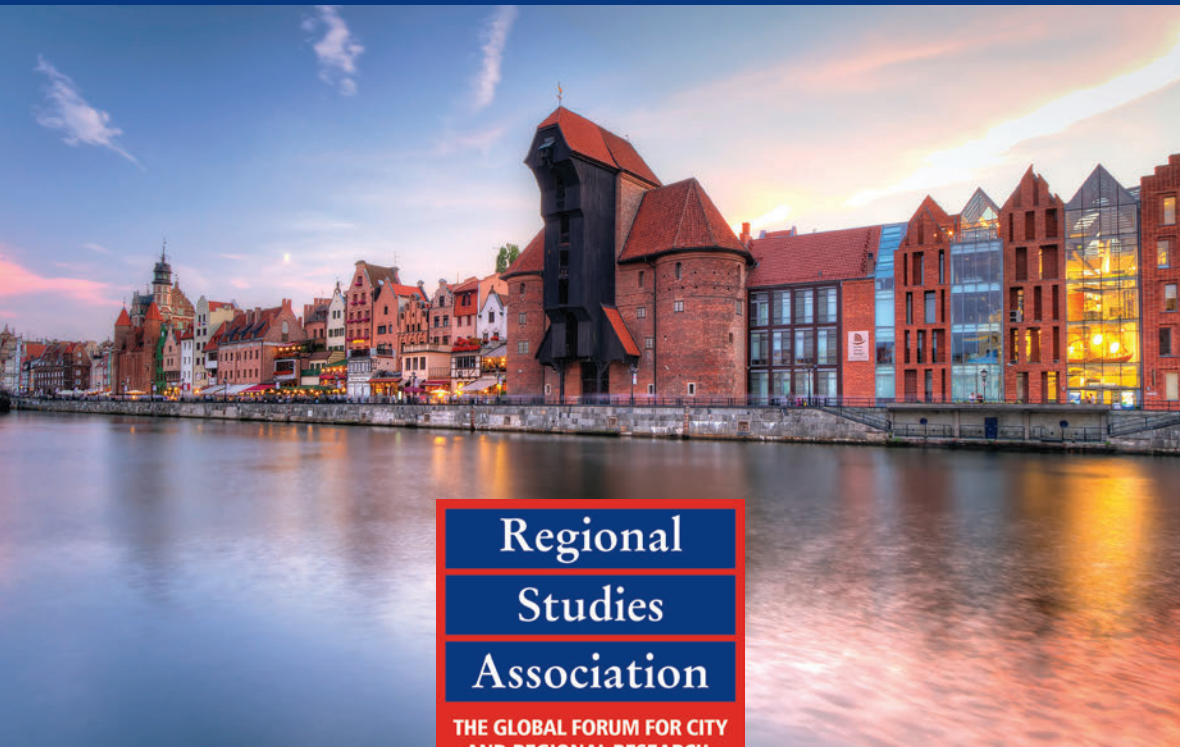


# EUROPE'S CHANGING GEOGRAPHY

THE IMPACT OF INTER-REGIONAL NETWORKS



Regional  
Studies  
Association

THE GLOBAL FORUM FOR CITY  
AND REGIONAL RESEARCH,  
DEVELOPMENT AND POLICY

REGIONS AND CITIES

EDITED BY NICOLA BELLINI  
AND ULRICH HILPERT

# Europe's Changing Geography

European macro-regions, Euroregions and other forms of inter-regional, cross-border cooperation have helped to shape new scenarios and new relational spaces which may generate opportunities for economic development, while redefining the political and economic meaning of national borders. This book is based on a number of key case studies which are crucial to understanding the complex web of political, economic and cultural factors that shape the heterogeneous picture of Europe's new geography.

