

ID 1471 | UNDERSTANDING DIFFERENCES IN THE GOVERNANCE OF MACRO-REGIONAL COOPERATION

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1 INTRODUCTION

Since 2009, the gradual establishment of four so-called EU macro-regions has signalled a more comprehensive macro-regional strategy at the EU level. Up until now, such macro-regions have been established in four European areas: the Baltic Sea (2009), the Danube river (2010), the Adriatic and Ionian Seas (2014) and the Alpine mountains (2015). Since they have only been in place for about 2 to 7 years, macro-regions can still be considered a very recent phenomenon. Hence a systematic empirical overview of them is still in a primary stage (e.g. EC, 2016a).

When EU macro-regions were first launched, they were defined as areas 'covering a number of administrative regions but with sufficient issues in common to justify a single strategic approach' (EC, 2009: 5). From this definition, two elements are apparent. Firstly, EU macro-regions are composed of a number of smaller (regions or municipalities) or larger (nation-states) territorial entities each of them addressing their respective desires. Secondly, EU macro-regions correspond to areas with common issues, which may be geographical or sectoral in nature. These issues need a strategic approach in order to be addressed. Such an approach demands 'integrated frameworks [which help] to identify needs and allocate available resources', the so-called EU macro-regional strategies (Samecki, 2009: 1). Based on these two elements, it is fair to conclude that EU macro-regions encompass both a territorial and a functional dimension. Therefore, I argue that macro-regions are hybrid forms of organization balancing between these two dimensions.

Furthermore, existing macro-regions face various issues; they have different histories, political backgrounds, normative viewpoints and cultural preferences. In addition, they are brought into practice by a huge variety of actors and institutions. As a result, the way in which various macro-regions accommodate both dimensions is hypothesized to vary greatly. Hence, the underlying objective of this paper is to understand the hybrid nature of EU macro-regions and how they balance between the territorial and functional interdependences.

In order to address this question, I aim, first, to give an overview of the current state of the four existing macro-regions and, second, illustrate their hybrid nature by focusing on three aspects: 1) the pre-existing forms of cooperation and geo-political backgrounds these macro-regions build upon, 2) the substantive issues these macro-regions are dealing with, and 3) the governance structures they have set up. Both steps are the outcome of a thorough investigation of relevant EU and 'macro-regional' documents as well as interviews with a selective number of EU, cross-regional and national officials¹.

2 THEORETICAL AND ANALYTICAL POSITIONING

2.1 MACRO-REGIONS AS TERRITORIAL AND FUNCTIONAL SPACES

In the existing literature, the understanding of EU macro-regions has been developed by a number of considerations. From an EU perspective, macro-regional strategies are considered a form of bottom-up and place-based policy (Samecki, 2009; Barca, 2009), which has to be designed and implemented predominantly by its constituents. Another consideration comes from Stocchiero (2010) who welcomed the initiation of macro-regions by arguing that they constitute an 'interesting political experiment' comprising actors from various territorial levels (Stocchiero, 2010: 3). Furthermore, Schymik (2011) recognized the territorial and functional aspects of macro-regions by seeing them as a 'model experiment of macro-regional strategy' (Schymik, 2011: 5). Similarly, Dühr (2011) suggested that 'the argument for territorial and

¹ A list of interviewees is available on demand.

functional interrelations is at the heart of the EU macro-regional strategies' by arguing that macro-regions provide an additional governance layer for transnational cooperation (Dühr, 2011: 38). Lastly, Stead (2014) links macro-regions with the concept of soft spaces 'in terms of resource efficiency and policy coordination and integration' (Stead, 2014: 687). Although these considerations do refer to some functional and territorial aspects of macro-regions, they mainly point out their experimental substance. Interestingly, they do not address the issue of how these macro-regions balance between those aspects and how the state of macro-regions is affected by those aspects.

The following contributions, however, do connect to the distinction between territorial and functional organization within EU macro-regions. For example, Kern and Gänzle (2013) suggest that EU macro-regions may be affected by 'a shift from territorial to functional regions' (Kern and Gänzle, 2013: 10). In their terms, such a shift is described by the process of macro-regionalization and it affects the 'spatial dimension, boundaries, institutional set-up and governance' of macro-regions (ibid). As a result, macro-regions differ from territorial regions in their demarcation (based on functional interdependencies), shifting boundaries (transcending existing territorial boundaries), policy-specific institutional arrangements and new forms of functional governance.

Furthermore, Blatter (2004) elaborates the distinction between territorial and functional governance. To develop this distinction, he analyses categories such as 'the structural pattern of interaction, sectoral differentiation, functional scope, geographic scale, and institutional stability' (Blatter, 2004: 533). Based on them, he concludes that, in the ideal type of territorial governance, a central authority is charged with top-down interactions across the organizational structure (usually the nation-state); actors from the public sector dominate the participation in general-purpose institutions, which have clear boundaries across time and space. In contrast, the ideal type of functional governance encompasses networks interacting horizontally, incorporating both public and non-public actors, working in task-specific issues beyond concrete territorial, time and space boundaries.

