens, companies, organizations and municipalities. Tasks of the EUREGIO include the promotion of cross-border cooperation on socio-cultural issues, informing and advising citizens and entrepreneurs about social legislation and issues concerning taxes and living and working across borders.

The INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands is a cross-border partnership between five provinces in Belgium (Antwerp, Limburg, East-Flanders, West-Flanders and Flemish-Brabant) and three provinces in the Netherlands (Limburg, Northern-Brabant and Sealand). Also the Dutch national and the Flemish government are involved. With the institutionalization of this partnership in 2007 the previously separated Euregios Benelux Middengebied and Euregio Scheldemonde were united in one region in order to carry out the INTERREG program 2007-2013 Flanders-the Netherlands (INTDIR). The INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands manages all aspects of the INTERREG operational program and therefore operates on a larger scale than the EUREGIO.

Goals

EUREGIO aims to increase the opportunities for citizens, companies and municipalities at both sides of the border, to improve regional prosperity and welfare and to encourage mutual understanding. EUREGIO develops activities in a number of fields, such as social-cultural integration, tourism, sport and education, infrastructure and science and technology. The INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands is a cross-border partnership between Dutch and Flemish provinces together with national governments and has as goal the implementation of the Operational Program of INTERREG IV 2007-2013. The aim is to contribute to a sustainable socio-economic development of the cross-border region by stimulating cross-border activities and to become a competitive region in socio-economic terms. To achieve that, taking away the institutionalized border as much as possible is seen as necessary.

Projects and activities

Various projects are carried out by the EUREGIO. Most of these projects aim at promote 'business-to-business' contacts. However, the department of Culture and Mobility is specifically aimed at citizens, with a so-called 'people-to-people' approach (EURCM). Part of this is the Citizen Advisory service, which informs and supports cross-border citizens. In the next section this advisory service will be discussed in more detail. Another aspect of the Culture and Mobility department is the Mozer-program that aims in to bring citizens together on the fields of sport, education and culture. Cross-border theater shows, cross-border sport activities and cross-border cooperation between educational institutions are examples of this. There is also a project aimed at tourism that has a more direct impact on citizens. All the other projects mainly focus on improving the structural aspects of cross-border cooperation and by doing that, having as aim to improve cross-border cooperation and cross-border behavior.

While there are projects that try to bring citizens together in the field of culture and to give citizens an experience of the other culture, it is also noted that the EUREGIO operates while acknowledging the cultural differences between the countries and respecting them. It is not the goal to create a so called 'EUREGIO identity' (EURCM). While parts of the EUREGIO share more or less a regional identity, the aim of the EUREGIO is not to create one culture and identity, but to acknowledge and respect the differences and to learn from each other. This 'social-cultural' aspect is seen as an important part of the EUREGIO activities by its managers and politicians. However, that does not mean that the most of the money is

available for activities that are part of the social-cultural component. Instead, most of the financing can be found in the structural components since that is what the INTERREG program focuses on (EURCM).

Through the INTERREG region only larger projects are implemented that are focused on improving structural aspects. The INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands does not have activities or services directly aimed at citizens. Citizens profit from the activities and projects indirectly. It is also an aim of the region to communicate to the citizens what the added value is of INTERREG and the EU (INTDIR). The idea is that by improving those structural aspects, cross-border cooperation and behavior becomes easier and in that way the citizen will acknowledge the role of the EU in this. Within the area of INTERREG Flanders-the Netherlands the European network for cross-border employment, EURES Scheldemond is active. This partnership aims to improve the conditions for employers and employees across borders by giving information and advice and is supported by the European Commission (EURESCH). While not directly linked to INTERREG, the activities of EURES Scheldemond will also be discussed in the next section since they are the partnership set up by the EU to promote cross-border labor and mobility.

4.3 Activities for border surfers

Citizen-advisory EUREGIO

The citizen advisory service that is part of the EUREGIO was created bottom-up, as a reaction to questions of citizens who needed advice. There is still need for this advisory service, because people encounter a lot of issues regarding living and working at two sides of the border. They are especially in need of personalized information, because the issues they encounter are usually very much dependent on their personal circumstances (EURCA). Citizens sometimes come to the EUREGIO after they have gone through a long search for information and they became quite desperate. In that sense, it is important to communicate the existence of the EUREGIO and its citizen advisory, since that can prevent problems if citizens come sooner to them with their questions. At a first glance, it seems that the border does not exist anymore and that can give citizens the idea that they do not need to care about anything, while there still is an institutionalized border, with national laws on both sides (EURCA).

EURES Scheldemond

EURES Scheldemond is a cross-border cooperation that is aimed at employers, jobseekers and cross-border workers. The aim is to promote labor mobility by giving information and advice about the possibilities concerning cross-border labor. EURES is a network of European employment services that is active in all EU countries and is financially supported by the European Commission (EURES, 2012). EURES Scheldemond is active in a part of the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands, namely in the Antwerp region, East- and West-Flanders (Belgium) and in the provinces North-Brabant and Sealand (the Netherlands). People can make use of the EURES advisers that are involved in other organizations, such as UWV, Kamer van Koophandel, IVR Schelde-Kempen and VDAB. Cross-border workers can get information about working and living in different member states. Employers also can

turn to EURES advisers to get advice when they want to recruit cross-border workers (EURESCH).

4.4 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, the question ‘what is the institutional context in which the construction of cross-border citizenship takes place?’ was central. Both the INTERREG programs aim at structural improvement of cross-border behavior and want to stimulate social-economic development. These activities have mostly indirect consequences for border surfers. There is no single regional policy that regulate border surfing, but a variety of partnerships, programs and projects. Via the citizen advisory service of the EUREGIO and the EURES partnership, border surfers can get information and advice to make the best of their cross-border behavior. In the next chapter the focus will be on the border surfers themselves and on the ways in which they deal with issues regarding their cross-border behavior.

5. Citizens' construction of their citizenship

In this chapter the ways in which citizens construct (aspects of) their citizenship within a cross-border region will be examined. When asked about their cross-border behavior and the issues they encountered, border surfers discussed various aspects that concern the construction of citizenship. These issues concern citizens' rights and duties, feelings of identity and belonging and practices and participation. All these issues with their relative importance will be discussed in subsequent sections but first, the reasons why these citizens became border surfers will be discussed. At the end of this chapter citizens' use of the institutions that were discussed in chapter 4 will be analyzed, alongside other institutions citizens make use of.

5.1 Reasons for cross-border behavior

The reasons citizens have to start a job or start living in the neighboring country are very diverse. However, a recurrent theme is that it is often for practical reasons. Some participants indicate that they needed work and that work was offered at the other side of the border. Sometimes they were looking for a job, sometimes someone asked them if they would be interested. Also, some started working across the border, for instance in the Netherlands via their Belgian employer and from there transferred to a Dutch employer. It can also be more practical to work at the other side because of proximity or financial advantages. As for living across the border, for some of the participants the lower house prices were the driver behind their move. For instance Belgian citizens that moved to Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and Dutch citizens that moved to Germany named this as the most important reason. For the Belgian border surfers also the financial advantages of getting mortgage interest deduction (*hypotheekrenteafstrek*) played a role in this. For Dutch border surfers who went to Belgium the availability of more space and privacy was important. Sometimes the mentality and culture was mentioned as a reason to move. For others, having a partner from the other country, or having found a house that was located just on 'the other side' was named as a reason. A recurrent theme when discussing the reasons or motivation for cross-border behavior was simply coincidence: '*we just ended up here by coincidence*' (#05).

