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To cite this version:

Julien Noel, Louise de La Haye Saint Hilaire, Rachel Reckinger, Sabrina Dermine-Brullot, Pierre Guillemin. Food territorialisation by the means of cross-border cooperation: experiences from the Greater Region. Disruptive borderlands. Unpacking the innovative potential of transbordering practices, imaginaries and policies, Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research, Sep 2024, Esch-sur-Alzette, Luxembourg. hal-04690652

HAL Id: hal-04690652

https://hal.inrae.fr/hal-04690652v1

Submitted on 6 Sep 2024

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LISER
LUXEMBOURG INSTITUTE OF SOCIO-ECONOMIC RESEARCH

Disruptive borderlands. Unpacking the innovative potential of transbordering practices, imaginaries and policies

4-6 Sep 2024 Esch-sur-Alzette (Luxembourg)

Food territorialisation by the means of cross-border cooperation: experiences from the Greater Region

Julien Noël*, Louise De La Haye Saint Hilaire*, Rachel Reckinger***, Sabrina Dermine**** and Pierre Guillemin*
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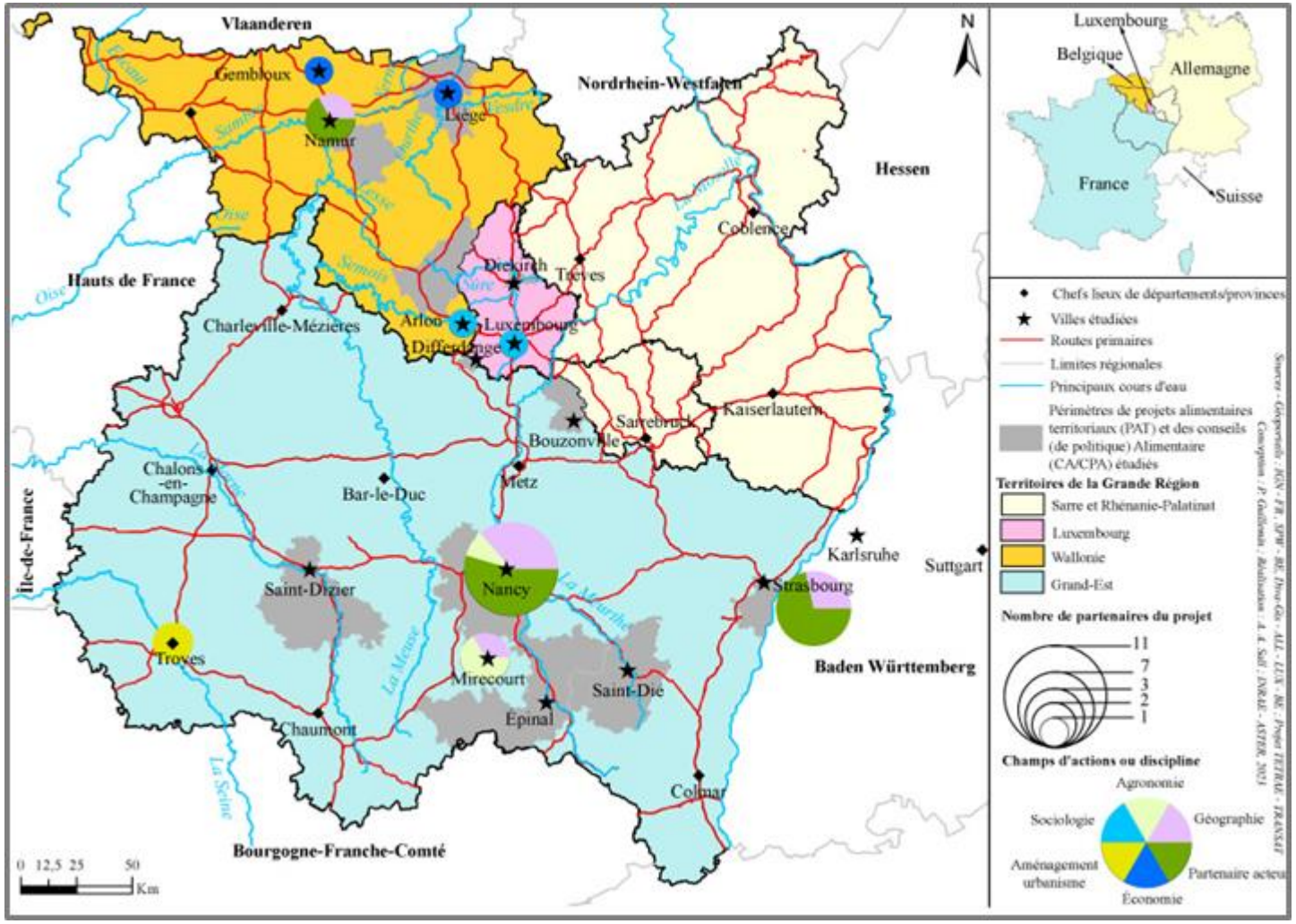
***University of Luxembourg – Luxembourg
****Troyes University of Technology - InSyTe – France

