Re-scaling 'EU'rope: EU macro-regional fantasies in the Mediterranean

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Fantastic Spaces: European macro-regional fantasies in the Mediterranean

Introduction

The spatial imaginations of the European Union's policy makers have commanded the attention of political and urban geographers for quite some time now (see, among others: Bialasiewicz 2011; Böhme et al. 2004; Böhme and Waterhout 2008; Clark and Jones 2008; Jones and Clark 2010; Moisio 2011; Paasi 2005). Geographers have long argued for a critical engagement with the EU's 'spatial fantasies' as key to understanding the multiple process of 'EU'ropeanization for, as Jensen and Richardson (2004) note, these are a fundamental part of the EU's attempts to (re)territorialize both 'European' spaces, and those at their borders. Indeed, over a decade's worth of critical geographical work has elucidated on the ways in which 'EU'ropean 'space-making' is explicitly about the political production of 'European spaces', rather than simply the deployment of 'European' policies in already-existing political space (see, among others, Brenner 1999; Clark and Jones 2008; Hudson 2004; MacLeod 1999; Painter 2002). Yet despite the well established critique expressed by this literature (as well as that in cognate disciplines such as political sociology, IR and political science – see, for example, the work of Browning 2005; Browning and Joenniemi 2008; Rumford and Delanty 2005) we are witnessing today a new momentum in the elaboration of EU policies aimed at (re)making both 'EU'ropean and extra-'EU'ropean spaces within a distinct set of geographical and geopolitical imaginations that continue to be entirely oblivious of such academic debates.

One important manifestation of this new momentum is the current vogue for the idea of European 'macro-regions', as a novel policy fix for the making of 'EU'ropean spaces. It is on this new geographical fad that we wish to focus our attention here, inspired in particular by the most recent proposals for a 'Mediterranean Macro-Region' promoted by the EU-funded MedGovernance Project.[i] We choose to focus on this particular initiative not because it is unique (for, as we shall argue in the pages to follow, it is just the latest spatial creature spawned by the macro-regional fad) but because we believe it highlights some of the underlying conceptual as well as political and geopolitical challenges of the on-going regionalization of 'EU'ropean space. At the same time, we will suggest that the projection of the macro-regional vision/template upon the Mediterranean in particular raises a whole host of additional questions – questions seemingly ignored by the developing policy literature (that we in part examine here), but that deserve the critical attention of

geographers and other scholars concerned with the making and the 'scaling' of 'EU'ropean space (for a discussion of this notion see Brenner 2003; Leitner 2004; Moisio 2011).

The notion of European 'macro-regions' was first formally enshrined within the European Commission's *EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region*, published in June 2009. Although originating in the specific context of the Nordic/Baltic cooperation strategies (Galbreath and Lamoreaux 2007; Moisio 2003), the 'macro-regional perspective' has, nonetheless, been recently projected by the Commission onto other European spaces: a 'Danube Macro-Region' has been 'recognised' and formalised, and other initiatives aiming at 'macro-regionalization' have been envisaged, from the Adriatic to the Alps, to the Western Mediterranean, the English Channel, and the North Sea (see, among others, Ágh et al. 2010; Medeiros 2011a, 2011b). The conceptualisation and planning of future macro-regional strategies has also mobilised particular communities of 'geographical expertise', invoking into the 'macro-regionalizing' project some of the most prestigious European think-tanks (see Lagendjik 2005). In recent years, political geographers have very fruitfully scrutinized the formation and operation of various such forms of expertise within EU institutions and associated European policy networks (see, for e.g, Kuus 2011a, 2011b; Prince 2012). We would like to build upon such work here, analysing specifically the geographical knowledge production implicit in the current and on-going 'making' of the macro-regional concept in the Mediterranean (and elsewhere).

In particular, we believe that the MedGovernance project is illustrative of what Moisio (2011) describes as the 're-scaling of European [spatial] expertise'. Writing on the horizontal networks that helped sustain the Baltic Sea macro-regional(izing) project, he notes how such networks 'bring together policy-makers and professionals *in the name of Europe'* (Moisio 2011:30, emphasis in original). Yet while such experts' involvement in EU-sponsored projects 'can be considered a practice whereby [existing] ideas of European spatial planning are implemented in interpersonal interaction, and become subjectified in the ways of being or identities of those involved' (2011: 30), such '(macro) region-makers' are also quite aware of 'playing [spatial] games in the name of the EU' (2011: 31). This also appears the case in projects such as the MedGovernance one, which brings together the representatives of a number of European regions[ii] with experts working for a variety of local and regional think-tanks[iii]. The project was originally conceived (and received funding from the ERDF, through the European Union's MED Programme in 2009), with the aim of 'analyzing the governance framework for the preparation and implementation of major policies affecting the Mediterranean region', and in particular 'the issue of multilevel governance' and 'new

regional strategies' (MEDGOVERNANCE 2010). Its promotion of the macro-regional concept as a privileged spatial formation for governing and administering the Mediterranean space deserves our attention also because it sheds light on some the ways in which such local and regional networks 'play spatial games' with a concept that has a long history in the geographical tradition.

Another aim of the paper is, indeed, to also remark upon this (seemingly forgotten) history, highlighting the distinct genealogy of today's macro-regional understandings, and locating these most recent attempts at the re-making of 'EU'ropean space within a much longer trajectory of European spatial 'ideologies', projected both upon EU spaces, as well as those beyond its borders. The external(izing) function of the current EU macro-regional initiatives is indeed crucial, for the transnational regions being imagined (and, in some cases such as the Baltic, already 'practiced') have also as their aim the making of a 'Wider Europe', extending forms of European territoriality beyond and across the EU's current borders. As Andreas Faludi (2011: 83) has argued, 'regional policy is a flagship policy of the European Union [yet] at the same time, it bears witness to its ambivalence apparent also in foreign, energy and defence policy'. For Faludi, this ambivalence in regional policy 'is about the EU's territoriality' – or, more precisely, the tension between the 'hard' and 'aspirational' notions of territoriality that mark the European project (see Bialasiewicz, Elden and Painter 2005); between the bordered space of the now-EU27, and 'EU'rope's wider spaces of action and (inter)action, whether defined through notions of 'European values' or 'European responsibility' (the term adopted by ESPON (2006) in mapping the 'greater' spaces of the EU's influence in the world – see the discussion in Bachmann 2011).

