Thinking the Balkans out of the Box

EU Integration and Regional Cooperation – Challenges, Models, Lessons
Southeast European Integration Perspectives

Edited by

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Thinking the Balkans out of the Box
EU Integration and Regional Cooperation – Challenges, Models, Lessons

Nomos
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#### Bibliography
Acknowledgements

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Previous material, here thoroughly reviewed and significantly updated and completed, was published in various papers (duly mentioned in the introductory chapter) and two collective volumes, the first co-edited with Wolfgang Petritsch: *Regional Cooperation in South East Europe and Beyond: Challenges and Prospects* (Nomos, 2008), and the second with Paul Stubbs: *Towards Open Regionalism in South East* (Nomos, SEIP, volume 6, 2012).

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I dedicate this book to my mentors, with thanks for their guidance and friendship, to colleagues from whom I have gained much, and, last but not least, to my students who continue to inspire.

Geneva, 28 August 2017
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<td>AEBR</td>
<td>Association of European Border Regions</td>
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<td>AER</td>
<td>Assembly of European Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AFSJ</td>
<td>Area of Freedom, Security and Justice</td>
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<td>AII</td>
<td>Adriatic-Ionian Initiative</td>
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<td>ASEAN</td>
<td>Association of Southeast Asian Nations</td>
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<td>ARF</td>
<td>ASEAN Regione Forum</td>
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<td>BRESCE</td>
<td>UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Culture</td>
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<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China</td>
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<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa</td>
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<td>BRICSAM</td>
<td>Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa, Mexico</td>
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<td>BSEC</td>
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<td>BTTC</td>
<td>Brics Think Tank Council</td>
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<td>CADSES</td>
<td>Central European, Adriatic, Danubian, South-Eastern European Space</td>
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<td>CAP</td>
<td>Center for Applied Policy Research</td>
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<td>CARDS</td>
<td>Community Assistance for Reconstruction, Democratisation and Stabilisation</td>
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<td>CBC</td>
<td>cross-border cooperation</td>
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<td>CBR</td>
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<td>CCSI</td>
<td>Centre de Contacts Suisses-Immigrés, Geneva</td>
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<td>CEE</td>
<td>Central and Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>CEFTA</td>
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<td>Center for European Integration Strategies, Geneva</td>
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<td>CiO</td>
<td>chairmanship-in-office</td>
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<td>CLRAE</td>
<td>Congress of Local and Regional Authorities</td>
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<td>CMEA</td>
<td>Council for Mutual Economic Assistance</td>
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<td>CoE</td>
<td>Council of Europe</td>
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<td>COMECOM</td>
<td>Council for Mutual Economic Assistance</td>
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<td>CPI</td>
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<td>CSDP</td>
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<td>civil society organisation</td>
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<td>Dinaric Arc Initiative</td>
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<tr>
<td>EEA</td>
<td>European Economic Area</td>
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<td>EBRD</td>
<td>European Bank for Reconstruction and Development</td>
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<td>EC</td>
<td>European Commission</td>
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<td>ECNC</td>
<td>European Centre for Nature Conservation</td>
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<td>European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation</td>
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<td>European Neighbourhood Policy</td>
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<td>European Regional Development Fund</td>
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<td>ERICarts</td>
<td>European Institute for Comparative Cultural Research</td>
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<td>ERGEG</td>
<td>European Regulators’ Group for electricity and gas</td>
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<td>ESDP</td>
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<td>European Security Strategy</td>
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<td>European Territorial Cooperation</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<td>EUFOR</td>
<td>European Union Military Operation in Bosnia and Herzegovina</td>
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<td>EULEX</td>
<td>European Union Rule-of-Law Mission in Kosovo</td>
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<td>EUPM</td>
<td>European Union Police Mission in Bosnia</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organisation of United Nations</td>
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<td>FDI</td>
<td>foreign direct investment</td>
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<td>FES</td>
<td>Friedrich Ebert Stiftung</td>
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<td>FRY</td>
<td>Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>FTA</td>
<td>free trade agreement</td>
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<td>GAMA</td>
<td>Citizens’ Action for Peace</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>gross domestic product</td>
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<td>GFAP</td>
<td>General Framework Agreement for Peace</td>
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<td>GIZ</td>
<td>Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit</td>
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<tr>
<td>hCa</td>
<td>Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HDZ</td>
<td>Croatian Democratic Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>IBM</td>
<td>integrated border management</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICAN</td>
<td>International Contemporary Arts Network</td>
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<td>ICESS</td>
<td>International Conference on Education and Social Science</td>
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<td>ICTY</td>
<td>International Criminal Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia</td>
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### List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>IUCN</td>
<td>International Union for Conservation Union</td>
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<td>IDP</td>
<td>internally displaced person</td>
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<td>IETM</td>
<td>International Network for Contemporary Performing Arts</td>
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<td>IFI</td>
<td>International financial institution</td>
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<td>ILECUss</td>
<td>International Law Enforcement Coordination Units</td>
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<td>IMF</td>
<td>International Monetary Fund</td>
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<td>IMO</td>
<td>Institute for International Relations, Zagreb</td>
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<td>IBSA</td>
<td>India, Brazil, South Africa</td>
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<td>JHA</td>
<td>Justice and Home Affairs</td>
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<td>JHAEE</td>
<td>JHA external dimension</td>
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<td>KFOR</td>
<td>NATO-led Kosovo Force</td>
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<td>MANS</td>
<td>Network for the Affirmation of the NGO Sector</td>
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<td>MDG</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<td>MedPO</td>
<td>Mediterranean Program Office of WWF</td>
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<td>MERCOSUR</td>
<td>Common Southern Market</td>
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<td>MFF</td>
<td>Motovun International Film Festival</td>
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<td>MLG</td>
<td>multi-level governance</td>
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<td>MMA</td>
<td>monitoring, mentoring and advising</td>
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<td>MoU</td>
<td>memorandum of understanding</td>
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<tr>
<td>NAFTA</td>
<td>North American Free Trade Agreement</td>
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<td>NAM</td>
<td>Non-Aligned Movement</td>
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<td>NATO</td>
<td>North Atlantic Treaty Organisation</td>
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<td>ND</td>
<td>Northern Dimension</td>
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<tr>
<td>NDEP</td>
<td>Northern Dimension environmental Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>NIS</td>
<td>Newly Independent States (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Turkmenistan, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Moldova, Tajikistan, Ukraine, Uzbekistan)</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGO</td>
<td>non-governmental organisation</td>
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<td>NUNS</td>
<td>Independent Association of Journalists of Serbia</td>
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<td>NUTS</td>
<td>Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics</td>
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<td>NRA</td>
<td>New Regionalism Approach</td>
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<td>OAS</td>
<td>Organisation of American States</td>
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<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development</td>
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<td>OCR</td>
<td>Optical Character Recognition</td>
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<td>OHR</td>
<td>Office of the High Representative</td>
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<td>OSCE</td>
<td>Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe</td>
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<td>OSI</td>
<td>Open Society Institute</td>
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### List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Abbreviation</th>
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<tr>
<td>PED</td>
<td>EULEX Police Executive Department</td>
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<tr>
<td>PHARE</td>
<td>Poland and Hungary: Assistance for Restructuring their Economies</td>
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<tr>
<td>PISG</td>
<td>provisional institutions of self-government</td>
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<td>PJC</td>
<td>Police and Judicial Co-operation in Criminal Matters</td>
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<td>PPP</td>
<td>Purchasing power parity</td>
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<td>PROSECO</td>
<td>Public Prosecutors’ Network</td>
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<td>RBA</td>
<td>Region Building Approach</td>
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<td>RCA</td>
<td>revealed comparative advantages</td>
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<td>RCC</td>
<td>Regional Cooperation Council</td>
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<td>R&amp;D</td>
<td>research and development</td>
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<td>REC</td>
<td>Regional Environmental Centre</td>
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<td>RECOM</td>
<td>Regional Commission for Establishing the Facts about War Crimes and Other Gross Violations of Human Rights Committed on the Territory of the Former Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>RoK-FOR</td>
<td>Regions of Knowledge for Forestry</td>
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<td>ROSTE</td>
<td>UNESCO Regional Bureau for Science and Technology</td>
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<td>RTA</td>
<td>regional trading agreement</td>
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<td>SAA</td>
<td>Stabilisation and Association Agreement</td>
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<td>SAM</td>
<td>South Africa and Mexico</td>
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<td>SAP</td>
<td>Stabilisation and Association Process</td>
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<td>SECI</td>
<td>Southeast European Cooperative Initiative</td>
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<td>SEDM</td>
<td>Southeast European Defence Ministerial</td>
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<td>SEE</td>
<td>South East Europe/European</td>
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<td>SEEBRIG</td>
<td>South Eastern Europe Brigade</td>
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<td>SEECP</td>
<td>South East European Cooperation Process</td>
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<td>SEEI</td>
<td>Southeast European Initiative</td>
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<td>SEER</td>
<td>South East Europe revue – Journal for Labour and Social Affairs in Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>SEEPAG</td>
<td>Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group</td>
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<td>SELEC</td>
<td>Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre</td>
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<td>Swiss Development Cooperation</td>
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<td>SCCA</td>
<td>Sarajevo Center for Contemporary Art</td>
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<td>SFRY</td>
<td>Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia</td>
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<td>SIPA</td>
<td>State Investigation and Protection Agency</td>
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<td>SME</td>
<td>small and medium-sized enterprise</td>
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<td>SNV</td>
<td>Netherlands Development Organisation</td>
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<td>SP</td>
<td>Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe</td>
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<td>SPAI</td>
<td>Stability Pact Anti-corruption Initiative</td>
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<td>SPOC</td>
<td>Stability Pact Initiative against Organised Crime</td>
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<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>SSR</td>
<td>Security sector reform</td>
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<td>SWFs</td>
<td>Sovereign wealth funds</td>
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<td>TFC/CBC</td>
<td>Transfrontier / cross-border cooperation</td>
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<td>UCTE</td>
<td>Coordination of the Transmission of Electricity</td>
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<td>UfM</td>
<td>Union for the Mediterranean</td>
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<td>UJDI</td>
<td>Association for the Yugoslav Democratic Initiative</td>
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<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation</td>
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<td>United Nations Environment Programme</td>
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<td>United Nations Mission in Kosovo</td>
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<td>United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime</td>
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<td>UPS</td>
<td>United Power Systems</td>
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<td>Visegrad Group</td>
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<td>World International Studies Committee</td>
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<td>wiiw</td>
<td>Vienna Institute for International Economic Studies</td>
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<td>WOA</td>
<td>World Order Approach</td>
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<td>World Trade Organisation</td>
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<td>World Wide Fund for Nature</td>
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<td>World War II</td>
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Bridging the Gap

Rethinking Integration and Regional Cooperation Together

EU Integration and the enlargement processes are widely perceived as an unprecedented success story. Nevertheless, after the 2004 “big bang”, which brought in ten new members, followed by the 2007 membership of Romania and Bulgaria, enthusiasm for enlargement, and, where many were concerned, even for Europe as such, largely vanished.

Despite the rhetoric and the many conferences with their (self-) reassuring statements and promises, accession prospects seem unambiguously bleak for South East Europe (SEE) countries. The enthusiasm and political will have evaporated, and, most crucially, the EU policy and strategies have failed to acknowledge the emerging new world order.

But really has nothing changed in the last two decades?
— On the one hand, no: Slovenia (May 2004) and Croatia (July 2013) have become full-fledged EU member-states.
— But on the other, yes: the other SEE countries remain in the EU’s waiting room.

Resistances to rethinking and renewing European strategies for South East Europe can be traced back to the first EU–Western Balkans Summit, held in November 2000 in Zagreb. After the second EU–Western Balkans Summit organised in the framework of the Thessaloniki European Council (June 2003), the Center for Applied Policy Research (CAP) identified that progress regarding South East Europe had reached a stumbling block and called therefore for a “determined rethinking and a renewal of European strategies for South Eastern Europe”.

It is important, however, to include another dimension: further completing the EU integration process would certainly be a way to renew the pan-European dynamic and thus also to reconnect with and renew “early regionalism” (see below). As we will discuss, a pan-European vision sets the bilateral and multilateral issues, as well as regional integration and cooperation, in a coherent and significant framework for an efficient development of economic, political and cultural cooperation (see Chapter 2.3). Additionally, a pan-regional approach such as this represents a bold vision.

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for South East Europe, and also for Europe as a whole. Fredrik Söderbaum recalls the main features of pan-regional movements:

Pan-regional movements were usually motivated by a mixture of geopolitical, socio-economic, cultural (sometimes even racial) and, to some extent, functional beliefs and goals. They were multidimensional and reflected shared ideas and goals of political and intersocietal unity rather than intergovernmental regionalism in a more narrow sense.²

It would be a mistake to think “early regionalism” is outdated. Today’s Organisation of American States (OAS) can be traced back to the 1889–90 regional cooperation in the Americas. It is the oldest still working organisation of this kind in the world. Thus, albeit rebranded, pan-regional movements may become relevant in the new world order (see Part 3).

Encompassing the years 2000 through to 2017, the first aim of this book is to focus on two intertwined processes: the EU integration and the regional cooperation in their relation to SEE. Obviously, the nexus between both is as complex as it is manifold. It is thus crucial to envision a framework that encompasses the multi-layered structure of regional cooperation and EU integration.

The following key issues will be discussed throughout this volume:

- in the view of the EU, “regional cooperation” is a key to, and a formal conditionality for, EU integration;
- both, in SEE, are more top-down than ground-up driven processes;³
- both are widely perceived in SEE as exogenous products (push factor), and so there is an obvious lack of regional “joint ownership”;
- both encompass a set of dimensions: politics, economics, security and culture;
- both refer to different scalar processes and strategies active at different levels;
- but they differ inasmuch as EU-integration specifically addresses the state-level while regional cooperation processes may involve provinces and regions (micro-regions), and/or states, and/or various (part of) states (macro-regions).

These are some of the typical issues broadly discussed, but most of the

² Fredrik Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2016), p. 20.
³ For an effective ground-up approach, see the volume (focusing on the Scandinavian countries) edited by Herald Baldersheim, Ave Vergard Haug and Morten Øgård, The Rise of The Networking Region (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2011).
scholars tend to split what I consider to be intrinsically linked. The gap between the EU and regionalism studies, as well as between their respective scholars, may partly explain this.

Furthermore, while in South East Europe, “integration” is almost exclusively related to the European Union accession process, the term ought instead to be understood in a much broader sense, as a process that establishes, confirms and deepens the EU membership. Here “territorial cooperation”, intended as partnerships established between the regional or local authorities of one state and the equivalent authorities in one or more other states, plays a key role in the perspective of a qualitative integration strategy. The New Regionalism Approach (NRA) — developed from the mid-1980s on, notably by the seminal work of Björn Hettne and Fredrik Söderbaum — offers an adapted conceptual framework in its advocacy of a multi-layered and comprehensive understanding of regionalism, which is not bound to the Westphalian state-centred approach. The NRA, further developed in the framework of the “comparative regionalism”, highlights a multi-dimensional and pluralistic type of regionalism, as well as new institution designs and the active role of non-state actors.

Additionally, we have to consider that many regional cooperation initiatives involve at the state level countries (or regions belonging to states) that are not yet EU member-states and are also non-EU countries. Accordingly, regional cooperation programmes had been developed from the mid-2000s on in the respective frameworks of the Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (2006) and the European Neighbourhood Policy (2007). Regional cooperation thus developed specific programmes treating in a different way both “internal borders” — separating adjoining territories of (forthcoming) member states — and “external borders” — delimiting member states from non-EU countries. The former anticipate and accompany the accession process of incoming EU member-states, while the latter play a substantial role in “managing” the new “East–West” divide.

Nothing is really new here. Since its early stages, regional cooperation and integration had been largely related to reconstruction and reconciliation as illustrated by the following milestones that belong to the “old regionalism” era (see Table 2, p. 23): the creation of the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, of the Common Market in 1957, of the German–Dutch Euregio and of the European Economic Community (Treaty of Rome) in 1958, of the Regio Basiliensis and of the Franco–German reconciliation (Elysée–Treaty) in 1963.

The key element in the next stage — which corresponds to the “new regionalism” phase initiated by the White Paper on internal markets (1985), the Single European Act (1986), and the fall of the Berlin Wall
Introduction

(1989) — was the EU’s regional policy reform in 1998: the European commission assigned a key role to regional, more specifically to cross-border, cooperation in the task of European integration. Accordingly, the community initiative Interreg (see Chapter 2.1) was introduced in 1990 and became instrumental both in economic growth and territorial cohesion. After the 2007 Treaty of Lisbon, territorial cohesion became a strategic goal of EU regional policy, and regional cooperation became an integral part of EU integration policy. Thus, integration also becomes effective in the framework of the comprehensive territorial cooperation policy that encompasses a set of three strands or schemes: first, Cross-border cooperation (local cooperation between neighbouring regions separated by a frontier); second, Transnational cooperation (cooperation over large areas); and, third, inter-regional cooperation (pan-European networked cooperation) (see Tables 8 and 9, p. 90 and p. 92).

Obviously, the geopolitical upheaval in 1989 intensified and deepened the linkage between integration and regional cooperation. Euroregions, created in the early 1990s, spanned and linked East and West territories, contributing notably to speeding up the path of Central and Eastern European countries towards accession. Meanwhile, the regional cooperation schemes also play a security role in “Wider Europe”. In the view of then President of the European commission Romano Prodi, they constitute “a ring of friends surrounding the union”. They are thus tools for a “soft power” management of EU’s external borders. In the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), they were supposed to replace the Cold War order, ensuring democratic stability on the EU periphery. Nowadays, of course, in a very different geopolitical context, the ENP is taking on new dimensions.

The focus on the above-mentioned linkage must nevertheless not overshadow the main differences. While the interstate level and bilateral relations matter in the framework of European integration, for the most part local and regional stakeholders are involved in regional cooperation. Of course, their respective goals have a different magnitude: compare the “ever closer union among the peoples of Europe” (Schuman Declaration,


5 See the volume edited by Sieglinde Gstöhl, The European Neighbourhood Policy in a Comparative Perspective (Abingdon: Routledge, 2016); and our discussion in the Chapter 2.1 and Part 3. Note that the special cases of Norway and Switzerland are, as result of their geographical location and particular relationship with the EU, integrated into the Interreg programmes.
1950) with the practical solutions to border problems. Accordingly, the tools vary: unique Community law versus different national legal frameworks. Finally, both are evolving in a different way: while strengthening of the institutions and spatial expansion are the hallmarks of EU integration, singularity and diversity characterise regional cooperation. And last but not least, they have quite a diverse visibility: respectively high versus low.

**Theoretical Framework**

Methodologically speaking, I refer to three distinct and heterogeneous, yet nonetheless interconnected, areas — in which I have been active over the last thirty years. These draw on: first, a narrative corpus (administrative documents, review reports, non-papers); second, forums of discussion (seminars, conferences, etc.) and, third, publication networks (thematic reviews, Internet forums, informal networks). By comparing the dynamism, flexibility and interconnectivity between the above-mentioned areas in the fields, on the one hand, of architecture and urbanism and, on the other hand, of integration and regionalism, we may observe that the latter are less permeable and flexible, specifically in SEE. For the former, meanwhile, plasticity and porosity characterise these areas, along with the consented flow of information, projects, practitioners and scholars, with the same persons being subsequently or simultaneously active in various areas.\(^6\)

For the French urbanist Ascher, this corresponds to a global trend, a new phase of society that he identifies as the “hypertext society”\(^\): After the classical, community-based society and the industrial, Fordist-Keynesian-based society, the hypertext society characterises a third revolution (see Table 1, p. 22). The hypertext metaphor reflects a layered organisation of society, an \(n\)-dimension space, where people belong simultaneously to different layers and shift with ever greater ease from one to another. Indeed, people belong simultaneously to different layers of society, and shift more and more readily from one to another. Nowadays, social links might weaken, but they are considerably enhanced: social relations, which are indeed more fragile, are more numerous and more subject to change.\(^7\)

\(^6\) As for urbanism, an excellent insight is provided by Alain Bourdin and Joël Idt (eds.), *L'urbanisme des modèles* (La Tour d'Aigues: Editions de l'Aube, 2016).

### Table 1: Modernisation process and the three modern revolutions

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Community</th>
<th>Industrial society</th>
<th>Hypertext society</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Social ties</td>
<td>few, not diversified</td>
<td>more, diversified</td>
<td>many, highly diversified</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>stable, strong</td>
<td>scalable, becoming specific</td>
<td>direct, fragile, specific</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solidarity</td>
<td>mechanic</td>
<td>organic</td>
<td>commutative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social territory</td>
<td>autarkic, close</td>
<td>integrated, national-based</td>
<td>open, multiple</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>locally driven</td>
<td></td>
<td>shifting, local and global</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>real and virtual</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Paradigm</td>
<td>belief, tradition</td>
<td>universal reason</td>
<td>complexity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>destiny, authority</td>
<td>functionality</td>
<td>uncertainty</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>representative</td>
<td>flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>democracy</td>
<td>self-governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Action</td>
<td>repetitive</td>
<td>rational</td>
<td>reflexive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regulation</td>
<td>custom, chief</td>
<td>state, laws</td>
<td>subsidiarity</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>public opinion</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economics</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
<td>industrial</td>
<td>cognitive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Culture</td>
<td>local</td>
<td>socio-professional</td>
<td>hybrid</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Urbanism</td>
<td>town</td>
<td>industrial city</td>
<td>metapolis</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Institutions</td>
<td>parish, canton</td>
<td>central administration</td>
<td>countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nation-state</td>
<td>welfare state</td>
<td>regions</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>alliances</td>
<td>welfare state</td>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>treaties</td>
<td>international</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>organisations</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>NGO</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Table 2: Old, new and comparative regionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Old regionalism</th>
<th>New regionalism</th>
<th>Comparative regionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Context</strong></td>
<td>Post–World War II and Cold War (Europe) Bipolarity but also post-colonialism</td>
<td>Post–Cold War Globalization and neoliberalism</td>
<td>Multipolar and multiplex world order</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>provided context (developing world)</td>
<td>Unstable multilateralism Transformation of the nation-state</td>
<td>War on terror</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Linkage</strong></td>
<td>Regional integration beyond the nation-state (Europe) Development and</td>
<td>Regionalism seen as resisting, taming or advancing</td>
<td>Regional governance part of multi-layered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>nation-building (developing world)</td>
<td>economic globalization</td>
<td>global governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Sectors</strong></td>
<td>Sector specific</td>
<td>Multi-sectorial or specialized</td>
<td>State and non-state actors grouped in formal and</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actors</strong></td>
<td>Formal and state-led regionalism through regional organizations</td>
<td>State vs. non-state actors</td>
<td>informal forms of organization in growing number of</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forms</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>Regionalism vs. regionalization</td>
<td>sectors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Epistemology</strong></td>
<td>Dominance of positivism, rationalism and materialism</td>
<td>Rationalism vs. constructivism</td>
<td>Epistemological pluralism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Epistemological conflict</td>
<td>Emerging dialogues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Methodology</strong></td>
<td>Europe-focused Rigid comparison</td>
<td>Regional specialisation vs. false universalism</td>
<td>Increasing comparison</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Comparison as parallel case studies</td>
<td>Emergence of non-Eurocentric comparative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>regionalism</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Flexibility is thus a key argument in “neo urbanism” as conceptualized by Ascher. Accordingly, the process of standardisation shifts, in the “neo urbanism” approach, from being a means of mass-production and spatial expansion (as conceived in the framework of a neoliberal functional, bureaucratic and static approach), to being a means of change and combination. Flexible and highly reactive projects, involving a wide range of “drivers for change” constantly involved in reflexion and negotiation, increase joint ownership, reinvigorate local democracy, foster “commutative solidarity” — in that they relate people and organisations that belong to a multiplicity of interconnected networks (this matters particularly in the context of a new world order, see our discussion pp. 174–175) — and, last but not least, open new ways of thinking politics.

A closer look at Ascher’s approach highpoints similarities structuring neo-urbanism and comparative regionalism: both can be defined as open, multidimensional and collaborative systems; for both, the changing world order context matters. Ascher’s emphasised social mutations imply significant changes in the conception, production and administration of territories. The same applies to regionalism. As Björn Hettne put it: “A new world order thus implies a new type of regionalism”. Furthermore, Ascher’s distinction between community, industrial and hypertext society (see Table 1, p. 22) fits for the most part with the distinction between four subsequent phases in the development of regionalism: early, old, new and comparative regionalism.

It makes sense to briefly mention how the three key differences between “old” and “new” regionalism were seen and formulated when the New Regionalism Approach was first formulated by Hettne (1994):

1. Whereas the old regionalism was formed in a bipolar Cold War context, the new is taking shape in a more multipolar world order.
2. Whereas the old regionalism was created from outside and from “above” (i.e., by the superpowers), the new is a more spontaneous process from within and “from below” (in the sense that the constituent states themselves are the main actors).
3. Whereas the old regionalism was specific with regard to objectives, the new is a more comprehensive, multidimensional process.

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8 Ascher, instead of using the concept of “new urbanism”, introduced the concept of “neo-urbanism”. As for the discussion of the ten new principles of urbanism, see Ascher, *Les nouveaux principes de l’urbanisme*, pp. 95–120.


Following Fredrik Södernaum’s synthesis, Table 2 (p. 23) traces the intellectual roots and main characteristics of three types of regionalism — first outlining the context and polity content (links between national, regional and global governance; and sectors, actors and forms of organisation) and, second, focusing on the modes of knowledge production and methodology.\textsuperscript{11}

This framework, insisting on the influence of the political context and of different theoretical standpoints, should be handled in a smooth way. First, the various phases are complementary rather than mutually exclusive. Thus, whenever possible, they should be interconnected. For example:

The inclusion of the section on early regionalism serves to draw attention to the deep roots of and diverse trajectories of regionalism preceding the era of old regionalism. Among other things, early regionalism underlines the interaction rather than the competition between regionalist and statist ideas, and at least in some respects this resembles more recent debates about multilayered global governance.\textsuperscript{12}

Second, the same complementary approach should apply to the richness of theorizing regionalism. There are of course many ways to consider regions and regionalism. Considering various theories is indispensible as they provide a useful toolbox for a critical analysis of different regional schemes and are instrumental in overcoming the binary conceptualisations (state versus non-state actors, formal versus informal regionalisms, etc.). Often their differences refer to different aspects of regionalism, as Söderbaum has highlighted:

For instance, structural analysis may be more plausible when the research focus is put on the role of regions in world-order transformation, whereas, a stronger emphasis on agency is necessary for a better explanation of agencies and micro-processes on the ground.\textsuperscript{13}

Considering the emerging regional architecture of world politics, Amitav Acharya provides another interesting illustration of complementarity in the framework of the discussion on how regions respond to powers in the new world order. Acharya calls

\textsuperscript{12} Söderbaum, \textit{Rethinking Regionalism}, p. 30.
\textsuperscript{13} Söderbaum, \textit{Ibidem}. In the same book, Chapter 3 “Learning from Theory” reviews the main theories and competing approaches to regionalism (pp. 36–61).
Introduction

for balancing the top-down and powercentric analytical prism [...] with an agency-oriented perspective that acknowledges local resistance to, and socialization of, powerful actors and attests to the endogenous construction of regions.  

Nevertheless, despite my affection for complementarity, my reflections are clearly rooted in reflectivists' and in constructivist scholarship — focusing on how social interaction influences region-building — as well as in the comparative regionalism inasmuch it implies a stronger emphasis on the political dimensions. Taken together, they provide in my view a deeper understanding of regionalism and region-building, and, last but not least, deliver tailored concepts for understanding the emerging reality of a new world order (see Part 3).

Organisation of the Book

The volume is structured as follows. Part 1 focuses on the EU integration process. Chapter 1 reviews the tortuous path to EU membership being experienced by countries from South East Europe, and insists on the necessity both of consolidating the achievements of previous integrations and of grappling with the implications of the “truly new” European project in which it is engaged. Accordingly, a “new strategic thinking” is needed.

The first chapter goes on to set out how momentum was lost in the 2000s and the factors which explain “enlargement fatigue” and the EU’s “period of reflection”. The gloomy mood has led to a gap between achievements in technical terms and the political will required to respond, as well as a deepening of the demands placed on the countries of South East Europe.

The conclusion calls for a “member state-building strategy” based on delivering a more promising prospect of EU membership accompanied by specific strategies to address issues of development and growth, within the framework of a regional cohesion programme favouring social inclusion.

Chapter 2 highlights how the post-1945 system has run its course and how a new world order is about to emerge. Disarray is being nurtured in

15 “Reflectivists” refers to various theories, such as critical theory, post-structuralism, post-modernism and new regionalism approaches.
17 Based on Christophe Solioz, “The EU: Breaking the Chains of Weariness,” SEER,
particular by an increasingly multiplex world order, by the tricky “mission impossible” of intervening and protecting, by the never-ending “war on terror”, by the recurrent financial crises, and by the rise of the BRICS (thus Brazil, Russia, India, China, South Africa) and other emerging powers that question stability. This new and rather explosive background does not signal the end of the EU, but provides evidence that its core features must be redesigned and reach out to broad popular support. A long-term vision and strategy to cope with the challenges of the twenty-first century is now urgently needed — key issues that are further discussed in the conclusive part of the chapter and in Part 3.

To state the obvious, in this new context the EU enlargement must assume a new profile. First, the over-emphasised trade-off between widening and deepening must be deconstructed. Second, enlargement needs to be a planned political goal, and not a confused mixture of technical criteria which become harder and harder to meet. Third, the “regatta principle”, which is counterproductive and short on results, should be replaced by a redesigned “caravan approach”. Fourth, a conditionality package should be prioritised and, as for previous candidates, proactive handling of exemptive differentiation and transitional arrangements should be introduced. Last but not least, the EU must accept that open questions will be resolved only within the framework of the EU, and will thus require an “integration follow-up” mechanism targeting these issues.

Part 2 of the volume focuses on regionalisms in South East Europe. The first two chapters are based on joint work, as part of an intense collaboration with Paul Stubbs. Until now, regional cooperation in SEE has been largely ascribed by outside forces, perceived merely as a condition of the EU integration process, and approached solely from a state-based view-point as an inter-state construct. Regional cooperation must be redesigned in the framework of “comparative regionalism”: it must be achieved more from within, encompassing multi-actor, multi-level and multi-scalar processes that form a complex geometry of interlocking networks, with variable reach and multiple nodal points.

Viewing South East Europe through a lens of “comparative regiona-

17 (2014) 2, pp. 153–165. The paper was first presented in Rome on 8 October 2014 at the international conference “The Western Balkans: The Futures of Integration” organised by the NATO Defense College Foundation, in cooperation with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Balkan Trust for Democracy.

lism” prefigures a framework in which SEE, in its variable geometry, is seen as a key part of pan-European space. The time is clearly ripe for analysis which addresses regional cooperation as more than mere EU conditionality, necessitating a move away from an exclusive focus on interstate and donor-driven processes. In “networked regionalisation”, tensions between political, technocratic, and civic claims and approaches to governance do not disappear but, rather, are reconfigured in interesting and innovative ways at various scales.

With a multiplication of nodes, an increasingly complex geometry of regionalisation and, above all, a thickening of networks, “comparative regionalism” provides a welcome multidisciplinary approach that captures a complex and rapidly evolving landscape. As neo-urbanism, “comparative regionalism” attempts to address the tensions and possibilities in the spaces between global, regional, national and local processes; between regional conditionalities and sub-regional “joint ownership”; and, above all, between dominant politics and everyday realities, resistances and recalcitrance.

The last chapter of Part 2 focuses on the pan-European dimension and views South Eastern Europe resolutely in a broader, pan-European perspective, examining the different stages of the European integration process, also taking into account the transformational achievements of the particular countries of the region.\(^\text{19}\) It shows that, since the mid-2000s, regional cooperation in SEE is both a key issue and at a crossroads.

Avoiding the short-term horizon, this chapter encompasses diverse regional cooperation approaches, notably the pan-regional movements belonging to the “early regionalism”, and others, shaped by the current diverse and contradictory world order, belonging to the “comparative regionalism” paradigm. The chapter illustrates how some regional initiatives, like the 1961 Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), may well have been initiated in the era of “old regionalism” (1950s–1970s) but were later renewed during the “new regionalism” period (late 1980s–1990s), often with expanded membership and adapted tasks.

