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A New Territorial Scale Through Promotion of Cooperation and Coordination? The Macro-Regional Strategy of the European Union

İşbirliğinin ve Koordinasyonun Geliştirilmesi Yoluyla Yeni Bir Teritoryal Ölçek? Avrupa Birliği'nin Makro Bölgesel Stratejisi

Abstract

The macro-regional strategy (MRS) of the European Union (EU) is widely acknowledged as a soft form of governance. To this view, the identified macro-regions (MRs) are loosely demarcated regions, the governance of which hinges on the informal coordination and flexible involvement of actors. However, it is also stated that MRs have the potential to solidify. Nevertheless, how this solidification may be handled in integrity has not been addressed in studies on MRS. This study proposes an integrated framework for this matter. Considering that the scale is configured and reconfigured, MRS offers a new governance level that has territorial dimensions in certain respects. It delineates a macro-regional scale with the aim of promoting the autonomy and ability of the identified MRs to produce policies. In this regard, the results of the study suggest that MRS may introduce a new territorial scale on the basis of three variables that are delimitation, place-based governance, and territorialisation of policymaking.

Keywords: Delimitation, Place-Based Governance, Territorialisation of Policymaking, Territorial Scale, Macro-Regional Strategy of the European Union.

Öz

Avrupa Birliği'nin makro bölgesel stratejisi (MBS), genellikle yumuşak (soft) bir yönetim formu olarak değerlendirilmektedir. Bu görüşe göre tanımlanmış makro bölgeler (MB), gevşek bir şekilde sınırları belirlenmiş (demarcated) bölgelerdir ve bunların yönetimi, enformel koordinasyona ve aktörlerin esnek katılımına dayanmaktadır. Bununla birlikte MB'lerin katılma (solidification) potansiyeline de sahip olduğu ileri sürülmektedir.

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Ancak MBS üzerine yapılmış çalışmalarda, bu katlaşmanın nasıl olabileceği bütünlüklü bir şekilde ele alınmamıştır. Bu çalışma, bu konuya ilişkin bütünlük bir çerçeve ortaya koymaktadır. Ölçeğin oluşturulduğu ve yeniden oluşturulduğu dikkate alındığında MBS, belirli açılardan teritoryal boyutları bulunan yeni bir yönetim düzeyi oluşturmaktadır. MBS, tanımlanan MB'lerin özerkliğini ve politika üretme yeteneğini geliştirmek amacıyla bir makro bölgesel ölçek belirginleştirmektedir. Bu bağlamda bu çalışmanın sonuçları, MBS'nin sınırlandırma (*delimitation*), yer merkezli yönetim (*place-based governance*) ve politika yapımının teritoryalleşmesi değişkenleri temelinde yeni bir teritoryal ölçek geliştirebileceğini ortaya koymaktadır.

Anahtar Kelimeler: Sınırlandırma, Yer Merkezli Yönetişim, Politika Yapımının Teritoryalleşmesi, Teritoryal Ölçek, Avrupa Birliği'nin Makro Bölgesel Stratejisi.

Introduction

The EU launched MRS as a new tool for the improvement of territorial cooperation by adopting the EU Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region (EUSBSR) in 2009. Subsequently, three more MRSs have been put in practice. MRS is a cross-border cooperation (CBC) strategy with the aim of finding solutions to common challenges shared by states located in an identified MR. It seeks to ensure economic and social development through promoting cooperation between actors, achieving coordination among policies, and mobilising the existing resources of MRs (Gänzle and Kern, 2016b; Yılmaz, 2021).

MRS is widely regarded as a form of soft governance. To this view, an MR is a functional region with fluid boundaries. As a result-oriented cooperation process on a sectoral basis, MRS has a flexible membership structure. Its governance rests on informal relationship patterns, and policies are mostly implemented by task-specific units. Therefore, it is concluded that MRs are soft spaces (Gänzle and Kern, 2016b; Metzger and Schmitt, 2012; Purkarthofer, Sielker, and Stead, 2022; Stead, 2014a). In some other studies, it is asserted that MRS is a 'territorial coordination' since it is a loose and informal form of cooperation, conducted by working groups or area-wide platforms, and there is no organisational structure and hierarchical control upon information, resources, and processes (Peterlin, 2011).

