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Filippo Celata  
Raffaella Coletti *Editors*

# Neighbourhood Policy and the Construction of the European External Borders

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Editors

# Neighbourhood Policy and the Construction of the European External Borders

 Springer

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## Preface

In the introduction to their *Border as Method*, Sandro Mezzadra and Brett Neilson consider the strategic role of borders “in the fabrication of the world”. Borders, they note, “far from serving merely to block or obstruct the passage of people, money or objects, have become central devices for their articulation” (2013, p. 3). Political geographers have begun to turn their critical attention to this “productive” function of borders and border-making, and this volume is an important contribution in that regard, analyzing the myriad of initiatives that make up the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) through the lens of an ever-shifting play of re- and cross-bordering.

As Mezzadra and Neilson suggest, the play of borders should be seen in a frontier-like logic of “the creative destruction and constant recombining of spaces and times”, a continuous process of “geographical disruption [and] rescaling” of the territorialities of wealth and power (2013, p. 6). The ENP, as the shifting frontier of EU power and actorness, is a perfect example of such logic, where re- and cross-bordering processes work to produce ever-new constellations of sovereignty, governmentality, wealth and power. The current volume carefully traces some of the geographies of these processes, going “Beyond Fortress ‘EU’rope”, as it announces in the title of its opening chapter, and looking precisely to the “productive” making of the ‘EU’ropean neighbourhood as the EU’s extended and extensive borderspace/scape. In doing so, it complicates easy distinctions between the visibly hardening EU external borders and the variety of ways in which the Union’s actions and actors spill beyond and across them, noting how such concurrent openness and closure, collaboration and securitization, are not at all contradictory but, actually, part of the very same process/project of the making of spaces for ‘EU’rope.

Such a nuanced geographical perspective on the making of the neighbourhood provides an important counterpart to the existing literature in International Relations and European Studies, still strongly marked by ‘diffusionist’ understandings of the externalization of EU governance and the stretching of EU spaces and actions. As the chapters in this volume highlight, rather, what we are witnessing is not simply a spread of EU actorness across space or into ever wider spaces, but rather a much more complex and fluid process of the reworking the confines of what and where Europe is; a series of constantly shifting, “productive” re-articulations of

European economic but also political-juridical and regulatory spaces. Indeed, as the contributions here note, Neighbourhood region-making, whether in the Mediterranean or at the EU's Eastern borders involves a multiplicity of political and economic projects at a variety of geographical scales, sometimes complementary but often contradictory. The discussion of cross border regions and Macro-region initiatives to which the book devotes considerable attention highlights this very diversity, noting how such making of 'European spaces' is built on a shifting and tenuous balance between integration and exclusion, and an ongoing re-definition of what is to be shared, how, and with whom, choosing to make selectively mobile certain categories of capital, goods, labour and investment.

The analysis offered here also does not forget the wider geographical context for EU actions, for the ENP of course does not exist in a geopolitical vacuum. It is the EU's frontier, but also one where the Union comes into direct competition with other global actors such as Russia, China and the United States, as geopolitical/geoeconomic challengers but also as ideational competitors. The making of neighbourhood spaces for 'EU'rope is hardly uncontested, and indeed increasingly runs into alternative projects of political and economic region-making that explicitly counter EU agendas of democratization and neo-liberal trade promotion (whether in the Ukraine, or North Africa). Such attention to the multiple geographies that both frame and are framed by EU neighbourhood initiatives is crucial in capturing their complexity, and brings to the fore their power as, above all, modes of "productive" re-bordering.

Luiza Bialasiewicz

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# Chapter 1

## Beyond Fortress ‘EU’rope? Bordering and Cross-Bordering Along the European External Frontiers

Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti

### 1.1 Neighbourhood Policy and the Re-Bordering of Europe

The enlargement in 2004 led to a new strategic investment from the European Union in its neighbouring countries. The European Union (EU) had to deal with three main challenges: first, to guarantee the security and stability of the Union along its new external border; second, to avoid the emergence of new “dividing lines” between the enlarged EU and its neighbouring countries; and third, to strengthen relations with those countries who, although not EU members nor candidates for accession, are of strategic relevance for the geopolitical and geoeconomic reconfiguration of ‘EU’rope as a global actor.

The main response from the EU to these challenges was the elaboration of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), firstly introduced by the “Wider Europe” Communication in 2003. The policy was definitively launched in 2007 and according to the European Commission its aims included avoiding the emergence of new dividing lines and reinforcing prosperity, stability and security in the partner countries. To this end, the ENP includes a complex set of strategies aimed at cooperation on the one hand and securitization on the other, and which will be reviewed in the following sections and chapters.

The ENP includes those countries that are proximate to the EU but are not candidates for accession: ten Mediterranean countries (Algeria, Egypt, Jordan, Israel, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, Palestinian Authority, Syria and Tunisia) and six Eastern countries (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine) (Fig. 1.1).

The final aim of the ENP should be “to share everything but institutions”, as famously declared by the former Head of the European Commission Romano Prodi

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**Fig. 1.1** The European Union and its neighbourhood. (Source: designed by the authors)

in 2002. The idea is that relations between the EU and its neighbouring countries should somehow replicate the same degree of integration that exists among member States even though neighbouring partners have no prospect for becoming member States, at least in the short term.

The creation of this new geographical entity—the European neighbourhood—and the idea of bringing these countries ‘closer’ to the EU by fostering cooperation and their ‘approximation’ to the Union, has been said to materialize a logic of “concentric circles” (Moisio 2007; Zielonka 2006). The Euro area, the Schengen area, the EU, countries in pre-accession and, finally, neighbouring countries (Fig. 1.2): all of these constitute a sequence of buffer zones where a sort of soft and mobile path toward closer integration with the EU is projected, which is discursively opposed to the hard lines that other EU policies are putting forward and that are often represented by the imaginary of a “Fortress Europe”. The ENP is based on the idea of a “wider Europe” with blurred borders: a space of strengthened cooperation based on the recognition of common challenges, common values, a common history and—hopefully—a common future of “friendship”, increased convergence and integration.

Such a strategy has much to do with the re-bordering of the EU, of its external frontiers, of its relations with the outside world as well as of its internal and peculiar territoriality, as we will see in the next pages. This is indeed the main issue that we

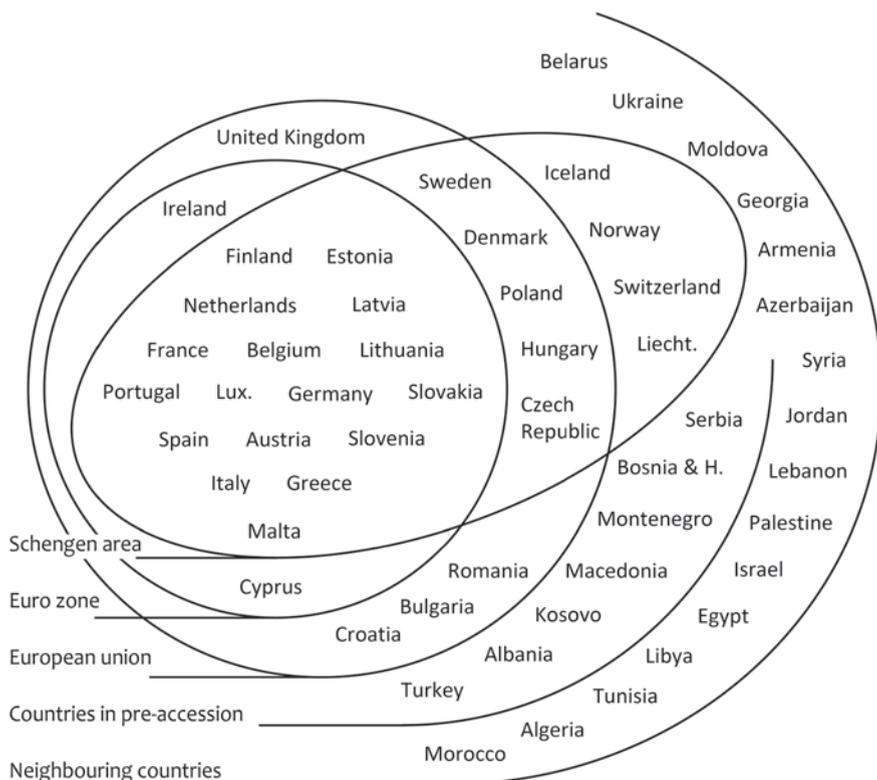


Fig. 1.2 Neighbouring countries and the concentric circles of integration. (Source: designed by the authors)

will explore in the book. This introductory chapter is aimed at giving a first glimpse at the extremely wide variety of ways through which such re-bordering is pursued by presenting the state of the art of scholarly debates on the topic and how we intend to contribute to those debates.

We critically reflect on how a unique policy framework is supposed to deal with the diversity of contexts where the ENP operates (Sect. 1.2) and to promote domestic reforms in partner countries through conditionality measures (Sect. 1.3). Section 1.4 problematizes the ambiguity between cooperation and securitization in EU's relations with neighbouring countries, while Sect. 1.5 deals with the Eurocentric character of the ENP and introduces the issue of bordering, which is explored further in Sect. 1.6. Section 1.7 focuses on the variegated geometries of the European Neighbourhood Policy and on the ongoing regionalization processes across the EU external borders, while Sect. 1.8 discusses (external) Europeanization as a multi-dimensional and selective dispositive and how it relates with the (re-)bordering of the "wider Europe". Section 1.9 presents the structure of the book and introduces the contents and aims of the following chapters.

## 1.2 A Single Policy for a Diverse Neighbourhood?

The ENP has been the object of a vast debate since its launch and it continues to be so especially after the so-called 'Arab spring' and because of the rapidly changing geopolitical scenario along the Mediterranean shores and in Eastern Europe.

The first issue of the ENP that has been critically scrutinized within policy and academic debates is related to the policy's geographical delimitation. According to this line of criticism, the idea of including Mediterranean countries and Eastern European countries within a single (and invented) geographical entity— that of the "European neighbourhood"—did not take into proper account the high political, cultural and socio-economic diversity of the area, "not only on a country-by-country but also on a regional and sub-regional basis" (Aliboni 2005, p. 2).

Even the European Parliament expressed doubts about "the meaningfulness of the ENP's geographical scope, as it involves countries which are, geographically and culturally, European together with Mediterranean non-European countries" (European Parliament 2007): "You cannot have a coherent policy for such heterogeneous countries" (EU official, cited in: Dimitrova 2010a, p. 472).

EU institutions are certainly aware of these differences and, consequently, repeatedly highlight the need to guarantee the proper "differentiation" and targeting of ENP strategies towards each partner country. Despite such emphasis on differentiation, the idea is that the EU and its partners share many "common challenges", which justifies the definition of a unique strategy. At the same time, an excessive differentiation of the policy principles and aims could lead to accusations of 'double standards', undermining the credibility of the EU commitment to pursue the same "common values" in all partner countries (Balfour 2012).

Notwithstanding such a common policy framework, one of the aims of the book (see Chap. 3 and 4) is to show how the actual implementation of the ENP results into a peculiar balance between homogeneization and differentiation, policy transfers of the same model everywhere on the one hand, and adaptations to specific circumstances on the other hand (Celata and Coletti 2013). In our opinion, looking at how such a balance is pursued in each case is crucial for understanding the ENP, its strategic functioning, its appropriation by a plurality of actors and its travelling across space and boundaries.

Nevertheless, the extremely wide geographical scope of the policy still remains a debated issue, not to mention the inclusion of Israel in the same partnership with Arab countries, the involvement of problematic countries such as Belarus or Libya, or the decision of a strategic neighbour such as Russia not to adhere to the ENP. Another related and more general issue, as we will see, is the geographical scale at which the EU's external policies should be implemented, given the co-existence and the more recent multiplication of micro-, meso- and macro- regional strategies with overlying and variable geometries across the EU's external borders (see Sect. 1.7 and Chap. 3, 4 and 6).

The subsumption of the Euro-Mediterranean strategy within the ENP has been especially criticized, not only due to the specificity of the area but also because in this way—according to many observers—the ENP risks compromising the perspectives for regional integration and multilateralism in the Mediterranean. Notwithstanding the fact that EU institutions highlighted that the ENP would “reinvigorate” the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, the ENP constituted a shift of EU's priorities from its Southern shores to Eastern Europe (see Chap. 3).

It has been already mentioned, moreover, that the ENP was designed as a response to the EU's 2004 Eastern enlargement. Enlargement not only represents the challenge that the ENP wishes to respond to but it also serves, somehow, as a model for the design of the policy. In fact, the strategy adopted towards neighbouring countries represents a policy transfer from the enlargement approach (Kelley 2006), where partner countries commit themselves to pursuing the objectives of the *acquis communautaire* and to implementing those reforms which are requested to pre-accession countries. The ENP, in other words, is certainly not merely an external assistance programme. As declared in 2009 by Benita Ferrero Waldner, European Commissioner for External Relations and ENP:

Drawing on the EU's unique range of instruments, we are seeking to achieve a new, innovative style of partnership (...). This is not philanthropy. It is 21st century European foreign policy. (Ferrero-Waldner 2009, p. 2)

Such aid programme, moreover, is not complemented solely by some trade liberalization measures. In previous EU external policies, e.g. the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, ‘integration’ was interpreted almost exclusively in terms of fostering trade relations which required a certain degree of legislative harmonization. The ENP has gone a step further and proposed, more recently, a ‘deep’ and ‘comprehensive’ commercial integration (see Chap. 5) with the already mentioned final aim to share “everything but institutions”.

This is one of the main limits of the policy according to many observers. As stated by Zaiotti (2007, p. 152), “the ENP was not developed with the neighbours in mind”. The ENP is a policy transfer of the “enlargement methodology” (Gawrich et al. 2010), that is hardly adaptable to those countries with no prospects for accessing the EU nor qualifications for EU membership because they are not “European” countries.

In any case, the request for the adoption of the *acquis* and for economic and political reforms in partner countries is not supported nor justified by an enlargement perspective in the short term. The incentives offered in the ENP framework are too limited to support domestic drivers for institutional reform (Gawrich et al. 2010). The ENP generated, more generally, a gap between the expectations raised by the policy and the EU’s “capacity to deliver” (Cremona and Hillion 2006, p. 18). The adoption of the narratives of enlargement and integration, finally, creates ambiguity and false expectations regarding what the final aims of the policy are and what it is effectively able to ‘deliver’.

### 1.3 Exchanging Aid for Democracy? The Problem with Conditionality

The issue of the gap between aims and incentives brings us to the widely debated issue of conditionality in the implementation of the ENP (Kelley 2006; Cremona and Hillion 2006; Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011; Kramsch 2011), and, in general, as a foreign policy tool that, according to many observers, is largely ineffective.

ENP allocations towards each partner country are very diverse, as we will see in Chap. 3, depending on the highly diversified quality of geopolitical relations between the EU and each of those neighbours. In this regard, there is an increasing emphasis—at least on paper—on conditioning the distribution of ENP benefits towards the implementation of domestic reforms and “good governance” in partner countries (Aliboni 2005).

Previously, within the EU’s external strategies, the principle was that of “negative conditionality”, i.e. a suspension of relations with countries that have violated human rights. The ENP is instead based on the principle of “positive conditionality”: relations will be only fostered with those countries that express their commitment toward political reforms (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). These reforms, as already mentioned, are not solely instrumental to, for example, trade liberalization, but are considered goals in themselves.

Such a ‘soft’ approach and the strong emphasis throughout the ENP on the ‘civilising’ mission that the EU is supposed to play in the world, has brought Ian Manners to define the EU as a “normative power” (2002), indicating the EU’s preference for soft power with respect to the ‘harder’ power which is typical of US policies in the area, for example (see Chap. 7). Within the ENP framework, the approach is normative as long as it emphasizes the need to use aid, cooperation and integration as ‘sticks’ to promote political changes in non-EU countries.

Such a normative approach has succeeded in keeping relations between the EU and its partners “cordial and constructive” (Emerson and Noutcheva 2005), with respect to the more problematic relations the US has with several countries in the area, for instance. However, the EU “has failed to use its more positive image (...) to set out an alternative reform path” (Youngs 2006).

At times, there is an impression that ENP “common values” alone, as once stated by the EU Commissioner for External Relations, Ferrero-Waldner, (cited in: Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011, p. 136), are supposed to constitute the “weapons” (sic) for pushing neighbours toward meeting the requirements of the EU and adopting the norms of liberal democracies.

The ‘sticks’ of conditionality have never brought any relevant result (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Balfour 2009). The failed attempts to promote democratization in partner countries are often justified by the scarcity of incentives: “we can’t buy reform, we are conscious of the fact that we don’t have the money to buy reform” (EU official, cited in Jones 2006, p. 426). European leaders repeat that “democracy cannot be imposed” while—according to many observers—they do not even try to use conditionality properly (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011; Kramsch 2011). EU institutions and European countries have often been silent about the lack of democratization in some of their most preferred partners who have even been rather praised for their achievements in this domain. In the years before the Arab uprisings of 2011, “some critics detect[ed] a return to the continent’s traditional approach to the region—supporting authoritarian governments in exchange for natural resources and stability” (Youngs 2006, p. 5), and—increasingly in recent years—as an attempt to improve migration management, as we will see in Sect. 1.4.

The ‘soft power’ that the EU is adopting towards its neighbours, however, seems to be too soft indeed as confirmed by an inability to cope with the recent return of ‘hard’ geopolitical threats along the EU’s external frontiers (see Chap. 7). Such inability confirms most of the criticisms about the ENP framework and its instruments (Whitman and Juncos 2012). The changing political regimes in many partner countries, moreover, has shown what the risk of having governments, rather than countries, as political partners is.

Another frequently mentioned criticism of the programme is the overwhelming role of central political authorities of neighbouring countries with respect to, for example, sub-national authorities or civil society (O’Dowd and Dimitrovova 2011; Scott and Liikanen 2010; Scott 2011; see Chap. 3 and 4), which may be regarded as alternative means to promote democratization ‘from below’. The post-Arab spring scenario has shown, however, that democratization is a rather complex process and that we still need to learn how to deal with it through soft means and pro-actively rather than through the ‘hard’ power of ex-post military intervention.

Not surprisingly then, in Arab countries which struggled for the same ‘common values’ the ENP is trying to promote, democratic protesters are sceptical toward EU commitment in this regard. While some of those actors perceive Europe as a controversial ally, others think that it may even be an obstacle to democratization.

The European Union continues to promote an agenda for trade and investments which has already proven to be useless for the developing needs of partner countries and that, if con-

firmed and enhanced, could seriously challenge the ongoing democratic transitions. (Arab NGO Network for Development, February 2012, translated by the authors).

Recession and the debt crisis in Europe, moreover, have contributed to decreasing the EU's attractive power with respect to its neighbours (Whitman and Juncos, 2012), in parallel with the rising importance of other global players in the area (see Chap. 7). Notwithstanding a recent increase in the ENP budget, the gap between the ambitious policy aims and its ability to effectively reach its goals remain enormous (Balfour 2012).

In Chap. 5 we will see how the EU is trying to renew the ENP in order to respond to this changing scenario on the one hand, and to some of the above mentioned criticisms on the other hand. The issue of 'differentiation', for example, has been reaffirmed and strengthened; positive and negative conditionality measures are supposed to improve and an increasing emphasis has been given to the involvement of civil society. While the scope and novelty of these changes is limited, other issues still remain open and unsolved, as they interrogate the same essence of the EU as a (global) political actor.

## 1.4 Cooperation, Securitization and the Limits of 'EU'rope

The "dividing lines" that the ENP seeks to avoid are not only those between new and old EU member States and their immediate neighbourhoods but also, more specifically, those resulting from the Schengen Agreement. The ENP is an attempt at preventing the freedom of movement within the EU from being obtained at the expense of strengthening the EU's external border (Beck and Grande 2007, p. 176).

A frequent critique of the ENP, in this regard, is that such attempt is only on paper. The "ring of friendship" that the ENP is trying to promote, in other words, is incoherent with the emphasis on security issues and on external threats such as illegal migration and terrorism (Zaiotti 2007; Lynch 2005; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009). As Luiza Bialasiewicz points out:

Although the EU may pronounce itself a 'soft' and 'civil' power, its leaders are increasingly explicit about the fact that the EU's various 'soft' initiatives—including the ENP—are aimed also (if not primarily) at protecting Europe from 'hard' threats. (Bialasiewicz et al. 2009, p. 79)

Throughout the ENP, EU institutions try hard to balance this emphasis on securitization by prioritizing other dimensions of cooperation—to contrast the image of a fortress Europe with the idea of a borderless Europe, as we will see in the next pages and particularly in Chap. 4. However, it is difficult to deny that the main aim, especially in recent years, is to use cooperation for the securitization of EU's external borders. The two goals, moreover, are contradictory and create ambiguity in the implementation of the policy (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011, p. 143).

A related criticism is that, despite good will and even within those parts of the ENP that emphasize cooperation and friendship, the policy results in strengthening rather than weakening the EU's external border as we will see further in the next section. This tendency is difficult to avoid. "Creating new spaces of influence for Europe is also, inevitably, a bordering exercise" (Bialasiewicz et al. 2009, p. 79), as it implies a decision about who's in and who's out of these spaces.

The above mentioned issue is strictly connected to the issue of Europeaness and defining where Europe ends. Most of the time, the borders of Europe are taken for granted even if, from a geographical perspective, we know that defining Europe as a continent and establishing its exact borders is problematic at best. Such problems are evident when deciding if Russia, Turkey or Cyprus should be considered European countries or not, for example. Yet the question, most of the time, is not in deciding who's European and who's not but who should access the EU even if the two questions are frequently confused (Agnew 2001).

The borders of the EU are even more difficult to delimit than those of Europe as a continent and it is not possible in this few pages to summarize decades of debates on the topic. We know that the issue has been deliberately omitted (Bialasiewicz et al. 2005), from the EU's constitution. Accession to the EU is conceded to those countries that respect the Copenhagen Criteria<sup>1</sup>, but it has been denied sometimes for the merely geographical reason of not being a "European country", as in the case of Morocco in 1987. In any case, the EU prefers to define its (potential) borders according to political-institutional criteria, economic and financial requirements and in terms of cultural values rather than just in terms of physical geography. This is why Israel, for example, has been repeatedly proposed as a candidate for accession by several European political leaders.

The map of Europe is defined in the first place in the minds of Europeans. Geography sets the frame, but fundamentally it is values that make the borders. (Commissioner for Enlargement Olli Rehn, cit. in Kostadinova 2009, p. 247)

The same creation of the "European neighbourhood" category, in this frame, is a (temporary) decision about where the border between the EU and the outside world lies (Dimitrovova 2010a; Bialasiewicz et al. 2009). There is an inherent contradiction between the objective of avoiding the creation of new dividing lines and clearly defining what is European and what is not, implying an exercise of bordering and othering that is hardly coherent with the explicit cooperative objectives to bring partners "closer" to the EU (Dimitrovova 2010b). The ENP is consequently, according to many authors, "a bordering and not a cross-bordering policy" (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011, p. 124).

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<sup>1</sup> "Copenhagen Criteria" are those criteria that countries which candidate for accession in the European Union must meet. They include stability of institutions guaranteeing democracy, the rule of law, human rights and respect for and protection of minorities; the existence of a functioning market economy as well as the capacity to cope with competitive pressure and market forces within the Union; the ability to take on the obligations of membership including adherence to the aims of political, economic and monetary union.

We will come back to these controversial issues several times in the following pages. The inherent ambiguity between cooperation and securitization, the “Wider Europe” vs. the “Fortress Europe”, openness and closure of the EU external borders is crucial to understanding the aims and limits of the ENP since the launch of the policy, during its first programming period (Chap. 3), as well as in the renewed ENP and for its second programming period (Chap. 5). Such ambiguity, we will see, even influences the component of the policy which is most explicitly aimed at creating a borderless “wider” Europe, i.e. the cross-border cooperation component of the ENP which will be analysed in details in Chap. 4.

In order to properly understand how the ENP contributes to the re-bordering of EU relations with its neighbouring countries, however, we need to clarify that, firstly, the border regime which is in the making is obviously highly selective. Bordering and cross-bordering processes are not contradictory but proceed side by side in an explicit attempt to implement a regime of managed and differential flows across EU’s external borders. In Chap. 3, 4 and 5 we will explore in detail how the ENP distinguishes between different regions, on the one hand, and different relations on the other hand, some of which are promoted—e.g. trade in industrial products or, within the renewed ENP, even skilled migrants mobility—while other flows—trade in agricultural products, “illicit” flows, “irregular” migrations, etc.—are contrasted.

Secondly, bordering is not solely a process of reinforcing political jurisdictional and dividing lines but it also implies a wider set of dynamic political and social practices of spatial differentiation as we will see in the next section and in Chap. 2.

The question, in other words, is not whether the ENP promotes the strengthening or the softening of its external frontiers, nor whether a “Fortress Europe” is emerging rather than the contrary. The crucial question is *what* kind of bordering and cross-bordering processes the ENP promotes, to what ends, and *how* those divergent processes coexist within the same policy framework.

## 1.5 Eurocentrism and Othering Along the EU’s External Frontiers

The narratives that the ENP is putting forward are highly controversial with respect to the above mentioned alternative between integration and separation. Such controversy has been described by Kostadinova (2009) as the result of an ambivalence between the attempts to define the “common values” (e.g. democracy, the rule of law, human rights) on which relations with external partners should be based while, at the same time, establishing the proper “repertoire of differences” between EU and non-EU countries in order to justify that those countries need some external assistance, and to decide what kind of assistance they need. These differences are crucial, moreover, in discriminating between good and bad partners, between those partners that should access the benefits of the ENP or be included and excluded from full integration into the EU. Diversity between the EU and its non-EU neighbouring countries, in other words, is sometimes perceived as an obstacle toward

integration, at other times as a rationale for cooperation and much less in terms of something that should be respected or preserved.

The definition of both differences and commonalities, according to this line of inquiry, ends up reinforcing the perception of a hard border between the EU and the outside world (Kostadinova 2009, p. 249); a border which is not only political and military but cultural in the first place (Kostadinova 2009; Dimitrova 2010a; Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011; Delanty 2006).

A related critique of the ENP is that the common values that Europe should be sharing with its neighbours are Eurocentric. Notwithstanding the emphasis on partnership and co-ownership, it is clear—and will be discussed in detail in the next chapters—that it is the EU that decides the scope of the ENP strategies, its principles, etc. (El Kenz 2007, p. 530).

The Commission does not leave any doubts that the 'commitment to shared values'—such as democracy, liberty, rule of law, respect for human rights and human dignity—refers to the values of the EU and its member States. (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, p. 23).

It is surely not to be contested that European institutions promote liberal democracy in partner countries as well as the respect for human rights and other more or less universal values. What needs to be stressed is that common values are presented at first as "European values", causing discontent from partner countries. The idea is that 'EU'rope has already discovered what the best institutional model is and it is now ready to export this model to partner countries for their mutual benefit.

The tendency to impose a 'package' of economic, political and institutional principles that are considered un-negotiable and as conditionality clauses, is an explicit attempt at the Europeanization of the neighbourhood (Lavenex 2008). This has led some authors to stress the neo-colonial and post-colonial nature of the ENP (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011, p. 131), especially in the Mediterranean (Chambers 2008; Giaccaria and Minca 2011), and also with respect to previous regional strategies along EU's external frontiers. It has been argued, for example, that within the Euro-Mediterranean partnership the sea basin constitutes the 'centre' of an ambitious multilateral and regional project. Within the ENP, on the contrary, "the Mediterranean is diluted into a disordered archipelago of countries surrounding the European and Western 'centre'" (Amoroso 2007, p. 496).

We may say that the design of the ENP is influenced, on the one hand, by the colonial past of European countries that forces them to respect the autonomy of their partners and not to intervene directly in their domestic politics, as we will see further in Chap. 3. There is, on the other hand, a "colonial present" (Gregory 2004), in that European institutions "continue to think and to act in ways that are dyed in the colours of colonial power" (p. 15). Europeans cannot resist considering their values as universal, superior, something that most neighbours still do not possess but need to in order to access the benefits of the ENP, and that they will probably possess in the future—with the help of the EU—through modernization, institutional reforms and economic development.

The discourse of common values, in other words, "is structured in such a way that the neighbours are the subjects of the ENP policy rather than partners" (Dimitrova 2010a, p. 477). Diez (2006) defined this ambivalence as the "normative

power paradox”: the tendency to elevate Europeans’ values as universally good thus reinforcing the border between the EU and the outside world. Many other authors have emphasized the Eurocentrism which is implicit in ENP narratives: “both the content and form of the initiative reinforce the asymmetry characterizing the two sides” (Zaiotti 2007, p. 151); “the approach is dominative, rather than universalistic or cosmopolitan” (Barbé et al. 2009, p. 379).

The ENP on the one hand creates an image of an inferior neighbour that urgently needs to move towards European standards and on the other hand produces a speech politics of mutuality and dialogue. (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011, p. 130)

Moreover, in promoting these common values the ENP is controversial and even internally contradictory as it puts forward “geopolitical discourses that are competing and hardly coherent” (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011 p. 143). European institutions themselves do not totally agree on which common values should be pursued and in which cases, as we will see in Chap. 3. Tensions and contradictions are visible in considering the aspects of the ENP that are linked to specific policies towards the neighbourhood, like security policy, justice and home affairs, and especially migration.

Although democracy and human rights are the first priorities in the ENP Action Plans, it is hard to say that they are the most important priorities. Strategic interests, or energy resources, for example, are usually more important (Dimitrova 2010a, p. 479). The same applies to the issue of migration control. The commitment of partner countries to controlling migration has been included in the conditional clauses of the ENP (Kausch and Young 2009, p. 966). Migrants’ re-admission agreements are, in some cases, included in the ENP Action Plans (Smith 2005), and, according to many authors (Fekete 2005; Peers and Rogers 2006), they imply violations of the same human rights that the ENP is supposed to promote.

## 1.6 Spatialities of Bordering and the European Neighbourhood Policy

In recent years there has been a renewed interest in borders and borderlands. New approaches have emerged that attempt to go beyond research focusing merely on political borders as physical and legal dividing lines in order to investigate the multiple spatialities and the everyday construction of borderscapes and bordering practices (Brambilla 2014). While these new approaches will be presented in detail in Chap. 2, this section is aimed at outlining a brief summary of the main perspectives that have been used to investigate how the ENP contributes to the re-bordering of the EU and of its neighbourhood.

The first perspective comes from geopolitical studies where States are considered the main actors; here, the ENP is investigated in the framework of the foreign policies and of the (conflicting) geopolitical priorities of the EU and its member States (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). Borders are almost exclusively conceived as jurisdictional dividing lines and their discussion is mostly based on the distinction

between hard and soft borders (Kostadinova 2009, p. 238), that is, complementary to the discussion of hard versus soft power. The 'hard' borders of modernity, it is argued, are becoming permeable, while military means to secure borders are complemented by the soft power of ideologies and political imaginations. European integration is a standing example in this regard (Manners 2002), as well as the EU external policies which, as already mentioned, deploy a wide range of soft measures in order to promote stability in partner countries. In this light, the question is whether a "fortress Europe" is emerging and what kind of soft/hard means are being put forward to secure its external frontiers.

Secondly, we can distinguish an institutional perspective where ENP is analyzed as a form of external governance of the EU, in relation to and with the same methodologies that apply to the analysis of other EU policies. Institutionalists do not confine themselves to analyses of the role of States, but they consider a wider range of actors, both within single institutions (e.g. within the EU), and outside the domain of formal political authorities (e.g. civil society). The ENP, as with any other policy, is considered a result of the interaction between governance models, different interests, logics and power of the various actors, and organizational/historical antecedents. The Europeanization of the neighbourhood is considered the main aim of the ENP (see Sect. 1.8), to be pursued not only through a unitary but composite and fragmented policy with conflicting priorities and variegated targets. The border itself is fragmented and selective as the EU discriminates between different external actors and policy domains in order to adopt a strategy of simultaneous inclusion/exclusion, openness/closure, cooperation/control (Berg and Ehin 2006; Walters 2006).

Thirdly, we can distinguish what could be defined as a topological perspective. The changing spatiality of State power implies that borders are not only to be found at the perimeter of national and (even less) EU territory. National borders in Europe are not being replaced by a single, more or less 'hard', external EU border. Border topology is changing both within and outside the EU (Delanty 2006, p. 192). Non-territorial imaginaries are supposed to better represent contemporary borders and—among those—networked, fluid and mobile topologies are frequently proposed (Delanty 2006; Axford 2006). The idea of a mobile border, in its simplest version, may refer to the fact that the EU still needs to decide where its external border will definitively lie. The shift toward a networked/mobile border, to give other examples, is due to the relocation of border controls away from the borderline and closer to strategic locations, e.g. ports, airports, islands (Walters 2006; Mountz 2011), or their externalization away from European shores in an attempt to manage borders "at a distance" (Bialasiewicz et al. 2013, p. 70).

The fourth perspective is a social constructivist approach, inspired by post-structuralism, discourse analysis and the "cultural turn" in social sciences (Kramsch 2006). The focus is on ontology rather than topology. Constructivists emphasize the social and cultural embeddedness of borders, rather than just their legal and political relevance. Whereas power and norms in traditional international relations scholarship are often seen as antidotes (Diez 2006, p. 244), according to the constructivist perspective the hard border of military controls and repression goes hand-in-hand with a soft and civilian border that includes normative power, surveillance,

ideologies, imaginaries, biopolitics. The focus is on processes of bordering rather than on borders per se: “It is not only the politics of delimitation/classification, but also the politics of representation and identity that come into play” (Paasi in Johnson et al. 2011, p. 62). In terms of their spatiality, borders, borderlands and borderscapes may be said to be “everywhere” and diffused throughout society through means of—for example—cultural differentiation, othering, emotional bordering, technical landscapes of surveillance, ubiquitous and unmediated contacts with the outer world (Balibar 2009).

While we agree that the ‘methodological nationalism’ implicit in most purely geopolitical accounts is limited, this book is an explicit attempt to adopt an eclectic approach which draws selectively on each of the above mentioned perspectives with a particular emphasis on bordering as a material and symbolic process. The four lines of enquiry, however, do not exclude one another:

Borders have symbolic roles in defining the political community; they have functional roles with respect to the internal administration and political control of populations and markets, and they have a geopolitical role in respect of territorial defence. (Delanty 2006, p. 188)

It is not surprising that the EU and its (internal and external) borders have been a crucial area of investigation in each of the perspectives mentioned above. The EU is certainly not a classical geopolitical actor not only because it does not directly control any military force, nor because it needs to mediate between an increasing number of member States, but because the scope and the outcome of such negotiation is strictly connected with the peculiar dynamics of the European integration project itself. In the process of creating a novel political subjectivity, the EU initiated one of the most ambitious attempts to materialize a multi-level governance system that seeks, literally, to “govern without [or beside] governments”, creating, empowering and giving visibility to a plurality of institutional actors and scales. The internal and external borders of this peculiar polity are inevitably soft, mobile, fragmented, blurred. The power that the EU is able to deploy in this framework is inevitably normative.

In recent years, an extensive literature has consequently developed which investigates the varieties of ways through which the EU is rescaling and re-bordering its internal territoriality as a means to project its political subjectivity over a Westphalian space that it tries to overthrow (Keating 1998; Brenner 2004; Bialasiewicz et al. 2005; Clark and Jones 2008). This strategy, more recently, and increasingly through the years, has been extended beyond the EU’s borders. The ENP is one of the most relevant attempts in this regard and it is consequently “the result of a process in which the EU was primarily concerned with itself” (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, p. 10), rather than with the need to define the most appropriate measures to promote stability and economic development in neighbouring countries.

European space making is explicitly about the political production of ‘European spaces’, rather than simply the deployment of ‘European’ policies in already existing political space. (Bialasiewicz et al. 2013, p. 60)

Some authors have stressed the post-Westphalian and even neo-Medieval character of such ‘EU’ropean space which implies a very peculiar conceptualization and

**Table 1.1** The EU as an international actor. (Source: Zielonka 2006, p. 144)

Major features	Neo-Westphalian State	Neo-Medieval Empire
Type of borders	Hard and fixed external border lines	Soft border zones in flux
Institutional structure	Single European army and police governed from one centre	Multiplicity of various overlapping military and police institutions
Policy aims	Defence against external aggression and maintaining the balance of power	Diffusion of internal conflicts and pacification of the external environment
Policy means	Military-civilian	Civilian-military
Legitimizing strategies	Might makes right	Our norms are right

management of its borders: “not a ‘fortress Europe’, but a ‘maze Europe’ is likely to emerge” (Zielonka 2006, p. 4). The EU, according to this line of inquiry, is not developing a super-State but a multi-layered and heterogenous polity with multiple authorities, shared competencies and blurred borders (Table 1.1). These borders are not modern but post-modern: no more hard and fixed but soft and fluid with no clear distinction between inside and outside. Besides these increasingly dissociated topographies, one of the characteristics of a neo-Medieval polity is the tendency to use moral and normative power, rather than military force and formal rules, as a legitimizing strategy and in order to delimit and to defend its borders (Zielonka 2006).

Notwithstanding neo-Medievalism in Europe is contrasted by the persistent importance of a still largely Westphalian sovereignty system, in the next chapters we will explore in details how the ENP contributes—or at least seeks to contribute—to the rescaling and re-bordering of the “wider Europe”. This is particularly evident in the cross-border cooperation component of the ENP and, more generally, in the peculiarity of the territorial and non-territorial imaginaries that the ENP deploys (see Chap. 2, 3, 4 and 6). A standing example in this regard is the multiplication of micro-, meso- and macro- regional strategies across a variety of national and supranational borders.

## 1.7 Regionalization and the Rescaling of the Wider Europe

The ENP is indeed the container of a plurality of regionalization processes and various regional policies in the European neighbourhood across different geographical scales. A first regionalization process is put in place by the policy itself through the introduction of the “European neighbourhood” as a new geographical entity and more in generally, as already mentioned, through the logic of “concentric circles” of integration.

An additional layer of regionalization can be identified in the cross-border cooperation component of the ENP (ENPI-CBC). Cross-border regions are sub-national areas that crisscross EU's external borders introducing a space that is both in-between and that cut through the logic of concentric circles. In this, ENPI-CBC deploys a strong counter-imaginary to the "who's in—who's out" logic that derives from other EU policies. Cross-border cooperation is also peculiar in the key role it attributes to local and regional authorities. The ENPI-CBC programmes seek to extend the instruments and narratives of (internal) European Cohesion Policy to neighbouring regions. The attempt is to overcome the clear distinction between policies (and resources) that are internal and external to the EU, and to extend the principles of subsidiarity, multi-level governance and the imaginary of a "Europe of regions" beyond the EU.

Chapter 4 will explore in detail how the transfer of such a model to the European neighbourhood produces different outcomes in the various cases. Local authorities, for example, are sometimes portrayed as equal partners while other times as beneficiaries who need assistance and empowerment. Several additional differences between internal and external CBC initiatives will be highlighted showing how the idea of eradicating borders in order to promote cooperation is parallel to the attempt of improving border management in order to keep Europe secure and protected. The ENPI-CBC programme, in other words, is crucial for understanding how bordering and cross-bordering processes, policy transfers and local adaptations, integration and exclusion proceed side-by-side.

The emphasis on 'region-building' across (and despite) political borders, typical of CBC programmes, is also inherent in other components of the EU's strategies towards neighbouring countries, although at different scales. In the second half of the 2000s, in parallel to the implementation of the ENP, all neighbouring countries have been included in new or reinforced (meso-) regional strategies which we will explore further in Chap. 3 (Fig. 1.3). Already existing meso-regional strategies such as the Northern dimension and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership were relaunched (in 2006 and 2008 respectively), while the Black Sea Synergy (2007) and the Eastern Partnership (2008) were created. These strategies—with the only exception of the Northern Dimension that nevertheless offers a relevant framework for the relations with the Russian Federation—are explicitly considered by the EU as complementary to the ENP. The (renewed) attention given to all the meso-regional strategies in the same period attest to the strategic relevance that (neo-)regionalism acquired within the ENP framework, not only as a practical instrument for promoting cooperation and multilateralism in the wider Europe but also for its symbolic dimension.

The meso-regionalization indeed recalls an imaginary of a Europe of "Olympic rings", instead of a Europe of concentric circles, in which,

The different yet interdependent regions/rings of Europe (...) become simply nodes in a wider framework (...). The new region building is seen to offer the possibility of envisaging a restructured Europe in which peripherality becomes a resource for action rather than a burden that confirms one to the margins. (Browning 2003, p. 50)

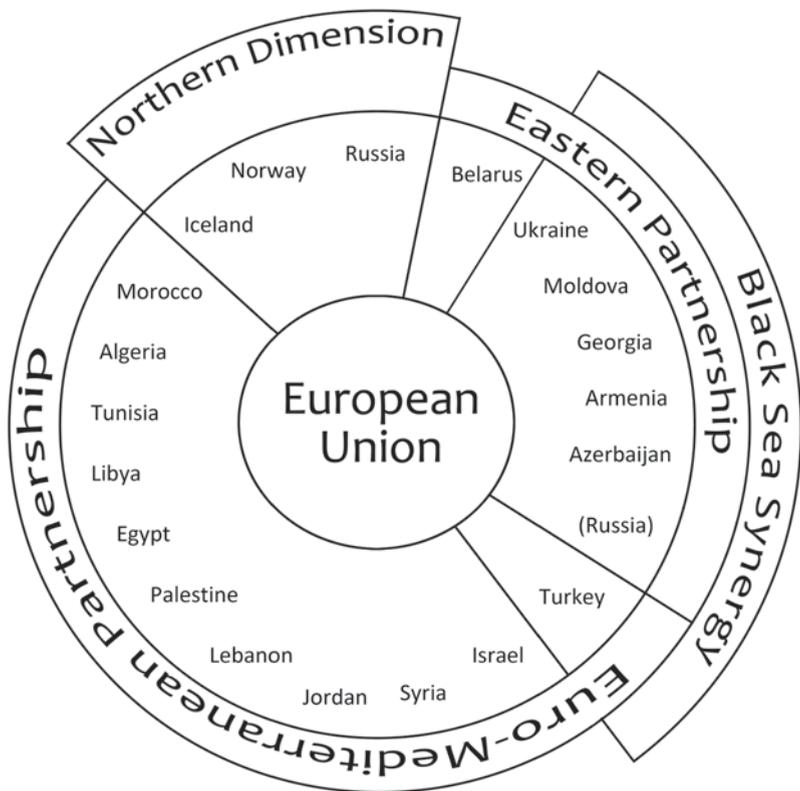


Fig. 1.3 Regional strategies in the European neighbourhood. (Source: designed by the authors)

The same applies, although with some relevant differences, to a further and more recent regionalization process which will be analyzed in Chap. 5: the macro-regional strategies which involve European member States and, in some cases, also neighbouring countries. Following the creation of the first macro-region in the Baltic in 2009, the idea has been to span from the Danube area to the Adriatic-Ionian Sea, the Alpine macro-regions and, more recently, along the so-called Atlantic Arc, in the North Sea-Channel and in the Mediterranean, although not all of those initiatives have been formally constituted yet (Fig. 1.4).

The multiplication of these ‘regional fantasies’ and “spatial games” across European frontiers (Bialasiewicz et al. 2013), gives visibility to the EU’s commitment to softening its external border but, at the same time, as we will see, it subsumes a variety of (re)bordering processes and produces a peculiar kind of border between the EU and its neighbourhood that is simultaneously mobile, fragmented and selective. Despite the emphasis on the territorial logic of regionalism and region-building, these strategies deploy a wide array of non-territorial, topological and networked imaginaries. Such a complex topography/topology, which the ENP projects, is consistent with the spatial politics and the institutional architecture that the EU is trying



**Fig. 1.4** Macro-regional strategies in Europe. (Source: designed by the authors)

to materialize. The attempt to replicate in its exterior the same imaginary of ‘soft’ cooperation, multi-level governance and regionalism by which the EU is rescaling and re-bordering its internal political space, is particularly evident here; a territoriality that is not merely the sum of the (national and regional) spatial units which it includes and one that surely does not correspond to the space of a modern and strictly bounded political space (Celata and Coletti 2011).

## 1.8 Topologies of Europeanization and the Neighbourhood Policy

The spatial metaphor that best captures and, in a way, summarizes all the above mentioned attempts from the EU to deal with neighbouring countries is, in our opinion, that of 'external' Europeanization (Jones 2006; Lavenex 2008). According to Featherstone and Radaelli (2003, p. 333), Europeanization is a set of,

Processes of construction, diffusion and institutionalization of formal and informal rules, procedures, policy paradigms, styles, 'ways of doing things,' and shared beliefs and norms which are first defined and consolidated in the EU policy process and then incorporated in the logic of domestic discourse, political structures and public policies.

While research on Europeanization was initially and is still today primarily concerned with policy convergence within the EU, the concept is now increasingly applied to relations between the EU and its exterior (Jones and Clark 2008). A number of additional distinctions should be considered in order to better appreciate the complex topologies of external Europeanization and its multi-dimensionality, which are particularly relevant to the case of the ENP.

First, Europeanization is aimed at institutional convergence as well as at discursive isomorphism: it is constituted by 'soft power' and political imaginations rather than solely by perspectives for 'hard' reforms (Bialasiewicz 2008; Clark and Jones 2008). It is a postcolonial rather than a neo-colonial strategy. Such a 'soft' dimension of Europeanization is somehow implicit in the original quotation cited above; it consists of the diffusion of specific practices, ways of doing and thinking which those actors, in partner countries, that are more directly involved in the ENP policy community, are somehow obliged to adopt. As Clark and Jones put it, it is "the microgeographies of everyday worked life of specific actors (...) which determine the (re-)production of Europeanization" (2008, p. 309). More generally, although the ENP has been unable to promote any kind of 'hard' political reform in partner countries, beyond some regulatory convergence, it has otherwise succeeded in framing relations with neighbouring countries according to a particular discourse on what those relations should look like and how they should evolve in the future.

Secondly, Europeanization is a specific typology of policy transfer and we have already mentioned how the diffusion of policy models from within the EU into the wider Europe is crucial for understanding the ENP. Critical studies on policy transfers, in this regard, have highlighted how policies are never simply "exported" from one place to another. Policy transfers are always selective and interactive, adapted to local circumstances, appropriated by a plurality of actors and transformed due to a variety of contextual, contingent and partisan circumstances (Peck and Theodore 2001, 2010; McCann and Ward 2012). Such "mutations" are crucial, as we will see, for a proper understanding of how a single policy framework produces diversified, sometimes unintended and even contradictory outcomes.

Thirdly, and in line with this last point, we should be very careful in portraying Europeanization, and the ENP, as a unidirectional strategy originating in Brussels and imposed uniformly upon a passive neighbourhood. This is not only to repeat that

the ENP is indeed the container of a plurality of geostrategies, but also to emphasize that Europeanization is mostly effective towards those actors and social groups that are more directly affected by European policies, or think they could be empowered by the Europeanization of their institutional system. The policy, on the other hand, does often encounter contestations and opposition from some partner countries or from specific actors/institutions within those countries which repeatedly denounce the Eurocentric character of EU external policies, are sceptical with respect to these policies or fear that (soft) integration may generate spill-over that undermine their power status (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). Recent research has commenced to highlight various subtle forms of what we could define as counter-Europeanization (Browning and Christou 2010): the “constitutive power” of European ‘outsiders’ not only to use the EU to pursue their own particular interests, but also to influence the content of EU policies and even the European perceptions of what the EU is, what it should become and how it should relate to its exterior.

This brings us to some preliminary concluding remarks. First, the fact that Europeanization is a contested process opposed by some local actors while appropriated by other actors and social groups may have and sometimes already has had the result of creating dividing lines *within* neighbouring countries. The result of such a controversial strategy may be defined as “selective Europeanization” and, again, as much to do with the re-bordering of the EU and of its neighbourhood. The selective functioning of Europeanization risks indeed a reinforcement of existing divisions between pro-European or pro-Western factions and their anti-European and anti-Western opponents that are typical of many countries surrounding the EU, not only in the Arab world. The recent Ukrainian crisis and, more generally, the fierce opposition of the Russian federation towards the perspectives for further integration of former Soviet countries with the EU, is a standing (and dramatic) example in this regard.