This book provides a fresh view on this phenomenon, with a realistic approach shedding light on its complexity as well as on its ambiguities. The new macro-regions are interpreted with an approach recognizing the importance of institutionalization, but also their flexible configuration and 'blurred' borders. The book also raises the issue of credibility and legitimacy, arguing that inter-regional cooperation has to be removed from the foggy realm of the exchanges between local political and bureaucratic elites in order to be clearly and concretely motivated, and functional to key strategic objectives of the regions. Finally, the authors suggest a complementarity between relations based on proximity and wider (possibly global) networks where some territories, and especially metropolises, find opportunities based on 'virtual' proximity.

*Europe's Changing Geography* provides a substantial re-appraisal of a key phenomenon in the process of European integration today. It will be of interest both to scholars of the political economy of European regionalism and to practitioners.

**Nicola Bellini** is Professor of Economics and Management at the Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna in Pisa, Italy.

**Ulrich Hilpert** is Professor and Chair of Comparative Government at Friedrich-Schiller-University, Jena, Germany.



## Regions and Cities

Managing Editor

**Gillian Bristow**, *University of Cardiff, UK.*

Editors

**Maryann Feldman**, *University of Georgia, USA,*

**Gernot Grabher**, *HafenCity University Hamburg, Germany,*

**Ron Martin**, *University of Cambridge, UK,*

**Martin Perry**, *Massey University, New Zealand.*

In today's globalised, knowledge-driven and networked world, regions and cities have assumed heightened significance as the interconnected nodes of economic, social and cultural production, and as sites of new modes of economic and territorial governance and policy experimentation. This book series brings together incisive and critically engaged international and interdisciplinary research on this resurgence of regions and cities, and should be of interest to geographers, economists, sociologists, political scientists and cultural scholars, as well as to policy-makers involved in regional and urban development. For more information on the Regional Studies Association visit [www.regionalstudies.org](http://www.regionalstudies.org)

There is a **30% discount** available to RSA members on books in the ***Regions and Cities*** series, and other subject related Taylor and Francis books and e-books including Routledge titles. To order just e-mail [alex.robinson@tandf.co.uk](mailto:alex.robinson@tandf.co.uk), or phone on +44 (0) 20 7017 6924 and declare your RSA membership. You can also visit [www.routledge.com](http://www.routledge.com) and use the discount code: **RSA0901**

### 1. **Beyond Green Belts**

Managing urban growth in the 21st century

*Edited by John Herington*

### 2. **Retreat from the Regions**

Corporate change and the closure of factories

*Stephen Fothergill and Nigel Guy*

### 3. **Regional Development in the 1990s**

The British Isles in transition

*Edited by Ron Martin and Peter Townroe*

### 4. **Spatial Policy in a Divided Nation**

*Edited by Richard T. Harrison and Mark Hart*

5. **An Enlarged Europe**  
Regions in competition?  
*Edited by Louis Albrechts,  
Sally Hardy, Mark Hart and  
Anastasios Katos*
6. **The Regional Imperative**  
Regional planning and  
governance in Britain, Europe  
and the United States  
*Urlan A. Wannop*
7. **The Determinants of Small  
Firm Growth**  
An inter-regional study in the  
United Kingdom 1986–90  
*Richard Barkham, Graham  
Gudgin, Mark Hart and Eric  
Hanvey*
8. **The Regional Dimension of  
Transformation in Central  
Europe**  
*Grzegorz Gorzelak*
9. **Union Retreat and the Regions**  
The shrinking landscape of  
organised labour  
*Ron Martin, Peter Sunley and  
Jane Wills*
10. **Regional Development  
Strategies**  
A European perspective  
*Edited by Jeremy Alden and  
Philip Boland*
11. **British Regionalism and  
Devolution**  
The challenges of state reform  
and European integration  
*Edited by Jonathan Bradbury and  
John Mawson*
12. **Innovation Networks and  
Learning Regions?**  
*James Simmie*
13. **Regional Policy in Europe**  
*S. S. Artobolevskiy*
14. **New Institutional Spaces**  
TECs and the remaking of  
economic governance  
*Edited by Martin Jones and  
Jamie Peck*
15. **The Coherence of EU Regional  
Policy**  
Contrasting perspectives on the  
structural funds  
*Edited by John Bachtler and  
Ivan Turok*
16. **Multinationals and European  
Integration**  
Trade, investment and regional  
development  
*Edited by Nicholas A. Phelps*
17. **Unemployment and Social  
Exclusion**  
Landscapes of labour inequality  
and social exclusion  
*Edited by Sally Hardy,  
Paul Lawless and Ron Martin*
18. **Metropolitan Planning in  
Britain**  
A comparative study  
*Edited by Peter Roberts,  
Kevin Thomas and  
Gwyndaf Williams*
19. **Social Exclusion in European  
Cities**  
Processes, experiences and  
responses  
*Edited by Judith Allen, Goran  
Cars and Ali Madanipour*
20. **Regional Development Agencies  
in Europe**  
*Edited by Charlotte Damborg,  
Mike Danson and Henrik Halkier*