Taking the challenges of our disruptive era into account, “Thinking, Venturing Beyond” (Part 3) moves resolutely beyond the Balkans and Europe to consider integration and territorial processes in a much broader perspective that, on the one hand, reloads neglected policy analyses and,

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on the other, calls for new ones. Already, in previous turning points in modern history, we can acknowledge as Hannah Arendt suggests in her essay “Understanding and Politics”:

the great change took place within a political framework whose foundations were no longer secure and therefore overtook a society which, although it was still able to understand and to judge, could no longer give an account of its categories of understanding and standards of judgment when they were seriously challenged.  

Nowadays, in a world that stands at a crossroads, about to enter a new era, we similarly experiencing the loss of the capacity for political action, the loss of the quest for meaning and the need for understanding. As Arendt highlights, “within the framework of preconceived categories […] events in the sense of something irrevocably new can never happen”.  

We are attempting here to consider the emerging new world order in the way Arendt reflected on “event” and “action”, conceived not as an execution of laws or an application of rules or any other managing activity, but instead as “the beginning of something new whose outcome is unpredictable”.  

Accordingly, understanding becomes the other side of action:

namely, that form of cognition, distinct from many others, by which acting men (and not men who are engaged in contemplating some progressive or doomed course of history) eventually can come to terms with what irrevocably happened and be reconciled with what unavoidably exists.  

Part 1
The EU Integration Process
1.1. Inside, Outside and Between

In the Age of Flex Lives

Europe — and this does not mean exclusively the European Union (EU) — is completely different from what it was some twenty years ago. Following the fall of the Berlin Wall, unforeseen geopolitical changes have given the continent a new order of peace and security and a novel architecture.\(^1\) After the 2004 “big bang”, the fifth and biggest ever enlargement, followed by the accession of 4 additional countries,\(^2\) the EU had to cope with the consequences of two decades of unprecedented success in terms of integration and enlargement against the background of an emerging new world order — discussed in the next Chapter 1.2 as well as in “Thinking, Venturing Beyond”, Part 3.

The European Union must consolidate these achievements for the future, but Brussels is, at the same time, facing the challenges of a truly new European political project. First, the EU needs to reorient its relations with its neighbouring areas, i.e. the countries located between the EU and the Russian Federation.\(^3\) It must use in a much more assertive way its three main tools: the enlargement policy in South East Europe (SEE); the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) in the east; and the strategic partnership with Russia. Second, the EU has to envision a flexible architecture, taking into account the pan-European dimension and the evolving nature of regional cooperation\(^4\) — as illustrated by the dynamism of inter-connected sub-regions such as SEE and the Black Sea area. Third, the EU is increasingly facing multi-dimensionality and fluidity — multi-actor, multi-level and multi-scalar processes, forming a complex geometry

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2 On 1 May 2004, the EU welcomed ten more member states: Cyprus; the Czech Republic; Estonia; Hungary; Latvia; Lithuania; Malta; Poland; Slovakia; and Slovenia. This was the fifth time that the EU had accepted new members, bringing the total from 15 to 25 member states. Later, Bulgaria and Romania accessed on 1 January 2007, Slovenia on 1 May 2004 and Croatia on 1 July 2013.
of interlocking networks. As pinpointed by Janine Wedel, we live in a world of flexibility:

The new players and networks of power and influence do not restrict themselves to activities in any one arena. Rather, through their activities, they connect state with private, bureaucracy with market, political with economic, macro with micro, and global with national, all the while making public decisions — decisions backed by the power of the state.\(^5\)

Accordingly, the EU must take into account the “flex nets” and develop “network power”.\(^6\)

These issues are crucial for the EU if it wants to gain relevance, and even more so for South East European states as they may play a key role in a pan-European framework given their geo-strategic position — bridging the Danube region, central and eastern Europe, western Asia and the Russian Federation (see Chapter 2.3). What should be borne in mind is that South East Europe is a “region of overlapping regions”;\(^7\) and, therefore, it is not a homogeneous region but rather a multi-faceted network linked to other networks of regions. This is best illustrated by the regional cooperation schemes which are evolving inside but also outside the EU in the direction of an interpenetration between the interior and exterior of states, virtually producing a “de-borderisation” as well as, at the same time, a “nostalgia for roots and walls”.\(^8\)

Only a flexible architecture and strategy may overcome what could be viewed as new dividing lines between EU member states encompassing the latest enlargement, “would-be” (thus, South East European) EU members and those countries which are explicitly precluded from EU accession — such as Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the Caucasian states. New strategic thinking is also needed in order to be able to cope with the greater complexity resulting from, first, the relations among SEE countries (sub-regional cooperation and multiple bilateral issues) and their


respective partnership with the EU; and, second, the coexistence of numerous programmes — such as the pre-accession process, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, numerous bilateral agreements, various action plans and the wide range of EU and Council of Europe cross-border, transitional and inter-regional programmes (see Chapter 2.1). Both the EU integration and the regional cooperation processes require flexibility.

The Lost Momentum — From Thessaloniki (2003) to Lisbon (2010)

Following the 1997 EU Regional Approach for the Western Balkans, the Stabilisation and Association Process (SAP) — as a tailor-made, country-by-country, progressive approach and intermediate step on the path towards accession — has, since May 1999, been the centrepiece of EU strategy vis-à-vis this region.9 On 19 and 20 June 2000, at the Santa Maria de Feira European Council, all Western Balkan countries were considered as potential candidates for EU membership while, on 24 November 2000, the prospect of possible accession to the EU was confirmed at the Zagreb Summit. Two years later, the European Commission (EC) convincingly expressed a major shift in the Union’s approach to the Western Balkans:

EU leaders decided that a policy of emergency reconstruction, containment and stabilisation was not, in itself, enough to bring lasting peace and stability to the Balkans: only the real prospect of integration into European structures would achieve that.10

At the June 2003 Thessaloniki Summit, the EU made the unequivocal promise that Western Balkan countries could join the Union provided that they bring themselves up to EU standards by fulfilling the four Copenhagen conditions for entry11 and by adopting the acquis communautaire.12

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9 The SAP was officially launched at the Zagreb Summit on 24 November 2000. The Summit’s final declaration mentions the SAP as a “Stabilisation and Association Process on an Individualised Basis”.


11 The four “Copenhagen conditions” — democracy and the rule of law; a market economy; the capacity to meet the obligations of membership; and the EU’s capacity to absorb new members — were set at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993 and went beyond those for any previous applicant.
The Thessaloniki declaration offered the concrete prospect of membership, but the Thessaloniki Agenda for the Western Balkans emphasised the need to upgrade regional cooperation, to strengthen the SAP and to intensify relations between the Western Balkans and the EU through the introduction of European Partnerships — following the successful experiment with national programmes for the adoption of the acquis in the accession process of Central and East European countries.

The Thessaloniki Summit was greeted with satisfaction, if not euphoria, by many commentators. This renewal of European strategies and perspectives for South East Europe, combined with a number of coherent practical and symbolic measures, eventually marked the end of clientelistic bilateral manoeuvrings between EU member states and the individual states of the region. At the time of the Thessaloniki Summit, some major think tanks were lobbying for a strengthened accession process. First, the European Stability Initiative (ESI) suggested applying strategies — cohesion policy or structural policy — based on the European regional development policy. Second, the International Crisis Group (ICG) also focused on a more vigorous approach, suggesting a set of technical means ranging from increased financial assistance to effective twinning arrangements and regional integration. Third, two years later, the more comprehensive report of the International Commission on the Balkans recommended a “member-state-building” strategy, focusing on the necessity to include institution- and thus capacity-building into the negotiating framework. These were all outstanding — and still relevant — proposals but, most unfortunately, they were able neither to revitalise the EU integration process nor counteract the “enlargement fatigue” which was about to obstruct the accession prospect.

12 The term acquis communautaire — corresponding to the third of the Copenhagen conditions — first refers to the legal embodiment of existing and settled EU policies and, second, encompasses EU values and policy objectives. Thus, the term refers in a broader sense to “all real and potential rights and obligations of the EU system and its institutional framework” (Uniting Europe, No. 9, 13 April 1998).


14 See European Stability Initiative, The Road to Thessaloniki: Cohesion and the Western Balkans (Berlin: ESI, 12 March 2003).


Seven years after the Thessaloniki Summit (2010), the results were bleak: from the Balkan area, only Slovenia (since May 2004), Bulgaria and Romania (since January 2007) had become fully-fledged EU members. As of 2010, all the other countries were still knocking on the door: Croatia and Macedonia as candidate countries; Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro and Serbia as potential candidate countries — Table 3 (p. 42) provides an updated overview as of August 2017.

The first enlargement package of the new Commission working under the Lisbon Treaty, presented on 9 November 2010, proposed candidate status for Montenegro and recommended that accession negotiations with Montenegro and Albania should be opened, “once these countries have met a number of key priorities set out in the opinions”. All the countries were by then in the slow lane and in a state of strategic uncertainty. How come? As a matter of fact, the Thessaloniki enthusiasm quickly vanished. First, mixed signals had already emerged in 2004, when the EU — in its draft Instrument of Pre-Accession Assistance (IPA) — assumed that countries from the region would eventually be able to achieve candidate status around 2010 and actual membership around 2020. Indeed, the SAP should definitively not be perceived as fast-track integration but as a gradual process following a slower pace than the earlier waves of accession.

There were some key factors which provoked “enlargement fatigue” and which called for a “pause for reflection”. First, the previous enlargements of 2004 and 2007 had some shortcomings: the problematic case of Cyprus (which joined the EU as a still-divided country on the mistaken assumption that accession would hinge on overcoming the partition of the island in accordance with the UN plan); the Slovak–Hungarian bilateral problems; and, above all, the Bulgarian and Romanian EU accessions, which were considered by many as premature — with the two countries showing some serious deficits in their political and moral economies. The consequence was that bilateral tensions in the Balkans and contentious issues became closely monitored, while the corruption and rule of law indices were scrupulously vetted. Certainly, there will be no further enlargement where there are unresolved partitions or problematic statehood: EU integration requires strong and functioning states. This clearly sets the agenda for the (potential) candidate countries.

Second, there is the issue of the EU’s limited “absorption capacities”\(^{18}\), above all, the persistent lack of an institutional framework for resuming the enlargement process following the rejection of the draft EU constitution by France and the Netherlands in May 2005. In fact, there is nothing new about this: during the accession process of Central and Eastern European countries in the late 1990s, the focus on the applicants’ conformity with the EU was already being used as a smokescreen to cover the unwillingness of the EU to reform itself so as to fit new members in. This also gave the signal to candidate countries that they were not particularly welcome. Nowadays, while the EU is losing most of its appeal in South East Europe, a clear signal should be given that the EU is sticking by its Thessaloniki commitment. Despite the rhetoric, no such signal has ever been given.

Third, there is the slow progress in South East Europe and the, to some extent, unanticipated setbacks — often described as “reform fatigue” and local disenchantment. On the one hand, the Balkans is still in the long process of an as-yet unfinished transition — with some countries combining the problems of transition with the challenges of development.\(^{19}\) On the other hand, the “pull factor” and the stimulus for reforms, although they have not completely vanished, are less convincing today. Thus, after visa liberalisation, the EU needs to make the prospect of membership more concrete and visible to people so that that they may buy in to domestic politics.

Fourth, there is Turkey’s multifaceted role. Its own accession process remains more blocked today than yesterday. While EU public opinion and most politicians show strong reluctance to Turkey’s membership, Turkey’s assertiveness as an international player — active to great effect in SEE — must be taken into consideration. The tricky question is: should the EU, for the sake of political feasibility, decouple the accession process

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18 The EU’s capacity to absorb is the fourth “Copenhagen condition” set at the Copenhagen European Council in 1993. Various authors have suggested correctly that the “absorption capacity” is better deconstructed into more precise and objective components, such as the capacity of the EU’s internal market, labour market, budget, eurozone and institutional system to absorb new Member States; society’s capacity to absorb immigration; and the EU’s capacity for assuring its strategic security. See Michael Emerson, Michael Senem Aydin, Julia De Clerck-Sachsse and Gergana Noutcheva, *Just What Is this “Absorption Capacity” of the European Union?* (Brussels: CEPS, September 2006).

for South East Europe from that of Turkey? As a matter of fact, SEE countries accession is only about the completion and consolidation of the EU’s integration — thus finishing the job initiated in early 2000 with the fifth enlargement. In this respect, Turkey represents the greatest challenge to the forthcoming perhaps-to-be enlargement. The point is that both issues suffer a lack of consensus among EU member states, but in SEE and in Turkey, the EU’s own credibility has significantly decreased while the political cost to those advocating accession has notably increased. It is thus urgent that the EU should finish its job in the Western Balkans and prioritise if not Turkey’s membership at least a strong partnership.

More and more serious doubts have started to be openly formulated on the future of European enlargement. Timothy Garton Ash has expressed a rationale behind this gloomy mood:

Thus far, enlargement has strengthened, not weakened, the EU. But at some point, continuous extension must end up weakening the Union (…) If the Union were to include all the remains of the Ottoman Empire, it might end up sharing the fate of the Ottoman Empire.

This viewpoint and similar stances — mostly under the pressure of domestic politics — indicate that the prospect of integrating SEE was increasingly viewed with alarm and also convey the impression that the EU was about to pull away from its commitment made at Thessaloniki in 2003. This pessimistic view, often related to a decontextualised misperception of the region, legitimates a prolonged accession process characterised by strict conditionalities and extensive guidance.

**Imbalance Between the Technical and Political Levels**

Between 2005 and 2009, South East European countries were thus confronted with a double bind. On the one hand, enlargement faced three scenarios: to slow down; be frozen; or even — as the worst-case scenario — cease altogether unless the then 25-member EU proved capable of coping with more members. On the other hand, the EU repeatedly reiterated its readiness to carry its “responsibility” to support stability and progress in the region and to “help” the countries there pass through the

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The EU Integration Process

portal towards candidacy for membership. However, it insisted equally on the importance of: “carefully managing their accession and how much the integration process required hard work and difficult decisions”. Consequently, the reform process slowed down in SEE and domestic politics gained in importance — the latter of which applies also to the EU.

Furthermore, SEE was — and still is — facing an accession process which, from one enlargement wave to the next, has become more demanding: negotiations have been subjected to much more stringent tests and have become much more technical. The SAP principles include the 1993 Copenhagen Criteria for accession and two extra conditions: regional cooperation, and cooperation with the ICTY; and additional country-specific conditions which had to be met before an SAA could be signed. This obviously makes the process both more complicated and longer.

This performance- and conditionality-based scheme was confirmed by the “enlargement consensus” adopted in 2006. This enhanced the rules governing accession, introducing strict conditionality at all stages of negotiations, and refused to set any target dates for accession until negotiations were close to completion. Consequently, the technical examination of the *acquis communautaire* undertaken by the European Commission (the “screening”), introduced at an early stage, before the Opinion and award of candidacy status, makes the entire process stricter — the intention being that “the increased technicality intends to facilitate the process”.

Additionally, in contrast to what happened in previous enlargement rounds, the EU is now more directly involved in the institutional development and decision-making processes of the next group of potential EU member countries. Indeed, the accession process of South East European countries is more complex, also as a result of the specifics and the pitfalls of the triple transition to a free market, to a liberal democracy and from war to peace. However, the EU cannot simply duplicate the pattern successfully implemented in Central Europe. Therefore, it needs to rethink the mostly standardised strategies and instruments of enlargement and adapt some of the instruments already deployed in South East Europe.


25 A fine-tuned analysis of the patterns of transition reveals that, while some former Yugoslavia republics, such as Croatia and Slovenia, are closer to the Central Euro-

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The academics leading the *Captive States, Divided Societies* research project highlighted that the accession of SEE countries must be considered as a new — much more protracted and arduous — process, despite enhanced transformative power, reform assistance and political guidance provided by Brussels. The consequence is that:

The integration of the Western Balkans into the European Union in the next decade will be much more of an uphill battle than East-Central Europe’s “return to Europe” ever was.26

Similarly, Marie-Janine Calic’s assessment from 2005 remains, alas, applicable in the present:

The Western Balkans still has a long way to go before they can realistically expect to be accepted as full members of the EU.

Meanwhile, her recommendations are equally valid:

There is no reason to believe that an intelligent combination of political incentives (integration framework) and an adequate and refocused assistance package could not contribute to overcoming the last division within Europe.27

The overall trend toward an increasingly technical accession policy obviously increases the imbalance between the technical and the political levels. This is partly due to the European Commission taking responsibility for managing the enlargement process from the early 1990s onwards. More fundamentally, as pointed out by Grabbe:

There was a lack of strategy and coherence in the EU’s approach, largely because of the dearth of political leadership in the EU on how to deal with the aftermath of 1989.28

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26 ibid. p. 6.
28 Grabbe, *op. cit.* p. 28.
### Table 3: SEE countries on the road to Brussels

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<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Croatia</th>
<th>Macedonia</th>
<th>Montenegro</th>
<th>Albania</th>
<th>Serbia</th>
<th>Bosnia and Herzegovina</th>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Accession talks start</td>
<td>Oct 2005 Jun 2012 Dec 2014</td>
<td></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Accession talks conclude</td>
<td>Jun 2011</td>
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<td>Accession</td>
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Indeed, we may ask several questions. What happened to the European spirit of the 1970s and 1980s, when countries such as Greece, Portugal and Spain, which had just emerged from dictatorship and civil unrest, were welcomed into the European community? And where is the political will and enthusiasm for unifying Europe after several decades of division?
subsequent to the accession of central and eastern European countries? 29

For the time being, there is no breakthrough. We may remind ourselves also that previous enlargement waves had to cope with resistances and with the discourse of an enlarged Union that was already by then more complex and difficult to govern than before. What is missing is a high degree of consensus — on the accession of SEE countries — among EU member states, as was the case for the fifth enlargement. Political will and leadership make the difference. EU enlargement in South East Europe is very much a political project. Given the politicised nature of the accession debate, considering also the political and security issues at stake, the EU needs to rethink its strategy in South East Europe and, above all, embrace politics in order to make the region work. 30 A renewed “EU narrative” and updated strategies could “reload” the accession process and overcome the current negative consequences of enlargement and accession fatigue.

From Lisbon Onwards

We may now ask to what extent the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty on 1 December 2009 has addressed these problems. The new treaty does indeed remove the technical obstacles to further enlargement and has created the opportunity for the joint implementation of all tools (CFSP and community tools). In spite of this, new obstacles are emerging even though the institutional and financial capacities to proceed with the integration process are now finally available.

For a while, Brussels was busy with the establishment of the second Barroso Commission and the EU’s European External Action Service (EEAS). Last but not least, the new dynamics between the Council, the Commission and the Parliament have still to play out. After all, along with the global financial crisis hitting some of its member states, the Union has to deal with its first disintegrating state (Belgium), while new priorities have been influencing the EU’s foreign policy throughout the 2010s. The new treaty does not create the impression at all that it would promote the deepening and widening of European integration and enhance the EU’s

capabilities. The good news is that the European Parliament is much more powerful under the Lisbon Treaty. Parliamentarians have expressed their concern about the current pace of South East European accession. Notably, the Parliament’s Foreign Affairs Committee has become proactive on various Balkan-related issues.

The financial crisis — afflicting Greece, Ireland, Portugal and other member states — obviously had a negative impact on the perception of South East Europe, but the overall economic situation in the region deserves specific attention.³¹ Despite remarkable rates of growth in GDP up to 2009, GDP growth in 2009 was still lagging behind the 1989 level in Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina and, possibly, in Montenegro; labour markets have not shown significant improvement; greenfield investments are scarce and foreign direct investments are still limited; and, finally, the globally poor business environment is having a negative impact on job creation. Substantial economic growth is necessary to underpin the reform process required for EU accession. The prospect of EU membership could act as a short-term incentive, but the lack of such a perspective is affecting the pace of reform as well as the reforms themselves.

SEE countries should become more proactive, introduce and implement substantial reforms and make faster progress, notably in the fields of economic liberalisation and the reform of public administration. The rebranding of the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA)³² as a truly South East European Free Trade Association (SEFTA) — thus acting as a regional free trade and visa-free movement area on the model of EFTA, created in 1960 — could boost regional cooperation and pave the way for the future accession of South East European countries while consolidating and developing their economic potential — bringing it progressively up to European standards. The goal would be not to postpone but, on the contrary, to keep the candidate countries on track in their progress towards Europe and eventually to facilitate their membership following the examples of Austria and the Nordic states. This would give South East European states the opportunity to illustrate that they opted for change rather than for the status quo and to raise the level of mutual trust within the region and between SEE countries and the EU.

³² In 2004 and 2007, Central and East European countries and Slovenia left CEFTA when they joined the EU.
What Should be Done Need not Wait

Against this background, it is highly problematic to think of alternatives. A proactive approach is greatly needed, whereas an overly optimistic view of the integration process must be avoided. Today, most of the earlier proposals seem outdated. It is illusory to suggest a softening of the conditionality (through junior membership) or a speeding-up of the process (be it through shortcuts or a kick-start package). Despite candidate countries having rarely entered the EU individually but rather as part of a “convoy”, there is an overall consensus — in the EU as well as in the region — in favour of a “regatta approach” under which all (potential) candidate countries start the process together but reach the finishing line at their own speed — as opposed to a simultaneous accession scheme (the “convoy”). Last but not least, the option of an international conference on the model of the Thessaloniki Summit (Thessaloniki II) has never generated support.

The May 2010 European Council Foreign Relations (ECFR) policy brief suggests that some lessons might be learned from the recent visa liberalisation process: clear policy aims, achievable short-term goals and a transparent process may indeed, “transform a technocratic process into a political imperative, leaving little space for local leaders to make excuses or blame EU bias for their lack of progress”.

However, it seems highly improbable that — as the ECFR brief suggests — the questionnaire will be handed out simultaneously to Serbia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo. Almost certainly, all countries concerned will not begin the screening exercises together — instead, each country will be requested, as a prerequisite, to complete accession negotiations. What might happen, provided there is the political will, is that some countries will become part of the same convoy — and Table 3 (p. 42) suggests which countries might belong to convoys respectively.

Focusing less on the speed of accession and more on the quality of reform achievements could certainly be more effective as well as capable.

34 It is worth noting that, initially, enlargement proceeded in “waves”; negotiations on different chapters were thus opened simultaneously with countries in a given group. In 1999, the EU abandoned “waves” for the “regatta principle” as a more flexible, multi-speed accession process. However, this largely failed because, by then, strong pressure was being exerted on the Commission to admit certain countries as a group.
of convincing those affected by “enlargement fatigue”. As already suggested by the Captive States, Divided Societies project team: time spent on the accession process should be well spent. It is important to capitalise, as mentioned above, on the positive trends and to diversify the strategic repertoire, giving more weight to the endogenous potential: genuine and factual changes in the field will make the difference.

Against the background of the war period, each SEE country has made huge progress, but — to various degrees — each of these is still far from becoming a fully-fledged EU member state. Time is running out on the approach initiated in Thessaloniki back in 2003. Bridging the widening time gap between candidacy status and membership — this implies some eight years from the start of accession talks — constitutes the first challenge. A first convoy may be a realistic option for some SEE countries, while “catch-up” facilities, including early screening, should be offered to those lagging behind — typically Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. This said, some tangible measures should be introduced during the forthcoming years. For example: EU student mobility should be extended to all South East European countries, irrespective of their respective status in their negotiations with the EU. This proposal, and other similar initiatives, would keep the momentum introduced by visa liberalisation and convince the citizens of SEE that the road toward Brussels does pay off.

A wake-up call both to the EU and to the region that a stark choice must be made is much needed. In this respect, there is a gap between symbolic politics and realpolitik: thus a renewed explicit formal political promise — sustaining momentum and the pace of reform with specific instruments and, as mentioned above, visible measures — should formulate a tangible commitment to a strengthened relationship between the EU and South East Europe and, at the same time, acknowledge the legal and administrative necessities in a flexible way, thus combining policies of transition and development.

The new foreign policy priorities, the diminishing international involvement in South East European countries and the current financial crisis have all contributed to a deepening of the development gap which separates SEE countries from EU member states. A more promising prospect of EU membership, accompanied by specific strategies to address issues of development and growth, within the framework of a regional cohesion programme favouring social inclusion, could contribute to bringing SEE countries closer to European standards.

The further the EU expands, the more diversity it will have to embrace and the more flexibility will be required of it. The gap in terms of demo-
cracy and culture needs to be considered: it cannot be bridged through political transfers and ticking boxes during a mostly technical accession procedure. Misleading representations of backwardness and legacies, which are apparently very difficult to overcome, must be deconstructed using multi-case analytical comparisons in a broader European framework. The very idea of partnership has to be reviewed as well: SEE countries must play a full part in the ongoing debates about the meaning of the common European Union project. Alas, if we consider the ongoing integration process over the last years, including the recently initiated “Berlin Process”, we have to admit that this is has not been happening.

The “Berlin Process” is a five-year initiative, inaugurated by Chancellor Angela Merkel in 2014 to reinforce the commitment to EU-enlargement for the Western Balkans countries by revitalising the bilateral and multilateral ties between them and participating EU member states. Summits were organised in Berlin (2014), Vienna (2015), Paris (2016) and Trieste (2017). If EU membership is somehow still on the cards, the priority since the Trieste Summit has clearly been to focus on the above-mentioned SEFTA-option; thus, as mentioned in Trieste, to develop a Regional Economic Area based on CEFTA and EU standards and principles. Various arguments may explain this sectorial focus: first, of course, are economic matters in a region dramatically hit by massive waves of brain-drain; second, Germany’s own economic and geopolitical interests are at stake; and third, there is an obvious trend to develop a more pragmatic approach. Additionally we may also notice that this shift matches with the EU’s new strategy in the framework of the ENP — which tends to focus on sectoral partnerships in order to pool resources, increase joint partnership and gain efficiency.


38 Despite the multiple mechanisms introduced in SEE in the 2010s, such as action plans supposed to contain the brain-drain, the results were not forthcoming. Indeed, the opposite was the case. Also in this sector, there is clearly a need for a new approach. See Bilsana Bibic, “Brain Drain in the Western Balkans,” openDemocracy, 17 March 2015 and Jean-Arnault Dérens and Laurent Gueslin, “Balkans: le grand exode,” Le Temps, 16 March 2017, p. 4.

Acknowledging the above-mentioned gaps with their specificities could help formulate a fresh strategy, taking into account the new geopolitical context and the region’s specificities and avoiding the mistakes made in the previous enlargement round. Compared to the initially over-optimistic expectations, the introduced delay should be used constructively in closing the gaps: on the one hand, in the EU: first, to view enlargement to the Western Balkans as a consolidation of the previous enlargement process, and second, to review and update some instruments and to market its presence on the ground more strongly; and, on the other hand, in SEE in order to proceed more seriously with the accession process. Such an approach would combine post-independence state-building and capacity development within the framework of a truly “member-state-building” strategy.

The next chapter discusses the EU integration process in a broader perspective, acknowledging that the post-1945 system has been overcome and that a new world order is about to emerge. It questions the disarray exacerbated notably by an increasingly multiplex world order. This new, quite explosive, background does not signal the end of the EU, but provides evidence that its core features must be redesigned. A long-term vision and strategy coping with the challenges of the twenty-first century is now urgently needed.
1.2. Breaking the Chains of Weariness

The EU: With Divides or Flexibility?

The years 1974–1990 correspond to a significant democratic expansion, described by Samuel Huntington as the “third wave of democratisation”. The then fashionable question was: “Were these democratizations part of a continuing and ever-expanding ‘global democratic revolution’ that will reach virtually every country in the world?” Huntington’s answer mirrors the spirit of the time: “Democracy will spread to the extent that those who exercise power in the world and in individual countries want it to spread.”

The immediate post-Cold War international order was marked by the unification of Germany, the collapse of communist regimes in Central and Eastern Europe, the dissolution of the Soviet Union, and the progressive emergence of the European Union (EU) through various rounds of enlargement. The 1989 fall of the Berlin Wall symbolised the triumph of democracy and of a reunited Europe — it is notable that, at that time, nobody was questioning the principle of EU enlargement. As for the global landscape: the USA and Europe were clearly leading a liberal hegemonic order, the rest being in the “shadow of the West”. Francis Fukuyama could write about *The End of History* (1992) as the triumph of liberalism, democracy and market capitalism excluding future challenges.

This has much to do with a heavily Western-centric historiography. Anyhow, the era proved to be rather short-lived. But at the time, it would have been badly thought of to speak about the decline of the West (see “Thinking, Venturing Beyond”, Part 3).

The general post-1989 enthusiasm was short-lived. The very idea of “spreading democracy” came to be filtered through more realistic lenses.

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1 Samuel Huntington, *The Third Wave: Democratization in the Late Twentieth Century* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 1991)
3 Huntington, “Democracy’s Third Wave,” p. 34.
After triumphalism, sometimes followed by disillusionment, the reality-check headed towards adjustment. It became obvious that the different pace of democratisation needed to be acknowledged: rapid democratic consolidation being the exception, a longer time perspective was unavoidable in most cases — especially for less-developed lower-income countries. Concerning EU integration, this became, over the years, a longer and more demanding process. Despite enjoying the most favourable conditions (compared to those faced in the 2010s by SEE candidate countries), it is noticeable that Central and Eastern European candidate members had to wait until 2004 — thus, fifteen years after 1989 — to become fully-fledged EU members.6

Against the background of the then-forthcoming 2004 “big bang enlargement”, this idea of pace was transposed to the EU integration process in order to resolve its wider/deeper trade-off. Within the framework of a two-or multi-speed Europe, a “core Europe” would bring together a “progressive” group of states developing “enhanced collaboration” and “driving” the union.7 However, the facilitated consensus and gains in efficiency that were expected were outweighed, first, by institutional hurdles;8 second, by the already-existing tensions between centre and periphery, and between wealthy (donor) and poor (recipient) countries; and, third, by the risk of building second-class membership which would weaken the EU’s internal cohesion and renew the East-West divide.

Meanwhile, the union self-imposed various other divides: between the seventeen member states of the Eurozone and the eleven left outside; between the 23 member states applying the Schengen Agreement and those five which do not belong to it (the UK, Ireland, Romania, Bulgaria and Croatia). Further, two member states — Romania and Bulgaria — have been under a “Cooperation and Verification Mechanism” since they joined the EU in 2007.9 Last but not least, in relation to the assertion of a particular fiscal discipline within an austerity regime, the EU’s East–West

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7 The mechanism of “enhanced co-operation” was first mentioned by the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) and confirmed by the Nice Treaty (2001).
9 See the biannual reports on progress in Bulgaria and Romania regularly published at: <ec.europa.eu/info/effective-justice/rule-law/assistance-bulgaria-and-romania-under-cvm/reports-progress-bulgaria-and-romania_en> (Accessed 13 April 2017). These reports assess progress under the Cooperation and Verification Mechanism, with judicial reform, the fight against corruption and, concerning Bulgaria, the fight against organised crime.
divide switches into a North–South one. Against the background of a virtually “divided” EU, how should it expand?

We may see things from a slightly different perspective. The EU is, indeed, moving closer to a union à la carte driven by a variable-geometry approach in order to confront its increased heterogeneity. Such an approach will, most probably, be adopted in the field of European public policy in order to introduce some flexibility for different member states. In the field of foreign policy and security matters, ad hoc groups are already implementing the same strategy: new alliances are emerging which effectively change the rules without changing the Treaty. This illustrates the trend — of course, reinforced by successive rounds of enlargement — towards increased heterogeneity in the EU and an inexorable shift towards a more flexible union. This fits partly within Larry Diamond’s perspective, focusing on multi-layered and non-linear processes: “Which often involves progress on some fronts and regression or setbacks followed by increments of progress”.10

Thereafter, new keywords such as “democratic consolidation”, “continued democratic development” and “invigoration of democracy” have surfaced. Acknowledging the widening gap between democratic form and substance, “low-intensity democracy”, “poor democracy” and similar terms have emerged to describe “weak” and “failed” states. Meanwhile, Guillermo O’Donnell has introduced the more precise notion of “delegative democracy”, referring to countries that have the formal constitutional structures of democracy, but being institutionally hollow and fragile.11

Last but not least, and beyond the labelling approach, a hard behind-the-scenes look on the often ill-conceived aid-programmes, imposing change upon societies without really understanding them, tells the tortuous tale of how Western donors, who set out to build democracy, instead often rekindled corruption, communist legacies, and anti-capitalist sentiments.12

Understandably the question arises as to whether the “third wave” is over.13 Even if there is not a reverse wave of democratisation, we are currently facing stagnation or, to put it optimistically, stability. How do these terms cope with our subject?