Secondly, the European ‘model’ that the ENP is trying to export is by no means precise, complete, definitive, but rather continuously in the making, along with the different shapes that the European integration process itself takes in space and time. As already mentioned, any attempt to re-conceptualize and re-map the neighbouring ‘other’, is indeed a struggle over the European ‘self’ (Jones 2006). The effectiveness of EU external policies, for example, is obviously correlated to the ability of the EU to complement or even to substitute its member States in their foreign policies. We know how it has always been difficult for the EU to speak with a single voice (see Chap. 7). The strategic investment the EU is deploying to build a “wider Europe”, in this frame, has an external as well as an equally important internal target, as mentioned in Sect. 1.6. This can also be regarded as a form of Europeanization that the ENP promotes: the production of a discourse which emphasizes the necessity and the legitimacy of an increasing role of the EU in the neighbourhood and beyond (Jones and Clark 2008, p. 567).

If the ‘making’ of the Neighbourhood Policy is the ‘making’ of Europe, finally, the limits of the former are limits to the latter. As we don’t know how Europe itself will evolve in the future we cannot say how relations between the EU and its neighbourhood will look at the end of the European (economic and political) crisis and

given the multiplication of hard geopolitical challenges in the Arab countries and in the former Soviet Union. The aim of the book is to take a look “from the border” on these complex issues with the idea that this is a crucial point of view for understanding the ENP as well as the ‘EU’ropean project more generally, and in order to search for alternatives.

## 1.9 Structure of the Book

The book is structured as follows. In Chap. 2, James Scott presents the state of the art of debates on theoretical and practical issues concerning border politics and cross-border cooperation in Europe, that are relevant to the interaction between the EU border regions and their immediate neighbours. The chapter focuses on the concept of ‘bordering’ as a theoretical and empirical approach to understanding the socio-political significance of borders both within and beyond Europe. Rather than to focus strictly on physical borders as legal institutions, the ‘bordering’ perspective is about the everyday construction of borders among communities and groups, through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and agency. In this frame, a focus on the cross-border cooperation initiatives is presented. Furthermore bordering is analysed within the EU’s dual geopolitical project of consolidation and co-operation. The ‘politics of borders’, it is argued, has been an integral part of the European Union’s project of integration, enlargement and regional cooperation and has been embodied by the European Neighbourhood Policy.

Chapter 3, by Filippo Celata, Raffaella Coletti and Enrica Polizzi, presents a review of the European Neighbourhood Policy’s diversified aims and of its realizations. The chapter presents an assessment of the ENP’s goals and narratives with a specific focus on its diversified regional strategies and on the perspectives for a multi-level governance of the policy. The aim is to show how the ENP is not a unitary but fragmented and controversial strategy: bordering and cross-bordering, homogenisations and differentiations, centrifugal and centripetal forces proceed side-by-side. Grasping the variety of these apparently contradictory forces, it is argued, is more useful in understanding the Neighbourhood Policy rather than referring to simple and ‘territorial’ metaphors such as “wider Europe”, on the one hand, or “fortress Europe” on the other.

Chapter 4 focuses on cross-border cooperation programmes between the EU border regions and their immediate neighbours. The chapter, by Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti, includes first a reflection on the role and the meaning of cross-border cooperation in its historical development: from its application to the EU internal borders to its transfer towards non-EU countries and to the European neighbourhood. The aim is to reflect on the changing significance of political borders in a Post-Westphalian “Europe of regions” and on the symbolic and material construction of the EU’s external frontiers. Secondly, the chapter presents a critical analysis of the narratives and the strategies of the cross-border cooperation initiatives launched within the ENP, in order to identify differences and tensions among

different programmes and meso-regions. The discussion of its cross-border cooperation component, it is argued, is particularly useful for understanding the contradictions which arise from the implementation of the ENP, the variety of governance models by which the policy is implemented and the relevance and the function that borders and border regions have in the construction of a “wider Europe”. Moreover, the issues of Europeanization and transnational governance, and the attempts to strengthen territorial cohesion between the EU member States and the non-EU neighbouring countries are discussed.

By presenting and critically evaluating the renewed approach put forward by the European Commission in the aftermath of the upheavals in the Mediterranean area and beyond, Battistina Cugusi discusses in Chap. 5 the EU response to new challenges emerging from the shifting geopolitical scenario in the European neighbourhood as well as the implications for the European Neighbourhood Policy. The aim is to analyse this renewed approach in light of the political instability and difficult economic situation characterizing the entire “wider Europe”. What has substantially changed compared to past shortcomings of the ENP? Is the EU better equipped with this renewed ENP in responding to the new challenges? After identifying the main aspects of the renewed ENP, the chapter will challenge these with the lessons learned from the application of the ENP incentive-based approach so far, in light of the EU decreasing leverage in the neighbourhood, and given the increasing influence of other key players in the area. Moreover, it will take into consideration the EU’s response to the main conflicts in the neighbourhood, highlighting the lack of coherence between ENP rhetoric and the divergent politics of member States.

Chapter 6, by Andrea Stocchiero, offers an updated overview on the macro-regional strategies promoted by the EU as a possible new tool for managing the relations between the Union and its neighbouring countries. Having being first introduced in the Baltic area, macro-regional strategies are now diffusing all over Europe and—even if they receive no additional funding from the EU and have a weak degree of institutionalization—they have captured the interests of both scholars and policy-makers. Macro-regions, it is argued, contribute to the ongoing rescaling and to increase the complexity of the European polity, while offering the opportunity for a better policy coordination at a plurality of geographical scales. By involving both EU member States and non-EU neighbouring countries, macro-regional strategies may potentially overcome the logic of “concentric circles” of integration through the constitution of a European space with variable geometries based on “rings” of cooperation with fuzzy borders. The chapter presents a review of existing macro-regional strategies in order to reflect upon the potentialities as well as the limits of the instrument, its applicability to non-EU countries and its potential and perceived impact on the ground.

Chapter 7, by Andriy Bryin and Raffaella Coletti, presents an overview of the geopolitical and geoeconomic relations between Russia, China, the US and the participants to the European Neighbourhood Policy. These global powers as well as the EU are analysed as modern global empires, with differentiated interests in establishing economic and political relations with neighbouring countries, in the framework of their evolving geopolitical spheres of influence. Neighbouring countries are

applying increasingly differentiated international politics towards those different empires, and the EU's normative approach appears far from sufficient in maintaining a privileged relation with its partners. Eastern Europe, the Southern Caucasus and the Mediterranean basin emerge as the potential chessboards where modern empires compete. This competition gives further momentum to the practice of (selective) Europeanization: the normative approach of the EU, and the privileged relations that the EU has with some specific countries and actors in its neighbourhood, are also dictated by the need to find a specific positioning with respect to the role of other global players in the same region.

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# Chapter 2

## Bordering, Border Politics and Cross-Border Cooperation in Europe

James W. Scott

### 2.1 Introduction

Contemporary border studies reflect continuity and change in scientific thought as well as innumerable contributions to the conceptualization of social space and its workings. Through the investigation of borders we realize that there can be no hegemonic dominance of any specific social theory, whether critical or not, in the understanding of space and its social significance. And whereas space is abstract and absolute, we now understand that it is borders that ‘fix’ space and make space concrete as lived and comprehensible social places. As a result of this realization, the study of borders has moved from a dominant concern with formal State frontiers and ethno-cultural areas to the study of borders at diverse socio-spatial and geographical scales, ranging from the local and the municipal, to the global, regional and supra-state level. Furthermore, the robust growth of border studies can partially be attributed to the emergence of counter-narratives to globalization discourses of the late 1980s and early 1990s. For a rather short but influential period, prophecies of ‘borderless worlds’ abounded in which global technologies, cyberspace, capital flows, East-West political convergence and interstate integration would make political borders obsolete. However, perhaps ironically, globalization has instead contributed to research perspectives in which borders have become ubiquitous—not always visible, but always with clear social impacts.

The present state of debate indicates that the field of border studies has opened up possibilities for questioning the rationales behind everyday border-making by understanding borders as institutions, processes and symbols. Borders are thus not given, they emerge through socio-political border-making or *bordering* that takes place within society (Van Houtum and Van Naerssen 2002; Scott 2011). Rather than focus strictly on physical borders as formal markers of territoriality, the bordering perspective is about the everyday construction of borders among communities and

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groups, through ideology, discourses, political institutions, attitudes and agency. As such, it is the process of bordering which brings diverse types of borders within a single frame of analysis. Furthermore, the strategic use of borders, characterized here as ‘border politics’, provides a perspective on bordering that reflects this contemporary discussion.

The concept of border politics raises a series of interesting questions regarding the power relations involved in the making of borders; this manifests itself, for example, in tensions between the local constitution and external determination of borders in society. This has, of course, been amply considered in debates on region-building (Keating 1997; Allen and Cochrane 2007; Davoudi and Strange 2009; Jonas 2012). However, these questions remain relatively underdeveloped in the border studies literature. With reference to debates on regionalism and citizenship, one underlying *bordering* narrative is the idea that bounding of social space can be an incremental and endogenously driven process that creates a shared notion of community (Scott 2007; Wallis 2010). An alternative bordering narrative suggests, on the other hand, that the bounding of social space is increasingly characterised by adaptation to external pressures, producing, among others, ‘post-political’ reinventions of regions, territories and community relations in order to manage the territorial contradictions of global capitalism (see Allen and Cochrane 2007; Brenner 2004). These two generalised border-configuring contexts are not mutually exclusive; they co-exist as elements of social construction that both reference specific geographical spaces as well as functional relationships that are often less territorially fixed.

In the following, the concept of border politics will be developed with regard to the European Union’s conceptualizations of supranational territoriality and its strategic use of State borders in order to advance its geopolitical goals. The EU’s border politics is a complex array of programmes, policies, and imaginaries of political community in which borders are used as resources for different specific aims. Cross-border cooperation, which is the main focus of this paper, is a prominent instrument of the EU’s border politics: it is assumed that with time, CBC will both break down barriers to deeper political and social integration as well as create new development opportunities through communication, ideas and synergies. Similarly, the European Union has attempted to appropriate the idea of ‘borderlands’ as part of its drive to create new spatial contexts for social transformation, regional development and innovation. Cooperation, on the other hand, has been framed as the actual regional-building process across borders.

The EU’s politics of borders, moreover, is both idealistic and practically oriented as evidenced by the complex agendas of ‘Cohesion’ and ‘Neighbourhood’ within which cross-border cooperation discourses are embedded. For example, a central logic of INTERREG and other support programmes of CBC has been the creation of new communities of interest and geographically flexible networks—and to break down territorial and administrative constraints to the exchange of ideas. It is perhaps not an exaggeration to state that the EU has envisaged a project of European construction through the transcendence of local particularisms and boundaries. This idealistic element of the EU’s border politics coexists uncomfortably with the *Real-*

*politik* of implementation. CBC within the EU is embedded in Cohesion Policy and highly territorialised; spatially defined indicators, goals, remits and responsibilities create their own barriers to interaction. At the same time, national implementation of Cohesion Policy remains guided by a fixation with physical investment and development and not on the development of cooperative networks across borders. Furthermore, the context of European neighbourhood deserves attention as the EU's external borders lie at the intersection between the EU's ambitions for influence, acceptance and stability on the one hand, and its territorial anxieties on the other. Economic co-operation and cross-border dialogue compete with border security agendas and the Schengen visa regime (Scott 2005).

In the form of a selective overview, this chapter will relate CBC and the creation of cross-border regions to bordering by emphasizing their political character within the context of European integration. Discussion will begin with a very general overview of the state of the debate in border studies and a specific focus on change and continuity in the framing of State territoriality. This will be followed by a brief discussion of the bordering perspective as a means of interpreting the European Union's role in configuring borders in a wider European context. What emerges in this discussion is that the EU is a border-making actor that reflects a number of different bordering logics. Among these logics we can include the creation of new post-national relational spaces, the consolidation of territorial development within the EU but also the creation of a highly selective border regime that regulates access to the Schengen Area.

## 2.2 Territoriality, Nationhood and Statehood: Change and Continuity in Border Studies

It is important to remember that border studies has its origins in historicist and cultural determinist traditions (inspired by specific interpretations of Herder, Hegel, Darwin, Fichte and others)—in which the emergence of nation States and their borders was understood as an expression of historical necessity and/or 'God's will'. Even without Hegelian undertones, modern nation-states continue to be understood as the highest form of effective social organization within the world system and remain major—if not always the principal—sources of political, cultural and social identity. Major classic studies by scholars such as Ratzel (1903), Hartshorne (1933; 1937), Ladis Kristof (1959) and Julian Minghi (1963) highlighted the co-evolution of borders and States. For Kristof (1959, p. 220), the primary function of boundaries as legal institutions was clear: "... in order to have some stability in the political structure, both on the national and international level, a clear distinction between the spheres of foreign and domestic politics is necessary. The boundary helps to maintain this distinction". We can also detect a clear Cold-War era reification of national hegemony, despite the fact that attempts to create supranational political and economic institutions in Europe began shortly after 1945. Almost sacrosanct was the principal of national sovereignty as a source of geopolitical stability; a stability

that national borders could (and should) provide by serving as effective markers of sovereignty.

In many ways and for good reasons, the State-centered tradition in border studies—and political geography in general—perseveres as a result of historical experience that has been reinforced by current events. Indeed, one of the defining characteristics of Post-Cold War Europe—one which coincided with the proliferation of discourses of ‘borderlessness’ and nation-state decline—has been the drive for national self-determination in Central and Eastern Europe. This drive for de-facto and/or re-asserted sovereignty has shifted the political map of Europe, created new borders and dealt a fatal blow to multinational federations such as Yugoslavia, Czechoslovakia and the Soviet Union. At the same time, this drive for national Statehood also brought with it destructive wars and brutal episodes of ethnic cleansing that have seriously damaged interstate and interethnic relations in Southeast Europe.

Although interdependence and processes of globalization have complicated the picture, the continuous (re)construction of borders based on forms of social-political organization and processes of nation-building remains a central problem in border studies. As Paasi argues (2012, p. 2307) understanding borders is inherently an issue of understanding how States function and thus: “(...) how borders can be exploited to both mobilize and fix territory, security, identities, emotions and memories, and various forms of national socialization”. Further, according to Paasi “this conceptualization of borders suggests that, while it is continually vital to examine how borders and bordering practices come about, it is also critical to reflect on the political rationalities and State-based ideologies embedded in these practices.” There are, of course, open critics of persistent State-centeredness in border studies. Kramsch (2010) has argued that understandings of borders exclusively in terms of the historical emergence of States negates the importance of temporal specificity and everyday mentalities in creating border categories. Kramsch suggests in fact, that it is rather notions of possibilism, rather than a priori ‘state-determination’ that provide a way forward in border studies.

Perhaps in order to put the State-centric focus into perspective it should be mentioned this is not the end of the story; a reification of the State as historically inevitable is not at issue. What is at stake is an understanding of the State that is historically contingent. Additionally, most border scholars do not suggest an immutability of State borders nor an ‘end of history’ mindset, i.e. with regard to a final future world map of nation-states. Furthermore, within border studies it has seldom been suggested that State sovereignty is *absolute* but rather conditional upon many factors; contemporary analysis documents the challenges that transnational processes of an economic, social and political nature have visited upon States (see Flint and Taylor 2007; Held et al. 1999; Agnew 2009). Thus ‘globalized political authority’ as conceptualized by McGrew and Held (2002) suggests a relative shift of political power away from rather than an obsolescence of States.

The reality is thus one of multifarious persistence and incremental change with regards to the role of State in the world system. For example, one important strand of ‘post-national’ theorization is that of the emergence of new political and econom-

ic units that partly incorporate but also beyond the context of the nation-state. The development of multinational and geographically contiguous zones of economic and political co-operation, such as the case of transnational regionalism in East Asia, are one expression of the global forces that are restructuring the world system of individual States (see Perkmann and Sum 2002). Transnational regionalism is a manifestation of ‘geo-governance’, implying the orchestration and regulation of globalization processes.

These questions have an important bearing on our discussion of border politics. European integration is an evolutionary process that has promoted perhaps the most concrete notions of post-national politics and borders proposed to date. This has taken place in concrete forms of shared sovereignty and community policies, the support of local and regional cross-border co-operation and more subtle discursive and ideational forms of Europeanization. Territorial configurations of power in Europe have in this way experienced fundamental change: the exclusive nature of State sovereignty and citizenship has been challenged and the function, significance and symbolism of State borders have been transformed. There is, furthermore, the question whether EU geopolitics, born out of an experience with shared sovereignty, national heterogeneity, cultural difference and large regional disparities, represents an historical break from the power politics and ‘will to hegemony’ so characteristic of more traditional geopolitical doctrines.

### 2.3 Bordering and EU Border Politics

What the above suggests is that contextually sensitive understandings of the concept of post-national borders in no way suggest a disappearance of States or the decline of State territoriality per se. They instead suggest the potential emergence of new borders, new border functions and/or new methods of territorial control that go beyond traditional notions of State territoriality. Post-national borders might thus follow either sub- or supranational logics of political interaction. Such borders are post-national because they create new political functions of integration and interaction across State borders. Understood in these terms, post-national borders might define politics that transcend the jurisdictional and conceptual limits of State-centred orientations, for example as a community of States, as networks of cities or cross-border regions.

Cross-border regions and cooperation thus provide a conceptual bridge to an understanding of borders based on transcending the limits of Stateness and State-centered political action; they also indicate that it is processes of *bordering* that bring diverse spatialities and diverse types of border within a single frame of analysis of the European Union’s politics of borders. The notion of bordering suggests that borders are not only semi-permanent, formal institutions but are also non-finalizable processes. At its most basic, the process of bordering can be defined as the everyday construction of borders, for example through political discourses and institutions, media representations, school textbooks, stereotypes and everyday forms

of transnationalism. Henk van Houtum (2005) use the term ‘bordering’ to refer to the interplay between the ordering (of chaos) and border-making. Physical borders are not there only by tradition, wars, agreements and high politics but also made and maintained by other cultural, economic political and social activities. Everyday ‘bordering and ordering’ practices connive to create and recreate new social-cultural boundaries and divisions which are also spatial in nature. Everyday lived experiences include intersections, differentiations and similarities. Intersectional perspectives pay attention to how gender, age and ethnicity work together and mutually constitute each other through diverse categorizations and selected signs in different ways. What matters and to whom and how some are made more stable than others.

There are, furthermore, overlapping ways of how bordering can be understood (Scott 2011). For example a *pragmatic* approach that derived generalizable knowledge from practices of border transcendence and confirmation a *critical* approach which theorized and questions the conditions that give rise to border-generating categories. These bordering perspectives come together, among other ways, in the present geopolitical climate where, in stark contrast to the 1990s when discourses of ‘de-bordering’ Europe enjoyed substantial currency, the EU’s external borders appear to have become formidable barriers symbolizing civilizational difference between East and West.

At one level, bordering serves to satisfy two basic needs of people—being protected from external and internal threats and determining the territories which belong to particular political, cultural and social groups. These goals are achieved, firstly, through the process of socialization in family, at school and by media, shaping a self-identification of an individual with certain territory, culture and political system. Borders are also necessary to determine not only internal but also external identities of territories, especially the States recognized by the international community, their right to maintain different relations, to create unions and associations, and to be represented in different unions, i.e. to be legal political actors. Secondly, security is supposed to be provided by a sovereign ruler or authorities looking for legitimacy in the eyes of citizens (Newman and Paasi 1998; Newman 2011). The sovereignty of a ruler or other authorities is extended to a specific territory with clearly delineated borders controlled by them.

On a more subtle level, bordering is about a politics of difference. Border narratives, for example, have always, consciously and sub-consciously, thrown up the notion of difference which exists on both sides of the border. In the classic chicken and egg situation, either borders are created to reflect existing differences between groups and cultures and are thus imposed upon the landscape (be it geographic or social) to institutionalize and perpetuate that difference, or borders are imposed upon ‘virgin’ uninhabited spaces and, in deterministic fashion and are thus responsible for the evolution of difference on either side of the line of separation (which is equally a barrier to communication and movement). However, a closer analysis of cross-border narratives would indicate that the opening of borders highlights, rather than diminishes, notions of difference.

New geopolitical perspectives, and the question whether Europe is engaging in post-colonial or neo-imperial bordering practices with new methods, inform much

critical debate on the EU. For example, reference is often made to the European past as a conceptual guide to understanding how a future EU might relate to its citizens, its ‘neighbourhood’ and the rest of the world. One result of this perspective is to see the EU as a quasi-empire, as a new supranational body that uses its considerable power to structure the world and, in particular, its more immediate region. Some readings of the ‘Europe as Empire’ metaphor are rather benign, if not outright positive, such as Jan Zielonka’s (2006) suggestion that a ‘post-modern’ European empire without immutable and excluding borders can generate a hybrid multilevel sense of governance, citizenship and identity. Other notions of European empire are much less sanguine. James Anderson (2007) sees the EU as a Neo-Westphalian re-constitution of core Europe’s political and economic hegemonic ambitions in which the EU is unilaterally imposing its norms (and interests) on new member States and beyond. Similarly, Dimitrovova (2010) argues that the EU engages in traditional State-like politics of difference and exclusion with regard to neighbouring States in East Europe and the Mediterranean.

## 2.4 Cross-Border Cooperation and Politics of Borders

Much of the research of cross-border cooperation—as a project of region-building—has been focused on European borders. Region-building at borders has been encouraged by European policy makers in the period leading up the EU’s eastward enlargement in 2004 as a means of gradually bringing people on both sides (in some cases it can be more than just two adjacent borders) to encounter and know each other before the final opening and removal of the border. The dynamics of what takes place in such regions of transition are not limited to State territories but also to the ways in which groups and cultures develop cross-border meetings of culture within multi-cultural societies as they develop new hybrid modes of cultural and social behaviour.

CBC can be defined in terms of political projects carried out by private, State and, to an extent, third sector actors with the express goal of extracting benefit from joint initiatives in various economic, social, environmental and political fields. Through new forms of political and economic interaction—both institutional and informal—it has been suggested that greater cost-effectiveness in public investment can be achieved, economic complementarities exploited, the scope for strategic planning widened and environmental problems more directly and effectively addressed.

Research interest in CBC has been spurred by the momentous political changes of the past two decades. While the concept of CBC is not new, it is the context of Post-Cold War change that has elevated CBC to the paradigmatic status it now enjoys. ‘De-bordering’ within the enlarged European Union and new cross-border relations in Central and Eastern Europe indicate that not only States but citizens, communities and regions have chosen to open new avenues of communication with their neighbours across national boundaries. Furthermore, in those contexts where

States have (re)gained their independence and new borders have emerged, Euro-regions, cross-border city partnerships and similar cooperation vehicles have also come into being (Scott 2006). CBC within the EU and at the EU's external borders aim at managing issues that transcend the confines of individual communities—issues that include social affairs, economic development, minority rights, cross-border employment and trade, the environment, etc. Cross-border co-operation also involves attempts to exploit borderlands situations, using borders as a resource for economic and cultural exchange as well as for building political coalitions for regional development purposes (Popescu 2008).

Cross-border co-operation between States has been the subject of interdisciplinary and comparative study for almost three decades. This research has been driven by at least one general core concern: i.e. transformations of nation-states and their consequences for economic, political, social and cultural life. Originally, research focused on urban and regional forms of 'subsovereign paradiplomacy'; the pioneering work of Duchacek (1986), Soldatos (1993) and others indicated how cities and regions have pursued economic development and political aims through international co-operation. For example, transboundary strategic alliances between cities, regions and other subnational governments as well as the initiatives of cities to promote their economic and political interests internationally received considerable research attention during the 1980s and 1990s.<sup>1</sup>

Partly spurred on by European Union, the focus of research shifted during the 1990s from empirical research on transnational urban networks and their co-operation mechanisms to a the study of local and regional forms of policy relevant cross-border interaction. A particular European characteristic of this emergent research field has been a more contextually sensitive understanding of the nature of borders themselves. In common understanding, borders are significant State-level processes of 'ordering'. Borders, however, also refer to symbolic boundaries and societal processes that help construct societies at a more general level. In terms of everyday life, borders are formed by the spatial organization of difference; both the reproduction of symbolic systems and the creation of subjective distinctions (borders) between self and other are central to human perception and the organisation of human societies.<sup>2</sup> In some cases borders mark transitions, both physical and cognitive, between different spaces, 'borderlands' define these transitions in concrete spatial terms as evidenced by increasing tendencies towards cross-border co-operation—particularly in Europe (Kolossoff and Scott 2012). In sum and with particular reference to the EU-European situation, borders are seen to play an important role in framing and regulating social relations as well as setting conditions for local and regional development.

The process of 'Europeanization'—defined in terms of a gradual diffusion of supranational understandings of citizenship, territoriality, identity and governance—is

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, Briner (1986), Church and Reid (1996) and Steiner and Sturn (1993).

<sup>2</sup> Two informative sources on border research in Europe and in more international terms are two major anthologies that have recently appeared: Wilson and Donnan (2012) and Wastl Walter (2011).

closely related to CBC as well as to changing concepts of borders, both within the EU and beyond the EU's own borders (Scott and Liikanen 2011). A central aspect of this process is the definition of rules, norms and practices that recast national spaces as integral elements of an international political community; from this derive the objectives and values that create a common set of discourses in which various political and social issues can be negotiated. The principal characteristic of this process is the transcendence of strictly national orientations in public policy, development policies and identity. Indeed, the construction of the European Union is in large part an attempt to create a coherent political, social and economic space within a clearly defined multinational community (the EU 27). Borders play an important role in the representation of European nation-states and the EU itself, as well as in the representation of the EU's relations to its neighbours. Cross-border co-operation at the interstate, regional and local levels is seen to provide ideational foundations for a networked Europe through symbolic representations of European space and its future development perspectives.

CBC research has also focused on the European Union's impact on the nature of cross-border relations in Eastern and Central Europe (Popescu 2008; Zhurzhenko 2010; Scott 2006). The EU's influence has been felt at a geopolitical level but also at a more basic societal level (Scott 2005). On the one hand, prospective benefits of closer relations with the EU (including hopes of membership) have provided a context for rapprochement and development. On the other hand, concrete material incentives provided by the EU have been used to begin developing local and regional cooperation initiatives. In preparing Central and East European countries for membership, the EU adopted a strategy based on institutionalized CBC and aimed at a gradual lessening of the barrier function of national borders. These policies have also been aimed at integrating previously divided border regions in order to build a more cohesive European space.

## **2.5 Perspectives on Cross-Border Governance and Co-operation**

Building upon the conceptual foundations of 'subnational paradiplomacy', border studies, particularly in the European case, developed during the 1990s and early 2000s a specific focus on cross-border policy integration as a form of multilevel governance (Perkmann 1999; Lepik 2012). This focus remains an important one in terms of CBC policy within the EU. However, if the former approach positioned CBC within a context of globalization and transnational networks, the European perspective has been largely influenced by formal, structural understandings of transnational governance (see Blatter 1997, 2004). For example, in order to overcome traditional forms of inter-governmentalism, institutionalization at the local and regional levels was seen as a necessary element for successful CBC (Scott 2000). Prospects for transboundary regionalization have been thus defined by the outcomes of a gradual and complex process of institutional innovation and capac-

ity-building at national, State and local levels. At the same time, the emergence of new planning forms across borders were prophesied in terms of regional dialogue. Dialogue, together with adequate strategies with which to reconcile and co-ordinate diverse interests, were seen to offer considerable promise for developing transboundary alliances between cities and their regions (Leibenath et al. 2008).

The EU has played a crucial role in supporting local and regional cross-border governance processes as these are seen to be important aspects of interstate integration and a mechanism for deepening relations with non-EU neighbours. The principal strategy pursued by the EU in supporting CBC has been to couple the development of local and regional cooperation structures with more general regional development policies. This has necessitated a process of institution-building, generally, but not exclusively, in the form of so-called Euroregions or other cross-border associations. In response to the EU's policy initiatives (and its more or less explicit institutionalization imperative). The main goal of Euroregions and similar organizations is to promote mutual learning and co-operative initiatives across borders in order to address specific regional economic, environmental, social and institutional problems. These associations, many with their own cross-border administrative bodies (e.g. councils), represent an additional, albeit strictly advisory, regional governance structure and play a vital role in channelling European regional development support into the border regions. In order to structure their long-term operations and, at the same time, satisfy European Union requirements for regional development assistance, the Euroregions define Transboundary Development Concepts (TDCs) that identify principle objectives of transboundary co-operation and define possible courses of action. TDCs build the basis for concrete projects, proposals for which can then be submitted to the EU, national governments or other funding sources for support.

Euroregions were pioneered and developed as locally based co-operation initiatives in Dutch-German border regions as early as the 1960s (Perkmann 2007). Since then, Euroregions have become part of complex policy networks at the European and national levels and have contributed to 'institutional thickness' in transboundary planning, particularly along Germany's borders. Indeed, the Dutch-German EUREGIO, a Euroregion with its own local council and close ties to German and Dutch State agencies, has served as a model of sorts for the development of border region associations within the European Union. In its different phases of development CBC been characterised by the adaptation of existing institutional structures to new opportunities and problems set by recent geopolitical changes. Given the long track record of cross-border cooperation in Western Europe it is not surprising that cooperation stakeholders in Central and Eastern Europe have emulated many of the institutions and projects pioneered within the EU.

Looking back on the history of cross-border co-operation within the EU, multi-level institutional mechanisms for transboundary co-operation in Europe appear to have contributed significantly to the development of new interregional and transnational working relationships (Perkmann 2002). The popularity of the Euroregion concept is undeniable. These associations are now a ubiquitous feature along the EU's external borders as well in many non-EU European contexts (Bojar 2008;

Perkmann 2002; Popescu 2011). The EU structural initiative INTERREG, now in its fifth programming phase (2014–2020), has supported numerous transboundary and transnational co-operation projects between regions. Financed out of the EU's structural funds, INTERREG has disbursed well over 10 Billion € making it the community's largest structural initiative. In addition, programmes targeted for Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union, most prominently PHARE, TACIS and more recently the European Neighbourhood Policy Instrument, have provided supplemental funds for cross-border projects in regions on the EU's external boundaries.

Although the promotion of territorial co-operation and as sense of cross-border regionness through common institutions has been intensive in theory, in practice institutionalization patterns have been uneven—both in terms of governance capacities and their performance in terms of actual cooperation. Despite undeniable successes, Euroregions have clearly not automatically guaranteed the establishment of new public and private sector alliances to address regional and local development issues. European experience would also seem to indicate that, ironically, co-operation practices have maintained an administrative, technocratic and official character that as yet has not sufficiently encouraged citizen action and public-sector participation—particularly in areas characterised by stark socio-economic asymmetries, such the German-Polish border region (Matthiesen 2002).

In the most successful—that is, the most well-organized—border regions (e.g. the Dutch-German Euroregions), public-sector and NGO co-operation has been productive in many areas, especially in questions of environmental protection, local services and cultural activities. Additionally, successful cases (e.g. German-Dutch, Austrian-Hungarian regional projects) seem to involve a process of pragmatic incrementalism, with 'learning-by-doing' procedures and a gradual process of institutionalization. As working relationships have solidified, experience in joint project development has accumulated and expertise in promoting regional interests increased, as has the capacity of regional actors to take on large-scale problems and projects. Furthermore, in well-organized border regions (e.g. the Dutch-German Euroregions), public-sector and NGO co-operation has been productive in many areas, especially in questions of environmental protection, local services and cultural activities.

On the other hand, however, the research state of the art indicates a number of problems in CBC that appear to be a more persistent nature. In less successful cases, for example, cross-border projects have merely served to enhance local budgets without stimulating true co-operation. Generally speaking it has also been very difficult to stimulate private sector participation in cross-border regional development Explanations for these mixed results have been accumulated through numerous case studies, but it appears that the transcending of borders is a much more complex socio-spatial process than most empirical research has been able to capture<sup>3</sup>. Furthermore, given the ambiguous results of institutionalized forms of

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<sup>3</sup> See, for example, Henk van Houtum's (2002) essay on 'borders of comfort' and their effects on restricting cross-border economic networking.

local and regional CBC within Western Europe, what can be said about the situation in the new member States—and, for that matter, at the EU's external borders? Gabriel Popescu (2006), for example, has critically assessed EU institutionalization strategies in Central and Eastern Europe—an area of complex social, economic and political diversity. Popescu argues that Euroregions often tend to be co-opted by specific interests seeking either to benefit from direct EU support. As a result, Popescu states that Euroregions, especially those emerging in Central and Eastern Europe, are top-down creations, inhibiting processes of region-building through local initiative.

## 2.6 EU Border Politics and the Case of the External Borders

If the practice of cross-border co-operation has been a long-standing element of the EU's border politics as a means of consolidating political community, it has been employed vis-à-vis neighbouring States in order to enhance the EU's external role and to differentiate the EU from the rest of the world (Scott 2011). Cross-border relations between the EU and post-Soviet States have evolved rapidly during the last two decades with cities, regions, States and civil society opening new avenues of communication with their neighbours. One major conditioning factor underlying this cooperation is the EU's desire to assume a stabilizing but also transformative role in the post-Soviet context.<sup>4</sup> Announced with much aplomb in 2003, the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) promised a new dimension in regional cooperation and interstate relations between the EU and its direct neighbours to the East and South. This policy represents one of the main instruments of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy, the principal aim of which is to establish a greater regional context for economic growth and free trade, social modernization, political stability and security.<sup>5</sup> Evidence for redoubled EU efforts to promote cooperation with its immediate neighbours is provided by the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI), which in the programming period 2007–2013 undertook investments in promoting cooperation and integration between the EU and neighbouring

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<sup>4</sup> According to the ENP strategy paper (EU Commission 2004, p. 3), 'the privileged relationship with neighbours will build on mutual commitment to common values principally within the fields of the rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development'. The document then states: 'The level of ambition of the EU's relationships with its neighbours will take into account the extent to which these values are effectively shared'.

<sup>5</sup> The countries involved in the ENP are: Algeria, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Egypt, Georgia, Israel, Jordan, Lebanon, Libya, Moldova, Morocco, the Palestinian Authority, Syria, Tunisia and Ukraine. While not part of the ENP process in the strict sense, Russia participates in cross-border programmes funded through the European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument (ENPI–CBC). No agreements have been established to date with Belarus, Libya and Syria. For further information on the European Neighbourhood Policy, see Chap. 3.

countries, advancing good governance and sustainable socio-economic development in the respective States, and promoting cross-border cooperation.<sup>6</sup>

Thus, border politics of CBC work quite differently in the case of the EU external confines. The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), as it is now known, represents a framework ostensibly based on co-ownership of cooperation agendas. The geopolitical vision that underlies the EU's concept of neighbourhood is that of 'privileged partnership'—that is, of a special, multifaceted and mutually beneficial relationship with the EU, in many cases in place of concrete perspectives of EU membership. Arguably, therefore, the ENI facilitates an ideational projection of power that—at least in theory—marks a decisive departure from traditional State-centred geopolitics. A further indication of this are the roles attributed to civil society and cross-border co-operation. In particular, the strengthening of a 'civil society dimension' within the ENI is promulgated by the European Commission (2007), the Council of Europe and the Parliament. 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.

However, at the same time that the EU-European space is being made 'exceptional' by a set of geopolitical discourses and practices that extol its core values, a sense of civilizational difference is being projected on its neighbours to the East and South (Boedeltje and van Houtum 2011; Browning and Joenemmi 2008). We thus see processes of geographical and cultural-historical differentiation between the present EU-28, prospective members (ex-Yugoslavia, Albania), associated countries such as Turkey and countries considered unsuited for EU membership (e.g. Moldova, Morocco, Ukraine).

While the ENI's scope is complex and multilayered, its main focus since 2003 has been the creation of a wider security community in Europe; illegal immigration, human trafficking, terrorism and cross-border organized crime remain issues that are seen to require an especially intensified co-ordination between the EU and its neighbours.<sup>7</sup> Nevertheless, through a politics of borders the EU is pressing its political and security concerns onto the template of partnership. One example of this is the extension of the EU's border regime and security perimeter beyond its borders and deep into the territory of neighbouring States (Vacchiano 2013). Some recent critiques of the EU are quite pointed, suggesting that the EU's relations with its neighbours are increasingly characterised by a 'hard territoriality' that privileges

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<sup>6</sup> Article 2 of the ENPI Regulation (European Parliament 2006) reads as follows: 'Community assistance shall promote enhanced cooperation and progressive economic integration between the European Union and the partner countries and, in particular, the implementation of partnership and cooperation agreements, association agreements or other existing and future agreements. It shall also encourage partner countries' efforts aimed at promoting good governance and equitable social and economic development'.

<sup>7</sup> The EU's security policies with regard to the neighbourhood are targeted at enhancing public security through combating environmental hazards, terrorism, organized crime, smuggling and other illegal activities. At the same time, peace and stability are to be achieved through closer economic cooperation and the avoidance of divisive gaps in living standards.

security issues, border management and sovereignty (Bialasiewicz 2012). This resonates with concerns voiced by Follis (2012), Scott and Liikanen (2011) and others that obsessions with undocumented migration, cross-border crime and terrorism as well as continuing visa restrictions on non-EU citizens could reinforce obstacles to co-operation, conjuring up fears of an emerging Fortress Europe that effectively divides the continent.

In the specific case of Ukraine, the EU's border politics appear to be contributing to a new buffer zone between East and West. This is evidenced by the EU's neglect of Ukraine despite this country's attempts to adhere to EU conditionality (Korosteleva 2011). While highly exaggerated, fears that Ukraine will end up as a host country for unwanted immigrants, refugees and asylum seekers help cement EU-Ukraine divisions. At the same time, the EU has not been projecting its ideas very clearly—and thus is subject to misrepresentations. It is perceived as too aloof and distant and thus portrayed in very negative terms by nationalist groups. The EU might, ironically, be reproducing what it explicitly seeks to avoid: the creation of new divisions in welfare, social opportunity and political dialogue. The EU does hold great appeal for many in Ukraine as a model of a more open and tolerant society and has in fact promoted new social agendas and new ways of thinking about Ukrainian social and political transformation. However, having achieved its ambitious enlargement agenda, and now securing its Eastern borders, the EU appears to have lost sight of the material and symbolic significance of regional cooperation. Civil society struggles to receive greater recognition and support from the EU even though its political salience continues to increase.

## 2.7 Conclusions

The present state of debate indicates that State borders not only have different meanings for different actors but are also manifestations of power relations in society at different scales. In particular, they reflect the normative power of international organizations, including the EU and asymmetries between States in different areas. As this discussion has illustrated, the EU has been actively involved in a highly differentiated politics of borders that seeks to break down barriers to intercultural communication and interaction. As the European Union can be understood to be an experiment in supranational liberal democracy, however, border scholars have attempted to outline some of the basic contradictions of EU's politics of borders and its bordering practices. European integration has on the one hand signified a certain degree of progress towards a more democratic regulation of borders, partly through local cross-border cooperation. The question that arises with globalization and the new permeability of borders is whether this progress can be sustained. Paradoxically perhaps, Europeanization does not only imply *transcending* national spaces per se. It also serves to confirm State sovereignty. In effect, while the space within the EU is being gradually *integrated*, a border is being drawn around the EU-28 in order to consolidate it as a political community and thus manage regional heterogeneity,

core-periphery contradictions and political-organizational flux. This also involves an attempt to structure EU-European space through, for example, central political agendas, structural policies, spatial planning strategies and research-funding programmes. Consolidation, and the border confirming practices it entails, is seen as a mode of establishing State-like territorial integrity for the EU and thereby also strengthening its (in part contested) image as a guarantor of internal security.

This process of EU-bordering has had serious consequences in terms of CBC and wider societal cooperation between the EU and its immediate neighbours. For example, the EU's failure to properly engage with Ukrainian society in its geopolitical strategy of neighbourhood is a case of a one-sided preoccupation with border management, territorial issues and realist interpretations of cross-border interaction. The shortcomings of ENP are thus indicative of geopolitical visions that are embedded in asymmetric understandings of identity and interest, made from the perspective of hegemonic and uncritical geopolitical self-assessments. At the same time, the enforcement of exclusionary borders is a challenge to the identity of the EU as a supranational *force for good in the world* that transcends national and socio-cultural divisions (see Barbé and Johansson-Nogués 2008).

To conclude then, the contemporary state of debate in border studies indicates that borders are a crucial condition for openness and cooperation. But non-exploitative cooperation goals can be achieved only through multilevel, multi-sectoral and long-term approaches that involve transformation at the international, national and local levels. This, in turn, demands new kinds of thinking on both sides of any given border.

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# Chapter 3

## The European Neighbourhood Policy, Region-Building and Bordering

Filippo Celata, Raffaella Coletti and Enrica Polizzi

### 3.1 ENP and the Reworking of ‘EU’ropean External Borders

The European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is an ambitious policy which, during the 2000s, unified previous external assistance policies towards those countries which are proximate to the EU, but are not candidates for accession, within a single framework. The aim of the ENP is to promote stability and prosperity in partner countries through increased cooperation while at the same time motivating those countries to pursue domestic reforms. According to the ENP Strategy Paper (2004), the policy is aimed to “prevent the emergence of new dividing lines” by extending to those countries the benefits of enlargement:

The objective of the ENP is to share the benefits of the EU’s 2004 enlargement with neighbouring countries in strengthening stability, security and well-being for all concerned. It is designed to prevent the emergence of new dividing lines between the enlarged EU and its neighbours and to offer them the chance to participate in various EU activities, through greater political, security, economic and cultural co-operation. (European Commission 2004, p. 3)

The privileged relationship offered by the EU to these partner countries is based on their commitment to pursue so-called “common values”, including:

Rule of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, including minority rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development. (...) The fight against terrorism and the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction, as well as abidance by international law and efforts to achieve conflict resolution. (European Commission 2004, p. 3)

As regards the practical implementation of the policy,

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Enrica Polizzi has contributed to section 3.2

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The method proposed is, together with partner countries, to define a set of priorities, whose fulfilment will bring them closer to the European Union. These priorities will be incorporated in jointly agreed Action Plans (...). The Action Plans will draw on a common set of principles but will be differentiated, reflecting the existing state of relations with each country, its needs and capacities, as well as common interests. (European Commission 2004, p. 3)

The allocation of funds available through the financial instrument that supports the ENP (ENPI in 2007–2013 and ENI in 2014–2020 programming periods), is established in Country Strategy Papers and National Indicative Programmes. Furthermore, bilateral relations are complemented by two regional strategies, dedicated to Southern and Eastern partners respectively, and a wider interregional programme.

The ENP is complemented by a strategic partnership with Russia which is somehow complementary to the Neighbourhood Policy. The country was first supposed to join the ENP but, although Russia participates to some of the policy's activities (i.e. the Eastern Regional Strategy and the cross-border cooperation component; see Chap. 4), it refused to be included in the ENP, willing to maintain a privileged relation with the EU due to its political and strategic relevance. The relation between the EU and Russia is articulated on four "common spaces": the common economic space, the common space of freedom, security and justice, the common space of external security and the common space of research and education. If compared to the objectives of the ENP, the common spaces are not very dissimilar; furthermore they adopt a similar methodology based on progress reports to measure the achievements gained. Nevertheless, Russia and the EU seem to enjoy a more equal relation than the one between EU and other ENP countries and that was the aim of Russia in proposing a separate agreement. Consequently the language of common spaces shows the diplomatic efforts to reach an equal agreement for sensitive issues (see Chap. 7).

The aims and rationales of the ENP, together with its main problems and limitations, have been extensively discussed in Chap. 1. In this chapter we will present an overview of the allocation of EU funding to neighbouring countries (Sect. 3.2), and further discuss the strategies pursued by the EU towards its different neighbours as those result from EU Action Plans and ENP Country Strategy Papers (Sect. 3.3).

This analysis will constitute the basis for reflecting, in the remaining part of the chapter, on the different regionalization processes that are ongoing in the context of the ENP, and on how these processes are redrawing European external borders.

As already discussed in Chap. 1, the ENP is indeed the container of several regionalization processes and various regional policies in the European neighbourhood, involving different geographical scales: the first regionalization process is put in place by the policy itself, through the introduction of a new geographical entity, that of the "European neighbourhood". The neighbourhood is indeed divided into two sub-regions—Eastern Europe and the Mediterranean basin. Furthermore, in the second half of the 2000s, in parallel with the implementation of the ENP, all neighbouring countries have been included in new or reinforced (meso)-regional strategies. Already existing meso-regional strategies such as the Northern Dimension and the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership were re-launched (in 2006 and 2008 respectively), while the Black Sea Synergy (2007) and the Eastern Partnership (2008) were created. The (renewed) attention given to all the meso-regional strategies in the same period indeed suggests that all of them should be considered part of the overall strategy of the EU towards the neighbourhood, alongside the ENP. A third regionaliza-

tion process can be identified in the cross-border cooperation component included in the ENP, which will be the object of Chap. 4. More recently, a further regionalization process has been put in place through the institution of macro-regional strategies; these strategies primarily involve European member States but in some cases they also include external partners (Chap. 6).

Section 3.4 introduces and describes the three meso-regional strategies that involve Eastern countries: the Northern Dimension, the Black Sea Synergy and the Eastern Partnership, while in Sect. 3.5 we will focus on the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and the Union for the Mediterranean. Section 3.6 summarizes the main findings of this chapter with regard to the ENP and its impact on the regionalization and re-bordering of the ‘wider Europe’.

## **3.2 EU Priorities and Allocations Towards Neighbouring Countries**

As enlisted in the EC Regulation of October 2006 (European Parliament 2006), and following Cugusi (2007), the areas of cooperation funded by the ENPI are classified into key priority areas of the ENP, as shown in Table 3.1.

The key area “Trade and internal market” is the most well-funded; it promotes legislative and regulatory approximation of neighbouring countries with the aim of developing those countries’ market economies through liberalization and support to the private sector and by improving the business climate and fostering global trade in accordance to the principles of the WTO and in light of a closer commercial integration with the EU. Many actions are included regarding agricultural products, intellectual property, manufactured goods and services, antitrust and State aid regulations.

The key area “Connecting the neighbourhood” funds infrastructure networks for telecommunications and transport in cooperation with neighbouring countries. An important role is played by energy, both in terms of promoting a more efficient and safe supply and distribution, and in terms of renewable energy investments.

The key area “Political dialogue and reforms” is intended to empower the local civil society, to promote “good governance”, to improve respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, to foster pluralism and the impartiality/effectiveness of the judiciary system. The final aim of those actions is to promote the democratization of partner countries and to empower various institutions including legislative bodies, public authorities, mass media, civil society and non-governmental organizations. This area can be considered as aiming to enhance institutional capital by fostering relationships (bonding, bridging and linking) among various political actors, both horizontally (among institutional bodies) and vertically (between formal political institutions, civil society and citizens).

“Social and economic development” includes projects for sustainable development, poverty reduction, employment and societal welfare in general. A particular emphasis is devoted to social dialogue, labour standards and discriminatory practices including gender issues. The area aims as well at reducing regional unevenness by addressing both urban and rural areas.