- 21. Community Economic Development**  
*Edited by Graham Haughton*
- 22. Foreign Direct Investment and the Global Economy**  
Corporate and institutional dynamics of global-localisation  
*Edited by Jeremy Alden and Nicholas F. Phelps*
- 23. Restructuring Industry and Territory**  
The experience of Europe's regions  
*Edited by Anna Giunta, Arnoud Lagendijk and Andy Pike*
- 24. Out of the Ashes?**  
The social impact of industrial contraction and regeneration on Britain's mining communities  
*Chas Critcher, Bella Dicks, David Parry and David Waddington*
- 25. Regional Innovation Strategies**  
The challenge for less-favoured regions  
*Edited by Kevin Morgan and Claire Nauwelaers*
- 26. Geographies of Labour Market Inequality**  
*Edited by Ron Martin and Philip S. Morrison*
- 27. Sustainable Cities**  
*Graham Haughton and Colin Hunter*
- 28. Regions, Spatial Strategies and Sustainable Development**  
*David Counsell and Graham Haughton*
- 29. Clusters and Regional Development**  
Critical reflections and explorations  
*Edited by Bjørn Asheim, Philip Cooke and Ron Martin*
- 30. Regional Competitiveness**  
*Edited by Ron Martin, Michael Kitson and Peter Tyler*
- 31. Regional Development in the Knowledge Economy**  
*Edited by Philip Cooke and Andrea Piccaluga*
- 32. The Rise of the English Regions?**  
*Edited by Irene Hardill, Paul Benneworth, Mark Baker and Leslie Budd*
- 33. Geographies of the New Economy**  
Critical reflections  
*Edited by Peter W. Daniels, Andrew Leyshon, Michael J. Bradshaw and Jonathan Beaverstock*
- 34. European Cohesion Policy**  
*Willem Molle*
- 35. Creative Regions**  
Technology, culture and knowledge entrepreneurship  
*Edited by Philip Cooke and Dafna Schwartz*
- 36. Devolution, Regionalism and Regional Development**  
The UK experience  
*Edited by Jonathan Bradbury*
- 37. Intelligent Cities and Globalisation of Innovation Networks**  
*Nicos Komninos*