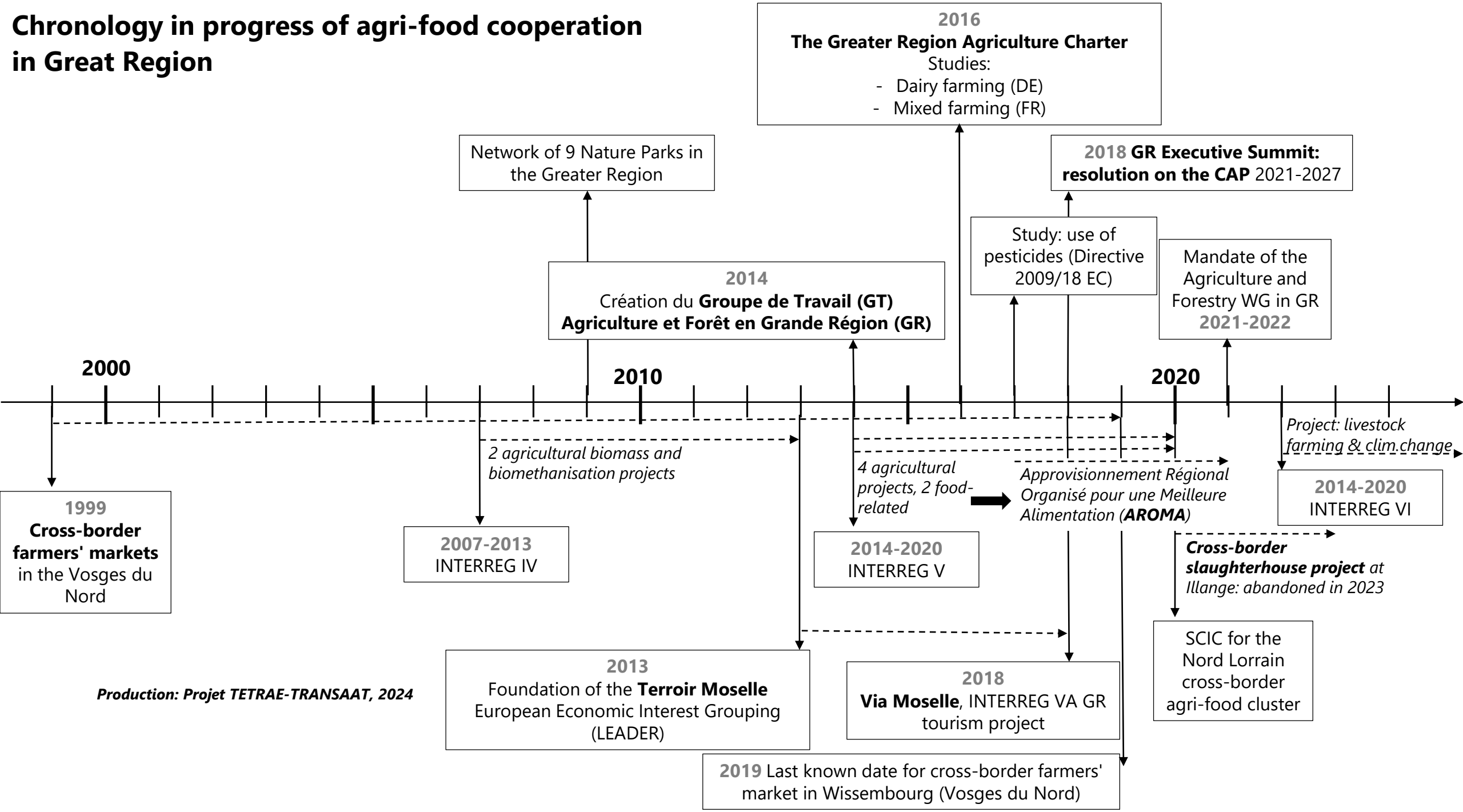
Introduction

- The growth of trans-local networks of cities committed to food policy (Moragues-Faus, 2021)
- A cross-border food market as a backdrop (Maye & Ilbery, 2006) or through migration studies (Huang, 2019)
- In foodsheds studies, the under-utilised potential of cross-border markets due to higher transaction costs than tariffs (Karg et al., 2016) : limited transport and communication infrastructures, slow and costly trade procedures and informal taxation.

- **Background and purpose of research :**
- A TETRAE action research project...
- ... dedicated to the transition of territorialised agri-food systems (TRANSAAT)
- A nesting spatial scales between local food projects and agricultural and food policies in the Greater Region
- The transborder cooperation as an innovative framework for agrifood policies and chains



Chronology in progress of agri-food cooperation in Great Region



Production: Projet TETRAE-TRANSAAT, 2024

Current situation and research questions

- **Current situation about agri-food cooperation in Great Region**

- There are cross-border flows of cereals via the main rivers and railways (which go beyond the historic Great Region, as they also come from the French side of Champagne and Alsace) and by road for livestock flows;

- Public-private initiatives in direct sales, in a context of high amenity (Vosges du Nord farmers' markets), but already signs of potential territorialisation;- Institutionalisation through the Charter in 2016, in parallel of studies to embody the cross-border mission;

- Agriculture and food as minority themes in the INTERREG program, focusing on the livestock and wine sectors. There has been a recent shift in focus towards food (local supply chains, waste).

- Institutional routine around crisis management/prevention of animal diseases/invasive species;

- Attempts to innovate on point 4 of the Charter dedicated to added value/CCPs through AROMA/TNT/SCIC, which have not yet been put into practice.