Indeed, in popular understandings (but also in much of the EU policy literature) regions are understood as both a scale lower than the nation-state (for example: Tuscany or Provence, to use two Mediterranean examples) and one that is supra-national (for example: the Middle East or the Mediterranean itself). In the first case, the region is generally conceived as a territorial container of functional, or cultural, or historical, or administrative, or physical attributes, or at times all of these things together. This kind of region is also often presented as a sort of spontaneous, 'organic' container, produced by the workings of local communities, their histories and mundane geographies. In the second case, instead, the regional scale is seen as a flexible grouping of states brought together by some common features (religion, culture, past, etc.). Such 'macro' (although the prefix is not necessarily always – or even predominantly – applied), regional mappings also contain echoes, however, of a long standing tradition of Pan-Regionalist ideologies, dating back to the theorizations of political geographers like Friedrich Ratzel, Halford Mackinder, Karl Haushofer,

Nicolas Spykman and many others (see Heffernan 1998; Kearns 2009; O'Loughlin & van der Wusten 1990) but also the geopolitical fantasies of statesmen from American President Woodrow Wilson to Nazi ideologue Heinrich Himmler. Although the parallel may appear extreme, these are echoes that we should not forget when considering region-making in and beyond 'EU'rope, for as Bachmann and Sidaway (2009: 106) remind us, current projections of 'EU'ropean influence all too frequently 'simultaneously internalise and occlude prior visions of Europe and European world roles'.

What is also problematic is that most EU policy documents dealing with the macro-regional question seem to adopt a gallimaufry of such understandings, frequently opting for the rather loose definition of macro-region as '*an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges*' (INTERACT 2009: 1). Indeed, what is most striking to a geographer in the EU's renewed emphasis on macro-regions – to be identified, supported and 'strengthened' – is that they appear the unconscious product of a mix of both scales, with all that such mixing may imply, not only theoretically but also, very concretely, in potential policy terms. The macro-regions envisaged by the contemporary 'EU'ropean policy literature are presented as curious aggregates of already existing regions belonging to more than one country, bound by 'some' common spatialities: in other words, macro-regions intended as agglomerations of (micro)regions.

As we note previously, this conceptual pastiche becomes even more problematic when forcible macro-regionalization is applied to the Mediterranean, a space that can be defined as an endless (and un-mappable) 'field of tensions' at best (Giaccaria and Minca 2011), a space that resists any attempt at regionalization (that is to say, at spatial reification and homogenization), a space that, as Iain Chambers (2008) has argued, can solely be described with metaphors of 'pluriversality'. And yet the Mediterranean has long been presented as a 'sea-region' par excellence, and a source of inspiration for comparative work on other 'regional seas' such as the Baltic (Wójcik 2008). This imagination of the Mediterranean draws, most importantly, on the geo-ecological accounts of Fernand Braudel and other work, in history as well as geography, of a Braudelian inspiration. We should recognize, however, that Braudel himself was influenced and inspired, in turn, by longer standing 'regional imaginations' and, in particular, by the work of the doyen of French geography, Paul Vidal de la Blache, and key Vidalian concepts such as *genre de vie*, *genius loci*, and *personnalité* (Claval, 1988), concepts that are deeply organicistic (Archer, 1993). It is crucial to acknowledge such organicistic 'echoes' in Braudelian (and Braudelian-inspired) accounts of the

Mediterranean. Vidal de la Blache's description of the Mediterranean 'unique coming together' of natural conditions and human settlements, of nature and culture is revealing in this regard: 'ces genres de vie subsistent, non comme survivance, mais comme expression d'harmonies naturelles qui ont favorisé la multiplication des hommes' (1918: 179). Paradoxically, both Vidal de la Blache and Braudel wrote about the Mediterranean whilst ignoring its marine and maritime features, establishing a tradition of regionalization of the Mediterranean space that, as we shall discuss in the next pages, still influences the European geographical imagination (Horden 2005). Inspired as they were by Vidalian understandings, hence, such imaginations of a Mediterranean 'region' were directly linked to the birth of the European regional idea/ideal itself, and the first projects for the modern regionalization of space (see Clout 2003a, 2003b, 2003c). We do not have the space here to revisit the history of the idea of the region, but it does need to remain in the background of the discussion that follows, for region-making projects now, as then, are fundamentally about the (power-ful) making of spaces for political action.

In the section that follows, we attempt to disentangle some of the implicit and not-so-implicit spatial imaginations/spatial ideologies that lie 'behind' (in both a genealogical and conceptual sense) the recent EU macro-regional approach, while emphasizing the complex and contradictory nature of the actual geographies that such projects of regionalization may produce. The subsequent section focuses instead on the 'on the ground' histories of regionalization of the Mediterranean, examining the evolution of Euro-Mediterranean policies and their understanding of the Mediterranean space. We then reflect on some of the geopolitical implications of the attempted Mediterranean macro-regionalization, highlighting in particular the tension between the macro-regional narrative of partnership and a 'shared' Mediterranean space and the increasingly 'hard' attempts at the bordering and ordering of this very space. We conclude by briefly addressing the broader implications of such macro-regional fantasies, while calling attention to the inherently political nature of all 'EU'ropean space-making, within, at, and beyond the EU borders.

Macro-regionalization and the ghost(s) of the region
The European Union's macro-regional policy has a complex, twofold genealogy. On the one hand, it derives directly from the regionalization of the 'EU'ropean space and its multifaceted narratives (Lagendijk 2005), related to the vanishing of internal borders and the subsequent rise of cross-border cooperation between member states and regions (Häkli 1998). On the other hand, macro-regional policies must be understood in the framework of the re-bordering of the margins of Europe and the reconfiguration of the relations between the EU and the countries in its immediate and

further Neighbourhoods. 'EU'ropean macro-regional policies thus occupy and represent a threshold in-between *internal* territorial cooperation and *external* cross-border cooperation.[iv] It is important in this context to note the role of successive INTERREG initiatives in providing the inspiration – and the conditions of possibility – for current macro-regionalising endeavours. In his recent review, Medeiros (2011b) notes how the current macro-regional 'push' is directly linked to the 'making' of Euroregions and various other cross-border initiatives supported by the INTERREG programme, seen also by other scholars as an important 'creator' of 'New European Regions', providing the 'terrains for producing new transnational actors and new opportunities for existing actors' (Perkmann 1999: 657). Medeiros argues, in fact, that the new 'Macro Territorial Agreements' are not just a result of a momentary European Macro-Regional political will, but instead can be taken as a step-by-step process which has been solidified by the experience gained through various INTERREG B (transnational cooperation) programmes in the European Union, which acted as a kind of laboratory [...] enabling the consolidation of transnational networks between entities with common interests' (2011b: 2).