- 38. Whither Regional Studies?**  
*Edited by Andy Pike*
- 39. Business Networks in Clusters and Industrial Districts**  
The governance of the global value chain  
*Edited by Fiorenza Belussi and Alessia Sammarra*
- 40. China and Europe**  
The implications of the rise of China as a global economic power for Europe  
*Edited by Klaus Kunzmann, Willy A Schmid and Martina Koll-Schretzenmayr*
- 41. Globalizing Regional Development in East Asia**  
Production networks, clusters, and entrepreneurship  
*Edited by Henry Wai-chung Yeung*
- 42. Manufacturing in the New Urban Economy**  
*Willem van Winden, Leo van den Berg, Luis de Carvalho and Erwin van Tuijl*
- 43. The Impacts of Automotive Plant Closures**  
A tale of two cities  
*Edited by Andrew Beer and Holli Evans*
- 44. The Futures of the City Region**  
*Edited by Michael Neuman and Angela Hull*
- 45. Migration in the 21st Century**  
Rights, outcomes, and policy  
*Kim Korinek and Thomas Maloney*
- 46. Leadership and Place**  
*Edited by Chris Collinge, John Gibney and Chris Mabey*
- 47. Beyond Territory**  
*Edited by Harald Bathelt, Maryann Feldman and Dieter F. Kogler*
- 48. The Recession and Beyond**  
Local and regional responses to the downturn  
*Edited by David Bailey and Caroline Chapain*
- 49. Cultural Political Economy of Small Cities**  
*Edited by Anne Lorentzen and Bas van Heur*
- 50. Just Growth**  
Inclusion and prosperity in America's metropolitan regions  
*Chris Benner and Manuel Pastor*
- 51. Industrial Policy Beyond the Crisis**  
Regional, national and international perspectives  
*Edited by David Bailey, Helena Lenihan and Josep-Maria Arauzo-Carod*
- 52. Promoting Silicon Valleys in Latin America**  
*Luciano Ciravegna*
- 53. Regional Development in Northern Europe**  
Peripherality, marginality and border issues  
*Edited by Mike Danson and Peter De Souza*

- 54. Creating Knowledge Locations in Cities**  
Innovation and integration challenges  
*Willem van Winden,  
Luis de Carvalho,  
Erwin van Tuijl,  
Jeroen van Haaren and  
Leo van den Berg*
- 55. Complex Adaptive Innovation Systems**  
Relatedness and transversality in the evolving region  
*Philip Cooke*
- 56. Innovation Governance in an Open Economy**  
Shaping regional nodes in a globalized world  
*Edited by Annika Rickne,  
Staffan Laestadius and  
Henry Etzkowitz*
- 57. Creative Industries and Innovation in Europe**  
Concepts, measures and comparative case studies  
*Edited by Luciana Lazzeretti*
- 58. Community-based Entrepreneurship and Rural Development**  
Creating favourable conditions for small businesses in Central Europe  
*Matthias Fink, Stephan Loidl and  
Richard Lang*
- 59. Regional Development Agencies: The Next Generation?**  
Networking, knowledge and regional policies  
*Edited by Nicola Bellini,  
Mike Danson and Henrik Halkier*
- 60. Leadership and Change in Sustainable Regional Development**  
*Edited by Markku Sotarauta,  
Ina Horlings and Joyce Liddle*
- 61. Networking Regionalised Innovative Labour Markets**  
*Edited by Ulrich Hilpert and  
Helen Lawton Smith*
- 62. Re-framing Regional Development**  
Evolution, innovation and transition  
*Edited by Philip Cooke*
- 63. The University and the City**  
*John Goddard and Paul Vallance*
- 64. The Value of Arts and Culture for Regional Development**  
A Scandinavian perspective  
*Edited by Lisbeth Lindeborg and  
Lars Lindkvist*
- 65. Europe's Changing Geography**  
The impact of inter-regional networks  
*Edited by Nicola Bellini and  
Ulrich Hilpert*

# **Europe's Changing Geography**

The impact of inter-regional networks

**Edited by**

**Nicola Bellini and Ulrich Hilpert**



First published 2013  
by Routledge  
2 Park Square, Milton Park, Abingdon, Oxon OX14 4RN

Simultaneously published in the USA and Canada  
by Routledge  
711 Third Avenue, New York, NY 10017

*Routledge is an imprint of the Taylor & Francis Group, an informa business*

© 2013 Selection and editorial material, Nicola Bellini and Ulrich Hilpert;  
individual chapters, the contributors

The right of the editors to be identified as the authors of the editorial material,  
and of the authors for their individual chapters, has been asserted in accordance  
with sections 77 and 78 of the Copyright, Designs and Patents Act 1988.