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- **Research questions**

- Is cross-border cooperation an innovative framework for the territorialisation of agri-food systems?

- What are its outputs in terms of "projet-objet" on the one hand and in terms of "projet-processus« (Pinson, 2005) on the other?

- What are the levers or barriers to progress in governance and the emergence of concrete experiences or tools for agri-food cooperation in the Greater Region? TAPs and FPCs could be areas of opportunity and experimentation to support territorial cooperation in the agri-food sector?

- **3 case studies**

1-The INTERREG project AROMA

2-The transborder slaughterhouse projet in Illange

3-The national cross-border territory (TNT) in Differdange - What are the levers or barriers to progress in governance and the emergence of concrete experiences or tools for agri-food cooperation in the Greater Region?

INTERREG AROMA: a major unfinished European project

- Finding: taken together, the territories of the Grande Région produce surplus of all the foodstuffs needed by the public catering industry – with the exception of fish, chicken and tomatoes.
- But taken individually, each territory has significant deficiencies in produce.
- Yet local agri-food chains are structured to give precedence to exports and local public tenders do not yet consistently favour local quality produce.
- AROMA tried to fill those gaps:
  - Participative charter aroung strong common values ---------->
  - Crossborder supply platform (*Organisme Transfrontalier d'Approvision-nement – OTA*) for efficient networking, collective learning (training & resources) and for economic accompani-ment of companies and institutions
  - Yet none of the States wishes to finance the initial running costs of this crossborder supply platform (2 years of 1 full-time job before projected financial autonomy), for protective reasons dedicating budgets narrowly to national jurisdictions.