**Table 3.1** ENPI key areas and specific actions. (Source: Cugusi 2007)

Key area	Specific actions
Political dialogue and reform	Promoting political dialogue and reform
	Promoting the rule of law and good governance, including strengthening the effectiveness of public administration and the impartiality and effectiveness of the judiciary, and supporting the fight against corruption and fraud
	Promoting and protecting human rights and fundamental freedoms, including women's rights and children's rights
	Supporting democratisation, inter alia, by enhancing the role of civil society organisations and promoting media pluralism, as well as through electoral observation and assistance
	Fostering the development of civil society and of non- governmental organisations
Social and economic development	Promoting sustainable development in all aspects
	Pursuing regional and local development efforts, in both rural and urban areas, in order to reduce imbalances and improve regional and local development capacity
	Supporting policies aimed at poverty reduction, to help achieve the UN Millennium Development Goals
	Supporting policies to promote social development, social inclusion, gender equality, non-discrimination, employment and social protection including protection of migrant workers, social dialogues, and respect for trade union rights and core labour standards, including child labour
Trade and internal market	Promoting legislative and regulatory approximation towards higher standards in all relevant areas and in particular to encourage the progressive participation of partner countries in the internal market and the intensification of trade
	Strengthening of national institutions and bodies responsible for the elaboration and the effective implementation of policies in areas covered in association agreements, partnership and cooperation agreements, and other multilateral agreements to which the Community and/or its member States and partner countries are parties
	Providing support for actions aimed at increasing food safety for citizens, in particular in the sanitary and phyto-sanitary domains
	Promoting the development of a market economy, including measures to support the private sector and the development of small and medium-sized enterprises, to encourage investment and to promote global trade
	Supporting administrative cooperation to improve transparency and the exchange of information in the area of taxation in order to combat tax avoidance and evasion
Justice and internal affairs	Ensuring efficient and secure border management
	Supporting reform and strengthening capacity in the field of justice and home affairs, including issues such as asylum, migration and readmission, and the fight against, and prevention of, trafficking in human beings as well as terrorism and organised crime, including its financing, money laundering and tax fraud

**Table 3.1** (continued)

Key area	Specific actions
Neighbourhood networks	Promoting environmental protection, nature conservation and sustainable management of natural resources including fresh water and marine resources
	Promoting cooperation in the sectors of energy, telecommunication and transport, including on interconnections, networks and their operations, enhancing the security and safety of international transport and energy operations and promoting renewable energy sources, energy efficiency and clean transport
	Promoting participation in Community research and innovation activities
People-to-people actions	Promoting cooperation between the member States and partner countries in higher education and mobility of teachers, researchers and students
	Promoting multicultural dialogue, people-to-people contacts, including links with communities of immigrants living in member States, cooperation between civil societies, cultural institutions and exchanges of young people
	Supporting cooperation aimed at protecting historical and cultural heritage and promoting its development potential, including through tourism
	Supporting policies to promote health, education and training, including not only measures to combat the major communicable disease and non communicable diseases and disorders, but also access to services and education for good health, including reproductive and infant health for girls and woman
Transversal sectors	Supporting participation of partner countries in Community programmes and agencies
	Supporting cross-border cooperation through joint local initiatives to promote sustainable economic, social and environmental development in border regions and integrated territorial development across the Community's external border
	Promoting regional and sub-regional cooperation and integration, including, where appropriate, with countries not eligible for Community assistance under this Regulation
	Providing support in post-crisis situations, including support to refugees and displaced persons, and assisting in disaster preparedness
	Encouraging communication and promoting exchange among the partners on the measures and activities financed under the programmes
	Addressing common thematic challenges in fields of mutual concern and any other objectives consistent with the scope of this Regulation

“People-to-people actions” is a key area with two main components. On the one hand, people-to-people actions are supposed to improve access to basic services, such as health and education. On the other hand, the area seeks to improve cooperation and exchanges between researchers, teachers, students, migrants, civil society, cultural institutions, etc.

Finally, the key area “Justice and home affairs” deals with security issues and border management while the key area “Transversal sectors” deals with regional and cross-border topics and specific issues like support in post-crisis situations or the participation of partner countries in specific programmes and agencies. Both of these areas are mainly addressed at the regional and cross-border level and their relevance in the framework of national programmes is limited.

In the following sub-sections, EU funded projects in the neighbouring countries will be classified according to these key areas in order to enrich our understanding of the priorities that the ENP identified in each partner country and in each region.

### ***3.2.1 A Look to the Past: TACIS, MEDA and EIB Resources Allocation***

The ENPI has indeed substituted previous EU programmes: MEDA (for the Mediterranean partners) and TACIS (for the Eastern partners). A look to what has happened in the previous programming period (2000–2006) is useful in identifying priorities and strategies pursued by the EU in the neighbourhood and to understanding the framework in which ENPI started operating in 2007.

Table 3.2 shows the allocation of MEDA resources. Most of the resources (40%) are dedicated to economic development (support to economic reforms, private sector development and trade), followed by infrastructure (22%) and social sectors such as health and education (20%). The three priorities combined account for more than 80% of the total resources for the MEDA programme in the 2000–2006 programming period. Other minor areas of intervention are political dialogue (support to political dialogue and reform and implementation of the Association Agreements), governance (support to civil society and activities in the field of justice and police affairs) and humanitarian aid (food security and rehabilitation). Morocco has received the most significant amount of resources (23.6%), followed by Egypt, Turkey, Palestinian Authority and Tunisia (between 12.4 and 14.2% each).

The interventions of MEDA and, more recently, of the ENPI are complemented by the financial support offered through the European Investment Bank (Table 3.3): a financial institution whose shareholders are EU member States and whose role is in providing long-term finance in support of investments. Given the scope of the EIB's funding, the most relevant sectors have proven to be, in the last 10 years, energy and transport: together they represent more than 60% of total allocations. Other relevant sectors are credit lines to banks and financial institutions to help them finance SMEs, manufacturing and waste management. Egypt and Tunisia are the countries that have received the most grants, followed by Morocco.

Table 3.4 shows the allocation of TACIS commitments for the 2000–2004 period. Unlike the MEDA programme, there is a more even distribution of resources among different sectors. The most important sector is institutional, legal and administrative reform which accounts for 34% of all resources. Other relevant sectors are private businesses and economic development (16%), social consequences of transition (15%) and infrastructure (14%). Not surprisingly, most of these resources are concentrated in Russia and Ukraine.

The EIB's funding has been significantly lower in the Eastern neighbourhood than in the Mediterranean countries in the 2000–2011 period, as shown in Table 3.5. For instance, the most important recipient, Ukraine, has received less than one third of the amount received by Tunisia.

**Table 3.2** MEDA II (2000–2006) resources committed per country and per sector. (Source: ADE 2009)

	Algeria (%)	Egypt (%)	Jordan (%)	Lebanon (%)	Morocco (%)	Palestinian authority (%)	Syria (%)	Tunisia (%)	Turkey <sup>a</sup> (%)	Total (%)
Economic development	15	30	62	35	29	80	36	54	27	40
Infrastructure	26	31	2	17	43	1	19	9	19	22
Social sector	37	24	22	4	10	15	42	29	21	21
Governance	14	4	2	6	10	–	1	5	–	5
Political dialogue	3	4	11	9	2	2	–	4	–	3
Natural resources and environment	1	2	–	–	5	–	–	–	–	2
Humanitarian	–	–	–	21	–	–	–	–	5	1
Agriculture	3	3	–	8	–	–	–	–	–	1
Other	0	2	2	1	0	2	2	0	28	5
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (mln Euros)	339	593	332	133	982	523	180	518	551	4151

Libya was not eligible for MEDA funding due to UN sanctions which were lifted in 2003

<sup>a</sup> Turkey was only eligible for MEDA II until the end of 2001 and it has been benefiting from Pre-Accession Instruments since 2002

**Table 3.3** Contracts signed by the European Investment Bank in Mediterranean countries per country and per sector, 2000–2011. (Source: European Investment Bank database)

	Algeria (%)	Egypt (%)	Israel (%)	Jordan (%)	Lebanon (%)	Morocco (%)	Palestinian authority (%)	Syria (%)	Tunisia (%)	Total (%)
Energy	37	66	–	18	–	28	62	53	31	39
Transport	23	9	–	11	14	45	–	3	31	21
Credit lines	–	6	12	10	61	2	18	7	20	11
Water, sewerage and solid waste	17	3	75	29	23	6	–	8	6	11
Industry	6	14	14	25	–	4	–	6	9	9
Health and education	–	–	–	7	–	10	–	14	3	4
Composite Infrastructure	17	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	2
Services	1	1	–	–	1	1	21	0	1	1
Telecommunications	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	6	–	1
Agriculture, fisheries, forestry	–	1	–	–	–	1	–	–	–	1
Urban infrastructure	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	–	0
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (mln Euros)	1354	3876	651	569	748	2972	73	1621	3457	15,325

**Table 3.4** TACIS (2000–2004) resources committed per beneficiary country and per sector. (Source: Short et al. 2006)

	Armenia (%)	Azerbaijan (%)	Belarus (%)	Georgia (%)	Moldova (%)	Russia (%)	Ukraine (%)	Central Asia <sup>a</sup> (%)	CBC (%)	Regional Cooperation (%)	Total (%)
Institutional, legal and administrative reform	51	33	–	39	30	32	46	54	2	28	34
Private sector, development	5	31	–	9	24	23	23	3	11	8	16
Social consequences of transition <sup>b</sup>	19	–	50	26	26	23	18	21	–	–	15
Infrastructure	15	26	–	8	–	–	–	14	55	32	14
Environment	–	–	–	–	–	7	–	1	14	32	9
Rural economy	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	2	–	–	0
Small project programme <sup>c</sup>	9	10	50	11	20	10	11	3	7	–	8
Small project facility <sup>c</sup>	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	–	12	–	1
Bistro facility <sup>d</sup>	1	–	–	–	–	2	0	1	–	–	1
Other	0	1	–	7	0	3	0	1	–	–	1
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (mln Euros)	26.5	48.9	4	38.7	42.5	407.5	236.7	166.3	131	197.5	1300

<sup>a</sup> Central Asia: Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Turkmenistan, Uzbekistan

<sup>b</sup> Social Services and social cohesion

<sup>c</sup> Small projects support grass-roots organizations, regional and local authorities and is complementary to major programmes

<sup>d</sup> Tacis Bistrot supports small-scale projects in the Russian Federation and Ukraine and is complementary to major programmes

**Table 3.5** European Investment Bank, contracts signed in Eastern neighbouring countries per country and per sector 2000–2011. (Source: European Investment Bank database 2014)

	Armenia (%)	Georgia (%)	Moldova (%)	Russia (%)	Ukraine (%)	Total (%)
Transport	23	–	51	–	60	39
Energy	6	53	–	54	30	34
Credit Lines	70	26	16	–	9	10
Wastes	–	21	4	21	1	8
Telecommunications	–	–	–	25	–	6
Agriculture	–	–	29	–	–	4
Total (%)	100	100	100	100	100	100
Total (mln Euros)	21.3	190	255	467.5	1,090.5	2,024.3

**Table 3.6** European Bank for Reconstruction and Development, project number and value per country (in Millions of Euros), 2000–2010. (Source: European Bank for Reconstruction and Development database 2014)

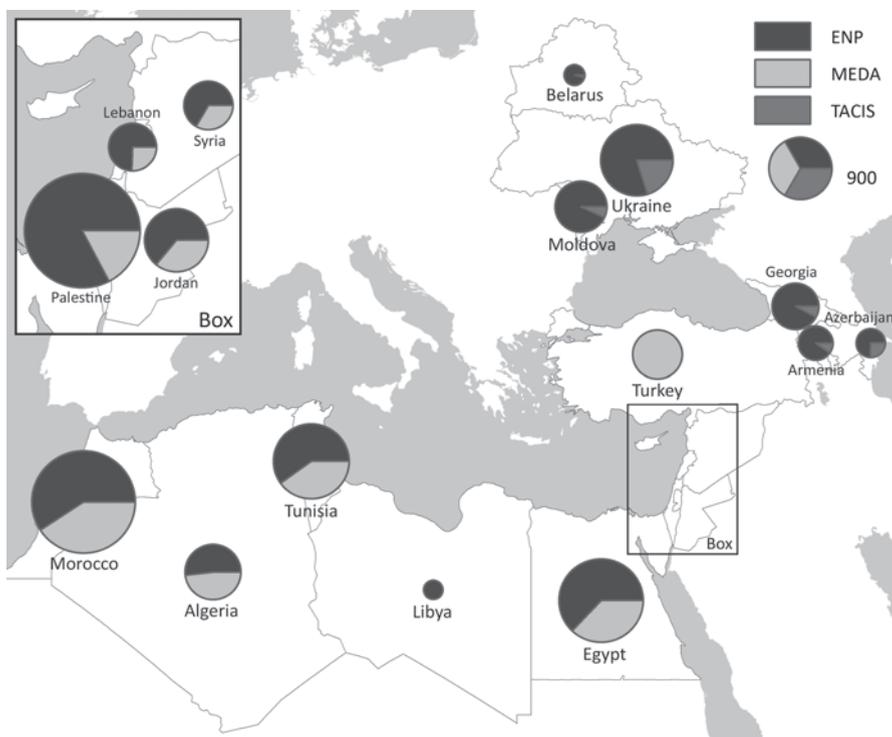
	Armenia	Azerbaijan	Belarus	Georgia	Moldova	Ukraine	Russia	Total
Number of projects	101	115	39	140	84	289	685	1453
Total project value	9117	5700	9705	4900	1000	14800	54600	82882
Disbursement/project value	44%	17%	29%	16%	34%	32%	26%	26%

The European Bank for Reconstruction and Development (EBRD), established in 1991 to promote investments in 30 countries from Central Europe to Central Asia, also supports Eastern partners. The EBRD offers funding to banks, industries, publicly owned companies and businesses through both new ventures and investments in existing companies that could not have otherwise attracted credits with similar terms. Significant funds have been granted to Russian and Ukrainian companies in recent years (Table 3.6).

In Fig. 3.1, TACIS, MEDA and ENP resources are combined in order to give a more comprehensive overview of the total commitment of EU resources towards neighbourhood countries in the last years.

### 3.2.2 Analysis of ENP Allocations

The analysis of ENP allocations is based on the latest available implementation report issued by the European Commission (2014), and on multi-annual National Indicative Programmes (NIPs) which allocate EU funds to each neighbouring coun-



**Fig. 3.1** EU resources for neighbouring countries, per source, 2000–2013 (in Millions of Euros). (Source: designed by the authors based on ADE 2009; Short et al. 2006; European Commission 2014)

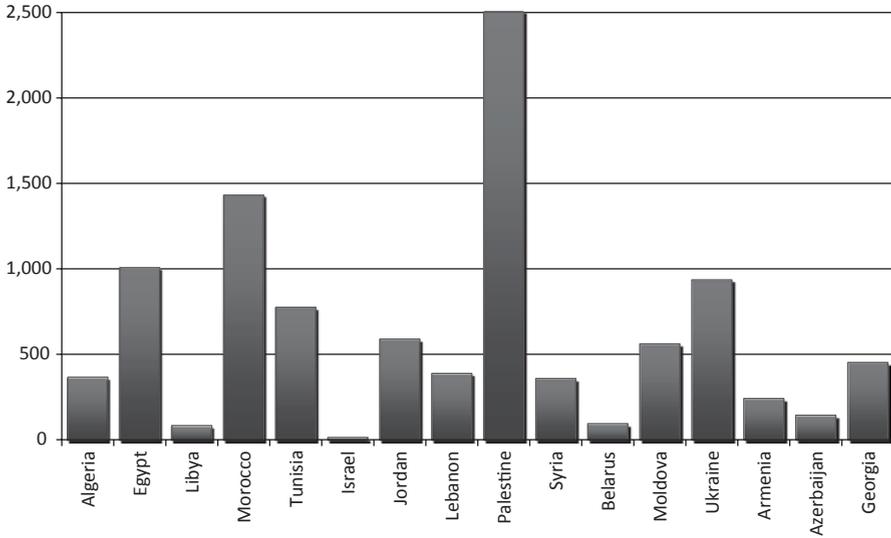
try over the 2007–2013 programming period<sup>1</sup>. In order to compare this data, actions have been classified by the authors according to the list of ENP priorities and key areas listed in Table 3.1. Consequently, this information should be considered as estimates deriving from this re-classification.

Figures 3.2 and 3.3 draw attention to the large differences in resource allocation for each partner country.

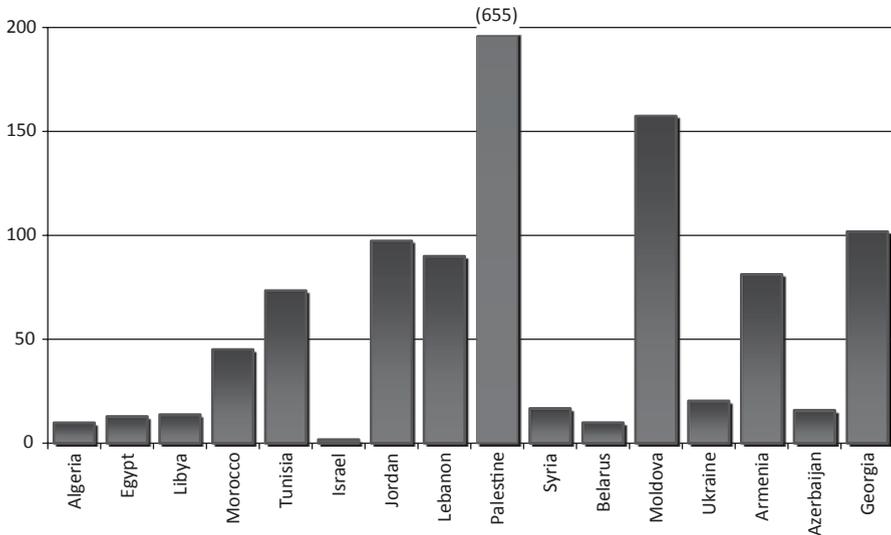
ENP resources for the Mediterranean are almost double those allocated to Eastern countries, coherently with the policy general guideline to dedicate two thirds of total funding to Mediterranean countries given that their population is approximately double that of Eastern countries. Figures show, however, that the distribution of resources to each country is by no mean proportional to their weight in terms of population but due to a plurality of other factors which we will discuss in Sect. 3.3.

In Fig. 3.4 and in the next pages a disaggregation of resources per key area of intervention is provided based on a reclassification of the funding allocations mentioned in the National Indicative Programmes (for 2007–2020 and 2011–2013 re-

<sup>1</sup> The NIPs that have been reviewed are listed in the bibliography.

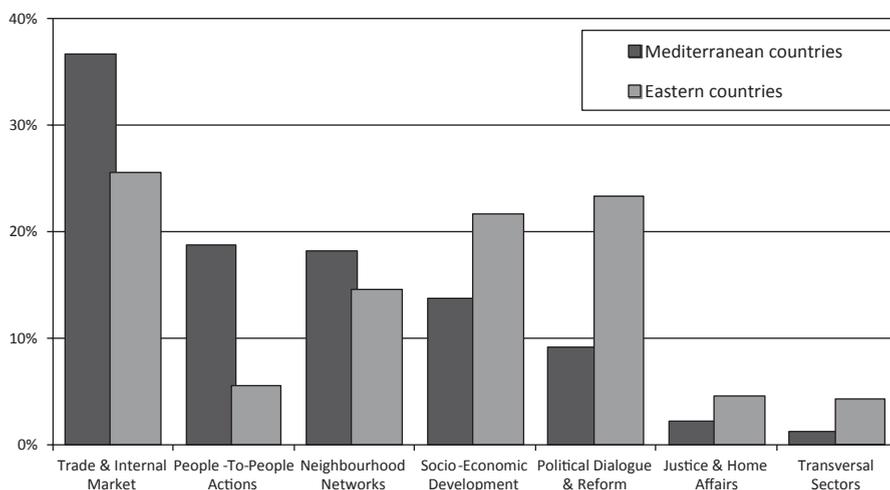


**Fig. 3.2** ENPI committed resources per country 2007–2013 (in Millions of Euros). (Source: European Commission 2014)



**Fig. 3.3** Distribution of ENP committed resources per capita and per country, 2007–2013, Euros. (Source: European Commission 2014 and World Bank database 2014)

spectively) according to ENPI key areas and specific actions presented above. The Palestinian Authority is not included, as in this case resources are not programmed. Israel as well has been not included due to the insignificant amount of resources.



**Fig. 3.4** Financing allocations per region and key area. (Source: Elaborated by the authors based on European Commission 2007a, 2007c, 2007e, 2007f, 2007g, 2007i, 2007j, 2007k, 2007l, 2007n, 2007p, 2007q, 2007r, 2007t, 2010a, 2010b, 2010c, 2010d, 2010e, 2010f, 2010g, 2010h, 2010i, 2010j, 2010k, 2010l, 2010m, 2010n, 2010o, 2010p)

The Eastern and Mediterranean regions differ considerably in terms of funding priorities. In Mediterranean countries, besides measures to facilitate trade and the establishment of an internal market (36.8%), substantial shares are assigned to people-to-people actions (mainly in the field of health, education and access to services) and to create “neighbourhood networks”, i.e. more efficient infrastructures for transport, energy and telecommunications. Little is devoted to democratization and domestic reforms. The priorities reveal a continuity with the aims of the MEDA programme and of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership, as we will see in Sect. 3.4 (Tables 3.7 and 3.8).

Although “Trade & Internal Market” accounts for the largest share of ENPI resource distribution in Eastern countries as well (25.8%), those countries receive a greater share for political dialogue and reform (23.4%), and socio-economic development, i.e. local development and social programmes (21.7%). This can be linked to the past programming period where TACIS funds were concentrated on the “Institutional, Legal and Administrative Reform” followed by economic development, social development and infrastructure.

Among Eastern countries, Ukraine receives the biggest share of EU funds in continuity with the TACIS programme, followed by Moldova which receives the highest share of resources per capita in the entire neighbourhood, with the exception of Palestine whose funding is allocated almost entirely to emergency aid.

It should be noted that a relevant share of resources have been committed to infrastructure (neighbourhood networks) in Ukraine and Azerbaijan. In Belarus, most resources are allocated to transversal sectors and to people-to-people actions whereas little is committed to trade and internal market due to the absence of a formal agreement with the EU.

**Table 3.7** Eastern countries, percentage distribution of ENP resources per country and key area, 2007–2013. (Source: Elaborated by the authors based on European Commission 2007c, 2007e, 2007f, 2007i, 2007n, 2007t, 2010b, 2010c, 2010e, 2010j, 2010n, 2012)

	Armenia	Georgia	Azerbaijan	Moldova	Ukraine	Belarus	Total
Trade & internal market	20.8	23.8	20	27.7	28.9	11.9	25.6
Political dialogue & reform	32.2	28.8	26.7	27	17	22.2	23.4
Socio-economic development	24.3	28.8	13	36.3	12.2	35.9	21.7
Neighbourhood networks	9	0	21.9	0	27.5	0	14.6
People-to-people actions	9	7.9	9.1	3.3	3.8	11.9	5.6
Justice & home affairs	4.7	0	9.3	0	7.9	0	4.7
Transversal sectors	0	10.7	0	5.7	2.7	18.2	4.4
Total	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

In addition to the bilateral component, the ENP includes interregional and regional programmes for priorities of interest in the entire neighbourhood and for the two regions (Eastern countries and the Mediterranean). Regional strategies complement national programmes by focusing specifically on issues that have to be addressed at a supra-national or regional level. The first supra-national programme is about interregional cooperation, which covers the entire neighbourhood. The priorities established in 2007–2010 were substantially confirmed in 2011–2013 programming period but with a different allocation of funds as shown in the Table 3.9.

Tables 3.10 and 3.11 show the allocation of resources dedicated to Eastern and Mediterranean regional programmes respectively. In the Eastern programme funds are concentrated on the creation or the improvement of networks, on environmental protection and on good governance and stability. In the Mediterranean most of the resources are dedicated to sustainable economic development. Overall, these priorities reflect those identified in the national bilateral programmes in each of the two sub-regions. The differences between the two sub-regions will be further discussed in Sect. 3.3.1.

### 3.3 A Closer Look at Priorities: A Common Policy for a Diverse Neighbourhood

A look at the contents of ENP official documents is useful not only for a better understanding of how the aims and scope of the policy are diversified and adapted to each of the regions covered by the programme, but also in revealing the logic beyond those priorities, how the issues at stake are portrayed and, consequently, how those challenges are supposed to be addressed.



**Table 3.9** Priorities and resources in the ENP Interregional Indicative Programmes (in Millions of Euros). (Source: Elaborated by the authors based on European Commission 2007u, 2010o)

Actions	2007–2010	2011–2013
Promoting investment projects in ENP partner countries (including Neighbourhood Investment Facility)	250	450
Promoting higher education and students mobility (including TEMPUS IV, ERASMUS MUNDUS/ACTION2)	2186	249
Promoting reform through European advice and expertise (including TAIEX and SIGMA)	40	30
Promoting cooperation between local actors in the EU and in the partner countries (including CIUDAD)	14.3	15
Promoting interregional cultural actions	Absent	10
Promoting cooperation between ENP partners and EU agencies	Absent	3.6
Total	5239	7576

**Table 3.10** Priorities and resources in the ENP Eastern Regional Indicative Programme 2007–2013 (in Millions of Euros). (Source: Elaborated by the authors based on European Commission 2007v, 2010p)

Cooperation priorities	Resources
<i>2007–2010</i>	
Networks (including transport, energy, SME)	67
Environment protection and forestry	67
Borders and migration management, fight against transnational organised crime and customs	55.8
People to people activities, information and support	22.3
Landmines, explosive remnants of war, small arms and light weapons	11.3
Total	223.5
<i>2011–2013</i>	
Democracy, good governance and stability (including human rights, democracy and the rule of law; border management; response to disasters)	107
Climate change, energy and environment	90
Advancing integration with the EU and regional coop. (including youth and culture, support for Eastern Partnership, Black Sea Synergy and Northern Dimension)	79.6
Economic Development (including SMEs, territorial cooperation, transport)	72
Total	348.6

The main political texts produced within the ENP are Action Plans and Country Strategy Papers. The Action Plans (AP) are political documents laying out the strategic objectives for cooperation between the EU and ENP countries. These have been elaborated for all the ENP countries except Algeria<sup>2</sup>, Belarus, Libya, and

<sup>2</sup> An Association Agreement was signed with Algeria in 2002 and entered into force in 2005, but the negotiation of an Action Plan is considered premature at this stage (European Commission 2007a, p. 2).

**Table 3.11** Priorities and resources in the ENP Mediterranean Regional Indicative Programme, 2007–2013 (in Millions of Euros). (Source: Elaborated by the authors based on European Commission 2007w, 2010q)

Cooperation priorities	Resources
<i>2007–2010</i>	
Sustainable economic development (includes investments promotion; transport and energy; South-South integration; environment; information society)	199
Social development and cultural exchange (includes gender equality and civil society; information and communication; youth; cultural dialogue and heritage)	67
Political, justice, security and migration cooperation (includes confidence building; civil protection; partnership for peace; justice, security and migration; policy analysis)	45.4
Global allocation (for the implementation of the programmes)	31.9
Total	343.3
<i>2011–2013</i>	
Regional integration, investment, regulatory convergence (includes 30% of FEMIP funds; investment promotion, business development and industrial cooperation; transport infrastructure; information society; statistics)	123.1
Common regional institutions, confidence building and media development (includes the UfM Secretariat; civil protection; Partnership for peace; information and training for Euro-Med diplomats; regional media, Information and Communication Programme II)	46.1
Sustainable Development (includes environment, water and energy)	43.2
Social inclusion and cultural dialogue (includes gender equality; dialogue between cultures and cooperation on culture; civil society; youth)	40.3
Global allocation (see above)	34.6
Total	288

Syria<sup>3</sup>. Country Strategy Papers (CSP) further define in detail the EU's cooperation objectives and priorities of intervention in each ENP country, with the exception of the Palestinian Authority.

The strategies towards all neighbourhood countries make explicit reference to the 2004 enlargement of the EU and the effects of this event on the relationships between the EU and its neighbours. Following the enlargement, the EU recognized itself as a “close neighbour” to the ENP countries. According to the strategies, the ENP aimed at reinforcing the “political and economic interdependence” between the EU and partner countries. All the strategies are based on the commitment to shared values and to the implementation of political, economic, social and institutional reforms. The level of ambition for the EU-third country relationship is linked to the degree of commitment to common values as well as to the capacity to implement jointly agreed priorities.

<sup>3</sup> An Association Agreement has been negotiated with Syria, but it is currently blocked due to the violent repression of anti-government protests since mid-March 2011.

The approach is based on partnership, joint ownership and differentiation. “Partnership” between EU and recipient countries is the foundation of EU/neighbourhood cooperation as is the “joint ownership” of the process between recipients and donor countries based on the awareness of shared values and common interests. “Differentiation” among partners is a pivotal principle in the ENP aimed at recognising the specific needs, inclinations and aspirations of each country and tailoring cooperation to such specificities. Furthermore, all the strategies are aimed at the imperative of sustainable socio-economic development.

“Common” or “shared” values which are the basis of the EU approach towards the neighbourhood are usually taken for granted and not explicitly mentioned in the strategies. Three exceptions can be identified: Tunisia, Morocco and Azerbaijan. The list of common values is different between Morocco and Tunisia on the one hand, and Azerbaijan on the other. In Mediterranean countries common values are considered “democracy, the rule of law, good governance, respect for human rights, market economics, free trade, sustainable development, poverty alleviation” (European Union and Morocco 2006, p. 1; European Union and Tunisia 2006, p. 1). In the case of Azerbaijan, common values include “the respect of and support for the sovereignty, territorial integrity and inviolability of internationally recognised borders of each other and compliance to international and European norms and principles” (European Union and Azerbaijan 2006, p. 1).

Priorities for intervention are almost the same in all countries. This is not surprising as these priorities are simply translated from the main aims and objectives of the ENP. Nevertheless, the similarities in the priorities also confirm a lack of proper “differentiation” and one of the critiques of the ENP mentioned in Chap. 1: the application of a homogeneous approach to a very wide and diverse geographical area. The only relevant differences are references in specific objectives to contributing to the peaceful solution of specific local conflicts: the Nagorno Karabakh conflict in Armenia and Azerbaijan; Georgia’s internal conflicts; the Transnistria conflict in Moldova and, finally, the explicit aim to build the “institutions of an independent, democratic and viable Palestinian State”.

When it comes to single Country Strategy Papers, priorities are influenced by those already defined in the ENP Action Plans but they are more diversified according to the country’s specific context (Tables 3.12, 3.13 and 3.14).

Strategies towards Eastern European countries have very similar objectives. All strategies include support for democratic development and good governance as a main priority. Regulatory reform and administrative capacity building (including the approximation of legislations, norms and standards to the EU *acquis*) is also included in several strategies with the only exception of Belarus that, as already mentioned, lacks any formal relation with the EU. The EU’s intervention in Belarus aims at the long term objective for the country “to become a democratic, stable, reliable and increasingly prosperous partner with which the enlarged EU will share not only common borders but also a common agenda driven by shared values” (European Commission 2007f, p. 5). Armenia’s, Georgia’s and Moldova’s strategies dedicate a specific priority to poverty reduction efforts, while Azerbaijan’s, Belarus’ and Ukraine’s concentrate on sectoral issues like transport, energy and the environ-

**Table 3.12** Priorities for Eastern countries. (Source: European Commission 2007b, 2007d, 2007f, 2007h, 2007m, 2007s)

Armenia	1. Support for democratic structures and good governance (rule of law and reform of the judiciary; public administration reform, including local self government and combat of corruption; human rights, fundamental freedoms, civil society, people-to-people contacts)
	2. Support for regulatory reform and administrative capacity building (approximation of legislation, norms and standards and administrative capacity)
	3. Support for poverty reduction efforts (education; regional development and social services)
Azerbaijan	1. Support for democratic development and good governance (public administration reform and public finance management, including rule of law and judicial reform; human rights, civil society and local government; education, science and people-to-people contacts/exchanges)
	2. Support for socio-economic reform, with emphasis on regulatory approximation with the EU Acquis, fight against poverty and administrative capacity building, promoting trade and improving the investment climate; social reform
	3. Support for legislative and economic reforms in the transport, energy and environmental sectors
Georgia	1. Support for democratic development, the rule of law and governance (democracy, human rights, civil society judicial reform; good governance, public finance reform and administrative capacity building)
	2. Support for economic development (promoting external trade and improving the investment climate; supporting the programme's implementation; regulatory reforms; education, science, and people-to-people contacts/exchanges)
	3. Support for poverty reduction and social reforms (Strengthening social reforms in health and social protection; Rural and regional development)
	4. Support for peaceful settlement of Georgia's internal conflicts
Belarus	1. Democracy, human rights and civil society
	2. Social and economic development
	3. Border and migration management, the fight against transnational organised crime, corruption and customs
	4. Sectoral issues (energy, environment, transport, statistics, financial sector, JFS sector)
	5. People-to-people contacts and exchanges
Moldova	1. Support for democratic development and good governance (public administration reform; rule of law and judicial reform; human rights, civil society and local government; education, science and people-to-people contacts/exchanges)
	2. Support for regulatory reform and administrative capacity building (promoting mutual trade, improving the investment climate and strengthening social reform; Sector-specific regulatory aspects)
	3. Support for poverty reduction and economic growth
Ukraine	1. Support for democratic development and good governance (public administration reform; rule of law and judicial reform; human rights, civil society and local government; education, science and people-to-people contacts/exchanges)
	2. Support for regulatory reform and administrative capacity building (Promoting mutual trade, improving the investment climate and strengthening social reform; sector-specific regulatory aspects)
	3. Support for Infrastructure development (non nuclear energy, transport, environment, border management and migration including re-admission related issues)

**Table 3.13** Priorities for Mediterranean countries. (Source: European Commission 2007a, 2007g, 2007k, 2007l, 2007o, 2007q, 2007r, 2010i)

Algeria	1. Political reforms in the areas of democracy and human rights, the rule of law and good governance
	2. Reforms in the justice system, management of migratory flows plus the fight against organised crime, money laundering and terrorism whilst upholding human rights
	3. Economic diversification and the development of conditions conducive to private investment, the development of competitive companies (SMEs), growth and lower unemployment
	4. The development of conditions favourable to the three planks of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic)
	5. Developing education and training, youth, higher education and scientific research which are essential to the building of a knowledge society and bringing down employment in a more open economy
	6. Improving the provision of basic services while keeping the budget balanced
	7. Facilitation of trade in goods and services, alignment of technical regulations, standards and conformity assessment procedures, trade facilitation by means of modern customs procedures
	8. The development of transport, energy and the information society, and the strengthening of national and regional infrastructure and its inter-connection with the trans-European transport network. Development of the energy sector
Egypt	1. Supporting Egypt's reforms in the areas of democracy, human rights, good governance and justice (including decentralisation and good governance; Human rights; Modernisation of administration of justice)
	2. Developing the competitiveness and productivity of the Egyptian economy (including trade facilitation and customs reform, economic legislation and the business environment, agriculture, transport, energy, science and technology, statistical system)
	3. Ensuring the sustainability of the development process (support for reform of education, for public health reform, transport, energy and environment)
Jordan	1. Supporting Jordan's political reform including democracy, human rights, good governance, justice and cooperation in the fight against extremism
	2. Developing further trade and investment relations
	3. Ensuring the sustainability of Jordan's development process
	4. Supporting institution building, financial stability and regulatory approximation
Lebanon	1. Support for political reforms
	2. Support for social and economic reform
	3. Support for reconstruction and recovery
Libya	1. Improving the quality of human capital
	2. Increasing the sustainability of economic and social development
	3. Addressing jointly the challenge of managing migration

**Table 3.13** (continued)

Morocco	1. Development of social policies
	2. Economic modernisation
	3. Institutional support
	4. Good governance and human rights
	5. Environmental protection
Syria	1. Support for political and administrative reform (modernising the administration, decentralisation, rule of law, human rights)
	2. Support for economic reform (implementing the economic reform agenda and preparing for the Association Agreement and for WTO accession)
	3. Support for social reform (developing human capital and taking measures to accompany the transition process)
Tunisia	1. Political reforms concerning democracy and human rights, the rule of law and sound institutional governance
	2. Reforms concerning the justice system, management of migration and asylum (...) and measures to combat organised crime, money laundering and terrorism whilst safeguarding human rights
	3. Creation of the right conditions for private investment, the development of competitive SMEs, growth, a reduction in unemployment and sustainable rural development
	4. The development of conditions favourable to the three planks of sustainable development (environmental, social and economic)
	5. Developing education and training, higher education and scientific research as vital building blocks of the knowledge-based society and a crucial factor in reducing employment as the economy opens up
	6. Consolidating social programmes while balancing the budget
	7. Facilitating trade in goods and services, approximation of technical regulations and conformity procedures and standards
	8. Developing transport, energy and the information society, reinforcing infrastructures and their inter-connection with the trans-european transport networks; Energy and information society

**Table 3.14** Regional strategy papers: a comparison of priorities, 2007–2013. (Source: European Commission 2007v, 2007w)

Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (Priorities)	Eastern Regional Programme (Key issues to be addressed)
Justice, security and migration cooperation	Networks (transport and energy)
Sustainable economic development (support to the Euro-Med Free Trade Area, infrastructure network, environmental sustainability)	Environment protection and forestry
Social development and cultural exchange	Border and migration management, the fight against transnational organised crime and customs
	People-to-people activities, information and support
	Land-mines, explosive remnants of war, small arms and light weapons

ment. Georgia has a specific priority supporting the peaceful settlement of internal conflicts, and Ukraine has a specific emphasis on the issue of border management and migration.

Similarly to the Eastern partners, almost all Mediterranean strategies include “political reforms and good governance” among their priorities, the only exception being represented by Libya. The centrality of this issue is not confirmed by the data presented in Sect. 3.2: the majority of ENPI resources are indeed concentrated on Trade and Economic reforms thus highlighting a discrepancy between the aims and practical implementation of the policy. Migration and eventually other border issues (organized crime, money laundering, terrorism) are mentioned as priorities in the strategies for Libya, Algeria and Tunisia, while in the case of Lebanon a specific focus is on “support for reconstruction and recovery”, following the war in 2006.

Taking a bird’s eye perspective on the strategic documents, it is worth noting that the concept of “approximation” and “EU’s *acquis*” diffused in Eastern strategies are never mentioned for Mediterranean countries. Despite some similarities, Mediterranean strategies recall more of an “external assistance” approach—as already mentioned—with the general aim of creating an area of peace, prosperity and security, while strategies towards Eastern partners are more influenced by the approach and narratives of enlargement and they adopt more explicitly the “enlargement methodology” (Gawrich et al. 2010). All the strategies towards Eastern countries acknowledge “expressed European aspiration” from the partners. The ENP confirms that those countries have no prospect for accession into the EU in the short term. However, this does not formally exclude that some changes in this respect might occur in the near future and that relations might be further strengthened, at least in the form of “enhanced contractual relationship”, and even with countries such as Armenia (European Union and Armenia 2006, p. 3), Georgia (European Union and Georgia 2006, p. 4) and Azerbaijan (European Union and Azerbaijan 2006, p. 3). With respect to Mediterranean countries, ENP strategies are instead defined as the first step in the process of entering into “intensified political security, economic and cultural relations” with the EU (European Union and Jordan 2006, p. 1).

A difference between Eastern and Mediterranean countries can be found also in the definition of the main objectives of cooperation. While the priorities are very similar, as mentioned in the previous section, the discursive framework in which these priorities are embedded is different for Southern and Eastern partners. Several Mediterranean strategies are explicitly linked to national rules and national reform agendas thus emphasising the support and “external” role played by the EU in promoting democratic reforms. Quotations like the following can be found in almost all national strategy for Mediterranean countries:

The European Neighbourhood Policy is part of the EU’s response to the Palestinian Authority’s political and economic reform agenda. (European Union and Palestinian Authority 2006, p. 1)

Reapprochement to the Union represents (...) a fundamental foreign policy choice for Tunisia (...). The Neighbourhood Policy will allow Tunisia to reinforce the strategic foundation of this choice whilst respecting its national identity and characteristics. (European Union and Tunisia 2006, p. 1)

In the East, on the other hand, the focus is on developing “an increasingly close relationship, going beyond past levels of cooperation to gradual economic integration and deeper political cooperation” (European Commission 2007m, p. 2). The only exception is Belarus where, according to the Country Strategy Paper, the main objective is:

To support the needs of the population, to directly and indirectly support democratisation, and to mitigate the effects of the self-isolation of Belarus on its population. (European Commission 2007f, p. 4)

Furthermore, a difference between Eastern and Mediterranean strategies respectively can be identified with regard to the issue of local participation. With the exception of Belarus, all the Eastern strategies state that: “Member States, other donors and civil society organisations were consulted during the drafting process” (European Commission 2007m, p. 2). No mention of civil society or local actors is included in the Mediterranean strategies although this should change in the future as a consequence of the renewed Neighbourhood Policy in the post-“Arab spring” scenario (see Chaps. 1 and 5).

### ***3.3.1 Regional Strategies and Key Players in the European Neighbourhoods***

The ENP regional strategies are particularly suited to highlighting differences in the approach towards the Mediterranean and Eastern Europe. The Eastern strategy document is mainly based on experience from the TACIS programme, and includes Russia as well, despite the fact that the country is not formally included in the ENP. Instead, the Southern strategy paper relies on the Euro-Mediterranean partnership signed in Barcelona in 1995 (see Sect. 3.4). The regional document for the Southern partners refers to Euro-Mediterranean partnership objectives as the main aims underlying the document together with ENP strategic documents (European Commission 2007w, p. 6). Eastern partners lacked a similar partnership with the EU when the documents were approved although in the following years the Eastern Partnership and, to some extent the Black Sea Synergy, came to fill this gap.

According to the strategy, Eastern regional cooperation is based on the effective need to tackle some specific challenges jointly:

Several challenges faced by the countries of the region, such as developing trans-national corridors, the management of cross-border rivers and basins, and the fight against terrorism and transnational organised crime, have an inherent cross-border character and can sometimes only be tackled through a cooperative effort at regional level. (European Commission 2007v, p. 5)

Moreover, the Eastern strategy paper explicitly mentions strategic objectives to be targeted in the region:

Sustainable development and environmental protection (...), diversification and security of energy supplies to the EU (...), further development of transport links between the enlarged EU and its neighbouring countries (...) as trade relation increase. (European Commission 2007v, p. 6)

The Eastern strategy seems to be focused on the peculiarities of the region, including an explicit reference to conflict settlement (p. 8), issues of justice, freedom and security, governance and democracy (pp. 8–9), energy (p. 10) and transport (p. 11). The Euro-Mediterranean strategy, on the other hand, is more generic and devoted to a comprehensive notion of sustainable development.

Both regional strategies select similar priorities but in the Eastern documents more emphasis is given to issues related to transport and energy and border management, given the specific relevance of Eastern neighbours in this regard.

When looking at national strategies, in terms of “meso-regions” and sub-regions within, all Mediterranean strategies include some reference to the Barcelona process (for example: European Union and Egypt 2006, p. 1; European Union and Morocco 2006, p. 1), with only the exception of Libya that joined the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership only in 2011. In the case of Israel, the document stresses that,

Participation in regional activities has frequently proved difficult for Israeli representatives in the absence of bilateral diplomatic relations between Israel and some Euro-med partner countries. (European Commission 2007j, p. 5)

Strategic documents acknowledge, moreover, the Maghreb region<sup>4</sup> and the “EU strategy for Africa”, adopted in 2005 as a long term strategic framework for interaction between Africa and the EU at all levels. The strategies towards Mediterranean countries, however, adopt a very limited regional (i.e. supra-national) perspective. The only exception can be found in the strategies for Algeria and Morocco where the shared use and protection of the Mediterranean Sea is defined as a cross-border issue (European Commission 2007a, p. 11; 2007o, p. 27).

In terms of key players, the first country to be mentioned for the Mediterranean is undoubtedly Egypt. According to the EU/Egypt Action Plan,

Egypt’s unique geographical position and her historical and strategic relations with the Arab and African Countries, and her key role for peace and stability in the Middle East, as well as EU’s increasing role on the global arena and its enhanced contribution to peace, security and economic development in the Mediterranean and the Middle East, enable Egypt and EU, through this Action Plan, to further develop their cooperation on regional and international issues. (European Union and Egypt 2006, p. 2)

The privileged partnership between the EU and Egypt is confirmed by the focus on “an agenda of mutual commitments on political social and economic issues, centred on common values shared by Egypt and the European Union” (European Commission 2007g, p. 3). According to the Country Strategy Paper for Egypt,

The key strategic importance of Egypt lies in its plans for political, social and economic reform, in its potential for deeper economic relations with the EU and in its willingness to cooperate with the EU on promoting peace and security in the region. (European Commission 2007g, p. 19)

Egypt plays a strategic role in peace and stability in the region. In the Middle East peace process, Egypt has regularly mediated in the dispute between Israel and the Palestinian Authority and has backed EU/Quartet approaches to encourage a return to the Road Map.

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<sup>4</sup> European Union and Tunisia Action Plan include in its aims “promoting integration in the Maghreb region” (p. 1).

Egypt made a significant contribution to facilitating the EU's border monitoring presence at Rafah, allowing persons to move between Gaza and Egypt. As host to the Arab League, Egypt is a leading voice in the Arab world. It is also an active player in issues concerning Africa. (European Commission 2007g, p. 9)

A strategic role is also given to Syria and Jordan. The Jordan Country Strategy Paper recognizes that "at regional level, Jordan is an important stabilising and modernising influence" (European Commission 2007k, p. 6). In the case of Syria,

There is mutual benefit in a closer relationship between the EU and Syria. Syria is a key factor in regional stability and plays a pivotal role as a transit country between the EU and the Middle East. Syria and the EU have privileged cultural links and there is strong potential for further strengthening economic relations. (European Commission 2007q, p. 4)

Moreover, Morocco is given a privileged partnership:

Morocco is a privileged partner of the European Union. The EU is Morocco's most important export market, its leading public and private external investor and its most important tourist market. Morocco also contributes to the EU's energy security as a strategic transit country for Algerian gas and as an exporter of electricity to Spain. Human exchanges are constantly expanding: the EU is the main destination of Moroccan migrant workers and an increasing number of Europeans choose Morocco as a place for holidays or even residence. Professional exchanges are also steadily increasing. (European Commission 2007o, p. 3)

Egypt and Morocco are indeed the first two of three main recipients of ENPI funds. The third is Tunisia but resources there mainly target activities for economic development and trade: the economic relevance of the country is recognized rather than its political and strategic importance.

Finally, it should be mentioned that the EU has a peculiar relationship with Israel. According to the European Union and Israel Action Plan, the two already "share the common values of democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law and basic freedoms" (p. 1). Furthermore, the "functioning market economy and well developed public administration and public services" (European Commission 2007o, p. 1) of Israel makes it a more equal partner to the EU than the Arab Countries. The inclusion of Israel in the same partnership with Arab countries, both in the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and in the case of the ENP, is considered a mean for promoting peace relations in the Middle East. Indeed, according to the Country Strategy Paper for Israel, relations with the EU are framed in the EU's "wider efforts to contribute to a resolution of the Middle East conflict" (p. 3). It is well beyond the aims of this analysis to discuss the complex situation in the region or the role that the EU is playing and/or is supposed to play in this frame. However, it is worth mentioning that the inclusion of Israel in the ENP has raised discontent from both parties.

Strategies towards Eastern partners lack any emphasis on an Eastern regional dimension giving the impression (further discussed in Sect. 3.4) that the 'meso-regionalization' of the area is an attempt to transfer a model developed elsewhere rather than reflecting an ongoing process. A key role in the region is attributed to Ukraine, that "is clearly committed to playing a constructive role in the wider region" (European Commission 2007s, p. 5). Within Eastern strategies, strategies towards Caucasus countries devote specific attention to the issue of "regional

cooperation”, including an explicit reference to the Black Sea. Strategies focus specifically on transport and energy where Georgia is recognised as a strategic country due to “its interconnection with the transport and energy networks of the European Union, in order to ensure effective cooperation in the areas of energy and transport between the EU and the States in the Black Sea and Caspian regions” (European Union and Georgia 2006, p. 11). More generally, Georgia has a key role in the specific framework of the Black Sea cooperation with the aim, *inter alia*, of promoting better governance on maritime related matters (European Union and Georgia 2006, p. 3), and in contributing to “energy security and supply diversification needs for the EU” (European Union and Georgia 2006, p. 3), confirming the strategic role of Georgia as a transit country for oil and gas coming from the Caspian basin.

In order to give a closer look at key players in the European neighbourhood, in the following pages a series of maps are presented. The maps show two of the most important bilateral relations of neighbouring countries with their proximate countries and with EU member States: trade flows and (regular) migration flows. Although Turkey and Russia are not directly involved in the ENP, they have been included as well given their geopolitical and geoeconomic relevance in the region (Figs. 3.5, 3.6, 3.7, 3.8, 3.9, 3.10, 3.11, 3.12, 3.13, 3.14, 3.15, 3.16, 3.17, 3.18, 3.19, 3.20, 3.21, 3.22, 3.23, 3.24, 3.25, 3.26).

### **3.4 Meso-Regional Strategies and Multi-level Region Building in the European Neighbourhood**

The meso-regional dimension of the ENP should be taken carefully into account because the issue is strictly related to the debate about bilateralism vs. multilateralism in the EU’s strategies towards its external partners. According to the ENP website,

The ENP, which is chiefly a bilateral policy between the EU and each partner country, is further enriched with regional and multilateral co-operation initiatives<sup>5</sup>.

The regional initiatives (or strategies) are partially autonomous programmes yet they are also considered integral components of the ENP in terms of priorities and partially in terms of funding. The ENP is a sum of meso-regional strategies as well as a tool for the implementation of those strategies. The added-value that the meso-regional dimension is supposed to bring to the ENP, as well as to other parallel programmes like the Instrument for pre-Accession Assistance and the four Common spaces for Russia, can be classified according to the following points.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/world/enp/policy_en.htm).