All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reprinted or reproduced  
or utilised in any form or by any electronic, mechanical, or other means,  
now known or hereafter invented, including photocopying and recording,  
or in any information storage or retrieval system, without permission in  
writing from the publishers.

*Trademark notice:* Product or corporate names may be trademarks or  
registered trademarks, and are used only for identification and explanation  
without intent to infringe.

*British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data*

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

*Library of Congress Cataloging in Publication Data*

Europe's changing geography: the impact of inter-regional networks/

Nicola Bellini and Ulrich Hilpert.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

1. Regional economics—Europe. 2. Regional planning—Europe.

3. European cooperation.

I. Bellini, Nicola. II. Hilpert, Ulrich, 1951–

HT395.E8E87 2013

338.94—dc23

2012041018

ISBN: 978-0-415-53977-7 (hbk)

ISBN: 978-0-203-38371-1 (ebk)

Typeset in Times New Roman  
by Sunrise Setting Ltd, Paignton, UK

# Contents

<i>List of figures</i>	xi
<i>List of tables</i>	xii
<i>Notes on contributors</i>	xiv
<i>Preface</i>	xv
<i>Abbreviations</i>	xvii
<b>PART I</b>	
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
1 Europe's changing regional geography: the impact of inter-regional networks	3
NICOLA BELLINI AND ULRICH HILPERT	
<b>PART II</b>	
<b>New challenges and new patterns of collaboration</b>	<b>29</b>
2 European macro-regions as a new dimension of European geography: networks of collaboration in the light of culture, history and language capabilities	31
ALEXANDER NAGLER	
<b>PART III</b>	
<b>Europe's new regionalization: the integration of regional activities through macro-regions</b>	<b>65</b>
3 The Baltic Sea region: who cooperates with whom, and why?	67
CARSTEN SCHYMIK	
4 Towards a 'wide area cooperation': the economic rationale and political feasibility of the Adriatic Euroregion	81
ALBERTO BRAMANTI AND PAOLO ROSSO	

- 5 A typology of agents and subjects of regional cooperation: the experience of the Mediterranean Arc 101

ANTONI DURÀ-GUIMERÀ AND XAVIER OLIVERAS-GONZÁLEZ

**PART IV**

**Europe's re-regionalization across borders 125**

- 6 Transnational infrastructure projects and their impact on region-building in the southwestern Baltic Sea region 127

MAGDALENA SCHÖNWEITZ

- 7 Incentives and obstacles to cross-border cooperation in post-communist central Europe 145

GERGŐ MEDVE-BÁLINT

- 8 The Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion: functional networks, actor perceptions and expectations 171

FRANCESC MORATA AND ANDREA NOFERINI

**PART V**

**Conclusions 191**

- 9 Europe's changing geography in perspective 193

NICOLA BELLINI AND ULRICH HILPERT

*Index* 203

# Figures

2.1	Selected programme areas under INTERREG IIIB	36
2.2	Patterns of trade in the Baltic Sea Region and the Mediterranean Arc between 2007 and 2009	40
2.3	Networks of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC in the Western Mediterranean Area	45
2.4	Networks of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC in the Western Mediterranean Area (including Andalucia)	46
2.5	Networks of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC in the Baltic Sea Region	47
2.6	Networks of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC in the Baltic Sea Region (including the Baltic republics)	48
2.7	Networks of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC in the Adriatic Sea Region	51
3.1	Timeline of Baltic Sea Region Cooperation	70
4.1	Adriatic Euroregion at a glance	85
5.1	Study area: the Mediterranean Arc	102
5.2	Territorial cooperation	103
5.3	Regions and cities represented in regional cooperation organizations (and their headquarters) in the Mediterranean Arc	109
6.1	TEN-T Priority Axes in Northern Europe	131
6.2	Regional cooperation and large-scale transport infrastructure projects in the Southwestern Baltic Sea region	132
7.1	Participation rate of local governments in Euroregions in the NUTS 3 level land border regions of Central Europe (in November 2008)	159
8.1	Has your organization had some contact with the PME? (by sector)	181
8.2	What are the main goals that the PME should pursue?	183
8.3	Why do you think the EU should promote CB/inter-regional cooperation? (by region)	185