12 See the excellent Janine R. Wedel, Collision and Collusion: The Strange Case of Western Aid to Western Europe 1898–1998 (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 2001).
First, concerning the way the EU is currently organised: the informal extension of the competencies of the Commission and the Council (the later acting as law-maker and as executive), a still-weak Parliament and poorly-Europeanised parties make it clear that the EU has only been insufficiently democratised. Second, populist setbacks may be observed in Central Europe where democratic institutional foundations have turned out to be fragile and lacking in firm social foundation — here, the term consolidation may apply.\(^\text{14}\) Third, looking especially at Bosnia’s and Kosovo’s poor performances and high levels of corruption, the notion of weak and/or failed states is often used. Is the union strong and flexible enough to integrate the latter?

In spite of the welcome criticism mentioned above, both Southern and Central Europe — not (yet) encompassing the Balkans\(^\text{15}\) — can be considered as a “third wave success story”.\(^\text{16}\) There are, of course, obvious differences: first, between the regimes in transition in Southern and in Central-Eastern Europe; and, second, within the 27 post-communist countries themselves, notably between the different sub-regions: respectively, the post-communist, post-Yugoslav and post-Soviet countries.\(^\text{17}\) We may highlight the broader reach of the transition process in Central Europe, involving politics, economics, social life and nation- and state-building; and, for the post-Yugoslav area, a transition process of similar magnitude but proceeding through wars (transition guerrière) and from federalism to new nation-states. Of course, the strategic and security dimensions were key here. The “security void” after 1989 explains why NATO expansion proceeded faster than that of the EU — even if joining the EU was the ultimate goal.\(^\text{18}\)

After the plain sailing post-1989, the 2010s have faced profound cli-
mate change against the backdrop of Russia’s destabilising strategy: the annexation of Crimea was promptly followed by Moscow’s interference in the eastern Ukraine, where the Russian Federation fomented instability, armed separatists and intervened militarily. More widely, the disjunction between conventional arms and nuclear weapons — providing the former with a new strategic use — and the emergence of cyber-warfare, possibly characterise a “new Cold War” era. However welcome Germany’s new assertive policy may be, as well as the increased commitment of some European countries including Italy, France and Poland, the EU’s response — consisting mostly of economic sanctions — was far too slow and not sufficiently incisive. Considering this and the weakness of the European Common Security and Defence Policy (CSDP), the almost-immediate NATO expansion to Central European countries in the early 1990s provides today the only reliable security umbrella.

A New EU in a New World Order

The 1989–2017 years can hardly be seen as a continuum. First, the 1989-2004 period may be seen positively if we focus on the construction of the EU, including the successful introduction of the euro and the 1995 and 2004 waves of enlargement. Second, the 2005 French and Dutch rejections of the draft treaty establishing a constitution for Europe, the European Council’s painful difficulties in agreeing the EU budget for 2007–2013 and, last but not least, the global economic crisis, marked a turning point, confronting the EU with a crisis of unprecedented gravity. Third, in the meantime, nationalism re-emerged all over, weakening multilateral institutions and the EU. Concerning the latter, particularly worrying is the increased presence, now even in the European Parliament, of movements opposed to what the EU stands for — fundamental values (rule of law,

19 See the review of the strengths, weaknesses and challenges of the EU by Christian Lequesne, “Ce que l’Europe nous a apporté,” Esprit, (2014) 14 May.
20 Of course, the French and Dutch votes did not produce the crisis, they simply brought it to the surface. Laurent Cohen-Tanugi points out that “It was the economic, social and political shortcomings of the existing EU that brought about the rejection of the treaty, not the other way around”. See Laurent Cohen-Tanugi, “The End of Europe?” Foreign Affairs, 6 (2005) 84, pp. 55–67.
human dignity and human rights);22 solidarity between peoples and nations; and shared sovereignty and institutions. Declining legitimacy and the rise of nationalism, combined with right-wing sovereigntism, go hand-in-hand — with both of them increasing political ins-tability and tensions.

To complete this overview, we may briefly detail the broader context: Asia is becoming a new strategic point of reference, but is unwilling or unable to take a position on concrete issues such as the Syrian and Ukrai-nian situations. Furthermore, the instruments of the international order — including the UN and other inter-governmental bodies — seem increas-ingly unable to deal with transnational security and climate issues. Last but not least, the US is opting, at least temporarily, for fall-back positions.

Without doubt, the post-1945 system is now behind us and a new world order is about to emerge: but is it multipolar, bipolar — but in a new way — a-polar or unstructured, an anarchy under control? At this stage, it is hard to be more precise (see Part 3). Certainly, globalisation economics strongly contrasts with the fragmentation and the increased heterogeneity of the political sphere. Jürgen Habermas puts it thus: nation-states are seen by most of their citizens as the only collective entities that act effectively with some legitimacy, but they do not face up to the reality that state-nations have precisely “become more and more entangled in functional contexts which transcend national borders”.23

Nicole Gnesotto summarises the key security issues in an unstable world:

American leadership is absent, the period when Europe set the example has passed, the authority of the UN has been thwarted, and the dynamism of the emerging powers, as real as it is, remains self-centred. Hence the litany of strategic para-doxes that are easier to state than to solve: a more violent world, but an interna-tional community with less power; a more volatile environment, but less regu-lated international security; more active extremism, but democracies that are less certain. Faced with these challenges, the collective will to powerlessness among Europeans is looking like the greatest political waste of the early twenty-first century.24

23 Jürgen Habermas, “Mais que veut dire une «Europe forte»?” Esprit, (2014), 5, p. 79 — The English translation is provided by the Institute for Public Policy Research’s Juncture.
Simone Weil’s premonitory words receive a new meaning: “If we do not undertake a serious effort of analysis, one day sooner or later we may well find ourselves at war and powerless not only to act but even to make judgments”.

25 And similarly with regard to Edmund Husserl’s famous 1935 Vienna lecture, inviting us to break the chains of weariness:

There are only two escapes from the crisis of European existence: the downfall of Europe in its estrangement from its own rational sense of life, its fall into hostility toward the spirit and into barbarity; or the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all. Europe’s greatest danger is weariness.

26 Obviously, the above-mentioned difficult context does not signal the end of the EU, but it does provide evidence that its core features — such as competition policy, rules on freedom of movement, the euro and the EU’s monetary policy — must be redesigned and receive broad popular support. The quite unproductive “period of reflection” is over: retooling, a policy of mere adjustments, will not do the job; a long-term vision capable of coping with the challenges of the twenty-first century is now urgently needed.

If we are not to have a new European treaty, then the existing ones need to be utterly revised: first, a truly monetary union — effectively coordinating the economic policies of the member states — must address the structural defects of monetary union; second, a nation-state based and democratically-legitimised EU — as a transnational community and multi-level form of governance, meeting democratic benchmarks of legitimation — seems to be the only model capable of overcoming the false dichotomy between nation-state and European federal state. One key argument, based on the distinction between popular and state sovereignty, is made by Habermas: “Restricting national sovereignty by transferring sovereign rights to supranational authorities by no means necessarily comes at the cost of disenfranchising democratic citizens”.

27 Furthermore, Habermas highlights that, in a federation without a state, shared — thus not superimposed — sovereignty at EU level and state

sovereignty are not two levels competing for control over centralised authority but rather constitute distinct and, at the same time, interwoven levels. Nation-states continuing to uphold their constitutional role as guarantors of law and freedom does not lead to a loss of legitimacy in establishing a political order beyond the nation-state. In place of an absolutely unrealistic supranational form, such a transnational option — one which, admittedly, is certainly complex to introduce — offers the only credible way of settling a new political framework.

**Enlargement: Wider or/and Deeper?**

After more than fifty years of European integration, the EU has to tackle a crisis of delivery and a crisis of identity. People worry more about the EU’s unfulfilled economic and social promise, somewhat less about the EU’s inability to play a bigger role on the world scene and only marginally about “excessive expansion”. Nevertheless, we have to acknowledge that an enlarged EU is perceived as increasingly ineffective. Trust in the enlargement policy has significantly declined in EU member states — including in traditionally pro-enlargement countries — as well as in candidate countries. More than frustration, this disenchantment expresses the rather rational opinion that a 28-member union is hardly workable in the context of what amounts to a loosely connected network of transnational regimes.

Nonetheless, the symptoms of the EU’s crisis should not be taken for its causes. It is not enlargement *per se* which burdens the future deepening of the EU, but the way it was planned — the then 15-member union ha-

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28 Such a “stateless EU”, as a non-state polity, may be seen as a response to the problem of nationalism and international relations. See Habermas, *Ibid*.

29 We may remember that the 2000 Lisbon agenda promised over the next decade to turn the EU into “The most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth, with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion.” Available at: <www.europarl.europa.eu> (Accessed 13 April 2017).


ving been unable to achieve the necessary institutional reforms for further enlargement waves. In other words, the previous round of enlargement was conducted without the institutional reform that would have strengthened both the EU institutions and the EU’s cohesion. But the EU cannot ignore these things now.

Against this background, the EU’s deepening, supranational centralisation, and its further enlargement, the expansion of its membership, may hardly be conceived as business as usual. The context factor — highlighting the increasing politicisation of the integration process — does of course matter, and the misleading alternative proposition of horizontality (widening) vs. verticality (deepening) must be discussed as such. Both aspects are intertwined, but it would be wrong to consider them separately: what is at stake is their interaction.

In recent years, many scholars and politicians have over-emphasised the trade-off between widening and deepening, arguing that the first would obstruct the second. However, the long and winding road of the EU actually demonstrates the contrary: deepening and widening go hand-in-hand. Enlargement has constantly affected the EU’s own functioning, producing a systematic deepening of supranational policy-making capacities. As Eva Heidbreder observes:

Enlargement extended the policy agenda beyond the traditional pool of EU policies to political realms in which the old member states had not seen the need to pool competences but felt pressured to introduce safeguards for the incoming members. Consequently, enlargement served as a powerful catalyst of policy-generated integration.\textsuperscript{32}

This is consistent with the research conducted by Kelemen, Menon and Slapin. Based on a theoretical model and empirical evidence, these authors suggest that widening facilitates deepening:

It does so, first, by generating legislative gridlock that in turn increases the room for manoeuvre of supranational administrative and judicial actors who exploit their discretion to pursue their preferences for deeper integration. Secondly, because it encourages legislative bottlenecks, enlargement creates functional pressures for institutional reform that eventually facilitates deepening.\textsuperscript{33}

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The same authors observe that successive enlargements have enhanced the centrality of the EU system, notably strengthening the EU’s judicial system and empowering meaningfully, albeit with poor legitimacy, the Commission’s coordination and brokerage role.

Beyond the above-mentioned trade-off, the past six rounds of enlargement also illustrate a “differentiated integration” — the Eurozone and the Schengen area exemplify this. Furthermore, weaker candidates have benefited in previous enlargement rounds from preferential treatment: for example, receiving more time to adopt the *acquis*.

Frank Schimmelfennig highlights:

> The EU uses differentiated integration as an instrument to smooth the enlargement process and to reduce the costs of enlargement for both old and new member states.

What is at stake is, therefore, not widening versus deepening, but the homogeneity versus heterogeneity alternative — the latter favouring deeper cooperation inside the European Union.

To sum-up: recent research has deconstructed the false dichotomy of widening vs. deepening and highlighted the key role of heterogeneity and, thus, flexibility. The remaining challenges are, first, to increase the legitimacy of EU procedure within the framework of a new treaty, and, second, to review the enlargement process.

**Enlargement: Who, When and How**

**Who**

Excepting Iceland, no other enlargement is on the table besides that of the Balkans. Albania became a candidate in 2014 and Macedonia in 2005 — but both countries are miles away from opening accession talks; Bosnia and Herzegovina concluded its negotiations on a Stabilisation and Association Agreement (SAA) in 2008 and the agreement entered in force in 2015; Serbia started accession negotiations formally in January 2014; Ko-

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sovo started negotiating its SAA in late 2012. Turkey, which has been negotiating since 2005, has not yet opened half of its negotiations chapters. To sum up, all these countries are in the slow lane (see Table 3, p. 42).

Despite the modest results and serious shortcomings, especially in Bosnia and Kosovo, where the EU is part of the problem, substantial progress in modernisation and democratisation has been achieved since the 1990s. Compared to Afghanistan and Iraq, the Balkans may stand as an example of successful post-conflict reconstruction even though, notably, the EU has been unable to resolve Macedonia’s name dispute, Kosovo’s status and the Bosnian conundrum. Nevertheless, the perspective of EU accession, the major anchor of stability for all countries, remains the most efficient incentive for the on-going post-communist transition and reform process.

Within the framework of the already-existing trend towards a flexible and more heterogeneous EU mentioned above, some five additional new incomers — thus here excluding Turkey — will not affect the continuing process of (de)centralisation — and nor will they overburden the “absorption capacities” of the EU.37

Even if we acknowledge the proactive presence of Turkey, China and Russia in previous years, these countries do not currently represent a credible alternative for the Western Balkans.38 However, if the EU integration perspective does not gain in credibility, major setbacks cannot be excluded. A halt in transition and democratisation processes could well introduce a vicious circle and lead to the consolidation of clientelist and semi-authoritarian regimes — most probably leading to an increase in the influence of China and Russia in the region. In this case, EU membership would become a “dead deal”.

As for the latter, Russia’s influence in SEE since the early 2000s has been manifold and has targeted various policy areas, notably in the energy sector. Nevertheless, it must also be acknowledged that Moscow’s games of influence, beyond some historical connections, essentially corresponds to a strategy that puts pressure on the EU and the USA. Beyond that, Russia’s outreach exceeds the post-Soviet area.

Dimitar Bechev’s nuanced and comprehensive study of the political dynamics between Russia and key countries in South East Europe (Rival

The EU Integration Process

*Power, 2017* puts the Russian challenge in perspective, discussing its limits, and recognising what it is not. Bechev invites us to discard the idea of a return to the Cold War and to consider opportunistic strategies on both sides (Russia and SEE). Reassessing Moscow’s position, Bechev highlights its limits:

[... ] the Kremlin does not appear to have a coherent model that is exportable beyond the post-Soviet space. Neither “the managed democracy” or “sovereign democracy” of Putin’s first two terms, nor the more recent praise of conservative values and religion more broadly as well as the celebration of Russia as a unique civilization opposed to global liberalism, quite do the job, irrespective of the fact that there is no shortage of cheerleaders across the EU. [ ... ] Even more important, Russia does not appear to have the economic resources for costly ideological crusades nor the bankroll friendly regimes.39

The next chapters, focusing on region-building, will extract the Russia–SEE relations from an obsolete multipolar world and may present an alternative narrative.

When

After the 2004 “big bang” enlargement, distinguished experts and politicians extended the “pause for reflection” on the Treaty to the enlargement process. Soon, the pause became “enlargement fatigue”. Ten years later, things were going from bad to worse: presenting officially the political guidelines for the next Commission on 15 July 2014, the new President of the European Commission, Jean-Claude Juncker, alluded unambiguously to the “need” for a “break”:

The EU needs to take a break from enlargement so that we can consolidate what has been achieved among the 28. This is why, under my Presidency of the Commission, on-going negotiations will continue, and notably the Western Balkans will need to keep a European perspective, but no further enlargement will take place over the next five years.40

But what does this mean? The most advanced candidate countries, Montenegro and Serbia, are not likely to join before 2020 anyway; for the remaining candidates, 2030 is more realistic. This means some twenty or

thirty years since the launch of the Stabilisation and Association Agreement process in 1999. It is not clear whether Juncker’s statement refers to this timetable or whether he is adding a further five years — thus, displaying an eagerness to slow enlargement down further. If so, we would face a never ending negotiations scenario that might seriously affect the reform process in the Balkans.\(^{41}\)

That the Directorate General for Enlargement has been renamed European Neighbourhood and Enlargement Negotiations tends to confirm this scenario. Certainly, the 2014–2019 Juncker Commission is not looking outwards, but inwards. For some candidate countries, the new EU priorities might strike a blow, but they may well be welcomed by those in the region and in different European capitals who only seemingly supported the accession process and who have interests (albeit different in each case) in further preserving their private economic goals and/or political power.

Is there no appetite anymore? Curiously, on the very same day that Juncker presented his political guidelines, the German Chancellor, Angela Merkel — meeting in Dubrovnik the presidents of Albania, Croatia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo, Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Slovenia — sent a quite different message, stating that, provided the criteria and treaties were respected, the (not yet EU member-) countries from the Balkans had a “clear prospect” of joining the EU.\(^{42}\) Merkel emphasised that:

> The countries of the region that have gathered here are on the way to becoming EU members and we can say that all of them already completed a big part of the journey.\(^{43}\)

Once again, the EU is not speaking with one voice and as a result the signals are confusing both for people in Europe and for those willing to join the EU.

The Dubrovnik gathering was followed by a conference organised in Berlin on 28 August 2014 that initiated the so-called “Berlin Process” (see Chapter 1.1). Under the slogan “Through trade, investment and regional

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\(^{41}\) See the four scenarios discussed by the Balkans in Europe Policy Advisory Group, *The Unfulfilled Promise: Completing the Balkan Enlargement* (Belgrade and Graz: European Fund for the Balkans and Centre for Southeast European Studies, 2014).

\(^{42}\) As reported by Deutsche Welle and AFP on 16 July 2014. Greece became the first Balkan country to join the EU in 1981; Slovenia the second in 2004; and Croatia the third in 2013.

\(^{43}\) As reported by Sven Milekić for *Balkan Insight*, <www.balkaninsight.com>.
cooperation to new dynamics”, heads of government, foreign ministers and economic ministers of Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Montenegro, Croatia, Kosovo, Macedonia, Slovenia and Serbia were in attendance. Meanwhile, regular follow-up conferences were organised with the task of assessing progress in the field of regional economic cooperation and the resolution of outstanding bilateral and internal issues. Disappointingly, no assessment mechanism was set up. Berlin was thus just another additional — and mostly unsatisfactory — conference. Nevertheless, Germany, the most important trade partner for the Balkan region, seems to have become the stakeholder most willing to press integration forward. The question is how?

How not

The EU’s current enlargement strategy is based on the “regatta principle”, which clearly prioritises the technical side of the accession process while undermining its political dimension: each country implements the acquis individually and its integration into the EU thus progresses in accordance with its reform milestones. In other words, each country joins the union at a different point in time. Many leaders in the region welcomed this approach; beyond the, mostly empty, rhetoric about regional cooperation, all are looking separately to Brussels without regard for their neighbours. This, of course, weakens the bargaining power of the region’s states.

While some technical arguments do indeed speak in favour of this approach, it nevertheless stands in contradiction to the EU’s own regional policy, with regional cooperation being an additional conditionality imposed on Balkan candidate countries. Nor does it fit with the historic heritage made up of a shared past, followed by wars and now mutual suspicion. It also neglects the fact that previous rounds of enlargement were all “group driven” and successful. Notably, the regional solidarity illustrated by the Višegrad Four stands as a model of effective regional cooperation and integration processes that could inspire the Balkans. This is especially pertinent in as much as each Balkan country faces serious bilateral problems that still hamper bilateral and multilateral cooperation and which

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may seriously obstruct the accession process once it reaches its final stage. In particular, various EU member states, such as Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Romania and Slovenia, are involved — countries that might receive support from the anti-enlargement lobby in the EU.

The accession process is supposed to be equal for all candidates, but Balkan countries have to fulfil a set of additional conditions — i.e. the “Copenhagen Plus” criteria — and deal with a far more rigorous Union in the way in which it monitors “enhanced conditionality”. More than was the case with previous rounds, the “regatta approach” favours single members blocking or delaying decisions on enlargement. All this considerably slows enlargement and gives the impression that the Balkans is racing ahead but not under the same rules.

Last but not least, what if we assume that, whatever common sense dictates, the “regatta principle” was, after all, the right way. Where are the results after fifteen years? Well, It’s now “game over” for all the parties concerned.

So, how?

We argued above for serious reforms inside the EU that would include a constructive deepening/widening process. Only a process such as this could, in our view, reinvigorate and legitimise enlargement. It would also provide the EU with the opportunity to recommit to the region with some credibility. A new treaty could possibly envision integrating candidate countries in some EU structures — giving observer status in the European Council and Parliament, for example, as well as participant status in some EU programmes such as Erasmus. The initial impact in the Balkans would be the restoration of incentives towards reform and the avoidance of any unnecessary postponement of accession. Being more assertive does not mean implementing a bulldozer style. Timing matters: a clear and realistic timetable would be a considerable step forward.

The second consequence of this approach would be the development of a regional qualitative approach focusing on the political dimension of the integration process, which is not merely technical but indeed essential. Past candidate countries — and not only Romania and Bulgaria — entered the EU more rapidly than their reform progress report would have allowed because of the successful exertion of political influence. All past candidate countries have benefited from “exemptive differentiation” and/or “transi-
tional arrangements”46. These should also apply in a specific manner to the different new incomers, easing their path to Brussels.

Furthermore, the countries should meet the criteria fixed by the conditionality package prior to membership, not prior to talks. A set of conditionalities should be prioritised, focusing on national convergence strategies (targeting various issues, notably: public administration; fiscal consolidation; improvement of productivity; and the reform of education). A proactive handling of exemptive differentiation and transitional arrangements, including the provision of extensive assistance measures, should be adopted for issues requiring greater administrative competencies and capacity building. As for the questions that remain open (border, status, constitution — what Veton Surroi calls the “unfinished states”), the EU must consider alternative ways of resolving these within its own frame-work. Accordingly, an “integration follow-up” mechanism targeting such issues should be established.

Third, we firmly advocate a single round: a “caravan approach” in place of the “regatta” one. Thus, all countries would negotiate membership simultaneously. In this way, the shortcomings of the latter would be avoided. This would also avert any splitting of the candidate group into one group (of two countries) moving steadily forward while the prospects for the slower candidates would be bleak — leading, most probably, towards the abandonment of accession. Such a “caravan approach” would also reinvigorate the accession process and create a truly fresh regional dynamic, increasing the bargaining power of the candidate countries. Cross-border regional projects should receive more attention and be supported by the European Investment Bank (EIB). Enhanced and effective regional collaboration could create a virtuous circle of transformation and integration: a regional cooperation which would not be limited to the Balkan states, but one which involved central Europe and, in the framework of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the Baltic area. This we shall consider in the next chapters.

46 “Exemptive differentiation refers to those transitional arrangements that favour new member states via the postponement of undesired obligations of membership, such as environmental or safety standards. In contrast, transitional arrangements causing ‘discriminatory differentiation’ may temporarily exclude new member states from desired rights and benefits of EU membership, such as passport-free travel or subsidies from the EU budget”. Schimmelfennig, “EU Enlargement and Differentiated Integration,” p. 682.
Part 2
SEE in a Broader Framework
2.1. See Regional Levels in Europe

*Conceptualizing Region, Regionalism and Regional Cooperation*

To situate South East Europe in the framework of “comparative regionalism” calls upon a grasp of the variable geometries of multi-scalar networks and flows which produce and reproduce social constructions of place. Questioning taken-for-granted geographical notions of space implies considering, on the one hand, the tensions of nation-state-region-building practices in the context of multiple histories of antagonism and cooperation, and, on the other hand, the tensions inherent in the development of emerging forms of governance of contested regional spaces.

The importance of an analytical, political and normative shift from South East Europe as constructed in its double “otherness” — not yet Central Europe and not at all Western Europe — is key to this endeavour. Avoiding the clumsy binaries between seeing SEE as, on the one hand, fully fixed in a peripheral and marginal position, and, on the other hand, as a true subject free to choose its own destiny, the focus needs to shift from assessing labels such as core and periphery, subject and object, as inherently true or false and, instead, towards exploring the multiple political meanings and impacts of these labels in practice. A nested set of geopolitical spaces never fully absorbed into the so-called Eastern bloc during the Cold War, and with a complex and contested set of relationships to multiple modernities, can never be understood in terms of a single, linear, narrative.

The invention and reinvention of “South East Europe”, as “the Balkans”, “the Western Balkans”, “former Yugoslavia”, and so on, tells us much about continued struggles to create meanings which escape, however fleetingly, from orientalism and colonialism (see the Chapter 2.2, page 108). The narratives of “returning to Europe”, “convergence”, “widening and deepening”, now seem somewhat tarnished and ambiguous in the face of new sets of power relations in which some parts of Europe, allied with other global actors, impose new sets of disciplinary practices, reworking ideas of core and periphery, “old” and “new” Europe, revealing the paradoxes of “Euro-Atlantic integration”.

The following addresses theoretical and conceptual approaches to regionalism and region-making which questions some of the taken-for-granted orthodoxies of realist conceptions of international relations which, all
too quickly, lead to a dangerous essentialism. Then, it addresses the implications of moving from a nation-building to a region-building lens in South East Europe, and the complexities of so-called “regional ownership” or “joint ownership” as a response to the imposed agendas of those outside. The importance of a myriad of small-scale projects and programmes is reinforced through an exploration of the flourishing of cross-border cooperation schemes in a wider European context.

Traditionally, regions have been viewed as a particular level in the architecture of international relations, with the concept applied typically to a limited number of nation states linked together by a geographical relationship and a degree of mutual interdependence. Reliant on an objectivist spatial ontology in which geographical relationships, nation-state forms and, indeed, measures of mutual interdependence are essentialised categories, the traditional view spawned a set of supposedly technical scientific exercises in which, on the basis of ever more complex typologies and models, classifications of which regions were “real” and which were not could be developed and agreed. The concept of “regions” is further complicated, of course, by the fact that it can also refer to sub-nation-state units and, indeed, to intrastate regions composed of parts of neighbouring nation-states. Similar issues of essentialism remain here. Both kinds of regions matter, of course, insofar as they are translated into specific practices resulting in recognised territorial boundaries (revealed in maps) and specific institutional structures (with set competencies enshrined in laws, rule books, and codified procedures).

However, regions and ways of thinking about regions are changing rapidly, with much less emphasis on the “what” in terms of their definition, and much more emphasis on the “how” in terms of processes of region-making. Furthermore, ideas and theories of regionalism must be related to the context in which they develop. Correspondingly, Frederik Söderbaum clarified the distinction between four subsequent phases in the development of regionalism: distinguishing early, old, new and comparative regionalism (see Table 2, p. 23).

It has become commonplace to assert, as Björn Hettne does, that “there are no ‘natural’ regions: definitions of a ‘region’ vary according to the particular problem or question under investigation”. ² The “spatial turn” in contemporary social science is underpinned by the axiom that regions are socially and politically constructed and subject to diverse and contested

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meanings. Regions are thus seen rather more as flexible constructs, contingent on social practices, and made up of more or less dense and interlocking “social networks” of collaboration and interaction, as well as of conflict and contestation. According to Michael Davern:

a social network consists of a series of direct and indirect ties from one actor to a collection of others, whether the central actor is an individual person or an aggregation of individuals (e.g. a formal organisation). A network tie is defined as a relation or social bond between two interacting actors.³

Regions, like nation-states, then, are “imagined communities” consisting of complex, overlapping and, not unusually, competing identities, identifications and visions, both constituted by, and constitutive of, power relations.⁴ Regions are never merely arbitrarily invented: they do bear the traces of historical legacies, but are also redefined and reconstituted by a wide range of diverse and various practices or “narratives”. These “rarely produce a coherent or even compatible story”.⁵

The social scientific task becomes one of drawing out the agendas and interests that may invoke particular regional narratives and which seek to translate them “into actions of region-building”.⁶ Louise Fawcett, seeking to grasp “the newer and expanding domains of regional action”, distinguishes between “regionalism” as a body of ideas, values and policies, and “regionalisation” as a project of cooperation, integration and cohesion, thus a process involving “a concentration of activity at regional level” that may both “proceed and flow from regionalism”.⁷ We may notice that most scholars share this viewpoint except the architects of the World Order Approach (WOA) — developed by Andrey Gamble and Anthony Payne — who view regionalism as a states-led project, while regionalisation is seen as a societal process.

Here what matters is to overcome this tension. Obviously, regionalism is not the only game in town. Hence, the necessity to envision the broader landscape, taking into account regional contexts and processes, and the

⁶ Ibidem.
other way round, to approach regions from a global perspective. Thus, such a complementary approach may be instrumental in overcoming this gap in interconnecting world-order processes with regionalism. One crucial argument is that contemporary global governance has regions as a key ingredient, albeit not the only one. As already mentioned in our introductory chapter and further discussed in Part 3, in an emerging new world order, region-related processes become more visible and influential — they may be considered as “a structural component of today’s global politics”. Let’s illustrate this with an example given by Richard Falk:

From a world-order perspective one crucial contribution of regionalism is to help create a new equilibrium in politics that balances the protection of the vulnerable and the interests of humanity as a whole […] against the integrative, technological dynamic associated with globalism. One kind of balance is being promoted by transnational social forces connected with human rights and the environment, but regionalism could be another. Both phenomena are, in part, reactions to the displacement of the state, from without and within, and the decline of sovereign territorial space as a domain of unconditional political control. Regionalism, if democratically conditioned, might yet provide, at least for some parts of the whole, a world-order compromise between statism and globalism that has indispensable benefits for the circumstances of humanity, as well as some new dangers.

Against the background of an emerging new world order, Andrew Gamble and Anthony Payne envision “the birth of a qualitatively new stage in the development of the world order, which renders redundant many of the categories we have used in the past for understanding its history and its future prospects”. Hence, the necessity for new forms of governance, new kind of networks, and crosscutting identities and authorities:

Such a world order would be extremely complex, and conflicts would be common. Quite radical changes and shifts could be expected. It would be a world order of considerable flexibility. There would be no hegemon, and no requirement for one. [...] In such a world regionalism would have a role, as one level of governance, as a means for states to manage certain common problems which were identified as being handled best at a regional level.

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Nevertheless, the question remains open as to whether regionalism might have a counterhegemonic democratising influence, provide an answer to the problem of collective action at the global level, and positively nurture a new multi-plex world order.  

Back to Fawcett’s approach. Working in the space between objectivist and constructivist accounts, she does not make clear when processes become sufficiently concentrated to become a regional project. In addition, the framework she provides is in danger of seeing the regional level as somehow prior to these processes and, thus, to increase the contrast between, on the one hand, state-led regionalism and regional organisations and, on the other hand, the processes of regionalisation. This does not allow, therefore, for any understanding of how regions are made and unmade.  

Nevertheless, Fawcett’s concepts are useful in directing attention to the active politics of region-making, in which “regions are invented by political actors as a political programme”. They thereby encourage the study of “the ideas, dynamics and means that contribute to [...] a politically constructed community”. As Söderbaum emphasises, from this perspective, “regions are constitutive of society itself, are viewed as social constructions and are held together by historically contingent interactions, shared beliefs and identities, norms and practices”.  

In the early 1990s, Hettne coined the term “new regionalism”. This concept is often understood as referring to a new era or new “wave” of regionalism emerging around the time of the first stirrings of the shift away from Westphalian order and the bipolar Cold War world to a world based on multipolarity (see Table 4, p. 72). While this understanding is
mostly correct, it is nevertheless somewhat misleading because Hettne, instead of identifying a new era of regionalism, intended to focus on “the identification of new patterns of regionalization (coexisting with older forms)”.

While the temporal sense is often brought to the forefront, the empirical sense also matters.