**Fig. 3.5** Merchandise trade interchange of Belarus with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



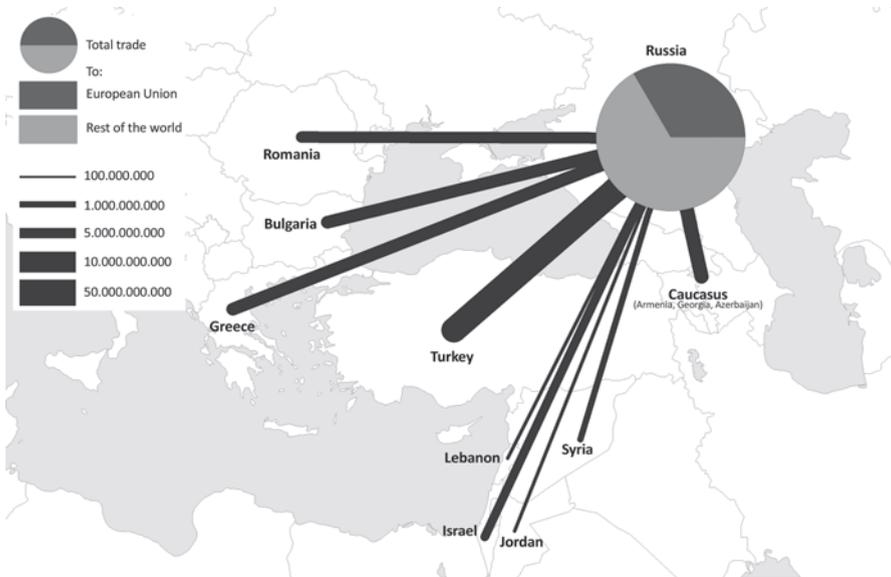
**Fig. 3.6** Merchandise trade interchange of Ukraine with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



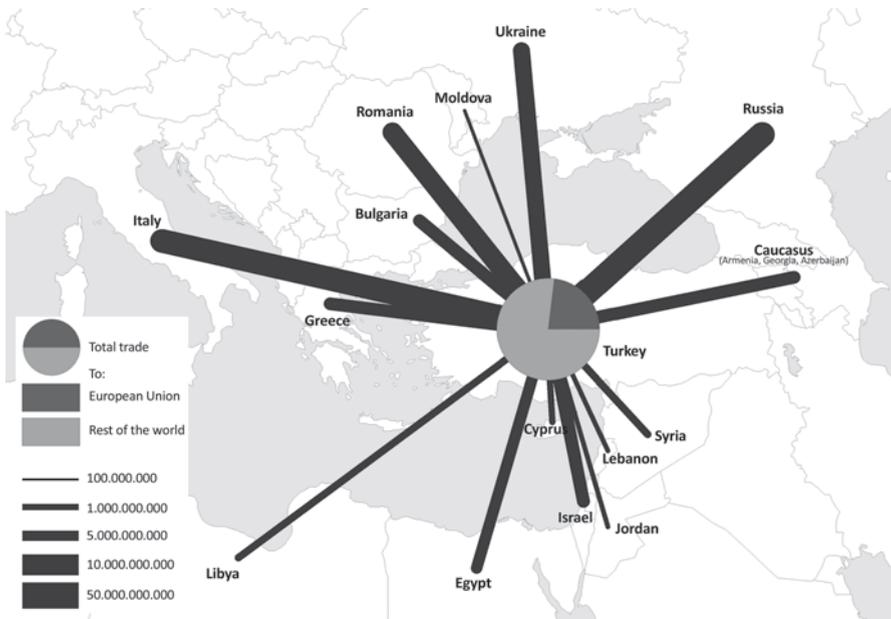
**Fig. 3.7** Merchandise trade interchange of Moldova with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



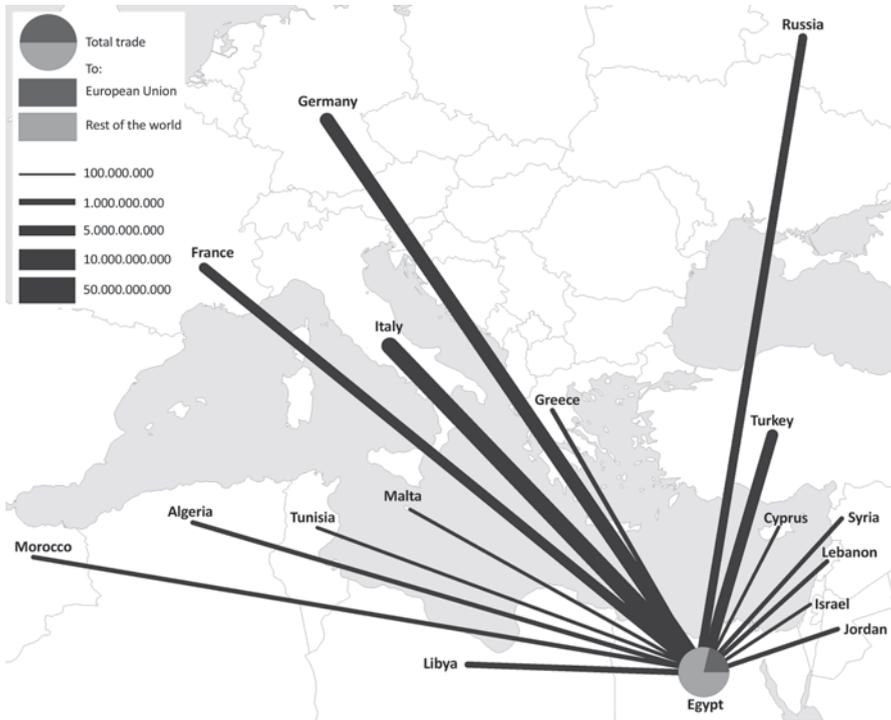
**Fig. 3.8** Merchandise trade interchange of Russia with North-Western neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.9** Merchandise trade interchange of Russia with South-Western neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.10** Merchandise trade interchange of Turkey with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



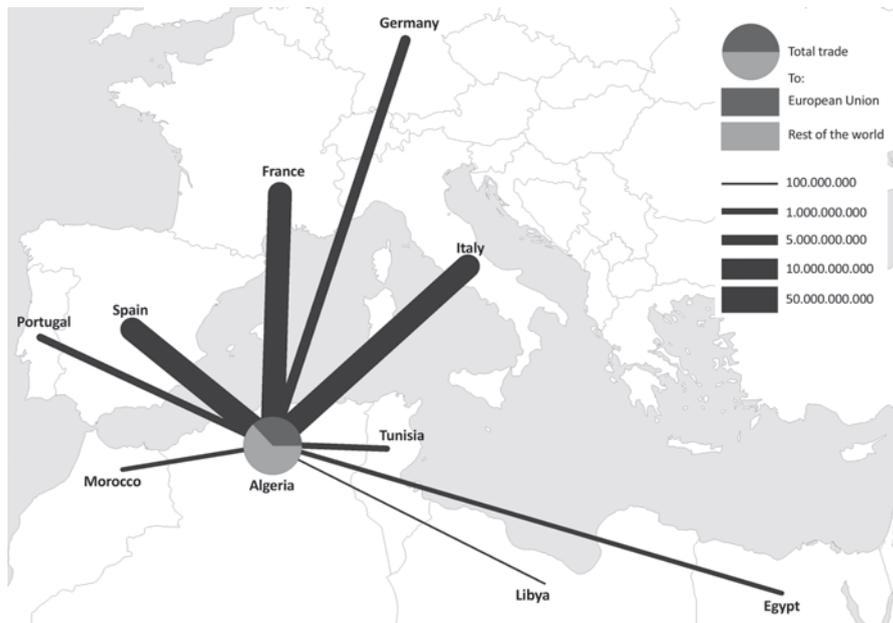
**Fig. 3.11** Merchandise trade interchange of Egypt with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



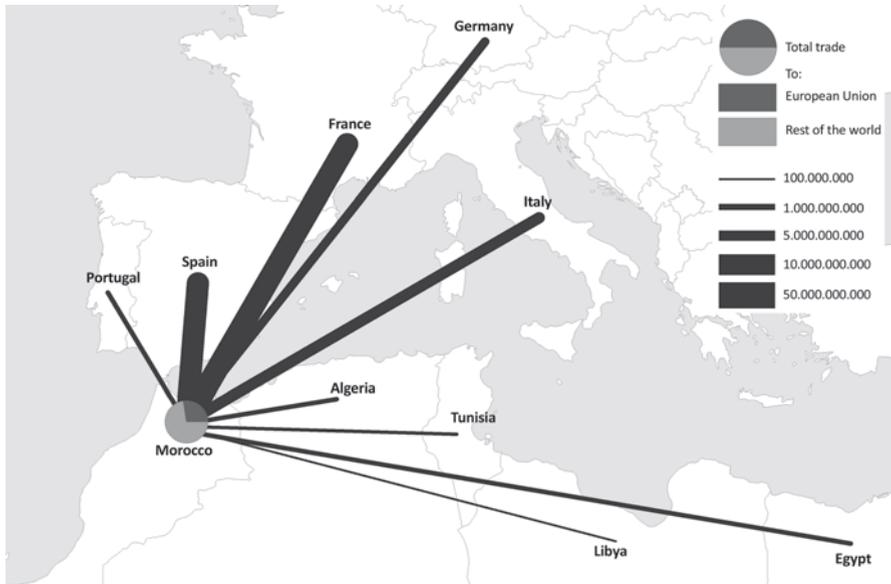
**Fig. 3.12** Merchandise trade interchange of Libya with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



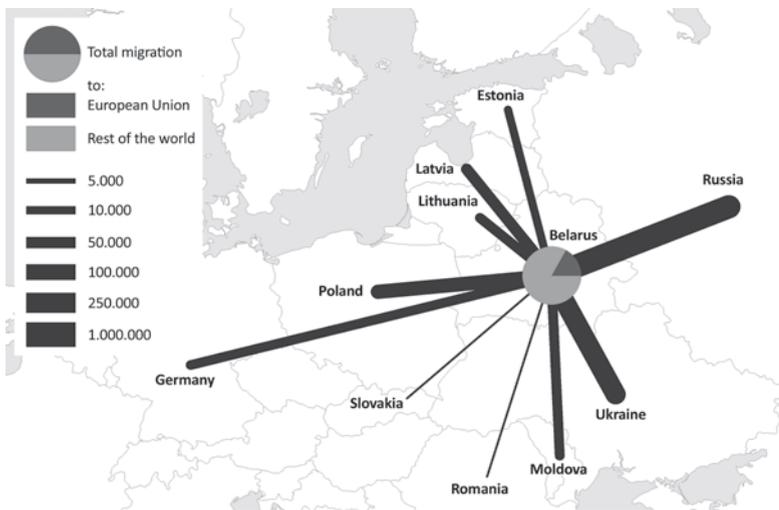
**Fig. 3.13** Merchandise trade interchange of Tunisia with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



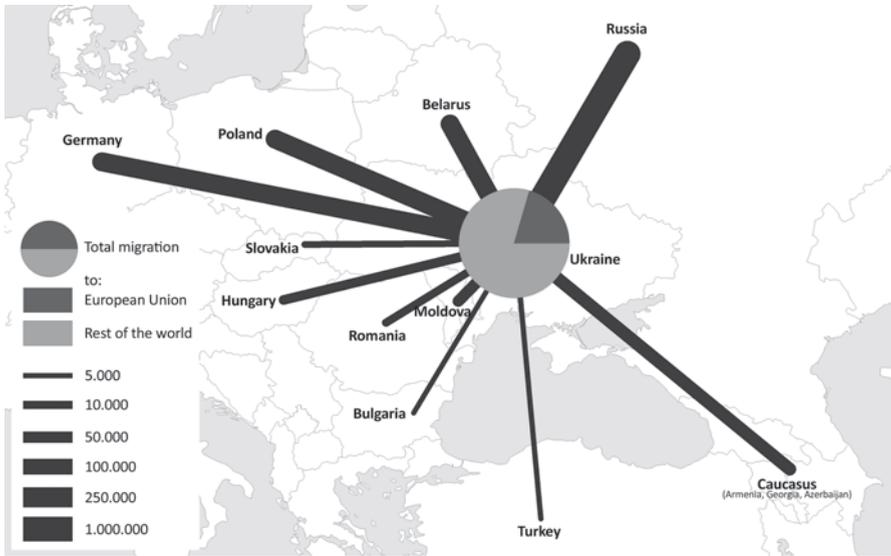
**Fig. 3.14** Merchandise trade interchange of Algeria with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.15** Merchandise trade interchange of Morocco with neighbouring countries, yearly average 2007–2013, Thousand Dollars. (Source: designed by the authors based on UNCTAD Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.16** Total migrant stock from Belarus to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



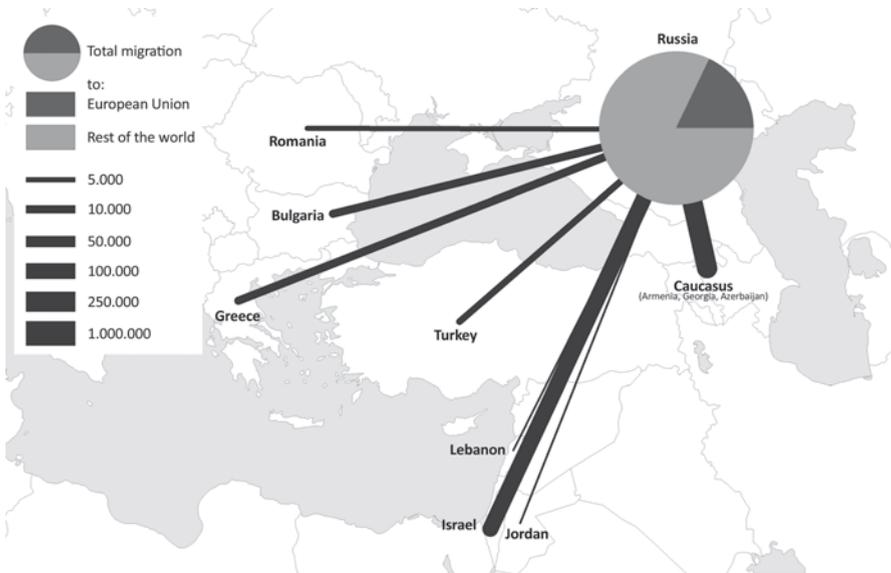
**Fig. 3.17** Total migrant stock from Ukraine to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.18** Total migrant stock from Moldova to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.19** Total migrant stock from Russia to North-Western neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.20** Total migrant stock from Russia to South-Western neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



Fig. 3.21 Total migrant stock from Turkey to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



Fig. 3.22 Total migrant stock from Egypt to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



Fig. 3.23 Total migrant stock from Libya to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)

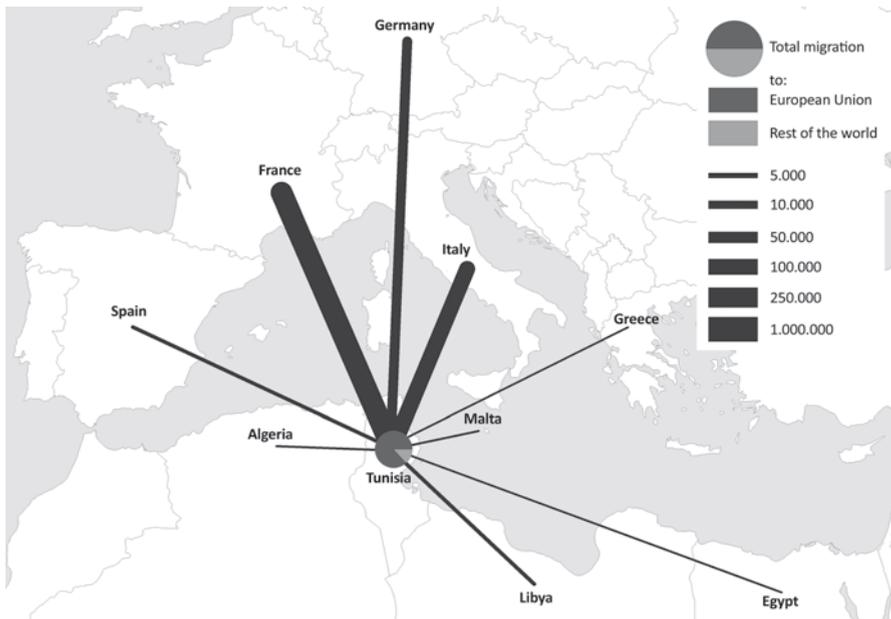
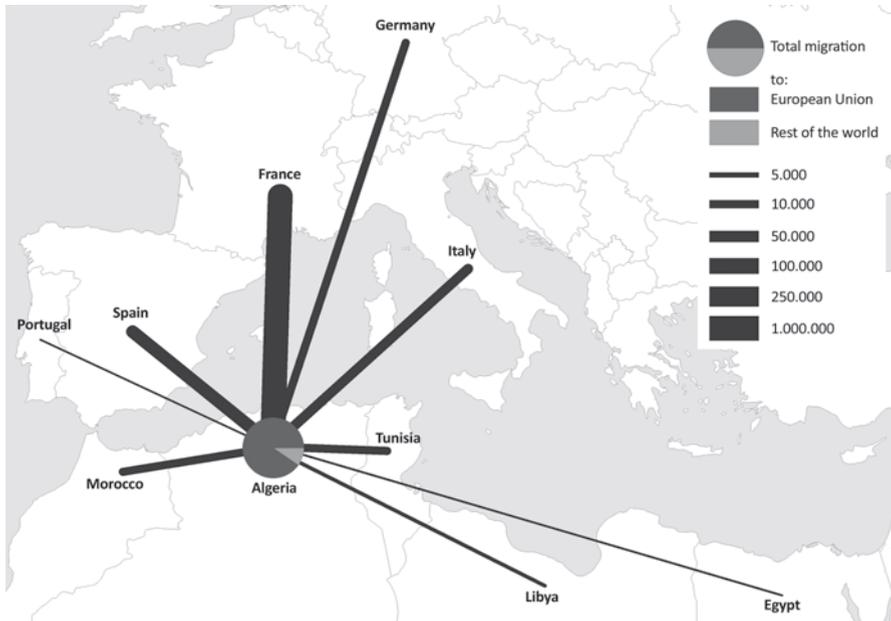
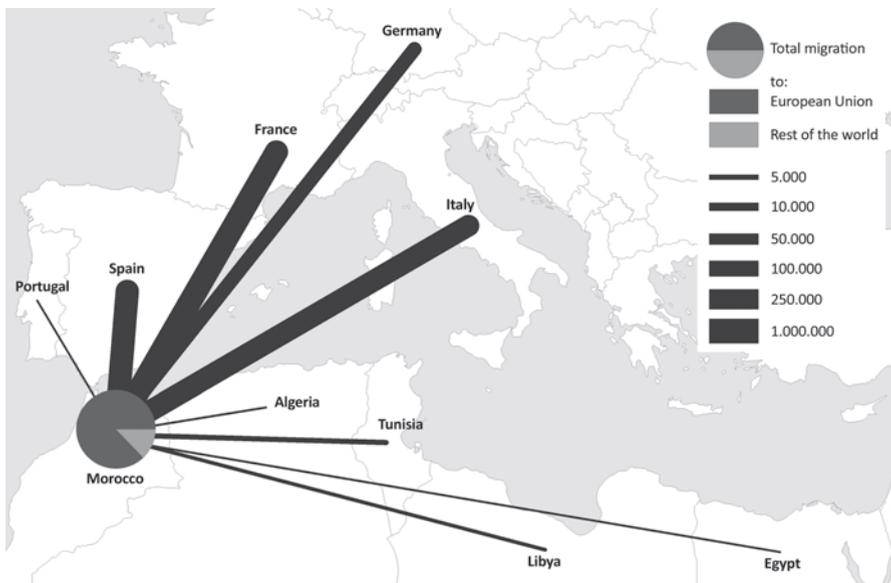


Fig. 3.24 Total migrant stock from Tunisia to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.25** Total migrant stock from Algeria to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)



**Fig. 3.26** Total migrant stock from Morocco to neighbouring countries, 2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on United Nations Database 2014)

First, the regionalisation of the neighbourhood allows the definition of strategies that better respond to the need of each specific meso-region, complementing the general framework of the ENP with more tailored initiatives.

Second, meso-regional strategies allow the maintenance and enhancement of a multilateral cooperation approach, necessary to complement the bilateralism which is implied in the ENP and to tackle specific transnational issues. In this frame, moreover, meso-regional strategies are explicitly aimed at region-building (Neumann 1994). The strategies create material institutional venues where the EU, member States and partner countries can meet in a formally equal position, to discuss problems affecting the whole region and the possibility of cooperation and economic development. This overtakes the idea of mono-directional aid flows from the rich EU to the (less developed) partner countries, which is frequently associated with the ENP and, more generally, to all of the EU's external policies.

Third, although meso-regional strategies are based on the participation of the entire EU, member States are unequal in their active participation in all of initiatives. Their more or less active participation depends on their interest or commitment towards each specific meso-region. The regional initiatives mechanism allows differentiated participation while, on the other hand, seeking to maintain all these relations under the common EU umbrella.

Fourth, meso-regional strategies adopt a multi-actor and multi-level governance approach sustaining the role of not only central governments but also local authorities and civil society, at least on paper. Following Tassinari (2011), we can say that the coexistence of different policies, at different geographical scales and involving different political units, are intended to extend the rationale of multi-level governance beyond the EU's border:

In contemporary Europe, regions have characteristically been multi-level and multi-dimensional phenomena (...). These various options are, on the one hand, a reflection of the increasingly post-national character of the European political arena and to the progressive 'de-territorialisation' of social interactions. On the other hand, they suggest that the regional framework emerges as a suitable format of social aggregation when actors need to tackle practical questions, which have become eminently transnational – from environmental issues to trade regimes. (Tassinari 2011, p. 228)

A fifth added-value of meso-regional strategies is that they are supposed to be the optimal scale for pursuing stability and conflict resolution in the European neighbourhood, as expressed by Adler with respect to the Mediterranean:

Behind the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and related efforts lies the (...) idea that the most promising—perhaps only—way to achieve long term security, economic welfare, political stability, and peace in the Mediterranean area is neither an elaborate system of alliances or collective security system, nor a functional scheme of economic integration, but the socio-cultural process of constructing a region. (Adler 1998, p. 189)

### ***3.4.1 The Northern Dimension***

For a long time, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, created in 1995 at the Barcelona Conference (further discussed in Sect. 3.4) and the Northern Dimension,

established in 1999, have been the only two existing examples of institutionalized regional cooperation frameworks between the EU and non-EU countries.

The Northern Dimension (ND) is a common policy created in 1999 and re-launched in 2006 by the EU, Norway, Iceland and the Russian Federation, with Canada and the United States participating as observers. The ND is considered one of the more successful and inspiring region-building processes among the various European meso-regional strategies (Browning and Joenniemi 2003). This area has a long tradition of intergovernmental cooperation and can be regarded one of the most advanced in terms of regionalization experience and new forms of governance. Several organizations were created in the second half of XX century to deal with the specificities of the region, including various Euroregions and cross-border cooperation programmes (see Chap. 4). As we will see in-depth in Chap. 6, in 2009 the Baltic area was the birthplace of the first “macro-regional strategy”.

The creation of the ND, in 1999, was based on a Finnish proposal from the early 1990s, whose aim was “a re-imagining of the Baltic Sea area in unifying rather than dividing terms” (Browning and Joenniemi 2003, p. 463). The initiative combines targeted projects that deal with economic, social and environmental problems and is based on specific sectoral partnerships together with “an attempt to frame policy in the North more broadly (...) to provide a vision for the future development of the region” (Browning and Joenniemi 2003, p. 466). The strategy adopts the partnership principle as the cornerstone of the initiative:

The ND partners recognize that their cooperation framework can only be driven by the spirit of partnership and based on shared confidence. The ND policy is henceforward a common project and a common responsibility. (Northern Dimension 2006a, p. 1)

The policy covers “from the European Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas to the Southern shores of the Baltic Sea, including the countries in its vicinity and from North-West Russia in the East of Iceland and Greenland in the West” (Northern Dimension 2006a, p. 1). According to the Northern Dimension Policy Framework Document, “The Baltic Sea, the Kaliningrad Oblast (...) as well as the extensive Arctic and Sub-Arctic areas including the Barents region, are priority areas for the Northern Dimension Policy” (art. 3). Each of these areas has their own peculiarities in the framework of the general strategy for the whole region. For instance, the Russian Federation, Iceland, Norway, Canada, Denmark, Finland, Sweden and the US are also included in the “Arctic” EU regional policy, set up in 2008, to specifically deal with the Arctic area.

The region-building process in the Northern Dimension is based on a narrative that emphasizes “geographic proximity, economic interdependence, common cultural heritage, common challenges and the possibilities to reap together the benefits in one of the most dynamically developing areas of the world” (Northern Dimension 2006b, p. 1).

The policy has been more recently influenced by ENP narratives stating that the ND “will help to ensure that no dividing lines are established in the North of Europe” (Northern Dimension 2006a, p. 1). The objectives of the policy are very broad, even though “the ND (...) will [only] focus on areas of cooperation where a regional and sub-regional emphasis brings added value” (Northern Dimension 2006a, Art. 12).

The ND has a deep commitment to creating multi-level and multi-actor governance in the Northern political space. This is considered a distinctive feature of cooperation in the North especially if compared with the more State-level regional cooperation experienced in the Mediterranean and elsewhere. According to the Policy Framework Document, “The Northern Dimension policy will be characterized by transparency and openness towards all its actors and will take due regard of the subsidiarity principle” (Northern Dimension 2006a, art. 13).

Cross-border cooperation initiatives are especially relevant: “cross-border cooperation will be a cross-cutting theme producing added value at the sub-regional and transnational level, enhancing sustainable regional development, the involvement of civil society and people-to-people contacts” (Northern Dimension 2006a, art. 15). The partners “confirm their readiness to cooperate with all international, regional, sub-regional and local organizations, institutions and other actors, including the business community and NGOs, that are ready to contribute to the development of the region”.

The Northern Dimension has been used as a model for the Black Sea Synergy (European Commission 2007x), in “deliberative attempts by the project’s main actors to mimic what are perceived as region-making success stories” (Ciutâ 2008, p. 136); it has been of inspiration also for the Eastern Partnership, although some “key conceptual differences” (Browning and Joenniemi 2003, p. 463) can be identified between the two initiatives, as we will see.

### 3.4.2 *The Black Sea Synergy*

The Black Sea Synergy (European Commission 2007x) was set up in 2007 following the enlargement to Romania and Bulgaria. The strategy was implemented in an area where several initiatives aimed at regional dialogue were already in place, i.e. the Black Sea Economic Cooperation<sup>6</sup> or the Black Sea Forum for Partnership and Dialogue<sup>7</sup>, although with a diverse degree of participation from the single countries. The Black Sea Synergy is seen as an instrument to foster cooperation between the EU and the above mentioned existing regional initiatives.

The strategy is explicitly based on European strategic interests in the area. The first two sentences of the Black Sea Synergy document clearly show the orientation of the programme:

On 1 January 2007, the Black Sea littoral States, Bulgaria and Romania, joined the European Union. More than ever before, the prosperity, stability and security of our neighbours around the Black Sea are of immediate concern to the EU. (European Commission 2007x, p. 2)

<sup>6</sup> Created in 1992 to foster interaction and harmony in Albania, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Bulgaria, Georgia, Greece, Moldova, Romania, Russian Federation, Serbia, Turkey and Ukraine.

<sup>7</sup> Created in 2006, by Romanian initiative, to set up a regular consultative process among Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Moldova, Romania and Ukraine, plus Bulgaria and Turkey as observers.

The Black Sea area represents a security challenge in at least two different ways: on the one hand,

The enduring need for access to sources of energy (...) and the global war on terror revalue the military significance of the Black Sea which becomes a security asset as a platform for power projection to the Middle East and Asia and as a buffer zone against asymmetric risks to European Security. (Ciutâ 2008, p. 125)

On the other hand, “frozen conflicts, illegal arms trafficking and transnational crime are issues that make the Black Sea a security problem” (Ciutâ 2008, p. 126).

If compared with other EU’s meso-regional strategies, the peculiarity of the Black Sea Strategy, is in the fact that only certain member States are included in the partnership as well as non-EU countries. Indeed, according to the Black Sea Synergy document, the countries involved in the Black Sea region are Greece, Bulgaria, Romania and Moldova in the West, Ukraine and Russia in the North, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan in the East and Turkey in the South. The document stresses that “though Armenia, Azerbaijan, Moldova and Greece are not littoral States, history, proximity and close ties make them natural regional actors” (European Commission 2007x, first footnote). The Synergy indeed encourages “variable geometries of cooperation” (Tassinari 2011, p. 233), as it foresees that “the scope of actions could extend beyond the region itself, since many activities remain strongly linked to neighbouring regions, notably to the Caspian Sea, to Central Asia and to South Eastern Europe” (European Commission 2007x, p. 3).

Due to its geographical coverage, the Strategy cuts across three different EU policies: the ENP, Enlargement and Strategic Partnership with the Russian Federation. The initiative is defined as “complementary to these policies” (European Commission 2007x, p. 3), and focuses on cooperation “within the Black Sea Region and also between the region as a whole and the European Union” (European Commission 2007x, p. 3).

The Synergy concentrates on “cooperation sectors which reflect common priorities and where EU presence and support is already significant” (European Commission 2007x, p. 3). The list of main areas of cooperation includes many priorities “spanning from those that have a clear pan-regional focus, to others where the region-building dynamic would have a more limited impact such as ‘employment and social affairs’ (Tassinari 2011, p. 233). Some of those priorities derive from the ENP (i.e. democracy and security), while others are more targeted towards the specificities of the region (i.e. energy and transport). Although conflicts in the area are mentioned in the strategy document, “enhanced regional cooperation is not intended to deal directly with long-standing conflicts in the region, but it could generate more mutual confidence and, over time, could help remove some of the obstacles that stand in the way” (Tassinari 2011, p. 2).

The role of civil society and local actors is explicitly mentioned in the strategic document especially in relation to the ENPI cross-border cooperation programme (that will be discussed in Chap. 4). According to the document, the programme will facilitate “the further development of contacts between Black Sea towns and communities, universities, cultural operators and civil society organizations including consumer organisations” (European Commission 2007x, p. 8). In any case, according to Tassinari,

Most of the EU democracy assistance mechanisms are a jungle of red tape impenetrable to democracy activists. The result is that assistance tends to be given to the same organizations and to become a sterile technical exercise. (Tassinari 2011, p. 237)

### 3.4.3 *The Eastern Partnership*

The Eastern Partnership (EaP), established in 2008, is primarily based on the efforts of the Polish government which, dating back to the 2003, sought to identify an eastern dimension in the framework of ENP (see Cimoszewicz 2003). According to the European Commission, the strategy is based on the “need for a differentiated approach respecting the character of the ENP as a single and coherent policy framework” (European Commission 2008a, p. 2).

Since 1997, four of six members of the Eastern Partnership (Georgia, Ukraine, Azerbaijan, Moldova) had already been associated in the GUAM (Organization for Democracy and Economic Development) but without any involvement from the EU. The Partnership also includes Armenia and Belarus.

The EaP builds on previous Commission proposals to strengthen the ENP and aims at reinforcing the interaction between the EU and each of the partner countries in addition to offering a new framework for cooperation at the meso-regional level.

The main aim of the EaP appears to be complementary to the ENP’s: “the ENP has already been successful in forging closer relations between the EU and its neighbours. The EaP should go further” (European Commission 2008a, p. 2). The Partnership is strongly influenced by narratives of integration with the EU: “the main goal of the Eastern Partnership is to create the necessary conditions to accelerate political association and further economic integration between the European Union and interested partner countries” (Eastern Partnership 2009). The EaP, moreover, is defined as a means to “bring our partners closer to the EU” (EEAS Website)<sup>8</sup>; the foundations of the partnership are the ENP’s “shared values”, such as democracy and the rule of law, respect for human rights and basic freedoms, market economy and sustainable development. The Partnership explicitly acknowledges the aspirations of ENP Eastern partners to access the EU and it leaves the door open to possible future EU enlargements.

The EaP neither promises nor precludes the prospect of EU membership to the partner States. It offers deeper integration with the EU structures by encouraging and supporting them in their political, institutional and economic reforms based on EU standards, as well as facilitating trade and increasing mobility between the EU and the partner State<sup>9</sup>.

One of the main priorities of the partnership is, consequently, economic integration and convergence with EU policies (European Commission 2008b). The partnership’s priorities are very similar to the ENP’s yet they also take into account the specificities and the hot topics in the area, namely energy. Priorities, however, do not appear to have a specific “regional” added-value: the reasons for launching the

<sup>8</sup> EEAS Website, [http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/azerbaijan/eu\\_azerbaijan/political\\_relations/eastern\\_partnership/index\\_en.htm](http://eeas.europa.eu/delegations/azerbaijan/eu_azerbaijan/political_relations/eastern_partnership/index_en.htm).

<sup>9</sup> <http://www.easternpartnership.org/content/eastern-partnership-glance>.

Eastern Partnership are to be found in the need to establish an Eastern ENP regional dimension and not in addressing specific regional and transnational issues. The region is thus created by the commitment of the EU to improving cooperation in the area and with all the risks associated with this approach, as confirmed by the recent violent reaction of Russia towards perspectives for further integration of former-Soviet countries with the EU. Indeed “EU-promoted regionalism often risks giving local actors the impression of a full-scale EU ‘takeover’ of the region” (Tassinari 2011, p. 230). Moreover, “the EU-centric logic of region building often clashes with diverging interests among EU member States” (Tassinari 2011, p. 230).

The participation of local governments and civil society is explicitly mentioned in the partnership. Based on regional disparities within partner countries, the EaP document proposes the creation of a “Memoranda of Understanding” on regional policy, the development of a pilot regional development programme and sustained direct cooperation between the regions of the EU and those of the partner countries, including participation in transnational programmes in Southern, Eastern, Central and Northern Europe. The partnership is moreover aimed at extending ENPI funded cross-border cooperation initiatives currently implemented at the external borders of the EU to the borders between external partners (European Commission 2008a, p. 8). Although the participation of civil society and local actors is not to the same degree as within the Northern Dimension, “the EaP proposes to support the further development of Civil society organizations, and to establish a Civil Society Forum to promote contacts among CSOs and facilitate their dialogue with public authorities” (European Commission 2008a, p. 12).

### **3.5 From the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership to the ENP**

Among the various regional strategies, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (or Barcelona process), launched in 1995 between the EU, its member States and 12 non-EU Mediterranean partners deserves special attention because it is the oldest and probably the most ambitious meso-regional initiative carried out by the EU.

It is not surprising that the first regional strategy was about the Mediterranean: since the 1950s, the Mediterranean has been the first and most important test for the EU’s ability to speak with a single voice in the international arena (Amoroso 2007, p. 502). From the 1970s, with the establishment of the Global Mediterranean Policy, several Euro-Mediterranean cooperation programmes have been launched. In this frame, the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership (EMP), “has become one of the critical ways in which the EU seeks to define itself as much as order its relations with the outside world” (Jones 2006, p. 420). The strategic relevance of the Mediterranean, moreover, is not only due to its proximity to the European area and to the long history of cross-Mediterranean relations, but also to the European enlargement to Greece (1981), Spain and Portugal (1986) and to the post-1989 geopolitical scenario. As stated by Adler a few years after the launch of the partnership,

Straddling two of the deepest divides of our era—that between the West and Islam, and that between the (prosperous) North and the (destitute) South—the Mediterranean basin harbours some of the most dangerous threats to contemporary international security. (Adler 1998, p. 186)

The strategic relevance of the Mediterranean is still confirmed today.

Although the EMP was not the first it may be considered the most ambitiously coordinated multilateral effort to establish a common policy toward the Mediterranean. The content of the partnership was not entirely new with respect to policies that European countries had already been conducting bilaterally with non-EU Mediterranean countries. What was new was the greater emphasis on the ‘regional’ dimension: the idea of conducting those policies multilaterally at the basin level, and the prospects for integration and regionalization in the area, reflected a growing belief among European political elites that a Mediterranean region could be ‘made’ (Bialasiewicz et al. 2009, p. 83).

The aims of the Barcelona process, as in the case of the other regional strategies discussed in Sect. 3.4, are various: to strengthen the relations between the EU and Southern Mediterranean countries with the aim of establishing a common area of peace and stability, economic and financial partnership in order to create shared prosperity and cooperation in social, cultural and human affairs; to develop human resources, enhance understanding between cultures and promote exchanges between civil society, etc.

The creation of a Free Trade Area (FTA) in the Euro-Mediterranean is one of the main pillars on which regionalization in the Mediterranean has been built. The idea of establishing a FTA was the first, and still continues to be, one of the most important component of Euro-Mediterranean policies even though those policies have since evolved and diversified from the time the proposal for a FTA was first formulated in 1995.

The FTA was supposed to include all Mediterranean countries that, since the 1970s, had already established trade agreements with the EU. In addition to the establishment of the FTA, the partnership aimed at increasing the financial support the EU had traditionally directed toward non-EU Mediterranean countries. The Barcelona process attempted to make those efforts more systematic and more ambitious although concrete achievements have been far below the initial expectations.

There is an extensive critical literature about the EMP (see Adler and Crawford 2004; Cugusi 2009a; Scarpetta and Swidlicki 2011; Cassano and Zolo 2007; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005; Emerson and Noutcheva 2005; Jones 2006; Kausch and Youngs 2009; Pace 2004; Youngs 2006; Zaim 1999).

In terms of commercial relations, the Mediterranean indeed ceased to be a crucial region for global trade in the XVII century (Braudel 1985, p. 53). The EU is an important commercial partner for some non-EU Mediterranean countries (see Sect. 3.3.2). If we exclude energy resources, however, cross-Mediterranean trade relations are minimal and they have even been decreasing in recent years as they are replaced by exchange with Asian countries. South-South exchanges are even weaker as they account for only 5% of the total trade of non-European Mediterranean countries (Cugusi 2009b, p. 48): “At the present time, it cannot be said that

there is a system of international trade between the countries of the Mediterranean” (Tovias and Bacaria 1999, p. 5).

Such evidence shows that trade liberalization in the Euro-Mediterranean has not experienced the effects that were initially expected. Most observers agree on this point and many other criticisms have been raised with respect to the EU’s strategy toward commercial integration. The component of Euro-Mediterranean politics that has progressed the most (even if many think it has not progressed enough), is indeed trade liberalization for manufacturing products. Although the 2010 deadline for the official establishment of the FTA was not met and has since been postponed, European countries have signed free trade agreements with all of their Mediterranean external partners, with the exception of Syria and Libya.

Critics have emphasized the asymmetry and neo-colonialism which is implicit in the prioritization of manufacturing trade in which European countries have relevant competitive advantages (Amoroso 2007, p. 507), and the protectionism that still characterizes other components of the so-called “four freedoms” of regional integration—persons, goods, services and capital. Agricultural trade, for example, has been excluded from the initial prospects for the creation of the FTA. This has the aim of safeguarding European agriculture and the European agricultural policy given the comparative advantages that Southern Mediterranean countries have with respect to the EU in many agricultural productions (Tovias and Bacaria 1999). This has raised much criticism and discontent in partner countries. Consequently, the EU has recently upgraded preferential market access for agricultural and fisheries products from Egypt and Jordan. Several other agreements in this field are being negotiated or are at the approval stage, with for example Morocco, in the field of free trade in services (European Commission 2011a).

The prioritization of trade is surely indicative of a peculiar approach to regionalization which is typical, although to a lesser extent, for any EU external partnership. The strengthening of Euro-Mediterranean relations—it is argued—should first and foremost be based on strengthening commercial relations. Many authors have stressed that such prioritization is the result of a utilitarian and neoliberal ideology (Latouche 2007). This is also coherent with the use of the term “partnership”, borrowed from the commercial domain to indicate that partner countries will remain fully autonomous but with agreed upon fostered commercial integration as long as—according to neoliberal ideologies—international trade is mutually beneficial to both.

The Euro-Mediterranean partnership can indeed be said to constitute a ‘commercial’ approach toward regionalization. Yet, the perspective on the establishment of a FTA is never considered an end in and of itself. The fostering of trade relations is rather supposed to be a ‘stick’ for fostering other kinds of relations. In this respect, the prioritization of free trade has much to do with the (Braudelian) idea that historically, trade flows are the primary connections upon which any other (political, social or cultural) relation is constructed. Even if supporters of a truly integrated area would say that the FTA is not enough, most observers agree that it is a starting point for any kind of regionalization process: it is the history of European integration itself.

Meanwhile Euro-Mediterranean politics have evolved and diversified considerably especially after the launch of the ENP in 2003. Among the many differences between the EMP and the ENP, we might say that the ‘commercial’ approach that characterized the Euro-Mediterranean partnership during the 1990s was replaced with a more explicitly ‘normative’ approach the following decade. As already mentioned in Chap. 1, the “normative” approach of the EU in its foreign policies has been highlighted by Manners (2002), indicating the EU’s preference for ‘soft’ power and due to on the emphasis on the ‘civilising’ mission that the EU is supposed to play in the world: trade and aid, in other words, are considered incentives to promote political reforms in non-EU countries.

Commercial integration and the establishment of a FTA is still a priority but it is more than ever a tool, rather than a goal itself, within an ambitious strategy for building a “deep” and “comprehensive” free trade area (DCFTA) that aims at promoting inter-institutional dialogue, regional development, regulatory convergence, approximation of non-EU countries to EU rules and practices, and “complex and broad-ranging reforms” (European Commission 2011b, p. 8):

Our aim is a political one; political in the sense of stability. We got into this business of association agreements and free trade in order to engage them in the process of political reform, not so much because there was a general economic interest. (EU Official, cited in: Jones 2006, p. 424)

Prospects for the participation of local actors and civil society are formally included in the EMP. Nevertheless, civil society did not play a central role in the partnership until now, nor did the EU/third countries relations in the Mediterranean adequately take into account local interests and the local civil society. On the contrary, “Western objectives in the region were supported by a large coalition of regional powers with conservative interests” (Aliboni 2011, p. 5).

The so-called Arab revolutions, in this light, have demonstrated—inter alias—the need to strengthen relations between the EU and partner countries’ civil societies, and this approach has been taken into account in the design of the Neighbourhood Policy for the 2014–2020 programming period. These aspects will be further discussed in Chap. 5.

Although the EU insisted that the ENP would “reinvigorate the Barcelona process”, since the launch of the ENP many observers have feared that the new policy would constitute a shift in the priorities of the EU toward its Eastern frontier (Aliboni 2005). The EMP was indeed the outcome of an EU enlargement in the 1980s and 1990s with the accession of Spain, Portugal, Greece and—more recently—Cyprus and Malta. The ENP, on the other hand, was a response to the EU’s Eastern enlargement and—according to many authors—was primarily concerned with the challenges that the enlargement would pose for relations between Eastern European countries who have become member States and their non-EU neighbours (Zaiotti 2007; Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005). The ENP has certainly been criticized for challenging the perspectives of a regional approach toward the Euro-Mediterranean (Kausch and Youngs 2009, p. 965):

The ENP abandons the prevalence of the principle of regionality that was inherent in the Barcelona Process, and replaces it with differentiated bilateralism. (Del Sarto and Schumacher 2005, p. 21)

The Euro-Mediterranean Partnership was never, indeed, a truly multilateral policy. For instance, free trade agreements, differently from other FTAs such as the NAFTA and the EFTA, are signed between the EU and each partner country individually. Some have defined this a “hub and spoke” approach which challenges the same creation of a FTA for the whole region (Zaim 1999). The EMP was, however, imbued with the narratives of region-building while prospects for a truly integration in the Mediterranean are weaker today than 20 years ago.

### ***3.5.1 From the Mediterranean Union to the Union for the Mediterranean***

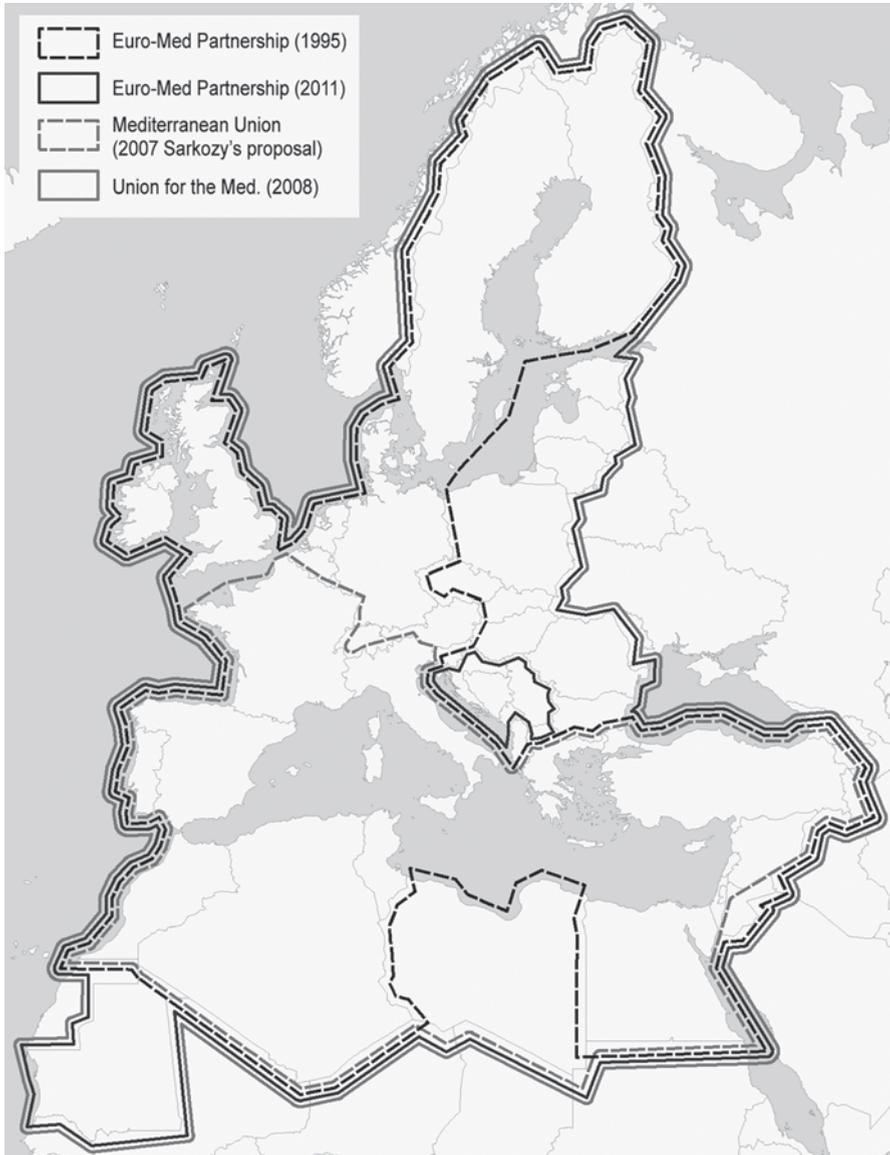
As a consequence of the fading prospects for integration in the Euro-Mediterranean, a few years after the celebration of the tenth anniversary of the Barcelona declaration the former President of France Nicholas Sarkozy proposed a new form of meso-regional cooperation during the French presidential election campaign in February 2007: the “Mediterranean Union”.

Different from the ENP and Barcelona Process, the Mediterranean Union was supposed to include only those Southern and Northern Mediterranean countries which border the sea, not the whole EU. The French proposal was, on the one hand, a response to aforementioned criticisms about EU disengagement from the Mediterranean and the ENP being too expansive, as well as to the failure of Euro-Mediterranean objectives as outlined in the Barcelona Declaration of 1995 (Gillespie 2008). At the same time, such a geographical delimitation emphasized the commitment toward the establishment of a truly Mediterranean “Union”, rather than a simple multilateral partnership. Sarkozy gave particular emphasis to region building in the Mediterranean:

While Europe’s future is in the South, Africa’s is in the North. I call on all those who can do so to join the Mediterranean Union because it will be the linchpin of Eurafrika, the great dream capable of enthusing the world. The Mediterranean Union is a challenge, a challenge for all of us, (...) Mediterraneans. (Sarkozy 2007)

The idea to include only those countries that border the Mediterranean, indeed, stirred debates and raised criticism because it challenged the perspectives for multilateralism in the Mediterranean in contradiction to the initial spirit of the EMP (Balfour 2009; Kausch and Youngs 2009). Even if the EU has recently conceded that regionalization in the area can proceed with a “variable geometry” (European Commission 2011a, p. 11), the French proposal was fiercely criticized not only by Northern European countries but also by Italy and Spain since it was supposed to weaken the role of the EU and the possibility for European countries to speak with a single voice.