# Tables

1.1 GDP and population of Interreg IIIC programme areas and selected countries in 2007	5
1.2 Patterns of foreign trade in the Adriatic Sea Region, 2005–10 (value in million Euro)	7
1.3 Patterns of foreign trade in the Adriatic Sea Region, 2005–10 (in per cent of foreign trade with EU27)	7
1.4 Population and GDP in new member countries of the EU	14
1.5 Population and GDP in old member countries of the EU	15
1.6 Hungarian minorities in Romania: Romanian regions with the highest share of Hungarian minority in 1992 and 2011	15
1.7 Hungarian minorities in Slovakia in 1991 and 2009	16
1.8 Russian minorities in the Baltic Republics in 2000 and 2012	17
1.9 The ten busiest borders in Europe in 2000 and 2006	20
2.1 Patterns of collaboration under INTERREG IIIC, 2000–6	39
2.2 GDP and population of INTERREG IIIC programme areas in 2007	42
3.1 Cooperation in the Baltic Sea Region	75
4.1 What Euro-regional languages do you speak? (% of respondents)	87
4.2 Cooperation intensity of Italian lead-project regions (Past programming Interreg, 2000–6)	89
5.1 Regional economic indicators of the Mediterranean Arc in 2009	108
5.2 Number of organizations by objectives and main level of the agents	110
5.3 Subjects of cooperation of general and territorial organizations (A) and sectoral organizations (B)	111
5.4 (Annex 1): Organizations of the Mediterranean Arc by objectives of cooperation and levels of agents	119
7.1 Incentives for local cross-border cooperation	151
7.2 Obstacles to local cross-border cooperation	153
7.3 The PHARE CBC Programme in Central Europe, 1995–2003	156
7.4 Distribution of committed INTERREG IIIA funds in Central Europe, 2004–6	157

7.5	Participation rate of local governments in Euroregions (in November 2008) and the distribution of INTERREG funds (2004–6) in the NUTS 3 land border regions of the Visegrad countries	160
8.1	PME figures	178
8.2	Actors by sector and activity	180
8.3	Questionnaires sent and received by category of analysis	180
8.4	What measures could be used to promote the participation of organizations such as yours in the PME? By State, multiple responses ( $n = 240$ )	186

# Contributors

**Nicola Bellini** is Professor of Management, Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna, Pisa.

**Alberto Bramanti** is Associate Professor of Applied Economics, Department of Policy Analysis and Public Management (PAM), Luigi Bocconi University, Milan.

**Antoni Durà-Guimerà** is Associate Professor of Geography, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

**Ulrich Hilpert** is Professor and Chair of Comparative Government, Friedrich Schiller University, Jena.

**Gergő Medve-Bálint** is PhD Candidate, Central European University and Junior Research Fellow at the Institute for Political Science, Center for Social Sciences at the Hungarian Academy of Sciences, Budapest.

**Francesc Morata** works at Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus and the Department of Political Science, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

**Alexander Nagler** is Research Associate and Chair of Comparative Government, Friedrich Schiller University, Jena.

**Andrea Noferini** works at Institut Universitari d'Estudis Europeus (UAB) and the Department of Political Science, Universitat Pompeu Fabra, Barcelona.

**Xavier Oliveras-González** is a Postdoctoral researcher in Geography, Universitat Autònoma de Barcelona.

**Paolo Rosso** is Senior Consultant, Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development OECD, LEED Programme, Paris and of Autonomous Region Friuli Venezia Giulia, Trieste.