Table 4: Two waves of regionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>“Old” regionalism</th>
<th>“New” regionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Result of bipolar, Cold War international system</td>
<td>Feature of multi-polar, globalized international system</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dependent upon superpower patronage</td>
<td>Dependent on participant state preferences</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Economically protectionist</td>
<td>Economically open (neoliberal)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Function-specific</td>
<td>Multi-purpose</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Composed of states with (previously) complete state sovereignty</td>
<td>Composed of “porous” states with complex interactions between state and non-state actors</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Aiming to foster a more coherent theoretical construct, Hetten and Söderbaum in the early 2000s developed the “New Regionalism Approach” (NRA). The NRA is centred on the core concept of region-ness viewed as a “process that leads to patterns of cooperation, integration, complementarity and convergence within a particular cross-national geographical space”.


nomic blocks” to more freely chosen, open-ended, and innovative forms of cooperation across boundaries, characterized by multidimensional complexity, and fluidity. Heterogeneous state and non-state actors coalesce in often transient, rather informal, multi-actor coalitions, and act in multiple arenas in this context. After six decades of academic debates and emerging new trends in region-building, the time was ripe to rethink regionalism across four interrelated perspectives: regionalism viewed historically, spatially, comparatively and globally. Among the key issues: the prerequisite to transcending the unresolved tension between universalism and particularism, and to overcoming the too often Eurocentric and ethnocentric approaches to regionalism. While Hettne paved the way to a move beyond new regionalism, Söderbaum attempted to establish the concept of “comparative regionalism”:

The proposed way forward for a more integrated debate about regions, regionalism and regional organizations is the integration of the case of Europe within a larger discourse of comparative regionalism, built around general concepts and theories whilst still showing cultural and contextual sensitivity.

The current phase of regionalism is referred to as “comparative regionalism” inasmuch the comparative dimension “constitutes one of the core characteristics of the current phase in the study of regionalism, perhaps its most important one”. Contrasting comparative with old and new regionalism (see Table 2, p. 23) may help to identify the specificity and added value of the novel approach. Here, one issue discussed by Söderbaum is relevant for the next sections: the relationship between global, national, regional levels and their respective modes of governance.

Whereas many old regionalism theorists focused on (and hoped) that regional integration would shift loyalty and decision-making to regional institutions, “beyond the nation-state”, other theorists considered regionalism as a means to strengthen the nation-state and facilitate nation-building. In the next phase, new regionalism scholars focused heavily on the relationship between regionalism and globalization. Even if this issue has not disappeared, the global-regional nexus has changed meaning during the last decade. While much of the previous debate

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21 See Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, pp. 2–12; and our Part 3.
23 Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 10.
24 Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 33.
focused heavily on the relationship between globalization and regionalism *per se*, the current debate stresses the complexity of regionalism and the multifold interactions between state and non-state actors, institutions and processes at a variety of interacting levels, that range from the bilateral, to the regional, inter-regional and global.25

Comparative regionalism is, in many ways, a regionalism of networks and network power, producing, reconfiguring, and contesting “particular differentiations, orderings and hierarchies among geographical scales”.26 At their simplest, networks are merely “interconnected nodes” and “open structures” in which “the power of flows takes precedence over the flows of power”, capable of integrating new nodes “as long as they share the same [...] performance goals”.27 Whatever these “performance goals” might be, of course, could lead us onto a normative terrain. This is important to acknowledge, in part at least, because one iteration of “open regionalism”, which I do not share, sees it as a necessary expansion, and training ground, for wider liberalisation and globalisation.28

In Manuel Castells’ conceptualisation, the nation-state is neither prior nor primary; rather, it is itself a set of nested networks, such that “multiple power claims and regulatory regimes co-exist [...] and their interrelation is a matter of continuous negotiation”.29 The multiplication of sites for the generation of strategies30 means that what have thus far been seen as taken-for-granted “aspects of statehood” within a Westphalian model, such as sovereignty and the monopoly of violence, have become much more unstable and mediated in new regionalism, with patterns of diffusion and recombination operating at different speeds, with variable reach and

See Regional Levels

taking diverse forms. Binary understandings of state sovereignty, in which a state either fully possesses sovereignty or has lost sovereignty, are being replaced by notions of “sovereign frontiers” in which boundaries between what is supposedly “internal” or domestic and what is “external” or international become blurred. New hybrid forms based on complex linkages are emerging, constituting a new “intermestic sphere” of processes that “disrupt and remake the ‘inside’ and ‘outside’ of states”; not merely crossing borders, but transforming them.

Comparative regionalism is marked by a “crowded playground” in terms of a proliferation of actors both constitutive of and constituted by a regional scale. Clearly, one part of this is the rather dramatic expansion of what has been termed “non-state actors” who may be not-for-profit, for profit or, indeed, somewhere in an indistinct in-between zone. Thus, these are diverse actors from regionalised networks, partnerships, alliances, and coalitions that can involve shifting and multiple agency, with the rise of what Janine Wedel has termed “transactorship” in “flex nets” that have a “chameleon-like, multipurpose character” explicitly playing at the edge of, and therefore blurring, distinctions between formal and informal, public and private, state and non-state, international and domestic and, indeed, legal and illegal.

The importance of brokerage, mediation, and translation is intensified in such liminal encounters, with new forms of regionalised authority formed in the spaces between traditional career employment patterns. Hence, for instance, the non-governmental organisation activist who

37 “Liminality” is used here as “those times or places that are outside of ordinary structures with which we organize our lives,” Jacqueline Urla, “New Perspectives in Anthropology and Modern Literature,” Sub-Stance, (1977) 22, pp. 97–106.
becomes a politician, and then an international civil servant, and subsequently, or even simultaneously, a freelance consultant or advisor while maintaining an affiliation with a number of research institutes, operates in this way in precisely these spaces of network power, rendering even supposedly clear distinctions between “top-down” and “bottom-up” regionalisation increasingly irrelevant. The social scientific task is to untangle, then, the ways in which diverse actors engage in practices of “verticality and encompassment” in order to render specific forms of authority, regulation, and routine both spatialised and territorialised without making “unwarranted assumptions” about which actors have particular “spatial reach”.

Processes of comparative regionalism construct and reconfigure subjectivities and identities while also, crucially, continuing to create and recreate policy and political domains and practices. These include those that may be labelled, for example, creative and artistic, activist, civic, sporting, criminal, and trading and business relations, as well as multilateral, political and technical initiatives. Lendvai writes of the ways in which new regionalism involves the reconfiguring, reframing, and recoupling of domestic policy domains, creating assemblages of innovative policy fields in which “meanings, discourses, ideas, policy tools and objectives” are transformed, often subtly.

Constructivist theories can be in danger of downplaying power relations and, hence, of becoming apologists for idealistic conceptions of consensual regionalisms in which cooperation evolves naturally from a grow-


39 It can be argued that some forms of illegality are not merely rational but also a means of reading dominant power relations and participating in and authenticating particular regulatory codes (see Janet Roitman, “The Garrison entrepôt: Governing in the Chad basin,” in Aihwa Ong and Stephen Collier (eds.), Global Assemblages: Technology, Politics and Ethics as Anthropological Problems (Oxford: Blackwell, 2005), p. 432). In this sense, people-smugglers and drug traffickers, criminals in organized crime rings, and so on, may be networked region-builders every bit as much as their formally legal counterparts. Indeed, quasi-legal power networks (see Christophe Solioz, Turning Points in Post-War Bosnia (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2nd ed. 2007), chapter 2), in situations of ambiguity over power relations, may be a rather privileged site of such practices, able to move flexibly between legality and illegality through connections with business and political elites.

40 These labels are taken as the starting point for the contributions presented in volume edited by Paul Stubbs and Christophe Solioz, Towards Open Regionalism in South East (Baden-Baden: Nomos, SEIP, volume 6, 2008).

ing rational realization of common interests. Continued division of the world into “core”, “intermediate” and “peripheral” regions in terms of the degree of economic dynamism or stagnation, political stability or turbulence, and the degree of proneness to war, and in terms of a social Darwinist conception of their “ability to cope with global transformation”, though a profoundly ahistorical construction, does at least point to the centrality of power relations.

Many theorists of the new regionalism approach tend to suggest that hegemonic regionalisms, in which (so-called “great”) powers, near or far, offer protection — albeit often at a price — to members of regional alliances, are a thing of the past and that power and hegemony is far more dispersed nowadays. At the same time, however, more radical and post-colonialist critics would disagree.

Using a lens of empire and coloniality based on an understanding of “prior imaginings of world space” shatters the “presentist realism” of much contemporary globalisation thinking. Borocz focuses on “the specific histories of colonialism and empire, with their deeply coded [...] patterns of inequality, hierarchy, exclusion and power”, reflected in new modes of governance in the EU. This alerts us to the important, albeit rather more complex and fragmented, nature of relations of interdependency and of exclusion of supposedly dissimilar “others” — termed “othering” in the post-structuralist literature — that may be present in processes of regionalisation. We would see region-constructs, such as the EU, as replete with paradoxes of power, and tensions between solidarity and exclusion, between securitization and mobility, between neoliberal and more socially oriented forms of capitalism, and between managing and enabling citizens.

Europe’s Multiple Regional Groupings

Given that too often they are not on the radar, let’s list the main territorial configurations and institutional frameworks shaping regional cooperation in Europe: the Council of Europe (CoE), the European Union (EU), the Schengen area, the Eurozone, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), the European Economic Area (EEA), the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), the European Free Trade Association (EFTA), the Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA), the Energy Community, and the UNECE. Map 1 captures part of this: it gives an idea of a Europe as a complex multi-layered structure involving different
types of partly overlapping integration and territorial cooperation schemes of varying depths and degrees of institutionalisation.

While the previous sections provided the opportunity to examine some of these actors, the following one will offer an introductory note on the main stakeholders in territorial cooperation: the Council of Europe and the European Union. It is noteworthy that both are the only ones to have developed, first, consistent “territorial cooperation” initiatives at truly regional levels, and second, institutional mechanisms as development agencies and a centralized allocation of resources aimed to enhance “territorial management” and “territorial integration” and, third, institutionalized representative political bodies for regional actors — respectively the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CoE) and the Committee of the Regions (EU). It is also noteworthy that neither chambers ever gained substantial power, their function being rather a political sphere for territorial cohesion management. For the time being, they represent a way to control the “autonomist regionalism” that has re-emerged since the 1970s and which advocates for recognition of national identity. As the European Parliament, the only directly elected EU institution, received more power with each change to the EU treaties, it would be welcome to give also the Committee of the Regions (CoR) a greater say in order to provide opportunities for the regions to exercise real power. This would pave the way to a Union that would no longer be a mere union of states, but increasingly a union of citizens and regions.

Table 5: Instruments of territorial cooperation in the framework of the CoE

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1957</td>
<td>Conference of Local Authorities of Europe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1980</td>
<td>European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1985</td>
<td>European Charter of Local Self-Government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Congress of Local and Regional Authorities of the CoE (CLRAE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2009</td>
<td>Euroregional Cooperation Groupings (ECGs) – protocol No 3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation

SEE in a Broader Framework

The Council of Europe (CoE), founded in 1949 in Strasbourg, was the first European organisation to talk seriously about regional cooperation and to include on a fast-track in its membership the countries of Central and Eastern Europe (see Table 5, p. 79 and the next section).

Table 6: Instruments of territorial cooperation in the framework of the EU

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Instrument</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1975</td>
<td>European Regional Development Fund (ERDF)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988</td>
<td>Structural Fund (+ Reform of EUs Regional Policy)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1988–…</td>
<td>Interreg Community Initiative Programme (CIP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1992</td>
<td>Principle of subsidiarity (Treaty of Maastricht)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1994</td>
<td>Committee of the Regions</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2004</td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2006</td>
<td>European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation

The European Economic Community (EEC), established in June 1957, which became the European Union in 1992 and currently comprises 28 member states, focused on territorial cooperation in the mid 1970s but only became really engaged in regional cooperation initiatives in 1993 with the creation of a single European market. However, it is only since 1988, within the EU’s Structural and Cohesion policy, that the Union has explicitly addressed economic and social inequalities on a territorial basis, developed territorial cooperation initiatives and linked territorial cooperation and integration (see Table 6). The reasoning behind this approach is clearly integrative and technical: territorial management occurs largely within territorial parameters mostly conceived at state level, the intention being to integrate peripheral territories into the national and European polical and economic system.

Against the background of an “integrative regionalism” (see Table 7, p. 81), regions were rebranded because “pro-active territorial cohesion strategies need to be designed and implemented at the scales where economic actors make their strategic decisions”. Consequently, this necessiated the development of contextualized regional policies adapted to particular structural needs and the specific socio-economic profile of each region. As

Michael Keating points out, “The result was a politicization of regional development and a contest for the definition of the region, its economic and social meaning, and its institutionalization by states, the European Union and regional actors”.

Table 7: Taxonomy identifying six competing conceptual frames of regionalism

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Integartive regionalism</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Competitive regionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Welfare regionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Identity regionalism</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Regions as government</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Regions and the refract of interest</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation based on Michael Keating (2017)

After the Treaty of Lisbon was adopted (2007) — thus after the enlargements of 2004 and 2007 and the accession of 12 new members — cooperation and integration focusing on regional dynamics has been rationalized in functional terms and conceived as a key element in the construction of an integrated social and economic space. At stake is the polarisation between “metropolisation” and its flipside, rural territories, and the increase in intra-state regional disparities observed in almost all EU member states. We may note not only the economic dimension, but also other processes, e.g. in the demographic, social, educational or environmental spheres, which have become of relevance for regional development and territorial cohesion. Of course, territorial imbalance also characterized the new member states. An analysis conducted by the European Parliament established three types:

First, an East-West gradient can be observed in all countries, with the Western parts performing better than their Eastern counterparts. Second, the presence of significant disparities between predominantly urban and rural regions tends to suggest that rural areas do not follow the same pace of development as urban ones. Thirdly, the new member states experience particularly acute processes of polarisation opposing the largest metropolitan areas to their surrounding regions.


The European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation (EGTC) established in 2006 by the European Parliament and the Council, with the political support of the Committee of the Regions, provides the common legal structures: the EGTC Regulation was the first European cooperation structure with a legal personality defined by European Law. It is designed to facilitate and promote territorial cooperation with a view to strengthening the economic and social cohesion of the EU. Members of an EGTC belong to one or more of the following categories: member states, regional authorities and local authorities; furthermore, associations consisting of bodies belonging to one or more of these categories may also be members.\(^{51}\) The EGTC framework illustrates the shift towards the “competitive regionalism” paradigm: regions are increasingly seen as specific (economic) units in their own right.\(^{52}\)

The CoE and the EU provide the main framework for a wide range of cross-border cooperation forums and working communities (see Map 2) that will be further presented in the next sections. Both conceive of the regional cooperation as inter-space and across-the-state initiatives: the first targets the supranational and inter-country level, while the second focuses on the sub-state level. The Belgium–Luxembourg Economic Union, the Nordic cooperation Forum, the Visegrád Forum and the Kirkenes Declaration stand for “cross-border cooperation forums”. The 1978 established Alpe–Adria and the 2002 founded ARGE Carinthia–Slovenia are groupings of regional authorities developing bilateral or multilateral cooperation within the frame-work of “cross-border working communities”. These are more diverse and take many forms. They encompass different scales, actors, and levels within a kind of multi-level polity. While on the ground the realities of any particular initiative may be problematic, it is their sheer number, variable geometry, and innovative structures that matter. A functional conceptualisation of the region and regional cooperation doesn’t capture the fact that

The territory is constructed in two senses: its definition and meaning are a matter for interpretation by social, political and economic actors and by the citizens; and actors themselves seek to construct systems at particular scales and give them particular meanings.\(^{53}\)

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52 For the later, see the development of the European regional competitiveness index and the Union’s Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS).

53 Keating, “Constesting European Regions,” p. 10
Map 2: Cooperation forums and cross-border working communities


Such a constructivist approach and contextualised understanding help to understand, on the one hand, the “spacial rescaling” of policy systems, upwards to the transnational level and downwards to the sub-state level with the emergence of regional structures at the intermediate or meso-level, and, on the other hand, the recognition that there is no uniform regional level of politics but instead a variety of regional constructions.

Thus, it is paramount to see the “territory as a field in flux, with multiple influences at work and no definite outcome”.\textsuperscript{55} This is best illustrated by the difference between cross-border working communities and the more binding Euro-regions, by the development of some working communities into a Euro-region, and by the fact that some working communities are simultaneously Euro-regions (as in the 2010 established “Algarve–Alentejo Andalusia Euro-region Working Community”).

Against this background and based on a taxonomy identifying six key aspects of rescaling and the rise of regions (see Table 7, p. 81), Keating develops the concept of “contested regions” avoiding territorial determinism:

As the state’s monopoly on the definition of territory is weakened, the field is more open and contested. In some places the very foundations of sovereignty are challenged, while in others there are territorialized struggles over resources. There is competition between states and the European Union over the definition of regions for spatial policy interventions. The drawing of regional boundaries influences patterns of inclusion and exclusion and the balance of political and social forces. The same is true of the internal constitution of regions. Elected regional government has often been in tension with corporatist forms of representation. Regions as vehicles for state policy are in tension with regions as a form of territorial autonomy. Regions are arenas for playing out some of the most important political issues such as the balance between economic competition and social solidarity.\textsuperscript{56}

\textit{Euro-regions in the Framework of the Council of Europe}

The Council of Europe contributed, from the late 1950s on, to the emergence of “Euro-regions”, which later became an instrument for cross-border cooperation in Europe related to the creation of an emergent networked European polity.\textsuperscript{57} Notably, “cross-border cooperation” became officially recognised in 1980 by the Council of Europe Outline Convention on Transfrontier Cooperation (see Table 5, p. 79).\textsuperscript{58}

\textsuperscript{55} Keating, “Contesting European Regions,” p. 16
\textsuperscript{56} Keating, \textit{Ibidem}.
\textsuperscript{58} Council of Europe, \textit{European Outline Convention on Transfrontier Co-operation between Territorial Communities or Authorities} (Madrid: 1980).
Euro-regions may be seen as territorial partnership institutions and cooperation network initiatives, encompassing public-policy coordination and institution building leading to a spatial reconfiguration of social processes and governance institutions ("rescaling"). Numbering over one hundred, although only about one-third of them are truly operational, Euro-regions exhibit a variety of forms, constituting a set of interlocking networks of exchange rather than a new level of governance.

CoE programmes in South East Europe have focused on decentralisation, the development of innovative forms of local democracy, and increased citizen participation. They have also contributed to cross-border dialogue and cooperation, encouraging the setting-up of Euro-regions and similar forms of subregional cooperation, such as, for example, the Local Democracy agencies based on twinning — an initiative set-up in 1994 by the Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRAE) as the follow-up to the Standing Conference of Local and Regional Authorities of Europe and a transnational civic initiative, involving notably the hCa.

The CoE also engaged actively in the establishment and development of trans-border Euro-regions in South East Europe — currently, there are about fifteen of them. When identifying regionalisation in SEE, we may question the use of strict national or sovereign parameters and the meaning of micro- and macro-regions — the former being per se sub-national, while the latter are supra-national. Actually, micro- and macro-regions are related phenomena. Indeed, a wider understanding of regions — in the framework of the “comparative regionalism” — transcends the distinctions and tensions between “international” and “national”, between macro- and micro-regionalism, and between “globalism” and “localism”. Against this background, De Lombaerde coined the term “hybrid cross-border micro-regions”, which applies to the Euro-regions established in the post-Yugoslav space which were, only two decades ago, part of the same state (the SFRY) and, taking a longer historical perspective, share historically deep-seated relations.

In this particular geographic area, still entangled in the Westphalian trap, “comparative regionalism” offers a form of questioning of historical power structures delinking social processes from national space. While in SEE, as in Central Europe, borders are overburdened with nationalistic sensitivity, in East Asia on the contrary, where networks, corporate interests and strategic necessities clearly dominate, borders are more “meta-


60 De Lombaerde, “How to ‘connect’ Micro-regions with Macro-regions?” p. 34.
phorical”.61 Seen from another angle, “region” is not bound to integration and may lead toward fragmentation: micro-regions could prioritise subnational areas and lead to the disaggregation of national economic and political spaces.62 In SEE, this is notably the case for Northern Kosovo (where the open conflict is intra-state or inter-state — depending on one’s point of view) and for the Bosnian Serb entity, Republika Srpska: in both areas (in)formal cross-border strategies63 and networks are intertwined with (foreign) state activities in a process which might be characterized as a “clandestine hybrid of state- and private market-regionalisation” and labelled as “trans-state regionalisation”.64 This applies, to a lesser extent, to Vojvodina (Serbia), which is actively involved in the Danube–Körös–Maros–Tisza Euroregion.65 These examples illustrate the tension between integrative regionalism — an option worth experimenting in SEE — and regionalism as differentiation. Nevertheless, most regional cooperation schemes are integrative, as illustrated by the Euro-region (see below).

The Adriatic Euro-region, founded in Pula (Croatia) on 30 June 2006, has 23 members whose variety demonstrates that regions are not simple aggregations of states and illustrates the multiplicity of levels involved:

- Seven Italian regions (Abruzzo, Emilia–Romagna, Friuli–Venezia Giulia, Marche, Molise, Puglia, Veneto)
- Three Slovenian municipalities (Izola, Koper, Piran)
- Seven counties from Croatia (Dubrovnik–Neretva, Istria, Lika–Senj, Primorsko–Goranska, Šibenik–Knin, Split–Dalmatia, Zadar)
- One canton from Bosnia and Herzegovina (Herzegovina–Neretva)

63 We use the term “(in)formal” to indicate that in many areas both formal and informal strategies and actors coexist in a dynamic way. This kind of “network regionalisation” may be quite rudimentary or sophisticated, covering a wide range of sectors with tactics evolving over time, including: warlordism, organised business strategies, smuggling and criminal strategies, survival strategies and forms of civic resistance.
With such a broad membership, the regional governance is rendered complex by the divergent levels of competencies — regions, municipalities, counties, cantons, and states — with potentially significant effects on the nature, themes, and effectiveness of cooperation. Such large-scale initiatives face obvious multiple governance dilemmas, as underlined by Karl-Dieter Keim: “the interplay of different scales of any given political system is more often than not dysfunctional”. Consequently, these projects entail the risk that their activities may be limited to common declarations and information exchange. These critical observations apply also to other experiments in CBC such as the Euro-region Kent–Nord-Pas de Calais–Belgium and the first Euro-region established in what back then lay (1993) outside the EU: the Carpathian Euro-region Interregional Alliance (including parts of Poland, Slovakia, Ukraine, Hungary and Romania): both are faced with the difficulty of coping with agreement-based partnership instructions, are encountering obstacles inhibiting cross-border cooperation, suffer from a lack of citizens’ interest, and compete with many other cooperation structures active in the same area.

There is thus a need to question how far these projects really involve citizens or contribute to the emergence of new transnational public space and a truly regional community. The assumption is that by “going local” the citizens’ would become more concerned with, and consequently get more involved in, cross-border initiatives. Furthermore, today’s rhetoric

66 Compared to generally small-scale of most of the other Euroregions, the Adriatic Euroregion may be compared to larger groupings such as the Working Communities (see Map 2). Examples are: Alpen-Adria, Arge Alp and the Working Community of the Western Alps. The Working communities are large transnational groupings of contiguous regional entities — they had their high in the 1970 and 1980s.


69 See the respective analysis presented by Odile Heddebaut and Ann Kennard in the volume edited by Kramsch and Hooper (eds.), Cross-Border Governance in the European Union, pp. 70–87 and pp. 107–120. The book offers many other case studies as the Finnish-Russia Karelia Euroregion.
on regionalisms is often associated with buzzwords such as “empowering local authorities”, “endogenous regional development”, “community-empowerment”, “citizen-friendly”, “bottom-up process of governance”, “borderless spheres” etc. As pointed out by James Wesley Scott: “this normativity can be seductive: it is unclear to what extent new and effective territorial contexts for political action, socio-cultural and economic development are in fact emerging”. Indeed, it turns out that generally we may observe diminished levels of public awareness about cross-border projects: there is only poor knowledge about institutional cross-border cooperation initiatives and, in some cases, the borderlanders are not even aware of their existence. The occasionally colossal size of these Euro-regions, the pre-dominance of a rather traditional understanding of territorial political space and prevalence of statist loyalties, such as the effect of a strong nation-state, may partly explain this. Furthermore, these projects appear to be essentially elite-driven, as in the case of the Catalan borderlands:

The processes of cross-border cooperation have fostered the development of governance disconnected from politics rooted in national territories. This is clearly the case in Catalonia where the networks of governance bring together actors who basically are in charge of developing the cross-border region as a whole, but still are mainly representing their own municipalities and regions. It is not at all clear how consistent this form of governance is with the citizens’ desire for democratic participation.

Research on regional governance processes in East German urban regions highlighted that “regional development concepts” proved to be flexible and efficient multi-purpose instruments, facilitating interactions and improving the process of decision-making between actor networks or actor coalitions involved in regional governance. Baldersheim, Haug and Øgard focused on the dynamics of networking activities in municipalities and regions in the Nordic countries, suggesting that “the more regions make efforts in order to formulate and implement information society type

of policies the more they will be involved in dense and far-flung networks”.\(^{74}\) This suggests the need for collective action in developing joint decision-making procedures across institutional borders — thus privileging the “horizontal” dimension of the CBC network. Such a demanding approach requires new political capacities. Another way to approach this issue is to opt for smaller projects involving urban- and micro-subregional networks or to develop Euroregions on a smaller scale. More flexible and closer to citizens, these have tended to replace the larger models which were developed in CEE in the late 1990s.\(^{75}\)

As regionalisation is an evolving process, and given that the Adriatic Euro-region emerged only in 2006, we may consider this as a regional network “in the making”,\(^{76}\) with a thus far largely untapped potential for democratisation and social development leading towards new, flexible and hybrid, institutional arrangements in an environment of rapid change and amplified EU integration. In the end, the informal dimensions of regionalisation processes are crucial, and largely ignored in a critical literature which tends to have an institution-led approach and less of an agency- or actor-led approach:

There is so much more to current regionalisation processes than whatever can be captured by a focus on states and formal regional organization. In many parts of the world, what feeds people, organizes them and constructs their worldview is not the state and its formal representations (at local, national or regional levels), but the informal sector and its multitude of networks, civil societies and associations (again at many levels). Of course, people participate not solely in the formal or the informal sector. Rather, they move in and out of both, and it is precisely these kinds of interactions and the various forms of regionalism that they create which studies of regionalisation should try to capture.\(^{77}\)

In contrast to grand multilateralism, any “failures” in a particular Euro-region rarely have wider and deeper implications, and any “successes” will leave their mark in terms of innovative modes of governance. The fact...


that the legal status of Euro-regions varies is also important in terms of promoting openness and flexibility. As the Council of Europe points out, Euro-regions can involve a community of interest without legal personality, a European Economic Interest Grouping, a non-profit-making association, a working community without a legal personality or a public body. Most interestingly, while some Euro-regions include similar levels of authority, such as regions and provinces, others have a mixed structure as illustrated by the Adriatic Euro-region.

Table 8: Overview on Interreg (1988–2020)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interreg phase</th>
<th>Number of projects</th>
<th>Funding (million EUR)</th>
<th>Number of EU member states</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>0 1988–1989</td>
<td>14</td>
<td>0.021</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1 1990–1993</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>1,082</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2 1994–1999</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>3,500</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3 2000–2006</td>
<td>79</td>
<td>5,100</td>
<td>(after 2004) 25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4 2007–2013</td>
<td>92</td>
<td>7,800</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5 2014–2020</td>
<td>100</td>
<td>10,100</td>
<td>28</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


**Territorial Cooperation in the Framework of the EU**

The European Union significantly enhanced its own approach to a “Europe of regions” in the late 1980s. The European Regional Development Fund was established in 1975, followed in 1988 by the Structural Funds...
aiming to consolidate all regional aid programmes and, in 1990, by the Interreg Community Initiative. The main objectives of the EU’s cohesion policy are: convergence; regional competitiveness and employment; and European territorial cooperation. EU regional policy developed multi-level governance structures in which supranational, national and regional/local agencies interact to achieve policy outcomes.

Within the 2014–2020 financial framework of the Union regional policy, spending amounts to an average of almost €60 billion per year, which is more than one third of the total EU budget. Regional policy spending is channelled through three “Structural Funds”: the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), the European Social Fund (ESF) and the Cohesion Fund. The trans-European Territorial Cooperation Objective aimed to reduce economic disparities within the EU. In the later framework, the three strands (see Table 8, p. 90) of the Interreg programme — including 28 member states and their 271 regions, plus Norway and Switzerland — deserve particular attention as they illustrate the prevailing role of the micro-regional, thus sub-national, level within a network framework for the different scales of regionalisation.

Regionalisation initiatives are obviously characterised by distinct patterns and forms in CEE and SEE due to the specificities of the transition–transformation process in former state-socialist regimes:

regionalisation has emerged in post-socialist Europe as an important political project conditioned, on the one hand, by the desire for membership of the European Union but, on the other hand, by attempts to (re)construct democratic political institutions.

James Scott further highlights that region-building — in Central Europe, but this applies also to SEE — are long-term initiatives, still in the making, and that it remains to be seen to what extent they will evolve into politically active units.

Thus, region-building as a political project was, for the most part, externally imposed in response to the EU integration process, and also, paradoxically used to strengthen central government control over regional development (as in Hungary and Romania). It was also strongly related to the “nation-building” process that was taking place in CEE and SEE. In

addition, it was, of course, affected by each country’s history, cultural nar-
ratives and socio-spatial processes. It is the complex combination of
these four factors which makes for the highly variegated impacts of the
same policy and programme in different places at different times.

Table 9: The three strands of Interreg

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Spatial emphasis</th>
<th>Integration</th>
<th>Stakeholder level</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border</td>
<td>proximity</td>
<td>contiguity</td>
<td>local regional</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>cohesion</td>
<td>planning as overarching theme</td>
<td>regional supra-regional national</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interregional</td>
<td>network</td>
<td>interactions</td>
<td>regional supra-regional local</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Strand A targets cross-border cooperation between adjacent regions and aims to develop cross-border social and economic centres through common development strategies. The overall objective is to strengthen the competitiveness of the border micro-regions.

Strand B exemplifies the concept of a multilevel political structure as it focuses on transnational cooperation involving national, regional, and local authorities in order to improve integration within the EU through the formation of large groups of subregions, based on territorial coherence and

80 This is best illustrated by Romania’s region-building in 1998 (confirmed by the 2004 legislation): the eight development regions, forming the territorial basis for EU structural funds according to the NUTS hierarchy, mostly correspond to the seven cultural-historical regions. It is important to note that their functions are limited to the establishment and implementation of regional development policies — they are thus not legal entities enjoying any form of democratic legitimacy. See József Benedek, “The Emergence of New regions in Transition Romania,” in Scott (ed.), *De-coding New Regionalism*, pp. 236–237.
geography.

Strand C concentrates on interregional cooperation with the objective of improving the effectiveness of regional development policies and instruments through large-scale information exchange and sharing of experience. In this framework, enhanced cooperation among Europe’s subnational micro-regions is encouraged in four programme zones (North, East, South, and West) and promotes the participation of third-party countries as widely as possible.

Unlike the other two programmes, Strand C allows micro-regions without joint borders to work together through common projects and to develop networks of cooperation focusing on eight thematic areas: research, technology and innovation; SME development and entrepreneurship; Information society and e-government; Employment, social inclusion, human resources and education; Environment, risk prevention, energy and natural resources; Regional planning territorial regeneration and urban development; Tourism, heritage and culture; and Accessibility, mobility and transport.