Given the components and implementation methods of MRS, it may be inferred that MRs are loosely demarcated and non-institutional geographical areas, managed on a soft governance basis. In fact, the European Commission acknowledges that "*it is not essential that the limits of the [macro-]region be precisely defined. [...] [T]he physical boundaries may*

vary according to the relevance of the policy area in question” (EC, 2009b, p. 1). Nevertheless, MRS is not a momentary initiative, and it has gradually been revealed as a result of the large-scale territorial cooperation programmes of the EU (Medeiros, 2013, p. 1255). Moreover, considering that CBC is a learning process (De Sousa, 2013), it is uncertain to which the macro-regional cooperation shall lead. The prospect of MRSs hinges on the performance of MRs. Hence, MRs also have the potential to harden (Gänzle, 2018; Gänzle and Mirtl, 2019; Metzger and Schmitt, 2012). However, an integrated and coherent approach on how this solidification may be handled has not been addressed. Building a framework on this matter is the main focus of this study.

Drawing on the framework proposed by Perkmann (2007a) on the rescaling process, this study claims that MRS may also lead to the emergence of a territorial scale. Perkmann outlines a model for the introduction of a new territorial scale on the basis of three variables as political mobilisation, governance building, and strategic unification and empirically applies this model to the Dutch-German CBR, covering the geographical area of Enschede, the Netherlands, and Münster, Germany. Based on the information gained from interviews and policy documents, he concludes that new regional cooperation patterns giving local actors a more prominent role in CBC, embraced by the EU and supported by the European Commission’s funding programmes, promotes the mobilisation of local actors to deal with cross-borders issues, the established governance structure encapsulates horizontal networks (local units) and vertical networks such as central governmental units and supranational organs, and the CBR turns into a ‘new unit for intervention’ in policymaking. This study utilises these variables. However, primarily perusing into communications from the European Commission, action plans, and implementation reports on MRSs, it handles the question of whether MRS may lead to the emergence of a new territorial scale within variables peculiar to the macro-regional cooperation. Within this framework, the study elaborates on three variables. The first is the form of delimitation. The strategy marks and demarcates a geographical area on the basis of geographical and human-related components that are specific to each MR (Medeiros, 2020). MRs are not geographical areas that are classified and delimited only by their physical features. Economic, social, and territorial components are also included in their delimitation (Gänzle and Kern, 2016b). This way, MRs are distinguished from outside by their particular geographical and human characteristics. The second is the governance method. MRS anticipates intense coordination and cooperation among governmental and non-governmental actors at different levels (EC, 2014b)

for their amalgamation into cooperation at a new scale (Gänzle, 2017). The last one is the designation of the macro-regional scale in fulfilling policies. MRs are assumed to be strategically unified for policymaking. It is expected that policies should be implemented by considering the delimited area in unity (EC, 2009a). This process should rest on the ownership of actors and resources of MRs (EC, 2014b). These variables are interrelated and bolster one another. They are basically intended for advancing the place-based foundation and autonomy of MRs, thereby promoting the territorial basis of the designated macro-regional scale.

In the light of the explanations outlined above, the second section following the introduction elucidates the concepts of region, territory, and scale for this study. The third section handles the relationship between the configuration and reconfiguration of scales and territorial governance. It elaborates on the basic variables that may introduce a territorial scale. In the fourth section, the concept of macro-regional cooperation is analysed in the framework of the identified variables. The last section summarises the conclusions drawn from the study.

Conceptual Clarification

Region and Territory

The region is an elusive concept, employed across various disciplines, not just in geography (Tomaney, 2009). In conventional regional geography, focusing on the spatial dimension, regions are identified as bounded spatial units separated from each other (Paasi, 2009a, p. 214). This view, positioning the region on the territoriality of space, is challenged by the relational approach proposing that the space is constantly reconstituted through multi-layered interactions. The region, to this view, is not a bounded and discrete unit in a specific hierarchy of scale. It is rather open and discontinuous, formed by spatial networks (Goodwin, 2013, pp. 1182-1183). In some studies, it is argued that regions may be constituted through territoriality as well as relationality (Goodwin, 2013), or different combinations of territorial and relational dimensions may be observed in regional practices (Harrison, 2013).