Indeed, one of the key aims of the INTERREG B projects has been, as Moisio (2011: 30) notes, the promotion of a distinct 'transnational vision for a wider Europe', citing the Commission's 2004 Communication in this regard:

> Transnational cooperation between national, regional and local authorities aims to promote a higher degree of territorial integration across large groupings of European regions, with a view to achieving sustainable, harmonious and balanced development in the Community and better territorial integration with candidate and other neighbouring countries. Special attention will be given to the four transnational regions implementing the neighbourhood dimension. (CEC 2004: 5)

So while the most recent macro-regional approach has been formulated by the DG Regional Policy within the *Baltic Sea Region Strategy* and, subsequently, assumed and discussed by the Committee of the Regions – that is, the two institutional bodies dealing with *internal* regionalization, at the same time, as we note above, the macro-regional approach has a clear and explicit link to *external* policy and especially, to the re-bordering of the EU space and its 'stretching' into 'EU'rope's various Neighbourhoods. The European Neighbourhood Policy, launched in 2003, has indeed played a key role in 'making spaces' for 'EU'rope and creating new 'geometries' (the term used in the policy literature) of association and integration, including a variety of cross-border regional initiatives (for a discussion see, among others, Kramsch and Hooper 2004; Scott 2005, and the

contributions in Scott 2006). It should also be noted, however, that while the ENP was initially conceived with the explicit aim of fostering 'stability and peace' at the Union's external borders by creating a 'ring of friends', its focus has shifted considerably in recent years from a rubric of collaboration and 'friendly' exchange to an explicitly security-led agenda, rendered in the phraseology of 'preventative security', an intentionality that, albeit not explicitly, also underpins many of the macro-regionalising initiatives (see Guild 2010, as well as Van Houtum and Boedeltje 2011 and the associated special section of *Geopolitics*; on the ENP in the Mediterranean, also Pace 2007; Pace 2009). We discuss this question in more detail in a subsequent section of the paper.

The antecedents of the EU's currently-promoted macro-regional conceptualization can be traced back to the Brussels European Council of 14 December 2007, with the Council's 'invitation to the Commission to present an EU strategy for the Baltic Sea region' (European Council 2008: 17). For the purposes of our argument, the (con)text is revealing: the five-line 'invitation' is, in fact, embedded in-between two other key paragraphs. The previous one (paragraph 58) calls for increased cooperation in specific maritime regions, 'including islands, archipelagos and outermost regions as well as of the international dimension' (European Council 2008: 17). The one that follows (paragraph 60), on the other hand, 'welcomes the Commission report on the 2004 Strategy for the Outermost Regions stating its positive results and presenting the future prospects for Community actions in those regions' (European Council 2008: 18). Moreover, these three paragraphs conclude the section related to 'internal' European politics and policies, and open up the part of the Presidency's conclusions dedicated to 'external relations'. In other terms, macro-regions were originally conceived as part of the definition and production of the borderspace and margins of Europe, together with that of maritime spaces and marginal spaces (such as the Outermost Regions). This real-and-imagined cartography describing 160 EU's maritime regions as 'peripheral', as part of the margins of Europe, is by now well established in the 'EU'ropean spatial jargon as confirmed by the existence of the Conference of Peripheral Maritime Regions of Europe (see Fig. 1 below).

Source: http://crpm.org/index.php?act=2
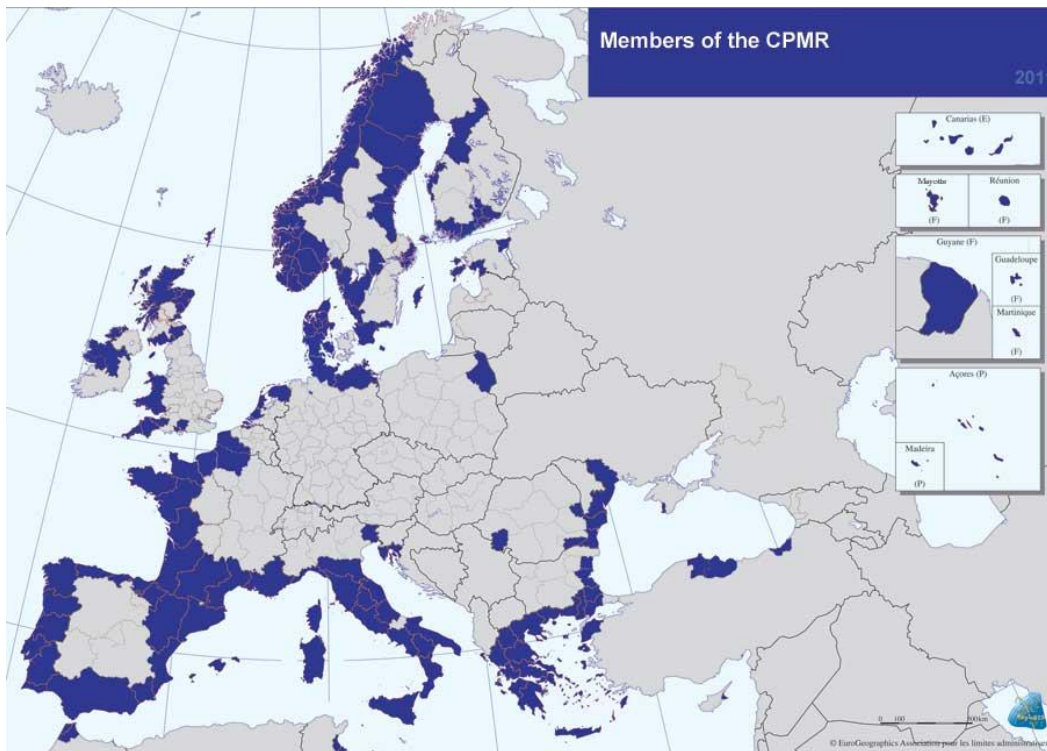
Macro-regions are thus conceived as a sort of spatial threshold between the two dimensions, 'internal' and 'external' of EU policy and agency – and this is also the way in which they are conceived in the policy literature on the Mediterranean Macro-Region (see, for instance, Stocchiero, 2010a, 2010b). This understanding of the macro-region is of particular relevance since it is inscribed in the broader coordinates of mainstream EU spatial discourses: macro-regional narratives are related, on the one hand, to the spatialities of the 'internal seas' and, on the other, to the redefinition of the actual 'margins of Europe' (Pace 2008). The fact that the Baltic Sea Region (BSR) is mentioned just before a short reference to the furthest lands of the European Union (such as the Canary Islands, the French overseas departments and the Portuguese regions of Azores and Madeira) alludes to a distinct spatial imagination of the European Council that is at the origin of the new plans for the realisation of macro-regional spaces (well in evidence on the INTERACT 2009 website).