4 principes au sein d'une charte de valeurs

4 Prinzipien innerhalb einer Wertecharta

PROXIMITÉ | Nähe

PARTAGE DE LA VALEUR AJOUTÉE | Aufteilung des Mehrwerts

QUALITÉ | Qualität

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https://www.aroma-interreg.eu

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  - Yet none of the States wishes to finance the initial running costs of this crossborder supply platform (2 years of 1 full-time job before projected financial autonomy), for protective reasons dedicating budgets narrowly to national jurisdictions.
- In parallel, local wholesalers already pragmatically work in a transnational way – but in a monopolistic for-profit logic distinct from the collective AROMA charter of shared values.
- Development of promising initiatives at regional or national level (Manger Demain, Supply4Future, NaturLëtz, Paniers Collèges, APAL', Natur Genéissen…), …), but no coherent cross-border coordination as modelised by AROMA.

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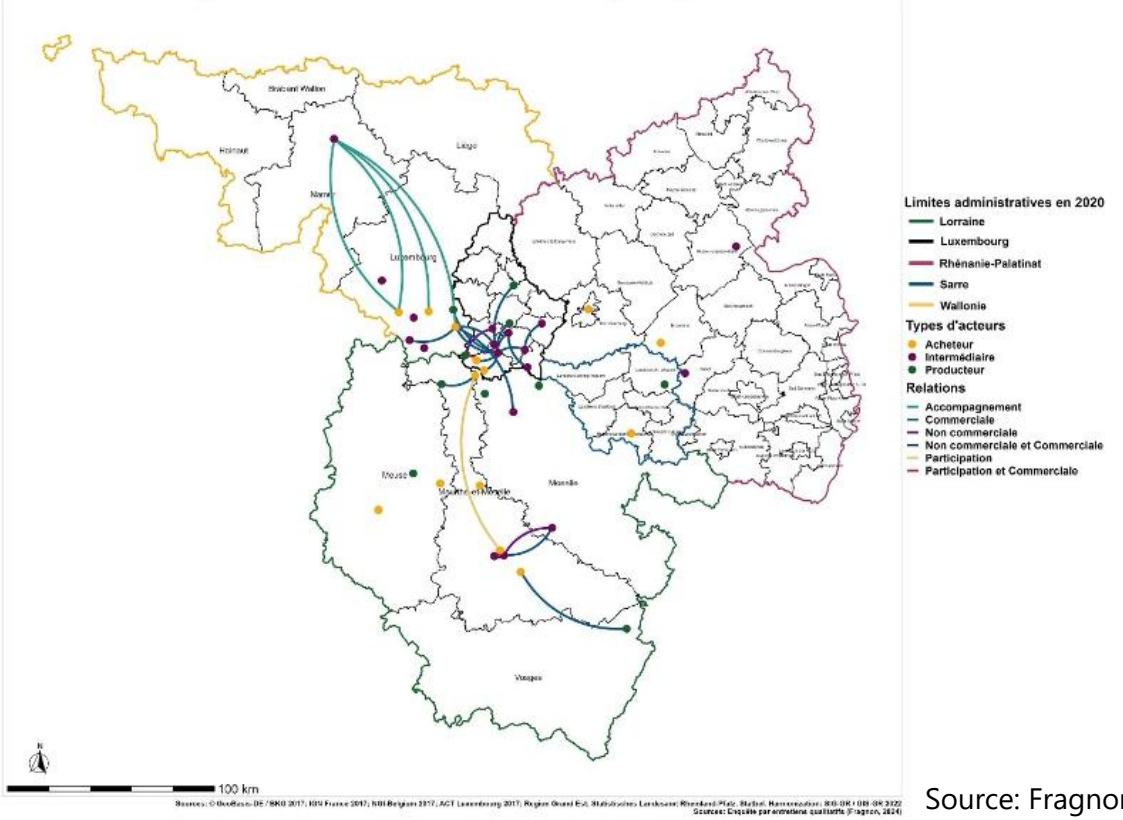
Localisation des trois types d'acteurs interviewés dans la Grande Région et qualification de leurs relations