Table 10: Interreg V 2014–2020

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Strands</th>
<th>Programmes</th>
<th>Number</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Cross-border</td>
<td>Cooperation programmes for internal borders</td>
<td>60</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg VA</td>
<td>Instrument for Pre-Accession – Interreg IPA</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI)</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transnational</td>
<td>Cooperation programmes</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg VB</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interreg VC</td>
<td>Interreg Europe</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intercat, Urbact, ESPON</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation

The distinction between three different scales of regional cooperation may be completed with the differences between urban and rural cooperation. The following table illustrates each feature with a set of examples:
Table 11: Scales and territories of regional cooperation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Scale</th>
<th>Spatial aspects</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Examples</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Local</td>
<td>Urban</td>
<td>Cooperation between two or more contiguous urban municipalities</td>
<td>Frankfurt (Oder)-Słubice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Eurode Kerkrade-Hezog.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rural</td>
<td>Cooperation between contiguous municipal/intermunicipal bodies, in sparsely built-up areas</td>
<td>Pyrenees-Cerdanya</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Mont-Blanc area</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional</td>
<td>Cross-border metropolis</td>
<td>Cooperation between contiguous territories (NUTS 3 or NUTS 4) with a monocentric or polycentric metropolitan structure</td>
<td>Basel Eurodistrict</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Meuse-Rhine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Lille-Kortrijk-Tournai</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-metropolitan</td>
<td>Cooperation between contiguous territories (NUTS 3 or NUTS 4) without a metropolitan structure</td>
<td>Euroregio</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Catalan cross-border</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supra-regional</td>
<td>Metropolitan</td>
<td>Cooperation between contiguous territories (NUTS 2 or NUTS 4) with a metropolitan dimension</td>
<td>Greater Region</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Non-metropolitan</td>
<td></td>
<td>Upper Rhine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Channel Arc</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>


Since 2009, the Union has developed a new evaluation tool: the Regional Innovation Scoreboard (RIS), a regional extension of the European Innovation Scoreboard (EIS). Focussing exclusively on economic develop-

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81 The Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics (NUTS) provides a hierarchical classification of European Territory at six levels. The regional level is divided into three parts: NUTS 1: major socio-economic regions; NUTS 2: basic regions for the application of regional policies; NUTS 3: small regions for specific diagnoses.
ment, this instrument assesses the innovation performance of regions on a limited number of indicators based on statistical facts focussing on regions’ innovation performance. The idea is to measure the process of convergence and thus the efficiency of the Union’s cohesion policy.

Compared to the EIS, the RIS has a stronger focus on the performance of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The RIS 2016 covers 214 regions across 22 EU countries and Norway, with Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg and Malta included at country level. These 214 regions (see Map 4) have been classified into regional innovation leaders (36 regions), regional strong innovators (65 regions), regional moderate innovators (83 regions) and regional modest innovators (30 regions). Here are the main findings from the 2016 report:

- Innovation excellence is concentrated in relatively few areas in Europe. For most countries, there is limited variation in regional performance groups, suggesting that regional and national innovation performance are linked;
- Only in four larger member states (France, Germany, Italy and Spain), are there three different regional performance groups;
- An analysis over a nine-year period, with 2016 as the most recent year, shows that performance group membership has been stable for most regions (70%);
- For the first seven years of the nine-year period of analysis, performance growth has been positive for all performance groups and 175 regions. Between the two most recent periods, performance has declined for all performance groups and 154 regions;
- Slovenia’s region belongs to the regional moderate innovators, Croatia’s Dalmatian coast to regional modest innovators, and the rest of Croatia to regional modest innovators.82

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SEE in a Broader Framework

Map 3: Cross-border cooperation programmes 2014–2020

Source: © REGIO-gis
Map 4: Regional performance groups

Source: European Commission, Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2016 (Brussels: Directorate-General for Internal Market, Industry, Entrepreneurship and SMEs, 2016), p. 16. Compared to the version printed, this is a corrected map: the colour shading of region DK05 (Nordjylland) has been corrected to that of a Regiona Strong Innovator.

© European Commission, Regional Innovation Scoreboard 2016
These results coincide largely with the assessment of Interreg’s strand C as provided for its third phase. This evaluation provided an overview on the level of participation of the concerned regions in the 265 different Interreg 3C (2000–06) projects as of September 2005: while almost all regions were involved at least to a certain extent, some were more proactive, such as in Spain, Slovenia, Germany, and in the Baltic area — Croatia not yet being a member state at that time. Meanwhile, interregional cooperation continues for the period 2014–2020 under the Interreg VC programme, which focuses on innovation, competitiveness, the knowledge economy and sustainable development. Even though currently there is a lack of an overall evaluation instrument, the above-mentioned RIS instrument is nevertheless useful as it mainly targets Interreg’s priorities. As already-mentioned, the regional thinking behind this model illustrates the “compe-titive regionalism” (see Table 7, p. 81) in which regions are constructed predominantly on the basis of economic factors.

Table 12: General levels of region-ness

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phases of region-ness</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Regional space</td>
<td>Geographical contiguity, but not necessarily respectful of state borders</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional complex</td>
<td>Regional space deepened by increased human contacts and transactions, e.g. trade patterns</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional society</td>
<td>A regional complex made subject to formal transnational rules, in which formal institutions and structures may evolve and in which both state and non-state actors participate in governance</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Regional community</td>
<td>A regional society that has developed a collective identity and its own ability to act as a collective, and is recognised as a collective actor by third countries</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Region-state</td>
<td>A new, multi-layered organisation that, based on voluntary evolution by its member states, has developed into a novel, heterogeneous form of statehood</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Of course, the growth of social and economic interactions, the quality of regional cooperation initiatives and the spread of regional identity are difficult to measure. Therefore, the impact of the different regional cooperation processes on their respective environments is very difficult to assess — particularly in the case of only recently established initiatives. The remaining option is, therefore, to rely on general assessments of different “levels of region-ness” which should be seen not as static but as dynamic, with the possibility of spaces shifting from one type to another (see Table 12, p. 98).

Furthermore, region-building needs to be explored not only in terms of its organisational forms; rather, the extent of regional cohesion, the development of a culture of cooperation, and the involvement of citizens’ networks in region-building are also important. A provisional assessment of Euro-regions in SEE suggests that they have a limited “institutional thickness”, characterized by low political mobilisation, essentially involving elites; being poorly funded, and consisting of a number of small projects. However, since “in most cases formal regionalisation is a weak and contradictory process”, we need measures which look beyond institutional performance.

The relevance of these regional programmes should “be identified beyond the merely operational level and the implementation of specific actions: rather, some of these bodies have an essentially symbolic value of reconciliation” — this applies particularly to the Euro-regions Prespa–Ohrid (in the border area of Albania, Macedonia and Greece), Gjilan/Gnjilane–Kumanovo–Presevo (Kosovo, Serbia, Macedonia and Bulgaria) and the EuroBalkans region (Bulgaria, Macedonia, Serbia). These subregional cooperation networks address specific, mostly political, challenges related to state collapse and post-conflict situations.

Of course, these forms of regionalisation were developed in a very top-down manner, to increase political stability and promote economic deve-

83 Table 12 was adapted from Hettne and Söderbaum, “Theorising the Rise of Regionness,” pp. 39–45.
86 Proto, Survey on Euroregions and EGTC, p. 11.
87 See the global positive evaluation of the 2002-established EuroBalkans Euro-region in Proto, Survey on Euroregions and EGTC, pp. 19–21.
lopment in order to establish “security communities”. In the future, they may be driven by other concerns such as infrastructural investment, human resource management and ecological sustainability. We would tentatively suggest that the SEE region is already moving from a security- and development-oriented regionalism towards a more holistic regionalism.

Map 5: SEE transnational cooperation in the framework of Interreg IV

Source: Reproduced with permission of INTERREG IVC.
© EuroGeographics. 2001 for the administratives boundaries.

The Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe is one of 13 EU transnational cooperation programmes developed by the European Territorial Cooperation objective of the EU Regional Policy within Strand B. It was created out of the former Interreg IIIB Central European, Adriatic, Danubian, and South Eastern European Space (CADSES) Programme. For the 2007–2013 period, the CADSES transnational cooperation area has been divided into two spaces: South East Europe and Central Europe.
Some states, such as Austria, Hungary, Italy, Slovakia, and the Ukraine, are included in both programmes. Its overall objective is to improve the territorial, economic, and social integration process in South East Europe and contribute to the cohesion, stability, and competitiveness of the area through the development of transnational partnerships and joint action on matters of strategic importance.

More specifically, it targets innovation and entrepreneurship, protection and improvement of the environment, improvement of accessibility, and the development of transnational synergies for sustainable urban development. Its format illustrates the structural heterogeneity of South East Europe: out of the 16 participating countries, eight are EU member states, six are candidate and potential candidate countries, and two are countries participating in the European Neighbourhood Programme (ENP). It also illustrates the necessity to work at both state and substate levels: for 14 countries, the programme involves the whole territory of each country, and for two — Italy and the Ukraine — only certain regions (see Map 5, p. 100). Notably, this framework provides the first opportunity for Western Balkan countries, as well as the Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova, to get involved in transnational cooperation with EU-member states and, by the same token, to familiarise themselves with the procedures of Interreg programmes.

Accordingly, SEE stands as the most complex programme in the field of European territorial cooperation. The main part of the Programme budget comes from the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF), but it is additionally supported by two other financial instruments: the Instrument for Pre-Accession (IPA), which concerns Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, and Serbia; and European neighbourhood and Partnership instrument (EnPi), concerning Republic of Moldova and Ukraine.

The size and complexity of the architecture of this programme is not only a contribution to overcoming divisions within Europe along political, economic, and cultural lines, but also attests to the EU’s emergence as a major promoter of and actor in trans-European regional cooperation. It also emphasizes the role of micro-regions, as well as the necessity to bring the different region-levels under the same roof: a multi-scalar political landscape. The multidimensionality, complexity and necessary fluidity of regional cooperation schemes — in SEE as well as worldwide — are supplemented by the fact that most participating actors are simultaneously

involved in the different strands and cooperation programmes.\textsuperscript{89} Last but not least, in the framework of EU’s Instrument for Pre-accession Assistance (IPA),\textsuperscript{90} the Union adapted its regional cooperation programmes to the external borders of the EU, embracing states already undergoing the accession process.

Cross-border cooperation and regional development are two of the five component parts of the IPA. The IPA CBC (cross-border cooperation) programme encourages partners situated on either side of a common border to share management tasks and develop a transitional approach. The overall objective is to increase harmonisation and integration. Notably, in SEE, IPA’s cross-border programmes are softening newly erected borders resulting from the break-up of the former Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY). IPA II sets the framework for providing pre-accession assistance for the period 2014–2020 and integrates cross-border cooperation programmes with EU member states and other countries eligible for IPA. For 2010–2020 programming, 12 initiatives target cross-border cooperation regions in SEE (see Map 6, p. 103).

Flexibility is at stake: as Croatia became an EU member state in 2013, some borders thus became internal — but instead of disappearing from the CBC programme (as would have been the case in a CEFTA or RCC scheme) — the programme involving Croatia benefited from a European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) grant. Thus, the transition from candidate country to member state alters the structure or finances of a programme, but not the programme itself. This programme illustrates how regional cooperation is combined with integration: the IPA, as a transnational instrument, enables candidate countries to become accustomed to the EU programmes and management rules.


\textsuperscript{90} From January 2007 onwards, the IPA instrument — targeting candidate countries and potential candidate countries — replaces a series of European Union programmes and financial instruments for candidate countries or potential candidate countries, namely PHARE, PHARE CBC, ISPA, SAPARD, CARDS and the financial instrument for Turkey.
Map 6: IPA II cross-border programme (2014–2020)

2.2. SEE region-ness “Under Construction”

*South East Europe: From State-Building to Region-ness*

There is a complex relationship between state-building and region-building in South East Europe (SEE), overlain by contested historical claims in which contemporary understandings of a nation-state are superimposed on older territorial concepts. In some senses, the creation of nation-states in South East Europe at the beginning of the twentieth century and the establishment of perceived “ethnicised” frontiers based on the principle of national self-determination was extremely difficult, as mobility over the new borders of peoples who lived for centuries in multinational empires had to be contained.¹ Seeing the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (SFRY) as one of the last empires in Europe is also relevant, since the reassertion of nationalisms, the bloody conflicts and the fragmentation into smaller states and mini-states in which competing claims continue to be asserted, coincided with the fall of the Berlin wall and the beginning of the transition paradigm. A large federal state, Yugoslavia, close to joining a Western European “core” by the 1980s,² was thus quickly consigned to peripheral status and the successor states are only now beginning to be treated as part of an emergent intermediate region or sub-region — provided they adopt desirable forms of regional cooperation.

The European Union was a somewhat low-key player in the region during the wars of the Yugoslav succession, a time in which supposedly non-political humanitarianism stood in for any kind of constructive political intervention. Integration for states judged capable of “rejoining Europe” (Slovenia, Bulgaria and Romania, and later Croatia) produced new contradictions and, indeed, divisions between a European inside and a not quite European outside. To avoid a rigid binary, the European Union

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began, through the Stabilisation and Association process (SAp), to adopt a political approach to the region, at least in narrative terms. In this process, the qualities of the new states in terms of their internally evolving political and economic structures were tied to emerging regional cooperation in complex and sometimes contradictory ways.

Beginning in the late 1990s, a new wave of regional cooperation emerged, largely engineered from outside and approached as a kind of peace-building project. According to this linear approach, cooperation first had to be established through the promotion of cross-border activities such as transport, trade, production and tourism; second, this cooperation process was supposed to guarantee security and stability, and, thus, third, lead to political integration. Regional cooperation was primarily based on standards and norms set by outside actors such as the EU and NATO, and, to a lesser extent, by the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE) and the Council of Europe. In the region’s first post-war decade, the EU integration process and NATO membership, termed Euro-Atlantic integration, taken on a country-by-country basis, was the main incentive to reform. Hence, SEE was an emergent sub-regional space, largely ascribed by outside forces rather than achieved from within. Indeed, regional cooperation is frequently put forward by these forces, and often accepted by politicians in the region, as a conditionality that would ultimately make possible the goals of EU accession and NATO membership (which are supposedly more important) rather than as an end in itself.

The establishment of the Stability Pact for South East Europe launched in Sarajevo in July 1999 — under the administration of the EU — is both a key moment in this phase and a turning point in terms of the possibility of new forms of regionalism. From 1999 until 2008, the Stability Pact was the main regional scheme in the Balkans, focusing on promoting regional cooperation and coordinating international assistance. Established as a coordinating body “aimed at strengthening the efforts of the countries of South Eastern Europe in fostering peace, democracy, respect for human rights and economic prosperity”, the Stability Pact that was conceived, in part at least, as a mechanism for pressuring change in Serbia, excluded until the regime change, can in retrospect be seen as a hybrid operating somewhere between a traditional interstate body and a new networked governance organisation.

3 The SP was officially adopted in Cologne during the Conference of Minister on 10 June 1999, in which more than thirty countries and leading international organisations (UN, OSCE, CoE, IMF, WB) took part. Documents were available at: <www.stabilitypact.org> (Accessed on 12 August 2011).
Clearly, this was a case of “imposition” of cooperation by extra-regional powers, while local political elites lacked the necessary political will to engage in region-building.4 Similarly to the Stabilisation and Association process (SAP), “the countries of the Western Balkans realise that regional cooperation is neither an end in itself nor a substitute for accession to the EU”,5 but, nevertheless constitutes an essential component of the conditions for their entry into the EU; a process additionally undermined by the structural gap between the imposed regional approach and bilateral conditionality applied to countries on a case-by-case basis.6 It would be the task of the successor to the Stability Pact (see Table 13, p. 115), the Regional Cooperation Center, to overcome this gap by focussing clearly on enhancing local anchored regionalism (see the next section).

In one sense, the Pact held to a very clear definition of interstate politics with its external supervisors, both nation-states and supranational bodies, its constituent nation-states, and its observers in the near neighbourhood. At the same time, the establishment of three working tables7 and numerous initiatives allowed for new forms of cooperation to develop between technocratic policy makers from nation-states in the region. In addition, some of its architects, particularly German greens and social democrats, were committed to a network politics in which policy entrepreneurs could work within a space that was deliberately conceived of as a “black box” and act as policy entrepreneurs, allowing for new ways of approaching emerging issues.

Indeed, it could be argued that the spaces between these three frames — interstate diplomacy, technocratic policymaking, and networked policy entrepreneurship — were filled by personalities whose precise role, as activists, advisors, consultants, lobbyists, political figures, or technocrats, was either ambiguous or fluid and, in any case, less their main claim to

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7 There were three Working Tables, which operated under the Regional Table: Working Co-operation and Development; Working Table III: Security Issues (with two Sub-Tables: Table I: Democratisation and Human Rights; Working Table II: Economic Reconstruction, Security and Defence, and Justice and Home Affairs).
authority than their charisma and key contacts. To an extent, this was formalised in the increasing importance of key “intermestic” think tanks explicitly operating in the spaces between formal politics, technocracy, and informal connections, including the European Stability Initiative (ESI) and the International Crisis Group (ICG). In some ways, the fact that “the process initiated with the Stability Pact [...] raised great expectations for a new policy of the ‘international community’ and especially the EU, in dealing with the political conflicts and the transformation process in SEE countries” and, at the same time, the fact that South East European NGOs felt excluded from much of its workings, is testament to the difficulties of reconciling these levels and approaches, as well as to the difficulty of promoting “new regionalism” at that time.

The Stability Pact was also something of a turning point in terms of defining and naming the region, rendering the use of the term “South East Europe” central to its operations, explicitly targeting Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia, Romania, rump Yugoslavia (Serbia and Montenegro together), and subsequently Serbia, Montenegro and Kosovo, as well as Moldova and also Greece, Turkey and Slovenia, while implicitly referring to an inclusive regional approach. From 1998 onwards, the term “Western Balkans” emerged as something of a Brussels neologism referring to the countries that once belonged to the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia (minus Slovenia, plus Albania) and which are included in the EU’s SAP. From an EU perspective, the Western Balkans countries are divided into candidates and potential candidates. In this way, the South East European region was divided into several distinctive groupings based on external judgements on the nature of the state-building process and level of compliance with the norms set by the EU. As Dimitar Bechev has argued, the EU “shaped through its institu-

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tional practices of controlled inclusion the collective politico-geographical identities of the states in South East Europe after the late 1990s”.

The symbolic linkage between nation-building and state-building is illustrated by the 2005 report by the International Commission on the Balkans, *The Balkans in Europe’s Future*. The Commission, itself a clear example of the importance of reworking old conceptions of policy advice in a new context, suggests that the EU only has the capacity to absorb “reasonably functioning and legitimate states”, adding caustically that “after Croatia, there are no more of these left in the region”. Bechev has further suggested that the EU’s “carrot and stick” conditionality would not have had the impact it had without its “ideational power as a promoter of certain normative notions of appropriate state behaviour”.

In a sense, the argument points to the need for the message to be absorbed by political elites in each nation-state and to the complexities resulting from the fact that political and institutional arrangements remain unsettled while, in the case of both Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, still having a direct external supervisory presence in terms of the Office of the High Representative and the EU Rule of Law Mission. His concern that, at times, the Stability Pact and the SAp process have failed to deliver the expected carrots on time is important. Indeed, Bechev is surely correct to point to the contradictory nature of the balancing act between bilateralism and regionalisation. He is also right to point out how the downfall of Milošević in October 1999 and the post-Tudman election defeat of the Croatian Democratic Community (HDZ) in January 2000 were crucial in changing the equation. The key point, however, is that the main EU strategy at the time was predominantly state- and interstate-oriented.

Throughout this period, many other parallel regionalisation processes were underway, not least in terms of the linkages between NGOs and civil society organizations, particularly related to human rights, gender, peace, development, and ecology. A major catalyst for regional linkages was George Soros’ Open Society Institute (OSI). OSI was a key player at the interface of the complex linkages between civil society, states, and “emer-

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14 Bechev, “Carrots, Sticks and Norms,” p. 36.
gent forms of transnational authority”.\(^{15}\) Diane Stone’s account understands OSI’s legitimacy as based on a “circular process between the knowledge it produces and the audiences that help legitimize and institutionally consolidate that knowledge”.\(^{16}\) Noting its importance as an agent of “norm advocacy and policy transfer” throughout post-communist Eastern Europe, Stone’s essay prefigures an account of the specific role of OSI in South East Europe, helping to construct alternative personalities as legitimate figures at a time when formal politics was dominated by authoritarian nationalism, promoting regional networking and, hence, engaged in region-building, legitimating an explicitly anti-nationalist regional civil society as a “driver of globalisation”.\(^{17}\)

Noting the “elite” nature of associational life promoted by OSI is important, but the complexities of the relationship of these elites to state forms \textit{per se} and to particular conjunctural state forms is also crucial, not least since it could be argued that in Serbia at least, the Open Society grouping was a state elite in waiting. OSI helped to construct a region and in a sense prefigured the complex relationships between politicised, technical, expertised, and interest-based networking. Its construction of a regional agenda of cross-border projects in the areas of anti-corruption, education, public health, media, illegal labour migration, and minority issues,\(^{18}\) can be seen as a clear example of parallel intrastate civil society networking. While Stone is clearly correct in detecting a recent “global turn” in OSI thinking and networking, the earlier “regional turn”, including explicit involvement with the Stability Pact and other regional instruments and mechanisms, is of immense importance.

The OSI was inextricably linked to other significant networks, including, for example, the Helsinki Citizens’ Assembly (hCa), which had its lineages in the European Nuclear Disarmament (END) movement and which forged links with independent intellectuals, many of whom had been founders of the Association for Yugoslav Democratic initiatives. The emerging anti-war networks and civilian parliaments which it addresses worked alongside human rights initiatives. Many were linked to the OSI network — sometimes on principle but also, sometimes, on the basis of

\(^{16}\) Stone, Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Transfer Networks, p. 5.
\(^{17}\) Stone, Transnational Philanthropy, Policy Transfer Networks, p. 12.
material interest.

With a few notable exceptions which are traceable to particular personalities, such as the OSCE’s democratization unit support for regional networking among local citizens’ initiatives, neither the SAp nor the Stability Pact ever developed ways of promoting the advocacy of this kind of civic regionalism, at best working with a small number of elite networks which it could be stated they had been instrumental in establishing or, at least, in enabling to survive, including local Helsinki Committees and the Igman Initiative. The complexities of these processes are beyond the scope of this chapter, though we shall mention the symbolic importance of civic regionalism and, at the same time, its relegation to a kind of inferior, parallel, status compared with interstate regionalism at the time. Though primarily applied to sub-national regionalism, “civic regionalism” that is “based on participatory, inclusive and partnership modes of governance” can also be applied to transnational processes.

The above-mentioned citizens’ groups and initiatives stand for a “civil society regionalism” that “has emerged as a dynamic force in the re-spatialization of contemporary life”. The upgrade of societal actors in regionalism studies is a recent trend in regionalism. This is partly due to the general neglect of civil society in the literature. Of course, the very notion of “civil society” hides the diversity and the many roles that civic groups have. Based on case studies in Africa, whose civic groups are usually considered as among the “least likely class” of civil society regionalism, Söderbaum identifies four main roles of regional civil society: as partner, as legitimator, as counter-hegemonic force and as manipulator.

As for the former-Yugoslav space, various critical and counter-hegemonic groupings and initiatives have an effective regional approach that transcends Yugoslavia’s break-up (which might be viewed not only as state- but also as region-destruction) and contributes to effective region-building in SEE. It is noteworthy that on the whole they are not considered as potential partners by the various official regional initiatives. In addition to the above mentioned actors and the anti-war groupings, we may

21 Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 132.
22 See Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, pp. 136–144.
23 As for the anti-war movement, see the must-read in this field: Bojan Bilić and Vesna Janković (eds.), Resisting the Evil: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Contention (Nomos: Baden-Baden, SEIP vol. 7, 2012); and Bojan Bilić, We Were Grasping
mention here only three quite different initiatives, each one contributing in its own way to region-building:

- The RECOM initiative, which is a regional commission for the establishment of facts about war crimes and other serious violations of human rights committed in the former Yugoslavia from January 1, 1991 until December 31, 2001.\(^\就这么\) RECOM was established in 2008. See <recom.link> (Accessed on 24 June 2017).
- The publishing house Biblioteci XX vek, which aims to keep the “Yugoslav-space spirit” alive,\(^\就这么\) and
- The European Fund for the Balkans’ (EFB) programmes like Think and Link, the Fellowship Programme for Government Officials, and the “Balkans in Europe” televised debates.\(^\就这么\)

**Multiple Regionalisms in South East Europe**

Bechev’s contrast between the grand themes of multilateralism, which not lived up expectations, and what he terms “more flexible schemes” operating at a “less than regional level”\(^\就这么\) captures the shift towards a more open regionalism in the last few years. It is the recent proliferation and multifaceted nature of schemes and the ensuing possibilities of solidifying network power through a multiplication of nodes and, above all, a more complex geometry — so that cooperation in a single region is not “all or nothing” — that marks the key elements of this shift towards a new, more fluid, regionalism. In addition, structures have emerged that offer the possibility, if not yet the reality, of regional ownership and the diminution, if not the eradication, of external power hegemony. The diversity of linkages harbours the possibility of a clear move away from exclusively intrastate regionalism towards more open, expansive, and flexible geometries focusing on interlocking zones where diverse actors can realise common interests. Three key shifts are crucial in this regard and may be related to various region-building initiatives.

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\(^\text{for Air: (Post-)Yugoslav Anti-War Activism and Its Legacy (Baden-Baden: Nomos, SEIP vol. 8, 2012).}\)
\(^\text{24 RECOM was established in 2008. See <recom.link> (Accessed on 24 June 2017).}\)
\(^\text{25 Led by Ivan Čolović. See <www.bibliotekaxxvek.com> (Accessed on 24 June 2017).}\)
\(^\text{26 Even if foreign- and donor-driven — the EFB is a joint initiative of different European foundations — the EFB is strongly anchored locally and active at a regional level. See <balkanfund.org > (Accessed on 24 June 2017).}\)
\(^\text{27 Bechev, “Carrots, Sticks and Norms,” p. 29.}\)
CEFTA — Sub-regionalism from Outside

First, the fact that the renewed Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) 2006 — which originates from the initial CEFTA agreement signed in 1992 by the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) — no longer includes any country belonging to Central Europe, but only Western Balkans countries, is symbolic of an escape from the Balkans and identification with Central Europe as a first step on the road to a wider European space. CEFTA’s orginal task — to realise a free trade area by 2001 with more than 90 per cent of total trade liberalised and to introduce a single system of rules facilitating trade within the region — never materialized and has now been handed over to the Regional Cooperation Council (see below). CEFTA’s modest results may well relate to the fact that it was more a response to external actors than driven by intra-regional efforts. Indeed, CEFTA still remains a cooperation project defined, assisted and controlled from outside. Furthermore, the unsettled situation in Kosovo and Bosnia undermines the creation of any ambitious economic cooperation. Nevertheless, focusing on four priority areas — trade facilitation, trade in services, investment and transparency — CEFTA considers itself meanwhile as an important element of the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) strategic programme: South East Europe 2020. CEFTA’s structures acting thus as the implementation structures for the SEE 2020 Integrated Growth Pillar.

While the Energy Community can also be viewed in a similar way, here the linkage with EU interests and the acquis is more explicit. Indeed, the Treaty establishing the Energy Community in South East Europe, signed on 25 October 2005 and in force since July 2006, extends the EU internal energy market to the countries of the region. It establishes a stable regulatory and market framework capable of attracting investment in energy generation, transmission and networks. The single regulatory space in the region, aligned with EU legislation, intends to overcome

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28 As of 17 April 2017, the parties of the CEFTA agreement are: Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Macedonia, Moldova, Montenegro, Serbia and Kosovo.
30 Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), South East Europe 2020 (Sarajevo: RCC, November 2013).
31 See Ana-Maria Boromisa, “In Quest of Regional Ownership Between National and Donors’ Interests,” in Michael Weichert (ed.), Dialogues: From International Intervention to National / Local Ownership? (Sarajevo: FES, 2006), pp. 103–120.
market fragmentation, enhance security of supply, and contribute to improving the state of the environment. Notably, the membership is fairly extended, as the following stakeholders are active in the framework: the European Community, the Western Balkan countries, Kosovo, as well as Bulgaria and Romania, and, with observer status: Georgia, Moldova, Norway, Turkey, and the Ukraine.

While both relate, of course, to issues that are of everyday importance, the workings of CEFTA and, even more so, the Energy Community, rarely impinge on any but a very select, technical public. The continued examination of, and progress in, visa liberalisation for South East Europe both in relation to the EU and within the regional space itself may, on the other hand, have a wider resonance.32

Regional Cooperation Council — Sub-regionalism from Within

Second, the transition from the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (1999–2008) to the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC) — as an all-inclusive, regionally owned and led cooperation framework — with its staffing from the region and its main offices located in Sarajevo, is an explicit attempt to work towards new institutional structures underpinned by real regional ownership (see Table 13, p. 115).33 Nevertheless, the EU and some of its member states participate on a differentiated basis and are instrumental in stimulating sub-regional partnership. Charalambos Tsar-danidis introduced therefore the notion of “dependencia subregionalism”.34

The RCC was officially launched at the meeting of the Ministers of Foreign Affairs of the South East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) in Sofia, on 27 February 2008, under whose auspices it continues to operate.35 We may note that the SEECP was itself launched as a non-institutionalised regional process in 1996 on the exclusive initiative of

32 See European Stability Initiative (ESI), The White List Project: EU policies on Visa-free travel for the Western Balkans, Background paper (Berlin: ESI, 8 November 2008).
35 The SEECP consists of 13 member states from the SEE region, which are also participants in the RCC Board. The SEECP participants meet at the level of Heads of State/Government, Ministers of Foreign Affairs and Political Directors of the Ministries of Foreign Affairs, under the chairmanship of the participant that holds the annual rotating presidency.
SEE countries, and thus does not rely on any international organisation or countries external to the SEE area.

Table 13: SP and RCC at a glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
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</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Participants states</td>
<td>Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Kosovo*, Macedonia*, Moldova, Montenegro, Romania, Slovenia, Serbia, Turkey</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(beneficiaries)</td>
<td>Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Macedonia*, Romania</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Participants states</td>
<td>Hungary, Slovenia, Turkey</td>
<td>Austria, Canada, Czech Republic, Denmark, Germany, Finland, UK, France, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Norway, Poland, Slovakia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, USA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(non-beneficiaries)</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International financial</td>
<td>EIB, ERBD, WB, CoE Development Bank</td>
<td>EIB, EBRD, WB</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>institutions</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>International organizations</td>
<td>OSCE, EU, OECD, CoE, NATO</td>
<td>EU, NATO, OECD, UN, OSCE, UNECE, UNDP</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Secretariat</td>
<td>Brussels</td>
<td>Sarajevo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

* This designation is without prejudice to positions on status, and is in line with UNSCR 1244 and the ICJ Opinion on the Kosovo declaration of independence.

Source: Author’s compilation

Though external donors remain involved, a more explicit attempt to root funding in the countries of the region has emerged. The RCC took on some of the priorities of the Stability Pact (SP), shifting to more focused and result-oriented interventions in a limited number of areas. At the

36 The work of SP was divided among three Working Tables: WT 1, focussed on Democratization and human rights; WT 2, on Economic reconstruction, development and cooperation; and WT 3, on Security issues.
same time, the paradox of the Regional Cooperation Council is that, in conditions where it might be most needed, it is likely to be least effective and yet, conversely, in conditions where its job is easier, it has much less of a niche and has to work particularly hard to gain value. Under a largely technical-bureaucratic leadership, and in a context of declining core funding, the RCC has struggled for legitimacy, credibility, influence, and direction. The combination of project-driven initiatives, linkage to rather small-scale investment facilities, and the signing of rather weak technical agreements which are its main “achievements”, show this gap most acutely.