**Magdalena Schönweitz** is PhD Student, Department for Northern European Studies, Humboldt-University, Berlin.

**Carsten Schymik** is assistant professor, Department for Northern European Studies, Humboldt University, Berlin.

# Preface

Europe is on the move and national borders are not as important as they used to be. Regions have an increasing and irreversible role in European development. There is no doubt that part of this transformation is due to the greater importance of inter-regional, cross-border cooperation and to its progressive spread into more wide ranging arrangements, even when these do not lead to more formalized macro-regional institutions. It is the task of this book to attempt a fresh reappraisal of the phenomenon and to suggest an interpretative framework for what has happened, as well as for what is likely to happen in the near future. The upgrading of the political profile of this cooperation very much depends on the ability to fully grasp the real opportunities linked to inter-regional cooperation.

In the meanwhile Europe's geography has changed. The way we perceive the geographical spaces where problems are defined and solutions are to be found, is not what it used to be. The issue now is really how to make political sense of this change and to draw its implications not only in principle, but also in the daily practice of regional development. In doing so, we will need to look also at the virtual proximity between regions (based on analogies, intangible networks, air transportation and ICT infrastructures etc.) that can complement the opportunities provided by physical proximity. No doubt, Europe's geography will then become even more complex in the future.

The contributions to this book are all based on empirical work and updated analysis of cooperation cases. The editors are very grateful to the contributors for their patience in discussions and their willingness to make such different cases as comparable as possible, while creating a picture that confirms the unavoidable heterogeneity of this phenomenon.

This book would have not been possible without the generous support of the Regional Studies Association, whose grant allowed us to set up and manage a research network on this theme. Four workshops (held in Pisa, Jena, Brussels and Florence between 2008 and 2010) have helped to consolidate the 'knowledge base' and shape a common language. In organizing the workshops, the editors would also like to gratefully acknowledge the financial and organizational support received by Scuola Superiore Sant'Anna (Pisa), Friedrich Schiller Universität of Jena, the Regional Institute for Economic Planning of Tuscany (IRPET) and the Brussels Office of the Emilia Romagna Region.



Only a limited number of the contributions presented during those workshops have finally become chapters here. Yet ideas and comments by so many colleagues have been an invaluable addition to our shared thinking.

As usual, the final responsibility lies with the editors. As scholars, our ambition is that we could contribute to a better critical understanding of what European integration really is. This volume may be a very small step, but hopefully it is a step forward.

Nicola Bellini and Ulrich Hilpert  
Pisa, Italy, and Jena, Germany.

# Abbreviations

AE	The Adriatic Euroregion
AEBR	Association of European Border Regions
AER	Assembly of European Regions
AHRFI	Associazione Hotel Riviera Franco-Italiana
BASTUN	Baltic Sea Trade Union Network
BCCA	Baltic Sea Chambers of Commerce Association
BDF	Baltic Development Forum
BSPC	Baltic Sea Parliamentary Conference
BSR	The Baltic Sea region
BSSSC	Baltic Sea States Subregional Cooperation
CAFI	Conférence des Alpes Franco-Italiennes
CBC	Cross-border cooperation
CBR	Cross-border region
CBSS	Council of the Baltic Sea States
COTRAO	Western Alps Working Community
CTP	Working Community of the Pyrenees
EEIG	Economic interest groupings
EES	European Economic Space
EGTC	European Grouping of Territorial Cooperation
EIB	European Investment Bank
EURIMED	Euroregion of the Islands of the Mediterranean Sea
FDI	Foreign direct investment
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
IMEDOC	Association of Western Mediterranean Islands
IPA	Instrument for Pre-Accession Assistance
MOT	Mission Opérationnelle Transfrontalière
ND	Northern Dimension
PME	Pyrenees-Mediterranean Euroregion
POCTEFA	France-Spain-Andorra Cross-border Cooperation Operational Programme
VASAB	Visions And Strategies Around the Baltic