Source: Fragnon, 2024

An entrepreneurial project thwarted: Illange slaughterhouse

- Transporting animals to slaughter: time consuming, costly and questionable (animal welfare, etc.)
- Since 2011, multispecies tool project for breeders on the three borders (including mobile on-farm slaughter)
- Cost = €7.4m / 170 farmers and Conviz (a Luxembourg animal genetics company) mobilised as equity investors / three banks lent the remaining €2.5m (800,000/900,000 each)
- The SCIC project consortium is working with the French Department for the Protection of Populations to obtain a derogation to relax health requirements for trade in animals and carcasses in the Greater Region.

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- Upstream studies committed and paid for, and 4 site meetings held, but 4 days before the first work, the banks pull out!

Républicain Lorrain, 11/10/2022

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- Upstream studies committed and paid for, and 4 site meetings held, but 4 days before the first work, the banks pull out!
- Faced with potential competition from new downstream cutting activities, is there pressure from oligopolistic agribusinesses?
- Local mobilisation: 3,000 signatures in retail markets in favour of the project / some signatories take a share of the capital at €400
- Equity crowdfunding platforms were used as a last resort. But the links between this banking model and the animal cause prevented any rescue through this lever.

Républicain Lorrain, *11/10/2022*

France Bleu, *26/10/2023*

Controversial local planning: the Territoire Naturel Transfrontalier (TNT)

Un périmètre géographique homogène de trois vallées (Chiers, Moulaine, Alzette) **unies par un passé industriel commun dont les acteurs** (communes, associations citoyennes, …) s'engagent via une Association Sans But Lucratif à **améliorer ensemble leur environnement par des actions de proximité**.

Relier vie humaine et environnement

En concret le TNT, c'est par-delà notre frontière franco-luxembourgeoise, des projets et des activités comme :

- des balades découvertes du patrimoine naturel ;
- des échanges scolaires autour de la langue et de l'environnement ;
- des ateliers et des formations d'appropriation de bonnes pratiques ;
- des conférences, des tables rondes de sensibilisation à la nature ;
- de l'appui à des démarches écologiques, citoyennes ;
- de la recherche sur des dispositifs lumineux moins nocifs pour la santé humaine et les écosystèmes ;
- …

TNT
TERRITOIRE NATUREL TRANSFRONTALIER

- TNT ASBL, non-profit organisation enhancing cross-border cooperation between the city of Differdange and four neighbouring municipalities in France around the themes of nature and biodiversity , around four main topics --->
- Differdange additionally bought 110 ha of land ('terrains de Saulnes'), situated in France (2019) within this perimeter (5.270 ha) – initial motivation: avoid it be used as a land fill & counter the transport of inert waste