In the political-geographical context, the concept of region in social sciences was marginalised since the modern state was the dominant spatial-temporal unit in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Häkli, 1998, p. 88). However, particularly in Western Europe, states started to consider the region as a part of the modernisation process following the end of World War II. A top-down regionalisation process

with little local input was implemented until the 1980s. A new regionalism emerged in the 1980s, triggered by economic globalisation, the modern state's transformation, and the European integration process (Keating, 2003). Scholars of new regionalism in various theoretical strands basically highlight the multi-dimensionality and the plurality of regionalisation process. In this vein, constructivists and relativists suggest that regions are not pre-given and natural entities but constructed and constituted by collective human action (Söderbaum, 2016, pp. 27-30).

It may be inferred that current studies on the region deal with the relational and territorial dimensions and construction processes. Building on them, for this study, the region may be defined as a spatial construct, which has a 'territorial shape', the boundaries of which may vary from open to more or less closed (Paasi, 1991, p. 244, 2009b, p. 134), and a physical delimitation inhabited by human beings, enabling them to establish trans-local relationships (Hettne, 1999, p. 10, 2003, p. 28). Moreover, it politically offers regional actors a space for policymaking, which may render a region an actor, depending on its ability to produce policies and resources (See Keating, 2003, pp. 263-272).

The territory is the physical component of the region. Nevertheless, these are different concepts. A territory may be a region, but a region is not always a territory (Paasi, 2009b, 124). The territory is mostly addressed in reference to territoriality, a form of exerting power over a geographical area (Allen, 2009). Sack's (1986) definition of territoriality is fruitful in this sense. He defines territoriality as "*the attempt by an individual or group to affect, influence, or control people, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area.*" People, groups, or organisations mark, classify and delimit a geographical compartment to direct patterns of interactions over this area.

Drawing on Sack's definition, it may be proposed that the territory is a classified and delimited geographical compartment, functionally different from other types of geographical areas and separated from outside by its peculiarities. As "*[t]erritoriality acts as a container or mould for the spatial properties of events, [...] the territory becomes the object to which other attributes are assigned.*" It is a variable for the regulation of interactive patterns in a bounded area (Sack, 1986, pp. 32-34), which may be observed at different geographical scales (Storey, 2001, pp. 1-5). Accordingly, the territory, whether it is a place, locale, or region, is politically a delineated area that is based on spatially organised networks of human and non-human agents (Painter, 2010).

Scale

The scale in the discipline of geography is discussed in various respects. Some scholars claim that it is a methodological issue. The main focus of this epistemological conception is on metaphors, measurement tools, and metrics, harnessed to produce questions and knowledge on the earth. Some others suggest that the geographical scale is not merely a methodological issue. Scales such as the household, the urban, and the national are not solely measurement tools but are also material and social realities (Sayre and Di Vittorio, 2009, pp. 23-24). Another point is whether scales are given in a nested hierarchy. The notion of nesting assumes that *“the sum of all the small-scale parts produces the large-scale total”* (Howitt, 1993, p. 36). In terms of political organisation and action, the scale is considered to be hierarchically bounded spaces, ranging from the local to the global, in which political processes are conducted (Delaney and Leitneh, 1997). To illustrate, in his works published in the early 1980s, Taylor, within the perspective of the political-economic tradition, proposed a typology of the political economy of scale based on material factors: the world-economy scale, the national scale, and the urban scale (Herod, 2011, p. 7; Moore, 2008, p. 208).

As of the early 1990s, human and political geographers have started to underscore the (social) construction of scales. Studies in this perspective propose that scales do not exist in a pre-given hierarchy. Rather, as products of human action, they are contingent and have tangible existence. Specifying a scale has both rhetorical and practical dimensions, often a contested process (Marston, 2000, pp. 221-233). The suggestion that scales are socially constructed or produced, or ‘politics of scale’, a concept originally coined by Smith (Perkmann, 2007a, p. 255), signifies that scales are not pre-given. Smith says, *“[t]here is nothing ontologically given about the traditional division between home and locality, urban and regional, national and global scales.”* Scales are material socio-spatial entities, configured and reconfigured due to the geographical tensions in the global capitalist system (Smith, 1992).