Attempts to reinvigorate the RCC’s work in 2010–12 through a link with the Central European Initiative (CEI) intended to support the strengthening of the RCC Secretariat as the driver of regional projects generation, coordination and monitoring (see Table 14, p. 117), but seems likely to continue the disconnect between those within who believe in the RCC’s mandate and mission, and those outside who view it largely as a spent force. However, RCC’s 2013 strategic programme “South East Europe 2020” deserves attention. Inspired by the European Union’s (EU) Europe 2020 Strategy, it provides a framework to assist governments in the region to implement their individual development strategies, including EU-accession-related goals, by enhancing national efforts through focused regional cooperation on five interlinked pillars of growth:

- Integrated Growth promoting regional trade and investment linkages through policies that are non-discriminatory, transparent and predictable;
- Smart Growth facilitating commitment to innovation and competition on value-added rather than labour costs;
- Sustainable Growth aiming to raise the level of competitiveness in the private sector, develop infrastructure and encourage greener, more energy-efficient growth;
- Inclusive Growth emphasising skill development, job creation, inclusive labour market participation, and health and well-being;
- Governance for Growth focusing on the capacity of public administration to strengthen the rule of law, reduce corruption, improve the business environment and enhance public service delivery.
### Table 14: RCC’s partnerships with regional initiatives in four key areas

#### Economic and social development

- SEE Investment Committee (SEEIC) – Sarajevo
- Central European Free Trade Agreement 2006 (CEFTA) – Brussels
- Regional Rural Development Standing Working Group of SEE – Skopje
- Association of Balkan Chambers – rotating
- Centre of Public Employment Services of SEE Countries (CPESSC) – rotating
- SEE Trade Union Forum (SEETUF) – Zagreb/Sarajevo
- Adriatic Region Employers’ Centre (AREC) – Zagreb
- SEE Health Network – Skopje
- Centre for eGovernance Development (CeGD) – Ljubljana
- eSEE Initiative (Sarajevo) and bSEE Task Force

#### Infrastructure and energy

- Energy Community Secretariat (ECS) – Vienna
- South East Europe Transport Observatory (SEETO) – Belgrade
- European Common Aviation Area (ECAA) Agreement
- ISIS Programme Secretariat – Brussels
- International Sava River Basin Commission (ISRBC) – Zagreb
- Regional Environmental Center for Central and Eastern Europe (REC) – Szentendre
- Network of Association of Local Authorities of SEE (NALAS) – Skopje
- SEE Public Private Partnership Network (SEEPPPN) – Zagreb

#### Justice and home affairs

- Migration, Asylum and Refugee Regional Initiative (MARRI) – Skopje
- Regional Anticorruption Initiative (RAI) – Sarajevo
- Southeast European Law Enforcement Centre (SELEC, former Southeast European Cooperative Initiative – Regional Centre for Combating Trans-border Crime (SECI Centre) – Bucharest
- Southeast European Prosecutors Advisory Group (SEEPAG) – Bucharest
- Southeast Europe Police Chiefs Association (SEPCA) – Sofia
- Secretariat of Police Cooperation Convention for SEE – Ljubljana
- Western Balkans Prosecutors Network
- Southeast Europe Law Schools Network (SEELS)

#### Security cooperation

- Disaster Preparedness and Prevention Initiative (DPPI SEE) – Sarajevo
- South Eastern and Eastern Europe Clearinghouse for the Control of Small Arms and Light Weapons (SEESAC) – Belgrade
- South East Europe Defence Ministerial (SEDM)
- The United States-Adriatic Charter
- Forum for Western Balkans Defence Cooperation – SEEC
- Centre for Security Cooperation (RACVIAC) – Rakitje (Croatia)

*Source:* Author’s compilation based on information provided by the RCC secretariat.
The first edition of OCED’s “Competitiveness in South East Europe: A Policy Outlook” (2016) supplies quantitative and qualitative information on 15 key policy dimensions of RRC’s SEE 2020 Strategy. The OCED’s overall assessment is encouraging:

The report acknowledges regional progress in all dimensions and describes the benefits of a more strategic approach to policy making, including through more effective whole-of-government co-ordination. In this regard, it stresses the need for more effective involvement of stakeholders in policy design and implementation, particularly the private sector.37

While sector-wise the RCC seems able to enhance economic reforms and fragmented regional cooperation, lack of political will and joint ownership are preventing for the moment the mutualisation of the different economic policies and hampering effective regional cooperation. Like CEFTA, the RCC first focuses almost exclusively on regional cooperation schemes at state level, neglecting other territorial cooperation levels and, second, builds an ephemeral ad hoc structure, an antechamber to the EU. Indeed, once a participating country joins the EU, its CEFTA and RCC membership ends. This impedes the development of a long-term policy — the only one able to achieve any convergence.

The experience of the Visegrád Group will make the argument explicit. This state-level, cross-border cooperation forum (initiated in 1991 between Poland, Hungary, the Czech Republic and Slovakia) worked out effective cooperation initiatives — before and after the EU accession — in the framework of consultative meetings based principally on informal processes.38 Regional cooperation can thus work well without any contractual basis and in the absence of an institutional framework. The permanence of the cooperation network and of political will matters more than the institutional setting (see the next section); another lesson not yet learnt in South East Europe.

Against this background, the territorial cooperation frameworks we will discuss next, on the one hand, prove to be more consistent and constant, and, on the other hand, have the advantage of developing truly regional cooperation instruments and mechanisms that are more anchored

in everyday politics. The latter matters particularly as small business
groups are more embedded at the local level and stand closer to local
political concerns. These are precisely strategic actors in the RCC’s 2020
strategy, which seeks to stimulate the key long-term drivers of growth.

Furthermore, we may observe that the RCC shift towards resolutely
sectorial, and thus economic, cooperation and integration corresponds to
the priority agreed at the 2017 Western Balkans Summit organised in
Trieste in the framework of the “Berlin Process” (see Chapter 1.1); the
priority being to develop a Regional Economic Area in order to pool
resources, increase joint partnership and gain efficiency. This noticeable
trend towards sectorial cooperation and integration should be balanced
with the presence of other dimensions, including the civil-society sector —
which is almost totally absent from any kind of regional high-level
political process. Instead of being only focused on economics, region-
building in SEE should be more flexible and inclusive.

When considering the EU integration process, the overall goal has to
be remembered: it should be not only economic integration, but also full
EU membership. From a regional viewpoint, it is crucial to bridge the
economic and political version of regionalism. Indeed, “comparative re-
gionalism” is a multidimensional process combining economic, political,
social and cultural aspects. In both respects we are far away from this.
Considering the latter, SEE remains in a “peripheral position” with an
extremely low level of region-ness. Why so? The legacy of the break-up
of Yugoslavia and the lack of ownership are regularly mentioned and, of
course, they both matter. Perspectives for full scale EU integration —
admittedly the most convincing incentive to increase the degree of region-
ness is “positive Balkanization” — are bleak, and formal cooperation me-
chanisms are systematically overdetermined by state-centric approaches
and thus intergovernmental actors, mostly dismissive of regional strategies
and regional actors. The RCC — though this applies also to other regional
initiatives — is a multilateral structure still driven by a Westphalian ratio-
nality, and does not yet enhance “regional multilateralism”. Nevertheless,
the RCC should not shift from centralized state-level to a looser order of
networks and/or regional meso-level, but “rescale” its programmes in
order to incorporate them.

Outside / Inside

Third, and potentially most importantly, an array of cross-border and
interregional cooperation initiatives, mainly led by the Council of Europe
and the European Union, hold out a real opportunity for tracing and consolidating a new trend towards region-building (see the previous Chapters and the next section). These regional networks, promoted by the implementation of European regional policy, increased significantly in the 1990s. They exemplify a shift away from the “one-size-fits-all” approach, as well as from post-conflict reconstruction and state-building approaches, towards more tailor-made region-building and integration strategies.

Taking all these diverse initiatives together, we may observe an encouraging shift from an externally driven process towards a more locally anchored one. Clearly, SEECP and the RCC give the signal that joint ownership matters in SEE. Nevertheless, while culture for regional cooperation is eventually developing, we may still question whether region-building in SEE has really been locally appropriated. We may also question whether some political leaders might not be engaged solely in discursive region-building activities, with no real commitment to implementing them. Last but not least, there are also forces resistant to regional cooperation. These too should be integrated into a comprehensive approach. Additionally, let’s not forget that key region-building initiatives in SEE still relate overwhelmingly to “asymmetrical interregionalism” and “dependencia subregionalism”, and are counterproductively influenced by the country-by-country driven EU accession process (see above).

Thus, there is still a long way to go before the SEECP becomes the “South East Europe Dimension”, akin to the existing Northern Dimension (ND). Being realist, we may consider the SEE area as a “subregional cooperation under construction”. Nonetheless, the Northern Dimension remains an inspiring model: initially developed as an EU foreign policy initiative (in the framework for “old regionalism”), today the ND is a sub-

39 On the respective CoE and EU similarities and differences, see the comprehensive presentation and comparison drafted by Rafał Sadowski published as: Council of Europe, Similarities and Differences of Instruments and Policies of the Council of Europe and The European Union in the Field of Transfrontier Co-operation (Strasbourg: CoE, 2005).

40 See Dimitar Bechev, Filip Ejdus and Dane Taleski, Culture of Regional Cooperation in Southeast Europe (Belgrade & Vienna: BiEPAG, 2015), p. 3.


regional cooperation initiative with four equal partners (EU, Russia, Norway and Iceland). This could prefigure a flexible, multi-layered region involving “wider SEE” — thus including EU member countries, candidate member countries, countries targeted by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), and EU non-member countries. In fact, all SEE countries also belong to varying degrees to other regions: Central Europe, and the Mediterranean and Black Sea regions. As Vladimir Gligorov points out: “the Balkans are a region of overlapping regions”. Indeed, South East Europe is less a homogeneous region than a multifaceted network linked to other networks. It is now time to network these networks. This introduces the next section.

Region-ness in Wider Europe

Regional cooperation in South East Europe must be now understood, first, in a broader framework encompassing Russia, the countries of the Western Newly Independent States (NIS) and the Southern Mediterranean; second, in a new geopolitical environment; and third, in a new world order. It should be acknowledged that since the 2004–2007 enlargement wave, the EU has started to focus on the necessity of envisioning new bilateral and multilateral relations with neighbouring non-EU countries “on the bases of shared values” and in order to “avoid new dividing lines in Europe and to promote stability and prosperity within and beyond the new borders of the Union”. The 2004 big-bang enlargement brought about major geopolitical shifts and reconfigured European borders. The socioeconomic and administrative trends characterising the former external borders, such as the German–Polish border during the 1990s, are now to be observed further East, for example on the Polish–Ukrainian border. As mentioned by Katarzyna Krok and Maciej Smętkoski:

As Ukraine narrows development and “governance” gaps with Poland, structural and administrative conditions for more successful cooperation will also improve. Of course, cross-border cooperation is by no means a panacea for entrenched regional development problems. However, it can help bring about a much-needed normalization and enhancement of political dialogue and general social exchange between both countries.

**European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP)**

Against this background, the 2004 developed European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) — initially an extension of the former EU programmes targeting Central and Eastern Europe and the Russia Commonwealth countries, respectively Phare (1989) and Tacis (1991) — became a major tool for the EU to pursue its transformative policy beyond its borders and to exercise political, social and economic influence. The ENP establishes a new “proximity framework” between the EU and the countries on its external borders. Initially conceived in 2002, adopted in 2004, as an adapted strategy for a “Wider Europe”, the ENP intends to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines on the European continent and to establish close partnership-based relations, focusing on strengthening security and stability, with non-EU Member States.

The European Neighbourhood Policy has an impressive and comprehensive regional coverage targeting the external borders of the EU, namely all European States of the Commonwealth of Independent States, including the South Caucasus and all the Mediterranean States of the “Barcelona Process”. But the ENP does not represent an enlargement policy, nor does it aim to open up the prospect of membership to the countries concerned or to provide specific accession prospects — even though it does not preclude prospects for some countries that may at some future point apply for membership, which is strongly desired by the Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia and Armenia.

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47 Krok and Smętkoski, “Local and Regional Cross-Border Cooperation between Poland and Ukraine,” p. 191.
48 The term “Wider Europe” was coined by the 2002 Solana and Patten joint letter to the Council and endorsed in Romano Prodi’s speech, “A Wider Europe – A Proximity Policy as the key to stability”, Brussels, 5-6 December 2002.

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Since the late 2010s, and thus in a quite different geopolitical context, the ENP has taken on new dimensions: The Arab uprisings, civil wars in Libya and Syria, the continuing Israeli-Palestinian conflict, the crisis in Ukraine and Russia’s annexation of the Crimean peninsula, have all called the institutional design and tools of the ENP into question and a comparative perspective is crucial to understand EU neighbourhood policies in a
wider sense. Accordingly, the 2009 Lisbon Treaty enabled the EU to strengthen the ENP and, based on a review of past achievements, led in May 2011 to a revised ENP intended to give “A New Response to A Changing Neighbourhood”. 

Against this background, the ENP and the related cross-border cooperation (CBC) programmes were updated for the 2014–2020 period. The CBC in the European Neighbourhood (see Map 7, p. 123) extends the principles of cross-border cooperation within the EU, which is part of the European Territorial Cooperation (ETC) programmes — CBC in the Neighbourhood receives funding from the European Regional Development Fund as well as from the European Neighbourhood Instrument. While I will further discuss EU CBC programmes in the next chapter, the three strategic objectives of CBC in the framework of the ENP may be mentioned here:

- to promote economic and social development in regions on both sides of common borders;
- to address common challenges in environment, public health, safety and security;
- to promote better conditions and modalities for ensuring the mobility of persons, goods and capital.

While there is an obvious influence of EU’s Interreg programmes (see Chapter 2.1), the ENP CBC objectives differ, despite having similar implementation rules — ENP is above all regarded as a means of securing political stability in the targeted areas. Of course, we recognise the presence of an originating dimension of European integration: the intention to develop a large area of peace. However, as noticed by the authors of the 2015 published *Territorial Cooperation in Europe*:

the objective is not merely to develop partnerships but to propagate the political and economic model of democratic systems based on the rule of law, respect for individual freedom, human rights and the autonomy of local authorities, and

operating a capitalist economic system.\textsuperscript{53}

Viewed from Russia, this narrative is propaganda (see Part 3). It is noteworthy that Russia is indirectly involved in this partnership through one interregional programme and seven cross-border cooperation initiatives.

Among other elements of a pan-European approach with much added value is the fact that these countries are deemed to be “European” by virtue of cultural, historical and geostrategic considerations — emphasising that Europe is more than just the enlarged EU. This broader concept of Europe must now be made a reality.

Related to its programmes in the fields of regional-, sub-regional- and cross-border cooperation, the ENP perceives civil society organisations as an actor for enhancing its influence and its agenda: “Civil society organisations have a valuable role to play in identifying priorities for action and in promoting and monitoring the implementation of ENP Action Plans”.\textsuperscript{54}

In the above-mentioned revisited ENP, the CSO’s pivotal role is confirmed and plans are mentioned to establish a European Endowment for Democracy and a Civil Society Facility for the Neighbourhood. As pointed out by Scott: “It seems to be widely understood that a civil society dimension is vital in order for the EU’s policies to boost links with its ‘ring of friends’ and, thus, to deepen the integration between the Union and its neighbours”.\textsuperscript{55} The 2006–2009 EUDIMENSIONS international research project, focussing on civil society networks, views CSOs as “bridge-builders”:

Civil society actors who engage in cross-border cooperation between EU member states and neighbouring countries are adopting new institutional and discursive practices that are widening the political landscape from the local to the national and European level, and thus participating in a bottom-up diffusion of “Europe” beyond EU borders. However, this is not taking place in terms of convergence to normative models but rather occurring as a complex process of accommodation and adaptation.\textsuperscript{56}


\textsuperscript{54} Commission of the European Communities, \textit{A Stronger European Neighbourhood Policy} (Brussels: Commission of the European Communities, 2007), p. 11.


\textsuperscript{56} Scott and Liikanen, “Civil Society and the ‘Neighbourhood’”, p. 433. Reference is made here to the international research project EUDIMENSIONS: Local
The results further highlight that, despite the partnership rhetoric, the debate on the role of civil society is essentially structured in Western terms, and that CSOs — especially regional and local community-based voluntary organisations — tend to be marginalised on regional political issues such as the Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern Partnership (discussed below). There may be too much blind faith placed in civil society as an actor for change and “an opportunity for a socially inclusive and responsive ENP”.57

The following briefly discusses three main issues that may reframe the EU’s neighbourhood policy (ENP) and its regional policy.

Partnership with Russia

First, a new enhanced strategic partnership with Russia was under discussion in the early 2000s and is still due. The previous EU-Russia partnership expired at the end of 2007; after suspension due to the crisis in Georgia in 2008, the negotiations for a “Partnership for Modernisation” resumed in July 2008 and, by the end of 2010, twelve full negotiation rounds had taken place.58 The fact that all the EU members adopted the mandate for talks in May 2008 illustrates the — often missing — unity of the EU. As Mikhail Gorbachev noted: the time seems ripe for a “comprehensive dialogue aimed at constructing an advanced partnership between the European Union and Russia”.59

In a new global context, an EU–Russia strategic partnership has to free itself from historical legacies and balance a policy of interests with a policy of values. A far-reaching pact would undoubtedly anchor the shift away from the military dimension towards political and economic dimensions, from power-blocs towards a regional approach, and help to ease tension and confrontation with Moscow.60 Avoiding the exclusive focus
on political, economical, and security-related issues, the creation of an EU-Russia Civil Society Forum — suggested at the 27th Summit in Nizhny Novgorod on 9-10 June 2011 — could contribute to some contact between elite citizens’ groups. Progress of negotiations on an agreement for visa liberalisation would enhance such a pragmatic approach and illustrate that the EU-Russia partnership is still a work in progress.

Alas, the current situation in Ukraine hinders EU-Russia relations. Russia’s illegal annexation of Crimea and, at the time of writing, the ongoing conflict in Eastern Ukraine, are significantly affecting the bilateral relations. Consequently, some mechanisms of cooperation are frozen and sanctions have been adopted. While Russia remains a “natural partner” of the EU, the partnership is gone. The outgoing EU ambassador to Russia (2013–2017), the Lithuanian diplomat Vygaudas Ušackas, identifies a deep and dangerous clash of values between Moscow and the West, epitomised by the Ukraine crisis and predicts:

The Russian leadership will continue to reject the outcome of the cold war and insist on a European security order based on the spheres of influence of major powers. Russia respects the sovereignty and territorial integrity of its neighbours only as long as their geo-political choices align with its interests.\(^\text{61}\)

For the time being, while the EU has to formulate a realistic, long-term and unified strategic approach, the OSCE and the Council of Europe are offering room for political dialogue. Against this background, ENP cross-borders programmes (2014–2020) also involving regions from Russia become politically more relevant (see Chapter 2.3).

The Eastern Partnership (EaP)

Second, the joint Polish and Swedish “Eastern Partnership” (EaP), first presented at an EU foreign ministers’ meeting in Brussels on 26 May 2008,\(^\text{62}\) and launched in May 2009, creates an innovative multinational forum between the EU-27 and the six Eastern neighbouring states: Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Georgia, Moldova and Ukraine. This proposal for a new Eastern-Europe Policy aims to offer EU’s eastern neighbours political dialogue, and support for reforms and economic integration that would go beyond what is already offered in the framework of the ENP. The ingenuity of this initiative is to offer (and at the same time to

distinguish) a platform for enhancing regional cooperation, and a framework for bilateral issues.

The Eastern Partnership Summit, to be held in November 2017, will seek to work out tangible results. Twenty deliverables for 2020 are on the table targeting four priority areas: economic development and market opportunities; strengthening institutions and good governance; connectivity, energy efficiency, environment and climate change; and mobility and people-to-people contacts. 63

Such a new and flexible approach to regionalism, provided it avoids the trap of the “sphere of influence”, could reinvigorate what remains a rather feeble pan-European architecture. In the framework of the ENP and the renewed EU–Russia partnership, there could be space for a renewed sub-regionalism in Central and Eastern Europe, also involving Finland and Sweden. Crucially, the EU will have to revise and push forward links with its Mediterranean neighbours.

The Mediterranean dimension

Third, in contrast to the ecological and socio-political priorities of the Northern Dimension, politics and economics overdetermine the Mediterranean dimension. The asymmetric partnership on the EU’s Southern flank is a challenging task. If not a “Mediterranean Union” — the project pioneered in October 2007 by the then French president, Nicolas Sarkozy — then a reloaded “Barcelona process” (which was established in 1995) focusing on concrete and achievable objectives could be a viable, though less ambitious, alternative. The “Union for the Mediterranean” (UfM), launched on 13 July 2008 in Paris in the framework of the ENP as the counterpart of the “Eastern Partnership” (see above), involves, along with the 28 EU member states, 15 Southern Mediterranean, African and Middle Eastern countries — among these Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia and Montenegro. 64

In contrast to the “Barcelona process”, which remained an empty shell, the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) has, at least on paper, a more robust institutional architecture to upgrade the political level of partnership and its visibility: a Barcelona-based permanent secretariat (which

opened in 2010) to monitor the implementation of some 40 regional labelled projects; a Mediterranean Investment Bank, the Euro-Mediterranean Regional and Local Assembly to develop interregional cooperation; and the Anna Lindh Foundation for dialogue between cultures which promotes a network of CSOs in the Mediterranean area. The plan is to develop multi-structured cooperation in the energy, employment, education, infrastructure, counterterrorism and immigration sectors concerning the following key principles: co-ownership, variable geometry, and focus on specific projects.

Unsurprisingly, the UfM has from day one had to face a set of critical geopolitical challenges: the conflict between Turkey and Cyprus, the issue of Western Sahara, the Arab-Israeli conflict and the current stalemate in the Middle East. Thus, the challenges are as manifold as they are overwhelming. The ambition is there, but the results are not, at least not yet. Dominique Moïsi, senior adviser to the French Institute for International Relations, rightly anticipated back in 2008: the UfM “was a great intuition — to extend the logic of reconciliation to the Mediterranean and deal with the issues as ‘Europe’ — but it was badly mismanaged and presented, so as a result it may lead nowhere”. On 23 February 2011, French diplomats confirmed this estimation, condemning the launch of the UfM as being unprepared for the challenge. This criticism corresponds to the UfM’s beginning, which did not unfold under the best auspices. This partly explains why only after ten years does the UfM now seem to be in position to develop its activities, as illustrated by the following three phases that encompass its development:

- 2008–2011: launch of the UfM and setting up of the Secretariat of the UfM in Barcelona
- 2012–2015: development of activities, reinforcement of the capacities of the Secretariat, working methods and partnerships
- From 2016: drafting of an enhanced common regional agenda for the Mediterranean

67 Quoted from “La voix de la France a disparu dans le monde,” Le Monde, 23 February 2011.
Of course, it is too early for a fair assessment. Nevertheless, as of January 2017, the UfM has presented the following tangible results:

- 10 ministerial conferences and several high-level meetings took place;
- increasingly structured regional dialogues have involved a network of cooperation of over 10,000 stakeholders throughout the Mediterranean region;
- 47 regional cooperation projects have been drafted in total worth more than 5 billion Euros.

The UfM, aware of its shortcomings and of the need to be significantly reinforced, will benefit from the support of the ENP and of Fererica Mogherini (HRVP of the EU), which were confirmed at the informal ministerial conference in Barcelona in November 2015. Against this background, UfM’s ministers of foreign affairs adopted on 23 January 2017 a Roadmap for action focusing on the following four areas of action: enhancing political dialogue among the member states, ensuring the contribution of UfM activities to regional stability and human development, strengthening regional integration and consolidating the UfM’s capacity for action.68

The transition to democracy in countries on the Mediterranean southern shore, though an extremely difficult context, may provide the UfM with a last opportunity to assert its ambitions. Otherwise it will be just another sinking ship. Unfortunately, more than 20 years after the launch of the European Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), reloaded in 2008 by the UfM, the region faces more region-deconstruction than region-building. Against the background of the current highly conflictive political situation, it might be worth considering an alternative model, less EU-centric, more tailor-made to the context, without asymmetric dependence built-in, and it might also be advantageous to envisage less formal bureaucracy and more flexible structures and processes.

Comparative regionalism may be briefly introduced at this stage. The Association of Southeast Asian Nations’ (ASEAN) approach69 — based

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69 The Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) was founded in 1967 by Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, Singapore, and Thailand. Brunei joined the grouping in 1984, Vietnam in 1995, Laos and Myanmar in 1997, and Cambodia in
on informality, flexibility, consensus and non-confrontation — could inspire a more pragmatic consensus- and region-building strategy, based on “informal regionalism”. Indeed, extremely formalistic inter-state and state-led regional frameworks still drive the discussed regional initiatives in SEE. Reducing their number would not be harmful, and would certainly enhance joint ownership. As Söderbaum argues, “there is no reason to believe that soft institutionalism is a uniquely East Asian phenomenon”. Indeed, Europe is a crowded playground with a variety of region-building models. Some of them are less formalised, such as sub-regions in Scandinavia, the Baltic Sea Region, and the Visegrád Group in Central Europe, and they are rather successful. This is an option worth considering for the above-mentioned areas.

While common sense, knowledge of the region, and sound political analysis matter a great deal, we may benefit from some interesting insights provided by the comparative regionalism theory. Summarising the main research findings comparing the design and effectiveness of different regional international frameworks, Acharya and Johnston highlight:

Another finding on the link between design features and the nature of cooperation is that more formally institutionalized regional groups do not necessarily produce more effective cooperation. At first glance, if ones goes by changing levels of formalization, then only the EU and NATO, and to some degree the OAS, may be said to have been the most effective regional institutions in inducing normative and preference change. But beneath the surface […] national institutions and traditions remain a force in Europe despite its highly formalized setting.

At the same time, less formalized regional institutions such as ASEAN have not been totally ineffectual in terms of producing preference change. Institutions can still help attain their original goals and induce preference change with informal rules and deliberative mandate. […] More informal groups such as ASEAN have had a discernible impact in changing the preferences and norms of their members.72


70 Not to be confounded with “shadow regionalism”: the latter “suggests that regime actors use their positions of power within the state apparatus to erect a form (firm??) regionalism that is informal and driven by rent-seeking and personal self-interest”, Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 90.

71 See Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 95.

72 Amitav Acharya and Alistair Iain Johnston, “Conclusion: Institutional Features, Cooperation Effects, and the Agenda for Further Research on Comparative Regionalism,” in Amitav Acharya and Alistair Iain Johnston (eds.), Crafting Coopera-

tion: Regional International Institutions in Comparative Perspective (Cambrid-
A further argument concerns specifically the formalism in decision-making rules and its impact on the nature of cooperation:

Again, a key question is whether shifts toward greater formalism (such as a shift from consensus to majority voting) indicate greater identity change (which we use as an indicator of nature of cooperation). Our conclusion is that greater formalism may actually affect cooperation negatively.73

These thoughts serve as an invitation to soften regional initiatives in order for them to maintain their impetus and dynamism.

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73 Acharya and Johnston, “Conclusion”, p. 270.
2.3. SEE the Bigger Picture

From the mid-1990s, South East European countries had to face simultaneously four demanding processes: war-to-peace transition, development, democratisation, and state and nation building. As for the latter, they are still driven by a traditional nation-state approach that belongs to a remote world order (see Part 3).

During the first post-war decade, the EU-centric integration process, taken on a country-by-country basis, was the main incentive for reforms. Accordingly, the EU can be said to have garnered the lion’s share of attention, to the detriment of regional and pan-European organisations such as the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), the Council of Europe and various UN agencies. It could sound cynical; nevertheless, we may ask whether, beyond the narrative “to join the EU”, state building is not the real priority — both for the EU and the SEE countries. Lessons learnt from comparative regionalism are telling:

the EU’s sovereignty-challenging approach should not be emulated in an area where sovereignty is a hard-earned and, to this day, novel idea. Instead, regional institutions in the developing world should develop their own distinctive approach, perhaps emulating ASEAN, one of the most successful experiments in regional cooperation outside the West.\(^1\)

Thus, South East Europe is facing a double bind: while restoring a lost sovereignty, it is supposed to transfer part of it to the Union in the EU accession process. Consequently, we may view slightly differently the time-gap on the long and winding road towards Brussels. It signals not, as has often been stated, resistances, or even, as some argue, “backwardness”; it is simply the normal path for war-torn countries that are barely recovering — for whom, joining the EU means an escape from the Balkans (as one narrative has it).

The already-mentioned “ASEAN way” (see Chapter 2.2) would have been an option worth considering for sub-regional cooperation processes in the Balkans as well as in Central Europe, inasmuch as:

Notwithstanding the expansion in the scope of the ASEAN institution, institutional design in ASEAN remains wedded to state sovereignty as an initial preference, which results in a high degree of autonomy for national governments in determining domestic policy.\(^2\)

Against this background, we may also view in a new light the next trend that was introduced in the 2000s: regional initiatives — such as the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI); the Stability Pact for South Eastern Europe (SP), launched in 1999, and its successor organisation the Regional Cooperation Council (RCC), established in 2008;\(^3\) not forgetting the reframed Central European Free Trade Agreement (CEFTA) — have received increased attention as the regional dimension, initially a somewhat neglected facet, became a crucial issue — and here again, both for the EU (as an imposed conditionality) and for the SEE countries (which had, willingly or not, to cohabit). Thus, SEE countries played down “regional cooperation” as a “bilateral setting” for neighbourhood relations — providing space for appeasement but also for new low-key conflicts (mostly border related). Not that this process enables the eagles of the Balkans to become doves.

We may find here some analogies with the ASEAN process. Indeed, ASEAN countries initiated their regional cooperation while experiencing interstate rivalries (during the 1960s). Their rationale was the following:

They decided to form ASEAN as a mechanism for regional rapprochement, anticipating that participation in the Association would help moderate the currently unrestrained competitive dynamics between their countries. This, in turn, would enable governments to focus attention and resources on addressing the myriad domestic economic, political, and socio-economic challenges they faced without having to constantly look over their shoulder at what neighbors were getting up to.\(^4\)

This chapter discusses first the idea of a pan-European dimension that, rather than being in competition with the European one, complements it.

\(^2\) Yuen Fong Khong and Helen E.S. Nesadurai, “Hanging together, institutional design, and cooperation in Southeast Asia: AFTA and the ARF,” in Acharya and Johnston (eds.), Crafting Cooperation, p. 33.


\(^4\) Fong Khong and Nesadurai, “Hanging together,” p. 33.
The discussion considers the often-neglected “Europe of the Regions”. Second, there are marked differences in territorial politics (regional cooperation at different levels) in SEE, not, of course, because of primordial cultural or “ethnic” characteristics, but because of the specific post-war state-building and democratisation processes. The latter face three structural challenges that will be examined: developmentalism versus gradualism, aid versus development, and fake versus effective implementation.

The Necessity of a Comprehensive Framework

A pan-European approach matters for two reasons, first, the European regional dimension must be conceived in a significantly broader framework, bridging various sub-regional areas, such as SEE and the Black Sea region, in order to capitalise on the significant potential for cooperation. Indeed, what once was perceived (erroneously, we might add) as one region — the “Eastern Bloc” — today forms at least three sub-regions: the Russian Federation and the Commonwealth of Independent States, Central and East Europe, and SEE. Second, it must take into account a new geostrategic environment and develop a comprehensive strategic approach towards the Russian Federation in order to tackle some key problems such as disputes over territories seeking independence, missiles and energy.

Affecting stability in SEE as a whole and at the country level, as well as economic prospects, are typical cross-border issues: foreign direct investment, trade and transport facilitation, people mobility and migration, environmental protection, and energy supply. These regional/transboundary issues, targeted by the EU Interreg and ENP programmes, must also be addressed in the framework of a broader regional vision encompassing the geostrategic role of the SEE countries bridging Europe and Asia, and Europe and the Middle East. This speaks in favour of a broader understanding of the concept of SEE that bridges the Danube region, Central and Eastern Europe, Western Asia and the Russian Federation.

Accordingly, the various EU and CoE sub-regional programmes and initiatives, such as the RCC, should be included in a pan-European regional framework. This would not interfere with, but rather complement and reinforce, the EU integration and the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). Such a global landscape has already been anticipated by the EU ENP cross-borders initiatives (see Map 7, p. 123) as well as by 5 out of 15

EU transnational cooperation programmes (Interreg, strand B) targeting SEE (see Map 8, p. 136). ENP’s added value is to target regions as such, while other sub-regional initiatives, like the RCC, are mostly state-centric. Individual sub-regional strategies and good-neighbourly relations alone cannot tackle all the challenges the European region faces. Furthermore, classical state-based bilateral and multilateral approaches are not enough when confronting global economic development, climate change, migration pressure, energy policy strategies, international terrorism, etc. What matters, therefore, is to revitalise the very notion of a “Europe of the Regions” that has fallen out of favour in the 2000s — except in the realm of regionalism studies.6

Map 8: Transnational cooperation programmes involving SEE (2014–2020)

Source: InfoRegio.