2.2 AN ANALYTICAL FRAMEWORK TO STUDY EU MACRO-REGIONS

For the purposes of this study, I recognize the experimental character which macro-regions have thus far, however I regard their hybrid nature balancing between the territorial and functional dimension. To illustrate this hybrid nature of EU macro-regions, I suggest an assembled analytical framework. This framework is inspired by the contributions made by Kern and Gänzle (2013) and Blatter (2004), and it addresses two elements. The first element highlights the role of pre-existing institutions in mobilizing macro-regional processes, developing them and making them work. In fact, EU macro-regions build on pre-existing institutional arrangements, but the macro-regional processes themselves may, in turn, be affected by the pre-existing institutional arrangements. It is exactly because of this reason that 'macro-regional strategies need to be embedded in the already existing institutions operating at the macro-regional level' (Kern and Gänzle, 2013: 12). Yet, the second element shows the analytical pertinence of substantive scope and governance of EU macro-regions. This is because EU macro-regions result in a sort of new policies and governance structures. Drawing upon Blatter (2004) and Kern and Gänzle (2013), the substantial scope of EU macro-regions may refer to functional goals, tasks, boundaries or issues which territorial or functional regions have to deal with, while governance of EU macro-regions can be seen in the new forms of governance structures established in territorial or functional regions.

Hence, in order to understand how macro-regions are hybrid models balancing between their territorial or functional interdependencies, I focus on three aspects, namely 1) pre-existing institutions, 2) substantive content of macro-regional strategies, and 3) governance structures. To operationalize the three aspects, the first aspect analyzes the institutional and historical background which surrounds existing EU macro-regions. This includes an overview of pre-existing forms of cooperation preceded by a short overview of historical milestones determining the status of cooperation which have been in place before the launch of EU macro-regions. The second aspect concerns the substantial issues such as the scope, objectives, drivers and challenges attached to existing EU macro-regional strategies. The third aspect covers the organizational issues such as what governance mechanisms have been created and what issues they struggle with.

3 AN OVERVIEW OF THE CURRENT STATE OF EU MACRO-REGIONS¹

BALTIC SEA REGION

The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) can be traced back to 2006, when a report of the European Parliament called for a strategy for the Baltic region as a means to reinforce the regional cooperation of countries in the Baltics (EP, 2006). Following that, the European Commission (EC) released the Communication and the Action Plan for the EUSBSR in June 2009 and the European Council officially endorsed the Strategy in October 2009. The EUSBSR was the first EU macro-regional strategy and although it started as a purely European strategy including 8 EU member states, it was soon widened to involve 4 non-EU countries. It addresses 3 main objectives, namely 'save the sea', 'increase prosperity' and 'connect the region' which are further specified in 13 Policy Areas and 4 Horizontal Actions. At the end of the day, all these strategy features aim to develop implementation projects (flagship projects).

In order to make the EUSBSR work, various key actors are currently involved. Firstly, the European Commission holds a strategic role in facilitating the EUSBSR. Secondly, national coordinators are responsible for coordinating the EUSBSR at the national ministries level, while the coordinators of policy areas and coordinators of horizontal actions are in charge of the coordination of specific thematic actions (under Policy Areas and Horizontal Actions of EUSBSR). Furthermore, flagship leaders make EUSBSR projects run, while managing authorities of various funding programmes aim at ensuring complementarities between EUSBSR projects and other existing programmes. These actors get involved in or support the workings of EUSBSR governance mechanisms. In brief, the three components of the EUSBSR governance are: 1) the National Coordinators Group, 2) the Policy Area Steering Committee/Coordination Group, and 3) the Horizontal Action Steering Group.

DANUBE REGION

The EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR) was initiated, primarily by the efforts of Austria and Romania, as a new project of regional cooperation (Romanian Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 2010). The EUSDR was adopted by the EC in December 2010 and endorsed by the European Council in April 2011. The Strategy involves 9 EU and 5 non-EU countries and it addresses 4 main objectives, namely 'connecting the region', 'protecting the environment', 'strengthening the region', and 'building prosperity'.

Regarding the main actors involved in EUSDR, the European Commission offers strategic coordination and administrative support. In turn, National Coordinators (NCs) and Policy Area Coordinators (PACs) are in charge of coordination at the national and inter-ministerial level. In order to facilitate the coordination and communication between project experts and policy makers, the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) was established in 2015. Building on the involvement and expertise of actors, the EUSDR governance is organized around three components, namely 1) the Meetings of National Coordinators, and 2) the Priority Area Steering Groups, while 3) the Danube Strategy Point has got a more intermediate role between the other two components as well as the EC services.

ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION

In 2014, the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was launched as a tool for building prosperity in the region alongside the integration process of the Western Balkans (EC, 2014a). The EC adopted the EUSAIR Communication and its accompanied Action Plan in June 2014, while the European Council endorsed the documents in October 2014. EUSAIR involves 4 EU and 4 non-EU countries and aims at four basic areas of cooperation, namely 'blue growth', 'connecting the region', 'environmental quality', and 'sustainable tourism'.

The EUSAIR benefits from the EC support and the involvement of other actors. The EC services help the development of EUSAIR as facilitators and policy coordinators. National Coordinators supported by other institutions ensure the coordination and policy making at the macro-regional level. Another significant body at this level is the Adriatic Ionian Council, which informs the coordination of national agendas regarding

¹ See also Table 1, Annex.

EUSAIR among the Foreign Affairs ministers. Other officials at the national, inter-ministerial and regional levels (namely the Coordinators of Thematic Steering Groups) are engaged in running and implementing EUSAIR in their respective policy areas. Lastly, managing authorities of European programmes take part in the implementation/financing of EUSAIR projects. In terms of governance, EUSAIR consists of three main components: 1) the Governing Board, which is the main body coordinating representatives across the national level, and 2) the Thematic Steering Groups in charge of EUSAIR coordination and implementation, while 3) the EUSAIR Facility Point is anticipated to be an intermediate mechanism to support the previous two components and the EC services.