The politics of scale has been later enriched (Herod, 2011; Marston, 2000). The writings of Brenner (1998; 2001) should be addressed in this respect. He substantially elaborates on the concept of the politics of scale. In dealing with the tension between fixity and motion in the circulation of capital for the production of spatial scale under capitalism, he suggests a plural form of scale. Drawing on the writings of Lefebvre and Harvey in particular, Brenner underlines that each round of capitalist globalisation

introduces a multidimensional process of rescaling and scalar fixes for capital, which positions each geographical scale in a hierarchy. Therefore, Brenner (2001, p. 28) hypothesises that “[s]cales evolve relationally within tangled hierarchies and dispersed interscalar networks.”

Given the debates in human and political geography, it may be proposed that scales are subjected to territorialisation, deterritorialisation, and reterritorialisation. For this study, the scale is considered an entity, which signifies the geographical scope of a tangible area such as place or territory. It is also a practice towards which actions gravitate. Accordingly, it is operationalised as a framework that promotes the construction of a geographical area and specifies the spatial dimension of political, social, economic, and governmental actions.

Rescaling and Territorial Governance

The configuration and reconfiguration of scales or rescaling naturally has a repercussion in governance. The emergence of a new scale is a process, which introduces a new spatial frame for policymaking and offers new institutional and spatial rationalities by rescaling governance (Gualini, 2004, 2006). This process transforms spaces (Blatter, 2004), which may result in the construction of new territorial scales (Perkmann, 2007a).

Governance, employed across various disciplines, is a way of governing, which designates the plural and multi-level dimensions of decision-making processes (Bevir, 2012). It is also referred to explain the governing of the EU. With the works of Marks and Hooghe, in particular, the concept of multi-level governance (MLG) has been introduced in EU studies (Stephenson, 2013). MLG basically emphasises the vertical and horizontal networks among public authorities and non-governmental actors' participation in governing processes (Bache and Flinders, 2004). Territorial governance shares the basics of MLG but differs from MLG, with its particular focus on the territory. It is “a place-based and territorially sensitive approach”, which requires cooperation among various governmental levels and private actors (Böhme, Zillmer, Toptsidou, and Holstein, 2015, pp. 15-16). The fulfilment of governance considering the particularities of territories and the participation of local elites are the fundamentals of territorial governance. Therefore, with its human and non-human components, the territory is included as a variable in governance to promote collective action (Davoudi, Evans, Governa, and Santangelo, 2008; Stead, 2014b; Yilmaz, 2020).

Place-based governance is also among the essentials of the territorial

agenda of the EU (Böhme et al., 2015; Stead, 2014b), which overlaps with the EU's regional policy. The involvement of local elites in policymaking and the advancement of the autonomous action capabilities of regions are significant aspects of the EU's regional policy. The EU stimulates regional mobilisation and the engagement of subnational actors in cooperation patterns across the national borders in Europe (Hepburn, 2016; Hooghe and Marks, 1996; Perkmann, 1999). It is a 'supportive institution' (Hataley and Leuprecht, 2018, p. 321), which encourages governmental and non-governmental actors to initiate CBC. Thus, CBRs in different forms have emerged in the EU's territory. They are created for finding solutions to cross-border issues with which central national units cannot substantially deal, establishing stable cross-border interactions, and benefiting from the opportunities that globalisation and regionalisation offer (De Sousa, 2013; Perkmann, 2003, 2007b). Cooperation processes also introduce new forms of governance for regional initiatives (Gualini, 2003). Therefore, "[CBRs] are part of the administrative landscape in most European border areas today" (Perkmann, 2003, p. 167), which have a role in the reterritorialisation of space at a variety of scales in Europe (Noferini, Berzi, Camonita, and Durà, 2020; Popescu, 2008).

Considering that the reconfiguration of scale introduces new spatial rationalities and territorial governance is a way of governing that seeks to enhance the autonomous action capability of a classified area, it may be proposed that three variables should be considered for constructing a territorial scale in the macro-regional cooperation of the EU. The first is delimitation, which designates in what aspects a geographical area is spatially classified. Delimitation may be carried out in various forms. For substantial cooperation, (transnational) delimitation hinges on both natural geographical elements and human-related features (Medeiros, 2020). The second is the place-based governance method that requires the participation of local and regional actors, which is essential for the valorisation of territorial capital and resources. For this study, governance refers to 'governance and policy networks' among actors, and it aims to promote problem-solving capacity and find reasonable solutions to common challenges (Blanco, Lowndes, and Pratchett, 2011; Torfing and Sørensen, 2014). The foundation of networks among formal institutions and private actors in implementation of policies enhances the ability of regions to resolve problems and creates opportunities, the case in which their autonomous action capability is improved. The third is the consideration of the delimited area where policies are implemented and cooperation is established spatially and strategically in a unified

