

[Slide 2]

With “Montparnasse”, Andreas Gursky digitally post-processes two pictures of the same building: this picture-puzzle reconstructs the “reality”, encompassing both centre and periphery, allowing two levels of recognition: from a certain distance, the façade’s global structure emerges — *à la* Mondrian; close, you may inspect single people, furnishings... In a way the geometrically structured façade becomes alive.

[Slide 3]

Similarly, regions are (re)constructed, rearticulating centre and periphery; nevertheless, their political architecture must not distract your attention from lively experimented regionalisation.

While, on the one hand, regions are well-defined entities part of the political landscape... and also all over present statistical units; on the other hand, they have to be viewed as flexible constructs, contingent on social practices, and made up of more or less dense and interlocking social networks.

This map tends to wipe away the states’ borders and somehow illustrates the new, redimensioned, role of the nation-state. Here you should imagine additional layers blurring the boundaries. Indeed, this map doesn’t show regional networks involved in the “working communities” or in the various EU interregional, transnational and/or cross-border cooperation programmes.

Let me briefly clarify the just mentioned three EU INTERREG-related strands.

[Slide 4]

The 1990 launched EU INTERREG programme distinguishes:

- Cross-border cooperation is referred to as **Strand A**
 - ✍ promotes integrated regional development between neighbouring border regions; this type of co-operation is focused on the local dimension at the internal and external borders of the European Union
 - ✍ Involves as “driver” NUTS 3 regions (Nomenclature of Units for Territorial Statistics), thus as “small regions for specific diagnoses” with a population between 150’00 and 800’000. Concretely: Districts (GE, AT), Departments (F), Lands (DK), Provinces (I, ES), Regions (FI), Regional authorities (Ireland), Arrondissements (Belgium), Districts (Serbia), Cantons (BiH), Counties (Croatia), Statistical region (Macedonia), Prefectures (Albania), etc.

- Transnational cooperation schemes are referred to as **Strand B**
 - ✍ 13 programmes cover the whole Europe and encourage cooperation between local, regional and national authorities with a view to promoting wider European integration and sustainable and balanced development in the European Union and better integration with neighbouring countries.
 - ✍ Involves as “driver” 245 NUTS 2 regions. NUTS 2 are considered as basic regions for the application of regional policies. This corresponds to a population between 800’000 and 3 million. Concretely: regions (F, I, DE, DK, IE), autonomous communities (ES), Provinces (Belgium), Entities (BiH), 5 regions in Serbia, 2 regions in Croatia, etc.

- Interregional cooperation corresponds to **Strand C**:
 - ✍ Focused on non-contiguous cooperation in a pan-European wide framework, regions develop networks of cooperation targeting specific thematic areas — the overall objective being to reduce social and economic disparities.
 - ✍ Involves as “driver” — as Strand B — 245 NUTS 2 regions

[Slide 5]

In order to give an idea of the respective NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) format, the next slide shows two maps published in the *Eurostat regional yearbook 2011* (volume: population).

NB: In most cases, the NUTS 2 regions in SEE (specifically in Serbia and Croatia) were created by the government in order to meet the NUTS criteria as well as the requirements of the EU regional policy; they do not have actually a considerable administrative power; also, they are not self-governed entities.

Without opening the discussion on a critical cartography approach, few tendencies must be here briefly mentioned:

☞ In official EU documents, almost all maps follow the classical solution of cartography in NUTS 2 division (NUTS 3 in a minority of cases) — as produced by the Euro-Geographics.

☞ There is an awareness that different cartographic representations deliver different political messages (complementary or conflicting); accordingly, the introduction of new cartographic solutions may be potentially related to the exploration of new policy options.

☞ The new trend is to work on a revised NUTS division based on functional criteria and adopting a mixture of NUTS 2 and 3 units for its regional studies — as for example the OECD does.

See ESPON scientific report: *Applied Territorial Research Building a scientific platform for competitiveness and cohesion*, 2006

[Slide 6]

Cross Border cooperation notably evolved since the set-up of the first Euro Region, along the German-Dutch border in 1958 (in the framework of INTERREG A). Now, more than 70 cross-border entities operate with the aim to reduce the barrier effect in border areas, and increase their socioeconomic cohesion and the overall territorial articulation.