*This page intentionally left blank*

## **Part I**

# **Introduction**

*This page intentionally left blank*

# 1 Europe's changing regional geography

## The impact of inter-regional networks

*Nicola Bellini and Ulrich Hilpert*

European macro-regions and Euroregions are increasingly being discussed since the European Union has introduced a macro-regional strategy and defined ten European macro-regions. These new geographic constellations are expected to contribute to European integration, to help establish new socio-economic spaces which may generate economic development and employment, and to reduce tensions between neighbouring countries. Even before this policy was introduced, regional collaboration helped both to reduce the negative effects of national borders and to integrate countries, in particular their less developed border-regions, into a process of Europeanization. City partnerships and cross-border planning of traffic or environmental issues marked the beginning of a new conception of Europe.

While Europe's geography has been characterized by national borders, during recent decades regions, as subnational units, have gained importance and attracted particular attention from the European Union. National borders divided the continent into countries and often they have divided particular cultural spaces and ethnicities into subunits of different countries, where they were minorities. Simultaneously, for some decades after World War II nation states were also characterized by national economies with clearly identifiable centres of economic development which were usually not located along national borders. Thus, for decades the capabilities and potential of regions which were located along national borders were insufficiently taken into account – in particular their potential to identify opportunities by matching competences with contiguous regions across their borders. Increasing intra-European trade and traffic clearly introduced a strong need for cross-border planning or even European projects (e.g. the European rapid train system). The French–German collaboration in the Upper Rhine Valley indicates very clearly the advantage of European integration at regional level and also how this generates new opportunities once the importance of national borders is reduced.

Following the success of this new approach to inter-regional collaboration, reducing the significance of borders while strengthening socio-economic development and employment in these regions, the attractiveness of Euroregions grew. These involved collaborative arrangements with a wide range of activities and a

number of regions from different countries, or even macro-regions – particularly large systems of collaboration across a multiplicity of European countries. It is, of course, obvious that such multi-regional systems of collaboration engage a divergence of potentials and competences which may both be mutually complementary and contribute mutually to the benefit of the participating regions. The development of a skilled labour force, and the generation of industrial competences or networks of research, can be organized within large spatial arrangements such as macro-regions. Nevertheless, simply to declare both the introduction of a macro-region and announce the diminishing relevance of national borders is not likely to be sufficient to achieve such aims. Europe will change only where there is close collaboration and exchange, and where individual regions or actors in the regions are prepared both to take advantage of these new opportunities and to contribute towards these shared new opportunities.

Processes of integration such as these take time and require continuing engagement of the institutions and individuals involved. But, even more than this, it is important to identify both the existing potential of macro-regions when compared to that of potential member countries who are contemplating joining the Union and what the output of such processes is likely to be. Undoubtedly, there are differences throughout Europe, and clearly there are divergent regional situations depending on whether the border regions have complementary industrial and technological potential or whether they are rural regions based on agricultural products. Similarly, macro-regions differ according to the regions, metropolises and potentials they include. This may provide for more or less areas of collaboration and it might allow an assessment of how and where such macro-regions can generate the beneficial effects which are anticipated and whether the border regions can be integrated into the process of overcoming the problems posed by borders.

### **Building important transnational space beyond national borders: new macro-regions**

The definition of macro-regions relates to new entities which have previously escaped attention because they are neither a country nor an individual region. There is also no single, identifiable polity-structure which characterizes their government or political decision-making. Formed by a number of regions they are neither included in statistics nor are they politically represented. Once considered they account for significant potential in terms of population and economic performance (see Table 1.1). While the European Union is formed by nation states, it is important to see the vast capabilities and dimensions of its macro-regions. The Western Mediterranean Arc counts about 94 million inhabitants, the Baltic Sea Area makes up almost 80 million and the Adriatic Sea includes some 32 million people. Even the smallest multi-regional arrangement *Archimed* still counts for a population similar to that of the Netherlands. In addition, of course, the macro-regions differ from one another just like the regions of the member countries which make them up.