manner (Perkmann, 2007a, p. 258). Two factors may be highlighted for this variable. The first is the gravitation of policies towards the delimited area. Therefore, the designated scale provides a spatial frame for policymaking (Stead, Sielker, and Chilla, 2016). The second is the ownership of local and regional stakeholders, which means assuming responsibility in cooperation and implementation processes (Weichert, 2009). These two factors promote the designated scale as a 'space of intervention' (Perkmann, 2007a, p. 258), which fosters the territorialisation of policymaking.

Macro-Regional Cooperation

MRS or 'macro-regionalisation' as a process (Gänzle and Kern, 2016a) aims to enhance the autonomy and ability of the identified MRs in producing policies (Gänzle and Mirtl, 2019, p. 240), which corresponds to goals of the regional policy and territorial agenda of the EU. Accordingly, MRS, an instrument for the achievement of territorial cooperation, is an initiative to stimulate the mobilisation of actors and resources and achieve added-value through the promotion of cooperation and coordination for overcoming administrative divisions and advancing regional networking (Dubois, Hedin, Schmitt, and Sterling, 2009; Gänzle, 2016). In this sense, the macro-regional cooperation designates a new scale. The delimitation of MRs, the promotion of place-based governance, and the territorialisation of policymaking have significant outcomes in the crystallisation of this new scale.

Delimitation

There is a widespread definition of MR coined by Paweł Samecki, the former EU Commissioner for Regional Policy. He suggests that an MR is "*an area including territory from a number of different countries or regions associated with one or more common features or challenges.*" It is composed of several regions in several countries (EC, 2009b, p. 1; Gänzle and Kern, 2016a, p. 4). This definition does not designate a particular scale. Nevertheless, as it encapsulates areas in different countries, it has a transnational character. In other words, an MR covers a transnational territory (Medeiros, 2013, p. 1254).

Each MR is primarily characterised by natural geographical components. EUSBSR covers the area around the Baltic Sea (EC, 2009a). The strategies for the Danube Region (EUSDR) and the Adriatic and Ionian Region envelope functional areas, defined by a river basin and sea basin, respectively (EC, 2010, 2014a). The EU Strategy for the Alpine Region

(EUSALP) covers a mountainous area (EC, 2015). Therefore, the natural elements mark both the geographical content of MRs and, albeit fuzzy, their territorial extension. Although their final delineation is the state and regional borders, the boundaries of MRs are delimited by transnational natural geographical elements (Medeiros, 2020).

Human-related factors are also included in framing the macro-regional cooperation and its priorities. The objectives of MRSs are varied, ranging from tackling environmental problems to establishing intraregional and interregional spatial connections, boosting trade, integrating transportation networks, intensifying cultural exchanges, and achieving security (EC, 2010, 2014a, 2015, 2017). However, each MRS has peculiar goals, conditioned by geographical and human conditions. While, for instance, EUSDR rests on four pillars, namely connecting the Region, protecting the environment, building prosperity, and strengthening the Region through the improvement of institutional capacity and cooperation, the objectives of EUSALP are fair access to job opportunities, building on the high competitiveness of the Region, sustainable internal and external accessibility, a more inclusive environmental framework and renewable and reliable energy solutions for the future, and a sound macro-regional governance model for the Region to improve cooperation and coordination of action.

The policy areas of MRS are mostly sectoral. Nonetheless, these sectoral themes also have territorial dimensions (BMVBS, 2012, p. 43). MRS endeavours to ensure the development of MRs in unity and establish a functioning market. The purpose of connecting the regions lest no part remains isolated (EC, 2010, p. 7, 2017, pp. 44-45), for instance, demonstrates this endeavour. It is expected to assure the economic, social, and territorial development of MRs and integrate them into the single market. To his end, MRS embraces policies related to the advancement of connectivity among spaces and societies.