When someone is living in a cross-border region, an important incentive for daily cross-border behavior is the price difference in goods between the two countries. For every border surfer, this is a known and important issue. When it comes to shopping, everyone made use of the border by taking the price differences into account that are a consequence of that border. The border surfers have a good knowledge of which products are cheaper or better where and they do their shopping targeted: '*You have to know what is a good deal*' (#04). For instance, getting gas for the car is cheaper in Germany, so if you work in Germany you get gas on your way to work. So, border surfers do not only consider price differences between local supermarkets but also between countries. This is experienced as an advantage: '*You have to know what you can get in which place. Just as everyone knows the difference between supermarkets, we know that not only for Belgium, but for the Netherlands*

as well² (#14). Not only the price is an issue, also what is on offer and the familiarity with certain products are important, which can be a reason to do the groceries in the country of origin. For Belgian border surfers, the opening times of shops on Sunday is a big issue and therefore they make use of Belgian shops on Sundays. Where border surfers go shopping for clothes etc. depends on their preferences and on the preferences of their family members, their familiarity with shops and more practical issues like proximity. In the next section, aspects that concern citizenship rights and duties that play a part in the construction of cross-border citizenship will be discussed.

5.2 Rights and duties

Voting

Having the right to vote is an important political right for citizens in a democracy, not only in a national but also in a European context. Border surfers who only work at the other side of the border keep their right to vote for their own municipal, provincial and national government. However, for border surfers who have migrated this changes and then voting can become an issue. European law dictates that every citizen of the EU can vote for the municipal government in his or her residence within the European Union (European Council 1994). Also voting for the European Parliament is a right that every citizen of the EU has, regardless of which country they live in (European Council 1993). Both Belgian and Dutch citizens can still vote for the national government when they have emigrated. For Belgian citizens, voting for the national government is mandatory, however, voting for the national government is not that easy anymore.

The Belgian border surfers living in the Netherlands all discussed these issues, but they were not always clear about how and where they could vote for the national government. Sometimes they got a letter from the government, stating they could vote. Often this letter arrived too late, so they were not able to vote in time. They also did not know why they sometimes did get the announcement and other times they did not. Some expressed the feeling of being forgotten, or to be called only '*if they from the Belgian election find it important enough*' (#15). Dutch citizens living in Belgium or Germany also expressed different opinions about voting. Going to the Dutch embassy, voting via the internet or going to a ballot box in the Netherlands were listed as options. Concerning voting for the municipality, all border surfers indicated that they were allowed to vote in their place of residence, although they did not always receive a ballot paper. Everyone was clear on their right to vote for the European parliament.

Apart from the actual practice, the experience of and ideas about voting differed among the border surfers. Like with every group of citizens, the actual interest in politics and levels of involvement were not the same for everyone. Some border surfers were not interested in politics at all, so they did not know much about either the politics in their country of origin or their new country. They also did not bother much about the voting issue; they did not really want to vote and therefore did not care if they could not. Other border surfers were more interested in politics, also because of the impact of the political decisions on their

² Translation of quotes by author

working environment. Therefore, they actively followed the (political) news that was of interest of them. Often, they chose to follow a combination of news in both countries.

Having migrated to another country meant for the border surfers that sometimes they were less concerned with the national politics of their homeland. Since they now lived in another country, their interest in voting for the national government had diminished. In one case, a border surfer saw it as a shortcoming that she is not allowed to vote for the Dutch national government while she lives in the Netherlands just because she is not a Dutch citizen. She expressed a feeling of annoyance that while she is integrated in Dutch society and has to deal with decisions made by Dutch politicians, she is not allowed to vote and therefore has no say in it.

Paying taxes

Being a citizen means being liable to pay taxes. While for everyone the tax return can be complicated at times, this was one of the most prominent issues that came up in the conversation with border surfers, since they all have to deal with a more complicated form of tax filing and return, because they live and work in two different countries.

Before 2001, Dutch-Belgian border surfers were at a disadvantage because they had to pay taxes in both countries. For citizens living in the Netherlands and working in Belgium, this meant that they had to pay their income tax in Belgium and their social security in the Netherlands. Because the income tax in Belgium was higher and the social security in the Netherlands was higher, they had a double disadvantage. Therefore, a bilateral agreement was signed in 2001 to avoid the double paying of taxes. In the agreement, it was stated that in general, taxes were paid in the country of work (Belastingdienst 2012). The Dutch-Belgian border surfers mentioned this agreement often. Especially the border surfers who were already working across the border around that time mentioned it as an important fact, but also border surfers who recently started their work or had recently moved had a generally good notion of this.

For people living in the Netherlands and working in Belgium, *compensation* is available. This compensation is set because of the differences between deductions in the Dutch and Belgian tax system, such as the mortgage interest deduction. Dutch or Belgian citizens living in the Netherlands and working in Belgium do not get these deductions if they file their taxes in Belgium. Therefore, they qualify for the compensation, which is calculated by taking the difference between the total amount of taxes paid in the current situation and the total amount of taxes paid if the income would be taxed in the Netherlands. This is the *general* compensation. There is also a *special* compensation which applies to citizens who were working across the border at the time of the agreement, at last at 31 December 2002. They get an extra compensation because other arrangements expired with the signing of the new agreement (Belastingdienst 2012). To get this compensation, the border surfers have to file their taxes in the Netherlands as well. Border surfers across the German-Dutch border have to file their taxes in both countries to avoid double taxing. For everyone, they have to pay additional taxes based on where they live, such as municipality taxes or land draining rates (*waterschapsbelasting*).

The border surfers all have their experiences with the taxing system and the paperwork it brings with it. It is one of the items that is named if they are asked about disadvantages or problems. Most of them had to hire a tax adviser to do their taxes because it is too complicated to do it themselves. It can be a problem to find the right tax adviser who has sufficient knowledge of the tax system in both countries. Even when border surfers have a tax adviser who they trust to do the job properly, it can still be a struggle to get the paperwork right. At least, it takes a lot more time than for a regular citizen. What makes it more complicated is that the tax service in the Netherlands has a different date for tax filings than has the Belgian tax service. This makes it necessary for border surfers working in Belgium to send a request for delay to the Dutch tax service every year, because they do not get the necessary document in time from their Belgian employer. This is a small example which shows how paying taxes, which is normally a relatively straightforward part of being a citizen, becomes more complicated for border surfers living in a cross-border region.