After a long negotiation, in 2008 the proposal was transformed into a re-launch of the EMP under the name of the “Union for the Mediterranean” (European Commission 2008c), and included all countries that are part of the EMP plus



**Fig. 3.27** Delimitations of the Euro-Mediterranean area within EU policies toward the Mediterranean. (Source: designed by the authors)

Monaco and the Western Balkans (with the exception of Serbia and Macedonia) (Fig. 3.27). The initiative resulted in nothing more than the implementation of some strategic projects, with few prospects for regional integration (Kausch and Youngs 2009).

The aim of the initiative, more recently supported by all Mediterranean member States (Cugusi 2009b), is to “enhance multilateral relations, increase co-ownership of the process and make it more visible to citizens” (European Commission 2008c, art. 14), in an attempt to overcome the lack of co-ownership and political imbalance between the EU and Mediterranean partners that characterized previous relations. According to the initiative, “the Barcelona Declaration, its goals and its cooperation areas remain valid” (Art. 15), as does the work programme and documents adopted in 2005. Nevertheless, “there is a need to reassert in political terms the central importance of the Mediterranean on the political agenda of all participants” (Art. 13).

The partnership is wider than that of the Barcelona process (Fig. 3.27), and it attempts to adopt a cooperation principle based on regionality (including all the States bordering the Mediterranean Sea) not institutions (like the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership that included only European countries that are members of the EU).

Notwithstanding the involvement of territories covered by different policies, the Union for the Mediterranean is clearly linked to the ENP where it is considered a “Southern regional framework” complemented, in the East, by the Eastern Partnership. Furthermore, as already mentioned, the Union for the Mediterranean explicitly aims at strengthening the Barcelona process, in three main ways:

By upgrading the political level of the EU’s relationship with its Mediterranean partners; by providing more co-ownership to multilateral relations; and by making these relations more concrete and visible through additional regional and sub-regional projects, relevant for the citizens of the region. (European Commission 2008c, p. 5)

Similar to the other regional strategies, resources for the implementation of the policy come mainly from the ENPI (including programmes like Neighbourhood Investment Facility or ENPI-CBC), but also from other sources such as private investments, bilateral cooperation from EU member States, contributions from Mediterranean countries, international financial institutions, regional banks and other bilateral funds like the FEMIP.

The narratives of the Union for the Mediterranean recall the “close historical and cultural links” that Southern Mediterranean countries have with Europe (Art. 1), and are strongly influenced by the idea of co-ownership and practical translation of political efforts. The idea is to concentrate resources and activities in some major projects in order to maximize visibility and results, similar to the recently launched macro-regional strategies (Chap. 6). Projects developed under the initiative “should have a strong potential to promote regional cohesion and economic integration, and to develop infrastructural interconnections. They should constitute visible and relevant projects for the citizens of the region” (Art. 33). The projects included in the Union official document are the following: de-pollution of the Mediterranean Sea; establishment of maritime and land corridors; joint civil protection programme; Mediterranean solar energy plan; higher education and research, Euro-Mediterranean university; the Mediterranean business initiative.

All those strategic projects undoubtedly have a regional dimension and they combine traditional regional issues in the Mediterranean (e.g. the environment) with priorities that derive from the European internal agenda such as the post-Lisbon emphasis on research and innovation. At the same time, according to many

authors, the initiative is more of an addition to the EU's "trade and integration" policy rather than a change of direction (Holden 2011). Concrete outcomes from the Union for the Mediterranean have been very limited so far and the future will depend on many variables including geopolitical tensions, national priorities and availability of funding (Hunt 2011).

### 3.6 Regionalization and Bordering in the European Neighbourhood

As we have shown, the ENP is based on an idea of constructing a "wider Europe": a multi-scalar and post-national polity with blurred borders. The strategy indeed appears to replicate what has been defined as the "enlargement methodology"—enhanced cooperation, gradual approximation, opening of borders—but with several crucial differences.

The first and rather obvious difference is that ENP countries are not candidates for EU accession and some of them never will be. Consequently, inclusion in the ENP means being *de facto* excluded from EU accession: in this way the ENP clearly indicates where the EU's external borders lie (Dimitrovova 2010). According to other critiques (discussed in Chap. 1), the policy aims at cooperation and at the securitization of the EU external border, two goals which are contradictory and cause ambiguities, inconsistencies, ineffectiveness. Furthermore the narratives of "common values" have been essentially developed in Eurocentric terms. This results into an exercise of cultural bordering and othering that is hardly coherent with the explicit objectives of the policy. The ENP is consequently, according to many authors and observers, a bordering, rather than a cross-bordering policy.

In our view, such a bordering process is more complex and articulated than it appears to be at first glance. European institutions attempt to balance the emphasis on securitization by prioritizing other goals of co-operation: addressing "common challenges", promoting "common values", intensifying cross-border relations (as we will see further in Chap. 4). Furthermore, the ENP adopts the narratives of region-building across the EU external frontiers but with different emphasis and outcomes in the various cases. Notwithstanding the attempt to apply a single policy framework to the whole neighbourhood, the ENP does in fact promote different geo-strategies and construct a multi-faced "wider" Europe in the process (Browning and Joenniemi 2008; Emerson 2012). As it moves beyond its European core, and increasingly in recent years, the EU acknowledges and actively promotes the (co-) existence of a plurality of super-imposed and multi-scalar regionalization processes which, again, show highly differentiated aims and contents (see also Chaps. 4 and 6).

The ENP regional programmes towards Mediterranean and Eastern countries respectively, and the meso-regional strategies, permit a better targeting of the policy and a multilateral approach which the ENP is otherwise missing. Regional strategies, moreover, represent an implicit acknowledgment that integration of neighbouring

countries with the EU and its member States can proceed at variable geometries and with different velocities.

Despite some similarities, strategies towards the Mediterranean recall more of an external assistance approach aimed at channelling aid through traditional development cooperation. Region-building in the Mediterranean is supposed to primarily rely on increasing trade in the area which requires legislative and regulatory reforms, liberalizations and support to the private sector. The Braudelian image of a Mediterranean region with a long history of relations, flourishing thanks to geographical proximity, maritime connectivity and economic exchanges, represents a strong narrative in this regard.

This also applies, to a certain extent, to the Eastern neighbourhood where, on the other hand, there is a tendency to see the area as a historically unified space of homogeneity where continuity is stronger. The problem, in both cases, is how to foster integration between countries that are otherwise considered very distant in political, social and cultural terms. Strategies towards Eastern partners, however, are more influenced by the approach and narratives of enlargement and cohesion and place a stronger emphasis on “political dialogue and reform”.

In the South, the launch of the Barcelona process, with subsequent attempts at revitalization at the end of the 2000s, emphasize multilateralism and the attempt to build a Mediterranean ‘region’. On the other hand, this has progressively been paralleled with the attempt to securitize the Mediterranean border, especially after September 11, 2001, and due to increased migratory pressures. More recently, the most relevant advancements of European policies toward the Mediterranean have indeed been aimed at the militarization of the EU’s external border through inter-governmental co-operation for the control of migration or by a strengthening of the role of the EU in the management of its external borders.

The tendency to consider the Mediterranean as a region while at the same time tending to see it as a border is neither contradictory nor paradoxical: the two goals are intimately linked and produce a peculiar strategy that, although controversial, is coherent and, to a certain extent, effective. What these two imaginaries have in common—or where they find a synthesis—is in the representation of the Mediterranean as a space of relations and flows which should be properly managed, promoted in some cases, contrasted in others. Accordingly, European policies toward the Mediterranean may be seen as an attempt to create a regime of managed and differential mobility; a ‘region’ of asymmetrical and controlled relations.

This approach, and its ambivalence, is to some extent also applied to Eastern neighbours yet with some subtle differences. Commercial and economic aspects of cooperation are not the main drivers; the focus is more explicitly on bringing Eastern partners ‘closer’ to the EU by promoting domestic reforms and extending the strategies of the (internal) Cohesion Policy to those countries. This is by no means to prevent the coexistence of a parallel process of regionalization and bordering insofar as the political dialogue goes hand-in-hand with a strengthening of border management.

The ENP, especially through its regional strategies, not only aims to create a multi-regional but also a multi-level and multi-actor space of cooperation. This can

be considered an attempt at applying the same rescaling process by which the EU is re-imagining its internal political and institutional space to its exterior. Different typologies of actors at different scales—governments, local authorities, civil society, etc.—are supposed to participate in the policy community and not only as recipients of EU funding. The highly differentiated extent of this participation is a good point of view for understanding the degree to which different regions and countries are considered more or less ‘proximate’ to the EU. The stronger involvement of local authorities and civil society along the North-Eastern EU borders is complemented by a much weaker involvement in other Eastern countries and especially in the Mediterranean. The further South we move, the more those actors outside the central governments are considered beneficiaries of the ENP, at best, rather than strategic partners.

Moreover, any regionalization process attempts to weaken the borders among those that are included as much as it strengthens the borders with those that are excluded, both materially and symbolically. The EU has been accused, for example, of challenging the association among Arab countries through the selective inclusion of some countries and the exclusion of others from its spheres of influence. Such inclusions/exclusions are mainly dictated by political and strategic criteria but they are also masked by the apparently self-evident idea that those countries which are excluded are not ‘naturally’ part of any European, Mediterranean, Baltic or Black Sea nor of any other kind of (natural) ‘region’. The discourse of region-building, in this sense, is inevitably controversial. The crisis in Ukraine in 2014 (further discussed in Chap. 7), has dramatically shown how the strategy of selective inclusion can provoke violent reactions from those that remain at the margin.

Notwithstanding the attempt to speak with a single voice towards the neighbourhood, the bilateral approach of the ENP, together with the multiplicity of regionalization processes it contains, with their different depth and velocities, allows EU member countries themselves to be selectively and diversely pro-active in their relations with specific neighbouring countries: Poland and Germany with Eastern countries, Finland with Russia, or Italy and France with Southern Mediterranean countries, just to give some examples. This is often counterbalanced by calls for a more properly multilateral or transnational or more equally balanced approach towards the whole neighbourhood, for a better coordination of European external strategies, and to put those strategies more clearly under a common EU/ENP umbrella. Those claims also explain why regional initiatives are multiplying and are supposed to guarantee a comprehensive coverage of the whole wider Europe, as we will see further in Chaps. 4 and 6.

It is rather obvious, however, that among a supposedly homogenous neighbourhood, some countries and regions are considered more strategic, more proximate to the EU, more relevant than others. These differentiations are to some extent implicit in the Neighbourhood Policy, insofar as it allows each of its partners to “develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities allow” (European Commission 2011b, p. 5)

Bordering practices and region-building attempts, to conclude, proceed side by side, as well as the parallel deployment of narratives of inclusion and exclusion,

the transfer of homogeneous policy models everywhere and their differentiation and adaptation to specific circumstances, the centrifugal and centripetal forces by which strategic involvement shifts from the EU level, to each single country, from governments to local actors and the civil society, etc.

To grasp the variety of these apparently contradictory forces, which we only tried to outline in this chapter, is more useful in understanding EU relations with its neighbourhood rather than referring to simple and straight-forward metaphors as that of the “wider Europe”, on the one hand, or of the “fortress Europe” on the other hand. The ‘territorial’ logic of both these metaphors, in other words, is inadequate for understanding the overtly topological and rhizomatic essence of the described attempts to remap EU relations with the outer world, and to materialize a multi-regional, multi-layered and post-Westphalian geography.

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# Chapter 4

## Cross-Border Cooperation Along the EU's External Frontiers

Filippo Celata and Raffaella Coletti

### 4.1 The ENP and Bordering Along the EU's External Frontier

In the previous chapters we have seen that the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) is characterized by a peculiar mix of bordering and cross-bordering practices. From the point of view of its proponents, the policy is aimed at enhancing cooperation and creating a “wider Europe” with blurred borders while, from the point of view of its opponents, it ends up strengthening the EU external frontiers by excluding ENP countries for proper accession into the EU, by emphasizing securitization and migration control (Kausch and Youngs 2009) and through other more subtle means like, for example, institutional and cultural bordering.

However, as already mentioned, the process of bordering determined by the ENP is more complex and articulated than it may first appear. Regionalization and bordering processes proceed side by side through articulated and differentiated geographies with variable geometries and at various geographical scales.

The cross-border cooperation (CBC) component of the ENP is crucial in this regard, and for many reasons. First, it is here where attempts from the EU are the most evident to counter-balance securitization and bordering by emphasizing the image of a borderless ‘wider’ Europe. Cross-border cooperation aims at transforming both the functionality and the meaning of European borderlands and contributes to the creation of an articulated border regime between the EU and its neighbourhood. Secondly, CBC initiatives introduce a new transnational governance mechanism in the ENP allowing a local level of implementation and differentiation in the policy; it is mostly through CBC initiatives that the EU stimulates the participation of local and non-governmental actors to the ENP thus contributing to the multi-level and

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multi-actor approach which is typical of many (internal) EU policies and which is re-affirmed throughout the ENP. Moreover, CBC is a local initiative that implies a much higher level of differentiation for the general aims of the ENP in order to accommodate for the specificity of each cross-border region on the one hand (including, as we will see, a different degree of participation from central governments, local actors and NGOs), and the peculiarity of borderlands in general, on the other. Thirdly, it is here that the EU attempts to extend the logic of cohesion outside of the EU external frontiers are most evident. The CBC component of the ENP explicitly aims at transferring the logics, narratives and objectives of territorial cohesion beyond the EU external borders although with different adaptations in diverse contexts as we will see. Fourthly, and connected to the previous point, the CBC component is the most relevant attempt at extending models which are typical of EU internal policies to the ENP; this is moreover a relevant example of the more general process of “external Europeanization”. As already mentioned in Chap. 1, external Europeanization is always selective as long as different territories and actors show different attitudes towards EU policies, norms and values.

In brief, the CBC component is crucial to understanding the variety of bordering and cross-bordering processes that European institutions promote along the EU’s external frontiers.

This crucial issue—we have seen in Chap. 1—has been interpreted from different theoretical perspectives. The first perspective is that of geopolitical studies where borders are conceived as jurisdictional dividing lines and the issue lies in which inter-governmental and multilateral relations between the EU (member States) and neighbouring countries are contributing to the hardening or softening of the EU’s external borders (Kostadinova 2009, p. 238) and through which kind of soft/hard means. Secondly, we distinguished an institutional perspective on ENP as a form of external governance of the EU which considers a wider range of actors besides and below nation-States and even within single institutions (e.g. the EU). Thirdly, a topological perspective has recently emerged where bordering processes are not confined to the border-line insofar as the contemporary boundaries are becoming increasingly non-territorial but networked, fluid and mobile (Delanty 2006; Axford 2006; Mountz 2011). Fourthly, from a constructivist approach, the social and cultural embeddedness of borders is emphasized along with the discursive and ubiquitous nature of bordering processes and border politics (Balibar 2009; Paasi 2011).

Our approach can be defined as a mix of the last three perspectives: institutional, as we consider ENP as an external governance instrument; topological, as we look at different bordering processes; and constructivist, as we focus on the discursive nature of bordering. Based on this, in the following pages, we will present a critical evaluation of CBC initiatives implemented within the framework of the ENP in order to highlight more in-depth the function of borders within the institutional and discursive strategies that the EU is adopting towards its neighbourhood. The analysis will verify, additionally, the extent to which each CBC programme reflects the specificities of the context where it is implemented and contributes to the overall differentiated strategy of the EU towards the neighbourhood, as discussed in Chap. 3. Furthermore, we will take into account the relation of the ENPI-CBC

component with the European Neighbourhood Policy, on the one hand, and with the Cohesion Policy, on the other hand, and highlight differences in the governance model adopted for the management of the programme in each meso-region.

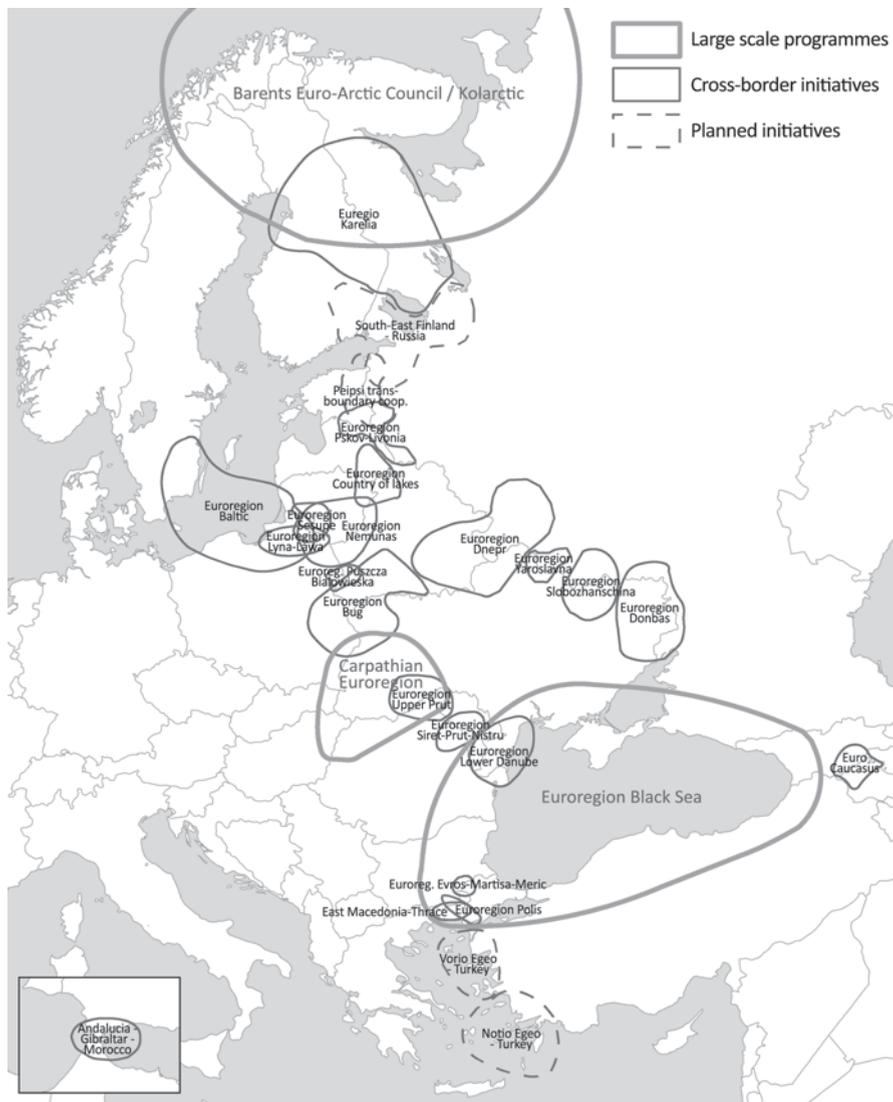
## 4.2 Cross-Border Cooperation and Cohesion Policy Beyond EU's Frontiers

Cross-border cooperation, in recent years, has captured the attention of both social scientists and policy-makers. The programme was created at the end of the 1980s to weaken the so-called 'border effect' among the EU's countries. The literature on the topic has shown that cross-border programmes do not simply contribute to transforming borders from fences to bridges but in producing a mixture of bordering and cross-bordering processes in line with the rescaling and re-bordering of State power in an age of globalization (Perkmann 2007).

The diffusion of CBC initiatives, moreover, is parallel to the strengthening of European integration and is one of the narratives by which European institutions promote the imaginary of a 'Europe without borders' (Celata and Coletti 2011). Local and regional authorities, finally, are actively involved in both the design and implementation of cross-border initiatives while international relations are traditionally managed through bilateral or multilateral inter-governmental agreements. The aim is therefore to contribute to the constitution of a "Europe of Regions" and to promote multi-level governance. Given these ambitious and far reaching goals, CBC can be considered an innovative but only partially effective and even controversial attempt at renovating the meaning and functionality of borders and border regions, within the EU and—more recently—across the EU's external frontier.

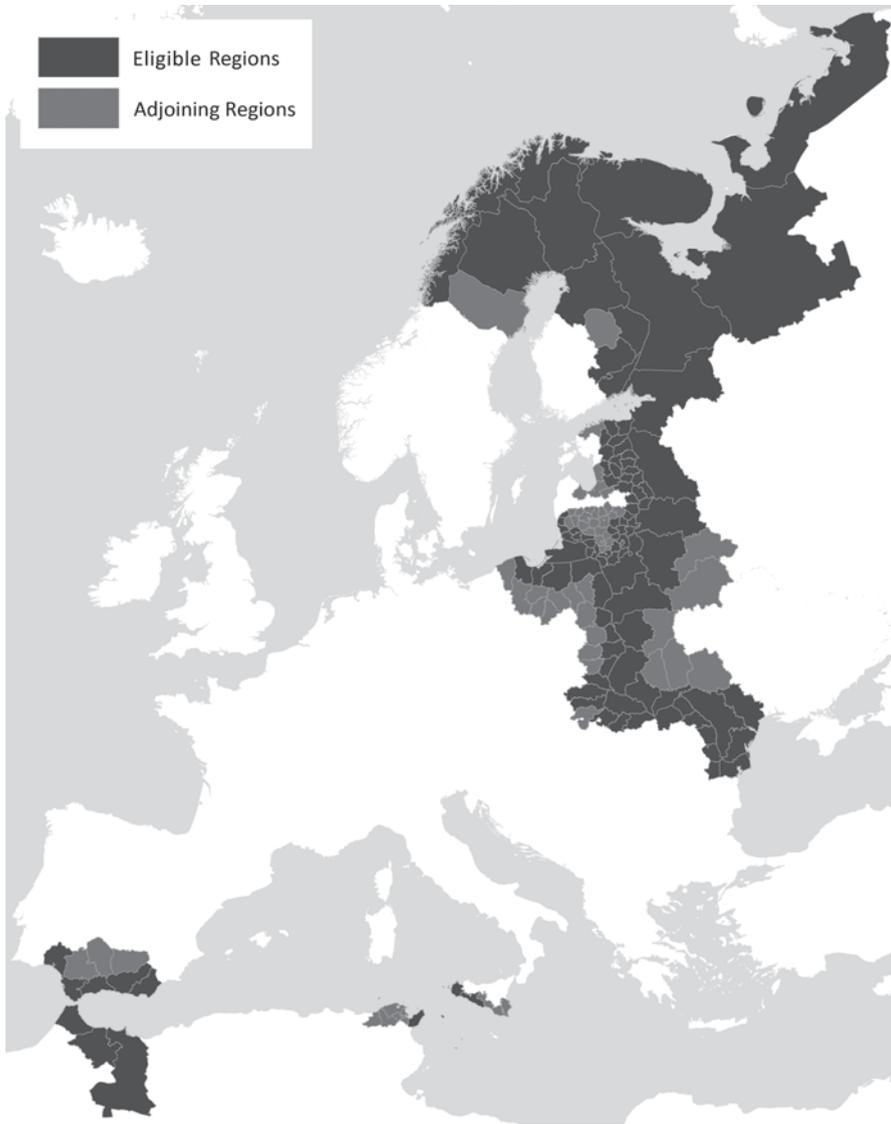
Cross-border cooperation has been a component of the ENP since the launch of the policy. Even before, the EU funded cross-border cooperation initiatives between member States and non-member countries along the EU's Eastern external border, in the framework of the TACIS programme. The ENP extended this opportunity to Mediterranean countries. Furthermore, a number of spontaneous initiatives of cross-border cooperation (Euroregions) have been created in recent years, both between EU member and non-member countries, and also between non-member countries especially along the EU's Eastern border, as shown in Fig. 4.1.

For the 2007–2013 programming period, fifteen ENPI-CBC programmes have been proposed: nine "land border" programmes along the Eastern European border and three "sea crossing" programmes where eligible areas are delimited at the NUTS III level (Fig. 4.2), plus three "sea basin" programmes delimited at the NUTS II level. Two of the three cross-sea programmes—Spain–Morocco and the CBC Atlantic programme—were programmed but never launched due to the decision by Morocco to opt out of the cross-border cooperation activities. Consequently, thirteen programmes were adopted (Table 4.1) and have been confirmed for the 2014–2020 programming period.



**Fig. 4.1** Euroregions and cross-Border cooperation initiatives in the European Neighbourhood, 2012. (Source: designed by the authors based on AEBR database 2013)

The sea basin programmes for the Mediterranean and Black Sea cover the same area of the meso-regional strategies Euro-Mediterranean Partnership and Black Sea Synergy respectively (see Chap. 3) although some countries have opted out these Sea Basin programmes modifying their original geographical coverage (see the next sections). With respect to meso-regions, however, CBC programmes involve different geographical units—NUTS II or NUTS III regions—and are based on the par-



**Fig. 4.2** Eligible and adjoining regions for ENPI-CBC programmes, 2007–2013. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2007a)

participation of local authorities and local stakeholders while in meso-regional strategies cooperation is mainly (although not exclusively) at the State level.

The participation of sub-national authorities implies the adoption of a vertical subsidiarity approach and the promotion of a bottom-up partnership based on regional/local participation, versus the more centralistic approach of both meso-regional strategies and of the ENP's other components.

**Table 4.1** ENPI-CBC programmes 2007–2013. (Source: European Commission 2007a)

<i>Land border programmes</i>	<i>Sea crossings programme</i>
Kolarctic—Finland/Russia	Italy-Tunisia
Karelia programme—Finland/Russia	
South East Finland/Russia	
Estonia/Latvia/Russia	<i>Sea basin programmes:</i>
Latvia/Lithuania/Belarus	Baltic Sea Region
Lithuania/Poland/Russia	Black Sea
Poland/Belarus/Ukraine	Mediterranean
Hungary/Slovakia/Romania/Ukraine	
Romania/Moldova/Ukraine	

The funding for the ENPI-CBC programmes derives from two sources: the ENPI and the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) merged under one budget-line (Heading 4 of the European Commission annual budget) and to be used on either side of the EU external border for actions of “common benefit” (Art. 1 of the ENPI regulation, European Parliament 2006).

Both of these principles—common benefits and regional/local participation—are aimed at contributing to overcoming the strict distinction between policies (and resources) that are internal and external to the EU. Cross-border cooperation initiatives at the EU’s external border are in-between internal Cohesion Policy on the one hand and external policies on the other, challenging the EU to find means to better coordinate these two policy domains. The ENPI-CBC thus also represents a means of “Europeanization” of the neighbourhood through the adoption of Cohesion Policy principles and narratives also in non-EU regions, although with some crucial differences, as we will see.

In Table 4.2, a comparison between the EU’s internal and external cross-border cooperation initiatives is presented in order to highlight these differences. The first rather obvious specificity is that cooperating regions are in this case characterized by larger asymmetries. These differences are not per se an obstacle for cooperation but, on the contrary, they could translate into complementarities and opportunities for cross-bordering, as shown in Figs. 4.3 and 4.4. The problem is indeed, however, that participants of CBC programmes are in this case divided by a far less permeable border than the one between internal EU regions, and this is surely a major obstacle for cooperation, as we will see in the next pages.

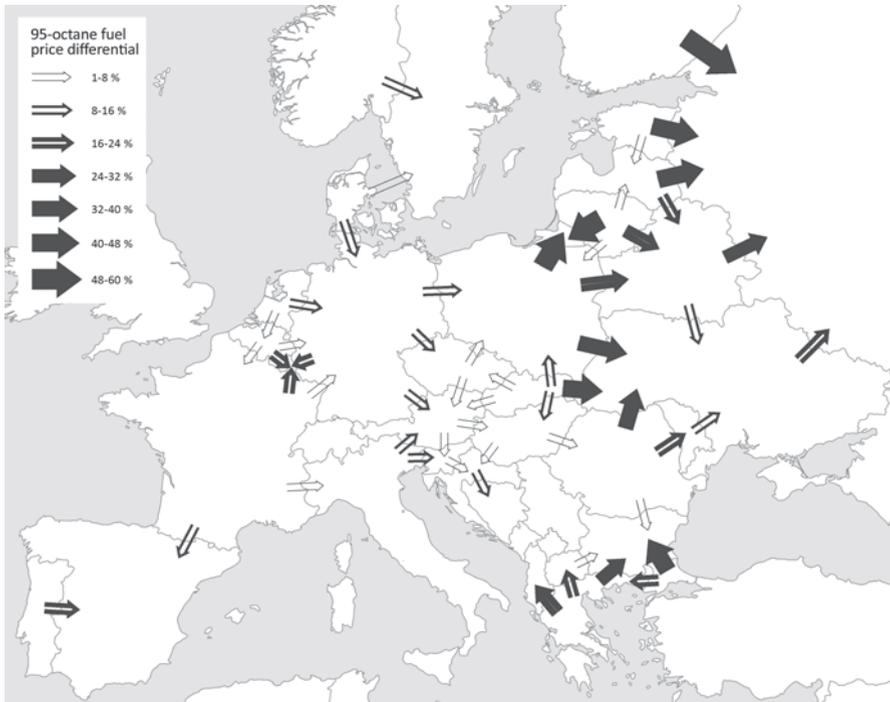
Secondly, different institutional conditions can be identified at the local level, depending on the general weakness of local institutions in most of the non-EU countries and their lack of experience in cross-border cooperation. This issue is carefully considered in the programming documents of ENPI-CBC, as we will see in Sect. 4.3.

Thirdly, while internal CBC objectives are framed within the general priorities of Cohesion Policy and of the Europe 2020 strategy, external CBC initiatives are

**Table 4.2** Differences and similarities between CBC programmes along the internal vs. the external borders of the EU. (Source: European Commission 2007a, b)

	Intra-EU CBC programmes	ENPI-CBC programmes
Policy framework	Cohesion Policy	ENP, four common spaces with Russia
Main aim	Economic, territorial and social cohesion	Security and prosperity at European external borders
Name of the instrument	Territorial cooperation	Cross-border cooperation
Typologies of cooperation	Cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation	Cross-border cooperation (land borders and sea crossing); Basin cooperation (transnational)
Geographical eligibility	NUTS III for CBC, NUTS II for transnational and interregional cooperation	NUTS III for CBC, NUTS II for basin cooperation
Specific Objectives	Reinforce cooperation at cross-border, trans-national and interregional level. Promote common solutions for the authorities of different countries in the domain of urban, rural and coastal development, the development of economic relations and the setting up of small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). The cooperation is centred on research, development, the knowledge-based society, risk prevention and integrated water management	Promote economic and social development in regions at both sides of common borders; Address common challenges in fields such as the environment, public health and the prevention of and the fight against organized crime; Ensure efficient and secure borders; Promote local cross-border “people to people” actions
Management	Joint managing authorities to implement joint projects	Joint managing authorities to implement joint projects
Institutional conditions at local level	Strong European local and regional authorities with experience in the field of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation	Strong European local and regional authorities with experience in the field of cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation; institutional weakness of local and regional authorities in third countries

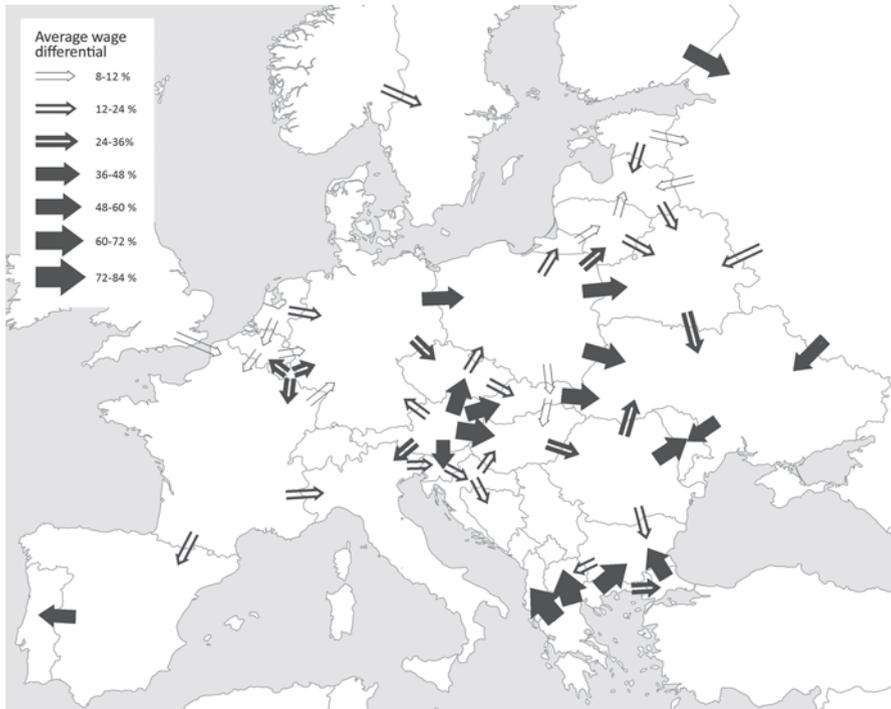
also influenced by the goals and narratives of EU's external policies and the ENP. As already mentioned in the introduction, the attempt at transferring the principles of Cohesion Policy to external regions and into the ENP framework is here particularly evident, and problematic. Economic and social cohesion are natural objectives of any regional policy: both the ENP and the Structural Funds aim at promoting economic and social development. The concept of “territorial cohesion” is more controversial, even within the EU, as we will see in Sect. 4.2.1.



**Fig. 4.3** Cross-border shopping potential in Europe. (Source: elaborated by the authors based on Frontex 2011)

### ***4.2.1 The ENP, Cross-Border Cooperation and Territorial Cohesion***

The concept of “territorial cohesion”, introduced at the end of the 1990s, has been formally adopted as an objective of European policies in the Lisbon Treaty in 2007 and it deserves special attention for its implications in terms of territorial cooperation. Territorial and cross-border cooperation is indeed explicitly recognized by the European Commission as means to address territorial cohesion: according to the European Commission (European Commission 2005), European regions should seek a better positioning in the global scenario through trans-European cooperation that might facilitate their connectivity and territorial integration. According to the Territorial Agenda for the European Union 2020 (European Union 2011), “actions at the cross-border, transnational and interregional level have a pivotal role to play in the implementation of territorial priorities of the Territorial Agenda 2020” (p. 9), and “territorial cooperation initiatives should be geared towards the long term objective of territorial cohesion” (p. 10). Several European documents include all the different forms of territorial cooperation in the list of the main policies relevant in the debate on territorial cohesion: cross-border, transnational and interregional cooperation.



**Fig. 4.4** Cross-border labour-oriented investments potential in Europe. (Source: elaborated by the authors based on International Labour Organization 2009)

But what does territorial cohesion mean? Although an official definition from the European Commission is still lacking, it is possible to identify the main recurrent concepts used to explain its aims and scope by EU institutions (Coletti 2013).

First of all, territorial cohesion is about spatial imbalances. According to policy documents, several kinds of territorial disparities have to be faced in order to pursue the EU's 'harmonious' development both in the distribution of human activities and in the natural and geographical characteristics of European territories. These imbalances are relevant at a variety of scales: at the continental level, between the "pentagon" and the other territories of the Union; at the national level, between regions with different degrees of growth and competitiveness (with specific attention to areas constrained by their geographical characteristics, e.g. peripheral or marginal areas); at the regional level, between the main metropolitan core and the smaller centres and between cities and their hinterlands and countryside; at the metropolitan level, between neighbourhoods with different degrees of social exclusion and poverty. Territorial cohesion is about reducing those disparities and it refers, consequently, to the concept of "harmonious development" in the EU.

Secondly, territorial cohesion is instrumental to enhancing economic competitiveness. According to the third cohesion report (European Commission 2004a), "territorial disparities (...) affect the overall competitiveness of EU economy"

(p. 28); as a consequence, pursuing territorial cohesion is not just about equity between regions but it is also about improving the ability of those regions to compete in the global economy.

This leads us to the third main recurrent concept at the basis of territorial cohesion which is about translating the goal of “balanced competitiveness and sustainable development into a territorial setting” (European Commission 2005, p. 1). For example, investments in the fields of accessibility are funded to improve territorial cohesion (European Commission 2004b). The concept of territorial cohesion permits more generally, and most importantly, an outline and implementation of a spatial planning strategy at the European level, with the objective of a more integrated and cohesive management of the EU territory. In this, territorial cohesion is supposed to contribute to the “start of a new era for EU Cohesion Policy in which the territorial issue is no longer simply a reference ambit for policy but assuming the role of a priority objective” (Pedrazzini 2006, p. 33).

A fourth key element in territorial cohesion is the need to enhance territorial capital and regional specificities. The valorisation of the specificities of each region is a key element for pursuing territorial cohesion. The definition offered by the Background Document for the Kiruna Conference (European Commission 2009) can be taken as an example:

The EU has an incredibly rich territorial diversity. Territorial cohesion is about ensuring a balanced development of all these places and about making sure that our citizens are able to make the most of inherent features of their territories—to transform diversity into an asset that contributes to sustainable development of the entire EU (p. 3).

All these concepts emphasize the relevance of the ‘territorial’ dimension of cohesion which, in turn, indicates an opportunity to design ‘place-based’ development strategies (Barca 2009), and to increase the connectivity of European regions while reducing spatial imbalances at a plurality of geographical scales. In light of these elements it is not surprising that a key role is attributed to territorial cooperation in order to improve the ‘physical’ integration of regions and European territories (European Commission 2004a). Competitiveness and regional development is not just about unleashing local economic potential but it also depends on “building links with other territories, to ensure that common assets are used in a coordinated and sustainable way” (European Commission 2008a, p. 3). The development of multi-level partnerships is essential for territorial cohesion, “bringing aboard actors at all levels, national, regional, urban, rural and local” (European Commission 2006, p. 29).

This internal process has clear consequences for neighbourhood territories (Fritsch 2009); furthermore, through cross-border cooperation, principles of territorial cohesive integration are directly applied outside the EU. In the next pages we will try to understand to what extent this ambitious aim to enhance territorial cohesion between regions across the EU external frontiers complements other aims of the ENP in neighbouring regions, how it influences ENPI-CBC programmes and how both the contents and the outcome of such attempts differ in the various (border) regions covered by the programme.

### 4.3 Bordering or Cross-Bordering? A Critical Analysis of ENP CBC

As already mentioned, ENPI-CBC programmes are strongly influenced by the experience of previous internal CBC initiatives and by the principles of the European Cohesion Policy. Consequently, if the ENP has been criticized for being a policy transfer, as reported in Chap. 1, we may say that ENPI-CBC is a policy transfer within a policy transfer. Cross-border policies were not only first put in place along the EU's internal borders but also in that domain the initiatives were an adaptation (or transfer) of a model that developed from the bottom-up along the German border at the end of the fifties and that led to the creation of the first Euroregions. The model was appropriated more recently by European institutions for its potential impact on the local development of border regions and with the aim of constructing a borderless "Europe of Regions" (Celata and Coletti 2011; Leitner 2004; Perkmann and Sum 2002; Perkmann 2007; Popescu 2008).

Being a policy transfer, *per se*, is not necessarily negative. Problems arise when the originating model does not fit with the specificities of the context to which it is applied, and when there is no proper attempt to acknowledge differences and to provide adaptations. Critical studies on policy transfers, moreover, have emphasized that "we must avoid the temptation to understand policy transfer through a straightforward import–export metaphor" (McCann and Ward 2012, p. 327): policy models are not just translated from one place to another, but are always adapted to local circumstances. Transfers are always "selective and multilateral" (Peck and Theodore 2001, p. 449). Furthermore,

Mobile policies rarely travel as complete 'packages', they move in bits and pieces—as selective discourses, inchoate ideas, and synthesized models—and they therefore 'arrive' not as replicas but as policies already-in-transformation (Peck and Theodore 2010, p. 170).

McCann and Ward define such adaptations as "mutations" (2012, p. 329). These mutations and adaptations are crucial, moreover, for the success or failure of any policy transfer, insofar as the mere replication of policy models does not produce the expected outcome most of the time and a "best practice" somewhere may become a bad practice somewhere else.

If we look at the narratives we see that the ENPI-CBC is strongly influenced by the internal CBC model and by what Kostadinova (2009) defined as the "language of integration": the idea that cooperation and integration should go hand-in-hand with the softening of borders. The aims of "integrated and sustainable development" and "harmonious territorial integration" that are typical in CBC programmes within the EU, are transposed to the ENPI-CBC. Concepts like the "isolation of border regions" (European Commission 2007a, p. 24)<sup>1</sup>—indicating the marginality and peripheral status that border regions have in their respective countries—or the relevance of borderlands in terms of geographical extension and population (p. 7),

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<sup>1</sup> Unless otherwise indicated, this and all the following quotations in this section are extracted from: European Commission 2007. The page number is indicated in brackets.

are recalled in the strategy papers and are typical arguments by which the EU justifies increasing attention to the specific needs of internal border regions.

The insertion of a CBC component within the ENP is justified in order “to remove obstacles to effective cross-border cooperation along the external borders of the European Union” (p. 7). The imaginary of borders is therefore similar to the one proposed by Jean Monnet (Walters 2006, p. 155), interpreting borders as ‘artificial’ divisions and ‘obstacles’ that prevent the development of cross-border relations that would otherwise flourish given the ‘natural’ integration of borderlands.

At the same time, the CBC component within the ENP assumes the same objectives of the ENP: to promote prosperity and good neighbourhood relations; to decrease differences in living standards across borders; to share common values and to address common challenges; to avoid the creation of new dividing lines, both material and symbolic, that may arise from the EU’s enlargement:

A key objective of the EU in general and of the ENP is to enhance the EU’s relations with its neighbours on the basis of shared values and provide opportunities to share the benefits of the EU enlargement, while help avoid any sense of exclusion which might have arisen from the latter (p. 8).

Enlargement, in this frame, is considered both a challenge and an opportunity. The aim is:

To address the challenges and opportunities following on EU enlargement or otherwise arising from the proximity between regions across our land and sea borders (p. 5).

Proximity is another key term: proximity to the EU is a crucial element in the definition of a European neighbourhood that deserves specific attention and resources. It is crucial as well, although at a different scale, in the creation of cross-border regions. Proximity is defined as something that both emphasizes differences (“differences in living standards across the borders”), and offers opportunities for cooperation that should help to reduce those differences.

The reworking of the EU’s external border, as already stated, is a crucial narrative and justification for the ENP. Consequently, the insertion of a CBC component is coherent and fits well with the ENP. On the other hand, the ENPI-CBC suffers from the same limitations of the ENP while most of the controversies that we referred to in Chap. 1 are even more evident.

The first tension is the potential contradiction between, on the one hand, the aim to promote economic development and to address common challenges while, on the other hand, to create “efficient and secure borders”. The idea is that the same aim which the CBC has between member countries (decentralized cooperation and economic development), can “best be achieved by combining external policy objectives with environmentally sustainable economic and social cohesion” (European Parliament 2006, p. 2). We have already referred to this controversy in Chap. 1. The contradiction, in this case, is even more evident given that CBC is explicitly designed to increase the permeability of borders and emphasizes the commitment of the EU to the ideal of open borders (Axford 2006, p. 172).

Differently with respect to intra-EU CBC programmes, and more precisely, the attempt here is to discriminate between the negative function of borders as obstacles

to cooperation and economic exchange with their positive function of keeping Europe secure and protected (Walters 2006, p. 155).

An integrated and harmonious regional development across the EU border is particularly important in a situation characterized by different rates of economic development, high income disparities and different demographic dynamics. Joint development strategies may help in addressing these disparities and assist in dealing with their most visible effects, such as the increase in legal and illegal, temporary and permanent migration flows, as well as with organised crime (p. 10).

The statement above, moreover, seems to imply that the link between the aim of promoting economic development and the aim of securing the border is identified in the fact that the former is a driver toward the latter.

Another tension is between the narrative of differences and the narrative of common values as pointed out by Kostadinova (2009) in relation to the whole ENP (see Sect. 1.5). Having a border in common, border regions (like countries) are not only supposed to face the same challenges but they should also share the same values and priorities.

To support the perspective of “common values”, the ENPI-CBC assumes the same narratives of CBC programmes among member countries representing regions across the EU's external border as having a common cultural and historical heritage:

Another essential characteristic to take into account in the context of CBC is the deep-seated and long-standing historical and cultural links which have been established over the centuries across what are today the external borders of the European Union. The border region in these areas often have a long common history (p. 8).

This is not necessarily untrue but it surely does not apply to the EU's entire external border, a border that, moreover, is still ridden with conflicts and divisions. Besides the insistence on common history and friendly relations across the borders, the documents indeed offer a variety of references to what can be defined as the “repertoire of difference” (Kostadinova 2009). In line with the ENP narratives, differences are almost exclusively identified between who's ‘in’ and who is ‘out’ of the EU. Although substantial differences among neighbouring countries are recognized—especially between Eastern and Southern partners (p. 7–9)—the concept of “common challenges” allows the whole neighbourhood to be dealt with in a rather unified and homogenous manner; this is parallel to the need of applying a single European strategy to a variety of different contexts:

Notwithstanding the substantial differences which characterise the different regions on the EU's Eastern and Southern borders, a number of common challenges can be identified: issues such as regional development, the environment, public health and organised crime are of particular importance in a transboundary context, as is the question of ensuring efficient and secure borders (p. 9).

Another key issue that derives from the application of the CBC model to the EU's external frontier is the role that sub-national authorities are supposed to play which, as already mentioned, is problematic. In the framework of the ENP, the CBC component may potentially produce an intermediate scale of intervention which is in-

between multilateral and bilateral approaches to the management of relations with neighbouring countries, introducing a new form of transnational governance at the local level. It may consequently offer a response to the overwhelming role of national authorities in the ENP. The ENPI-CBC does in fact stress the relevance of regions and local authorities in the implementation of CBC initiatives:

The local partners will be the key actors in the programme, and will be jointly responsible for establishing the priorities of the programme (p. 17).

Local and regional authorities in the border regions have been shown to be enthusiastic in working together in addressing common opportunities and challenges. A bottom-up approach, with full local ownership, is essential, as seen under especially the Interreg programmes (p. 14).

The effective involvement of sub-national authorities, however, is difficult and not justified by the perspective that local and regional authorities will have to manage EU projects and funds as is the case for candidate countries. Moreover, most neighbouring countries have a highly centralized political system and sub-national authorities do not have any previous experience in any sort of decentralized cooperation. The main challenge in this regard is identified by the EU as a risk that sub-national partners will lack the willingness or the capacity to properly cooperate with their European counter-parts (p. 25).

The new possibilities offered by ENPI will change this situation dramatically, but the local partners will also need time to become fully familiar with this new way of working (p. 14).

The difficulties in involving subnational authorities is not, however, a merely technical problem nor only due to the lack of institutional capacity; it is also and more properly identified as an inherently political problem. However, this problem is supposed to be the responsibility of neighbouring countries to be addressed at the national level.

In this context, questions of local government reform are of particular importance, and are often part of national reform agendas as reflected in the ENP Action Plan (p. 6).

The empowerment of sub-national authorities is indeed part of the “good governance” model that the EU is trying to promote in its partner countries or, in other words, an essential component in the Europeanization of the neighbourhood. The incentives in this regard, however, are by far insufficient. Consequently, the Strategy Papers identify central governments as the key actors for the implementation of the ENPI-CBC, while the role of local and regional authorities is considered “complementary”:

Many of these issues are being addressed in our bilateral cooperation with partner countries, but CBC at the regional and local level still has an important complementary role to play (...); a close cooperation at the local and regional level (...) on both sides of the EU’s external borders will be a valuable complement to cooperation at national level (...); in many respects this requires close cooperation at the national level (p. 10).

The CBC initiatives, indeed, can work as well (and they often do) when the involvement of subnational authorities is marginal, and the role of national governments is crucial; although this severely reduces the significance of the programme.

To conclude, the logic of the CBC might be effective in regions that are already strongly interconnected where a tradition of cooperation has already been established, and where an efficient meso-regional framework might encompass single initiatives and where the proper participation of sub-national authorities is possible. The policy, on the other hand, may provide insufficient incentives and an inadequate framework for other areas to establish proper cooperation initiatives.

In the next sub-section we will see how these problematic issues are dealt with in each of the regions where ENPI-CBC initiatives operate.

#### 4.4 ENPI-CBC Initiatives: An Overview

According to the ENPI Strategy Paper, the allocation of funds to the individual cross-border cooperation programmes has taken into account “objective criteria, such as the population of the eligible areas and other factors affecting the intensity of co-operation, including the specific characteristics of the border areas and the capacity for managing and absorbing assistance” (European Commission 2007a, p. 27). Allocations for individual programmes for the period 2007–2013 are shown in Table 4.3.