ALPINE REGION

More recently, the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) was released by the European Commission in November 2015 and endorsed by the European Council in June 2016. It is perceived to be an EU laboratory for effective cross-sectorial and multi-level governance (EC, 2015a). The Strategy is composed of 5 EU and 2 non-EU countries which target at three basic areas of cooperation: sustainable growth and innovation, connectivity and sustainability.

The EUSALP is quite unique in terms of the actors' involvement. The EC services are present in order to provide strategic coordination and facilitation. National representatives get involved in various governance arrangements (e.g. Executive Board), but, due to their empowered role, actors from the regional administrations are of particular importance in EUSALP. Lastly, the Alpine Convention and the Interreg Alpine Space Programme participate as observers to support the implementation of EUSALP. After all, the governance structure of EUSALP includes: 1) the General Assembly, where EC, national and regional representatives meet in order to set the political agenda, 2) the Executive Board which is in charge of the overall coordination of EUSALP, and 3) the Actions Groups in charge of the implementation of EUSALP.

4 COMPARING THE CURRENT ISSUES OF EU MACRO-REGIONS¹

4.1 PRE-EXISTING INSTITUTIONS

BALTIC SEA REGION

Although the Baltic Sea states were politically divided during the largest part of the 20th century, they targeted to cooperate according to the provisions of the Helsinki Convention on the marine environment already in 1974. However, this was not realized until the 1992 convention. Under this convention, the Helsinki Commission (HELCOM) was established in 1995 to address a good environmental status in the Baltic Sea. This body has been a key contributor with regard to sea matters, while its relevance and expertise has resulted to the 'Baltic Sea Action Plan' in 2007, a plan for the restoration of the ecological status of the Baltic marine environment until 2021. Similarly, the VASAB has been another crucial actor in the Baltic Sea cooperation in the field of spatial planning. Its activities can be traced back in 1992, while it is currently active in the framework of the Baltic macro-region by offering its expertise on various spatially related sectors. These two pre-existing institutions indicate that functional interdependences have been drivers of cooperation in the Baltic Region already for a long time. Nevertheless, political cooperation has gradually emerged since the 1990s, indicating territorial interdependencies in the Baltic Region as well. From this point of view, the Northern Dimension (ND) and the Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS) are important frameworks. On the one hand, the ND constitutes a tool for political dialogue and cooperation of the EU member states with neighbouring countries commenced in 1999 and extended in 2006 in order to frame the political cooperation in the Baltics. On the other hand, this political cooperation is enhanced by the CBSS, an intergovernmental body among Baltic states operating since 1992. The CBSS supports joint activities in a variety of policy areas, and it is currently involved in the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in the fields of security, climate change and neighbour relations.

Lately, the EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region (EUSBSR) was suggested to reinforce the regional cooperation of institutions in the Baltics countries (EP, 2006). This goal seems to be achieved according to a recent EC report, which states that the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region has been a development

¹ See also Table 2, Annex.

which ‘reinforces’ and even ‘deepens’ the cooperation between existing regional frameworks (e.g. HELCOM and ND) as well as supports ‘the establishment of new networks and joint initiatives’ (EC, 2016b: 11). It has also provided ‘a new stimulus to put back on the political agenda some topics of regional importance’ (EC, 2016b: 13-14). Although the launch of EUSBSR may seem a development based on territorial drivers, it is equally dependent on functional needs. Based on empirical evidence, the EUSBSR is seen ‘to help the systematic cooperation of existing institutions’ and ‘to create a hub of knowledge’ deriving from existing expertise (Interview 4). This expertise certainly comes from ‘a number of ‘Pan-Baltic organizations’ which contribute to EUSBSR (Interview 9). In addition, respondents suggest that while pre-existing institutions (especially under HELCOM) offered significant work of political organization, the EUSBSR has contributed to policy coordination among participating countries and pre-existing cooperation arrangements (Interview 4). As an example, the Annual Fora organized by EUSBSR provide arenas for interaction between ‘pre-existing organizations [to] share their views’ (Interview 9).

DANUBE REGION

The Danube region is characterized by a unique geographical element (the Danube river) as well as fundamental transitions in political conditions of its constituent states. Illustrating its functional drivers, regional cooperation across the Danube river has been significant in the area of navigation since 1948. For almost seventy years, the Danube Commission has been a key actor to ensure a free navigation system in the Danube. Following the same functional logic, the International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR) and the International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) operate, since 1998 and 2005 respectively, in order to support the navigation and sustainable water management in the Danube and Sava river basins. More recently, however, regional cooperation has also been developing to support stability and integration of Danube countries, especially the Eastern European countries in transition. Serving a more territorial scope, the Central Europe Initiative (CEI), the Danube Countries Working Group (ARGE Donauländer) and the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) have been supporting the Danube states in their trajectory to increase capacity building and facilitate regional cooperation in the matters of economy, society, energy, transportation and tourism among others.

Since 2010, the emergence of the EU strategy for the Danube region (EUSDR) has brought a new momentum of regional cooperation among institutions and countries in the Danube region. Due to the EUSDR, for example, the ‘culture of cooperation’ in the Danube region has been improved (EC, 2016b: 26). This improvement predominantly comes from functional drivers. As mentioned by interviewees, ‘there was no systematic cooperation in some policy areas before, but they exist now (e.g. education, entrepreneurship)’ (Interview 2). Similarly, ‘new organizations get organized’ such as networks of researchers (Interview 5). Together with improved cooperation, a growing ‘political relevance’ of the region is recognized (EC, 2016b: 27), however, the main challenge of EUSDR is considered to be ‘how to avoid duplication (e.g. ICDRP)’ without having parallel structures working on the same issues (Interview 2).

ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION

The Adriatic-Ionian region displays its own specificities due to its very diverse and delicate geopolitical space, as overwhelmingly illustrated by the collapse of the Soviet Union, the transition to an open economy, the partition of Yugoslavia and the Kosovo conflicts. In their effort to leave behind old conflicts and cease new opportunities, the Adriatic-Ionian countries tried to establish transnational cooperation starting from the political domain. As a result, a major accomplishment in this region was the creation of the Adriatic and Ionian Initiative (All). This is an intergovernmental body created in 1999 in order to bolster regional cooperation and promote political and economic stability in the area. Hence, the All mainly reflects a form of territorial cooperation aiming to address functional issues. Later, the All constituted the forerunner of the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region. Following the All, additional cooperation spinoffs were established since 1990 in order to address a more functional imperatives (e.g. among economic chambers, universities and local municipalities). From a similar perspective, cooperation among the Adriatic and Ionian regions was also supported by the CPMR Inter-Mediterranean Commission since 1990 and the Adriatic-Ionian Euro-region since 2005.

Since 2014, the EU strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) was initiated and has benefitted from the experiences of the Adriatic-Ionian Initiative, its spin-off organizations and cooperation structures

operating in the Mediterranean space (EC, 2016b: 38-40). Along the same lines, interviews suggest that 'all these networks are very useful for the future development of the Strategy... because all these networks showed that something is needed' as well as 'all pre-existing structures made some kind of seeds...' (Interview 7). However, we should be aware that other interview responses pointing to the Adriatic Ionian case suggest that cooperation of pre-existing institutions under EUSAIR entails 'nothing really revolutionary' and 'no really new ways of operating' (Interview 8).

ALPINE REGION

The Alpine area can be considered as a different case in contrast to other macro-regions in geopolitical and geographical terms. It has been a relatively stable and prosperous area throughout the last few centuries, while countries shaping the Alpine region retain a long tradition in transnational cooperation with a common view over the good condition of the mountain environment and its ecosystems. From a more territorial perspective, the Alpine Convention has been a major development in the region by targeting to the preservation and protection of the Alps since 1995. Alpine Convention is an international treaty covering all major areas of interests of Alpine states. Compared to the Alpine Convention, the International Commission for the Protection of the Alps (CIPRA) has been a wide network of institutions, which have been focusing on the protection and sustainable development of the Alps from a more functional perspective. Already since 1952, CIPRA advocates the added value of regional cooperation among the Alpine regions and surrounding areas in the fields of biodiversity and landscape, climate and energy, transport and mobility as well as youth-related issues.

Only very recently, the EU strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP) has emerged as an additional layer of coordination among institutions in the Alpine space. Since its launch, the EUSALP is expected to 'ensure their participation, where relevant, in order to build on existing expertise and to organize possible synergies among themselves' (EC, 2016b: 50). However, the EUSALP seems to be actually situated within an already institutionally overloaded arena comprising of the Alpine Convention and numerous sub-national regions (Interview 5). Against this background, the Alpine Convention is currently involved in EUSALP by dealing with the "Preservation and valorisation of natural resources" and supporting other policy areas as well, while CIPRA's involvement in EUSALP is still a process in progress (Interview 5).

4.2 SUBSTANTIVE CONTENT OF MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES¹

BALTIC SEA REGION

The substantive scope of EUSBSR has been described to reinforce existing cooperation in the Baltic Sea region. Following this, the Baltic Sea region was viewed by its constituents as an ideal case to test new approaches of regional cooperation and regional governance which can be further copied by other macro-regions. However, such a view was stimulated by two main drivers. The first and foremost driver of EUSBSR was the deteriorating condition of the Baltic Sea and its water environment. The improvement of such a water environment was recognized as a challenge shared by all countries of the Baltic macro-region, illustrating their significant interdependence with it. Hence, the so-called 'Cleaning the Sea' goal, was considered a sensitive and actual issue to be addressed by the EUSBSR, and it has been reconfirmed as 'a core field' in the Strategy as well (EC, 2016b: 16; Interview 5; Interview 9). Secondly, there are also geopolitical drivers justifying the emergence of EUSBSR (Interview 5). Although the Baltic Sea macro-region was largely initiated as a merely European project, it was soon widened by the participation of Russia and other countries of the Nordic arc. This momentum has brought high expectations regarding the usefulness of EUSBSR, however evidence remains divided. On the one hand, it is argued that the visibility and understanding of the role, purpose and added value of the EUSBSR 'is still not sufficient' (EC, 2016b: 17). On the other hand, it is supported that actors saw the added value of EUSBSR due to the fact that cooperation in the Baltics was already more coordinated than other cooperation frameworks (Interview 3), as well as institutions identified new opportunities 'to get role again' (Interview 5).

¹ Four macro-regional strategies have been launched so far: the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR), the EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR), the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) and the EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP).