However, the difference in tax systems of the two countries can also have its advantages. For instance, the mortgage interest deduction which is part of the Dutch taxing system is one of the financial advantages why for some Belgians it became more interesting to move to Zeeuws-Vlaanderen. Also the system of provisional (monthly) tax refund was mentioned by the Belgian border surfers who moved to the Netherlands as this is not general policy in Belgium and gave them more financial leeway. Some of the border surfers mentioned this as one of the reasons why they moved. See box 1 for an example of how Peter and Julia made the decision to move to the Netherlands and now make their cross-border experience work through their daily practices.

Box 1. Peter and Julia: Belgian couple living in the Netherlands

Peter and Julia moved to the Netherlands from Belgium. Peter still works in Belgium, while Julia has a job in the Netherlands. They have one daughter. Their real-estate agent provided them with a lot of helpful information and they also became a member of the Belgisch-Nederlands Centrum. The main reason for them to move to the Netherlands because they could buy a bigger house there and they had the advantage of the mortgage interest deduction. They really like living in their new village because it is quiet and nice. Some aspects are more expensive in the Netherlands, like the costs of insurances and public transport. They can also make use of services and health care facilities in Belgium, since Peter still works there and they are actively involved in choosing where they make use of what services. Also, they get child support in the Netherlands, with an addition from Belgium since there the amount of child support is higher.

What border surfers would like to see is that it becomes easier to file your taxes. In the words of one participant: *'It shouldn't be that hard'* (#11). What they see as the problem is the lack of alignment between the two tax systems. They have the feeling they have to deal with two different institutions that don't communicate with each other and they are in the

middle of it. One participant acknowledged that he had to sift through the different laws concerning taxes; both for the Netherlands as well as for Belgium, but that sometimes they contradicted each other. Therefore he needed a third party to make sense out of it for him. Another border surfer discussed her disappointment when she found out that it took this much paperwork to get the tax filing done. Beforehand, she thought that because of EU legislation, it would be going easy and naturally, but that was not the case: '*Concerning the paperwork, I really thought because we are Europe that it would go naturally and that is totally not the case. Europe has nothing to do with it. ... Nothing went easy concerning the paperwork*' (#13).

Social security

Access to social security is an important aspect of social citizenship rights. Every national government has its own social security system with rules and laws. There is also EU regulation to secure the rights of migrants within the EU. The regulation (EC) No. 883/2004 of the European Parliament and of the Council states as basic rule that social security should be provided by the country in which the migrant works. However, there are exceptions such as for public servants that work as expats in another EU country (European Council 2004).

In general, the bordering countries Belgium, Germany and the Netherlands have a similar system of social security and laws. So, if someone has a job in another country, this provision of social security is not by definition a problem. However, to get access to social security can be problematic. Some Belgian citizens who came to the Netherlands mentioned that they had difficulties in getting a social security number. When these things are sorted and someone is doing his or her job, everything is fine until something changes. This change can either be a change in job status or a change in national law and then the situation can get complicated.

If for instance a Dutch border surfer who has moved to Belgium but still works in the Netherlands loses his or her job, the unemployment benefits come from the Belgian government, since he or she lives there. However, unemployment benefits in Belgium are significantly lower than they are in the Netherlands. This is therefore a risk factor border surfers have to take into account when they move to Belgium (or Germany for that matter, since disability payments are also lower there). The other way around, if someone lives in the Netherlands but works in Belgium, he or she gets social security and health care insurance from Belgium. When losing his or her job, unemployment benefits are provided by the Dutch government, but then he or she has also to get the mandatory health care insurance (*basisverzekering*) in the Netherlands. This health care insurance is much more expensive than the Belgian health care insurance is.

Becoming disabled is another aspect of change in the working situation that can have a major impact on border surfers. One Belgian participant has had some health problems and it took her a long way to recover. Since she worked in the Netherlands, she was obliged to visit a *ARBO-doctor*. ARBO is a Dutch acronym which stands for 'working conditions' and is a form of legislation concerning health in the workplace. These *ARBO-doctors* review the health issues of employees and give advice to whether they can work and for how many hours a day. For this border surfer, the whole process of being ill and getting back in the

work process was confusing, since she was not used to this in Belgium. She felt really not at ease and did not know where to go to. Also the way in which the amount of disability payments is set differs between countries and this has an impact on the actual amount.

There are more issues regarding resignation and dismissal procedures, for instance the conditions on which you receive your unemployment benefits. In the Netherlands, if you approve your resignation or hand in your own resignation, you lose your right to unemployment benefits. However, in Belgium there is a specific regulation that contradicts this. If you lose your job in Belgium and you find another job that starts earlier than your previous contract ends, you still have to hand in your own resignation at the job where you were fired. However, this means that if your new job does not work out, you won't get unemployment benefits in the Netherlands.

Border surfers recognize the importance of national politics and changes in national law for their situation: *'you have the political system in the Netherlands and in Belgium, yes. That's what makes it difficult for us, sometimes. If one law changes, this has major implications for us'*. An example is that the system in Germany concerning the state old age pension (AOW in Dutch) has recently changed and the age on which citizens would get their state old age pension was changed to 67. That means that citizens who worked in Germany but now live in the Netherlands who want their state old age pension to start at 65 have a gap of two years and it is not always clear who is responsible and paying for that.

Another example of the differences between national regulations is the issue of the *mini job* in Germany. This is a special regulation in Germany, allowing citizens to have a small job and earn 400 Euros a month maximum, without having to pay social security. Effectively, it is a regulation to stimulate labor participation of for instance women. However, if you live in the Netherlands and get a mini job in Germany, it means that you have a gap concerning your social security. For the Netherlands it is clear: you work in Germany, so you have your social security in Germany. However, because of the special arrangement in Germany, you don't have social security through your job. Border surfers need to be aware of this and this is one example when cross-border laboring is the best option. Dutch citizens who are working in Germany are generally aware of this, but were not always aware of this when they started their job, see for example Maria's experience in box 2).

Box 2. Maria: Dutch woman working in Germany

Maria is a Dutch woman who works in Germany. She found a job there because there was no job available in the Netherlands and this was offered to her. At first, she was hired via the *mini job* arrangement in Germany. However, after quite some time her employer recognized that this was not the ideal situation and she received a regular contract. This caused a lot of organizing both by Maria and her employer. When she started her job, she did not know what the consequences of this regulations were for her and her employer. She likes to work in Germany, because she likes her colleagues and the work she has to do. Besides the extra time needed to sort out all the paperwork, having a job in Germany does not really affect her daily and social life. She goes to Germany to work, gets gas for the car over there because it is cheaper, but for the most part her life is still in the Netherlands and that is not about to change.

For border surfers who have children, regulations concerning child support and maternity leave also are important. From which country someone gets the child support is different for every situation. Aspects that influence that decision are for instance whether someone is single or not, and the kind of job someone has, for instance if someone has a regular job or is a public servant. The amount of child support in Germany is much higher than it is in the Netherlands. Also regulations concerning maternity leave differ and border surfers can sometimes profit from those differences.