The sea and the border are, hence, the two fundamental spatial markers when it comes to the European Union's macro-regionalization strategy. Adapting Horden and Purcell's historiographical terminology (2006), we may argue that a 'New Thalassology' is shaping 'EU'ropean spatial imaginations and policies. Well beyond the narrow limits of the EU's marine and maritime policies (Douvere and Ehler 2009), the trope of the 'inland sea' plays a key role in the making of the

European space, particularly with reference to the regionalization process. Within the ENPI-CBC (European Neighbourhood and Partnership Instrument-Cross Border Cooperation) programme, the internal 'seas' seem to be the 'connective tissue' framing the grand spatial scenarios of the EU. Despite the fact that the ENPI-CBC programme, launched in 2007, consists of both land border/sea crossing and sea-basin sub-programmes, most of the land borders are *de facto* nested in maritime spaces. Hence, sea-basins assume a specific geographical, political, and cultural relevance:

> whether in the Baltic or Black Seas, or in the Mediterranean, economic and cultural links across these sea-basins have been one of the most fundamental characteristics of economic and social development in these regions for thousands of years. Here, also CBC has a pivotal role to play, building on the persistent, shared heritage of contact and cooperation across these sea-basins. […] A broader environmental cooperation will be particularly important in the sea-basin programmes in the Baltic and Black Seas and in the Mediterranean. (ENPI 2007: 8, 18)

This quote highlights the two polarities of the EU imagination incorporated by the 'inland sea' concept. On the one hand, sea-basins have a direct functional relevance for policies in the marine (environmental cooperation, resource management) and maritime (transportation) domains. On the other hand, they are understood as historical spaces of communication and cooperation (but also of conflict and confrontation) setting an enduring foundation for economic and social co-development. In other terms, what is perceived as 'self-evident' geographical unity is arbitrarily translated into functional and historical unity, bringing together the two pillars of contemporary 'EU'ropean spatial policy: competitiveness *and* cohesion.[v]

These maritime fantasies also speak directly to EU's geopolitical imaginations; inland seas in fact define both soft and hard borders (Kostadinova 2009), both 'network Europe' and 'fortress Europe' (Rumford 2008). The thousand-year history of maritime contact and interaction, of trade and cultural exchange, is interpreted as a socio-economic precursor and a cultural foundation of European liberalism, hence sustaining the 'four freedoms' rhetoric (Barnard 2007). This maritime imagination becomes thus ancillary to the rhetoric of a connected and 'soft-bordered' 'EU'rope, where networking and trading are inscribed into the DNA of the Union and where neoliberal freedoms are the main engines of growth and prosperity.[vi] At the same time, however, the inland seas' porous and soft borders, their mobility and cosmopolitan 'nature' represent a challenge to the EU's security concerns and 'need' to be hardened through stricter immigration policies and military

patrolling of the maritime space. Securitization of the maritime margins of Europe is thus necessary exactly because they are 'naturally' open and porous, a border-space with uncertain and disputed sovereignty.

Hence, the spatial imagination that lies behind the macro-regionalization of the European space is twofold. It clearly is a 'seascape' (Bentley et al. 2007), a discourse that relies on the representation of the sea as a space of networking and connecting, of trading and understanding, of meeting and prospering. At the same time, it is also a 'borderscape' (Rajaram and Grundy-Warr 2007), a counter-discourse partially contradicting the seascape narrative while relying on it: the very nature of maritime openness demands regulation, sovereignty and control. This inner tension between 'seascapes' and 'borderscapes' produces a distinctive spatial imagination which is essential in order to comprehend both the EU's meta-geography (Paasi 2005) and the understandings that underpin the idea (and practice) of the 'macro-region'. As such, this complex and contradictory genealogy creates variable and mobile spatialities, where different geographical imaginations overlap and blur into each other.

At first glance, in the current policy and think-tank literature, the envisioned macro-regional spatialities are 'fuzzy' and 'soft-bordered'. In the European Commission's words, the macro-region is simply 'an area covering a number of administrative regions but with sufficient issues in common to justify a single strategic approach' (European Commission 2009: 5). Moreover, its borders are not defined once and for all, but their 'extent depends on the topic: for example, on economic issues it would involve all the countries in the region, on water quality issues it would involve the whole catchment area' (European Commission 2009: 5). The macro-region is thus presented here as a *functional* region, sharing challenges, opportunities and solutions. At the same time, the Commission outlines in other documents an additional meta-geographical narrative centered on the concept of 'inland sea', intended as a space 'naturally' unified by both common geomorphological and historical features. Sometimes, the key shared geographical commonality is a water basin, as if physical geography and morphology could be unproblematically understood as an obvious reason for people and territories to 'cooperate' (European Commission 2010). At other times, however, such documents appeal to history and 'sedimented' functional relationships between the constituent 'regions'. In most cases, indeed, no relationship between the 'physical' and the 'historical' features is mentioned, though both are often implicitly used together, while other times they are treated separately. A third category of aggregation adopted in the literature is 'cultural affinity'; again,

sometimes considered in relation to history, at others simply assumed on the basis of variables like language, religion, ethnicity, or something resembling Huntingtonian 'civilisational' cartographies

What is most striking is that all of the documents that we examined in this realm treat the above concepts/criteria as if they could/should be taken for granted, as something already existing that must be recognized, valorised and possibly 'strengthened' (European Commission 2010: 6, 8). No evidence of the actual existence of these same 'commonalities' is presented, no questions posed about the meaning of a presumed 'shared culture' or 'shared history'. The macro-regionalising exercise thus appears to be conceptually based on essentialist and highly problematic assumptions. Both already-existing-regions and the embryonic-soon to be unveiled-and-developed macro-regions are envisioned as 'simply' spatial containers, as discreet territorial entities endowed with a distinct personality and vocation (which may indistinctly be historical, cultural, or simply functional). Indeed, in this fantastic geography of territorial subjects potentially coming together in greater, equally fantastic, macro-spatialities, there is constant implicit and explicit reference to terms and concepts like *community* (especially local community), *space* and even *place* (with reference to the Mediterranean Macro-Region, see Tourret and Wallaert, 2010).

This fuzzy spatial imagination has been at work in all the macro-regionalization policies promoted by the EU, from the Baltic Sea Region Programme onward. The tension between current functional regionalization, on the one hand, and past geographical and historical regions is probably the very empty core of the overall macro-regional imagination, as highlighted by another document available on the DG Regio website, a discussion paper presented by Commissioner Pawel Samecki: "the absence of a formal definition of the region does not remove the need for a rationale for the existence of a macro-regional strategy. The Baltic Sea, with its environmental state, its historical significance and its geographical influence, for example on transport routes, provides an undeniable unity to the region" (European Commission 2009: 6). It is worth noticing that this set of representations runs parallel to 'EU'ropean discourses about infrastructure and transport plans, with their distinct spatial imaginations, made of topographies based on graphs and networks. What we are trying to highlight here, is how official EU documents tend to mix and conflate different (and somewhat incompatible) geographical concepts. On the one hand, what we find is a narrative about functional, natural, historical and cultural regions, defining the macro-region as 'the region' par excellence; on the other, these macro-regional policies are articulated within a purely network-based discourse. This confusion between 'regional' and 'networked' geographies clearly emerges in the Action Plan for the BSR Strategy:

"[t]he geography of the Baltic Sea Region, the very long distances by European standards (especially to the northern parts which are very remote), the extent of the sea that links but also divides the regions, the extensive external borders: all these pose special challenges to communication and physical accessibility in the region. In particular, the historical and geographical position of the Eastern Baltic Member States, with their internal networks largely oriented East-West, makes substantial investment in communication, transport and energy infrastructures particularly important"

(European Commission 2010: 46).