DANUBE REGION

Similar to the EUSBSR, the overall scope of EUSDR was conceived as a new project of regional cooperation. The main trigger which justified or even hastened the initiation of EUSDR was the issue of floods and their implications to navigation of ships within Danube in 2007. To illustrate this issue, interviewees note that 'there was an actual problem (that of floods) and flood management required a transnational perspective' (Interview 2). Yet, the EUSDR's objective lies on a vision of building prosperity realized by a context-specific sub-goals such as supporting connectivity, attractiveness, environmental conditions, and ecosystems. In that sense, the Danube macro-region seems to be equally motivated by new opportunities to be taken by countries across Danube. These two elements suggest that functional interdependencies are clear drivers for EUSDR. Yet, the EUSDR instead of depending purely on functionalities, it also adds the territorial element of integration of the Western Balkans. In doing so, political motives were crucial triggers. To illustrate this, empirical interviews suggest that 'the Danube macro-region helps the cooperation of operational level actors without the need of legal complications' (Interview 2), element which provides a certain degree of flexibility in joint action and project development among countries. Although political motives may be drivers in favour of EUSDR, an emerging risk is the fading political discourses illustrated by 'the EUSDR seems to be given a lower priority in the political narrative at national level' (EC, 2016b: 30). Additional substantive challenges in the development of EUSDR relate to how 'to define the actual joint action or what is really the focus' and how to achieve 'more concrete outputs' (Interview 2).

ADRIATIC-IONIAN REGION

The overarching scope of EUSAIR is to primarily address the prosperity challenge and, secondarily, the integration challenge. Regarding the first challenge, the EUSAIR's ultimate goal is to promote economic and social prosperity by supporting attractiveness, connectivity, competitiveness and the marine environment in the region. Certainly, this goal suggests a sort of vision based on the economic and social interdependencies between the Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions. It is partly inspired by the logic and objectives of the preceding EU sea-level strategy in the Adriatic-Ionian region. Hence, the main motives for cooperation under EUSAIR have been instigated by sectoral challenges. Regarding the second challenge, the accession and integration processes of Western Balkans are significant to EUSAIR. The crucial issue in such processes is the Adriatic-Ionian countries to 're-start talking', illustrating the territorial dimension of the EUSAIR content. Interestingly, in such processes the 'EC seems to have played a more active role' as well (Interview 3). This last point is partly related to a key issue in the content of EUSAIR, which is an important gap between the political commitment expressed by the high/ministerial level and the sequential support of their subjected administrations. Although EUSAIR is 'still in its initial phase' (EC, 2016b: 36), the above-mentioned issue is often attributed to the 'lack of adequate human, financial, administrative and technical resources' as well as 'the lack of leadership, commitment and ownership' among the participating administrations (EC, 2016b: 41). All these causes, nevertheless, reflect both an organizational/functional and a territorial/political nature of problems emerging in the EUSAIR.

ALPINE REGION

In the EUSALP, attention is mainly stressed to ensuring an effective horizontal (across sectors) and vertical (between territorial levels) governance of the macro-regional project. The Alpine macro-region seems to be predominantly motivated by seizing further opportunities, similarly to the Danube case. These opportunities pinpoint to functional interdependencies such as environmental, social and economic concerns in the Alpine mountains. As a result, the main objective of EUSALP depicts a vision of building prosperity by supporting attractiveness, competitiveness, connectivity and environmental conditions. However, the main difference compared to other macro-regions is the enhanced role of sub-national regions instead of national states (Interview 3). As in the EUSAIR case, the EUSALP is considered to be 'still in an initial stage' (EC, 2016b: 46), and the crucial issue to EUSALP success is the 'gap between the Strategy and funding opportunities' (EC, 2016b: 49). As such, this gap seems to be explained by '[the] structures, frameworks and timeframes [of existing programmes, which are] often not compatible with the needs of a macro-regional strategy' (ibid).

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES

Empirical research highlights a number of issues cutting across the content of all existing macro-regional strategies. The first issue refers how macro-regional strategies themselves are perceived. For example, macro-regional strategies are perceived as ‘a platform of cooperation at the transnational level in order to avoid duplications’ (Interview 3). In a similar logic, they are seen as ‘frameworks of cooperation [offering] opportunities for strategic cooperation’ to those involved (Interview 5). The second issue relates to the involvement of actors. Actors get motivated to develop macro-regional strategies ‘because they are confronted with things that they cannot deal individually’ (Interview 4). The last issue refers to a lack of clarity persisting across macro-regions. Illustrative quotes demonstrate a lack of clarity regarding ‘what is really the focus’ (Interview 2), ‘what they wish to achieve or no common vision’ (Interview 4; Interview 3), ‘their process, scope and who is involved’ (Interview 9). All three issues, however, indicate a consideration of macro-regional strategies according to their functional aspects rather than any territorial concern.

4.3 GOVERNANCE STRUCTURES¹

POLITICAL LEVEL

The highest level of macro-regional governance (political level) performs quite similar patterns across all existing macro-regions. More specifically, three main bodies inform the design and revision of macro-regional strategies, namely the European Commission, the European Council, and the High-level Group for macro-regions. Initially, the EC holds the strategic coordination and facilitation of macro-regional strategies through its various Directorate-Generals (DGs). Its role lies to highlight the functional character of macro-regional strategies by ensuring the efficient coordination of actors at the macro-regional level. Furthermore, the European Council is responsible to ensure domestic political commitment, facilitate the efficient allocation of tasks and participation of relevant institutions, and raise visibility of macro-regional actions. Accordingly, major political decisions such as the revision of Action Plans are made at this high-political level. Additionally, the high-level group plays an advisory role to EC and Council as well as facilitates the exchange of knowledge and experiences between macro-regions.