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One picture makes the argument crystal clear. The Assembly of European Regions (AER), the largest network of regions bringing together regions from 35 countries, published in 1990 the first map of its kind citing a Europe made up of regions (see Map 9). It illustrates a pan-European landscape enhancing the regions’ visibility, and not, as is usually the case, exclusively the state level. Of course, region- and state-levels are competing, but as Keating points out:

it would be a mistake to pitch regions against the state in a necessarily antagonistic relationship, or assume that, if either Europe or the regions are gaining power, the states must be losing it. Rather, we are seeing an interpenetration of territorial policy spaces, as Europe is increasingly regionalized, regions are Europeanized, and the state is both regionalized and Europeanized.7

The following table shows the key institutions and organisations active in favour of a Europe of the regions:

Table 15: Institutions and networks targeting the region-level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Multi-purpose associations of regions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>International Union of Local Authorities (IULA) — 1913</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council of European Municipalities and Regions (CEMR) — 1951</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA) — 1957</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⊗ since 1994: Congress of Local and Regional Authorities (CLRA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Council (later Assembly) of European Regions (AER) — 1985</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Consultative Council of Regional and Local Authorities — 1998</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>⊗ since 1994: Committee of the Regions (CoR)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Focused alliances of regions:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Association of European Border Regions (AEBR) — 1971</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) — 1973</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of European Regions of Industrial Technology (RETI) — 1984</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Four Motors for Europe — 1988</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Foundation Europe of the Cultures — 1992</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Source: Author’s compilation. Note: the numerous Euroregions are not mentioned.

Among these, the European Committee of the Regions (CoR) is the most important one. This consultative body succeeded in 1994 the Council of Regional and Local Authorities, and was further strengthened by the 2007 Lisbon Treaty “by referring to the principle of self-government, by introducing the aim of territorial cohesion and by including the regional and local dimension in the respect of the subsidiarity principle”. The CoR, with its 222 members — all regional or local elected politicians — benefits the formal right of consultation on EU proposals, especially on all matters falling within its competence. The question remains open as to whether the CoR could become a “third level” of the European policy, thus a region-based second chamber of the European Parliament (this

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would not significantly affect the power of the state-level. While institutions matter, effective programmes are key. Let’s mention just two of them: the EU’s Structural Funds, which significantly stimulated increased regional activity, and the Regions and Cities of Europe (Recite), that between 1991 and 2005 funded numerous locally anchored initiatives.

Notably, the European integration provided Western European (from the 1970s on) and Central European states (from the late 1990s on) the opportunity, first, to strengthen regional political institutions, second, to empower regional actors to develop new strategies for securing financial aid (as the Structural Fund) and accessing institutional arenas beyond the state, and, third, to participate in European decision making. This was not so in SEE, and it explains why in SEE “regional cooperation” is mostly apprehended as a state-led multilateral experiment — the on-going nation-building process being, of course, another key argument here. Curiously, this attitude in SEE countries is not challenged by the fact that they are involved in multiple regional cooperation projects established at, or involving, the region level. Thus, in SEE, since the region level is almost non-existent, regionalisation is not a force undermining the nation-state.

But we may present the same issue differently. The EU’s functioning shows that the Union’s politics is still dominated by sovereign states and sovereignty-based understandings of politics. Even more so, “competences transferred to the EU include matters in which regions have a direct interest or for which regional governments are constitutionally responsible”. Summarising various research reports as well as empirical observations, and referring in the following to state-level competencies, Elias points out that:

despite the progressive transfer of competencies away from the state and upwards towards the supranational level, there was little evidence that the sub-state level had benefited substantially from this re-distribution of policy responsibilities. The principle of subsidiarity, for example, was applied predominantly in a very narrow way to decide the legal basis of competence between member states and the European institutions, rather than as a mechanism for empowering the sub-state level.

From this viewpoint, resistance from the SEE countries would be a sound

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10 Keating, *The New Regionalism in Western Europe*, p. 163
strategy. Nevertheless, various studies in the field of regionalism are opposed to this, arguing that we are facing a new world order which is marked by a weighty transformation in the nature of the political process within a multi-level, multi-actor, non-hierarchical and increasingly complex political system.

This view also reframes sub-regional institutions dating from the old regionalism era, such as pan-regional movements. Nowadays, a pan-European approach, first, systematically links national and regional, local and global perspectives in an interregional cooperation framework, moving resolutely beyond national country-based strategies and classical bilateral country-to-country dynamics. Second, it encompasses political as well as socioeconomic aspects, the security dimension, and development and climate challenges. Third, it encompasses the whole of Eastern and South East Europe, the Caucasus region and the Russian Federation, reaching out towards Eurasia, including the Caspian region and Central Asia.

Such an approach could contribute to overcoming the new divisions and contradictions induced by the fifth EU enlargement. Indeed, today more than in the past, SEE and the Black Sea region are heterogeneous areas encompassing EU members, would-be members and countries explicitly barred from EU accession — such as Ukraine, the Russian Federation and the Caucasian States. The increased complexity of bilateral and regional relations is illustrated by the Romanian and Bulgarian case: as new EU members, they must strengthen their borders with their eastern neighbours, but this contradicts and undermines the promotion of regional cooperation. The issue of economic cooperation provides another example: the development of free-trade areas is as such welcomed, but these countries must take due account of the fact that EU Member States and countries bound to the EU’s common commercial policy by a customs union cannot autonomously participate in regional free-trade schemes. But there is more: on the one hand, cooperation within the regions and between the regions and the EU, and, on the other hand, the coexistence of numerous integration and territorial (regional cooperation) programmes — such as the pre-accession process, the ENP, the strategic partnership with the Russian Federation, and bilateral agreements and action plans —, considerably augment the structural complexity and tension that must be strategically addressed.

An additional divide must also be taken into account: the division between an economically and politically stable Europe and a Europe characterised by economic and political instability. Thus, there is a division between the economically developed Europe — “old” Europe, including some Central European countries — and an “underdeveloped” Europe — most SEE countries, the Russian Federation, the Caspian basin and Cent-
tral Asia. But viewed the other way around, the experiences of the “new” Europe in the fields of innovation and economic restructuring may provide a starting point for overcoming the conventional policies of the “old” Europe. Such an approach suggests, first, that new ideas may come out of the “other Europe” — notably in the field of social reforms — and, second, that the transformation process is not over, and this not only in SEE.\(^{12}\)

Additionally, in practical terms, these divisions are reflected, for example, in the more difficult conditions for crossing the borders of the new EU members, and consequent problems for business. Furthermore, countries from SEE, and also from the Black Sea region,\(^{13}\) are clearly too small to adopt relevant strategies in the fields of energy resources and security, transport, and environmental protection.

What is more, the above-mentioned lines of division benefit the forces opposed to sub- and interregional cooperation and to the stabilisation of the region. They ought to be countered by effective and appropriate policy — notably through conflict-resolution and confidence-building mechanisms addressing the political tensions and frozen conflicts between states,\(^{14}\) and shared measures against illegal migration, trafficking and organised crime.\(^{15}\)

This gives an idea of a quite fragmented political landscape that undermines broader inter-regional cooperation. Of course, a pan-European framework has to address and overcome these divisions. It is crucial, first,


\(^{13}\) The Black Sea region includes Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the west, Ukraine and the Russian Federation in the north, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the east and Turkey in the south. Though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral States, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors. The Black Sea Economic Cooperation, established in 1992, is a relevant organisation with a wide membership, including the above-listed Black Sea countries plus Albania, the Russian Federation, Serbia and Turkey as founding Member States. Seven EU Member States have observer status. See the EU updated Black Sea policy in Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament: Black Sea Synergy – New Regional Coopera-

\(^{14}\) More than SEE, the Black Sea region is affected by “frozen” conflicts (Transnistria, Abkhazia, South Ossetia and Nagorno-Karabakh).

\(^{15}\) The Bucharest-based SECI Regional Centre for Combating Transborder Crime has developed “best practices” in this field.
to foster a shared European identity; second, to contribute to the development of an open EU–US–Russian Federation dialogue; and, third, to promote a pan-European cultural, political and economic integration and cooperation process.

In such a renewed pan-European scenario, Eastern and South East European countries have a major role to play — being more open to cooperation with the United States, the Russian Federation and non-EU Eastern European countries in the Black Sea region and the Caucasus. The three above-mentioned dimensions exactly correspond to the priorities of pan-European institutions. Consequently, to complement the EU integration process, existing pan-European institutions — by definition, inclusive\(^ {16} \) — such as the OSCE, the EBRD and the Council of Europe, must give life to a renewed pan-European dynamic.

Obviously, there are needs that are specific to SEE countries. While, as seen previously, several regional initiatives contributed to initiating a regional cooperation process, hard security issues still need to be tackled (the status of Kosovo, and Bosnia and Herzegovina’s internal integration) as well as the belated state-building related issues discussed in the next section.

\textit{Structural challenges in SEE}

Developmentalism versus gradualism

In the wake of the democratisation of some 100 countries — what Samuel P. Huntington describes as democracy’s “Third Wave” (in the years comprising the late 1980s through the early 1990s)\(^ {17} \) — disillusionment and a kind of “democratic pessimism” are widespread today. Against the background of “democracy-building efforts” in Afghanistan and Iraq, the legitimacy and efficiency of democracy promotion as well as the overstated optimism of the various transition programmes are being openly questioned.

This scepticism also concerns SEE, where people are seeing that their drive to democracy is suddenly being forgotten in the general geopolitical game. This also illustrates the “dependency syndrome”, which assumes

\(^{16}\) Compared to the exclusive ones like the EU and NATO.

that the drive for reform must come from outside. Contrary to the experience in Central Europe, country and regional ownership was largely absent in SEE countries.18

External influences have had a profound impact in the region, especially in Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo. These experiments in “supervised democracy” illustrate in different ways that some countries of the region are still halfway between transition and democratic consolidation. Thus, these “Third Wave societies” are turning out to be “struggling democracies”, to use a concept coined by Thomas Carothers. This puts the spotlight on the effectiveness of the interventions, and the concepts and strategies upon which they rest.

Recent setbacks in democracy promotion, as in SEE, have given a boost to advocates of traditional developmentalism — arguing that development must precede democracy and provide evidence for “democratic sequencing”, i.e. the notion that the rule of law and a well-functioning state should be in place before democracy can be expected to take root. This is unfortunate, as, particularly in SEE, it is precisely the absence of consolidated democratic systems that inhibits the development of the rule of law and economic reforms, underscoring the vital role of efforts to strengthen the state’s core capacities taken in step with democratisation. As Vladimir Gligorov emphasises:

in the Central and Southeast European countries in transition, democratization has been a boost and lack of it an impediment to faster economic growth and development.19

Agreeing with this approach, Carothers advocates gradualism as an alternative to sequencing in assisting democratisation, stating that “state-building beyond the initial stage is best pursued at the same time as democratization, with an effort to find points of complementarity and mutual reinforcement”.20 The transition process and the comprehensive European integration of the European post-communist countries — thus, not only the EU SAp, but also countries’ membership of the Council of Europe, the OSCE and various UN agencies — illustrate precisely such a gradualist process.

18 It should be noted that already during the interwar period (1918–1939), Balkan countries were highly dependent on foreign powers.
As processes of post-conflict political reconstruction have fallen short of early and unrealistic hopes, the strategies and results of international state-building practices in SEE are being questioned. Critical, and sometimes provocative, accounts highlight the paradox of Western intervention that threatens to destroy democracy in order to save it, and the subordination and weakness of non-Western States in relation to the Western powers.\(^\text{21}\) Obviously, SEE experienced a transition process that was significantly different to that of most Central European countries, since it was strongly affected by the break-up of the SFRY and the war experienced in the early 1990s.

Rethinking these years, Marina Glamocak coined the term “transition through war” (transition guerrière) to describe them.\(^\text{22}\) On examining this period, we may observe four distinct phases:

\begin{itemize}
  \item A transitional period characterised by war and crisis after independence (1991–95);
  \item A period of authoritarian nationalism and economic recovery (1996–98);
  \item A period of transitional democratisation (1998–2000); and
  \item A period of democratic consolidation and EU integration (2001–ongoing).\(^\text{23}\)
\end{itemize}

What is at stake in this last period is the Euro-Atlantic integration process and, above all, the effective transformation of the countries concerned into “truly” democratic states — and this requires more than just the “implementation” of EU requirements.

Aid versus development

In the war-torn SEE countries, the belated international political and military intervention and economic involvement had — during the immediate post-war years — positive consequences for the overall security in the aid-recipient states and in the region as a whole, but the long-term institutional and developmental consequences have often been negative. Indeed, while

the recommended economic policies had some positive effects that contributed to stability in the first post-war years, this was less so for development and growth in the region in the long run. According to Gligorov:

>[i]t is an open question whether the main reason was the lack of coherence between the aid effort that targeted mainly security and social stability with the transitional agenda that targeted institutional change and structural reform. 24

We may also ask whether these policies might first have been better adapted to the local context in order to address the political and economic specificities of the various transition phases, and to enhance country ownership. 25

The transition of Central and East European countries that joined the EU in 2004 demonstrates that the EU integration process favours trade, foreign investment, migration, development and institutional development. Already in 2005, the UN Economic Commission for Europe’s Economic Survey for Europe noted:

>[t]hat the realistic prospect of EU membership has been the single most important stimulus to the economic transformation of these countries. The preparation for accession to the EU defines a broad reform agenda with clearly specified goals and the means to achieve them, and establishes strong and clear incentives for policy makers. Moreover, the institutionalization of the policy commitments within a tight schedule of accession negotiations helps both to accelerate and provide direction to the reform process. 26

The cases of Romania and Bulgaria, who did not rely on aid, but had benefitted from the European anchor, also prove that EU integration speeds up the transformation process. Elsewhere in SEE, the essentially aid-based intervention turned out to be less efficient, especially in state-building and economic development. As Gligorov argues:

the main lesson is that the policy-making and policy-taking game is less effective and beneficial than that of integration and institutional development. 27

Subsequently, economic stability in SEE must be related more to the processes of EU integration and inter-regional cooperation, and less to the

25 It is obvious that country ownership was not a priority in the first post-war years at all.
27 Gligorov, Transition, Integration, and Development in Southeast Europe, p. 38.
classic process of development. Such an approach would contribute to avoiding the main shortcoming of international support policies highlighted by Žarko Papić et al.: partnership with local stakeholders related to implementation of support projects was not developed. Therefore, their ownership/responsibility is inadequately developed and their sustainability is weak.

The EU integration and the interregional cooperation processes can decisively contribute to the process of strengthening domestic capacities and fostering a policy of local ownership. Romania and Bulgaria’s EU integration also illustrates the impact of the transition and integration processes in the economic field: both countries have increased their global market integration, more so than have bilateral free trade agreements among SEE countries. This calls for reflection on the question of regional trade in a comprehensive manner.

The new multilateral CEFTA does indeed address the issue of subregional trade — the exports of the countries of the region to the region. But it must be noted that existing trade patterns suggest a low level of potential intraregional trade, given the small size of the regional market and the limited potential for specialisation: the reality is that with the EU as the main trade partner, the stimulus for further trade is smaller than that provided by the integration process itself. Thus, while CEFTA and now the RCC are working on creating a free trade area in SEE, it remains to be seen if it will also attract investments to further boost exports beyond the region. For the moment, the countries in the region sell to one another, especially Bosnia and Herzegovina and Kosovo, but tend to import from, rather than sell to, countries outside the region.

Nevertheless, by increasing cooperation, CEFTA/RCC could be instrumental in developing national economies as components of the regional market. This would strengthen regional stability and consequently help to attract investors. The second indirect effect is that of enhancing regional competitiveness: indeed, CEFTA/RCC (allowing the law of comparative advantage to work) could prepare the regional markets for international competition, first in Central and Eastern Europe, and second at the pan-European level. The added value of such an approach would also be to address the quality of foreign direct investment, and the issues of the

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large-scale privatisation transactions in telecommunications, banking and heavy industry. Indeed, it should be borne in mind that once the sell-off of state-owned large companies is completed, there is limited potential for attracting (for example) greenfield investments\(^\text{29}\) to the region in the existing environment.

Awareness of CEFTA’s potential, as well as its limits, is crucial for building a realistic and innovative approach to the challenges of the various national economies in the regional framework. Thus, CEFTA, but not CEFTA alone, could lead to an increase in intraregional trade and boost the economic development of the region. Therefore, embracing more than trade policy and the flow of aid, a policy enhancing inflows of capital and financial resources matters, as it develops a sound market economy and creates trade opportunities. Such an approach addresses the challenges of structural and development policy in SEE, two factors attracting foreign investments and conducive to market development.

While CEFTA and RCC are welcome, EU membership and the broad pan-European prospects will be more decisive, because they provide the impetus for much needed institution-building and structural reforms. If, however, EU integration remains a dim prospect, reforms — if they are not blocked — will lag behind, as can be observed in Bosnia and Herzegovina, Kosovo and, until recently, Serbia. Thus, the EU membership perspective and the pan-European framework must be seen as two intertwined conditions for successful development in SEE.

Fake versus effective implementation

As pointed out above, an understanding of the region’s dialectic of change and continuity, more specifically its main post-war economic problems, highlights the same set of factors. First, aid provided to SEE countries does not seem to have substantially improved their institutional transformation; second, the parallel presence of different international organisations and the lack of mechanisms for effective coordination among them have proved to be mostly counterproductive; and, third, the anchor of EU integration was — between 2005 and 2007 — seen to be somewhat shaky, serving paradoxically to block the reform process. The improved, albeit modest, growth performance in the early 2000s proves that the reform

\(^{29}\) So-called greenfield investments are direct investment in new facilities or the expansion of existing ones. Such investments are the primary target of a host nation’s promotional efforts, because they create new production capacity and jobs, transfer technology and know-how, and can lead to linkages to the global marketplace.
Sebastian Wallot

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policies had worked, but the limited institutional development must be addressed through structural reforms. The main problem is to implement them more consistently and to strengthen the state’s capacities for introducing additional reforms. These aspects characterise “reform fatigue”. Compared to Central European countries and other transition economies — Bulgaria, Romania and Slovenia — the duration of the transition process seems to be the main factor explaining the differences and delays.

These factors do not completely explain the specificity of the SEE transition process. One key aspect, directly related to the weak institutional framework, is too often forgotten, but nevertheless highly significant: the “unobserved” economy, comprising the informal economy, the underground economy and the illegal economy. These intertwined problems, related to the recent wars and their political economy, must be addressed simultaneously, otherwise the policies aimed at fighting corruption, curtailing the informal economy and combating trafficking will produce only limited outcomes. This means targeting the main figures of this emerging non-regulated economic space — which is a matter of concern to certain people, many of whom are close to the politico-military establishment, and have no interest in progress in institution- and state-building. Their interest lies in keeping the state weak and opposing the European integration process — more specifically, the adoption of certain standards. There is also the fact that these informal networks are, on the one hand, essentially regional, and, on the other hand, resistant to improved, controlled and formal regional cooperation. Thus, when speaking of enhanced regional cooperation, the issues of the unobserved economy and “shadow regionalism” must also be addressed.

As has been recognised by a number of outside experts, the recovery of the formal economy and the unobserved economy have been tackled separately by international involvement, the former through macroeconomic stabilisation, liberalisation and structural reforms; the latter through a plethora of national and regional initiatives aimed at introducing new legal frameworks, institutions and structures. But all this has had limited effect and proved to be insufficient to counteract the power of these informal networks. 30 This explains the lack of stability and consistently lowers the attractiveness of SEE’s markets for foreign investors. Many (if not most) EU and Council of Europe country reports insist on the lack of implementation of approved reforms corresponding to EU or Council of Europe

conditionalities. Structural factors and a lack of political will are mentioned as factors explaining the resistance to reform; experts insist on the “how” and neglect the other vital question: “Who” is supposed to agree on and implement the reforms? In the best cases, the absence of a middle class is mentioned, but “why” this is the case remains a mystery. Corruption is often mentioned, but an appropriate framework for how to deal with it is not provided. The following attempts to provide insights into this question.

From the early 1980s on, the main issue in SEE was the fate of the existing political and economic system. As the balance of forces was about to shift in favour of reformist forces who sought to reform existing structures, openly arguing for political and economic liberalisation, conservative forces used a strategy of tension and violence by which they could mobilise a conservative movement and impose a conservative leadership. The objective was, first, to maintain and consolidate control over existing structures of economic and political power, and, second, to control the changes in those structures. Thus, a conservative elite opposed the transition process — that of political and economic liberalisation — and manipulated the masses into violent conflicts by misusing the “ethnic card” and the discourse of ethnicity. As a result, violence and warfare, the least-favoured option among the wider population, came to be labelled “ethnic conflict” and to dominate and shape the post-Yugoslav space in the 1990s. But these wars were engineered by the conservative elites for their own purposes.

The paradox of the outcome of the recent Balkan wars was that the various peace agreements were shaped by the “international community” and by those local conservative elites precisely associated with the armed conflicts, or by specific conservative interests. Thus, instead of being defeated, conservatives consolidated their power and could pursue the capture of the states’ resources, using the time

31 For a comprehensive analysis of integrity and corruption in the post-war reconstruction process in Bosnia and Herzegovina, see Papić, Ninković and Čar, Integrity in Reconstruction.
33 This first section is informed by V. P. Gagnon, Jr., The Myth of Ethnic War: Serbia and Croatia in the 1990s (Ithaca & London: Cornell University Press, 2004).
34 The aim of the strategy of violence was to shift the focus of political discourse away from issues of change and thus to marginalise the proponents of fundamental changes; see Gagnon, The Myth of Ethnic War, pp. 180–181.
to shift their power from the resources that mattered in the old system [...] to the resources that matter in a capital market system — ownership of economically productive assets and of capital, and control over distribution networks.\(^{35}\)

As Ivan Krastev points out, state institutions were captured by these elites, delaying modernisation and state-building processes.\(^{36}\) Controlling the distribution of power and maintaining control of resources, they controlled the post-war transition to capitalism. As they no longer feel threatened by formal politics, ruling parties may change (as happened in Serbia, Croatia, and Bosnia and Herzegovina in 2000), but this does not affect the conservatives’ power. Even the European integration process may not undermine their influence.

Additionally, according to various indexes, SEE countries are often perceived (and, we may note, by their own citizens too) as being quite corrupt and failing to make progress in combatting corruption. For example: in 2016 Bosnia and Herzegovina is ranked at place 83 and, compared to 2012, has made almost no progress; the same applies to Kosovo, which ranks 95.\(^{37}\) The problem is that these indexes focus on “perception”, and thus amount to nothing more than opinions. The United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) report published in March 2008 tells something quite different. This report demonstrates, first, that the levels of crime against people and property are now lower in the Balkans than elsewhere in Europe — as the SEE countries strengthen their justice systems, the vicious circle of crime has been replaced by the virtuous circle of stability, decreasing crime. Second, there is still widespread and enduring collusion between politics, business, and organised crime. What is required, especially in Kosovo, is to break this nexus by fighting corruption, strengthening the rule of law and normalising the social and political conditions.\(^{38}\) This and similar reports deconstruct the stereotype of the Balkans as an ancestral hotbed of crime and demonstrate that open societies, open markets and open borders are the best way to fight crime and corruption in the Balkans. This also confirms the necessity to speed up the EU integration process and to upgrade the programmes targeting corruption and the growth of organised crime.


Thus, SEE did not experience the fate of Central European countries, especially those comprising the Visegrád Four, where the strategy of conflict was controlled, as in Poland, or rejected, as in Hungary. This is also explained by the fact that reforms there happened well before 1989. First, this enabled the conservative elites to adapt and find a position in the new society, becoming part of the new elite in a liberalised economic system; and, second, it enhanced cooperation between conservative and reformist elites. Thus, a national consensus, which is absent in most SEE countries, was constructed.

As Freedom House points out, public consensus on the need for belt-tightening during the approach to EU membership has now waned; reform fatigue and the erosion of the democratic consensus are also affecting Central Europe’s EU Member States. New populist currents are criticising the very consensus that, since 1989, has driven all the governments concerned, both on the right and the left, regarding adhesion to a market economy, the development of the rule of law, and membership of NATO and the EU. This illustrates how the social fabric of politics works: consensus is evolving, as new elites — bargaining on polarisation and populism — want their piece of the cake. The difference with SEE remains the same: in Central Europe, the strategy of violence was not chosen.

Against this background, new regional and international strategies must be designed formulating a coherent and comprehensive road map that addresses all aspects of the formal and unobserved economies. Economic consolidation and enhanced state legitimacy, supported by new stakeholders, may undermine the power of the “shadow economy”. A new leadership, aware of the necessity of rebuilding the social and political consensus behind the reforms, could contribute to overcoming what is apparently a ubiquitous lack of the implementation of reforms.

Going regional

As in other areas, Southeast Asia may be mentioned here again, since sub-regional institutions active in South-East Europe are related to post-war situations. We have already mentioned the leading role, now past, of Yugoslavia in the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM), an international move-

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ment that has since lost most of its credibility.\textsuperscript{40} The end of the Cold War ushered in the 1988 Summit of Foreign Ministers of SEE, a regional initiative renamed in 1996 as the South-East European Cooperation Process (SEECP) and, in 1989, the Central European Initiative (CEI), an initiative establishing a platform for mutual political, economic, scientific and cultural cooperation with a secretariat in Trieste,\textsuperscript{41} and the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC), a multilateral political and economic initiative, based in Istanbul since 1994.\textsuperscript{42} In 1995, after the Bosnian war, the European Council initiated the Royaumont Process to promote stability and good neighbourliness in SEE, while the United States initiated the Southeast European Cooperative Initiative (SECI) in December 1996, which encourages functional cooperation among the countries of the region in order to facilitate SEE’s EU integration.\textsuperscript{43} The Kosovo crisis and NATO intervention in 1999 led to the establishment on 10 June 1999 of the Stability Pact, whose ambition was to replace the previous, reactive

\textsuperscript{40} The concept of “non-alignment” was conceived by Indian Prime Minister Nehru in 1954. The first summit was held in Belgrade in 1961. The world’s “non-aligned” nations declared their desire not to become involved in the East–West ideological confrontation of the Cold War. The movement lost credibility in the late 1960s when it was seen by critics to have become dominated by States allied to the Soviet Union. The movement fractured from its own internal contradictions when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan in 1979. Post-Yugoslav republics have expressed little interest in the NAM since the country’s break-up.

\textsuperscript{41} The origin of the CEI lies in the agreement signed in Budapest on 11 November 1989 by Italy, Austria, Hungary and Yugoslavia establishing a platform for cooperation called Quadragonal Cooperation. In 1990, with the admission of Czechoslovakia, it became the Pentagonal Initiative, and in 1991, following the adhesion of Poland, it was renamed the Hexagonal Initiative. Following the dissolution of the former Yugoslavia, the Vienna Summit in 1992 admitted Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, and Slovenia and approved the renaming of the grouping as the CEI. Macedonia was admitted in 1993 at the Budapest Summit. In 1993 the Secretariat started operating at the EBRD in London. Information is available at: <www.ceinet.org> (Accessed on 24 August 2017).

\textsuperscript{42} BSEC member countries are Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, the Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine; seven EU countries, together with Croatia, Belarus, Egypt, Israel, Tunisia and the United States, are observers. Information is available at: <www.bsec-organization.org> (Accessed on 24 August 2017).

\textsuperscript{43} SECI was launched as an idea in Vienna in 1995; the aim is to focus on effective operational cooperation instead of political cooperation. SECI participating states include Albania, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Greece, Hungary, Moldova, Romania, Slovenia, Macedonia, Turkey and, as of December 2000, the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia — now the separate states of Serbia and Montenegro.
crisis-intervention policy in the region with a comprehensive, long-term conflict-prevention strategy, replaced in turn in 2008 by the Regional Co-operation Council (see Chapter 2.2).

The above list of sub-regional initiatives, far from being complete, represents the most prominent forums. There are obvious common features of these regional initiatives: the lists of objectives and membership generally overlap, their respective activities consist mostly of meetings, the budgets are small and cover infrastructure costs, there are only a limited number of implemented projects, and the overall output is modest. It is noteworthy that SEECP is the only original form of cooperation among the countries in the region launched on their own initiative (see Chapter 2.2). Thus, with the notable exceptions of SEECP and the RCC, the very notion of regional cooperation was part of post-conflict stabilisation efforts undertaken by the international community, and not a genuinely endogenous process. But the time when “regional cooperation” rhetoric was perceived as just “another sign of dependency — because it [was] not owned or promoted primarily by the region itself” is now over.

SEE seems much more open today to facing problems that can only be addressed on a regional basis. This includes attracting foreign investment, facing the energy-supply issue and fighting organised crime. Business people routinely cross borders and realise strategic partnerships; cultural productions from various parts of the region find audiences throughout the region; and artists and producers cooperate as if the wall of the recent past had never been there. This applies in a particular way to the former Yugoslavia: the anti-Yugoslav fixation appears to be increasingly outdated. At work here are forces linked to cultural proximity and affinity, as Tihomir Loza observes:

Yugoslavia was more than a state. Once it ceased to exist and as the causes of conflict among its constituent parts fade, things that the people of the region want to share irrespective of political arrangements among them become prominent.

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44 A typical list includes strengthening security and political cooperation; intensifying economic relations and cooperation in human resources, democracy, justice and the combating of organised crime; and, last but not least, facilitating the joining of European and Euro-Atlantic structures.
This new trend has nothing to do with “Yugonostalgia”, “because none of the ways in which Yugoslavia is really being recreated promises — or should I say threatens? — that the region will again be shaped into a single country”.  

As already highlighted, the above-mentioned sub-regional initiatives need careful recalibration and innovative thinking within a European landscape viewed as a complex network of governance, encompassing multiple territorial levels and actors.

First, regional, European and pan-European organisations must enhance coordination among themselves, especially when it comes to initiatives implemented in the region: pragmatism and efficiency are the keywords.

Second, in the framework of a “multi-level polity”, a new dynamic of interest must be instilled at four levels: among regions, states, the EU, and non-EU member states. At region-level, this means notably overcoming the remote strategy to “by-pass the state”, foster partnership-oriented decentralisation and subsidiarity mechanisms, and, last but not least, achieve a greater political and constitutional role in the region at EU- and at pan-European levels. Of course, sub-national representation and decision-making in Brussels matters. This mechanism, introduced by the Maastricht Treaty (1992), essentially targets the federal states (Germany, Belgium and Austria) but is of interest too for other countries such as Spain, France and Italy. Of course, at state level, each country has his country-specific provisions for a region level participation in European policy-making. The retroactive effect being that the state- and regional-levels of a country receive strong incentives to work together. This illustrates that also highly formalised EU-mechanisms may become a bit more flexible, even if not following the “ASEAN way”.

Third, as a method for how to implement the above-mentioned argument, flexible “multi-level governance” (MLG) has to be systematically introduced. Multi-level governance means delivering coordinated policies, actions and strategies by different stakeholders working in partnership. Thus, it stimulates joint ownership and shared responsibility between the different levels. This approach structures the way the EU’s Structural

48 Loza, “Yugoslavia: Rising from the Ashes.”
49 Keating presents some strategies, like Germany’s and the Belgian ones. See Keating, The New Regionalism in Western Europe, pp. 167–168.
Funds function, whose programmes of action are framed and administered by partnerships involving a Commissions representative, national governments, and representatives from the regions. It is crucial that such dynamics instil politics in SEE at the region level, thus increasing the role of both the local and regional levels. Mechanisms such as Germany’s “cooperative federalism” may give these levels more visibility and reshape the political space in SEE.

Finally, SEE countries must encompass the process of wider regional cooperation, thus including non-EU regions and countries in Eastern Europe, notably the Russian Federation, in the Caucasus, Central Asia and the Mediterranean basin. Such a broad regional network would be of interest at the political, economic and cultural levels.

Obviously, the European landscape at region level is far from being uniform: while Germany and Belgium have strong regions, in France they are rather institutionally weak and rivalled by cities and départements. In the UK, meanwhile, they are totally absent. Their respective relations with Brussels also differ considerably: while Belgium’s French Community and the Wallon region appointed an observer to the EU, Flanders did not; and in Germany, regional participation in EU matters has been integrated into domestic arrangements. It is still open which path the region level will take in SEE. Regions may well be as diverse as elsewhere in Europe; for example strong in Istria and Dalmatia (Croatia), Vojvodina (Serbia), and Northern Bosnia. We may also readily imagine that some political leaders dream of a delegation from their autonomous community in the country’s permanent representation — at is the case for Spain. However, as different as they will be, regions in SEE — as well as elsewhere in Europe — share the same key interests: effective collaboration in the inter-regional, transnational, and cross-border cooperation initiatives, design of multi-level partnership in the implementation of programmes, and interpretation and application of subsidiarity.