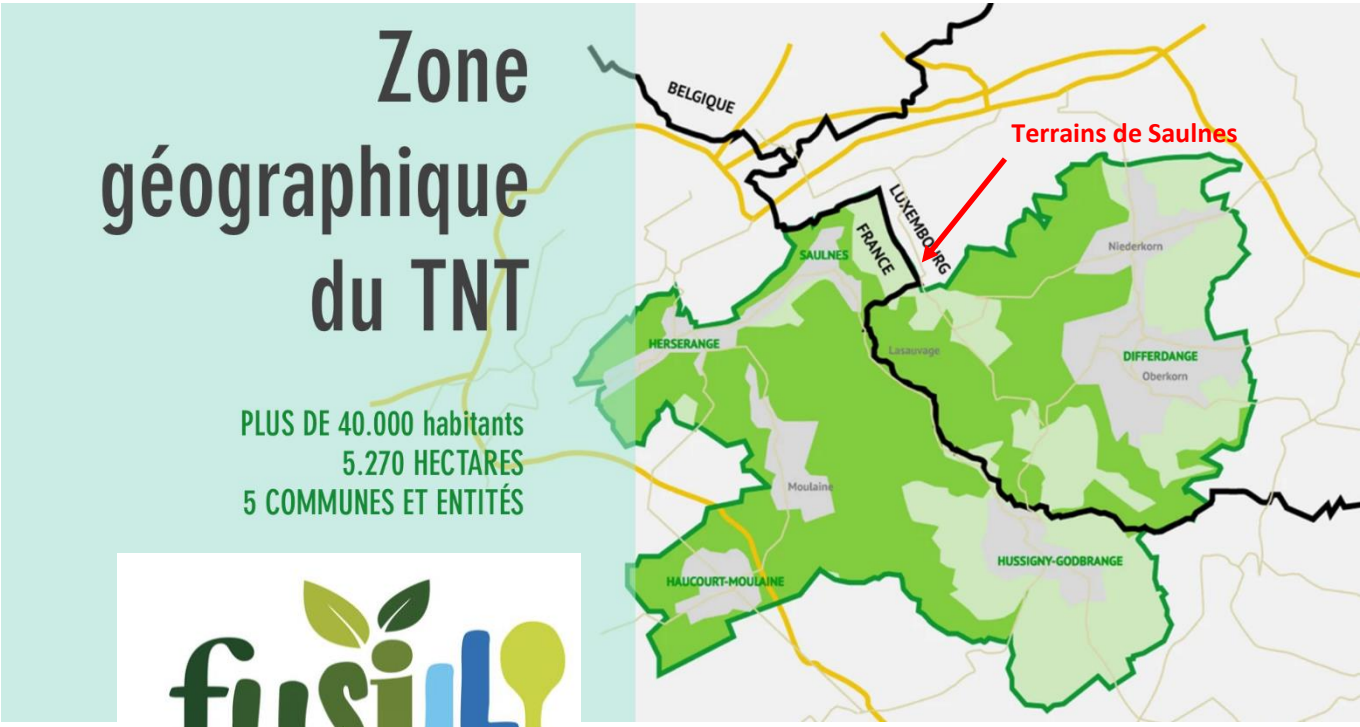
Gestion des ressources	Reconnexion environnementale	Consommation raisonnable	Innovation paysagère
Milieux, habitats, espèces, énergies, eau, …	Héritage naturel & industriel, cycles naturels et comportements, …	Alimentation, déchets, mobilité, économie circulaire, …	Design territorial, couloirs écologiques, tourisme et découverte, …

https://www.tnt-chiers-alzette.eu

Ville de Differdange · Ville de Herserange · Hussigny Godbrange · Ville de SAULNES · Haucourt Diverse cité

Controversial local planning: the Territoire Naturel Transfrontalier (TNT)

- Saulnes and Differdange present this sale as a territorial innovation to enhance transborder cooperation and reflexivity with ecological reconnection.
- TNT is entrused with the management of this land, but there is no written agreement between Differdange and TNT to formalise this.
- From 2022, the terrain could have been used specifically via the H2020-project FUSILLI that Differdange takes part in, for agrooecological and social inclusion projets around local vegetable and fruit production.



fusilli
URBAN FOOD PLANNING

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Strucutural issue 1: Farm lease

- Seeing as a municipaliy cannot qualify for farm status, an existing farm lease (which additionally can be inherited among generations of farmers) cannot be overthrown for the benefit for the city's own agricultural projects on agricultural land that it buys.

➔ Only solution: wait for the current farm lease to expire

➔ No further agroecological nor social insertion project can currently take place on the 'terrains de Saulnes'