All the CBC programmes share a common objective:

The core policy objectives of CBC on the external borders of the Union are to support sustainable development along both sides of the EU's external borders, to help ameliorate differences in living standards across these borders, and to address the challenges and opportunities following on EU enlargement or otherwise arising from the proximity between regions across our land and sea borders” (European Commission 2007a, p. 2).

**Table 4.3** Resources allocation to ENPI-CBC programmes, 2007–2013. (Source: European Commission 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f, 2008g, 2008h, 2008i, 2008j, 2008k, 2008l, 2008m, 2008n, 2010).

Programme	EC Contribution	Total funding
Mediterranean	173,607,324	215,631,983
Black Sea	17,305,944	31,498,773
Baltic Sea	22,608,210	230,642,709
Kolarctic	28,241,018	56,361,527
Karelia	23,202,507	34,803,761
SE Finland—Russia	36,185,361	54,278,042
Lithuania-Poland-Russia	132,129,733	144,021,409
Latvia-Estonia-Russia	47,774,729	55,874,707
Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus	41,736,666	46,670,154
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine	186,201,367	202,959,490
Hungary-Slovakia-Ukraine-Romania	68,638,283	74,815,728
Romania-Moldova-Ukraine	126,718,066	138,122,692
Italy-Tunisia	25,191,423	27,458,650

The sums include additional funds allocated in 2010 to the Mediterranean and Black Sea programmes

**Table 4.4** General objectives of the ENPI-CBC programmes 2007–2013. (Source: European Commission 2008b, 2008c, 2008d, 2008e, 2008f, 2008g, 2008h, 2008i, 2008j, 2008k, 2008l, 2008m, 2008n)

Programme	General objective
CBC Mediterranean	To contribute to promoting the sustainable and harmonious cooperation process at the Mediterranean Basin level by dealing with the common challenges and enhancing its endogenous potential
CBC Black Sea	Achieve stronger regional partnership and cooperation, in order to pursue a stronger and more sustainable economic and social development of the regions of the Black Sea Basin
Baltic Sea	To strengthen the development towards a sustainable, competitive and territorially integrated Baltic Sea Region by connecting potentials over the borders
Kolarctic programme	To reduce the periphery of the countries' border regions and problems related to the periphery as well as to promote multilateral cross-border cooperation
Karelia programme	To increase well-being in the programme area through cross-border cooperation
SE Finland-Russia	To promote the area as an integrated economic zone and a centre for transportation and logistics in order to strengthen its competitiveness and attractiveness to investors, to improve the state of the environment and the welfare of its citizens
Lithuania-Poland-Russia	Promoting economic and social development on both sides of the common border, working together to address common challenges and common problems, promoting people to people cooperation
Estonia-Latvia-Russia	To promote joint development activities for the improvement of the region's competitiveness by utilising its potential and beneficial location in the cross roads between the EU and Russia federation
Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus	To enhance the territorial cohesion of the Latvian, Lithuanian and Belarusian border region, secure a high level of environmental protection and provide for economic and social welfare as well as promote intercultural dialogue and cultural diversity
Poland-Belarus-Ukraine	To support cross-border development processes
Romania-Ukraine-Moldova	To improve the economic, social and environmental situation in the programme area, in the context of safe and secure borders, through increased contact of partners on both sides of the border
Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine	To intensify and deepen the cooperation in an environmentally, socially and economically sustainable way between the eligible regions and adjacent areas
Italy-Tunisia	To promote economic, social, institutional and cultural integration among Sicilian and Tunisian territories through a joint sustainable development process and cross-border cooperation

This general objective has to be adapted to the specificities of each context though a process of dialogue among partners, the results of which are summarized in Table 4.4.

According to the Black Sea Joint Operational Programme, “The EU does not seek to impose priorities or conditions on its partners” (European Commission

2008b, p. 5). Nevertheless, in their general objectives joint operational programmes seem to reflect local specificities and to address specific “common challenges” to a very small extent (a partial exception is Estonia-Latvia-Russia and South East Finland-Russia), while they are very general and mostly influenced by the general objectives of the two policy domains they derive from, namely the ENP and internal territorial cooperation (especially the Black Sea programme, Poland-Belarus-Ukraine, Italy-Tunisia and Karelia programmes).

Since the EU (re)launched its meso-regional strategies in 2008 and 2009, CBC strategies are also explicitly linked to these strategies:

The Union for the Mediterranean and the Eastern partnership were launched in 2008 and 2009 (...). CBC programmes are playing an important role in supporting their implementation (...). The Northern Dimension has gained pace (...). The activities to be financed under the Baltic Sea region programme and the five CBC programmes between Russia and the relevant member States also contribute to the implementation of the Northern Dimension. The Black Sea Synergy has become fully operational and developed a specific political and project oriented agenda (...). This development went hand in hand with the establishment of the regional Black Sea Basin CBC programme, which is an important source of funding for its activities (European Commission 2010, p. 7–8).

In the following pages the ENPI-CBC programmes will be grouped according to the meso-regional strategy in which they are found, in order to identify coherences and complementarities with the relevant policies carried out at the meso-regional level.

#### ***4.4.1 ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation in Northern Europe***

The CBC programmes included in the Northern Dimension are generally aimed at supporting the strategic relationship between EU and Russia, as far as “Russia is a strategic partner of the EU and its largest neighbour” (European Commission 2008f, p. 6). Programmes cover three different areas of the Northern Dimension: the Baltic, the Barents and the Kaliningrad Oblast.

In the Baltic area the CBC programme between Estonia, Latvia and Russia (Fig. 4.5) adopts some narratives that are typical in the ENP, in particular with regard to “shared values”:

Communities across border are working together to improve jointly the quality of life and to build shared values, norms and tolerance in multicultural environment (European Commission 2008c, p. 26).

The main focus is on transport and logistics in order to exploit the area's beneficial location at the crossroad between the EU and Russia, and between the USA, Canada, EU and Asia (p. 11).

The programme area is strategically positioned in a region that offers development benefit due to its geographical position and location relative to the EU TEN-T corridor and access to the Baltic port (p. 13).

The programme also includes a map of transport and infrastructure networks in the programme area (p. 14).



**Fig. 4.5** CBC Estonia-Latvia-Russia. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008c)

The programmes on the Finland-Russia border are strongly based on the EU-Russia Four Common Spaces strategy. According to the programming document (European Commission 2008m), the South East Finland-Russia programme (Fig. 4.6) will complement the overall EU-Russia relations “focusing on the eligible border regions on both sides of the border” (p. 4). Some narratives deriving from internal CBC are adopted in the programmes like, for example, that of a “common history” that goes beyond contemporary (and somehow artificial) national borders adopted in the Kolarctic programme:

The region also has a distinct cultural heritage—the only indigenous peoples of the European Union. (...). The indigenous populations have historical roots that go back to long before the present nation States exist (European Commission 2008g, p. 11).



**Fig. 4.6** CBC South East Finland and Russia. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008m)

Transport and logistics are key issues in all the Finland/Russia programmes. According to the Karelia programme (Fig. 4.7), “infrastructure forms the cornerstone of physical connections across the border” (European Commission 2008f, p. 12); the South East Finland-Russia (European Commission 2008m) includes a map of



**Fig. 4.7** CBC Karelia. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008f)

the main transport links and border crossing points, similar to the Kolarctic programme (Fig. 4.8), which also includes an explicit mention of natural resources (oil and gas reserves) in the Barents Sea and in the Arctic (European Commission 2008g, p. 8).

The programme around the Kaliningrad region, Lithuania-Poland-Russia (Fig. 4.9) also deals with the border issue in terms of accessibility (European Commission 2008i, p. 24), and includes several reference to territorial cohesion objectives and principles with a specific measure dedicated to joint spatial and socio-economic planning (p. 29).

Besides transport, specific attention is dedicated in the same programmes to border management: the Estonia-Latvia-Russia programme presents an analysis of border crossing points (European Commission 2008c, p. 15), and includes “maintaining efficient and safe borders” (p. 27), in its objectives. Efficient and secure borders are priority measures in the SE Finland-Russia programme (European Commission 2008m, p. 31). Kolarctic programme includes a reference to cooperation among border crossing authorities (European Commission 2008g, p. 25).

The programmes also derive some narratives from the territorial cohesion objective: for example, the Kolarctic programme shall promote “social and territorial cohesion” (European Commission 2008g, p. 21); regional and urban planning is included as a priority within the objective of improving the quality of life in the Karelia programme (European Commission 2008f, p. 30); while actions in the Lithuania-Poland-Russia programme are “aimed at creating a long term preconditions for sustainable development and territorial cohesion” (European Commission 2008i, p. 23).



**Fig. 4.8** CBC Kolarctic. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008g)

Another common element in all the programmes in the European North is the strong role of local and regional authorities. The Northern Dimension itself has always paid specific attention to sub-national actors (see Sect. 3.4), and several local and regional initiatives have developed in the area in recent years alongside cooperation at national and international levels. The Northern region can indeed be considered the main laboratory for the development of new forms of transnational governance across the EU's external border. A very peculiar case is the Baltic Sea programme:

Over the recent decades the cooperation between local, regional and national governments (...) has been growing rapidly and got additional momentum in effect of the EU enlargement (European Commission 2008n, p. 10).

One of the main priorities of the programme is to “ensure cooperation of metropolitan regions, cities and rural areas to share and make use of common potentials that will enhance the BSR identity” (p. 54), and, more generally, the Baltic Sea Region is described as “a European Laboratory of integration” (p. 31). The area does indeed offer a very advanced model of cooperation as shown by the experience of European macro-regions that first developed in the Baltic (see Chap. 6).

The Karelia programme stresses that “cross-border cultural exchange has already been active for a long time” (European Commission 2008f, p. 13), in the



**Fig. 4.9** CBC Lithuania-Poland-Russia. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008i)

area and one of the main objectives of the programme is “committing the key local, regional and central administrative organisations and actors in Finland and Russia to the implementation of the programme” (p. 23). In the South-East Finland/Russia programme “The basis of the joint cross-border development strategy of the programme is the location of the programme area and the long-established cooperation between its regions” (European Commission 2008m, p. 3); the programme dedicates special attention to civil society organizations and NGOs in the framework of people-to-people actions (p. 35). The Estonia-Latvia-Russia programme (European Commission 2008c) includes the development of local initiatives, and increasing administrative capacities for local and regional authorities in its subpriorities.

#### **4.4.2 ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation in Eastern Europe**

To a large extent, the Eastern Partnership as well as the four CBC programmes operating in this meso-region reflect the main priorities of the ENP. The whole ENP, according to some observers, has been developed with the specificities of Eastern Europe in mind and as a response to the progressive enlargement of the EU towards East, as mentioned in Chap. 1.



**Fig. 4.10** CBC Romania-Ukraine-Moldova. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008l)

The four CBC programmes strongly draw upon some of the main ENP narratives, like the aim to avoid the creation of new dividing lines between an enlarged EU and its external neighbourhood, to bring partners ‘closer’ to the EU, the idea of “common values” shared across the EU’s external borders:

Partners agreed that co-operation will build on mutual commitment to common values within the field of law, good governance, the respect for human rights, the promotion of good neighbourly relations, and the principles of market economy and sustainable development (European Commission 2008l, p. 4).

Furthermore, all the Eastern CBC programmes focus upon the issue of “efficient and secure borders”, aiming to increase the efficiency of border management and customs procedures, to improve border crossing points, etc. Furthermore, some of these programmes also deal with the topic of borders in terms of accessibility: Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus (European Commission 2008h, p. 32), Poland-Belarus-Ukraine (European Commission 2008k, p. 24), and Romania-Ukraine-Moldova (Fig. 4.10), which includes a measure for “cross-border initiatives in transport, border infrastructure and energy” (European Commission 2008l, p. 60).



**Fig. 4.11** CBC Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008h)

On the other hand, Eastern ENPI-CBC programmes adopt narratives that derive from the cross-border cooperation experiences within the EU. An example is the “naturalization” of the cross-border region as an historical and cultural unity. Numerous examples can be quoted: “The programme area, in reality, features strong historical and cultural connections” (European Commission 2008d, p. 9); “The social and economic development of all border regions have been closely linked for centuries” (European Commission 2008h, p. 8); “Historical connections within the programme area, results in high cooperation potential” (European Commission 2008k, p. 8).

A particular emphasis is on territorial cohesion. The Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus programme (Fig. 4.11), for example, include the territorial cohesion of the border region (European Commission 2008h, p. 31), in its general objective and the “enhancement of local and regional strategic development and planning” as a priority measure (p. 32). Romania-Ukraine-Moldova programme (Fig. 4.12) aims “to promote the balanced spatial development of the programme area” (European Commission 2008l, p. 56).



**Fig. 4.12** CBC Poland-Belarus-Ukraine. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008k)

The participation of local and regional authorities is relevant in the framework of the entire area (see Sect. 3.4), similarly to the Northern Dimension, that was used as a model for the Eastern Partnership regional initiative. Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine programme (Fig. 4.13) identifies local and regional actors as key subjects for the implementation of the activities. According to the Latvia-Lithuania-Belarus programme:

Besides the EU co-funded projects there have been independently established bilateral contacts between different organisations, mainly local and regional public authorities and NGOs. (...) Many municipalities of the programme area have bilateral cooperation and partnership agreements (...). Border regions have quite wide and successful cooperation experience, mainly on the municipal basis (European Commission 2008h, p. 27).

Furthermore, the programme includes “strengthening of administrative capacities for strategic development and planning” (p. 35), in its priorities. In its people to



**Fig. 4.13** CBC Hungary-Slovakia-Romania-Ukraine. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008d)

people cooperation priority Poland-Belarus-Ukraine includes “regional and local cross-border cooperation capacity building” and “local communities’ initiatives” (European Commission 2008k, p. 4). Romania-Ukraine-Moldova programme includes the support to local and regional governance (European Commission 2008l, p. 67), in its aims. However, with respect to CBC programmes in the Northern space, the focus is on “capacity building” and “strengthening” local authorities, rather than on a real mechanism of participation.

#### **4.4.3 ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation in the Black Sea**

The Black Sea CBC programme (Fig. 4.14) explicitly mentions the coherence with the objectives of the Black Sea Synergy, “though obviously less ambitious in terms of priorities and scope of cooperation” (European Commission 2008b, p. 30). The Black Sea cross-border cooperation area indeed covers the same region as the regional strategy although at a different administrative level at least in name. The Black Sea synergy, like other sea basin programmes, has certainly reduced its geographical coverage, as Azerbaijan and Russia opted out from the programme.

According to the documents, at the meso-regional level the Black Sea Synergy and the Black Sea CBC programme were set up in light of the strategic relevance of the area: “the Black Sea Region is a distinct geographical area rich in natural resources and strategically located at the junction of Europe, Central Asia and Middle East” (European Commission 2007c, p. 2); the Black Sea area is “a crossroads of civilisations (...). Currently, the Black Sea Basin is emerging as a decisive geo-strategic crossroads for the future of a wider Europe” (European Commission 2008b, p. 11). Furthermore, the EU’s enlargement to Bulgaria and Romania in 2007 has

given momentum to the cooperation of the EU with the Black Sea area stressing the relevance of the harmonious development of the region for the balanced development of the EU itself.

At least two main elements distinguish the ongoing regionalisation process in the Black Sea if compared with other meso-regional strategies and cross-border programmes.

First, the Black Sea Synergy is the only example of a meso-regional strategy that includes not only third countries in a relationship with the whole EU but also mentions which member States are part of the “region” (see Sect. 3.4). Secondly, regionalisation is based on strong commonalities among the territories in the region: member States’ in the region are presented as more similar to their non-EU partners in the area than to the rest of the EU’s territory:

The regions belonging to EU member States in the Black Sea Basin area are still lagging behind other regions in the EU. The large development gap between the EU overall and the eligible regions of the Black Sea Basin programme is one of the most prominent structural challenges for all EU and partner countries (European Commission 2008b, p. 12).

Strategically, both the meso-regional strategy and the CBC programmes concentrate on the Black Sea region for its role as a “production and transmission area of strategic importance for EU energy supply security” (European Commission, 2007c, p. 4). Energy infrastructure plays a very strong role with a focus on the proposed priority axes for oil and gas pipelines that cross the region (European Commission 2008b, pp. 20–22). Another priority is dedicated to accessibility and connectivity, coherently with territorial cohesion principles and narratives.

The Black Sea region CBC programme does not emphasize the role of local and regional authorities but it dedicates a measure to the “creation of administrative capacity for the design and implementation of local and regional development policies” (p. 47).

#### ***4.4.4 ENPI Cross-Border Cooperation in the Mediterranean***

CBC programmes in the Mediterranean are strongly influenced by a relatively long history of regional cooperation in the area in the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean partnership and the Barcelona process (Sect. 3.5). This influence is particularly evident in the Mediterranean Sea Basin programme as it covers basically the same geographical area of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership although it is based on different implementing units (NUTS II). According to the operative document:

ENPI-CBC Mediterranean Sea basin programme 2007–2013 provides the framework for the implementation of cross-border and cooperation activities in the context of the ENP, complementing efforts exerted within the framework of the Euro-Mediterranean Partnership, with the final aim of developing an area of peace, stability, prosperity and good neighbourliness (European Commission 2008j, p. 4).

The coverage of the CBC Mediterranean (Fig. 4.14) has significantly decreased in the implementation stage: for political and technical reasons Morocco and Turkey



**Fig. 4.14** ENPI-CBC Sea Basin programmes. (Source: Regional Capacity Building Initiative 2007)

decided to opt out while Libya and Algeria do not participate in the programme as they have never accepted its content and signed the agreement; nevertheless the programme remains formally open to these two countries as they have never officially expressed their wish to opt out (European Commission 2010, p. 4). The only CBC programme operating in the Mediterranean is the sea-crossing programme Italy-Tunisia (Fig. 4.15).

In the Mediterranean CBC programmes acknowledge the “deep economic and cultural exchanges that historically have characterized and enriched the region” (European Commission 2008j, p. 10). These ‘exchanges’ and relations and the potential for cooperation in the area, however, are hindered by a “very large difference in average income level on the two sides of the Basin” (p. 14). The ‘language of integration’ is counterbalanced here more than in any other case by the emphasis on differences: an ambivalence that is typical of the ENP narratives, as mentioned in Chap. 1 (Kostadinova 2009). The aim to secure borders and improve border management is very relevant in the framework of the Mediterranean. However, the topic of “efficient and secure borders” was excluded from the CBC Italy-Tunisia, due to the firm opposition from the former Tunisian regime that wanted to keep direct and centralistic control over any controversy regarding migration.



**Fig. 4.15** CBC Italy-Tunisia. (Source: designed by the authors based on European Commission 2008e)

If compared with the abovementioned land borders programmes, sea basin and sea-crossing programmes clearly have a different approach to the issue of borders due to their geographical specificities. In fact, they deal with the border issue mainly in terms of mobility of goods and people (European Commission 2008e, p. 33; European Commission 2008j, p. 52), aiming also at “managing in a cooperative way the social problems created by growing migration flows” (European Commission 2008j, p. 10). The strategic focus of the Mediterranean programme is on the sea as a resource stressing the need to maximise “the size, quality and sustainability of the material and immaterial flows across the sea” (p. 4). The attempt is to balance the conceptualization of the Mediterranean as a border with the idea of building a truly Mediterranean ‘region’, following the Braudelian emphasis on a long history of cross-sea relationship which should, however, be properly managed, controlled and, in some cases (irregular migration, smuggling, transnational crime, etc.) be contrasted.

Moreover, in the ENPI-CBC Mediterranean Sea Basin, territorial cohesion is included among the principles adopted for the formulation and orientation of the programme (European Commission 2008j, p. 42). The aim is not only to enhance the participating regions’ “endogenous potential”, but even to develop “strategies for urban and territorial planning” (p. 10). The first priority of the programme includes a measure dedicated to “strengthening the national strategies of territorial planning by integrating the different levels” (p. 49).

With respect to the participation of local and regional actors, the area lacks of any previous experience with cross-border cooperation as well as in terms of spontaneous experiments (e.g. Euroregions) and in terms of previous EU funded CBC programmes. Nevertheless, the CBC Mediterranean programme explicitly acknowledges the need to involve “a great number of local, regional and national subjects”

(European Commission 2008j, p. 5). The participation of local authorities requires, however, some external support in order to improve “the governance processes at local level” (p. 56).

Indeed, within the CBC Italy-Tunisia, there is only one funded project which involves a Tunisian municipality and another one involving a Regional Committee while all other public organizations participating in CBC projects are national authorities. On the contrary, on the Italian side 24 regional and sub-regional authorities participate in 33 projects (Celata et al. 2014). In the implementation of the whole programme, a clear prevalence of Sicilian actors in the role of project leaders is evident and this translates into a low degree of ownership of the projects by Tunisian partners. Another problematic issue is the scarce participation of private and social actors. Tunisians, moreover, are more used to working with an “external aid” logic and not one of joint territorial development.

Other peculiar problems are, for example, due to the geographical delimitation of the programme. The idea, following the CBC model, to include only ‘bordering’ regions results in asymmetries—the capital is in the eligible part of Tunisia while there are only small cities in the eligible part of Sicily—and the poorest regions of Tunisia are also excluded. Tunisian and Sicilian institutions, in this frame, have expressed their will to extend the coverage of the programme to all of Tunisia and Sicily. From the Sicilian point of view, many common problems/opportunities with Tunisia should be addressed in cooperation with Libya as well (Celata et al. 2014).

#### **4.5 The Function of Cross-Border Cooperation in the Construction of the European Neighbourhood**

The CBC component is the most ambitious strand of the ENP. It aims to actively involve sub-national authorities and local stakeholders, to improve the territorial cohesion of neighbouring regions across political boundaries, to extend to those regions the narratives and procedures of internal Cohesion Policy and, in general, to soften the “border effect” and the distinction between who’s inside and who’s outside the EU. The component captures a limited amount of resources but plays a crucial role within the ENP dispositive and in understanding the policy aims and limits. From our perspective, it is most evident here how the entire ENP is built upon a peculiar balance between bordering and cross-bordering, policy transfers and local adaptations, integration and exclusion. The ENPI-CBC is, in short, a paradigmatic example of how EU policy-making actively attempts to produce ‘EU’ropean spaces, rather than simply to channel funding into already existing political containers (Bialasiewicz et al. 2013, p. 60).

The emphasis on cross-border cooperation is primarily an attempt to subvert the image of a “fortress Europe”. More precisely, the geographical imaginary of CBC gives visibility to the EU’s commitment toward softening its external border but at the same time the implementation of CBC initiatives replicates the same bordering practices that are typical of the whole ENP. Despite good will, it has consequently

been argued (see Chap. 1) that the ENP reinforces the same borders that it is trying to soften (Boedeltje and Van Houtum 2011).

We think, however, that a binary distinction between the opening and closure of the EU external border may be reductive and misleading for discussing the function of ENPI-CBC programmes. The crucial issue is rather *what kind* of EU external border is in the making—a border that may be hard and soft at the same time, simultaneously opened and closed. The ENPI-CBC indeed contributes to the definition of a complex and fragmented border regime that cannot be described by referring to a single topography or to an univocal metaphor such as that of the “fortress Europe”.

The EU's external border is, firstly, highly selective insofar as—and differently from intra-EU CBC initiatives—ENPI cross-border initiatives carefully distinguish between the need to remove ‘artificial’ obstacles for trans-border relations to flourish and the need to make those divisions more efficient against any threat for European security and values.

Border management is a key topic in all the programmes but while in the North the relevance of borderlands is presented mainly in terms of accessibility—in an area of strong economic dynamism and strategic relevance—in the East the issue of borders is mainly related to the aim of maintaining efficient and secure borders, and of avoiding the creation of new dividing lines after the enlargement. In the Black Sea the strategy is strongly targeted at region-building; the attempt is to present a region that shares a common destiny; the perceived border here is not really that between EU and non-EU countries but mostly between the whole region and the rest of the EU, with Romania and Bulgaria being portrayed as problematic member States. In the South the nature of the maritime border implies several crucial differences and the main topic is the selective management of cross-border flows: to strengthen those flows that are considered as positive (e.g. flows of manufacturing goods and investments), and to reduce negative flows (e.g. irregular migration).

The inclusion of measures aimed at improving border controls within an instrument aimed at cross-border cooperation may seem contradictory at a first look but it is, at the same time, coherent with the regime of managed and differentiated relations across the EU external frontiers that the ENP is trying to materialize.

The ENPI-CBC is, moreover, proposing an imaginary of a fragmented, mobile and networked EU external border(land): cross-border regions and actors, while being formally excluded from full EU membership, have the possibility to strengthen their relations further and to be included in a networked political arena with ‘fuzzy borders’ (Lavenex 2004, p. 681).

Notwithstanding the aim to construct cross-border *regions*, what European policies actually produce is a space of selective and privileged *relations* with some specific actors. The results are dependent on local circumstances. Northern programmes are generally based on a long-established cooperation between regions in the field of, for example, spatial planning; in other cases the programmes aim at strengthening the capacity of local and regional authorities within a framework of partner countries’ institutional weaknesses and also due to the lack of adequate power and funding at the sub-national scales. The more we move South, the more the role of sub-national and non-governmental actors fades with respect to central govern-

ments and the more those local actors become beneficiaries of cooperation activities rather than real and equal partners.

Notwithstanding, throughout the ENPI-CBC, the EU seems to be trying to reproduce the same imaginary of a post-Westphalian and neo-Medieval space that it tries to produce within its own borders and against the over-whelming role that States continue to play in border management and in foreign policies. The ENPI-CBC tries to replicate this strategy in neighbouring countries, through the promotion of the same imaginary of ‘soft’ cooperation, multi-level governance and regionalism by which the EU is rescaling and re-bordering its internal political space. The geography of cross-border regions, per se, suggests a complex topography that reaffirms and at the same time cuts through the logic of “concentric circles” of integration (see Chap. 1). It is a discursive strategy which has an external as well as an equally important internal target: to actively create—more symbolically than materially—a ‘EU’ropean space which is multi-layered and potentially open. The value of cross-border cooperation, in this frame, has more to do with the geographical imaginaries that it refers to rather than with the effective results that it delivers.

The degree to which the EU succeeds in this, and in transferring the narratives of internal ‘EU’ropean space-making to non-EU regions is, again, highly differential. Such differences are revealing of the heterogeneity of border regimes that are in the making along the EU external frontiers as well as of the differentiated prospects for bringing neighbouring countries and regions ‘closer’ to the EU. The contradiction between security and cooperation (or bordering and cross-bordering) that we referred to in the previous chapters, is not only nor primarily a general contradiction inherent in the ENP but mainly a contradiction among different spaces, allowing for the coexistence of many border regimes in different neighbourhoods.

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# Chapter 5

## Future Perspectives for the European Neighbourhood Policy

Battistina Cugusi

### 5.1 Introduction

Few years after the launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP), in 2011 the so-called Arab spring and EU controversial reactions to the events in the Southern Mediterranean showed how the ENP has been a considerable failure in setting up a “ring of friends” at the EU borders. Yet, at the same time these events have been considered a unique political opportunity to be seized, paving the way for re-launching the policy by adopting a renewed approach, more focused on the promotion of democracy. As declared by Štefan Füle, former European Commissioner for Enlargement and Neighbourhood Policy,

With so much of our neighbourhood in a process of democratic change, this review is more important than ever. It is vital that we in the EU make a comprehensive offer to our neighbours and build with them lasting partnerships to reinforce deep and lasting democracy and promote economic prosperity (Füle 2011).

In the backdrop of the revolutions, the Commission Communication entitled “A Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity with the Southern Mediterranean Countries” (European Commission 2011b), set the basis for the re-launch of the ENP.

A new approach is needed to strengthen the partnership between the EU and the countries and societies of the neighbourhood: to build and consolidate healthy democracies, pursue sustainable economic growth and manage cross-border links (European Commission 2011a, p. 4).

Through the renewed ENP the EU offered a stronger support to the democratization claims coming from the population and gave more emphasis to political reforms and civil society organizations with the re-definition of the system of incentives. In practice, the core novelty of the renewed ENP consisted in offering a “more for

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more” approach, meaning strengthening conditionality by more explicitly linking EU financial support to progress in the implementation of democratic reforms.

Not long after its launch, the renewed ENP was tested by other significant events occurring in the Southern and Eastern neighbourhood: the war in Libya, the conflict and the continuing civil war in Syria, the uncertain situation in Egypt, the revamping of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, the dramatic events in Ukraine with the revolution of February 2014 and Russia’s annexation of Crimea.

The objective of this chapter is to analyze the renewed ENP approach against the political instability and difficult economic situations characterizing all the neighbouring area. What has substantially changed compared to past shortcomings of the ENP? Is the EU better equipped with this renewed ENP in responding to the changing political and geopolitical dynamics in the European neighbourhood? The main message is that although a new emphasis has been dedicated to promoting democracy, the renewed ENP cannot be considered a new response to past shortcomings of the policy nor an adequate response to political, economic and social instability in partner countries.

After identifying the main aspects and key areas of this renewed approach, the chapter will challenge these with the lessons learned from the application of the ENP incentive-based approach so far. Moreover, we will consider the EU’s response to the main conflicts in the neighbourhood and highlight the lack of coherence between ENP rhetoric and the politics of member States. Finally, we will assess the revised ENP approach in light of the decreasing leverage the EU has in the neighbourhood due to an increasing influence of other key players in the area.

## 5.2 The Keywords of the Renewed Approach to the ENP

The main aspects of the European Commission’s revised approach to the ENP have been described in the May 2011 Communication of the High Representative and the European Commission (European Commission 2011a).

The first relevant feature is the renewed importance of the political dimension for conflict resolution and political reforms, with an increasing emphasis given to the objective of supporting progress towards “deep democracy”. As specified by the European Parliament, this principle should be translated into more space for cooperation with civil society representatives and, more specifically, in promoting a more open and active policy to support social movements and encourage civic participation (European Parliament 2011).

This stronger partnership with civil society organizations has predominantly been realized through the Civil Society Facility and the European Endowment of Democracy (EED), established to reach a broader range of actors and extended to also support political parties, non-registered NGOs and trade unions.

The revised ENP continues to support sustainable economic and social development, “encouraging partner countries’ adoption of policies conducive to stronger

and more inclusive growth” (European Commission 2011a, p. 7), through interventions aimed at improving the business environment in the region by creating links between investors, extending the operational area of the European Investment Fund, implementing pilot regional development programmes, etc.

The new ENP also entails a renewed approach to economic and financial issues and mobility measures. In terms of economic issues, the objective of the ENP is to develop closer trade ties through the negotiation of the “deep and comprehensive free trade area (DCFTA)” with “willing and able” partners:

The deep and comprehensive free trade areas provide for the gradual dismantling of trade barriers and aim for regulatory convergence in areas that have an impact on trade [...] through progressive approximation of EU rules and practices, which requires a high degree of commitment to complex and broad-ranging reforms (European Commission 2011a, p. 8).

In terms of migration and mobility, the revised approach has foreseen the launch of a renewed “Global Approach to Migration and Mobility” (European Commission 2011c). First introduced in 2005, Mobility Partnerships are comprehensive frameworks for the EU, member States and partner countries that aim at facilitating access to legal migration channels, strengthening capacities for border management and combating irregular migration. A major goal is enhancing the mobility of certain categories of citizens between partner countries and the EU, in particular students, researchers and business people. At the time of writing, Mobility Partnerships have already been established with Republic of Moldova and Georgia; Visa liberalization action plans have been prepared with Ukraine and the Republic of Moldova. Within the renewed ENP, Mobility Partnerships will be consolidated and extended to Southern partners as well: Tunisia, Morocco and Egypt at first with further plans to conclude Visa facilitation agreements with all Mediterranean countries.

In light of these changes, the ENP’s ‘differentiation’ principle has gained new momentum. Its relevance in attaining policy objectives has been reiterated through the affirmation that the ENP needs “a much higher level of differentiation allowing each partner country to develop its links with the EU as far as its own aspirations, needs and capacities allow” (European Commission 2011a, p. 5). A much higher level of differentiation is pursued through the “more for more” principle, on the basis of which the most ambitious reformers will receive financial incentives. The European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI), the new financial instrument of the Neighbourhood Policy “should reflect this key principle, especially for programming and allocating support to the partners” (European Commission 2011d, p. 2).

The emphasis on the “more for more” principle is counterbalanced by a ‘less for less’ principle, on the basis of which “The EU will uphold its policy of curtailing relations with governments engaged in violations of human rights and democracy standards, including by making use of targeted sanctions and other policy measures” (European Commission 2011a, p. 3).

The “deeper democracy” principle, consequently, will be promoted through both positive and negative conditionality measures complemented with the above mentioned aim to promote ‘democratization from below’, through the support of partner

countries' civil society. According to many observers, however, no proper attempt to acknowledge ENP past shortcomings in this regard have been put forward. Given the decreasing leverage of the EU in partner countries, the divergent objectives of many EU member States, the increase in authoritarian regimes in the neighbourhood - which the EU in many cases and *de facto* supports—the renewed ENP will hardly favour any major change (Balfour 2012).

### 5.3 Confronting the ENP Incentive Based Approach with Past Shortcomings

What is substantially 'new' in the renewed ENP, compared with the policy's past shortcomings? In terms of conditionality measures, according to official documents "the difference, at least on paper, is that democratic commitments appear stronger conditions for gaining the additional incentives" (Balfour 2012, p. 30): "The more and the faster a country progresses in its internal reforms, the more support it will get from the EU" (European Commission 2011a, p. 3). Monitoring tools have consequently been improved. Since 2012, the European Commission has made more explicit reference to the path towards reforms and made recommendations to partner countries in this regard<sup>1</sup>.

The first visible result was the allocation of more financial resources dedicated to these aims:

One of the strongest proposals, the EU-Tunisia Task Force, was meant to provide 4 billion Euros to support democratic transition between 2011 and 2013 [...]. The Support for Partnership Reform and Inclusive Growth (SPRING) programme (created in September 2011) also foresees 350 million Euros to support democratic transformation and sustainable growth. In Morocco, assistance for development and democratic reforms was increased by 20% to 580.5 million Euros (Fargues and Fandrich 2012, p. 10).

There has been an increase in the number of calls for proposals to support civil society organizations and citizens' active participation giving emphasis to priorities such as freedom of expression, the strengthening of civil society engagement in politics, and new media: measures which are evidently in support of political and social movements originating from the Arab spring.

Notwithstanding, the enthusiasm for these improvements has been dampened by persisting shortcomings. Despite the Commission proposal to increase the budget for the ENP by 40% to € 18.1 billion (European Commission 2011e), the initial expectations were considerably revised during the negotiations which set the resources for the European Neighbourhood Instrument at € 15 billion for the period 2014–2020.

In addition, the new emphasis on political conditionality has not been followed by a significant step forward in order to improve the ownership of partner countries

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<sup>1</sup> Interview with EEAS officer, Brussels, April 2012

through a real and inclusive participatory process. As explained by the Arab NGO Network together with Eurostep and Social watch,

The ‘incentive-based approach’ that is introduced as the new approach to the relationship with the region gives rise to the question as to what criteria will be used to determine the kinds of reforms that are associated with this approach and on which countries will be expected to deliver. Indeed, if this approach is based on economic and security related objectives that are set by the EU, then we are concerned that such an approach is likely to result in national strategies being defined by externally defined expectations, rather than from internal processes (Arab NGO Network for Development et al. 2012, p. 4).

These shortcomings revealed how Eurocentric the ENP still is and how it continues to be based on the presumption that the EU’s attractiveness has gone unchanged over time and that prospects for further integration alone would push partner countries to engage in a demanding reform process. This presumption has instead ignored that the ENP, since its inception, has been characterized by a considerable gap between the expectations generated and the instruments available. Beyond political rhetoric, when confronting the key areas of the revised ENP with the lessons learned from the application of the ENP tools so far, it appears clear that the new policy framework represents more of a ‘cosmetic’ revision than a new approach: a fine-tuning of already existing tools and instruments in response to the contingent situations of the Arab spring. Despite the promises,

Member States have so far failed to deliver much: [...] populist fears about immigration restricted offers of greater mobility for students and workers; and protectionist sentiment, fuelled by economic difficulties, precluded any real opening of markets, especially to North African agricultural products (Vaisse 2012).

In this last regard, one of the main incentives on offer is the already mentioned deep, comprehensive free trade agreements. At the time of writing, Association agreements, including the Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Area were signed with Ukraine, Georgia and the Republic of Moldova on 27 June 2014. Negotiations between the EU and Morocco for DCFTA were launched in March 2013 and are still ongoing. The effectiveness of such an ‘incentive’, however, should be regarded with caution.

The practical experience of ‘deep’ trade integration suggest the substantial potential of such an agreement in promoting trade and investments, creating additional welfare and employment, regulatory and institutional harmonization with EU’s *Acquis*, and modernization of the economy of an EU trade partner (especially if the partner country is less developed as compared to the EU average). While beneficial for both sides, the potential gains (as well as the potential adjustment costs) are bigger for the EU partner. [...] Even if the DCFTA is ‘deep’ and ‘comprehensive’, this does not guarantee automatic success. Much will depend on the political will and administrative capacity to implement all of its provisions in a timely and accurate manner (Dabrowski and Taran 2012, p. 30).

While even European Parliament has expressed concerns about the institutional capacity of partner countries to comply with the requirements of the actual implementation of these trade agreements (European Parliament 2012), the Arab civil society has strongly criticized the EU approach considered it a mere “repackaging of old

proposal” (Arab NGO Network for Development 2012, p. 1), failing to address the real priorities of the Arab countries.

Skewed towards the sole aim of providing unconditional maximum protection to the European investors and investments abroad, [the free trade agreement] carries significant threats to democratic processes, public policies and public interest, and fails to evolve into a policy instrument that supports sustainable, productive, and employment-generating development (*Arab NGO Network for Development*, p. 3).

Instead, what these civil society organizations clamour for is a radical change according to which the EU support for economic growth could be decided through a real participatory approach that takes into account “people’s choice” and in which “productive capacities, redistribution mechanisms, employment and wages take forefront” (p. 1).

The incentive of establishing a trade agreement is not enough, *per se*, in pushing partner countries to carry out the necessary reforms (see Chap. 1 and 3). Since the inception of the ENP, it has been clear that the free exchange of agriculture products and human mobility across borders would have been the most convincing incentives for partner countries.

In terms of agricultural trade, there has been no significant improvement. As Sapir and Zachmann (2012) explain,

The Common Agricultural Policy’s export subsidies ensure that some of the EU’s market prices are higher than world levels, which effectively prices products from the Southern neighbourhood out of EU markets (Sapir and Zachmann 2012, p. 53).

In terms of human mobility, actual measures are limited so far to university scholarships and student exchanges (Fargues and Fandrich 2012, p. 12). These Mobility Partnerships are an inadequate offer for the expectations of partner countries. Such Partnerships, moreover, are not legally binding which means there is no guarantee for the compliance of the parties to the projects agreed upon; they are non-binding for all member States and only open to those who are interested in participating.

It should be stressed, additionally, that through the positive conditionality of the ENP, the EU (backed by those member States particularly affected by migratory flows coming from neighbourhood countries such as France and Italy) has progressively linked Visa facilitation agreements to the negotiation of readmission agreements, thus taking back irregular migrants who enter the EU. A number of these agreements are being negotiated while others are already in place (e.g. with Russia and Ukraine) with several neighbouring countries being forced to sign readmission agreements in return for simplified Visa procedures. Conditions mandating the readmission and preventative apprehension of undocumented immigrants put considerable pressure on the limited resources of neighbouring States (an issue raised by Ukraine and Moldova in particular), and may be conducive to important human rights violations. Morocco, one of the first countries to start the negotiation (2000), is still refusing to take on the responsibilities and burdens that the agreement implies.

The EU Visa regime has become critical and affects perceptions of the EU profoundly reinforcing the imaginary of a “Fortress Europe” in the mind of those

countries also with whom a Visa agreement has been signed. Ukrainians have, for example, denounced the EU attitude which poses discouraging conditions and financial obstacles to applying for Visa—interestingly, approval and rejection rates for Ukrainians seeking a Schengen Visa do not show up in official statistics—creating a travelling elite, which benefits those who have the resources to pay while discriminating young people and less well-off Ukrainians.

While in June 2011 the Council recognized the need to implement partnerships with all neighbouring countries to “manage mobility in a secure environment” so as to “address the root causes of migrations” (European Council 2011, p. 10), the Arab spring and the reactions to the increasing flow of migrants coming from these countries have unequivocally shown that the security approach towards migration is not about to be softened but rather reinforced in the near future. Following the uprisings in Tunisia and Libya, the migrants arriving in the island of Lampedusa (Italy) have had the effect of revamping the attention to migration and security issues at the EU’s borders. Mediterranean member States, and France in particular, have called for the development of a common asylum policy and for a new approach to EU immigration policy that strengthens border controls. This led to the revision of the Schengen *Acquis* agreed by the European Council in June 2012 which eases the conditions for a member State to reinstate border controls unilaterally and more easily. In sum,

Although new emphasis and great effort was dedicated to democracy-building, the EU did not invent any new responses to short-term migratory movements or long-term migration. Rather, EU policies on migration after the Arab spring reaffirmed old positions regarding Mediterranean migration (Fargues and Fandrich 2012, p. 10).

The results of the ENP in the field of human mobility show inherent contradictions and ambiguities reflecting more closure rather than opening. Paraphrasing the words of Bohdana Dimitrovova (2010), the process of “border confirming” where borders are conceived as areas of demarcation and division, has overwhelmed the ENP rhetoric discourses of “border transcending” as a process of transforming of EU’s external boundaries into zones of interactions, opportunities and exchanges. Mobility Partnerships, although presented as “border transcending” tools, contribute to strengthen the EU external borders.

The message is clear: in the field of migration, the EU wants to continue following the course that it has set so far. To do so, it will stick to extending and reactivating the agreements struck with authoritarian regimes that have been ousted from power with new provisional governments, following the same direction (Migreurop 2011, p. 6).

## 5.4 Conflicting Geopolitical Interests

The ineffective and inconsistent use of conditionality measures are especially due to those cases in which potential sanctions interfere with member States’ strategic interests in the neighbourhood. EU member States have been blamed several times for applying double standards towards third countries. As Sapir and Zachmann (2012, p. 54) pointed out,

The EU continues to be hampered by the individual foreign policies and interests of its member States, and stymied by a low level of cooperation with the United States and the BRICs in achieving a global resources deal through the G20.

In this regards, the words used by Martin Shultz (at the time head of the Socialist group in the European Parliament, and since March 2012 President of the European Parliament) are emblematic: during in an interview for *Der Spiegel*, the current president of the European Parliament responded to a question on whether the EU failed to take a clear position vis-à-vis the crisis in Egypt, and affirmed that:

People are always chiding ‘the EU’, but the institutions in Brussels are taking action. The parliament is providing money and the European Commission has tripled humanitarian aid. The European Union isn’t the problem. [...] The member States are the problem. They are pursuing interests that are sometimes widely divergent. I’m sick of these constant attacks on ‘the EU’ (Shultz 2011).

Many member States have traditionally been close to the region’s autocrats in order to protect their economic interests, for security reasons, or to prevent potential waves of immigrants from these countries. Moreover, it is not a secret that the application of (negative) conditionality through economic sanctions such as arms embargoes, trade restrictions, financial restrictions, restrictions on admissions, etc., has most of the time been softer in the case of those countries where EU member States have major economic and energy interests. The implementation of these measures, moreover, is a competence of each member State within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy. More precisely, the Lisbon Treaty introduced a two stage procedure: first there has to be an EU common position or joint action providing for economic measures against a third country; then concrete measures are taken by the Council through a qualified majority following a proposal by the Commission.

Energy sanctions are considered off-limits as they have detrimental consequences for EU member States whose energy provisions, although with big differences, depend largely on oil and gas imports from neighbouring countries. As stressed by Rosa Balfour “Here, foreign policy sits uneasily with national energy relations and with the EU’s emerging external energy policy, which sees the neighbourhood as a priority area” (Balfour 2012, p. 35).

The case of Libya is emblematic in this regard. On March 2011, the EU imposed financial sanctions to the Gaddafi’s regime by freezing his bank accounts in Europe. The measure was considered a drop in the ocean and largely ineffective considering the huge amount of cash reserves at his disposal (Spiegel Staff 2011). More importantly, the EU failed to reach a consensus on the possibility of imposing energy sanctions which,

Would probably pose greater difficulties for the dictator. Such a move would directly affect Libya’s economy: the country is the EU’s third-largest supplier of oil. [...] According to the German Foreign Ministry, an attempt was also made to place the State-owned National Oil Corporation on the list of sanctioned enterprises. After all, this company is controlled by Gaddafi and it helps him maintain his ability to wage a military campaign against the

rebels. However, the German government ran into resistance on this issue from Southern Europe (*Ibid*).

Another example is the EU's reaction to Russia's annexation of Crimea and its support to pro-Russian separatists fighting in Eastern Ukraine. For months, the EU had been reluctant in enacting effective sanctions against Russia fearing adverse effects on member States' economic interests. For this reason, the Council, while strongly condemning the Russian invasion, gave the Commission the task of assessing the "potential impact of restrictive measures towards Russia on the economy of the EU and its member States". EU sanctions have for months been limited to restrictive measures against those persons responsible for actions which undermine or threaten the territorial integrity, sovereignty and independence of Ukraine as well as persons and entities associated with them. Only on July 2014, after the crash of the flight MH17 into rebel-held territory in the East of Ukraine and which led to the deaths of 298 passengers, did EU member States reach an agreement to impose more restrictive measures to Russia including to "limit access to EU capital markets for Russian State-owned financial institutions, impose an embargo on trade in arms, establish an export ban for dual use goods for military end users, and curtail Russian access to sensitive technologies particularly in the oil sector" (European Commission 2014). Current sanctions do not cover 'high intensity' options that would have banned imports of Russian oil and gas. Considering that

The EU buys 84% of Russian oil exports and 76% of its gas exports, [...] an EU ban would make a \$ 300 billion hole in Russia's \$ 420 billion annual budget. With some large EU countries, including Germany, Italy, and Poland, dependent on Russian gas for at least one third of their needs, it would also shock the European economy (Pop and Rettman 2014, p. 1).

The reaction to the Arab spring and to other crises which have involved partner countries clearly shows that geopolitical interests matter the most in the relationship between the EU, its member States and partner countries.

The lack of coherence between the collective efforts under the ENP and the politics of the member States is particularly evident when it comes to regional conflicts. [...] The EU is still far from putting the ENP's instruments and its diplomatic and crisis management tools to use in the form of comprehensive and coherent action (Lehne 2014, p. 11).

In the aftermath of the uprising in Tunisia and Egypt, the issue of strengthening the role of the EU in the region, catching up with the first timid reactions was evidently far from the main concerns of Paris, London as well as of Berlin and Rome. Behind the position of the member States, worries of a geopolitical nature, inter-linked with domestic dynamics, prevailed. The Libyan conflict required putting member States on the "right side of the history", securing consolidated strategic assets, especially in the field of energy provision (Italy); taking advantage of the window of opportunity opened by the change of regime (France and UK); facing the risks in terms of increasing migration flows (Italy and also Malta); raising the opportunity for reinvigorating leadership as crucial in the geographical area, even beyond the traditional area of influence (France); fearing the reactions of national public opin-

ions (Germany) and the consequences for the upcoming regional and presidential elections (France).

Moreover, the failure of the attempt to deploy a EU-led military operation in Libya in early April 2011 showed the world, once again, an EU blocked by internal divergences, with France and UK advocating for the implementation of a no-fly zone and pushing for a military intervention under the NATO's umbrella; Germany strongly against the use of force, abstaining in United Nation Security Council voting for the setting up of a non-fly zone and not intervening in the military actions undertaken by NATO; Italy at first hesitant and then later joining the NATO coalition by offering its military basis in contrast with the provision of the Italy-Libya Treaty of Friendship.

In the case of Syria, EU member States have adopted softer positions: diplomatic censure, or condemning the violence and advocating for the creation of safe havens and humanitarian corridors inside the country (France). On the contrary to the case of Libya, no European country has made a first move calling for military intervention. After all, the most decisive factor having influenced the EU and its member States has been the lack of will of other key players in the area to intervene: the US unwilling to engage in a military conflict during the run up of the presidential campaign for re-election and vetoes from China and Russia to block a draft resolution calling for an end to violence in Syria and for the implementation of the Arab League peace plan.