The sea, the region, borders, history, geography, networks, and infrastructures all come together here in a conceptual *pastiche*, with no theoretical reflection that might justify this messy mobilization of geographical concepts.

Arguably, the same meta-geography is at work in the second macro-region institutionalized by the European Commission in 2010, the Danubian one (European Commission 2010). The *cliché* is the same as in the Baltic: transportation, energy, competitiveness, environmental protection, tourism, education and security are the mantras, while culture, heritage and history play an ancillary and rhetorical role, reinforcing and sustaining the alleged self-evidence of the macro-region. Also in the Danubian case, we find a similar overlap of functional, geomorphological and historical regional narratives, all based on the evident 'nature' of the Danube basin which plays the same role as the Baltic Sea, naturally 'connecting and unifying' the macro-region:

In ancient times rivers determined civilisations and often served as boundaries from geographic, economic and cultural points of view as well. Currently, our existence is not bound anymore to territories defined by rivers, since we live in complex structures of various territorial, political and economic entities. Nevertheless, it seems that Europe's river, the Danube has been obtaining a new role, stepping forward as a connecting link between local communities, and becoming a revived symbol of the old continent

(Ágh, Kaiser and Koller 2010: 9).

The Danube river functions in this spatial imagination like an inland sea, mobilizing a specific geographical imagination based on 'unity' and 'connectivity'. This mobilization, however, is at the same time related to territorial labelling, branding and marketing, as explicitly admitted by the

action plan of the European Union Strategy for the Danube Region (European Commission 2010: 28), while at the same time aiming at 'identity building' and 'community making' in the region (Koller 2010: 182).

Such a blurring of multiple regional fantasies (functional, geomorphological and historical) is similarly at work in analogous recent initiatives concerning the Mediterranean. A close inspection of the initiative for the realisation of an Adriatic Euroregion (envisioned, too, as a 'macro-region'), reveals that:

> EU policies for macroareas are a strategic approach that we support unreservedly and hope to see developed for all European Union territories sharing the same characteristics. […] Territorial homogeneity and the development issues of certain areas go beyond national, regional and local boundaries and can only be addressed in a uniform and supranational context – in other words, a Community context
>
> (Adriatic Euroregion 2009: 2).

As we noted previously, such faith in 'the same characteristics' and 'territorial homogeneity' is difficult to project upon the Mediterranean; the possibility of regionalizing the Mediterranean as a whole is in fact a disputed question, even from the perspective of the advocates of a Mediterranean macro-region (Tourret and Willaert 2011: 101). On the one hand, the Mediterranean is assumed to be 'too big' – and complex – to be macro-regionalized, hence suggesting the geographical paradox of a 'sub-regional macro-regionalization'. Even more radically, Wallaert suggests that the issue of a Mediterranean macro-region was simply converted from 'a totem to a taboo' (2011: 158). On the other hand (and as we point out in our introductory comments), the Mediterranean has been often considered by popular discourse as a region par excellence, the outcome of a long lasting geographical and historical imagination, from the Vidalian school of regional geography, to Fernand Braudel and beyond, influencing profoundly the way inland seas have been categorized and represented (Braudel 1972; also Birot and Dresch 1953; Horden 2005; Newbigin 1924). Furthermore, Mediterranean space has been intensively regionalized in 'EU'ropean policies from the late 1950s until the most recent realisation of the Union for the Mediterranean (UfM), producing in this way a rather heterogeneous and contested conceptual framework for any further attempt of macro-regionalization (Jones 1997) - the next section discusses in more detail how some of these key representations and policies have nurtured the idea(l) of a Mediterranean region since the late 1960s.

A Mediterranean (macro)region - 'EU'rope's geographical fantasies

Despite recent work, especially in political science/IR on the EU's status as *inter alia* a civilian, normative, soft, and civilising power, there remains no commonly agreed perspective on how best to interrogate the EU's 'external' region-building activities. As we have noted previously, the definition and construction of regions as political rationales for EU action is a long-standing part of the genetic make-up of EU institutions and their political/bureaucratic elites – regional 'fantasies' that have been deployed both within and beyond the EU borders. This regional fantasizing by EU elites is no better demonstrated than in the context of the Mediterranean where over 50 years of various EU-inspired narratives have been concocted to make intelligible 'EU'ropean ways of being in and acting towards this creation, and operationalizing a particular regime of truth there that both defines and enables EU actions and also silences and excludes other modes of interpretation.

Political geographical interpretations based on territorial, symbolic and institutional dimensions offer significant insights into EU regional fantasizing (Jones 2006; 2009; 2011). The territorial dimension in this trinity categorises space according to long-standing essentialised interpretations, that is, specific 'EU'ropean spatial readings that codify space for particular political actions. Symbolically, (macro)regions are made in ways which both facilitate support among individual EU member states and justify policy innovations at the EU supranational level and in so doing, serve to legitimise 'EU'rope's international interventions. These are in turn framed and scoped by a 'EU'ropean driven institutional parcelling and representation of space for 'EU'ropean political management.

As also the current advocates of the macro-regional approach admit (Tourret and Willaert 2011: 114-117), the main issue in designing an inclusive Mediterranean macro-region is how to harmonise this new multilevel tool of governance in a composite and multifaceted institutional framework. Since the late 1950s numerous efforts have been expended by EU elites to 'make' a Mediterranean region to further 'EU'ropean geopolitical goals; efforts that have produced a varied and chequered history of EU-Mediterranean relations. This political 'making of the Mediterranean' has involved various territorial, symbolic and institutional fantasizing of it; a fluidity resulting essentially from changing 'EU'ropean geopolitical preferences. We can identify five broad periods in EU efforts to create a Mediterranean region, each characterised by particular tropes and representations of Mediterranean space. The first of these spans the first decade of the EU's existence. Here, the Mediterranean was portrayed by EU elites as the most problematic flank of EU'rope, a representation underpinned by Cold War security discourses and potential threats to the fledgling

common market being fashioned within EU space. While members of the European Parliament called on the European Commission to draw up a political action plan for the Mediterranean in the mid-1960s, the EU's response was to continue with bilateral trade agreements with specific Mediterranean states, reflecting as much the lack of progress in the political dynamic of European integration as the EU's concerns over economic disruption to its own markets. By 1971 the EP's Rossi report forcefully argued against this approach maintaining that "*it did not create among Mediterranean peoples this certainty of belonging to one and the same region of the world, having its own personality, its brand image*".