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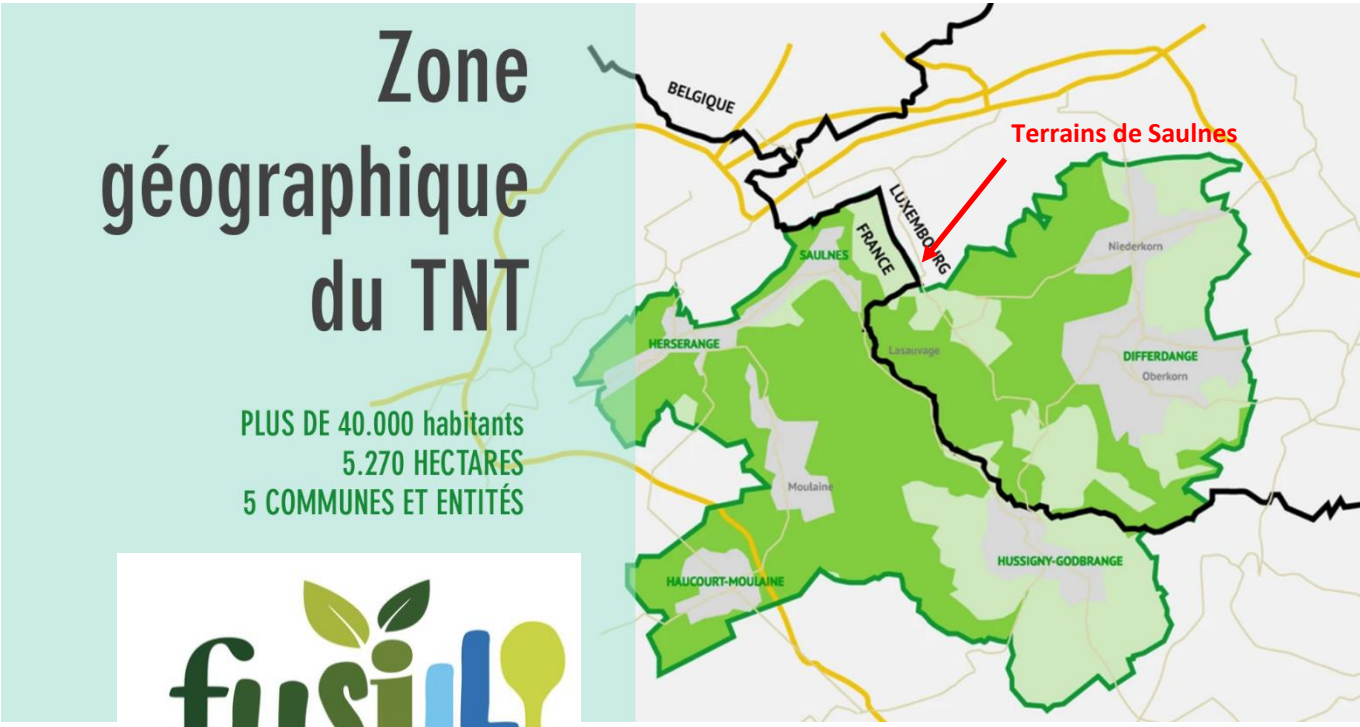

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Structural issue 2: differing national legal frameworks between concerned States

➔ Legal challenge: ensure that Luxembourgish workers in social insertion measures working on French territory fall under Luxembourgish law regarding tax, social security, and labour insurance.

➔ Solution: cooperation of French and Luxembourgish labour lawyers (solved, but currently blocked by issue 1)

Discussion and final remarks

Locking in material achievements and learning for agri-food governance

The socio-economic challenges facing the Greater Region justify the territorialisation of the agri-food sector, which is supported by public actors at regional level. But no results:

- despite the existence of specific national/regional policies and cooperation mechanisms;
- because the oligopolistic private firms do not take this into account and pursue cross-border trade in order to make a profit on the raw materials market;
- because local/national interests continue to take precedence over cooperation.

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Leveraging and learning from cross-border agri-food governance

- Even if they fail, the projects lead to learning how to work together to integrate national regulations at the level of a transborder region.
- For contiguous, large-scale cross-border cooperation, local authorities are effective, but in niche terms / For integrated larger-scale cross-border cooperation, a growing dynamic of cooperation by Euroregions (Hamman et RuB-Sattard, 2018) as communication channels (Durà et al., 2019), globally outside the scope of companies.

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Hypothesis and work in progress

- Is that agri-food governance on the scale of the cross-border area (such as PAT / CPA) should be able to defend and promote these issues in the face of national issues, encouraging dialogue and helping to find the missing funding (case of the slaughterhouse)?
- Is cross-border cooperation an invitation to move beyond institutional spaces, to a mesoscale based on the relationships between local projects/local policies?