Up to date, the role of EC, and DG-Regio in particular, has been significant to the get the macro-regional strategies started as well as make them work. Empirical evidence supports the argument that EC held the role of strategic coordinator and main facilitator in existing macro-regions, especially during their initial stages. In the Adriatic-Ionian case, for example, extra efforts have been devised in order to set the governance mechanisms and help them produce their initial results. Furthermore, the European Council has played a role in initiating macro-regional strategies, endorsing European Commission’s workings, raising key horizontal issues of macro-regions (such as governance) and ensuring political commitment in favour of the development of macro-regional strategies. A slight difference to this pattern of high-level processes is the Alpine case, which is the only macro-region with a General Assembly. In this case, the EUSALP Assembly is a political body composed by EC, national and regional representatives, and the Alpine Convention (as observer). Although it may suggest a territorial dimension in EUSALP governance, its main task is to set the general political guidelines for EUSALP.

COORDINATION LEVEL

At the coordination level, a mechanism of National Coordinators is assigned across all macro-regions with coordination and visibility tasks. The main tasks of National Coordinators are, for example, to represent their respective countries in official meetings, find the most relevant delegators of their national administrations to develop and implement macro-regional strategies, coordinate the workings of their

¹ The analysis under this aspect is formulated slightly differently than the previous aspects. This is because the basic framework determining the governance of macro-regions has been sketched by the EC in a recent report (EC, 2014b). This governance report can be considered a milestone because it establishes three distinct levels of operation, namely the political, coordination and implementation. Having this in mind, the governance structures of macro-regions are analyzed in this sub-section based on these three analytical levels (see also Tables 1 and 2, Annex) supplemented by some complementary remarks on specific macro-regions.

subjected mechanisms (e.g. policy area coordinators), and finally make the results visible to those involved and the public. In most macro-regional strategies, such a coordination structure was established after the actual launch of macro-regional strategies, except the Alpine case. In this particular case, the so-called Steering Committee was responsible to prepare the macro-regional strategy following the resolution and the mandate declared by the participating countries in 2012 and 2013 respectively (EUSALP, 2013; EUSALP, 2014). This distinctive approach shows a more territorial approach in the EUSALP, at least at its early stage.

In order to support National Coordinators in their tasks, additional coordination structures have created at the national level (e.g. EUSBSR, EUSDR, EUSALP) as well as new working structures have been emerged at the implementation level. (EC, 2016b: 10, 27-28, 47). An example of such structures is a pilot European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) managing authorities' network established in the EUSBSR in 2016. Nevertheless, the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regional strategies have requested the establishment of a mediatory body to support the coordination and implementation of their macro-regional strategies, namely the Danube Strategy Point (DSP) and the EUSAIR Facility Point. Lately, a similar discussion is under way in the EUSALP (EC, 2016b:48). Regarding the former body, the DSP was created to harmonize the coordination of national and policy area coordinators in several functions. These functions relate to support the implementation, communication and monitoring between EUSDR policy areas and National Coordinators as well as enhance linkages between EUSDR and Interreg programmes (Interview 2; Interview 5). With regard to the second body, it is envisaged as a support system to help governance and coordination between EUSAIR National Coordinators, EUSAIR implementation bodies and EC services (Interview 1). Interestingly enough, the DSP was realized within a very short period of time (approximately one year since its conception), whereas EUSAIR Facility Point is still in progress (almost two years after its conception). In spite of that, both the DSP and the EUAIR Facility Point indicate a need to improve the functional dimension of macro-regional governance.

IMPLEMENTATION LEVEL

Lastly, the implementation level seems to be the most crucial part of macro-regional strategies, since the success at this level determines the continuity of the entire Strategies (Cretu speech, 2016). To support implementation, various implementation mechanisms have been established across macro-regions. These mechanisms reflect a functional type of governance (Blatter, 2004) because they are created in order to address policy-specific or action-specific issues (e.g. Steering Groups or Action Groups). Similarly, horizontal or cross-cutting issues are managed by similar type or organizations.

However, although creating and experimenting in new structures is evident, a number of organization dysfunctions still persist both at the coordination and the implementation level. A first issue is the lack of availability of funding sources. Statements such as 'not all countries have allocated sufficient resources' are illustrative to what is happening in the EUSBSR and EUSAIR cases (EC, 2016b: 16; Interview 1). A second issue is the differential support between the political representatives and the implementers of the macro-regional strategies. This issue can be observed in different occasions such as, in the EUSBSR, 'no clear mandates to representatives' or, in the EUSDR, 'a gap between the formal political support and the substantial support by national administrations' is recognized (EC, 2016b: 16, 31). Similar occasions hold in the EUSAIR case as well (Interview 1). A third issue is described by the lack of compatibility between the implementation structures of macro-regional strategies and the implementation structures of Interreg programmes (Interview 3, 4, 8). To illustrate this through the EUSDR, there is a 'gap between the Strategy and the programmes, which too often divides managing authorities and officials in charge for the EUSDR' (EC, 2016b: 32). Against this issue, actors have already warned that 'as long as existing institutions (EU, national, local) do not recognize the work done by macro-regional structures, macro-regional strategies will be struggling' (Interview 4). Finally, additional challenges arise with regard to the actors involved and the tasks allocated to them. For example, the allocation of tasks has been an issue for clarification both for coordination structures as well as those implementing actual projects. To resolve this issue in EUSBSR, the second revision of the EUSBSR Action Plan included a whole chapter to clarify tasks and responsibilities among actors.