As we have seen, EU integration and the regional cooperation programmes represent a particularly strong source of outside interference for SEE countries. Against this background, first, the establishment of the RCC is sending out a strong signal: SEE countries are progressively shifting from passive policy tracking to a proactive policy-making approach. This locally owned regional cooperation process should be strengthened, completed by a multi-layered policy involving the region level, and pro-

51 Three out of six objectives of the Structural Funds are regional in nature. See European Structural and Investment Funds 2014–2020: Official Texts and Commentaries (Brussels: EU Publications Office, 2015).
progressively integrated into a broader pan-European framework — CoE and UNECE being instrumental. Second, the region level matters, and it will not overrun the state system. In a new world order, a new territorial politics is emerging, and regions will play a more significant role in economy, society and politics. This is the subject of our concluding Part.
Part 3
Thinking, Venturing Beyond
Rethinking the New World Order

The “crisis of European existence”, talked about so much today and documented in innumerable symptoms of the breakdown of life, is not an obscure fate, an impenetrable destiny; rather, it becomes understandable and transparent against the background of the teleology of European history that can be discovered philosophically. The condition for this understanding, however, is that the phenomenon “Europe” be grasped in its central, essential nucleus. In order to be able to comprehend the disarray of the present “crisis”, we had to work out the concept of Europe as the historical teleology of the infinite goals of reason; we had to show how the European “world” was born out of ideas of reason, i.e., out of the spirit of philosophy. The “crisis” could then become distinguishable as the apparent failure of rationalism. The reason for the failure of a rational culture, however, as we said, lies not in the essence of rationalism itself but solely in its being rendered superficial, in its entanglement in “naturalism” and “objectivism”.

There are only two escapes from the crisis of European existence: the downfall of Europe in its estrangement from its own rational sense of life, its fall into hostility toward the spirit and into barbarity; or the rebirth of Europe from the spirit of philosophy through a heroism of reason that overcomes naturalism once and for all. Europe’s greatest danger is weariness. If we struggle against this greatest of all dangers as “good Europeans” with the sort of courage that does not fear even an infinite struggle, then out of the destructive blaze of lack of faith, the smouldering fire of despair over the West’s mission for humanity, the ashes of great weariness, will rise up the phoenix of a new life-inwardness and spiritualization as the pledge of a great and distant future for man: for the spirit alone is immortal.


Ideas matter. Today more than yesterday: “Thinking means venturing beyond”.¹ This is not a mere principle of hope, but a necessity in order to shift one’s world-view. Confronted with a new world order, most scholars are still referring to out-dated schemes. Some think we should go back to the multipolar European system of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, others are nostalgic for the Cold War’s bipolarity or unipolarity under the Bush administration. In search of lost time and hegemons, they overlook

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the fact that the twenty-first century belongs to no one.\textsuperscript{2} As a matter of fact, the world is facing a truly new Copernican revolution.

Rethinking integration and territorial processes within an emerging world order, this chapter moves resolutely beyond South East Europe and the EU. In the previous chapters we observed that regional cooperation initiatives show cultural, contextual, and time sensitivities. They evolve, change, adjust, develop, and sometimes even disappear. Earlier, old, new and comparative regionalisms represent a way to capture the fluidity and history of regions (see Table 2, p. 23).

\section*{A New Copernican Revolution}

We are already living in a new world order, facing a fresh Copernican revolution: we now live in a less USA- and Euro-centred global system, and more in a multipolar world with enhanced mobility, diverse political cultures, higher heterogeneity and porous boundaries.\textsuperscript{3}

Forthcoming major economic trends give an idea of the global turn. The 2012 published OECD report \textit{Looking to 2060} highlights major changes in the relative size of world economies:

\begin{itemize}
  \item Growth of the non-OECD G20 countries will continue to outpace OECD countries
  \item Fast growth in China and India will make their combined GDP measured at 2005 Purchasing Power Parities (PPPs), soon surpass that of the G7 economies and exceed that of the entire current OECD membership by 2060.
  \item The faster growth rates of China and India imply that their combined GDP will exceed that of the major seven (G7) OECD economies by around 2025 and by 2060 it will be more than 1 1/2 times larger, whereas in 2010 China and India accounted for less than one half of G7 GDP.\textsuperscript{4}
\end{itemize}

Goldman Sachs and World Bank reports predict similar results, notably that in the coming years, the BRICS (Brazil, Russia, India, China, and South Africa) economies will surpass the USA and the G-6.\textsuperscript{5} The long run of the West’s material and ideological hegemony appears to be coming to an end.

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If we want to encompass the magnitude of changes depicting the emerging new world order, we have to pay attention to other blurred and porous boundaries: between social reality and science fiction, between human and animal, between human and machine. Donna Haraway’s cyborg myth “is about transgressed boundaries, potent fusions, and dangerous possibilities which progressive people might explore as one part of needed political work”. Haraway’s approach matters inasmuch she intends to overcome the domination paradigm:

From one perspective, a cyborg world is about the final imposition of a grid of control on the planet, about the final abstraction embodied in a Star War apocalypse waged in the name of defense, about the final appropriation of women’s bodies in a masculinist orgy of war. From another perspective, a cyborg world might be about lived social and bodily realities in which people are not afraid of their joint kinship with animals and machines, not afraid of permanently partial identities and contradictory standpoints. The political struggle is to see from both perspectives at once because each reveals both dominations and possibilities unimaginable from the other vantage point. Single vision produces worse illusions than double vision or many-headed monsters.

The fading away of the old world order and the emergence of a new one makes these “single visions” obsolete. We face a “profusion of spaces and identities, and the permeability of boundaries in the personal body and in the body politic”.

As for the latter, “the biggest, most basic questions of world politics are now open for debate”. Even more so, we are additionally confronted with a multiplicity of narratives and new players: China on the rise, Russia recovering, India and Brazil, and others, emerging. Strikingly, this applies also to non-state actors — Viva Rio from Brazil and Building Resources Across Communities (BRAC) based in Bangladesh (to name but a few) already compete with Bill Gates, Richard Branson, CARE and Médecins sans frontières. This implies a diversity of purposes as well as a different distribution of power — meanwhile empirical studies in regionalism are confirming the power shift from North to South and West to East.

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Peter Katzenstein says: “global politics will be polycentric, and plural in substance”.\textsuperscript{11} Accordingly, it would be out-dated to reload the nineteenth-century multi-polar world version. Multilateralism — often only a way to legitimate unilateral decisions — is passé and might well be reshaped as “regional multilateralism”. As for unipolarity and hegemony, they don’t ring true anymore, but heterogeneity does. According to Charles Kupchan, the consequence is that:

liberal democrats will have to share the stage with leaders of quite different stripes. Autocrats, theocrats, strongmen, and populists will all play a role in ensuring that liberal democracy is only one of the multiple variants of political order that will populate the next international system.\textsuperscript{12}

In the Middle East, Africa and Latin America — regions long dominated by outside (colonial) power — the legacy of top-down rule still impacts politics, and religion and ethnicity still and always provide the strongest political base. In the Middle East and in Africa, few countries might transition to democracy, some in substance, others only in form, but many surely not. Democratic activists and foreign donors are able to challenge neither autocrats in Russia and China, nor theocrats in the Middle East, nor even populists in Latin America and strongman politics in Africa.

Furthermore, heterogeneity is augmented by the fact that democratic countries do not ally with one other as a matter of course, as illustrated by India and Brazil, not to mention Turkey — all of which are countries that do not follow the West’s lead. Each of these countries thus forges its own version of modernity, and many different regime types will coexist. Consequently, this global dissensus elucidates why the leading and emerging powers — with the exception of China — hardly envision, let alone understand, the rules of the new world order. This brings Kupchan to state:

The next world will not march to the Washington Consensus, the Beijing Consensus, or the Brasilia Consensus. It will march to no consensus. Rather, the world is headed toward a global dissensus.

[...] What comes next will not be the Chinese century, the Asian century, or anyone else’s century. Rather, no one’s world will exhibit striking diversity; alternative conceptions of domestic and international order will compete and coexist on the


\textsuperscript{12} Kupchan, \textit{No One’s World}, p. 91.
The next world will hardly be the first one in which different great powers operate according to different conceptions of order. But, due to the onset of global interdependence, it will be the first time that such a diverse set of order intensively and continuously interact with each other. But it would be misleading to think here only in terms of political power, distribution of power, international power games, etc. The coexistence of a multiple centre of power, of manifold conceptions of modernity, and of diverse fundamental principles structuring the new world order will be key. Thus, the script behind the emerging global landscape matters a great deal.

Visualising the New World Order

Weber and Jentleson suggest repeatedly that “a global competition of ideas [...] within a market place of ideas” characterises the twenty-first-century as a “new age of ideology”. But ideology — using Mannheim’s definition — is a mode of thought that obscures the real condition of society, thereby stabilizing the shared social reality. Accordingly, we may have some doubts about the relevance of Weber and Jentleson’s viewpoint that may well deliver merely “reproductive imagination”. Paul Ricœur’s approach might help to avoid the trap. Relying on Mannheim’s seminal work, he reconnects ideology and utopia in a single conceptual framework driving toward the development of “productive imagination.”

We only take possession of the creative power of imagination through a relation to such figures of false consciousness ideology and utopia. It is as though we have to call upon the “healthy” function of ideology to cure the madness of utopia and as though the critique of ideologies can only be carried out by a conscience capable of regarding itself from the point of view of “nowhere”.

Thus, utopia empowers a critique of ideology: ideology provides common values and images, while utopia challenges those common values with

13 Kupchan, No One’s World, respectively p. 145 and pp. 183–184.
14 Weber and Jentleson, The End of Arrogance, respectively pp. 12, 40, 46, 48, 49, 51, 52, 62 and 195; and, for the new age of ideology: p. 6, 15, 16 and 19.
new, imaginative alternatives. Ricœur’s philosophy does not consider images, but rather language as the way to access images. Language, especially metaphors, produces productive imagination, unfolds new dimensions of reality, and opens the way to the possible, including the anticipation of action. This was a viewpoint formulated initially by Ernst Bloch who also viewed metaphors as the royal road to capture the "not yet conscious".

Symptomatically, in order to envision the new world order, both François Archer and Amitav Acharya have recourse to a metaphor. They first coined the idea of a “hypertext society” (see the introductory Chapter “Bridging the Gap”), while the latter introduced the notion of a “multiplex world”. The “multiplex cinema” metaphor stands for a “multiplex world” characterised by the following main features:

- In a multiplex world, the making and management of order is more diversified and decentralized, with the involvement of established and emerging powers, states, global and regional bodies, and transnational non-state actors.
- A multiplex world would be a world of diversity and complexity, a decentralized architecture of order management, featuring old and new powers, with a greater role for regional governance.
- A multiplex order is the political order of a culturally diverse world that rests on political and economic interconnectedness, as well as institutional arrangements, relying not on the power or purpose of a single actor or mechanism, but of a range of actors.  

Acharya’s viewpoint, closely related to “new regionalism”, bridges international relations studies and regionalism. The multiplex world order he describes is consistent with the regional world’s approach (regionalism): “Instead of a singular, traditional notion of universality, the idea of regional worlds speaks to a pluralist conception of global order”. Acharya concentrates on “the informal, non-hegemonic, comprehensive and multidimensional nature of newly emerging regional interactions and processes”, and on the prospects of progress towards sovereignty-freeing regionalism. More specifically, he highlights, first, that region-building is not dominated by a single power and, second, that emerging powers — in the past branded as the “Third World”, or the “South” — get successfully

involved in regional multilateral institutions adapted to their own specific goals and identities.

Accordingly, Acharya suggests rethinking regionalism. Against the background of the new global context, regionalism might potentially deliver a relevant “world order concept”. Various scholars might confirm this possibly. In his seminal work published in 1994, Björn Hettne reflected on the linkage between regionalism and context, as well as on the script of a post-hegemonic world. Hettne considers three scenarios: the first, interdependence based on multilateralism; the second, a USA-, EU- and Japan-based trilateralism; and, the third, a regionalisation of the world — the region emerging as an actor and spokesperson for the constituent states. Even if today we would rule out the two first scenarios, it is worth mentioning that Hettne insisted that: “no scenario has the monopoly on the future”.  

In the meantime, various scholars have confirmed that regions have become central to the understanding of world politics. Eve Hepburn reminds us that the rise of the regions relates to the European integration that “opened up new possibilities to pursue territorial interests that were once ‘closed’ by the expansion of the nation-state […]. Regions now operate within a post-sovereign or ‘post-Westphalian’ order in which authority is dispersed”. Regions have thus gained a new political role in federalising and regionalising states. As highlighted in Chapter 2.1, similar understandings — typically belonging to the “new regionalism approach” — need to be supplemented with perspectives such as “regional worlds” ideas, interregionalism and “comparative regionalism” which consider regionalism in the framework of a comparativist perspective encompassing region-building in other areas. Regionalism beyond EU-centrism is a must-approach.  

Accordingly, Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver suggest that, “it is now possible to begin more systematically to conceptualise a global world order


22 Thus region-to-region relations, for example EU and ASEAN. Inter-regionalism often means institutionalised inter-regional relations. See Heiner Hängi, Ralf Roloff and Jürgen Rüland (eds.), Interregionalism and International Relations (London: Routledge, 2006), p. 3

of strong regions”.24 Based on detailed studies, Peter J. Katzenstein argues that open and porous regions have become central to contemporary world politics and suggests that they may also provide solutions to the contradictions between states and markets, security and insecurity, nationalism and cosmopolitanism.25 Viewing regionalism as a driving force of world politics and as a dominating trend in today’s International Relations studies, Rick Fawn finds that “regions are now everywhere across the globe and are increasingly fundamental to the functioning of all aspects of world affairs from trade to conflict management, and can even be said to now constitute world order”.26

Rethinking regionalism in a constructivist and reflectivist way, Söderbaum, the authoritative writer on regionalism, states: “regionalism has become a structural component of global politics, deepening and expanding into an increasing number of policy fields”.27 Applying the institutional design theory to the analysis of comparative regionalism, Acharya and Johnston consider regional institutions as an increasingly prominent feature of world politics. Notably, “their characteristics and performance vary widely: some are highly legalistic and bureaucratic, while others are informal and flexible. They also differ in terms of inclusiveness, decision-making rules and commitment to the non-interference principle”.28

Likewise, intergovernmental organisations and politicians are starting to share this standpoint: viewing regionalism as a dimension or even an alternative to the Great Power concert. For the first, the UN, especially since the 1992 Agenda for Peace, involves regional organisations in its high-level meetings — for instance in the field of security matters. The World Trade Organisation (WTO), for its part, has also acknowledged the necessity of considering the role of regionalism positively — albeit subordinating regionalism to the WTO’s multilateralism. For the latter, we may think of Guy Verhofstadt who, then President of the European Council and Belgian Prime Minister, made public in an open letter the idea of replacing the current “G-8 of rich countries […] by a G-8 of existing re-

24 Barry Buzan and Ole Wæver, Regions and Powers: The Structure of International Security (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), p. 20 — the italics are the authors’.
26 Rick Fawn (ed.), Globalising the Regional, Regionalising the Global (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), from the book’s synopsis.
28 Acharya and Johnston (eds.), Crafting Cooperation, back-cover text.
Rethinking the New World Order

But it would be misleading to overemphasise the argument. While taking regionalism seriously, as a “building block of world order”, Acharya introduces a welcome nuanced approach:

Thanks to interregionalism, the rise of alternative non-European forms of regionalism, and the proliferation of transnational issues that regional groups must contend with, regionalism has become more open, inclusive, and multidimensional. While regionalism alone is not a sufficient basis for constructing global order, it cannot be ignored in any meaningful discussion of the future of world politics and deserves serious attention in any discussion of what might take the place of the American World Order.

Acharya illustrates once more the added value of the complementary approach: both/and instead of either/or.

At first glance we might think that this would be an approach shared by the UN. Indeed, Secretary-General Kofi Annan envisioned that, “the United Nations and regional organizations should [...] play complementary roles in facing the challenges to peace and security”. Nevertheless, the UN narrative intends to secure the primacy of the UN and its Charter. The rationale being that the UN agenda would be the only foundation for a rules-based world order. Ramesh Thakur questions whether the UN would be able to shape a new world order: he thinks in terms of proximity and views regionalism as an alternative that might possibly complement traditional multilateralism. Nevertheless, such a complementary approach might be difficult to formulate in practical terms, too, since the UN- and other multilateral approaches, as well as regional modes of governance, tend to follow different logics.

Avoiding linear thinking, Söderbaum considers that the above-mentioned approaches are still reliant on an abstract hierarchical order (structuring the global, regional and national levels). Significantly, the UN approach fails to understand that the “strengthened regional arrangements get their mandate not only ‘from above’ (from the UN), but also ‘from within’”. Accordingly, Söderbaum attempts to overcome binary thinking

33 Söderbaum, Rethinking Regionalism, p. 200.
Thinking, Venturing Beyond

(global versus local, global versus regional, multilateralism versus bilateralism), and to formulate a “regional multilateralism”, arguing that:

states and global organizations are being locked progressively into a larger regional and interregional framework, in which “regions” become the increasingly relevant scales and even actors in the global security architecture.34

Considering that regional formations, actually for the most part interregional institutions, are still “under construction” — which, incidentally, is an argument also mentioned by Söderbaum —, the time may not yet be ripe for regional multilateralism. While we may question whether regionalism would be the next paradigm, we may say that it will certainly play a role in it. Some case studies will further sustain this argument.

Another BRIC(k) in The Wall

The inter-regional BRIC/SAM, which is by no means homogeneous but small and compact, consisting on the one hand of Brazil, Russia, India and China and, on the other hand, of South Africa and Mexico35, illustrates the dynamism and fluidity of inter-regionalism.36 These countries have developed a form of collective identity, and combined a wide number of formalised interstate institutional links (with other regions) through socio-cultural, economic and political informal linkages. They have managed to sustain considerable economic growth in the past years, and have played a crucial role in the world economy in terms of total production, investment capital destination and as potential consumer markets. In particular, they are expected to provide most of the world’s economic growth and to become hubs of R&D for leading multinationals. Last but not least, they are all members of the 1999-established G-20, with growing influence in the grouping. Antkiewicz and Cooper observe that their increasing political weight is “going beyond geographical proximity and traditional forms

34 Söderbaum, Ibidem.
35 The IBSA Commission, a formal state-based structure, here plays a pivotal role in the field of trade but also in the field of social-political issues. Moreover, it is becoming increasingly active in formulating a joint vision of global governance.
of international and regional cooperation”. Furthermore, BRIC/SAM’s specificity and strength need to be acknowledged:

The grouping permeates the public domain not as a formal institution or organisation created in response to a specific need or threat (like the EU or NATO); rather, it is an informal entity fluidly going from working towards the same goal (IMF reforms) or competing with each other (investment).

Thus, the new world order is not only made by a “competition of ideas” as stressed by Weber and Jentleson. For the IBSA Commission, enhancing interregional partnership, fostering a common public space, and strengthening mutual understanding, are also at stake. As a matter of fact, they may be efficiently enacted not only in “the West”.

The “BRICS Long Term Strategy” document delivers additional confirmation. The emphasis lies clearly on proactive policies intended not only to strengthen economic relationships among themselves but also to influence the international scenario:

- In terms of economic cooperation and growth, BRICS countries should fully participate in the formulation of international financial standards and rules, make the best use of international financial reforming achievements and implement international standards to achieve internal reforms and to improve their own robust financial standards.

- To be able to achieve these goals, BRICS countries consider two conditions to be fundamental: reform of the governance of multilateral institutions, and the establishment of international peace and security.

- BRICS countries shall continue their efforts to promote changes in the voting rights at the IMF and the World Bank. They must also insist on the reform of the United Nations, including the Security Council. These measures are needed to reflect the new economic power of emerging economies.

Furthermore, the final declaration of the sixth BRICS summit in Fortaleza (July 2014) insists on a focus — promoting cooperation for economic growth and development — that is entirely consistent with the UN’s policy priorities mentioned in the 2013 published report *A New Global Partnership: Eradicate Poverty and Transform Economies Through Sustainable Development*.

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38 Antkiewicz and Cooper, *Ibidem*.
As is well known, two BRIC members are very active in South Eastern Europe: Russia and China. Their presence is sometimes perceived as intrusive or even as compromising SEE’s EU integration process. We might think we are faced with a typical situation of “system disruption”. From this viewpoint, it would be important to strengthen the integration process and to make it more robust and resistant to “directed disruption”. But we may ask whether this approach is really the correct one. I don’t think so, inasmuch it remains part of the world order of the previous century, subservient to the domination paradigm, rebranded now as “competition”. Such a viewpoint is per se unable to envision a pluralist conception of global order, incapable of thinking in terms of flexible ideas and approaches shared among various actors. As pinpointed by Acharya:

Asia’s regionalism is much more consistent with the new regionalism and regional world perspective, and is marked by a near absence of supranational institutions like the European Commission or the European Court of Justice.  

The China Dream

While China’s responsible and constructive approach to various Asian regional bodies is often overlooked, its assertive presence in South East Europe, as well as worldwide — notably through the Silk Road Economic Belt, recently renamed “One Belt, One Road” (OBOR) — has been making the headlines. At the economic level, China is the fastest growing economy in the current decade. Between 1978 and 2009, the Chinese economy grew at an average annual rate of 9.9 per cent, and is about to become the largest economy in the world. Notably: by 2010, three of China’s largest funds had approximately USD 780 billion in assets in sovereign wealth funds (SWFs).

As a matter of fact, China’s proactive policy needs to be not only acknowledged but also understood and accepted.  

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40 Acharya, The End of American World Order, p. 94. See the author’s excellent comparison between Asia’s and Europe’s approach to regionalism, pp. 94–101.
41 The highly networked Silk Road initiatives grew into a dominant representation for China’s foreign policy practices, for regional neighbourhood relations, as well as for some domestic issues. See Nadine Godehardt, No End of History: A Chinese Alternative Concept of International Order? Berlin: SWP Research Paper, (2016).
42 Discussing Habermas’ communication model, the Chinese philosopher Zhao Tungyang distinguishes comprehension from acceptation. Rational communication à la Habermas targets only the former. See Zhao Tungyang, “La philosophie du tianxia,” Diogène, (2008) 1, p. 23.
fore, to have some insight into one major ancient political approach that is still omnipresent in China and frames the Chinese world order. The Tianxia (All-under-Heaven) philosophical approach goes back to the Zhou dynasty (from 1046 until 771 BC). Here are its four key elements:

(1) Non-exclusion: or the “‘exclusion of nothing and nobody’ or the ‘inclusion of all peoples and all lands’”; (2) World Institution: “the Zhou Dynasty chose the world, and not the state, as the starting point for political thinking”; (3) democracy at international level: domestic democracy without international democracy might lead to imperialist hegemony. “[A]n institution is good if and only if it can be applied on all political levels, from the most basic to the highest, and from local to worldwide dimensions, thereby leading to a universal political system”; and (4) harmony versus sameness: Harmony is “usually defined as reciprocal dependence, reciprocal improvement or the perfect fitting for different things, as opposed to the sameness of things.”

By mentioning “harmonious but different” countries, or “harmony without uniformity”, we may have the impression of facing a synthesis of the “comparative regionalism” that delivers the main feature of a post-hegemonic world order.

Rethinking Tianxia, the Chinese philosopher Zhao Tingyang develops a contemporary political theory of “worldness” as well as a Chinese theory, picture and understanding of the world:

[…] the most important political problem today is not the so-called “failed states” but the failed world, a disordered world of chaos. This is why I maintain that our world is not yet a world, but is still a non-world. […] International theory in the framework of internationality finds its limitation in dealing with world problems, the common or shared problems of the world. World-ness cannot be reduced to internationality, for it is of the wholeness or totality rather than the between-ness. Our globe needs a world theory, rather than an international theory, to speak for the world. And the theory of All-under-Heaven as a world theory could provide a better view for political philosophy and political science.44

Interestingly, Tingyang connects the Tianxia to the ancient Greek Agora, both being viewed as key intertwined concepts — though they both need to be updated in order to fit to today’s world.45 Thus, Greek and Chinese traditions meet in harmony. Instead of competition, the Chinese mind-set

thinks in terms of compatibility and relational rationality. China is neither a menace nor an alternative, but a partner that wishes that its dream may become a world dream.\textsuperscript{46}

\textbf{Rethinking Regionalism Away from “Western Values”?}

Despite the EU-centred and -led integration and regional cooperation processes (discussed in the previous chapters), both the EU and the Council of Europe should have learned lessons from their respective interregional programmes and seen that, in regionalism, “lead” has to be replaced by “participate”, and, in politics “dominance” by “influence”. When compared with region-building elsewhere, notably in Asia, it is clear “that the EU does not hold the monopoly over successful pathways to regionalism and regional order-building”.\textsuperscript{47} Meanwhile, away from “Western values”, many emergent powers have made a different political choice and are delivering an alternative governance message — emphasising, for example, order, sovereignty, non-interference and progress — which is seen as legitimate by their people. They are no longer willing to be “norm-takers”; they want to become “norm-makers”. This shift traces back to the experience, as already mentioned, to the era of “old regionalism”, of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM) that imposed norms such as non-intervention and equality of states. More recently, these countries, at some distance from traditional-oriented values, have introduced the progressive norm of “common but differentiated responsibility” as a global climate change strategy. The evolution of the Responsibility to Protect provides an additional example for an open-minded setting (see below).

While their normative framework often reflects domestic political conditions and tradition (see the China case mentioned above), Acharya calls for a more updated assessment:

There have been some recent developments indicating that the normative gap between the established and emerging powers over sovereignty and non-intervention may be narrowing. While China and Russia adopt a much more cautious attitude toward such interventions, South Africa and Nigeria have led the way in turning Africa’s staunching non-interventionist stance to one that has allowed a number of collective interventions, including humanitarian interventions. While their dilution of non-intervention should not be overstated, the developing coun-


\textsuperscript{47} Acharya, \textit{The End of American World Order}, p. 100.
tries, including the emerging powers, are showing signs of being more interested and involved in rule-making, as well as contributing to some of the newer and more progressive norms of world order. The evolution of the Responsibility to Protect (R2P) is a case in point. It is not well known that many African diplomats and political leaders were not only sympathetic to the R2P idea, but played a role in its development.\(^{48}\)

Additionally, it is worth mentioning the often discounted fact that countries from Latin American, Eastern Europe, as well as China and India, are successfully active in many interregional programmes or intergovernmental bodies (like the G-20), as well as in the key international financial institutions of the post-war global economic order.

Eric Helleiner’s 2014 book on international development and the making of the post-war order reframes how most of the scholars viewed Bretton Woods.\(^{49}\) Based on primary sources such as the transcripts of the Bretton Woods conference, he recalls that thirty-two of the forty-four delegations at Bretton Woods were from what we would now call emerging markets. In spite of an obvious asymmetry of power and the fact that they did not form a united front, these countries significantly influenced the outcome of the negotiations.\(^{50}\)

China, Japan and India illustrate how many emerging countries may have major stakes in the emerging new world order, and how deeply they are involved in regional and global multilateral structures. Of course, this must overshadow neither their differences — which will of course contribute to increasing the diversity of the emerging world order — nor their conflicts (as is the case at the time of writing between China and India).

The question is, on the one hand, whether these countries, as norm-makers, want to export their own — often, but not exclusively, more traditional and hierarchical-driven — values and institutions, which might limit their influence and ability to shape the new world order. Or, on the other hand, whether, as partners, they are receptive to new ones, and thus be willing to reduce the normative gap and gain influence — as the above-mentioned examples tend to prove.


\(^{49}\) The IMF and the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development (nowadays the World bank) were established at the 1944 Bretton Woods conference.

Without doubt, the emerging landscape is as complex as it is fluid, and the time is ripe to introduce a change of civilisation.\textsuperscript{51} But how is the on-going transition to be managed peacefully? Some might be sceptical about the capacity of emerging powers to follow the Western path to modernity, others about the West’s ability to work out a consensus with emerging powers on foundational principles and rules.

As mentioned, the post-hegemonic world order, as well as regionalism, introduce, instead of a singular dominance and a centralised model of cooperation, a variety of actors and cross-cutting drivers as well as diverse political cultures and competing conceptions of international order. Consequently, the new world order’s key principles will have to be discussed and negotiated. Multiple versions of modernity and politics will enter into a decisive dialogue that must lead toward greater international cooperation and forge a pluralistic order.

Of course, sharing decision-making power is easier to achieve at regional level than at state- or at global-levels. But this argument does not face up to the fact that these levels are mostly intertwined. Thus, the relationship between subnational, national, regional, interregional and global levels must be reconceptualised. As Fredrik Söderbaum argues:

\begin{quote}
with the political and institutional landscape in transformation, there is a need to think in terms of a more complex, multiscalar approach to government and governance, in which the state is reorganized and assumes different functions and where non-state actors also contribute.\textsuperscript{52}
\end{quote}

Furthermore, since the Westphalian order is \textit{passé} and global governance is not working, Söderbaum suggests that discerning the pluralism of governance structures, that is, regional and multi-layered governance,\textsuperscript{53} may help to avoid the trap between the local and the global.

The emergent world order will increasingly involve multiple stakeholders who are eager to have a greater say. Close to François Ascher’s concept of “commutative solidarity” (see p. 24), the common-sense notion of “mutuality”, introduced by Weber and Jentleson, helps us to rethink the

\textsuperscript{51} See Edgar Morin, \textit{Le temps est venu de changer de civilisation} (La Tour d’Aigues: Editions de l’Aube, 2017).
\textsuperscript{52} Söderbaum, \textit{Rethinking Regionalism}, p. 195. See Chapter 2.1.
\textsuperscript{53} Regional governance is conceived “as spheres of authority at regional level of human activity, which amounts to systems of rule — formal or informal, public or private — in which goals are pursued through the exercise of control”. Söderbaum, \textit{Rethinking Regionalism}, p. 197.
subtle process of negotiation, diplomacy and persuasion; the idea being that politicians use their authority and power for shared rather than self-interested concerns.\textsuperscript{54} The authors mention some convincing examples, such as Carbon capture and sequestration (CCS) which might well apply to other sensitive issues such as intellectual property-intensive sectors (pharmaceutical and agricultural genetics). As for Weber and Jentleson, the “leadership proposition” consists

in the contribution to shared interests that one makes by distributing the technology widely and in such a way that the knowledge gained in practice from using it in diverse circumstances gets cycled back into the system for the benefit of all. And, of course, in the meaningful contribution to carbon reduction and climate change mitigation that would also benefit everyone.\textsuperscript{55}

This is one element of the much needed toolbox to build convergence, a middle ground between the established and emerging powers. Regionalism additionally offers a set of values and strategies: flexibility, autonomy, openness, inclusiveness and interactivity that fit well to the new landscape.

As diverse as different nations are, dialogue and consensus on fundamental values may be shared. Tingyang provided an example intertwining the \textit{Tianxia} and the ancient Greek \textit{Agora}. This brings us back to Europe’s root, to ancient Athens and its lesson which has still not been learned.\textsuperscript{56} Edmund Husserl’s famous Vienna lecture from 1935 might deliver a welcome reminder here — and the reader should feel free hereafter to replace “Europe” with “new world order”:

We can also see how, starting from this [the transformation of human existence and all its cultural life], a supranationality of a completely new sort could arise. I am referring, of course, to the spiritual shape of Europe. Now it is no longer a conglomeration of different nations influencing one another only through commerce and power struggles. Rather, a new spirit, stemming from philosophy and its particular sciences, a spirit of free critique and norm-giving aimed at infinite tasks, dominates humanity through and through, creating new, infinite ideals.\textsuperscript{57}


\textsuperscript{55} Weber and Jentleson, \textit{The End of Arrogance}, p. 143.

\textsuperscript{56} The documenta 14 (2017) had precisely the timely motto “Learning from Athens”.

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