To assist this branding of the Mediterranean, the EU launched the Global Mediterranean Policy in 1972 encompassing trade, aid and investment under a benevolence trope for Mediterranean region building. Symbolically, the Mediterranean was portrayed as a 'backward space' and ripe for EU sponsored economic and social development programmes institutionalised through bilateral agreements and aid budgets. 'EU'ropean economic recession, growing trade protectionism, Arab-Israeli hostilities and moves by several states to seek and eventually secure full EU membership put paid to any hopes of a coordinated EU Mediterranean policy. This led to the Mediterranean being viewed as an 'unsettled space' in 'EU'ropean political discourses and one characterised by fragile economies and political volatility, with obvious security concerns and dangers for 'EU'rope (see Tsoukalis 1977).

The Barcelona process launched by the EU in 1995 was underpinned by a 'EU'ropean representation of the Mediterranean as an unstable and fragmented space devoid of political collective identity and with a socio-political complexity that 'EU'rope was forced to manage. This problematic spatial reading of the Mediterranean is acutely reflected in comments made by a senior European Commission official as: '*An unstable region on our back door promotes concerns in terms of terrorism and the knock—on effects for investors in the region. Generally countries that respect human rights and have reasonably stable political systems are easier to do business with those that do not. The fact is that none of the Arab States respect human rights or have political systems which we could recognize as being acceptable*' (Interview with Senior Official European Commission, 18th September 2004 and quoted in Jones 2006). The symbolic codification of the Mediterranean as 'unstable' produced a 'EU'ropean response based on the trope of a partnership for change which framed the scope and intent of EU actions, and included socio-cultural, economic and political dimensions aimed at facilitating overall state reform. Elite fantasizing of the Mediterranean was shattered very quickly by 'EU'ropean self-assessments of disappointing policy

progress, the fragility of the partnership concept, varying levels of interest and commitment among Mediterranean states, and hardening positions on 'EU'ropean security post 9/11. From this assessment emerged the fantasy of the Mediterranean as European Neighbourhood and space of Europeanization.

European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) was launched by the EU in 2003. Within this the Mediterranean is represented by EU elites as something 'other'- a space to be Europeanized by the outward projection of 'EU'ropean norms and values. As Former European Commissioner, Chris Patten, explained, '*For the coming decade we need to find new ways to export the stability, security and prosperity we have created within the enlarged EU. We should begin by agreeing on a clearer vision for relations with our neighbours*' (quoted in Jones and Clark 2010: 91). As the then Commission president Romano Prodi confirmed '*[Europeanization] instead of trying to establish new dividing lines should deepen integration between the EU and the ring of friends which would accelerate our mutual political, economic and cultural dynamism*' (quoted in Jones and Clark 2010: 91). With a trope of friendship underpinning this new spatial fantasizing, the principal goal was to anchor the EU's offer of concrete benefits to the level of progress made towards political and economic reform in the targeted countries of a Mediterranean region now conceptualized as a human, social and historical [spatial] reality. Continued problems over access to EU markets, worries by 'EU'ropean governments over intelligence sharing with Arab governments, and generally low levels of progress on human rights and 'good-governance' plagued this regional approach prompting new rounds of regional fantasizing by both French and other 'EU'ropean political elites (Jones 2011).

The Union for the Mediterranean (UfM) initiated by the EU in 2008 represented until this year, the most recent spatial imaging of the Mediterranean. Here, the Mediterranean is represented as historically, geographically, and culturally bound with 'EU'rope. It is to be a shared space co-owned by 'EU'rope and those Mediterranean states lying outside of 'EU'rope's physical and legal space. Learning from past errors, EU elites have highlighted the principle of mutual respect and set up new institutional templates to improve the nature and visibility of relations between 'EU'rope and the Mediterranean. Symbolically, EU elites are attempting to reconfigure the Mediterranean as a peace and stability space based on what is referred to in EU circles as the three Ms- Money, Markets, and Mobility. The UfM's key goals since 2008 have been to promote economic integration and democratic reform across 16 neighbours to the EU's south in North Africa and the Middle East, though the UfM had barely got off the ground before it ran into trouble as a result of the Gaza

conflict between Israel and Hamas at the start of 2009. High-level UfM meetings were suspended both in 2009 and 2010. Like the earlier Barcelona process to promote stability and prosperity in the Mediterranean, the UfM became a victim of deep-rooted political tensions in the Middle East, at the mercy of spiralling popular unrest across North Africa as autocratic regimes (many of 'EU'rope's erstwhile partners) toppled one by one.

This situation provoked a new fantasizing of the Mediterranean by EU elites in search of a '*new response to a changing neighbourhood*' (European Commission 2011: 2). Under political pressure, the European Commission published a Medium Term Programme for a Renewed European Neighbourhood Policy (2011-2014) on May 25th 2011. The Renewed Policy explicitly sought to create a '*[Mediterranean] space where political cooperation is as close as possible and economic integration is as deep as possible*' (European Commission 2011: 37) and ushered in a new trope, the '*Partnership for Democracy and Shared Prosperity*' (European Commission 2011: 2) committing EU funds, promising investment safeguards and 'deep democracy' privileges. How long this particular regional fantasy will survive before the EU is forced to replace it with new spatial readings of the Mediterranean remains to be seen, however, if only because of what is, in many ways, 'the elephant in the room' when discussing current region-making endeavours in the Mediterranean. We are referring here to the question of border control at the EU's southern borders, a preoccupation that has come to dominate the EU's (and many Member States') envisioning of – and relations with – the Mediterranean space in the past few years, a topic that we engage in more detail in the section that follows.

Governing Mediterranean mobilities: border-work or region-making?

As we have hinted at previously, 'EU'ropean region-making has always also been about border-making – above and beyond other understandings popularly associated with the term that most frequently highlight some sort of common/shared 'character' or 'identity' (for an excellent critique, see Paasi's classic work from 1996). In the existing policy literature on the Mediterranean Macro-Region, such commonality is phrased in the language of 'partnership', 'common challenges' (or a 'shared priority axis') and 'territorial collaboration', that all somehow bind the Euro-Mediterranean space (see Cichowlaz 2011; MEDGOVERNANCE 2010; Tourret and Wallaert 2010). The discrepancy between the idealised imaginations of such a common Mediterranean project evident in these documents (the 'Partnership' trope highlighted by the Renewed ENP) – and the very real divides that mark the Mediterranean space today – is thus striking.

When noting how plans for a Mediterranean Macro-Region can 'learn' from the apparent success of the Baltic Sea and Danube Strategies, one of the programme documents published by the MedGovernance Project (Tourret and Wallaert 2010) pinpoints five 'fields of tension' wherein the 'lessons' of the other two macro-regional experiments may founder: '1.The scale of a Mediterranean macro-region, 2. Financial tensions, 3. Coordination with the UfM process and the other Mediterranean policies, 4.Taking into account the new EU institutional context, 5. The level of cooperation culture in the Mediterranean area, 6. Time and agenda setting'. The challenges for the projected Macro-Region are thus seen as largely bureaucratic/institutional, with the main 'tensions' having to do with the financial implications of the exercise (who is going to pay for what), potential conflict and/or overlap with existing structures of governance (in particular, the risk of undermining the role of the recently-constituted Union for the Mediterranean) and more nitty-gritty questions of institutional collaboration. In the 34 page document, the question of migration appears only once, at the outset (p.4), as one of the 'policy fields' that the Macro-Region should somehow address/re-dress. The word 'border', on the other hand, appears solely as part of the bi-nomer 'cross-border cooperation', frequently evoked throughout the document – but never alone.