5 CONCLUSIONS AND REFLECTIONS

This chapter aimed at providing an assembled analytical perspective of EU macro-regions. The main argument across this study is that EU macro-regions can be seen as hybrid models of organization which balance between territorial and functional interdependencies. Building on the distinction between territorial and functional spaces and informed by existing theoretical considerations, I attempted to illustrate the hybrid nature of EU macro-regions by looking into three analytical aspects (pre-existing institutions, substantive content of macro-regional strategies and governance structures).

Concerning the first aspect, the overall conclusion on pre-existing institutions suggests that the Baltic and Alpine macro-regions build on (rich) existing cooperation, where both territorial and functional dimensions are already established. In contrast, the Danube macro-region does not have long tradition of cooperation, except the domain of navigation, while the Adriatic-Ionian case enjoys limited pre-existing support coming only from political cooperation. More specifically, the EUSBSR is seen to reinforce and systematize the cooperation between pre-existing institutions in the Baltic region. In particular, its contribution is identified into improving policy coordination. In the Danube macro-region, the EUSDR has provided a new momentum for dialogue and regional cooperation. Although the main area of cooperation in the Danube was historically the functional area of navigation, the EUSDR provides new opportunities for political and economic cooperation among countries expanding from the core of the Danube river up to the Western Balkans. In the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region, cooperation of pre-existing institutions was provoked by the territorial need to make Adriatic and Ionian countries ‘talk’ again after a long period of disputes and conflicts. This issue still remains crucial, moreover the EUSAIR seems to build on experiences gained by the All in order to create new cooperation arrangements driven by functional independencies (e.g. blue economy, environment and tourism). Lastly, in the Alpine macro-region, there is a significant heritage of cooperation. Pre-existing organizations such as the Alpine Convention and CIPRA together with national and regional administrations in the Alps do provide territorial and functional focuses to EUSALP, which therefore needs to ensure the balance between all them.

Considering the substantive content of macro-regional strategies, they all commence with a functional scope, which is to improve coordination and efficiency in a number of policy areas. However, territorial imperatives are also apparent in macro-regional strategies, especially the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian cases. This can be seen either by focusing on the integration process of non-EU countries in macro-regional projects or by looking at the involvement of multiple actors from different territorial levels in various macro-regional processes. In more detail, the EUSBSR was initiated as a ‘European’ project in order to ‘Clean’ the Baltic sea, but it soon broadened its pertinence to additional functional areas by incorporating non-EU countries. In the Danube macro-region, the main functional trigger was the issue of floods in the Danube river. Starting from this issue, EUSDR soon reflected a broader political vision towards building prosperity in the Danube region and opening its relations to the Western Balkans. Similar to the Danube case, the Adriatic-Ionian macro-region aims to promote economic and social prosperity as well as the accession and integration of Western Balkans. However, it was created from a different starting point. This starting point was pre-existing territorial relations under the All, which are gradually developed in new functional forms of cooperation and networking. Obstacles to this trend seem to be the actual resources available as well as the political commitment of those involved. Turning to the Alpine case, the EUSALP is driven by a vision of prosperity which can be realized by a well-working functional coordination and governance. However, the realization of such a vision is threatened by incompatibility between EUSALP’s goals and the available funding.

Concluding on the last aspect, the governance structures of macro-regional strategies are principally driven by functional interdependencies, while territorial interests are still evident. In particular, governance structures balance between high-level processes that ensure strategic supervision to the EU and national actors as well as operational processes by which governance mechanisms respond to policy-specific challenges. Certainly, the main logic in the architecture of governance structures may seem identical across macro-regions, since the main motivation behind it is to improve effectiveness at the high-political, national (coordination) and policy-specific (Implementation) levels. As a result, new governance mechanisms as well as working structures are created across all macro-regional strategies in order to solve organizational issues caused by different governance systems within participating countries. However differences in governance structures still exist depending on those involved and the resources available to them. Reasons explaining these differences are the limited level of commitment and leadership of actors, the limited allocation of human and financial resources and the gap between macro-

regions as strategy tools and the implementation of cooperation programmes under already established streams of funding. A side but still relevant issue explaining differences in governance structures is multi-level governance (MLG). According to empirical evidence, MLG works differently in each macro-region (Interview 4; 8). Moreover, MLG is linked to differences in governance structures either by pointing to different actors and how they affect governance processes or by challenging the bottom-up principle and how lower levels of government and policy implementation hinder governance processes in the higher levels (Interview 2; 3).