Border surfers who are approaching the retirement age are aware of the difficulties regarding their retirement pension and state old age pension. For example, early retirement arrangements in Belgium are not always suitable for citizens who live in the Netherlands because of underlying assumptions and rules. Therefore, border surfers need to be careful and get information regarding to their personal situation to make sure they can make use of it and when. For every year a Dutch citizen works in Germany, the AOW pension is reduced by 2%. You can get an insurance to compensate this, but for a maximum of 10 years. This is seen by border surfer as unfair: '*now I get less AOW then someone who did not work at all. It should be better arranged for border surfers*' (#07). Also there are differences how the pension build-up is arranged by the employer. One Belgian border surfer noticed years after she had started work at a Dutch company that she did not have pension build-up and that she should have discussed that when signing her contract.

Not all border surfers were worried about their pension. More than once they stated that they did not know how it worked, but that they did not worry. They would deal with it when the time was there and require information about it only then.

Health care insurance

There are regulations concerning the health care insurance of border surfers, such as specific contracts between health insurance companies that cover the cross-border areas. For instance, a border surfer who lives in the Netherlands and works in Belgium has health care insurance via his or her Belgium employer. Via a contract with CZ, a Dutch health

insurance company, he or she can make use of Dutch health care facilities and this will be invoiced via CZ at the Belgian insurance company (CVZ 2012).

The health care systems between the bordering countries differ, for instance, how a doctor's visit is paid. In Germany, you have to make a mandatory payment each four months to make use of health care facilities. In Belgium, you first have to pay the costs yourself and then later on get a refund from the insurance company. Also, regulations concerning visiting a doctor during working hours differ. In the Netherlands, you can visit a doctor during working hours, in Belgium you have to take time off. This can be a reason for someone living in Belgium and working in the Netherlands to make use of a Dutch GP.

While European law guarantees that you can make use of health care facilities everywhere in the EU (European Council 2011), health care insurances often set rules and want citizens to ask permission before they make use of health care facilities in another country. The border surfers are aware of this, but also state that they don't always ask this permission. Sometimes that creates problems, because the insurance company does not want to pay the costs. On the other hand, border surfers also realize their freedom in choosing where they make use of the available health care facilities and how to deal with the health care insurance. It gives them a sense of freedom and provides them with more options. One Belgian border surfer who lives in the Netherlands and works in Belgium has Belgian health care insurance and therefore opted to have her baby in a Belgian hospital where she said the health care system and gynecologists are better. Maternity care was provided by the health care insurance of her husband, who works in the Netherlands and therefore has Dutch health care insurance. This is one example of how border surfers make use of the different systems and '*take the best of both worlds*' (#12).

Children of border surfers get their health care insurance from the country they live in. For instance, if a family lives in Germany and both parents work in the Netherlands, the parents get their health care insurance from the Netherlands but the children are insured via the German health care insurance system (*Krankenkasse*). The parents can make use of the German health care facilities, because their Dutch health care insurance company (Menzis) has a contract signed with the German *Krankenkasse* (see box 3). For a Belgium family where the father works in the Netherlands and the mother in Belgium, the kids have the Belgium health care insurance via the mother. In this case the work of the mother in Belgium makes it easier to arrange health care insurance for the children.

Box 3. Alice and James: Dutch couple living in Germany

Alice and James moved to Germany with their two children. They both work in the Netherlands and the children attend a Dutch school. They moved to Germany because they wanted to have a bigger house and live in the countryside and that was possible in the German village where they ended up. Since they are both working in the Netherlands, their social security and health care insurance all run through the Netherlands. Their health care insurance company has an agreement with the German health care insurance, so they can also make use of the German health care facilities. Often they actually make use of the German health care facilities, because they find the German system works better and the waiting lists are shorter. However, they sometimes also encounter some problems or unexpected things, such as the mandatory payment they have to make every quarter of a year to make use of health care facilities. Another issue is the health care provision for their children who are both insured via the German system. In some cases they tried to make use of the Dutch health care facilities because of familiarity and language issues, but were not allowed by their German insurance company.

(National) laws

Citizens have to follow the law. For border surfers, they have to deal not only with one national law system, but with two. In different phases of their life, they can be subject to either Dutch, German or Belgian law. For instance, a Belgian citizen living in the Netherlands and working in Belgium falls under Belgian law for his social security etc. but if he becomes unemployed, he becomes subject of Dutch law. So, border surfers have to take into account two national systems and the system of law that applies to them gets a more fluid and changeable character. The participants are aware of the differences between national systems of regulation and that they need information about this. Some of them call for more alignment of national legal systems or implementation of European law in order to diminish the differences. There should be more awareness by national politicians of the consequences national law has for border surfers and their position should be taken more into account, because now they sometimes get the feeling like they are not being heard and seen.

5.3 Identity and belonging

Nationality

While border surfers cross the border on a almost daily basis and therefore participate in at least two national systems, they have a good notion of their own nationality. '*I feel like a Belgian citizen*' (#03). The nationality seems a given, something that does not change and is also related to feelings of belonging and identity. It is just who you are: '*a Dutchman is a Dutchman and a Belgian is a Belgian*' (#14). Deep down, border surfers feel like they are still Belgian or Dutch and that does not change. What does change however, is how they are seen by others. For instance, a Belgian citizen who lives in the Netherlands and works in Belgium, is in his place of residence seen as 'the Belgian' but at his work seen as 'the Dutchman'. Border surfers who have emigrated note that they could change nationalities but they don't see the need for it. '*There is not a reason or cause to change it [nationality]*'(#15). Some

indicate that they would naturalize if it would have specific advantages or if they felt like they belonged more in their new country.

Belonging

While the notion of their nationality was clear for everyone, the feeling of belonging and being at home was not so clear for everyone. There are border surfers who indicate that they feel less ‘Dutch’ or ‘Belgian’ because they live in another country or because they migrated. They indicate that they have developed a more ‘mixed’ feeling of belonging and that in some cases they do not feel either Dutch, Belgian or German. The Dutch-Belgian border surfers noticed that there was a difference between different regions in the Netherlands – they felt more connected with the south of the Netherlands, “below the rivers”, than with the rest of the Netherlands, since the culture in the south of the Netherlands is more related to the Belgian culture.

Integration

The feeling of belonging was also quite often related to the process of integration and feeling at home. Border surfers see their own role as very important in that process: *‘it has to do with yourself: you have to open up and get involved’* (#09). Having good relations with the neighbors also is seen as very important. You feel at home when you have good contact with them. You have to live with your neighbors and getting along with them is an important aspect of integration. Border surfers also indicate that they are active in the community by doing their daily shopping there, visiting cultural events and taking part in sport clubs and associations. While border surfers also develop friendships in their new residence, there remains a difference. This has to do with a shared past, a sense of history. Friendship with people that you have known since you were a child is more intense and developed than friendship you have acquired later in life. Also, people tend to turn to their family and this means for border surfers that in some cases they have to make more effort to see their family and friends, since their family and friends often still live in their country of origin. It can also give a feeling of being left out in the immigrated country, since there the border surfer does not have those ‘connections from the past’.