This complete silence of the MedGovernance planning document to the question of borders and migration management in the Mediterranean commands our attention. As we have noted previously, all macro-regional initiatives of this sort are also about extending the 'EU'ropean Neighbourhood and its spaces of action (as was the aim of the Baltic Sea Strategy - see Moisio 2003). And an important part of such attempts to extend the 'EU'ropean space is, inevitably, 'border-work' (Rumford, 2008). This is visible not only – and actually not even predominantly – in a hardening of the EU's external borders (which is indeed happening), but also through various 'soft' modes of extending the spaces of EU action into its various Neighbourhoods (as we have noted in our discussion of the changing role/function of the ENP). The management of the EU's borders, increasingly at a distance, is part of broader strategies for what Sandra Lavenex (2004) terms the 'externalisation' of European governance – with 'EU'rope's Neighbours engaged into the Union's border-work, acting as 'filters' to sort and separate legitimate from illicit flows (of people and goods) before they reach the borders of 'EU'rope (see, among others, Andrijasevic 2010; Van Houtum 2010; Van Houtum and Pijpers 2007). The language of partnership and collaboration that underpins this macro-regional exercise is, in fact, the very same one adopted in invoking the EU's Neighbours into its border-management strategies, part of what William Walters (2010) refers to as 'ethicalised stylings of governance', articulated in a managerial language of 'best practice', and the promotion of certain 'shared rules and standards'. It is key to legitimising attempts by Union

institutions and agencies to re-make the Neighbourhood spaces at its borders (for a discussion, see Bialasiewicz et al. 2009).

It is therefore important to confront the Mediterranean macro-regional fantasy with current 'on the ground' attempts by European institutions to re-make the Mediterranean and, in particular, to govern Mediterranean mobilities.[vii] The 'Renewed' European Neighbourhood Policy (ENP) that we mentioned above, launched in May 2011 as a response to the momentous events taking place on the Southern and Eastern shores of the Mediterranean is, in many ways, nothing new, with its focus on 'partnership' and EU support for democratisation and trade and market access. The catchy slogan that belies this most recent initiative – the 'three M's' of Money, Markets and Mobility – that should magically solve the Southern Mediterranean's ills, also mirrors earlier attempts by Union institutions to promote economic integration and democratic reform as two key pillars of EU Mediterranean policy. The explicit focus on 'Mobility', however, is new – and has been a key focus of the most recent agreements signed by the EU with its Southern Mediterranean partners.

The first such formal agreement was signed on September 29, 2011 with the new Tunisian authorities, at the conclusion of the EU-Tunisia summit. The agreement – termed a new 'Privileged Partnership' – is part of the renewed ENP instrument and supported financially through the new 'SPRING' programme (Support for Partnership, Reform and Inclusive Growth). Alongside EU support for Tunisian economic development and new trade privileges and market access, a fundamental part of the agreement is a new 'Partnership for Mobility'. This latter, while opening the EU's doors to Tunisian students and select skilled migrants, also commits the new Tunisian state to aiding 'EU'rope with the monitoring (and halting) of illegal migration flows. The previous Tunisian government had been party to similar agreements on the policing of migration flows to the EU with individual Member States such as Italy – so in a sense this is nothing new. What is new, however, is that such border-policing functions have now been explicitly written into the text of the formal agreements on partnership with the EU. As the EU-Tunisia summit was being held in Tunis in the last days of September 2011, another international meeting was taking place in the city, with the theme of 'Rethinking migration: for free circulation in the Mediterranean space' (Repenser les migrations: pour une libre circulation dans l'espace méditerranée 2011). The meeting brought together political activists and NGOs from across the Mediterranean, with the aim of bringing the attention of EU leaders to the deadly effects of its migration management policies – and the dangers of trading economic openness for other forms of closure (as the new 'Privileged Partnership' being elaborated with Tunisia in those very days was proposing). In its closing statement, the meeting's

leaders denounced the guiding assumptions driving such new agreements: 'that of an incompatibility between the exterior and the interior of the European space', an incompatibility seen as inherently dangerous, and one that had to be carefully 'managed' through the selective control of the mobility of capital, goods and people between the two shores. Hardly a vision conducive to the elaboration of a shared Mediterranean macro-regional unity.

In our introductory comments, we remarked on the frequent fluidity and ambiguity of the 'region' as a term – and how such ambiguity often serves to occlude (and support) 'hard' political and geopolitical strategies. This is certainly the case in the Mediterranean todya, where new plans for region-making go hand in hand with increasing control of mobility and various other forms of 'governance at a distance'. It is therefore important to note this dual dimension of 'EU'ropean macro-regionalising projects, looking beyond their overt language of partnership and 'territorial cooperation' (whatever this problematically-paired term may mean; for critiques, see Faludi 2011; Luukkonen 2011) and also to their political and geopolitical agendas. It is revealing, indeed, that the key policy document published by the MedGovernance Project (Tourret and Wallaert 2010) in arguing for the benefits of Mediterranean macro-regionalization notes also its potential 'geopolitical' uses: 'for the [southern] EU countries, such a model would mean to develop new capacities of influence over the accessing and neighbourhood countries'; indeed, 'for the European Union [as a whole], macro-regions may constitute a *geopolitical continuum corridor* running from the Black Sea to the North and the Baltic Sea' (2010: 18, emphasis in original) – which brings us to our closing comments.

Conclusions: (macro)regions, power, and (geo)politics
According to Swiss geographer Claude Raffestin, 'the term region derives from *regere fines*, that is, to govern/mark out borders' (Raffestin 1984). This act is presented as the typical prerogative of the *rex* (the king, the sovereign etc.). The border 'is thus conceived as *recto*, that is, 'just', but also straight, linear. Put simply, then, the term region incarnates a distinct concept of governance over space and territory, based on straight lines' (Raffestin 1984). Accordingly, Raffestin suggests, every discussion of 'regionalization' should take into account the fact that any understanding of the region that intends it as a sort of spontaneous organic spatial formation based on a specific community is nothing but a myth, or better yet, a *mythologeme*. This *mythologeme*, for Raffestin, is, for instance, at the foundation of Von Thunen's concentric model based on a principle of territorial organization that inspired a very specific way of thinking the spatialization of social interaction for decades, but

also of Braudel's regional geographies of the Mediterranean, presented as though they were historical spatial formations based on specific 'territorial cultures' (Minca 2012).