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ANNEX

Table 1: Main features of EU macro-regions

Strategy	EU countries involved	Non-EU countries	Main strategy features	Main actors/ roles	Stakeholders participation	Main governance features
EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR)	Germany Poland Lithuania Latvia Estonia Finland Sweden Denmark	Norway Russia Iceland Belarus	Objectives and sub-objectives (3) Policy Areas (13) Horizontal Actions (4) Flagship projects	European Commission European Council High-level Group National Coordinators Policy Area Coordinators Policy Area Focal Point Horizontal Action Coordinator Horizontal Action Focal Point Flagship Leader	Annual Working Meeting Annual Forum of the EUSBSR	National Coordinators Group Policy Area Steering Committee/ Coordination Group Horizontal Action Steering Group
EU Strategy for the Danube Region (EUSDR)	Austria Bulgaria Croatia Czech Republic Germany Hungary Romania Slovakia Slovenia	Bosnia and Herzegovina Montenegro Serbia Moldova Ukraine	Pillars (4) Priority Areas (12) Indicative actions, examples of projects	European Commission European Council High-level Group National Coordinators Policy Area coordinators	EUSDR Annual Forum	Meeting of National Coordinators Danube Strategy Point Priority Area Steering Groups
EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR)	Croatia Greece Italy Slovenia	Albania Bosnia and Herzegovina Montenegro Serbia	Pillars (4) Topics per pillar (10) Cross-cutting issues and horizontal principles (5) Indicative actions, examples of projects	European Commission European Council High-level Group National Coordinators Pillar Coordinators	EUSAIR Forum EUSAIR Stakeholder Platform	Governing Board EUSAIR Facility Point Thematic Steering Groups
EU Strategy for the Alpine Region (EUSALP)	Austria France Germany Italy Slovenia	Liechtenstein Switzerland	Pillars (3) Pillar Priorities (9) Indicative actions, examples of projects	European Commission European Council High-level Group National Coordinators National Contact Points Action Coordinators Alpine Commission	Annual Forum of the EUSALP EUSALP Stakeholder Platform	General Assembly Executive Board (former Steering Committee) Action Groups

Table 2: Overview of elements in the four macro-regions

	EUSBSR	EUSDR	EUSAIR	EUSALP
Key structures and pre-existing institutions				
(Predominantly) territorial scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Northern Dimension (ND)-1999 Council of the Baltic Sea States (CBSS)- 1992 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dambe Countries Working Group (ARGE Doumländer)- 1990 Central Europe Initiative (CEI)- 1989 Regional Cooperation Council (RCC)- 2008 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Adriatic-Ionian Initiative (AII)- 1999 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Alpine Convention- 1995
(Predominantly) functional scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Helsinki Commission (HELCOM)- 1992 Vision and Strategies around the Baltic Sea (VASAB)- 1992 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dambe Commission- 1948 International Commission for the Protection of the Danube River (ICPDR)-1998 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> International Commission for the Protection of the Alps CIPRA (CIPRA)- 1952
Substantive content of macro-regional strategies				
Overall scope	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> to reinforce the regional cooperation of countries in the Baltics 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a new project of regional cooperation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> a tool for building prosperity in the region integration process of the Western Balkans 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> an EU laboratory for effective cross-sectorial and multi-level governance
Motives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> environmental pressures disparate development paths routes for trade and communication risks because of maritime traffic 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The world's most international river basin The Danube can open the EU to its near neighbours 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> functional area defined by the Adriatic and Ionian Seas prospect of EU accession for other countries in the Region port hinterlands impacts of land-based activities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> one of the richest areas in the world and among the economically most dynamic, innovative and competitive areas in Europe with unique geographical and natural features
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To enable a sustainable environment To enhance the region's prosperity To increase accessibility and attractiveness To ensure safety and security in the region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mobility Energy Environment Risks Socio-economic Security, serious and organized crime 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Socio-economic disparities Transport Energy Environment Natural and man-made hazards and risks entailed by climate change Administrative and institutional issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> economic globalization demographic trends high vulnerability to climate change and its foreseeable effects on the environment energy challenge geographical position in Europe, as a transit region high degree of seasonality
Overall objective	The area could be a model of regional co-operation where new ideas and approaches can be tested and developed over time as best practice examples	By 2020, all citizens of the Region should enjoy better prospects of higher education, employment and prosperity in their own home area. The Strategy should make this a truly	to promote sustainable economic and social prosperity in the Region through growth and jobs creation, and by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while	to promote sustainable economic and social prosperity of the Alpine Region through growth and job creation, by improving its attractiveness, competitiveness and connectivity, while at the
Main goals/pillars				
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Save the Sea Connect the Region Increase Prosperity 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 21st century region, secure and confident, and one of the most attractive in Europe Connecting the Danube Region Protecting the Environment in the Danube Region Building Prosperity in the Danube Region Strengthening the Danube Region 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced marine and coastal ecosystems Blue Growth Connecting the Region (transport and energy networks) Environmental quality Sustainable tourism 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> same time preserving the environment and ensuring healthy and balanced ecosystems Economic growth and innovation Mobility and connectivity Environment and energy
Governance structures				
Political level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission European Council/ Council of Ministers High-level Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission European Council/ Council of Ministers High-level Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission European Council/ Council of Ministers High-level Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> European Commission European Council/ Council of Ministers High-level Group General Assembly
Coordination level	National Coordinators Group	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Meetings of National Coordinators Dambe Strategy Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Governing Board Facility Point 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Executive Board (former Steering Committee) National Coordinators
Implementation level	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Policy Area Steering Committee/ Coordination Group Horizontal Action Steering Group 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dambe Strategy Point Priority Area Steering Groups 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facility Point Thematic Steering Groups 	Action Groups

Sources: EC, 2009; EC, 2010; EC, 2013; EC, 2014a; EC, 2015a; EC, 2015b

ID 1488 | THE ROLE OF ARTS FESTIVALS IN THE EUROMETROPOLIS LILLE-KORTRIJK-TOURNAI: BRIDGING GAPS IN THE FRENCH-BELGIAN CROSS-BORDER METROPOLIS

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1 INTRODUCTION

The 21th century is when the globalisation of capital has found, as of now, its pinnacle. According to Sassen (2007), this phenomenon has been responsible for the destabilisation of past scale hierarchies, previously almost totally centred at the national level, depicted by the nation state figure. The proliferation of multinational capitalist organisations with their structures based on a network of branches spread across the globe with its strategic functions concentrated in a unique place (or in just a few of them) contribute to