Language

Making an effort to speak the language (especially in Germany) is necessary to integrate in the community. In border villages, also speaking *plat*, a regional dialect, makes it easier to understand each other. While in Flanders and the Netherlands, both ‘Dutch’ is spoken, as some border surfer put it, there are also many differences between the languages that can lead to misunderstanding but and to funny situations: *‘when I talk to the neighbors, we have to laugh about the words we use, like: what is she saying?! It’s fun’* (#13). The language was more an issue for Belgian border surfers who worked or lived in the Netherlands than it was for Dutch border surfers who lived in Belgium. Whether they actually had to learn Dutch and change their pronunciation also depended on their line of work and the city or village in which they work.

Involved in other culture

For every border surfer, being in the other country on a almost daily basis meant that they have at least some understanding or knowledge of the other culture. Some Dutch border surfers who only worked in Germany were not very involved in the German culture and daily life. However, they also noted that they developed more knowledge about Germany simply by talking with their colleagues or clients and by being there. There were also border surfers who invested in knowing more about the other culture. They watch the news and read the newspapers of two countries and they really like being part of two cultures. '*you live in two worlds. It's nice. Now I'm talking to you, and in a while I'll be there and be talking to them*' (#04). It also has to do with showing respect for the other culture and cultural aspects. Border surfers mentioned that mostly in regard with the existence of Dutch *enclaves* in either Germany or Belgium. While they themselves also live in villages with a noticeable Dutch population, they state that they interact and integrate with the local population, but that they heard stories about other villages where the Dutch migrants keep to themselves and live together in parts of the villages. They argue that this is not the right way to do it but that you should do your best to integrate also in the local community.

Regional differences

Finally, feeling at home has to do with the kind of place you live in. Living in the countryside, in a small village '*the real rural experience, where people know each other and say hello on the streets*' (#10) is for most of the border surfers an important aspect of that. Having migrated from a larger city (for instance Antwerp or Gent) to a small village in the countryside makes them feel more at ease and at home. They acknowledge that this does not necessarily have to do with differences in culture or nationality, but is also related to the difference of living in a village instead of a city. Living in a border village also is different from living in a village further away from the border. '*Here we are all of these 'borderline cases'* [in Dutch: *grensgevallen*], *for everyone it is the same*' (#14). Border surfers who grew up in a border region also are used to go to the other side for shopping etc. and used to living with people of another nationality. They also acknowledge that there are almost no differences between Dutch who live in Zeeuws-Vlaanderen and Belgians who live in Flanders whereas Dutch in other parts of the Netherlands, especially in the north, are considered to be very different.

Mentality and culture differences

Being in contact with people of another culture also means noticing differences in attitudes and mentality. The border surfers all had their experiences with and stories about that. Besides the general, slightly stereotypical comments –Dutch are arrogant, Germans have a strong sense of hierarchy, Belgians are bureaucrats – border surfers mostly reflected on their own reaction to and dealing with cultural differences, especially on the workplace. The working culture in the Netherlands is quite different than in Belgium. Belgians working in the Netherlands all had their experiences with getting used to that, especially with the Dutch attitude of speaking up and telling your boss what you do and do not like. Some Belgian border surfers needed some time to get used to it, others felt like it was a relief. Experiencing the mentality differences also gave them more awareness of their own assumptions and customs and made it in some cases possible to combine the different work cultures and create their own way of working: '*the way of working [in the Netherlands] is*

quite different in respect to the way of working in Belgium. I don't know what the better one is. ... I'm somewhere in between. I know the use of having the structure [the Dutch way] but I also like to work like, okay, I'll just solve it [the Belgian way]' (#14) (see also box 4).

Box 4. Thom: Belgian working in the Netherlands

Thom is a Belgian citizen who works in the Netherlands. He went looking for a job there when he could not find a job in Belgium. He really likes to work in the Netherlands. He recognizes that there are many differences between Belgians and Dutch and acknowledges that it took him some time to get used to that. However, now he sees it as an advantage. He likes the openness and the opportunity to fight with your boss and also the opportunity he has to combine his attitude with a more Dutch attitude. He likes being in contact with other cultures and states that if you show respect to others, they will show respect to you. He sometimes goes to the Netherlands to do some shopping. What he thinks could be improved is his employer knowledge about the situation of cross-border workers.

Border surfers generally enjoy getting to know traditions and cultural aspects of the other country. Typical Dutch traditions like Queens Day, *Sinterklaas* and celebrations of birthdays were mentioned. On the other hand, the *Burgundian* life style in Belgium is mentioned by the Dutch border surfers living there, which they see as a nice fit to their own life style. Border surfers all deal with the differences in culture and mentality, and choose the aspects they like to enrich their lives and thereby in some ways create their own traditions. In the next section, more attention will be given to the daily practices by which border surfers construct and give meaning to their life and what it means to them in daily life to be a *cross-border citizen*.

5.4 Participation and practices

Freedom of participation: having a choice

Being a border surfer, means that you have easy access on a daily basis to services, facilities, shops etc. in two countries. Border surfers see this as an advantage and make use of it to the best of their abilities. *'We take the best of both worlds. Right? We try anyway and I think we succeed'* (#12). That is the advantage of living in a border region: that you can choose. This happens in different areas and sometimes in very inventive ways. With shopping of course, as discussed before, based on price differences, familiarity and practical reasons. But also with the use of health care facilities border surfers actively choose and participate in such a way that is most beneficial for them: going to the gynecologist in Belgium because they provide better services, but getting maternity care from the Netherlands because the Dutch health care insurance covers that; going to the GP in Belgium because you can get an appointment the same day you call, or going to the GP in the Netherlands because then you can go during work hours. Another aspect is taking part in cultural events and traditions and

the kind of media someone uses. For instance, celebrating *Sinterklaas* since you moved to the Netherlands, but not celebrating carnival as much as it is done in the Netherlands or watching both Belgian and Dutch news and constructing your own programming. Border surfers also take a cross-border attitude in their work. They recognize the working culture where they come from and where they are currently work and combine elements of these cultures to make it work for themselves. They are used to compare attitudes and mentalities and reflect on their own behavior. These are just some of the examples that show that border surfers know how they can make use of the advantages of having the border close by.

Participation in social groups

The social life of the border surfers who worked in another country play out mostly in their own country. Sometimes they have some colleagues who become friends or they go out in the other country, but not that often. Border surfers who moved to the bordering country have a more fragmented social life. Because friends and family often still live in their country of origin, it becomes less easy to see them, also because there is a feeling of distance by their friends. Some border surfers acknowledge that because they moved to a small village they miss the cultural events and facilities they had access to in the city. On the other side, border surfers also get involved in their new place of residence via sport clubs, volunteering works and contact with neighbors and colleagues. Also when children go to a local school this contributes to the social life. For instance, if it is not clear where you need to go to get satellite TV, because you do not know how the municipality works. Finding out these things can cost a lot of time and energy. So border surfers engage in different social groups which are also scattered across the border.