The fact that policy areas have territorial dimensions and are specified by the peculiarities of MRs displays the place-based foundation of MRS (McMaster and van der Zwet, 2016). It is assumed that states and regions with a shared geography and common problems also share a history, sometimes a common identity, and have a common future (Piattoni, 2016, p. 77). Gänzle and Kern say (2016a, p. 9), *“pre-existing common historical and cultural heritages of territories included within [MRs], such as the Hanseatic tradition in the Baltic Sea Region, serve as a useful narrative for a renewed macro-regional epos in cultural terms.”* Therefore, MRs are

not merely functionally demarcated areas. Place-based commonalities, with their human and non-human assets, shared by people dwelling in each MR are also attached to their delineation.

Promotion of Place-Based Governance

MRS is an inclusive cooperation process, the success of which heavily rests on the effective use of existing resources. Its governance hinges on the participation of governmental and non-governmental agents at different geographical levels, the clear specification of actors' responsibilities, and the assessment of outcomes (EC, 2014b). Moreover, its membership is flexible for specifying optimal policies by the needs of MRs (McMaster and van der Zwet, 2016, pp. 62-63).

MRS is formulated by three principles, known as 'Three No's'. The first is 'no additional EU formal structures', meaning that rather than establishing new administrative units, it is aimed at mobilising the existing cross-border ones and developing cooperation among them. The second is 'no new EU legislation'. This principle denotes that the EU shall not make additional legislation for the preparation and operation of MRS. The European Commission, in consultation with the member states, determines the general objectives of MRS. Policies are to be conducted by the participatory states in accordance with these objectives. The third principle is 'no new EU funds', the basis of which is the improvement of coordination and more efficient use of the existing resources (EC, 2013, p. 10; McMaster and van der Zwet, 2016, pp. 50-51).

On these principles, the governance of the identified MRSs, though differences between them, has a common ground. There are three levels. The first one is the political level on which the European Commission and the member states assume a critical role. They are the primary actors in the specification of the general framework and strategic priorities, while they also promote cooperation and coordination among related stakeholders. The second is the coordination level. Participant states are the leading agents in providing coordination among the supranational, national, regional, and local levels for the effective implementation of policies in unity. The last one is the operational level. Units and representatives assigned by participatory states ensure the implementation of the specified priorities in dialogue and cooperation with other stakeholders and civil society. All these processes rest on the mobilisation of the existing resources of regions, but the EU's funds may also be used for projects (EC, 2014b).

Formal EU and national institutions are the main actors in the governance of MRS. While the European Commission outlines the general principles and strategic framework in consultation with the member states, participant states are responsible for coordination and implementation. However, this does not mean that local and regional units and civil society are excluded from the process. On the contrary, it is expected that these agents participate in the governance and implementation of MRS. Their inclusion is a prerequisite for the place-based governance. To this end, national units and representatives seek to increase awareness regarding MRS for promoting the participation of governmental and non-governmental actors (EC, 2014b).

It may be observed that MRS embraces a governance method building upon intense coordination and cooperation. This method is aimed at establishing governance networks, and it is considered as a way to produce joint innovative policy solutions. In other words, through the achievement of networks among formal institutions at different levels, private actors, and civil society, assumed more adaptive to needs, it is aimed at advancing the problem-solving capacity of MRs for dealing with transboundary policy challenges (Grönholm and Jetoo, 2019). The EU aims to forge and consolidate networks among key implementers, including technical experts, across the strategies (e.g., in governance, transport, environment or climate change areas) and improve the ability of the implementing bodies. Moreover, it also stimulates constructive coordination between MRS and the existing resources and EU funds (EC, 2020b).

Marking the transnational as a governance scale provides opportunities and incentives for subnational stakeholders to set up trans-local interactions (Sielker, 2016a, 2016b). However, governance networks in the framework of MRS should not be considered to necessarily develop at the expense of national governments. On the contrary, the participant states are the leading actors for further cooperation. The governance of MRS has an inclusive tendency to produce solutions to regional problems that cannot substantially be handled by initiatives at the national level. It aims to promote stable and inclusive horizontal and vertical networks in a multi-level functioning process (Grönholm and Jetoo, 2019; Sielker, 2016a, 2016b). In this structure, the EU functions as a supra-territorial supportive agent, determining the fundamentals of MRS and urging CBC among governmental and non-governmental actors. The European Commission specifies governance patterns, roles of actors, and expected outcomes of macro-regional cooperation to create

synergy at the transnational scale.

