

## Contact information

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## Title of the paper (draft version)

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*Adapting new horizons: Unravelling individual readiness in cross-border collaboration within the Dutch-German Borderland*

## Abstract

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This qualitative research addresses a gap on the edge of economic geography and socio-cultural studies by examining individual readiness for cross-border cooperation (CBC) in networks in the Dutch-German borderland. European integration through CBC is imperative to overcome regional disparities. However, these inequalities continue to exist, with networks falling short of expectations.

While CBC is referred to as solution to bridge administrative and institutional barriers, and to foster regional integration, these barriers are frequently adduced as causes for CBC failure. Positive examples, however, demonstrate the potential for successful CBC when an optimistic mindset is adopted.

This research emphasizes the importance of individuals' mindsets. Individuals must overcome mental barriers and cultivate an resourceful mindset, shifting from perceiving obstacles to recognizing opportunities. However, the characteristics of such a mindset and the actual influence on cooperation remain underexplored.

When considering how to understand individual factors that promote or obstruct a cooperative mindset, the concept of readiness offers a fitting framework, because it captures individuals' beliefs, feelings, and intentions toward change and individuals stepping into CBC undergo cognitive processes similar to those observed in organizational change.

Through a methodological mix of focus groups and explorative interviews with individuals of both German and Dutch nationality, engaged in diverse social constructs, and employing abductive thematic analysis, this study explores participants' beliefs that drive their collaborative engagement.

This research contributes to science by introducing a mental readiness perspective into CBC analysis. It is also relevant for practitioners providing the foundation to design targeted interventions addressing mental barriers.

## **Biographical note**

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Max Klötters is an academic professional with a background in Logistics Engineering and Management Science. He obtained his Bachelor of Engineering in Logistics from Fontys University of Applied Sciences in Venlo and a Master of Science in Management Science from the Open Universiteit, the Netherlands.

For 17 years, Max has been part of Fontys University of Applied Sciences, holding various managerial positions and contributing to the institution's academic landscape. Amongst others Max provided leadership to two bachelor programs, leading teams of both German and Dutch professionals.

Currently, Max is engaged as lecturer for research skills within the Marketing Management program and as researcher connected to the Fontys research groups 'Lifelong Development' and 'Cross-Border Business Development'. Moreover Max is affiliated as external PhD candidate with the research group 'Organizational Science' at the Open Universiteit in Heerlen.

His PhD research centers around cross-border collaboration, specifically emphasizing the human factor, individual mind-setting and collaboration readiness in fostering cooperation between Germany and the Netherlands.

Max's experience as a cross-border commuter, residing in Germany while studying and working in the Netherlands, and past involvement in various cross-border collaborative projects (e.g. Interreg), provides a practical perspective to his academic endeavors and research focus.