Participation in politics and media

Border surfers pick up the news in two countries. How much they are involved mainly depends on their personal interests: '*I don't read newspapers, I don't follow the news*' (#13). Often a combination of media was used, both of the 'old' and 'new' country. It also depends on the work situation. The political situation can have an impact on the working environment and therefore it is seen as important to follow the news in that country. '*We need to get informed of two countries now. We do both, I read the Belgian newspaper on Saturday, because during the week I spend a lot of time in the Netherlands and in that way you stay informed on both sides*' (#15). Also watching TV shows and listening to radio is often mixed. Border surfers take the parts they like and it does not always matter from which country the show originates. '*I watch Dutch shows and Belgian shows, I'll find my own way*' (#13). They make use of their options and value the options they have: '*I watch the Belgian news at 19.00h and then I can see the Dutch news at 18.00h or 20.00h. So I can do both*' (#16). Also reading about the other country can help: '*Yes, well you need to keep up. If I am there [in Germany] I can join the conversation and have something to talk about*' (#04). Some of the border surfers were actively involved in politics, for instance in their town council. Because of their involvement in politics in their home town, they are also more interested in politics in the other country: '*Since I'm involved in the town council in Belgium, I pay more attention [to the political situation in the Netherlands]. ... there are things that I compare*' (#14).

Participation in the labor market: diploma differences

One aspect of daily life that participants encounter is the differences in diplomas. This can be a hindrance for participating in the cross-border labor market. One Belgian border surfer had the feeling that her diploma was not valued at the right level in the Netherlands. She thought she had a degree on a HBO (higher education) level, while in the Netherlands it was seen as MBO (intermediate vocational education). She felt not rightly judged and evaluated and had the feeling that her education and qualities were worth less in the Netherlands and that there was taken advantage of her. Another Belgian border surfer, who lives in the Netherlands and whose wife works in the Netherlands, could not find a job in his line of work with his diploma in the Netherlands, since his diploma was simply not acknowledged. He therefore did not have the opportunity to participate in the Dutch labor market. Sometimes degrees need to be reevaluated and assessed before someone can start work in another country. Border surfers recognize these institutionalized borders within the EU and call for improvement: *'It should be self-evident. There should be a system, like a table or something which shows what degree you have in Belgium and what the Dutch equivalent of that diploma is'* (#03).

Preparation and paperwork

As discussed before in the 'paying taxes' section, being a border surfer means dealing with a lot of paperwork and figuring out what needs to be done. This is part of their daily life and practices and is mentioned as one of the important factors concerning their cross-border behavior. Therefore, dealing with paperwork can be seen as an important practice through which border surfers construct their citizenship. There are many things one needs to do and figure out when start working or living across the border. It takes time and preparation. This is also an issue of consideration before making the decision: *'What stops people [from moving to the Netherlands] I think is that they are afraid of the paperwork'* (#10). However, most of the border surfers acknowledge that if you get started and invest time in figuring out how it works, it is not that bad. It took some time, for some border surfers even up to two years. However, there was also a sense of relief after it was organized and people had the feeling that they were in control. One border surfer also referred to the administrative side of it as '*an adventure*' (#08). The participants also keep learning things as they come across new problems: *'It is also.. encounter things, in practice I should say'* (#15).

Information gathering

Every border surfer needs information. This is a very important aspect and condition for successful cross-border behavior. Problems originate when people do not have the right information before starting their cross-border behavior. Since many of the regulations and rules concerning cross-border behavior are very personal and apply differently to individual situations, having access to individual, targeted information is very important. Information is also needed to make people aware of the issues that are important and of the institutionalized border that is in some aspects still there. Of course, there are different kinds of information that are needed in different moments during their cross-border behavior. When border surfers start to think about moving or working in another country, they need to get information on the financial implications this might have for them and they need an overview of what they need to organize beforehand. After they made the move, the

information need shifts more to issues concerning the tax filing and practical issues in daily life, such as information you get from to municipality. In a later stage, information concerning retirement and pensions becomes more important. The information gathering process of border surfers can be seen as an important practice people use to construct and make sense of aspects of their citizenship.

There are border surfers who took control of their information needs from the start. *'I am someone who will figure it out. If I don't know anything, I will find out'* (#05). When thinking about moving or starting a job they started looking for information on the internet. They found information at different websites and from various institutions, such as the tax service (Belastingdienst), the Social Security Agency (Sociale Verzekeringsbank, Bureau Belgische/Duitse Zaken) or via their labor union. Also, in the Dutch-Flanders region many citizens found the Nederlands-Belgisch Centrum, commonly known as the *Stichting Grensarbeid*, an advocacy association for cross-border migrants. You can become a member of this group and then they provide you with information targeted at your personal situation. In the Dutch-German region some border surfers made use of the EUREGIO Citizen Advisory Department and got information through them. Other sources of information are the real-estate agents that help with the purchase of a house and tax advisers who are specialized in the tax systems in both countries. In section 5.5, more attention will be given to the ways in which border surfers make use of these institutions and associations to make their cross-bordering behavior a success.

Border surfers who started their cross-border behavior a number of years ago acknowledge that before the internet it was a lot more difficult to accumulate information. But for border surfers nowadays, internet is the easiest way to start looking for information. Some border surfers spent a couple of months informing themselves and making a plan for their move (see also box 5). This helped them deal with the paperwork and made it more comprehensible.

Box 5. George: Dutch man living in Belgium

A couple of years ago, George and his wife started looking for another house. They wanted a bigger and detached house and they could not find this for the price they wanted in their own city. Since they lived near the Dutch-Belgium border they started looking in Belgium and there they had the opportunity to buy a plot of land to build their own house. Before they decided to take the jump, George did a lot of research. He searched for information and became a member of the *Stichting Grensarbeid* where he received a lot of necessary information, also on laws and regulation, both national and European. After he knew 'everything' he could make a well informed decision and started to build his own house. The building went well and they moved to their new house. George thought it would take more effort to emigrate to Belgium, but the whole process was easier then he thought. He thinks that is partly because of the EU and that 'there are indeed no boundaries anymore'.

Border surfers also use the information they gather to form their opinion about certain (national) regulations and what could be improved. For instance the regulation in Germany where people can work for a maximum of 400 Euros a month without having to pay social security should also be implemented in the Netherlands according to one border surfer: '*Especially because those cross-border workers know how it works in Germany, there it is allowed and here [in the Netherlands] you have to pay everything, even if you work only 1 hour per week*' (#09). This 'referencing' became also visible through comments like 'we in Belgium' or 'here they do not know that, but...' Border surfers make use of a broader frame of reference and have the opportunity to assess regulations and political issues based on their knowledge of more national systems.

Some citizens call for a more overarching approach of information provision. '*You have to know that as an individual [which institutions can provide information] because there is no one who tells you*' (#05). Some state that the government should provide them with basic information if they made the jump: '*.. on the moment they get the announcement... I do not know how that works... that says that I work in Germany... maybe from the municipality... well, from the government anyways, I would expect to get information*' (#07).

Having the right information and more importantly, having access to the right information is very important in the experience of border surfers. If they do not know where to go or if it takes a lot of time to figure something out, it gives a feeling of being left out and a feeling of helplessness and frustration: '*Yes, I had to figure everything out myself. It took me 3 months to get a social security number. It would take someone else like 15 minutes!*' (#03). Or in the words of another border surfer: '*It was a difficult step.. ... No one was there to tell you what you needed to do, you had to figure out everything for yourself..*' (#13). On the other hand, if they felt like they had the information they needed and knew where to go is something new emerged, this helped the border surfers to positively evaluate their cross-border experience and to make them feel in control: '*If you make sure you know everything, than it will work out and you won't get many surprises*' (#10). '*It is not that hard. If you have people around you that can help you*' (#04). It also can help in looking at the future and give the feeling of having information near at hand '*If I would get chronically ill or something, I would just go to the Stichting Grensarbeid and then I will ask them when I need information. I know they wrote something about that, so if I need anything, I will call them and then they can tell me*' (#13).