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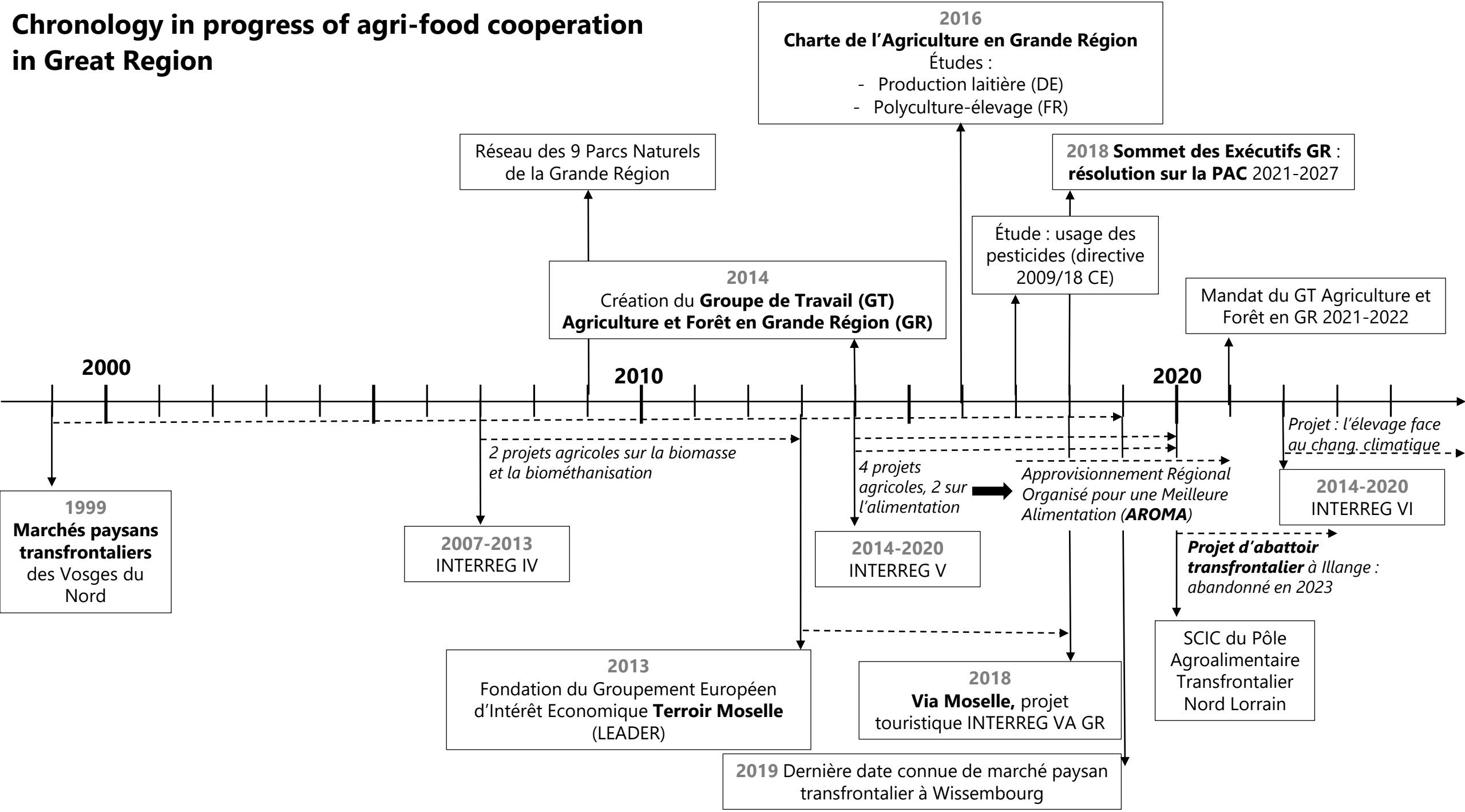
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