Territorialisation of Policymaking

MRS offers an integrated framework for implementing policies in cooperation and coordination among stakeholders, which bestows the opportunity with the EU and the member states to identify needs and match them with the available resources. It is aimed at strengthening EU policies concerning MRs. An integrated approach is considered essential for the sustainable development of MRs and in the process of tackling common challenges (EC, 2009a, p. 4, 2015, pp. 9-10).

The integrated approach is a framework for fulfilling policies in unity with the aim of the provision of welfare and social development. The implementation process of MRS rests on the achievement of strategic priorities in a coherent and mutually supportive manner. As it is stated in the action plans, projects should be congruent with the general objectives and strategic priorities, and their scope or impact should be directed to the transnational scale. Most projects with macro-regional outcomes include several states. However, if a national or regional project potentially has a macro-regional outcome and contributes to the fulfilment of the objectives and priorities, then it may be carried out (EC, 2017, p. 18, 2020a, p. 4). In this context, policymaking is spatially bounded by the transnational scale.

The consideration of the macro-regional scale for the fulfilment of policies in unity is one of the variables, which shows that MRs are regarded as a space of intervention. Moreover, the purpose of the participation of local and regional actors and civil society in the implementation of MRS is the achievement of awareness regarding the macro-regional cooperation. The inclusion of their expectations is required for establishing a stable and efficient governance process and turning the goals of MRS into action (EC, 2020b). This cooperation method may promote the mutual learning of all participating stakeholders (Gänzle, 2017). In particular, their involvement in agenda-setting is critical for the will of cooperation and performance of MRS (Sielker, 2016a).

The participation of local and regional actors in governance and implementation processes has significant outcomes in the establishment of cooperation at the macro-regional scale. The functioning of MRS heavily depends on the political and strategic leadership of the European Commission and participant states. Still, the ownership of subnational agents, including parliaments, regional governments, and civil society,

is expected for the efficient governance (EC, 2014b, pp. 4-5). Therefore, it may be asserted that place-based ownership is among the fundamentals of MRS. This way, it is aimed to promote regional mobilisation. This does not mean that external actors are excluded since their support, in general, urges local and regional actors to assume ownership and further the cooperation (Minić, 2009). Hence, the engagement of EU institutions, particularly the European Commission, may advance regional mobilisation and collaboration (Metzger and Schmitt, 2012).

Conclusions

Perusing into communications from the European Commission, action plans, and implementation reports on MRSs, this study has handled the question of whether MRS may introduce a new territorial scale. Elaborating on the rescaling of territorial governance and drawing on three variables, namely delimitation, place-based governance, and territorialisation of policymaking, the results suggest that MRS may lead to the construction of a territorial scale. Some conclusions may be drawn from the study, and these conclusions are supposed to be empirically tested by later case studies by examining the identified MRSs of the EU.

Firstly, MRS delimits a geographical area beyond the national scale on the basis of natural and human-related components. Delimitation endows the identified MRs with a territorial shape and provides local and regional actors with a concrete scale to shape policies and mobilise resources. MRS classifies a transnational space by signifying its peculiar characteristics, which leads to the differentiation of MRs from outside. The goals of each MRS are identified in considering the specific features of MRs. Therefore, it has a place-based basis in setting the framework of policy areas.

Secondly, MRS embraces the place-based governance method, which assumes the participation of local and regional actors and civil society in implementing policies and the achievement of intense cooperation and coordination among them. Place-based governance requires flexible cooperation to produce optimal policies. A pluralistic and inclusive form of governance where vertical and horizontal networks are set up is anticipated to fulfil the general objectives. Rather than generating new governmental layers, the strategy seeks to create and promote governance networks and amalgamate local, regional, national and supranational actors into the designated and delimited transnational scale. This way, it is aimed at achieving efficient governance and enhancing the endogenous territorial potential of MRs.

Thirdly, addressing policy implementation on the bounded spatiality and grounding collective actions of the ownership of local and regional actors is related to territorialised policymaking processes. In addition to public authorities, the participation of non-governmental agents and civil society is required for both territorialised policymaking and multi-level interactions. Considering the delimitation of macro-regional cooperation, the subnational scale is also connected to the transnational one. It is expected that the autonomous action capability and strategic unity of MRs improve, and MRs turn into agents for policymaking primarily through the mobilisation of their resources.

Declaration

In all processes of the article, TESAM's research and publication ethics principles were followed.

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