5.5 Citizens' use of cross-border institutions

In this section, the ways in which border surfers make use of the different institutions that are active in the cross-border regions and that are discussed in chapter 4, will be discussed together with other institutions and associations that border surfers use in the process of constructing their citizenship.

Within the EUREGIO, some of the border surfers had experience with the EUREGIO Citizen Advisory. They knew of its existence and went there personally or talked to someone on the phone for information. They got to know the EUREGIO via internet or via someone else, like a neighbor or their employer. They find it helpful that the Citizen Advisory is there, and are

positive about the usefulness of their information, both via the internet and personalized information via the advisory services. It is not that they make use of the EUREGIO services often, but it is one possibility if they need some information. The border surfers in the EUREGIO did not have many notions of other activities of the EUREGIO.

For the Belgian-Dutch border surfers, when searching for information, they often come across the Nederlands-Belgisch Centrum. They can find some information on the website but to get more information they have to decide whether to become a member of the association. The membership fee can be a problem and not everyone wanted to pay the fee. A number of border surfers acknowledged that while it cost them money, they still decided to become a member. When they become a member, they use the *Stichting*, as they call it, for every kind of information. Besides a personal consult, they also get advice on the tax adviser and accountant company that are well suited to their needs according the *Stichting*. After having used their membership in the preparation and first phase, they continue to be a member, because '*..maybe I will need them again in the future and I think they are doing good work*' (#13). The idea that there is some sort of information portal where you can go to is something happens or if you need to know anything, is reassuring and gives a feeling of security. '*For now I know everything, but if I need something, I can just send an email*' (#10). Also, border surfers have the idea that they support the association with their membership and support the advocacy work they do, at the European, national and regional level. They feel heard and seen through the presence of the association. It makes them visible.

None of the border surfers mentioned the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands. This is not surprising, since they do not carry out projects aimed at citizens directly and do not have an advisory service. However, also the services of EURES Scheldemond were not mentioned, while it is their aim to inform citizens about cross-border work. It seems that the *Stichting*, which is a private association, is much more visible for border surfers when they start looking for information. If they have found the *Stichting*, they do not have the need for other advisory services such as EURES.

5.6 Concluding remarks

In this chapter, the ways in which citizens construct their citizenship and the issues that are important in that process were discussed. Constructing citizenship in a cross-border context is an individual process and works out differently for everyone. Besides access to formal rights, also feelings of identity and belonging and daily practices play a role in the process of constructing citizenship. In that process, citizens have a clear need for information and make use of different institutional structures to get this information.

6. Conclusion and discussion

The current study deals with the issue of constructing citizenship in a cross-border context. The research question that was formulated is:

How do border surfers construct their citizenship and how is this process of constructing citizenship embedded in the institutional context of the cross-border region?

In this chapter, this question will be answered, after which a discussion based on the literature will be made and suggestions for further research will be done.

6.1 Conclusion

Most of the border surfers were actively involved in their own process of becoming a cross-border citizen, in the sense that they tried to make it work. They searched for information and actively participated in the integration process. Citizenship in general is more and more seen as a process instead as a given and this *process* aspect of citizenship is much more present in the case of border surfers. They have to do something, to act, to get to know their citizenship rights and to know how and when to use them. They 'learn' their citizenship by doing and they acknowledge that this is necessary and that their attitude of being active and alert helped them in making it a success. In that sense, they become active citizens who know their rights and where to get information about their rights. Having access to information and knowing where to get the right information is very important and can be seen as a condition that is necessary to participate well as a cross-border citizen. Border surfers are of course mainly interested in information based on their personal situation and information about specific problems they encounter. Therefore the information they get can be selective and they do not always have a complete overview of their (citizenship) rights. For instance, border surfers who do not reach their retirement age soon often have some notion that it could be difficult how to figure out how and from who they will receive their retirement payments, but they do not worry about it. As long as they know that somewhere they can find information when they need it or someone they can go to and work it out when the time is there, it is fine by them for now.

There are various challenges, problems and advantages border surfers encounter and need to deal with. Border surfers all deal with the construction of their citizenship and what elements of citizenship they are able to construct in different ways. Therefore, the construction of citizenship is a very individual process. From the in-depth interviews it became clear that every border surfer has an unique way of dealing with the issues regarding cross-border behavior and that this is also related to his or her personal characteristics. The reasons citizens have for their cross-border behavior influences their way of constructing their citizenship. If they only cross the border to go to their work every day and are not actively involved in becoming integrated in the other country, they also pay less attention to cultural differences and do not as such develop a different or mixed feeling of belonging. Border surfers that are in need of information and are very active in their way of finding this information often also stay informed after they made the jump and moved to

the other country. They feel it is important to stay informed, for example about changes that can occur in laws and regulations because that gives them the feeling that they know what they are doing and that they are in control. Border surfers who did not gather information beforehand and did not actively acquire information were also less interested in changes and information provision afterwards after they move. Cultural differences were discussed extensively during the in-depth interviews. These differences were often seen as positive and funny. They contributed to the process of integration and feelings of belonging. Border surfers see it as a prerogative that they are able to choose which aspects of either culture they incorporate. However, there is also another side to this. Cultural differences can also lead to misunderstanding and a feeling of exclusion and some border surfers also mentioned this aspect. Border surfers had very specific norms about what is right and wrong in cross-border behavior. They have their own ideas what makes you a good cross-border citizen which Smith (2002) argues relates to the meaning that is given to citizenship where citizenship is being related to standards of proper conduct. Aspects that are important and often mentioned are maintaining a good relationship with the neighbors, being open and active in society, and having respect for cultural differences. Aspects that need to be avoided are living together in enclaves or 'ghettos'. These norms are also related to their own practices as border citizens.

Cross-border citizenship can also be seen as a fluid form of citizenship because it is subject to change in both personal circumstances as well as change in European and national legislation. Therefore, how cross-border citizenship is being constructed changes over time and is not a stable concept that stays the same after it is constructed. It is therefore also a citizenship in development, a process of becoming a cross-border citizen. This element of fluidity in citizenship has two sides: on the one hand, it can give the citizen a sense of freedom. The situation is open and there are opportunities to rework things to their own advantage and also in a new situation, finding the best way to deal with it. On the other hand, this fluidity of citizenship can lead to insecurity and a sense of danger. Not knowing what changes are coming, what the effects will be and if and how you will be able to deal with that can make the experience of citizenship and the process of construction very stressful.