Typically, the involved actors develop CBC in a multi-level partnership (European, governmental, regional, local) in several development domains (infra-structure, economy, culture and sports, tourism and leisure, transports, environment, health, energy, communications, education, innovation and technology, etc.).

The map illustrates, first, that the extension of the INTERREG programmes followed the enlargement process and, second, that in the enlargement-related area the “density” of this type of organisations is even higher than in the Western part of Europe.

In the case of Central Europe and SEE, specific and sensitive geo-strategic as well as historical aspects increase the sensibility of the borders. Viewed from Brussels, CBC is a way to “manage” economic disparities and geo-strategic sensitive issues — including relations between new member states and non-member states — along the enlargement process.

What about the Balkans? Actually, SEE is already integrated in the transnational cooperation programmes (Strand B).

[Slide 7]

The Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe is one out of the 13 EU transnational cooperation programmes — referred to in the EU Interreg programme as Strand B (Interreg IVB).

Again, also here we could add layers with maps showing various cooperation programmes and their respective geographical area; CEFTA and RCC could be here mentioned. The difference lies in the fact that in the framework of the Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe regions as such are here the drivers. And other example is the Adriatic Euro Region.

[Slide 8]

This regional cooperation programme launched under the hospices of the Council of Europe involves:

- Seven Italian regions
- Three Slovenian municipalities
- Seven Croatian counties
- One canton from Bosnia and Herzegovina and
- Two countries (Montenegro and Albania).

This example illustrates how **transnational cooperation involves simultaneously national, regional and local authorities**. Thus, regionalisation operates simultaneously at different scales: above, below and at the state-levels.

Let me briefly present three main observations:

[Slide 9]

Firstly, SEE is not a “natural” or “objective” subregion, but a constructed one with shifting boundaries; further, the Balkans are less a homogeneous subregion than a multifaceted network linked to other networks. (...)

Looking to the “wider South East Europe”, we realise that all Western Balkans countries — in varying degrees — also belong (are networked) to other subregions as well: Central Europe, and the Mediterranean and Black Sea subregions.

Secondly, the format of these programmes also illustrates the structural heterogeneity of SEE. Out of the 16 participating actors in the above mentioned Transnational Cooperation Programme South East Europe:

☞ Eight belong to EU Member States,

☞ Six belong to EU candidate and potential candidate countries (this may evolve), and

☞ Two belong to countries participating in the ENP.

Paradoxically, due to the EU integration process, SEE — as well as the Black Sea subregion — is today more heterogeneous than before, as it encompasses EU members, and respectively would-be and/or non EU members.

Thirdly, the added value of such transnational programmes is that they bring the different region levels under the same roof in a multilevel political landscape connecting the macro with the micro, the global with the regional, the political with the private.

Regionalisation today is characterised by its multidimensionality and complexity, characterized by the emergence of new players and networks of power — including informal networks and what Janine Wedel calls “flex nets”.

[Slide 10]

Evaluation of regionalisation processes is a tricky issue, especially if a quantitative approach is chosen. Cautiously used, it may nevertheless indicate some global trends.

This map — NUTS 2 level — shows the level of participation of the concerned regions in the 265 different Interreg IIC (2000–06) projects as of September 2005: while almost all regions are involved to a certain extent, some are more proactive, such as those from Spain, Slovenia, Germany and the Baltic area. These results are confirmed by the 2006 “FAS.research” study which covers more than 90 per cent of its cooperation projects (268 projects involving around 194 regions, 50 countries, more than 2650 partners across Europe: 494 from new members states and 154 from third countries).

[Slide 11]

Why do regions matter?

First, to put it bluntly, simply because they exist — admit, too often under the radar screen.

Second, regions, obviously they do not have to be seen as a panacea, could contribute to “re-load” politics and give the EU a new impetus:

☞ providing decisively more space to collective activity, and, more specifically,

☞ enabling an explicit and lucid self-institution, and the self-alteration of the social institutions and the polity.

What matters is to view and shape politics differently. Andreas Gursky indicates subtly the way: due to specific windy conditions, the Rhine seems here to move backwards, against the current — the wind on that day caused that effect. You can see this photograph at the Tate modern.

(This is the most expensive photograph ever sold: \$4.3m at Christie’s, on 8 November 2011)