## 5.5 Facing Decreasing Leverage in the Neighbourhood

The Arab spring and all the different crises that have affected the neighbourhood since 2011 have shown that the EU policies and level of ambition should be reconsidered against the existing shortcomings in the implementation of political conditionality and in light of the limits of the EU common foreign policy.

Since the ENP was first implemented, the EU has had to face a more complicated context. Two further challenges should be considered: on the one hand, the fact that the current economic and financial crisis have put the EU 'model' into question. This inevitably risks undermining the attractiveness of the EU's soft power, meaning the EU's leverage and its capacity to exert its power of conditionality which is at the heart of the Neighbourhood Policy. Moreover, budget constraints which have limited funding to 15 billion, well below the 18 billion proposed by the European Commission, could hinder the application of the "more for more" principle and the EU's response to the crisis in the neighbourhood area.

On the other hand, while the EU's soft power attractiveness declines, other actors could gain more influence, reducing the relative importance of the EU (see Chap. 7). As Kramsch pointed out,

The 'positive landscape' which existed immediately following eastward enlargement in May 2004 has given way to a more menacing one [...]. Such threats include the rise of China and India as rival economic powers: the role of China as competing aid donor to the EU in Africa and in the Middle East; the destabilizing potential of a nuclear-tipped Iran; and

a Russia whose prodigious oil and gas resources have their capacity to destabilize European energy market (Kramsch 2011, p. 194).

The positioning of China as a different (from the West) international actor should also be considered:

Sovereignty is often considered to be the bottom line in Chinese foreign policy—or a red line that Chinese policy makers won't cross. This includes allowing each country to develop its own political and economic systems and norms independently rather than have them imposed by external powers and actors (Breslin 2012, p. 5).

This implies that the delivery of financial aid is not conditioned (as in the case of the EU and the US) to good governance, rule of law or to the implementation of economic reforms. “By comparison, the ENPI offers more modest financial rewards at higher costs of adaptation” (Whitman and Juncos 2012, p. 3).

The role of China as a competing aid donor and commercial partner represents an opportunity for partner countries to challenge the dominance of Western liberal order, to send concrete signals of discontent on policies implemented by traditional key players in the area. For example, the fact that the Egyptian president Mohamed Morsi made one of his first international trips to China, rather than the US or Europe, was considered an important turning point in the foreign policy of the country seeking a balance between old and new partners. It is not a surprise that he adduced as justification the fact that “[...] for 30 years the US [and the EU] openly supported the dictatorial regime of former President Hosni Mubarak, which for decades persecuted the Muslim Brotherhood group to which Morsi belongs” (Cunningham 2012).

The competition is not only limited to China but also includes other donors. Since the election of Mohamed Morsi, for example, Egypt has attracted \$ 2 billion financial package from Turkey; \$ 18 billion of investment pledges from Qatar (Awad 2012), including financial support of \$2bn as a deposit with the Central Bank of Egypt (Aljazeera 2012). When confronted with other donors, though, the EU's offer of economic aid appears quite poor:

The EU's pledge of approximately € 5 billion to Egypt following the overthrow of then president Hosni Mubarak in 2011 sounds impressive, for instance, but that sum consisted to a large extent of repackaged existing commitments and involved a lot of conditionality and burdensome procedures. The disbursement of this pledge will take a long time. Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates, by contrast, pledged € 5.9 billion (\$ 8 billion) after the 2013 military coup. This money arrives more rapidly and without so many strings attached. Understandably, therefore, Cairo does not get too worried about EU conditionality (Lehne 2014, p. 3).

Russian politics as well have been characterized by a significant shift which has seen “Putin's transformation from a fairly Western friendly statesman from 2000 to 2002 to one with hostile posture” (Nizameddin 2012, p. 3). The coloured revolutions occurring in Russian neighbouring countries and Western attempts to force regime change in Iraq (2003) and in Libya (2011) have favoured the emergence of anti-Western forces in Russia, followed by the intention to oppose—as position towards Syria has shown - any future attempt to use force in violation of the State sovereignty.

Moreover, by the time the Eastern Partnership was launched in 2009, Russia's attitude had turned more hostile and competitive towards EU policies in the Eastern neighbouring countries, seen as a direct threat to Russia geopolitical positioning in the area:

Russian President Vladimir Putin continued to view the Eastern Partnership as a zero-sum game in which any step by these countries toward the EU constituted a setback for Russia (Lehne 2014, p. 7).

As a consequence, in 2011, Russia launched a parallel integration project, an Eurasian custom union, emulating the EU's policies in the area but openly in contrast to them. The subsequent declaration of the European Commission considered this option incompatible and alternative to the Deep Free Trade Agreements offered by the EU, forcing Eastern partners to choose between the two, and it has clearly paved the way to a 'geopolitical competition' with Russia for the influence in the area. Although Armenia's and Ukraine's refusals to sign the trade agreement with the EU represented a positive result for Russia, the reaction of the Ukrainian population to this choice, together with the decision taken by Moldova and Georgia to sign the agreement with the EU, have shown that the issue is still unresolved:

In fact, it is likely that Ukraine's future alignment, and probably that of some other Eastern European countries as well, will continue to go through twists and turns for years to come (Lehne 2014, p. 8).

## **5.6 Concluding Remarks: What Should We Expect in the Near Future?**

The renewed ENP has been a first response to the upheavals in the Mediterranean but also an occasion to fine-tune the EU policy framework towards both Southern and Eastern partners. One of the main achievements of the renewed ENP has consisted of having widened the space for cooperation with civil society organisations. This achievement can be concretely measured by the increase in financial resources made available until May 2010, a trend that it is expected to be confirmed during the 2014–2020 programming period, and by extending those funds to non-registered organizations.

The support to civil society organisations represents a concrete application of the deep democracy principle which is one of the leading key areas of the renewed approach put forward by the Commission. In identifying this principle, the renewed approach of the ENP has also reaffirmed the relevance of political conditionality, recognizing democratic commitments in increasing importance as a condition to gain incentives.

The renewed emphasis of political conditionality is also at the basis of the "more for more" principle according to which 'more' incentives will be recognized to those countries 'more' committed in the realization of reforms. Through this principle, the intrinsic logic of the ENP continues to be based on the attractiveness of the incentives on offer: the more attractive the offer at stake, the more the partner

countries would be pushed to undertake the required reforms and to advance in the process. Yet, as has been extensively claimed by analysts and relevant stakeholders since its inception, the reality of the ENP has been undoubtedly characterized by a gap between expectations generated and the level attractiveness of the incentives on offer. Indeed, from the point of view of the system of incentives the approach proposed does not change very much from the past. This approach still responds to the economic and security objectives that are set up by the EU which is once again perceived as the main beneficiary of the whole process. The renewed approach has not led to concrete improvements towards the free movement of agricultural products nor to a real step forward in the mobility of people which would have been much better matched to the expectations and interests of partners countries, especially Southern ones, and represented a concrete step for further increasing the attractiveness of the ENP.

In addition, reactions to the flows of migrants in the aftermath of the crisis in Tunisia and Libya, the tensions between Italy and France and the call for the revision of the Schengen *acquis* have left no doubts that, despite the rhetoric, we are still on the process of “bordering confirming” rather than of “border transcending”. Furthermore, the ENP’s incentives are strictly connected with the EU’s security concerns coming about as the conclusion of Visa facilitation agreements linked to the negotiation of readmission agreements. After 13 years from the start of the negotiations, the reluctance of Morocco to take on the burden and the responsibilities that such an agreement implies sounds like a warning to the approach promoted by the EU. If we look eastward to the countries that have already signed a Visa agreement with the EU, discouraging conditions and financial obstacles in applying for Visa have been denounced in Ukraine while in Russia the prevailing feeling is that the EU will not take on its responsibilities on the abolition of its Visa regime even when all the requirements are fulfilled.

All this has contributed to raising doubts on the reliability of the renewed ENP, hampered by persistent contradictions between EU declarations and the attitudes of its member States which have been accused of having applied double standards to protect their economic and security interests. The reactions to the wave of crises following the Arab spring have confirmed this fear.

The reluctance to impose energy sanctions on Gaddafi’s regime, the failure of the attempt to deploy a EU-led military operation in Libya due to the diverging positions of member States, the different attitude adopted in the case of Syria and the weak leverage of EU sanctions, all confirmed that the real concern and aim for EU member States is in securing consolidated assets by taking advantage of the window of opportunity opened by the regime change.

When confronting the revised ENP’s key areas to the lessons learned from the application of the policy so far, it appears clear that the new framework represents more of a fine-tuning of already existing tools and instruments in response to the contingent situations, and less of a response to a real reflection at the EU level on its effects in the long-term.

The evolving situation, on the other hand, is posing increasing challenges at the EU external borders such as the deterioration of the strategic scenario in the Middle

East, the changing political environment in the countries of the region and the need to deal with unforeseen consequences of the change of political leadership in many neighbouring countries. The increasing influence of other big players (China, Turkey, the Gulf monarchies, etc.) as competing commercial partners and aid donors, challenges the leverage of the EU's soft power in the region (see Chap. 8).

In addition, the EU's soft power appeal is also declining in light of the difficulties the EU has shown in managing its internal financial crisis, undermining the credibility of the EU towards partner countries and weakening the strategic importance of the EU at the global level.

In light of this new trend, a new paradigm is needed. The Eurocentric vision which inspired the ENP, and which is still at the heart of the revised approach, no longer corresponds to the reality of the area. The EU patronizing policies should be nuanced and be more open to the participation of regional actors. However, the definition of a new paradigm would probably be impossible without a significant boost in the European integration process. Until the prerogatives and competences of the member States continue to prevail over the EU in sensible areas, the realization and potential of the ENP's objectives will continue to be unfulfilled and overwhelmed by security concerns as well as the specific geopolitical interests of member States.

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# Chapter 6

## Macro-Regional Strategies and the Rescaling of the EU External Geopolitics

Andrea Stocchiero

### 6.1 The Creation and Diffusion of a Policy Instrument: Macro-Regional Strategies

In the last years we have witnessed a multiplication of efforts to remap the EU's political space through the creation of policy instruments with variable geometries and at different geographical scales. Macro-regional strategies are the most recent of these attempts.

Since the launch of the first macro-region around the Baltic sea in 2009, many other transnational areas have expressed an interest in establishing macro-regions. The discourse on macro-region has been expanding from the Baltic to the Danube area, the Adriatic-Ionian Sea and the Alpine macro-regions. New potential macro-regions are discussed for the Atlantic Arc trans-national space, the North Sea-Channel area and in the Mediterranean basin (see Fig. 1.4 in Chap. 1).

The macro-region concept was first introduced based on the initiative of the Baltic countries. The national governments and an informal group of members of European Parliament from the Baltic States (the Europe Baltic Intergroup) have undertaken constant efforts through the years to introduce a new transnational strategy for this region to both the European Council and the EU Commission. The Swedish government took great part in promoting the macro-region and in political lobbying. The strategy was officially recognized by the European Council in October 2009 during the Swedish Presidency. Additional decisive factors were the explicit political will of the national governments of the area and the ability to build consensus at diverse levels.

The concept and strategy of the macro-region is illustrated in the Communication from the Commission concerning the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea region (European Commission 2009a) and in the following Council Conclusion

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(European Council 2009); it appeared in a paper drafted by the European Commission (European Commission 2009b) and was reiterated in the guidelines for future Social Cohesion Policy (Samecki 2009). The proposals for the new regulations on Structural Funds, territorial cooperation and the European Neighbourhood Instrument (ENI) for the programming period 2014–2020 mention the opportunity of sustaining the strategy (European Commission 2011a, b). The “Elements for a Common Strategic Framework 2014–2020” (European Commission 2012) indicates the support to macro-regional strategies among the priorities for cooperation. In sum, in a few years the idea to constitute a new transnational policy instrument has captured the attention of experts and policy-makers all over the EU and even beyond its borders (Dubois et al. 2009; Duhr 2011; Bialasiewicz et al. 2013).

It is the purpose of this chapter to understand the reasons beyond such a rapid diffusion, to see if the strategy possesses some added-value with respect to existing policies or if this is yet another example of a supposedly new and, consequently, fascinating policy instrument with few prospects for achieving concrete results.

A macro-region has been defined as:

An area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges (...) geographic, cultural, economic or other (European Commission 2009b, p. 1 and 7).

The definition reveals the functional dimension of macro-regions which are identified in relation to common cross-border challenges and opportunities that require a collective action as, for example, environmental problems where the action of a single actor yields no efficient result thus requiring a combined involvement of various actors. The adoption of a functional approach gives rise to possible variable geometries in the definition of macro-regional strategies, meaning that different geographical scales and areas can be identified in accordance with each single scope.

Nevertheless, the macro-regional area must clearly always encompass an inferior number of States in comparison to the whole of the EU and, following the example of the Baltic area, the strategy can also include non-EU countries because of functional linkages among territories. This last characteristic is very important, not only in light of the purpose of this book, but because it is one of the most salient features that distinguishes macro-regional strategies with respect to existing instruments.

The macro-regional strategy has indeed a very soft (and weak) degree of institutionalisation, because is based on 3 “nos”: 1) *no* new legislation—macro-regional strategies require no new ad hoc legislation; 2) *no* new funding—macro-regional strategies require no ad hoc funding by the EU; and 3) *no* new institutions—macro-regional strategies are not established and supported by ad hoc institutions. Consequently, the EU macro-regional strategy is a kind of soft political institution which aims at fostering dialogue and enhancing coordination by involving governments at diverse levels and at a trans-national scale. The strategy should be based on:

A ‘three *yeses* rule’: more complementary funding, more institutional coordination and more new projects (Alfonsi 2011, p. 2).

In this sense, the added-value of macro-regional strategies is the integrated approach: a collective action that strives towards a common objective, integrating

various actors, policies, programmes and funding (European Commission 2009b). The objective is to reduce economic and social divergences between the diverse territories and to construct competitive and sustainable macro-regions.

The macro-regional strategy would, thus, seem to constitute a pragmatic approach to the need for finding new modalities of rendering public policy more efficient in a cross-border area which goes beyond single nation States but without having to rely on the action of the whole EU and of each of its member States. In practice, the instrument aims to better coordinate existing institutions and resources and to implement visible and concrete ‘flagship’ projects. Moreover, it is also an innovative geopolitical experiment.

## 6.2 The Geopolitical Implications

The macro-regional strategy is on the one hand, as mentioned in the previous section, driven by a functional approach and by the need to respond to specific transnational issues. On the other hand, the initiative is based on the identification of proper geographical ‘regions’ and is supposed to link together areas according to a “mutual interdependence” and “spatially coherence” criteria: i.e. specific transnational interdependencies, material and immaterial flows, hard and soft linkages which qualify the geographical scale and the contents of a macro-region.

In the Baltic macro-region the most evident need that the strategy is supposed to address is the transnational management of the maritime environment and of the catchment area. The Baltic Sea is represented as a common good that must be protected by all the people and respective governments that are directly involved in its management but it is also a common good for all the EU, neighbourhood countries and more distant countries because of its diverse interconnections that have an influence on the area. The Baltic Sea is considered a transnational resource that should be conserved and managed at the proper scale and a concern for all of Europe. The same applies to the Danube River, the Adriatic-Ionian Sea and the Alpine area: ‘natural’ regions which require multi-level governance. Such a geographic and functional principle allows, at the same time, for the reshaping of power relationships inside and outside the EU according to natural, social and economic connections which require a transcendence of national and sub-national borders in order to cope with common issues.

“Another feature of macro-regions is the inherent experimentalism in the policy, no doubt a result of its relative novelty” (Mirwaldt et al. 2010, p. 12). The novelty of macro-regions lies not only in the experimentation of a new transnational and multi-level governance model, but also in the fact that macro-regions may include non-EU countries, both pre-accession and neighbourhood countries. Macro-regional governance is “located between the nation State and the supranational community” (Schymik and Krummy 2009). It is situated in a vast, transnational area somewhere between the EU supranational level and member States and includes the participation of regions, local authorities and social and economic stakeholders. As such,

macro-regional strategies represent a new political instrument for diverse actors at different levels. Each institutional level should take part in a positive-sum game: the sub-national and national levels are both supposed to be protagonists and in the pursuit of goals linked to regional development that crosses frontiers, dealing with common problems and contributing to strengthening integration in Europe even beyond the EU external frontiers.

Thus, diverse visions and interests interact in the construction of macro-regions which may have relevant effects inside the EU and upon EU policies affecting member States, regions and cities belonging to the same 'region', pre-accession countries and neighbouring countries. In this sense, according to the new regionalism and para-diplomacy perspective, macro-regions could be considered a new channel, a new window of opportunity for the geopolitical positioning of diverse actors within and beyond the borders of the EU.

The strategy is not only a technocratic instrument with important political consequences but also an initiative with social implications. It should favour the building of a common sense of identity and belonging, the sharing of common values and visions between people of diverse nationalities. As mentioned in the case of the Danube area:

Projects initiated and developed within the framework of the European Danube Macro-regional Strategy could only be successful if people's minds are undergoing meaningful changes and individuals of the region start to develop the so-called 'Danube consciousness', a set of identity elements which describe their attachment to the river itself and also their solidarity towards the people living in the environs of the Danube (Lütgenau 2010).

Macro-regional strategies are meant to be founded based on a top-down governance and through big infrastructural strategic projects and plans, but they are also meant to be able to cope with more subtle and soft questions that concern social and cultural cohesion. A macro-regional strategy should take into consideration hard as well as soft borders, material as well as imagined borders. It needs a multilevel governance structure because places, local populations and local issues matter in the construction of transnational spaces. A macro-regional strategy should be based on democratic, networked governance capable of negotiating different interests and perceptions through a multilevel approach.

This social and cultural region-building process sustained by common institutional and political instruments must transcend the strong distinction between the EU internal and external space. This requires strong and difficult coordination with EU external policies especially with regard to the enlargement and neighbourhood policies and their instruments, respectively the IPA (Instrument for Pre-accession assistance) and ENI (European Neighbourhood Instrument).

From this perspective, the Danube macro-regional strategy is particularly interesting insofar as it includes eight EU member States, four accession countries and two neighbourhood countries (Ukraine and Moldova). As stated by the European Parliament:

The Danube region is an important crossover covered by the EU's Cohesion Policy programmes, programmes for countries covered by the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) and potential candidate countries, and therefore represents an area where enhanced

synergies between different EU policies can be developed: cohesion, transport, tourism, agriculture, fisheries, economic and social development, energy, environment, enlargement (European Parliament 2011).

The same goes for the EU Strategy for the Adriatic-Ionian Region (EUSAIR) that includes four member States and four pre-accession countries: the macro-regional strategy is connected to the EU enlargement policy towards the Western Balkans.

The macro-regional strategy is a geopolitical instrument that sustains the Europeanisation of non-EU countries. It should contribute to extending the instruments of internal EU cohesion policy to non-EU countries, ensuring the convergence of regional development policies implemented in various regions and with other sectoral policies and instruments having a potential leverage effect in the macro-region, such as the EU maritime integrated strategy, environment and employment policies, etc. These sectoral policies implement European directives and regulations, they diffuse criteria, standards and benchmarks shared at the supranational EU level provoking changes at national and local levels. In this, a top-down process of policy convergence is promoted. At the same time, an upward process should be put in place. The actors of macro-regional strategy can influence the drafting of new regulations through the many different channels of negotiation of supranational strategies: member States in the Council of the EU; citizens' representatives in the European Parliament; local authorities in the Committee of the Regions; trade unions and employers associations in the Economic and Social and Committee.

Finally, macro-regional strategies establish new spaces and networks that are supposed to transcend the logic of concentric circles of integration (see Chap. 1), in order to support the idea of a European space re-shaping along the lines of an "Olympic rings" geography (Browning and Joenniemi 2008). The logic of "Olympic rings", according to Browning and Joenniemi, is different from the Wesphalian model anchored on national States' role, and also different from the imperial or Eurocentric one that envisions a series of concentric circles around a European core with differentiated integration perspectives; instead it is reminiscent of a neo-Medieval polity which has been described in Chap. 1, one that is more cosmopolitan and based on a transnational logic and a network governance with various centres and multiple regionalisations.

In vast areas which share common histories, common goods and challenges, these (new) regionalisation processes could be nested within the European integration process. This regionalisation could facilitate the construction of a polycentric Europe more attentive to local social and economic dynamics; could support European diversity against the homologation and standardization of a unique model of development dictated by other EU policies; could offer an alternative to Eurocentrism by involving the EU 'peripheries' on an equal base, and could stretch beyond the imaginary of an impenetrable "fortress Europe". The aim, in this regard, is to reconsider European integration from the perspective of external territories:

It is logical, in the context of such a vision, that those 'outside' are also drawn into and provided with access to the inner European circle. In this understanding, outsiders are needed as true partners—that is, actors to be provided with regulating and constituting power,

rather than conceptualized as the objects of the actions of those on the inside. This is so as their active contributions are needed if the construction of a more de-centred and less security-geared Europe is to become reality (Browning and Joenniemi 2003, p. 475–476).

Beside these ambitious objectives, the factual implementation of macro-regional strategies implies several challenges which will be described in the next sections.

### 6.3 The Challenges

Many authors have expressed doubts over the innovative aspect and geopolitical implications of the macro-regional strategy. The added-value of these strategies as well as their capacity to re-shape the EU geo-policy have been put into question. In this respect macro-regions are confronted with four different challenges that can be defined as governance, efficiency, community and external challenges.

The first challenge is governance. Integration between different instruments requires coordination between different institutions and regulations (European, national, regional, etc.) which represents, indeed, a governance challenge (Bengtsson 2009). It is a complex governance that faces difficulties insofar as it implies the interaction among various institutional levels and actors, and possible tensions among the various powers (Dubois et al. 2009, p. 39). According to these analysts, however, standing relations among these actors (central and sub-national governments, social and economic actors) could help to overcome conflicts with regard to tenure and command over the macro-regional strategy.

Furthermore, some have raised questions about whether the governance of macro-regional cooperation is really as “bottom-up” as it is presented (Mirwaldt et al. 2010; Stocchiero 2010; CPMR 2009). The action plans annexed to the macro-regional strategies are approved by the European Council and are elaborated by the member States with the assistance of the European Commission’s DG Regio, in consultation with sub-national authorities and local stakeholders. The macro-regions, as articulated by the European Commission, assigns a prominent role to the central governments of the member States.

However, when it comes to the implementation stage the central role played by member States is less evident. In the Baltic and the Danube macro-regional areas some regional authorities have assumed the coordination role in establishing priority areas and are leaders of flagship projects. Thus, as noticed by Perkmann in the case of the Euroregions, similar to the case of macro-regions, the role regional authorities could play depends in part on the “policy entrepreneurialism” of those actors, where “policy entrepreneurs” are defined as “actors that position themselves as protagonists within specific policy areas by taking advantages of the windows of opportunity opened up by conjunctures within their policy environment” (Perkmann 2005). A structure-agency problem appears: does the macro-regional strategy offer a structure of opportunity for real multi-level governance? How much does it depend on the policy entrepreneurialism of individual actors?

Second, the efficiency challenge (Bengtsson 2009) is linked to a weak focus of macro-regional strategies which, despite their functional orientation, are based on a wide range of priorities and initiatives. Without a proper focus there is a loss of expected added-value of the strategy, a risk of failure to implement criteria apt at concentrating on strategic projects and, above all, a failure to observe the inter-dependency linking the various projects.

The efficiency challenge also relates to the fact that no additional funds are allocated to macro-regional strategies implying that resources for project implementation should originate from existing funds such as EU funds and contributions from international financial institutions (European Commission 2009b). In this respect, it is worth stressing that evidence on the implementation of EU programmes, with particular regards to territorial cooperation initiatives, shows that the coordination as well as complementarity and coherence with other programmes and funding instruments (European as well as national and regional) is a major concern when evaluating the efficacy of the programmes. The fact that EU programmes respond to different regulatory frameworks represents additional constraints for implementing and coordinating activities between diverse funds.

Other authors have highlighted the strong similarity between the macro-regional approach and the transnational strand of the EU's territorial cooperation. Macro-regional strategies and transnational cooperation programmes overlap geographically and are in pursuit of the same objectives. Similarities between 'flagship projects' proposed by the macro-regional strategies and 'strategic projects' implemented in the framework of the EU transnational cooperation programmes have also been stressed. Further tensions exist regarding the relations between the macro-regions and other forms of trans-boundary cooperation, such as the Euro-regions and the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC).

The efficiency challenge raises the following questions: does the macro-regional strategy fulfil its promise to be an effective tool for delivering concrete benefits and added-value? What are the main coordination problems? What are the linkages between the macro-regional strategy and territorial cooperation?

Third, the creation of macro-regions has been generating tensions inside the EU: if, on the one hand, the strategy responds to the spatial diversity of the EU, on the other hand, it can also feed the divergent dynamics among different areas, favouring a multi-speed Europe. As indicated by Bengtsson (2009, p. 7), this issue may be defined as a "community challenge": the macro-region is a form of regionalisation inside the EU (intra-regionalization) that benefits those territories that are involved first-hand. Yet, it also requires the solidarity of all member States of the EU. As a result and as shall be highlighted hereafter, the Commission must notify the European Council with regard to the possibility of establishing a macro-region, showing that added-value exists for the entire EU.

Some voices have been more visible and recognized in their opposition to the creation of macro-regional strategies based on the argument that they can reward more certain areas than others. According to this point of view, the diverse macro-regional areas should be distributed equally, cover all of the EU and be more properly nested in the European space. On the other hand, their creation depends upon

the autonomous political will of the diverse local stakeholders and on the maturity of their cooperation networks. What conditions should be met in order to cope with the community challenge? Does territorial cooperation have a role to play in laying the foundation for the setting up of macro-regional strategies?

Fourth, the community challenge is linked to the external dimension of the macro-regional strategies, and with what I define as the “external challenge”. As already indicated, the macro-regions are based on geographic functionalities that span over the EU borders. The efficacy of the EU macro-regional strategy in coping with transnational issues depends on the possibility to involve external territories. If theoretically the need to create macro-regional strategies with external countries is evident, politically it is not easy to realize. What political conditions do constraint the construction of macro-regional strategies with external countries? How much can macro-regions be extended outward? What role the borders of the EU play in the macro-regional strategies? Could they support a new Europe of Olympic rings?

### **6.3.1 *The Governance Challenge***

As already mentioned, the added-value of the macro-regional strategy is in its integrated approach, namely the multi-level and trans-national governance which strives for an effective coordination of EU, national and regional instruments, plus the financing of flagship projects. The macro-regional strategy is innovative in technical terms because it builds a new form of governance which aims at achieving more efficacy in addressing common challenges and opportunities. At the same time, it is also innovative in a political sense as the new scale of governance “located between the nation State and the supranational community” (Schymik and Krumrey 2009, p. 3), can potentially contribute to an ongoing reshaping and rescaling of the European polity.

The macro-region is supposed to constitute a new multi-level and multi-actor subjectivity. However, this supposed added-value represents a governance challenge because it has yet to be accomplished: considering the different degrees of decentralisation and de-concentration of EU member States and non-EU countries, the real multi-level collaboration between the central, regional and local authorities of diverse countries and the participation of different levels of government which is needed, this poses as great challenge.

Moreover, within a trans-national approach governments should be ready to change and harmonize their domestic policies according to EU directives and regulations and in line with partner countries in order to achieve common objectives. In addition, according to the EU solidarity and common benefits principles, governments should be willing to co-finance projects implemented in other nations when there are important impacts on their own countries at stake. The basic issue is the political willingness of governments, functioning at diverse levels and in different territories, to relinquish some of their sovereignty and to converge resources in the implementation of flagship projects in a common space.

The preparation and implementation of a Plan of Action that derives from a strategic paper drafted by national governments and the European Commission through a “bottom up” consultative approach and through the involvement of local actors (European Commission 2009b, p. 8), is the primary component of the governance mechanism for macro-regions. In practice, the Commission exerts a “soft power” in the role of “overall coordinator”, “external facilitator”, and “impartial honest broker” (European Commission 2009b, p. 4 and 6), while the strategy is supposed to be drafted and implemented “from within” (p. 5), meaning by the national and sub-national governments and different stakeholders. The European Commission should elaborate the strategy with the National Contact Points under the Prime Ministries or the Foreign Affairs Ministries of the countries in the macro-region in coordination with sector ministries and in consultation with diverse stakeholders. Central administrations or “exceptionally regions or inter-governmental bodies” act as the Coordinators for Priority Areas and identify the flagship projects and indicate the relative responsibilities and roles. The Lead Partners of the flagship projects, meaning various agencies or institutions, implement the actions.

The strategy, however, is an EU strategy; therefore, the responsibility and accountability remains at the EU level. To this avail, the Commission convenes a High Level Group from all member States that periodically reports to the European Council (European Commission 2009b, p. 3), and “should be consulted about amendments of the Strategy and the Action Plan” (European Council 2009).

This architecture is backed by a consultative process with “involvement of stakeholders concerned from all levels in the region, for example through an annual forum with the aim to help the Commission in its tasks” (European Council 2009).

The Baltic case made it undeniably clear that a lengthy phase of harnessing consensus and legitimacy was necessary: stakeholder conferences were organized to discuss working papers concerning various problems; round tables were held to treat different topics and possible strategy actions. The Commission opened a consultative phase that gathered 110 written recommendations from bodies across the area (Joenniemi 2009, p. 3). In the Danube case the consultation process was shorter and was less participative, in the Adriatic-Ionian case it was even more so. In the latter case, the consultation process only lasted six months and gathered very few written relevant proposals.

The pending issue is prominently of a political nature: is a macro-regional strategy truly “bottom up” or does it constitute a means of policy inter-governmentalism? It is rather obvious that central governments were the main actors in the creation of macro-regions. Consequentially, stakeholder associations such as the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions (CPMR) and the Assembly of European Regions (AER) questioned the effective role of sub-national governments in macro-regional strategy:

Looking at how the Strategy will be implemented, here again the role of sub-regional authorities is a secondary one (CPMR 2009, p. 4).

The Assembly of European Regions writes:

In spite of the proclaimed territorial approach, the initiative seems to remain top-down and member-state-driven (...) with limited democratic legitimacy (...) If the role of regions in these macro-regions is merely consultative, there will be no improvement in the design and implementation of Cohesion Policy (AER 2009, p. 14)

Furthermore, Schymik and Krumrey (2009, p. 10) indicate a basic contradiction among the stakeholders:

On the one hand, many are advocating a bottom up approach (...) On the other hand there are also voices calling for a strong leadership or top down leadership (...) [and for a] more effective implementation of the action plan.

Thus, a just balance between the legitimization and the efficacy of the macro-region should be identified, reverberating the general search for a balance between legislative and government powers in all democratic processes.

Central governments are the central nodes of the macro-regional governance system. They have a general oversight power through the High Level Group mentioned above. They are to be coordinated by the European Commission in their trans-national relationships but European coordination is only a soft power acting as an “external facilitator” and “impartial honest broker” (European Commission 2009b), and it is not mandatory. Furthermore, central governments are not passive players in lobbying for the identification of priorities and if they have to co-finance flagship projects from their own resources, they have a decisive say in the decision making process. Central governments, moreover, play a major role in national decentralisation and de-concentration processes: they supervise and coordinate regional and territorial policies and above all they have many more capacities than local authorities and Regions in foreign affairs which are essential functions in framing transnational policies. Thus, the relative political power is more in the hands of central governments than in those of the European Commission, local authorities and other stakeholders: the macro-regional strategy lies in the political will of the central governments.

This inter-governmentalism contrasts with the idea that the macro-regional strategy should be a transnational and multi-level political construction:

Guided by the EU’s principles of subsidiarity and partnership, the consultation of key stakeholders may help to turn intergovernmental cooperation between States into a bottom-up process of multi-level politics that grounds EUSDR within the region. Thus linking inter-governmental activities with various bottom-up activities may bring Europe closer to the citizens, facilitate territorial cooperation, and thus helps to build a macro-region (De Frantz 2011, p. 17).

Translating this will into reality is not an easy process. It takes a long time to be realized and in the case of the Baltic area where political conditions are the most favourable, the European Commission admits that “the Strategy is a dynamic innovative process that needs time” (European Commission 2009a). Although the Commission’s assessment considers the enhanced cooperation achieved in the Baltic macro-region in a positive light, there are issues:

Needing to be further addressed, including better alignment of funding and a reinforced organisational structure. (...) The strategy needs to be more embedded in political and

administrative structures. Its set-up is still vulnerable to organisational changes, or changes in political priorities. Long-term sustainability requires institutional stability, with allocation of sufficient human resources (at regional, national and European level). To achieve goals, it is important that priority area coordinators, but also their equivalents in the other participating member States, are fully involved. Line Ministries need therefore to take a more active role, and to allocate adequate staff and support. (European Commission 2011c, p. 7 and 8)

The difficulty in clarifying, constructing and implementing the macro-regional governance pushed the Commission to put forward a specific Communication on the issue (European Commission 2014). The aim is to offer suggestions to improve the process in terms of the political leadership, ownership as well as coordination and implementation. Yet the recommendations appear insufficient: they put more pressure on member States at the central level (“Ministers hosting the National Contact Points should be the ultimate decision makers”, p. 5), weakening the multilevel approach and supporting a traditional inter-governmental scheme. Furthermore, they are vague on the engagement of non-EU countries (which is essential in the case of Danube macro-region and EUSAIR) and on the use of existing funds. A coalition of member States participating in the macro-region must be forged. They must plan and implement internal and external activities to create the conditions for the setting up of the macro-region: internal activities to create a national system made up of different ministries in charge of sector policies, of regional and local authorities and of social and economic stakeholders interested and committed to the implementation of the macro-regional strategy; and external activities to negotiate the identification of priorities and flagship projects with the corresponding national systems. External activities also concern relationships with member States that are not part of the macro-region but who should be included in the strategy (e.g., in the case of the development of trans-European corridors).

Regions and local authorities can participate by putting forward proposals for the elaboration of the strategy and for flagship projects. They may have many years of experience in territorial cooperation, help in identifying problems and opportunities and also have relevant competencies delegated by the central governments (especially in countries such as Germany, Italy, Spain and the UK). However, even in those cases regional and local authorities have fewer capacities than central governments in promoting trans-national coordination, or in identifying and implementing flagship projects. They do not have strong networks (at least in the Mediterranean area), they have generally not consolidated partnerships and they have different political positions and perceptions.

The governance model for the macro-regional strategy is indeed an opportunity for some stakeholders to be more pro-active than others, as is the case for some German States who have played a coordinating role in specific priority areas in the Baltic and in the Danube strategies (CPMR 2010). The Italian Marche Region has also been very committed to sustaining the launch of the EUSAIR by hosting and supporting the secretariat of the Adriatic-Ionian initiative, coordinating the network of the Italian Regions involved and supporting the Forum of the Adriatic-Ionian cities and towns as well as the network of Universities UNIADRION (Virtual University

of the Adriatic-Ionian Basin). They have also been important in playing a ‘whispering’ role with the Italian Ministry of Foreign Affairs on the political opportunities offered by the EU macro-regional strategies while building political consensus with local authorities of the area and at the European level through the Committee of the Regions.

The problem is that such a role for regions and local authorities should not be taken for granted. Democratic governance mechanisms, moreover, are also lacking at the local level at the expense of, for example, effective involvement of other local actors and civil society. In this, territorial cooperation initiatives could play a supporting role for building the political and institutional conditions for a proper multi-level and democratic governance of the macro-regional strategies.

### **6.3.2 *The Efficiency Challenge***

If the added-value of the macro-regional strategy consists in the integrated approach, then the basic issue at hand is whether the integrated approach is really integrated or not: if the Action Plan of the strategy is task specific or more generalistic. In discussing the Baltic case, Bengtsson (2009) highlights how the Action Plan shows a weak strategic focus. Due to a lack of proper focus there is a loss of expected added-value, a failure in implementing criteria apt at concentrating on significant projects, and, above all, a failure in observing the inter-dependency linking the various priorities. From this point of view, the macro-regional strategy risks failing to introduce any innovation and differences in comparison to other programmes such as for example, the transnational cooperation component of the EU Cohesion Policy.

In this sense the three “nos” presented in the previous sections could be interpreted as strong constraints to the development of the macro-regional strategies. Without new institutions or strong governance and without ad-hoc resources, the macro-regional strategy risks failure.

On the other hand, the condition on “no new funding” could constitute also an innovative factor given that all actors are spurred towards better coordination and synergy of the various financial resources available at different levels. In this case the issue at hand regards the feasibility of such coordination. Coordination should be implemented among different resources at national and regional/local scales, as well as in regards to all policies and programmes of the EU. For instance, the Report of the European Commission on the implementation of the strategy in the Baltic macro-region (European Commission 2011c) indicates how different structural funds have jointly supported the flagship projects, complemented by national, regional and local funds. The efficiency challenge is clearly linked to the problem with governance. Coordination tensions exist between institutions and instruments within the bigger framework of existing tensions and power struggles discussed in the previous section (Dubois et al. 2009). For example, the Baltic case shows tension between the macro-regional strategy, mainly supported by the DG Regional

Policy of the European Commission, and the integrated maritime policy (CPMR 2009).

There are additional constraints due to tensions between the European Commission and central and sub-national governments in terms of prioritizing between the macro-regional strategy and other institutional structures and financial programmes such as Euroregions, the European Group for Territorial Cooperation and the operative programmes of territorial cooperation. The Cohesion Policy forms the backbone of the macro-regional framework because its objective is to sustain territorial cohesion in vast areas, similar to those covered by the transnational component of EU territorial cooperation. However, differences exist in terms of multilevel coordination: the strategy for the macro-region merges the Community level with central, regional and local authority levels while territorial cooperation is more focused on regional and local actors. The macro-regional strategies should mobilise resources from different instruments and funds while territorial cooperation has its own operative programmes and resources. The macro-regions should also integrate the flagship projects in European, national and regional policies, overcoming the weakness of the territorial cooperation that is the scarce integration and mainstreaming of its fragmented projects in national and regional policies.

In this sense, the macro-regional strategy emerged from dissatisfaction with the inter-governmental, trans-national and cross-border cooperation in the Baltic area, such as:

The small size of the areas concerned (NUTS3), which are too small for large-scale projects (...) the trans-national programmes are also handicapped by a system of governance that is often ill-adapted to strategic decision-making and by a low degree of involvement of member States in the delivery of projects. As results the number of “structuring” projects is considerably reduced. (...) each programme is also hampered by the excessive red tape involved (CPMR 2010, p. 2–3),

Territorial cooperation fatigue is palpable here, besides a more general dissatisfaction with the Cohesion Policy overall. The Barca Report, for example, says that:

The state of the empirical evidence on the performance of Cohesion Policy is very unsatisfactory (...) the most evident weaknesses (...) are: a deficit in strategic planning (...) a lack of focus on priorities and a failure to distinguish between the pursuit of efficiency and social inclusion objectives; a failure of the contractual agreement to focus on results (...); a remarkable lack of political and policy debate on results in terms of well-being of people, at both local and EU level, most of the attention being focussed on financial absorption and irregularities (Barca 2009, p. xv–xvi).

Cooperation fatigue couples with enlargement fatigue: indeed, another motivation for the launch of the macro-regional strategy was the EU’s widening and stressful expansion to 28 member States. The enlargement has increased the need to spur more social and territorial cohesion. The political objective is to create a more united Europe, increasing social and economic convergence. With Europe enlarged to 28 States, the geographical, social and economical dimensions are wider and scattered; a risk of relative fragmentation versus concentration exists; tighter relationships are needed. A claim for a greater commitment towards a deepening of EU political integration before any further enlargement perspective is demanded.

Despite these limitations, the macro-regional strategy represents a tentative attempt at promoting social cohesion with more efficacy than traditional territorial cooperation in EU trans-national spaces. Diverse stakeholders are pushing to achieve concrete results through the implementation of flagship projects with strong impacts. The macro-regional strategy, according to those stakeholders, should not be a simple sum of projects as has happened so far with territorial cooperation. It should be founded, as already mentioned, on a concept of functionality that allows the identification of specific needs, priorities of action and flagship projects. The approach should be task-specific rather than general-purpose.

Nonetheless, the task presents a serious challenge as there is no common standard for identifying flagship projects. The same problem is observed in the different experiences of territorial cooperation programmes which are striving to define what a strategic project is. Projects launched within the Baltic macro-region do not seem very different from projects financed by transnational cooperation programmes in other geographic areas.

This debate raises another question about the link that should be forged between the macro-regional strategy and territorial cooperation: what is the difference between the strategic projects of territorial cooperation and flagship projects of the macro-regional strategy? What complementarities and coordination could be established?

Traditionally, territorial cooperation had the objective of creating a fabric of relationships and exchange of practices between regions across political borders. Recently a significant effort has been dedicated to strategic projects in order to increase the impact of territorial cooperation on cohesion but the instrument offers insufficient resources to support the realization of “hard” interventions such as infrastructural, technological or environmental investments. Furthermore, the multi-level partnership of territorial cooperation is weak: strategic projects are captured by regions and local authorities and the involvement of central governments and international organizations is rare.

On the other hand, territorial cooperation is tasked with supporting increasing linkages between territories, especially with new members States but also candidate, pre-candidate, and neighbouring countries, facilitating the development of the institutional framework of the macro-region and the identification of strategic projects (CPMR 2010). Moreover, according to the CPMR General Secretariat:

In a context of widespread disenchantment with Europe, the continued promotion of this kind of ‘ground level’ cooperation across the whole continent is essential (...). Growing globalisation now offers territorial actors opportunities that extend far beyond Europe’s borders. The special relations that already existed with neighbouring EU territories are being strengthened, while an increasing number of cooperation initiatives between European territories and those of other continents are emerging (CPMR 2010, p. 3).

Perhaps a division of tasks could be defined in the future: the macro-regional strategy should focus on ‘hard’ projects while territorial cooperation should focus on ‘soft’ projects such as institution building and harmonization of rules and policies. Another option could be to merge territorial trans-national cooperation with the macro-regional framework, thus avoiding the confusion between strategic and flag-

ship projects. Territorial cooperation has an important role in setting the basis for a bottom-up approach and this is necessary to support the legitimisation of strategic and flagship projects that should be negotiated among diverse stakeholders.

In the case of the Baltic area, the Commission discussed around 750 proposals. This intense effort aimed at fostering actor involvement is proof of the Commission's endeavour towards drafting a "broad, complex and not sufficiently focused" action plan, creating "another label for the already established cooperation" (Schymick and Krumrey 2009, p. 3). The majority of stakeholders, and particularly central governments, local authorities, social and economical organisations, have taken part in the process. Different views on the priorities have been aggregated:

For instance, the main priority for Sweden is accepting environmental challenges connected with the Baltic Sea Region, whereas Estonia's principal priority is territorial integration (understood as establishing more functional connections between the East and West parts of the Baltic Sea Region and improvement of industrial infrastructure) (Wojcik 2008).

The Baltic macro-regional strategy indeed includes an ample range of priorities and projects. The inclusion of a wide range of initiatives is aimed at building consensus among a variety of stakeholders is, however, inconsistent with the task-specific approach that should represent the added-value of the macro-regional strategy.

Notwithstanding the application of the general-purpose approach in the consultation process, the time has come to focus and decide which flagship projects should be implemented. The decision to implement a specific flagship project rather than others is a political decision. Who decides what is strategic? In the macro-regional governance framework discussed above, the pivotal role of central governments seems evident. In this sense other stakeholders, such as regions and local authorities, are demanding stronger roles.

Flagship projects, moreover, should also be debated in the representative bodies (i.e. parliaments and regional councils) and with civil society organisations. The fact that flagship projects decided at top level without informing territorial stakeholders might clash with local and trans-local constituencies should not be overlooked. The local dimension has political importance in a multi-level and trans-national perspective which points to the need for building a trans-national democratic process, such as indicated in the previous discussion on the governance challenge.

This is all evidence of how the macro-regional strategy is an inherently political construction:

In which commonalities are not a precondition for how the region functions in practice (...). It is possible to create strong cross-border cooperation among regions in countries that do not necessarily share a common history or culture. On the contrary, 'a history of alienation' between regions can actually provide the starting point for cooperation. In this sense, the importance of history and culture should not be underestimated, but should be understood as 'dynamic' rather than 'fixed'. The argument is that it is the common challenges that create the basis and willingness for cooperation. (Baad Berkkkan et al. 2009, p. 29)

Such political construction depends primarily upon the political will of national, and sub-national, governments in setting up a concrete integration and coordination of instruments and funds, supported by the European Commission, and relinquishing some of their sovereignty. However, the functioning of the strategy cannot rest

only on the political willingness of governments and stakeholders as it requires the proper incentives for supplementary funding, and/or obligations to earmark part of their national and regional budgets to those projects.

This kind of orientation has been assumed in various EU policies for both the 2014–2020– internal Cohesion Policy (Strategic Community Framework) as well as in environment areas for integrated maritime and transport (TEN-T), research and competitiveness policies and new external regulations for IPA and ENI that give preference towards flagship projects. However these are important but very weak orientations, that do not resolve the criticisms of macro-regional strategies discussed so far.

### **6.3.3 *The Community and External Challenges***

The macro-regions, as already mentioned, are defined as a function of shared cross-border challenges and opportunities. This implies potential variable geometries in the delimitation of the proper areas and scales. To this avail, the issue concerning the delimitation of the macro-region takes centre stage: which territories and regions comprise a macro-region? Who is in and who is out? According to the concept of functional regionalization, the scale is determined by the type of problem at hand and the nature of opportunities sought: specific trans-national interdependencies, material and immaterial flows and hard and soft linkages qualify the geographical space of the macro-regions irrespective of national and EU boundaries.

In the cases of the Baltic, Danube, Adriatic-Ionian and Alpine macro-regions, these areas are supposed to correspond to ‘natural’ regions or common goods: the sea basin, the river basin or the mountainous region. This is coherent with the common challenge that some of those macro-regions aim to address: in the Baltic as well as in the Adriatic, for example, one relevant pending issue concerns the eutrophication of the sea as a consequence of pollutant discharges from surrounding regions. Handling this problem means demarcating the macro-region to include catchment areas in these territories.

The functional approach is interwoven with political considerations, with the positions of national and sub-national governments in the EU framework and with respect to neighbourhood countries as well as continental and regional powers like Russia and Turkey. According to the functional principle, ‘natural’ macro-regions have no administrative and politically defined boundaries; yet this is not the case with macro-regional strategies: even if they are delineated based on functionalities, political conditions continue to be relevant in the delimitation of the area.

The setting up of the EU strategy for the Baltic macro-region, as already mentioned, has induced many other areas to follow this example and propose or to launch similar initiatives. Though where then should macro-regions be created? How can they be geographically distributed in order to not generate a multi-speed Europe? How much can they be extended outward? What role do the boundaries of the EU play in macro-regional strategies? Do macro-regional strategies serve a

Europe of Olympic Rings, i.e. a polycentric and unbounded space, as opposed to the Eurocentric character of other EU external policies?

At the time of writing, the European Commission was supporting the implementation of the strategy in the Baltic and Danube areas. The Adriatic-Ionian strategy was approved in 2014 and the Alpine strategy is planned in 2015. Western Balkan countries, candidates and potential candidates for accession in the EU participate in the Danube and Adriatic-Ionian macro-regions. Other regions and local authorities are proposing the elaboration of strategies for macro-regions in the North Sea and along the so-called Atlantic Arc. The Mediterranean basin represents another space where diverse stakeholders feel the necessity to improve trans-national governance through the establishment of a single macro-region or several strategies covering different areas: from the Adriatic-Ionian to Western Mediterranean.

The Danube macro-regional strategy is particularly interesting because it comprises eight EU member States, four accession countries and two neighbouring countries (Ukraine and Moldova). The strategy is linked to the EU enlargement process towards the Western Balkans. The candidate and pre-candidate countries are strongly interested in the initiative as yet another step towards full accession into the EU:

The Republic of Serbia has great significance in the future realisation of the aims contained in the Joint Overall Strategy for the Danube Region. (...) Through its participation in the development process and subsequent implementation of the Strategy, the Republic of Serbia confirms its strategic commitment for its effective membership in the European Union (Republic of Serbia 2010, p. 3).

EU member States have more prudent positions. The German policy paper underlines that:

Participation of non-EU countries is crucial if the desired objectives are to be achieved (...). Such participation must not blur the strategy's focus, shifting it to the EU's external relations rather than the Danube region (German Government 2009, p. 3).