Citizenship of cross-border citizens is often being constructed via an agent or intermediary agency. In that sense, cross-border citizenship can be seen as an intermediate citizenship. This means that issues regarding to citizenship need to be dealt with by asking advice of someone else. This 'someone else' is often not the regional or national government, but is a more private party, such as a tax adviser, real estate agent, labor union or the association for cross-border workers. Their services are used by citizens to get a grip on the complex issues such as paying taxes, having access to social security and insurances. Also the advisory service of the EUREGIO sometimes acts as a mediator in the process of constructing citizenship, by attempting to provide a bridge between national and European policy and the cross-border reality of the citizens in the cross-border regions. Citizens can make use of these services and in that way get information for their specific situation. Also, the aim of the EUREGIO and of the INTERREG region Flanders-the Netherlands is to improve the structural aspects of cross-border behavior, so that citizens experience less barriers when crossing the

border, thus making it easier for them to construct their citizenship. However, in their daily practices border surfers do not often make use of the institutionalized cross-border institutions and do not acknowledge the added value of these institutions for their daily life.

The layering of citizenship becomes clear in the cross-border region. As Painter (2008) argued, citizenship is multi-dimensional and multi-leveled because it incorporates membership of supranational, national and sub-national polities. In the cross-border region, this becomes very clear. Also the issue of portfolio citizenship is seen very clear in the cross-border region. Border surfers have access to a mix of right from different combinations of scales jurisdictions and perform practices on different levels as well.

On a supranational scale, the EU plays an important role in providing laws and regulations concerning cross-border behavior. While not every border surfer has a thorough understanding of this EU influence, their lives are influenced by it and it also provides them with certain European citizenship rights and duties. However, the European laws are mostly implemented via national laws and therefore not always recognized by the border surfers. Therefore the impact that European integration has on border surfers is mostly indirect because it is framed via national laws and citizenship and becomes visible through the opportunities that are created because of the integration process. Concerning the feeling of belonging to the EU and being a European citizen, this mostly takes shape via regional consciousness. Crossing the border on a daily basis means getting to know the other country better and becoming more aware of European neighbors close by. Therefore, more awareness of European regions in their own vicinity means that they identify the EU more or less with the cross-border region, but not with other European countries.

On the national scale, border surfers have to deal with two nation-states with their own systems and regulations. Besides that, border surfers also acquire various rights and duties that are important when constructing their citizenship via bilateral agreements. So, border surfers have to construct their citizenship by claiming their rights from two or more governments of which they are a subject. In that sense, there is a multiplicity or 'double citizenship' so to speak. Sometimes they are able to choose which government they go to concerning different aspects of citizenship. On the other hand, sometimes border surfers have to construct their citizenship in 'in-between' space. They do not always belong somewhere. No-one is totally responsible for them and for certain rights they do not know where to go and where to claim their rights. In that sense, they become citizens of 'nobody-land'.

On a regional scale, the structure that is provided by the institutionalized cross-border region does not give the border surfer direct access to citizenship rights, but can act as a mediator between the border surfer and national and supranational policies. On a local scale, border surfers are citizens of their municipality in which they have to find their way and become familiar with the regulations and specific municipal laws. As stated before, citizenship often is constructed via intermediaries. This construction via associations, project groups and advisers can be seen as a side-scaling of citizenship. So, where European citizenship and perhaps citizenship in general becomes more multi-leveled (Painter 2002), this 'multi-levelness' gets a new meaning in the cross-border region. This is because of the

complex interaction of the different scales together with bilateral agreements and private parties. The construction of cross-border citizenship is therefore embedded in a variety of (institutional) policies, agreements, projects and associations.

To conclude, border surfers construct their cross-border citizenship by:

1. Actively researching their rights and duties, by keeping these rights and duties and by participating in cross-border activities;
2. Because of this personal and individual participation, cross-border citizenship is also very dependent on the individual citizen and individual characteristics that determine how border surfers construct their citizenship;
3. However, because the construction of cross-border citizenship is heavily influenced by both personal circumstances as well as by national and European legislation, it changes over time and therefore is not a fixed construct but can be seen as a fluid form of citizenship.
4. The construction of citizenship often takes place via intermediary agencies or private parties. By using services that provide information regarding cross-border behavior, border surfers are able to make sense of the complexity of their citizenship.
5. Considering that the individually used rights and duties can be found on various levels (EU, nation-state, bilateral, and regional) cross-border citizenship can also be seen as a multi-level and portfolio citizenship. Although cross-border citizenship cannot be seen as forming a general European identity, border surfers are aware of various aspects of EU legislation and they experience the impact of this legislation on their daily lives.

To frame it differently, the way in which border surfers construct their citizenship in a cross-border context is active and focused on practices; is individually constructed; is due to constant change and therefore fluid; is constructed via intermediaries; and is created in a multi-level context.

6.2 Discussion

This study has shown that the construction of cross-border citizenship by border surfers takes place via complex and interrelated processes. It became clear that within cross-border behavior and the development of aspects of citizenship participation and practices are very important, which is in line with Isin & Turner (2002). Further research could focus on a more systematic review of the differences in practices between border surfers and also on contextual aspects that influence these practices.

The role of the EU and of European citizenship deserves further consideration. Based on this study, it seems that European awareness and citizenship is emerging in the background, via national and regional policies or institutions that 'translate' European law and ideas to the citizen. Also the notion that border surfers develop a more *regional* feeling of belonging within the EU is important in that regard. It seems that aspects of European citizenship

indeed work as an institutional mediation between '*the state and civil society, government and the people..*' (Enjolras 2008). However, the absence of acknowledging the European impact by border surfers on their cross-border behavior and therefore on their life questions the proposed consequence of increased legitimacy of the EU.

Finally, the multi-levelness of cross-border citizenship became clear in this research. The border surfers had experience with different governmental and non-governmental parties that had an impact on and that they could use within the process of constructing their citizenship. Especially the intermediary role (private) agencies have in this process is worth noting and could be the focus of further research. It seems that this is an very important aspect of the multi-levelness especially in cross-border regions. Further research could follow up on the portfolio form of citizenship (Painter 2008) that seems to be emerging in a cross-border context, by focusing on the relative importance that the different scales, jurisdictions but also these intermediary agencies have in the process of constructing citizenship.

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Appendix I: topic guide in-depth interviews

The interviews were started with some introductory questions, mainly about daily practices. For the rest of the interview a topic-list was developed to make sure all the topics on this list were covered at the end of the interview.

Introduction

- What kind of work do you do?
- How long have you been a cross-border worker/ since you moved to this place?
- Why did you move here, what was the most important reason?
- How do you experience your cross-border behavior?

Daily practices

- What problems do you encounter?
- What was difficult?
- What do you do in which country? (social life, shopping, school children etc)
- How and where do you get your information?

Aspects concerning rights/ duties (check if they are covered during the interview)

- Voting
- Retirement
- Social security
- Health care insurance

Aspects concerning identity/belonging (check if they are covered during the interview)

- Media/news
- Politics
- Member of associations/social life/cultural events
- Friends/family
- Feeling of citizenship/nationality: sense of belonging

Europe (check if they are covered during the interview)

- Notion of EU in daily life
- EU elections
- EU citizenship

Closing up

- Anything not discussed? Anything you want to share?