Our point in citing Raffestin is to note that regions and regionalization are always political and geo-political projects; they are the result of the decisive act of spatial bordering. Every single time we 'define' the existence of a territorial body and try to codify (and sometimes even institutionalize) it, we operate a fundamental spatial act (to cite Carl Schmitt); we operate as a sovereign power trying to define meaning and content for those very spaces that are created as a consequence of that act. To put it bluntly: every project of regional mapping or region-building is nothing but a political project translated into space(s). And the ambitious macro-regionalization currently envisioned by 'EU'ropean institutions and think-tanks certainly has the trappings of a grand (geo)political project, with some sinister echoes of past Pan-Regionalist imaginaries of the early 20th century.

It is curious, then, that the new 'EU'ropean macro-regional 'experts' seem entirely unaware of this long established tradition of geographical reflection on the regional metaphor and its 'space-making' power. At the same time, however, the macro-regional policy literature draws (at least implicitly) upon a *number* of different traditions of regional geography, a hodge-podge of academic and popular understandings of what a region, regardless of the scale, is supposed to be. We can thus identify in the documents both echoes of historical 'possibilistic' regions of a Vidalian kind, defined by distinct notions of place and *genre de vie* – but also definitions that reflect more closely the post-WWII American (and, more generally, positivist) alternative, that is, 'functional' regions deplete of place, but driven rather by models of a structural kind. At the same time, some of the definitions also seem to vaguely allude to system theory (which enjoyed a degree of popularity in the French speaking context and, more in general, in those countries where planning was particularly influential in the preoccupations of geographers, for example in Northern and Eastern Europe).

More could be said about these trajectories, of course, but our concern here is simply to highlight how these different traditions and ways of conceiving the region are conflated and confused in the new regional fetishism that seems to pervade the policy documents that support the macro-regional fad. The spaces described in the macro-regional literature (whether in reference to the Baltic or the Mediterranean) are thus defined by a multiplicity of visible and invisible functions, materialities, imaginations, fantasies, formal and informal strategies at a number of scales, fragmented individual and collective spatialities. In this sense, they also seem to echo the networked geographies theorized almost two decades ago by scholars like Castells (1996) and Storper (1997). Yet, again, there is no

explicit reference to the work of these (or other) spatial theorists in the macro-regional(izing) policy texts, where networked spatialities appear in a mish-mash with old fashioned cartographies in fantasizing a newly regionalized Mediterranean. Nonetheless, our point here is not simply to unpack and criticize the key tenets of this discussion, but rather to highlight the fact that although projects like these may appear theoretically weak (if not entirely untenable), this in no way implies that they will not be implemented – or that they will have no real effects. Quite the contrary: the wilful adoption of spatial metaphors like that of the region, loaded as they are with ambiguity and potentially infinite interpretations, is often a (power)ful strategy that consents the implementation of contentious political projects.

We do not wish to claim here that 'EU'ropean spatial thinking should be devoid of a regional understanding of things territorial. Conceiving and planning new spatial formations is what institutions do all the time. However, this should be done with adequate knowledge and acknowledgement of the histories of the concepts involved, also (if not especially) because of their potential performative power. What these documents reveal, rather, is poor theory. And poor theory, most often, leads to poor and at times even dangerous decisions. The only way to go around this problem would be for the self-appointed (macro)regional 'experts' to be entirely explicit about the nature and the aims of their project, clarifying to which concept of region they appeal. Simply 'interviewing a selection of stakeholders' regarding their desires for and from the projected macro-region (as the Tourret and Wallaert 2010 project document does, for instance) does not say much about the existence of an 'actual' or potential region but simply outlines the interviewees' own spatial fantasies and fantastic understandings of, in this case, the Mediterranean.

Finally – and we believe this is an important question given the stated aims of this special issue – a deeper interrogation is necessary of why thinking in (macro)regional terms is a taken-for-granted choice in 'EU'ropean policy-making and, in particular, in inscribing 'EU'rope's relations with its various 'Neighbourhoods'. Why must we continue to think in terms of bounded spatial containers, as 'soft-bordered' as these may be?

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[i] On May 6th 2011 a one-day workshop entitled "Mediterranean? Macro? Region?" was held in Torino, Italy, co-hosted by the Paralleli Euro-Mediterranean Institute, one of the partners in the MedGovernance Project. Alongside representatives of the MedGovernance Project and academic geographers, the workshop was also attended by practitioners and representatives of local and regional institutions and other think-tanks associated with the project – and generated a heated debate. The current paper draws upon those discussions, and we would like to thank the organisers for that opportunity.

[ii] Piemonte, Tuscany and Lazio in Italy, Provence Alpes Cote d'Azur in France, and Catalunya and Andalucia in Spain.

[iii] The Paralli Institute in Torino, CeSPI in Rome, MAEM/MEMA in Florence, IEMed in Barcelona, Three Cultures Foundation in Seville and the Institut de la Méditerranée in Marseille.

[iv] According to INTERACT (2009), an EU-funded organization offering advice and consultation about European Territorial Cooperation programmes, macro-regions constitute a third category, distinct from territorial cooperation (within the EU) and ENPI cross-border cooperation.

[v] Again, the front page text on the INTERACT (2009) website is revealing: 'The EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) is the first Macro Region in Europe. The European Council adopted the Strategy in the end of October 2009 during the Swedish Presidency of the EU. The countries around the Baltic Sea are joining forces to save their shared inland sea and to strengthen the competitiveness of the region. Europe's largest inland sea is in a bad way - the Baltic countries together have major environmental problems to address. However, it is not just problems that unite them. The countries also have a similar history, common features and already cooperate in a number of areas. To overcome environmental problems, but also to increase the region's competitiveness and prosperity, the Baltic countries have united on a common Baltic Sea Region Strategy. It started at the December 2007 EU summit, where the EU heads of state and government challenged the Commission to develop a strategy for the Baltic Sea Region. The Baltic Sea Region Strategy has three main aims: to make Baltic Sea cleaner, to make the region more dynamic and prosperous, and to improve security. In order to achieve this, the Member States and the Commission have agreed on an Action Plan with 15 Priority Areas and about 80 different Flag Ships. The European Council has asked to call upon all relevant

actors to act speedily and ensure full implementation of the Strategy, which could constitute an example of a Macro-regional Strategy. It invites the Commission to present a progress report to the Council by June 2011'.

[vi] See, for instance, the *eu4seas* project, funded within the 7th Framework Programme, under the heading 'The EU and Multilateralism' (http://www.eu4seas.eu/).

[vii] We do not have the space here to explicitly address the EU's response to the events of Spring 2011, or the geopolitics of the NATO led intervention in Libya, although both these passages need to be kept in mind when discussing post-conflict initiatives on the part of European institutions, as well as individual Member States (see Bialasiewicz 2011b).