The macro-regional strategy presents, in such a case, another parallel mechanism for reinforcing the accession process. The same arguments of the Danube Region apply in the EUSAIR: it is a vast area constituted by four EU member States and four accession countries (Albania, Bosnia & Herzegovina, Montenegro, Serbia). The Adriatic-Ionian area is a political priority for the Italian government for which the accession of the Western Balkan countries in the EU is a major geopolitical interest, matched by Greece, Croatia and Slovenia governments. The macro-region is considered instrumental to the fact that the Adriatic-Ionic will be an internal EU sea in the future. In the Baltic and the Danube areas, Germany similarly shows a strong interest in sustaining the two macro-regions, given its strong commitment towards enhancing territorial cohesion in Eastern Europe (Braun and László Kovács 2011). Special attention is given to involving Russia via cross-border collaboration.

Other member countries such as France and Spain have so far not officially expressed their opinions regarding macro-regions. In the case of Spain, some Northern regions are lobbying the government for an Atlantic macro-region. The French and Spanish governments are considering different opportunities but they do not

express much enthusiasm in creating a Mediterranean macro-region due to the possible overlapping or misunderstanding with other existing initiatives, e.g. the Union for the Mediterranean. They are cautious in this respect:

Macro-regions, being a partial grouping of territories, could break the communitarian principle of shared implementation, according to the co-operation principle (...), the real regional dimension in the EU is the community. (...) Cohesion and territorial solidarity are the basis of the regional policy and not inter-regional competitiveness. (...) The ‘resulting legitimacy’ should be accompanied by the ‘democratic legitimacy’ in a framework of solidarity ... (Moya Pérez 2010. Translation by the author).

As indicated by this last quote and as already mentioned, macro-regions pose a “community challenge”. The unbalanced creation of the macro-regions could indeed stimulate a multi-speed Europe and weaken the solidarity principle. Consequently, a comprehensive EU plan on macro-regions is requested by some stakeholders, for example the CPMR:

The debate on the potential geographical areas to be covered by such strategies could be organised by each of the 13 existing transnational areas (CPMR 2010, p. 5).

On the other hand, the same regions belonging to CPMR and the Assembly of the European Regions should themselves question which criteria should guide the creation of macro-regional strategies because a competitive race to put forward macro-region initiatives is taking place with potential conflicting effects on different areas. Should macro-regions be more equally distributed through a ‘global’ approach in order to reduce the competitive race and safeguard the solidarity principle?

Indeed, if the pragmatic and prudent approach suggested by the European Commission were to be adopted, the creation of macro-regions should be procedurally experimental, a process of test cases and of trial and error. If the strategy works it can be spread to other trans-national areas, but only in the case it is needed.

The need to avoid creating territorial disparities and preferences also explains the principle of the “three nos” mentioned in the introduction, especially the fact that macro-regions will not have specific resources and institutions. In principle the opportunity of creating a macro-region is open to all the European Union territories depending on their political trans-national conditions. The EU, on the other hand, does not want to create a new institutional machine which risks perpetuating itself without a concrete reason. If the macro-region strategy does not succeed, it may disappear without losing any institutional and financial resources: it is possible that in the next few years the strategy will disappear completely or it will be applied in some areas only. Despite the fact that Europe may be running at different speeds, the emergence and potential success of macro-regions depends on real political processes taking place and not on whether or not resources and opportunities are equally or unequally distributed.

The political answer to the community challenge should not be to stop the macro-regions that are working but to understand how to better create the conditions for those areas with a weak trans-national orientation to catch up. In the Baltic many institutions and networks have created fertile ground for the setting up of the macro-regional strategy. In other areas the conditions are less favourable. Yet even in the

case of the Baltic, involving all the relevant actors to ensure broader participation in the strategy, as suggested by the European Commission (2011c), may not be sufficient. In the Mediterranean area the prerequisite conditions for cooperation are even weaker (Alfonsi 2011). Furthermore Mediterranean countries have to face what we have defined as the “external challenge” of macro-regions: the coordination among member and non member States is more complex than in the exclusively internal macro-regions; furthermore the effective involvement of different governance levels it is difficult to achieve in contexts with limited decentralization levels and models. Other EU programmes, especially territorial cooperation initiatives, can play an important role in setting up a proper multi-level governance of the macro-regional strategy, similarly to what has been already mentioned in the case of the efficiency challenge.

## 6.4 Conclusions

Macro-regional strategies constitute a new geopolitical space where territories and institutions are supposed to cooperate in order to respond to common transnational challenges and opportunities that requires collective action, and according to an integrated and issue-oriented approach that links actors, policies and funding. The macro-regional strategy is a new soft political institution for transnational territorial cohesion. Besides the Baltic, the Danube, the Adriatic-Ionian and the Alpine macro-regions, other areas have expressed an interest in developing this instrument—the Atlantic arc, the North-Sea Channel, the Black Sea region—while others are asking the EU to elaborate a comprehensive view or map of equally distributed future macro-regions which would cover the entire territory of all of Europe.

Macro-regional strategies have the potential to better respond to the needs of peripheral and border territories, overcome the boundaries that divide nations and regions, inside and outside the EU, establish new networks and enhance common opportunities. However, in order to respond to these very high and positive expectations, the macro-regions are confronted with four main challenges.

First, the “efficiency challenge” is due to a weak focus of macro-regional strategies and to constraints in implementing an effective coordination between different stakeholders and funds which respond to different regulative frameworks and interests. Other tensions concern the similarity between the macro-regional approach and the transnational strand of the territorial cooperation programme, and between the macro-regions and other forms of trans-boundary cooperation, such as the Euro-regions and the European Grouping for Territorial Cooperation (EGTC). The Baltic experience highlights that a better subdivision of tasks between these overlapping instruments is needed, and that the added-value of macro-regions is mostly in the support of so-called flagship projects.

The weak institutionalisation of macro-regions implies that no ad-hoc funding is available and that other sources should be pooled and coordinated. Considering the three “no” conditions of the macro-regional strategy, incentives for the imple-

mentation of collective actions should be offered to stimulate political convergence with more alignment of funding from the different European programmes, and from other international and national funding sources.

Integration between different instruments also requires coordination between different institutions (European, national, regional, etc.), that indeed represents a “governance challenge”. The real problem is the complex governance of the macro-regional strategies, the difficulties implied in their coordination and, more fundamentally, in the variable political wills and institutional capacities of central and local governments and of the diverse countries.

Notwithstanding the rhetoric of multi-level governance, the prominent role played by central governments in the macro-regional strategies is evident. The bottom up process is limited to the first phase of consensus building. For real multi-level governance to take place the strategy should be more open and capable of offering more opportunities for participation. At the same time, diverse stakeholders should act more pro-actively if they want to exploit these opportunities. Territorial cooperation has a role to play in building the political, institutional and social conditions for proper multi-level governance of the macro-regional strategies to take place, contributing to the forging of political will, institutional capacities and social networks. More communication and ownership should be stimulated at the local level. More democratic decision-making processes should be put in place for the selection of flagship projects. The European Commission could implement a more general and direct initiative to increase awareness and ownership.

If the creation of macro-regions responds to the spatial diversity of the EU, at the same time it can feed the divergent dynamics among the different areas, favouring a multi-speed Europe, which poses a “community challenge”. This is the reason why some member States, regions and local authorities have asked the European Commission to define a comprehensive plan on macro-regional strategies for the whole of Europe. However, the European Commission’s approach is prudent because the strategy still has to prove its functionality and because political conditions are not equally distributed in the diverse areas. Consequently, the construction of macro-regions is proceeding at different speeds. In areas lagging behind in the process, more efforts and investments from the European Commission could stimulate and support networking, political convergence, and conflict management among the stakeholders.

All of these challenges become even more difficult to address when macro-regions include non-EU countries, and especially neighbouring countries. This last issue could be defined as the “external challenge” of macro-regions. Neighbouring countries sharing common problems with members States should definitely be involved for any strategy to be effective in a transnational space. Yet, in these cases the complexity of the coordination problem is even more evident. The possible application of EU macro-regional strategies depends firstly on the political will of member States and secondly on the political interest of third-party countries to take part in the process. Furthermore the possibility of involving third-party countries in a proper multi-level governance of macro-regions is constrained by their low degree of internal de-concentration or decentralization, their different approaches

to territorial cohesion in their national policies and by the lack of capacity of local authorities and stakeholders.

The proper involvement of non-EU countries is constrained, moreover, by the vision that the EU has on its external space. In this regard, the macro-regional perspective is relatively easier for countries who have already become candidates for accession. Balkan countries are participating in the building of the Danube and the Adriatic-Ionic macro-regional strategies. They have a direct and strong interest in the macro-regional process because it sustains their accession to the EU. Conversely, neighbouring countries are milder towards the macro-regional strategy because the incentive is negligible and very difficult to achieve.

These difficulties are evident in the Mediterranean. Southern Mediterranean countries are trapped by the inefficiency of previous experiments, such as the Union for the Mediterranean, in conflicts and in different political transition processes that make a macro-regional perspective unrealistic in the short term. A hypothetical Mediterranean macro-regional strategy could be articulated in coordination with the Union for the Mediterranean and the ENP, but both programmes are in a critical phase of restructuring to face the new and evolving Mediterranean geopolitical scenario.

All these dynamics manifest how the macro-regional strategies, despite their functional role, represent political processes and constructions, instrumental to the geopolitical positioning of diverse actors. The macro-regional strategy, in this respect, could nurture different geopolitical perspectives which are hardly coherent, and be unable to realize the polycentric political space which has been represented with the metaphor of the “Olympic rings”. In order to be part of a new cosmopolitan discourse more open to re-discussing Eurocentric models and norms, neighbouring countries and territories should participate more decisively in the construction of macro-regional strategies, while the EU should increase efforts for creating networks and stimulating a democratic debate on common policies.

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# Chapter 7

## Global Empires and the European Neighbourhood: China, Russia and the US

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### 7.1 Modern Empires, Borders and Governance: The European Neighbourhood Policy in a Global Context

The aim of this chapter is to analyze contemporary trends in the relations between Russia, China, the United States of America (US) and the participants of the European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP). This analysis is based on the idea that in a world that is growingly interconnected, the relations between the EU and its neighbours are affected by the relations that neighbouring countries have with other global players.

The ENP Countries will be analyzed according to three main groups: Eastern Europe (Ukraine, Moldova, Belarus), South Caucasus (Armenia, Azerbaijan, Georgia) and the Mediterranean basin including all the Middle East and North Africa (Morocco, Tunisia, Algeria, Lebanon, Libya, Egypt, Syria, Jordan, Israel, Occupied Palestinian Territory). Each of these areas (or each of these different neighbourhoods) presents peculiar characteristics and play a different role in the global geopolitical scenario. The Eastern countries are located in a key strategic area between Russia and the EU, and their indeterminate stance between Russia and Western countries has a strong impact on the overall stability of Eurasia. South Caucasus countries have a great geopolitical location in the heart of Eurasia and large reserves of mineral resources. Consequently, they represent a relevant security asset for the global war on terror and for energy supplies; on the other hand, Azerbaijan, Armenia and Georgia represent a global security problem, due to frozen conflicts, illegal arms trafficking and transnational crime. Finally, Mediterranean countries are a sensitive and strategic area in light of the threat to security and democracy that they potentially represent but also in light of their enormous potential as emerging markets.

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Russia, the US and China have been selected as the foci of this chapter on the basis of their constant or growing role in the international arena. According to Ian Zielonka, these are the global players that, together with the EU, can be defined as modern ‘empires’:

The term ‘empire’ represents a vast territorial unit with global military, economic and diplomatic influence. Moreover, an empire must have a record of acting in a way that imposes significant domestic constraints on a variety of formally sovereign or autonomous actors. These actors are seen as a kind of periphery to be governed by the imperial centre. The rule over peripheries is justified by the empire’s civilizing mission or vocation (...) Those who would seem to possess all of our imperial characteristics, albeit in diverse forms and intensity, are the US, EU, Russia and China. All four represent formidable global actors in various fields. (Zielonka 2012, p. 509)

All of the global empires are interested in neighbourhood countries, considering them part of their ‘periphery’ to be governed based on different logics and rationales that derive from their different approaches to global politics and their peculiar ways of acting in the international arena. According to Zielonka, key aspects in the definition of this way of acting are found in the different kinds of border regimes and in the different styles of governance that these actors promote, as we will see in the next pages.

The role of the EU, in this framework, is particularly and increasingly problematic. In terms of governance, the EU’s polycentric system makes it impossible to speak with a single voice in the international arena. Although the Maastricht Treaty (1993), the Amsterdam Treaty (1997) and the Treaty of Lisbon (2009) have gradually enhanced the role of the EU in the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (Ioannides 2014), this is still based on an intergovernmental mechanism, where the diverging interests of the single member States often prevent the definition of an EU “common interest” and a common position. On the other hand, the European Community has the competence to conduct external economic relations thus wielding important foreign policy instruments (Smith 2008).

As already mentioned in Chap. 1, moreover, the EU acts in the international arena basically counting on its ‘normative power’ (Manners 2002, p. 252). The ENP is a clear example of this normative power with its idea of sharing common values and principles: the more the neighbouring countries adopt common (European) norms and values, the more they will get integrated with the EU.

When the ENP was first launched in 2004 the approach proposed by the EU to neighbouring countries—which recalled that towards pre-accession countries—was very promising. Due to the growing success of the European model of development and the positive experience of new EU members States, the EU was particularly attractive to Eastern European countries. However, the situation today has significantly changed. The global financial economic crisis and more generally the *fatigue* experienced within the EU integration process have weakened the ‘magnetic attraction’ that the Union’s political and economic model have played towards non-member countries for many years after the end of the Cold War. Furthermore, the instable economic and political situation has forced the EU to take an indefinite pause in the enlargement process in order to strengthen its own security and domestic consolidation. The absence of a clear signal from Brussels about the prospect of membership, in particular for Eastern partners, is another factor that weaken the EU’s attractive

potential. Consequently, while the Velvet revolutions of 1989–1991 and the Coloured revolutions 10 years later showed the desire of neighbouring countries to follow the EU reform agenda and possibly join the EU, the latest popular protests across the Mediterranean countries in early 2011 did not confirm these expectations (Johansson-Nogués 2011), showing on the contrary how civil society in these countries is sceptical towards the European Union. Similarly, the events of 2014 in Ukraine show a dramatic division across the pro-European and pro-Russian segments of the population.

Today neighbourhood countries are applying increasingly differentiated international politics towards an increasing number of poles of attraction: on the one hand, they aim at strengthening relations with the EU but, on the other hand, they share growing economic and political relations with other old and new global players.

## 7.2 EU's Relations with Other Global Players

The EU keeps important relations with other global players in light of the roles they play and might play in the future in the European neighbourhood and beyond.

As regards the relations between the EU and Russia, the EU's intentions were supposed to be framed within the ENP context. However, Russia decided not to join the policy, aspiring to a privileged relationship due to its geoeconomic and geopolitical relevance. The agreement between Russia and the EU is articulated on four "Common Spaces" (the common economic space; the common space of freedom, security and justice; the common space of external security and the common space of research and education), already mentioned in Chap. 3. Overall, the main critique of the policy of common spaces can be summarized in the words of Emerson:

The four common spaces are indeed a manifestation of the proliferation of the fuzzy. They represent the outermost extension of the EU's internal logic. The ENP (...) is itself a weak and fuzzy derivative of the EU's enlargement process. This Neighbourhood Policy is embracing the same comprehensive agenda of the EU's internal policy competences and political values, but without the mega-incentive of accession. The four common spaces are now a weaker and fuzzier still derivative of the Neighbourhood Policy. (Emerson 2005, p. 3)

Furthermore, the problem with this agreement is that in several cases the diplomatic rhetoric is a mask to hide the lack of political commitment towards strategic issues (Emerson 2005). This lack of commitment, according to several authors, can be interpreted as a consequence of the strong bilateral relationship that a significant number of member States share with Russia on the one hand (e.g., Germany, Italy, France and Spain), and by the strained or even poor bilateral relationships of other member States on the other hand (e.g., former members of the Soviet bloc, UK, Denmark and Sweden) (David et al. 2011). In sum, it is difficult for the EU to maintain deep relations with Russia because the bilateral relations of single member States prevail. This situation was particularly evident in the case of the Ukrainian crisis of 2013/2014, further discussed in the following pages, where the weak position of the EU was connected with the varied approaches taken by different member States (The Economist 2014).

The EU recognizes the crucial role that Russia plays in the neighbourhood, in particular in Eastern countries, in all its Country Strategy Papers (CSP) for the 2007–2013 programming period. The Belarus Country Strategy Paper (European Commission 2007d), recognizes a strong focus on relations with Russia; furthermore, the document stresses that there is no border demarcation between Russia and Belarus, no visa requirement and that they share special economic ties and a long-standing project to set up a Russia-Belarus Union. According to the Country Strategy Paper for Moldova (European Commission 2007g) the country still depends strongly on Russia, both for energy imports and export markets. Finally, in the case of Ukraine bilateral relations with Russia are defined as important with a specific mention to the relevance of the gas agreement (European Commission 2007j, p. 5) and the cultural, economic and political influence of Russia in the country (p. 6). According to the Country Strategy Papers for the South Caucasus, Armenia has strong relations with Russia (European Commission 2007b, p. 6); in particular the “energy sector (...) is increasingly coming under Russian influence, if not control” (p. 7). Azerbaijan recognises Russia as a “key neighbour with strong political, economic and social interests” (European Commission 2007c, p. 7), in the country, particularly with regards to conflicts in the South Caucasus, energy cooperation and inhabitants of Azerbaijan living and working in the Russian Federation. Georgia (the strongest Western ally in the region as we will see in the next pages) and Russia share a very tense and difficult relationship, and “Georgia claims that the root cause for the deterioration of bilateral relations lies with Russian objections to Georgia European and Euro-Atlantic aspirations” (European Commission 2007e, p. 11). In the Mediterranean, Russia is mentioned in only two Country Strategy Papers: as an important economic partner for Syria (European Commission 2007i, p. 11) and as a foreign policy priority for Libya (European Commission 2010, p. 6), the same two countries that have more problematic relations with the EU.

The US and the EU have a whole complex of common and shared interests. Nevertheless, transatlantic cooperation between the US and EU countries is sometimes problematic and asymmetric. The US has a different policy agenda with respect to the EU and which reflects national priorities and concerns, in particular in the neighbourhood. While the US is mostly focused on security (namely counter-terrorism and energy security), stability and economic cooperation, the EU pursues additional interests in the field of migration management, good governance, administrative reforms or its future enlargement. The goals of the EU and the US are complementary but often minimally coordinated (Řiháčková 2008). Although the two are strong allies and assimilated in the broad definition of “Western countries”, they also compete in order to establish privileged economic and political relations with strategic partners.

Like Russia, the US is recognized as a key actor in EU strategy documents towards neighbouring countries. The US is mentioned in four of six Eastern strategies. In Armenia and Moldova the reference is quite marginal: according to the documents, Armenia seeks to maintain strong relations with the US (European Commission 2007b, p. 6), while in Moldova the US has a great involvement in the settlement of the Transnistria conflict (European Commission 2007g), together with the EU. Strong relations with the US are mentioned for Azerbaijan and Georgia: in

Azerbaijan this is due to “the increasing importance Azerbaijan has for Washington as a strategic ally in the region, both as an energy producer (or transit country) and for its proximity to Iran” (European Commission 2007c, p. 11); Georgia is perceived of as “strategically important for some of the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO)’s future challenges and as an important transit country for security and diversification of energy supplies” (European Commission 2007e, p. 11). In the Mediterranean, the United States is mentioned as a privileged “political” partner for Algeria (in the nuclear field and in the war on terrorism, European Commission 2007a, pp. 7–8), and Morocco (defined as the main US ally in the region, or a major non-NATO ally, European Commission 2007h, p. 19); and a privileged “economic” partner for Jordan (with a Free Trade Agreement signed in 2000 and a huge export of clothing and textile from Jordan to the US, the fourth largest import partner and main export market for Jordan, European Commission 2007f), and again Morocco (with a Free Trade Agreement signed in 2004, European Commission 2007h). In Morocco and Jordan the US is also mentioned as an important aid donor (European Commission 2007f, p. 16; European Commission 2007h, p. 19). On the other hand, problems are highlighted in the relations between the US and Syria and Libya (European Commission 2007i, 2010).

Finally, the relations between the EU and China are based on the growing influence of the latter in the global economic and political scenario. However to some extent the EU “continues to treat China as the emerging power it used to be, rather than the global force it has become” (Fox and Godement 2009, p. 1). China is indeed not mentioned in any of the Eastern strategies and only in a few of the Mediterranean strategies: Jordan, Libya and Syria. In Jordan’s and Syria’s Country Strategy Papers, China is mentioned for its economic relevance: China has important investments in Jordan’s garment industry (European Commission 2007f, p. 49), and is the third largest import partner of the country after EU and Saudi Arabia (p. 48). Syria has developed new markets in recent years and engaged in bilateral preferential agreements with a more diverse group of economic partners, including China (European Commission 2007i, p. 11). In the case of Libya the links mentioned are more political, reflecting Libya’s foreign policy orientation towards, in particular, large emerging countries (European Commission 2010, p. 6). However, there is a growing consciousness of the role played by China in the international scene and in the specific contexts of the neighbourhood countries. In the next pages, an overview on the relations between Russia, China, the US and Eastern European, Southern Caucasus and Mediterranean countries will be presented in order to frame the EU strategies towards the neighbourhood in a larger picture.

### 7.3 Russia and the European Neighbourhood

Under the lead of Vladimir Putin, first elected President of the Russian Federation in 2000, Russia is seeking to recover its role as a great power in the international scenario, lost after the collapse of the Soviet Union (Nygren 2007). To this aim,

Russia is predominantly preoccupied with counterbalancing the current Western-centred world order. In terms of governance, the Russian centralized system allows for speaking with a clear and strong voice in the international arena while fuzzy borders makes Russian external action a particular concern in terms of what happens in its neighbourhood, and in particular in those countries that were part of the Soviet Union, where Russia “seeks to establish a new security order based on spheres of influence that would recognize Russia’s ‘privileged interests’ in the post-Soviet space” (Larrabee 2010, p. 50).

The history of relations between Russia and the EU can be described as the permanent geopolitical competition for the spheres of influence in the Euro-Asian region. This is particularly true in the case of Eastern European countries: Russia shares not only political and economic interests with these countries but also a common social, cultural and historical background. Russia, Ukraine and Belarus in particular originated from common roots of Kievan Rus, a medieval polity with its capital in Kiev, which existed from the late ninth to the mid thirteenth century and influenced the identity of modern Eastern Slavic States (Subtelny 2000). More than a thousand years of common history has had a strong influence on the political dialogue between these modern countries. At the same time, the enlargement of 2004 has made the EU not only physically closer to these countries, but also in terms of future enlargement perspectives. Consequently, Russia is particularly sensitive to the relations of the EU with Belarus, Moldova and Ukraine.

Of the three Eastern European non-EU countries, Belarus is definitely the one with stronger links to the Russian Federation and weaker relations with the EU although these relations, according to many authors (Rotman and Veremeeva 2011; Ioffe 2011), have improved since 2006–2007. Not surprisingly, Belarus is one of the countries involved in the Eurasian Integration Process launched by Russia in 2011: President of Russia Dmitriy Medvedev, President of Kazakhstan Nursultan Nazarbayev and President of Belarus Aleksandr Lukashenko signed an agreement in this regard on November 18, 2011; successively, on May 2014 the three countries signed a Treaty that entered into force on January the 1st 2015, creating a Eurasian Economic Union. The Union was successively joined by Armenia (2 January 2015), while the accession treaty of Kyrgyzstan should enter into force in May 2015. The creation of the Eurasian Economic Union is a clear sign of Russian ambitions over Eastern Europe and Eurasia and of the will to create an alternative economic and commercial block to the neighbouring European Union.

Moldova and Ukraine have a more neutral attitude: after the collapse of the Soviet Union both countries have kept friendly relations with both Russia and the EU. Ukraine’s and Moldova’s indeterminate stance between Russia and the West (Proedrou 2010), is strongly criticized by Moscow, that has tried to block the moves of these countries towards Euro-Atlantic integration and the EU. For example, in the case of Moldova, Russia applied economic sanctions in 2013 and 2014 in order to block the Association Agreement with the European Union (Woehrel 2014a). In Ukraine the pressure from Moscow prevented the government from signing the Association Agreement with the EU in 2013; tensions exploded between pro-European and pro-Russian factions in the country, with an escalation of violence that led

to the impeachment of President Janukovyc, the secession of Crimea and a situation of profound instability and of civil war in the Eastern part of the country. In the aftermath of the crisis, both Ukraine and Moldova (together with Georgia) finally signed the association agreement with the EU in June 2014 (Bendavid and Norman 2014), strengthening their relations with the Union and accessing a privileged trade regime. The final outcomes of the situation in the region are still unpredictable. Surely a key role will be played by Russian energy policy: Russia has always used the leverage of energy dependency to put pressure on the governments of Moldova and Ukraine (Woehrel 2014a, b), and also towards European partners. After the emergence of the Russian-Ukrainian dispute, in May 2014 Russia signed a 30-year gas deal with China (Perlez 2014), looking for an alternative to European markets and sending a clear signal to the EU.

With the collapse of the Soviet Union, geopolitical and geostrategic transformations occurred not only in Eastern Europe but also in the South Caucasus. Consequently, Russia significantly decreased its political, economic and military influence in the region, while at the same time other global actors such as the US and the EU greatly strengthened their presence and expanded cooperation with countries in the region. Furthermore, Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia faced economic and political problems and also a series of unresolved ethnic conflicts in South Ossetia, Abkhazia and Nagorno-Karabakh. For all global empires, Caucasus States represent both a security issue (due to the extraordinary geopolitical location and the large reserves of hydrocarbons) and a security problem, due to the above mentioned unresolved conflicts (Ciutá 2008). These conflicts became the key issues on the agenda of relations between the Russian Federation and the region.

Due to historical reasons Russia has stable and strong relations with Armenia (which is also home to one of the Russian overseas military bases). Armenia keeps relations with the US and EU (Zolyan 2010), but can be considered the southern basis of Russian influence in the Caucasus. Besides close political and military cooperation, Russia and Armenia have developed active economic and trade relations; as already mentioned, Armenia has joined the Eurasian Economic Union in January 2015. Not surprisingly, Russia supports Armenia's territorial integrity in the Nagorno-Karabakh unresolved conflict with Azerbaijan. Russia does not have any diplomatic relations with Georgia after the Russia–Georgia war of 2008. With the election of the US-educated President of Georgia Mikhail Saakashvili in 2004, Georgia has declared its Western orientation. In recent years the Georgian government has signed a number of treaties on military cooperation and assistance with NATO countries, particularly the US, and has received millions of US dollars from the American government as a part of assistance programmes for post-war reconstruction. Russia has negatively reacted to such cooperation and laid claims about a threat of intensifying Western influence in the region.

Azerbaijan conducts its own independent foreign policy and does not support the Russian position on the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict but economic pragmatism and the “oil card” of Baku gives Azerbaijan certain positive benefits in the cooperation with the Russian Federation.

Finally Russian–Mediterranean relations have significantly changed in the last decades (Sánchez Andrés 2006). After experiencing a “golden age” during the Soviet period, particularly the 1960s, Russian–African relations regressed considerably with the collapse of the USSR in 1991. Today the Russian leadership has started to realize the need for a comprehensive reconstruction in the relations between Russia and Mediterranean countries: Russian foreign policy has been redesigned according to new global challenges. The principles of economic benefits and pragmatism have been put at the basis of such cooperation; Russia represents a potential alternative market for Mediterranean countries with respect to EU countries. For example, Russian imports from Southern Mediterranean States include a relevant component of agricultural products that cannot find a place in the European market due to the common agricultural policy. Putin’s Russia also seeks to establish cooperation in the Mediterranean in energy and military fields (Lutterbeck and Engelbrecht 2009). Furthermore the Russian Federation, as the Soviet Union’s successor, inherited a lot of responsibilities from the old Soviet Union, including technical-economic assistance for 37 African countries and trade agreements with 42 countries. Hundreds of joint projects were ended and tens were left incomplete with the collapse of the USSR (Fidan and Aras 2010). The Russian Federation, more recently, declared its efforts to continue the cooperation launched by the USSR with all the Mediterranean countries on the principles of equality and non-interference in domestic politics, respect of independence and territorial integrity. Russia is willing to develop economic relations by means of Russian firms (mainly State-owned) that operate in Mediterranean countries especially in such sectors as transportation, infrastructure and energy projects. The Russian Government strongly supports the activities of Russian companies in these sectors and protects their interests at an intergovernmental level.

Today’s Russia presents itself as a depoliticized actor in its relations with countries in the Mediterranean and adopts a pragmatic approach to economic cooperation. Moscow insists that this cooperation has to be motivated by economic, financial or commercial and not political reasons. However, Mediterranean partners are relevant for Russia not only as a source of resources and markets to sell its products and services, but also as geopolitical and geostrategic partners. Indeed, in political terms, North African countries share good relations with Russia in the international arena (Bryn 2013). Moreover, Russia fears the growth of the US military’s presence in the region as a potential security threat to Russia. From this point of view, Moscow’s policy is based on the idea of redrawing the negative consequences of a US-centred world order (Makarychev 2009). Not surprisingly, Russia politically supports Syria, a country that has traditionally complicated relations with Western countries and in particular with the US. Furthermore, Russia and Syria have a strong cooperation in the fields of energy and military forces. In security terms, Russia is also complaining about Islamic radicalism in the Middle East which is an especially sensitive issue due to the presence of Muslim extremists and terrorists in places such as the North Caucasus (Chechnya) (Trenin 2010).

## 7.4 China and the European Neighbourhood

China has become one of the most influential players in the modern system of international relations. China has indeed significantly increased its influence all over the world in the last decades based on an approach of economic pragmatism (Babayan 2010): the main capability of the country relies currently in its economic and financial power, and the international approach of the Chinese government is based on the use of this power, especially in Africa.

Today when most of the world has been affected by the negative outcomes of the global economic crisis and is in need of financial assistance, China, as the world's second largest and fastest-growing economy (World Bank 2011)—is willing to financially help any country or region. Such assistance might seriously strengthen the geopolitical presence of Beijing.

Together with this “soft power” based on economic diplomacy and a global economic security strategy, the main features of the new Chinese foreign policy include the search for strategic partnerships with other global powers such as the US and Russia, and “efforts to re-shape the orders of multiple regions of the world, including those that are outside China’s natural geographical context of East Asia, such as Africa and Central Asia” (Zhang 2010, p. 41). Indeed, China shares strong relations with all the European neighbouring countries: in Eastern Europe, in the Caucasus and in the Mediterranean.

The relations between China and Eastern European countries have strengthened in recent years through an increasing number of bilateral agreements on investments and trade (Rousseau 2012). More in detail, China has a strategic partnership with Ukraine since the Chinese Government issued a statement to guarantee the country's security following Kiev's signing of the Treaty on Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons in 1994. More recently China and Ukraine have developed excellent economic and trade relations: multi-billion US dollar projects were signed between the two countries in 2012 and 2013, in sectors such as infrastructure modernization, energy and coal industry, aerospace cooperation, medical cooperation, extraction of gas in the shore of the Black Sea and many others. In 2013 China was the second commercial partner of Ukraine after the EU: the total trade turnover between China and Ukraine was 10 billion US dollars (Euractiv 2013), with large potential for further development.

Similarly, China has intensified its presence in Belarus. This cooperation is first of all based on mutual support in the international arena: Minsk declares full support of the “One China” policy, criticizes any separatist movements in Tibet and the Xinjiang Uyghur Autonomous Region and does not recognize Taiwan as an independent State; at the same time Beijing supports Minsk in the international arena and negatively reacts to any trials of the isolation of Belarus in Europe. Furthermore, China remains one of the biggest creditors for Belarus, and the two countries share important cooperation in the field of trade relations and technical cooperation.

China has less developed cooperation in Moldova due to the instable socio-economic and political situation in the country and also due to its limited dimensions and reserves of mineral resources; nevertheless, the mutual political understanding (including on such sensitive issues as the Transnistria in Moldova and on Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang in China) might potentially strengthen the relations between the two countries in the near future. However future relations between China and Eastern European countries are strongly influenced by the role played by Russia. China's initiatives in Eastern Europe are always affected by the consideration of China-Russia relations (Chivvis and Lin 2014), and the events in Eastern Europe affect those relations as demonstrated by the gas agreement signed by the two countries in the aftermath of the Ukrainian crisis (Perlez 2014).

Like all the other global empires, China is also interested in increasing its political and economic presence in the Southern Caucasus countries of Armenia, Azerbaijan and Georgia. China became a significant player in this game for the Caucasus only in the beginning of the twenty-first century when an increasing level of economic development forced the country to look for new markets, zones of influence and partners (Ismailzade 2007). Also due to this relatively young interest, Chinese relations with Southern Caucasus countries are influenced by the strategies put in place by the other modern empires. For example, the relations with Armenia, the biggest ally and strategic partner of Russia in the South Caucasus, are often considered by Beijing in the framework of its cooperation with Moscow. However, China is interested in Armenia as a politically and economically stable partner. Consequently, Beijing supports a peaceful solution of the conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh. The relations between Azerbaijan and China are considered to be economically stable. Being a UN Security Council member the Chinese government recognized Azerbaijanian territorial integrity and its jurisdiction over Nagorno-Karabakh. At the same time Azerbaijan supports the "one China" policy and China's positions on major issues such as Taiwan, Tibet and Xinjiang. Deep political understanding between the two countries has enabled the development of successful cooperation in economic and trade spheres. Finally, China also shares relevant economic and political relations with Georgia.

The relations between China and South Caucasus States might improve in the near future particularly due to China's concern for meeting domestic energy demand and given the availability of energy resources in the South Caucasus region (İşeri 2009). In recent years China has indeed invested important resources in financing infrastructure projects for the creation of better links for transport and energy with the Caucasus States, revitalizing the "silk road" and strengthening the Eastern projection of Caucasus commercial routes and pipelines (Babayan 2011; Weitz 2014).

Finally, China's rapid economic growth has transformed its relations with the Mediterranean region: currently Sino-Mediterranean relations represent an important part of modern Beijing's foreign policy. The ongoing process of industrialization forces China to increase its demand for oil and other raw materials which North African countries are rich in; furthermore, China is interested in the growing local markets. Being the third largest trading partner for Africa (after the US and EU) the Chinese government actively promotes trade relations with this region and the

internationalization of Chinese companies through the development of several Economic Processing Zones in the Mediterranean (Quaglia 2014).

On the other hand, the Mediterranean basin has a unique geopolitical location between the EU, the African continent and the Middle East. The route from China to Europe through the Suez Canal, which is shorter than sailing around the Cape of Good Hope, makes the region very attractive in the perspective of Chinese exporters. Many Mediterranean ports currently compete for the role of logistics hub for the distribution of Chinese goods in Europe. Due to this location and to the various commercial agreements between the EU and the Mediterranean region, China considers this area a platform for approaching European markets and also for testing the quality of products before their distribution to final consumers in the EU (Pecoraro 2010).

The great potential of Sino-Mediterranean economic cooperation also positively affects political relations. Mediterranean countries and China share a common history of struggle against colonialism and non-alignment: Egypt was the first African country which recognized the People's Republic of China, founded in 1949, and Morocco was the second. At the same time China was the first non-Arab country to recognize the provisional government of Algeria in 1958. Furthermore, China and most of the Mediterranean countries support each other in the international arena on the principle of non-interference in internal affairs of other countries. As regards internationally contested issues, North African countries do not recognize Taiwan; on the other hand, China does not recognize the Polisario and considers the Western Sahara to be part of Morocco, but it supports the right of Palestine to have its own State. Like Russia, China shares particularly strategic relations with those countries that do not lie under US sphere of influence. It is thus not surprising that China is one of the stronger international allies of Syria, especially in economic terms.

## 7.5 The United States and the European Neighbourhood

The US is a 'modern empire' by definition. After the collapse of the Soviet Union many authors have identified US as the only surviving global power; and although this interpretation has proved to be wrong, "the US tends to treat the entire world as its periphery and does not refrain from imposing severe domestic constraints on foes and even on its allies" (Zielonka 2012, p. 509).

Referring again to the role attributed by Zielonka to borders and governance in order to define the "kind of power" that modern empire exercise, the US centralized governance system (in particular in the field of defence and foreign policy) and its stable borders allow a "truly global perspective on international affairs" (Zielonka 2012, p. 513), while in particular Russia's and EU's blurred borders make them mainly preoccupied with their neighbouring areas. Consequently, the US is interested in the European neighbourhood as part of their general international relations. The US makes a big use of the aid instrument to support friendly countries and, on the other hand, imposes sanctions to those countries that do not comply with US

expectations; US sanctions are mainly economic, effective due to the US economic power in the global scenario.

Eastern Europe is a key area for the US from a geostrategic point of view. The unique location between the EU and the Russian Federation make Ukraine, Belarus and Moldova strategically important for US policymakers in the context of the geopolitical future of Europe and Eurasia. In this framework, Ukraine is considered a regional leader. Since the Orange revolution, Ukraine has significantly improved political, economic and trade relations with the US. As a result the US government reinstated the tariff preference for Ukraine under the General System of Preferences in January 2006 and began supporting Ukrainian membership to the WTO in 2008 (Woehrel 2014b). A “Charter on Strategic Partnership” was signed between the two countries in December 2008, marking a new level of cooperation. Furthermore, the US supports Ukraine’s European aspiration and practical cooperation with NATO, as well as cooperation on international and regional security. In the aftermath of the crisis between Ukraine and Russia in 2014, the US has officially declared its support to Ukraine and has imposed economic sanctions to Russia. Although on paper the US and EU are “united in their support for Ukraine” (Smith-Spark 2014), European countries are much more cautious in approaching Russia (for example regarding the idea of introducing sanctions), due to their economic interests and dependencies on the Russian economy (especially in the field of energy) (Rampini 2014; Guetta 2014). On the other hand, the US has a complicated relationship with Belarus. Aleksander Lukashenko—the current president of Belarus—was called “the last true remaining dictatorship in the heart of Europe” by former US Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice during a CNN interview in 2005 (CNN 2005). US relations with the country worsened after the 2010 repression of the opposition following fraudulent presidential elections (Woehrel 2013). The US maintains severe sanctions against Belarus while it supports the country’s democratization, building independent media and non-profit organizations and political reforms. To this aim, in 2012 President Obama signed the Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act (Woehrel 2013). Finally, the interests of the US in Moldova are basically connected to the strategic location of the country between Romania and Ukraine, and are aimed at counterbalancing Russia’s hegemonic strategies. Furthermore, due to its weak political and economic system, Moldova has become a source of organized crime: problems such as arms sales, human trafficking, drugs and illegal immigration threaten overall European security and stability which is also a concern of the US government in the region (Woehrel 2014a). Consequently, since Moldova gained independence, the United States has strongly supported democracy and free market reforms. Furthermore, the two countries have developed good economic relations: the US Generalized System of Preferences status was granted to Moldova in August 1995.

The South Caucasus is one of the priorities in the modern agenda of US foreign policy. On the one hand, Caucasus plays a key strategic role in the definition of global balance among different powers (İşeri 2009); on the other hand, the Caucasus remains a source of instability and conflict: unresolved “frozen conflicts” in Abkhazia, Southern Ossetia, and Nagorno Karabakh; armed resistance in separatist

Chechnya and associated Islamic radicalism; the “Rose Revolution” in Georgia and furthermore Tbilisi’s efforts to intensify cooperation with the West; competition for access to the oil and natural gas reserves of the Caspian basin—these and other factors make the region a source of instability and international concern (Craig Nation 2007), and an important area of US engagement. US cooperation with the South Caucasian countries is aimed, *inter alia*, at preventing energy resources from these countries from falling under Russian or Iranian control:

The political objective of the US government is to prevent energy transport unification among the industrial zones of Japan, Korea, China, Russia and the EU in the Eurasian land-mass and ensure the flow of regional energy resources to US-led international oil markets without any interruptions. (İşeri 2009, pp. 34–35)

The US is also interested in a peaceful solution to the ongoing frozen conflicts in the area in order to guarantee stability and security to Western countries as well. The Caucasus has been declared by the US as “a region where the US has vital interests” and by NATO as “a strategic region” (Cabbarli 2011).

Georgia can be considered the US’ strongest ally in the region. In particular after the Georgia–Russia war in August 2008, Georgia intensified its economic and political relations with the US diversifying its export market and also in a move to find new strategic allies. The two parties signed a “Charter on Strategic Partnership”, in January 2009. Since the Charter was signed, the United States has declared their full support for Georgia’s territorial integrity and sovereignty while Georgia announced its plans to continue economic and political reforms towards democratization. Furthermore, the US contributed significantly to the post-war reconstruction of Georgia after the Georgia–Russia conflict: the US is Georgia’s largest bilateral aid donor and Georgia is ranked among the top world States in terms of per capita US aid. Moreover, the two countries have strong military cooperation ties: the US has provided the Georgian army with military training, technologies and medical equipment (Nichol 2013b).

Armenia and the US share quite complex relations. On the one hand, as already mentioned, Armenia has close cooperative ties with Russia, especially in economic and security fields, but on the other hand, Armenian officials strive to extend cooperation with West including the US and the EU. The US is an important partner for Armenia in term of aid flows and in the security processes in the region, as the US leads OSCE Minsk Group, an organization which was devoted to solve Nagorno–Karabakh conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan (Nichol 2013a), together with Russia and France. In the early 1990s, the US Government strongly supported Armenia in the conflict due to the powerful Armenian lobby in the US government (Croissant and Aras 1999). After September, 11, 2001, due to a shift in the foreign policy of Washington and to the strong support from Azerbaijan in the US war against global terrorism, the US government adopted a more neutral policy on the Nagorno–Karabakh dispute.

Azerbaijan is indeed another strategic country for the US, at the crossroads of Europe, Asia and the Middle East. Relations between Azerbaijan and the United States are founded on shared interests like global and regional security, economic development and democratic values. Former US Department of State Secretary

Hillary Clinton, during her July 2010 visit to Azerbaijan, claimed that “the bonds between the United States and Azerbaijan are deep, important, and durable” (Embassy of the United States Baku Azerbaijan 2010). The issues of the already mentioned Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and regional energy security are top questions in the current agenda. US companies are shareholders in three international consortiums which were formed to exploit Azerbaijan’s oil and gas fields.

Finally, as regards the Mediterranean, extensive cooperation with the region is today one of the core priorities of US foreign policy. The Mediterranean is home to a number of issues of concern to Washington: from terrorism in North Africa to energy security and the Middle East peace process (Lesser 2009). The US has thus developed strong economic, political and in some cases military relations with the most of the Mediterranean countries. One of the main instruments used by the US in the region is the assistance offered through aid programmes: the US is one of the main donors to Middle East and North African countries. Egypt and Morocco are recognized as the key players in the region and the US has traditionally developed strong relations with both of them although the future is unpredictable due to the uncertainty on Egyptian situation after the popular uprisings started in 2011. The tensest relations in the region have always been with Syria and Libya. In Syria, key issues used to include Arab-Israeli talks, questions of arms proliferation, Syrian connections with terrorism activity, Syria’s role in Lebanon and Syria’s opposition to the US occupation in Iraq (Prados 2006). The armed conflict in opposition to Bashar al-Assad’s government and anti-government demonstrators since 2011 have even worsened US-Syria relations with the US Government calling for President al-Assad to step aside.

Generally speaking, the privileged relation of the US with Israel has always strongly affected the cooperation with the Arab States of the region. Furthermore, September 11, 2001, marked a crucial turning point in US relations with the region. President Obama, with his 2009 Cairo speech, opened a different approach towards the region; however the hopes the Arab world placed on his presidency have been largely unfulfilled (Gerges 2012). No concrete advancement was reached in the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Furthermore, the US was very cautious in reacting to the Arab uprisings (Hassan 2013) and it currently lacks the capacity to influence the transition process of Egypt or Libya (Gerges 2012).

## **7.6 The European Neighbourhoods as Geopolitical Chessboards**

The development of the modern system of international relations significantly differs from the past century. The deep economic and financial networks existing worldwide, together with global problems such as food shortages, poverty, corruption, proliferation of deadly weapons, ecological disasters, demographic pressures, escalation of conflicts for energy resources and many others, determine the

emergence of new networks across the globe that overlap or substitute traditional ones, and exasperate unbalances at the global level.

For many years European States were divided among different alliances, blocks and groups of interests. The EU has been one of the most successful attempts to unite its members in the face of problems the entire world is dealing with. The current rise in social unrest and existing contradictions between EU members, in combination with the enduring recession, have pushed the EU to seek out new solutions to cope with the current challenges. In this framework, the relations between the EU and its neighbourhood play a relevant role, but cannot fail to take into account the influence of other modern empires like the United States, China and Russia.

The analysis carried out in the previous pages shows that the four modern empires often share similar interests in cooperating with ENP countries. In particular, issues like economic cooperation and regional security are relevant for almost all the analysed relations. At the same time different strategies, attitudes and interests can be identified in the relations of each global player with different neighbouring countries. Russia seeks to establish control over former Soviet Republics and to strengthen its geopolitical presence in the Mediterranean in order to counterbalance the influence of Western countries. China aims at expanding its economic power all over the world. The US policy in the European neighbourhood is mainly influenced by national interests like security and combating terrorism, and in maintaining the global leading role in economic and political terms.

In this framework, the effectiveness of the EU “normative power” to maintain privileged relations with its neighbourhood can be questioned especially in a time when EU’s power of attraction is decreasing. Economic recession and social unrest in Europe, member States’ inability to speak with a single voice in the international arena due to their diverging interests and also the EU’s insistence on conditionality, regulatory approximation and reforms, are often far less attractive for external partners than the approach proposed by other modern empires.

Furthermore, while the geopolitical category of the European neighbourhood, created through the ENP, is meaningful from the perspective of the EU, the same cannot be said for the other modern empires: in this chapter we have chosen instead to look at three different neighbourhoods that, in our opinion, represent potential chessboards for present and future geopolitical claims.

The first chessboard is represented by Eastern Europe. Russia seeks to maintain and extend its control over the region, considering it a natural subject over which to exert its sphere of influence being part of the former Soviet Union. The events that occurred in Ukraine in 2013/2014 clearly brought out the competition between Russia and the EU in the region and confirmed the difficulty of the latter in acting with a single voice in the international arena. Furthermore, the Ukrainian revolution has also highlighted the crucial role played by other modern empires in the region. The US has actively followed Ukrainian events taking actions (including sanctions) to limit Russian ambitions; and China has taken advantage of Russian discontent in the aftermath of the crisis to diversify its economic and political alliances.

The second chessboard is represented by the Southern Caucasus. The extraordinary geopolitical location, together with the huge reserves of gas and oil, make

this region a key area for all the modern empires. Furthermore, unresolved conflicts make it also a source of instability and a security problem. The different alliances of Armenia, Georgia and Azerbaijan with the global players mark an unstable and variable geometry that makes the future of the region unpredictable.

Finally, in the Mediterranean region, the interests of different empires are quite divergent. The EU wishes to develop friendly relations with Mediterranean countries to guarantee security and stability to its external borders, but it maintains an ambiguous attitude towards Southern partners, as mentioned in the previous chapters. The US is interested in a stable and safe Mediterranean but currently has no capacity to influence the ongoing transformations in the region. On the other hand, Russia and China are increasingly establishing relations and links with the Mediterranean countries, particularly in economic terms, but also politically, with a particular emphasis on countries that have problematic relations with Western countries.

To conclude, major global players have significantly increased their geopolitical and geoeconomic presence in the EU's neighbouring countries over the last two decades. This presence has a major impact on the geopolitical positioning of the EU and will continue to do so in the future especially if the EU continues to enlarge or strengthen further its integration with neighbouring countries. The geopolitical significance and perspectives of neighbourhood countries can be affected, on the other hand, by the interaction between different empires (as exemplified by the agreement reached in 2014 between China and Russia on natural gas) and by the different regionalization processes that modern empires might put in place (like the Eurasian Union proposed by Vladimir Putin or the geography of NATO or WTO countries led by the US). These processes could heavily reshape the EU's strategies in the neighbourhood in the near future.

The 'normative' approach of the EU should be revised not only due to its inability to achieve any relevant result in neighbouring countries, but also due to the growing influence of other global players, due to the specific role that each of them play in the region, and given their rather different approaches which, often, seems more in line with the expectations and possibilities of neighbouring countries.

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