



How to study the EU macro-regional strategies?

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Literature on EU macro-regional strategies

To review the growing body of literature on EU macro-regional strategies and the dominant **theoretical approaches**

- **political science**
- policy analysis (*European studies*)
- **(political) geography** and spatial planning

Deliberately an **inter-** and/or **multi-disciplinary**



Structure of presentation

- 1) background explanation to the development process and **nature** of the EU macro-regional strategies
- 2) **political science** scholarship distinguishing between theories of **regionalism**, **Europeanization** and variants of European **governance**
- 3) geographical concepts and theories focusing on theories of **soft policy spaces** and **rescaling**
- 4) new directions for **future research**



1) Concept of macro-regional strategy

► The European Commission defines macro-regional strategies as **integrated frameworks for cooperation** to address **‘common challenges’**

► The **‘three No’s’**

no new EU legislation
no new EU institutions
no new EU fundings



2) Approaches of political science

- ▶ The strategies refer both to a **process** and an **outcome**
- ▶ As an **outcome** macro-regional strategies contribute to '**place-based**' **policies** that may ultimately foster the emergence of macro-regions (i.e. '**region-building**')
- ▶ As a **process** they seek to **empower macro-regional actors** in the pursuit of **specific objectives** for a given territory with only functionally and even vaguely defined boundaries



2) Approaches of political science

Regionalism

- ▶ Research often distinguishes between **bottom-up** regionalism and **top-down** one: the former refers to 'spontaneous, socially generated instances of regional resurgence', the latter concerns 'planned political processes of creation of regions from the top'
- ▶ **Old** (top-down) and **new** (bottom-up) **regionalism** (Keating)
- ▶ **Sub-regional** forms: **Benelux** and **Nordic** cooperation / **Visegrad**

2) Approaches of political science

Europeanization

- ▶ Diffusing state-based power and competencies, whereby **state sovereignty is challenged** by the **new EU polity**
- ▶ Transforming political order through **European integration** (Radaelli)
- ▶ **Direction of transformation: vertical, horizontal and circular influences**
- ▶ **Cohesion policy** as example



2) Approaches of political science

Governance

- ▶ To consider the EU as ‘a unique set of **multi-level, non-hierarchical and regulatory institutions**, and a **hybrid** mix of **state and non-state** actors’ (*globalization*)
- ▶ EU can be conceived as ‘a system of continuous negotiations among nested governments at several territorial tiers’ (*multi-level governance* by Marks) – **public and private actors** both play a role (Piattoni)
- ▶ **External, experimentalist and evolutionary** governance: new suggestions

3) Approaches of geographical and spatial studies

Soft space

- ▶ EU macro-regional strategies contain **soft spaces of cross-border governance** along **hard spaces of national government** (Allmendinger)

Postmodern political process?

Rescaling

- ▶ **Transfer of competences** from one level to another (Gualini)

Three dimensions: functional, political and institutional one (Keating)



3) Approaches of geographical and spatial studies

► **Macro-regional** cooperation can potentially lead to a variety of **rescaling** processes

1) new **networks** constructed by a huge **diversity** of stakeholders

2) new dynamics of **agenda setting**

3) **political support** as a result of macro-regional processes

► ***European territorial cooperation*** initiatives (European integration and spatial dimension)



4) Conclusions: Future research

- ▶ The **growing political importance** of macro-regional strategies is one of the reasons for intensifying **research**
- 1) A strong need for **detailed *empirical evidence***. Many publications are more **conceptual** or **discursive**
- 2) A more ***comparative perspective*** (to date only *single case studies*)
- 3) Concept of *multi-level administration*: **governance architecture**

4) Conclusions: Future research

- 4) Analyses on the *impacts and outputs* of macro-regional strategies (to date many *conjectures...*). **European studies** as framework
- 5) Contribution of macro-regional strategies to the ***governance debate*** (*multi-level political mobilization*)
- ▶ The processes of macro-regionalization as opportunity for **multidisciplinary** and **interdisciplinary cross-fertilisation**





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