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Political territoriality in the European Union : the changing boundaries of security and healthcare

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Chapter 10

Conclusion

...far from being viewed as passé, borders should be brought back as a centrepiece in the analysis of world politics.
Peter Andreas¹

10.1 Essential and variable

The concept of territoriality is essential for a better understanding of political reconfiguration in Europe. However, it should not just be understood as the legal principle of territoriality, but also as a political strategy to control people and phenomena by controlling a geographically delineated area. The more salient territory is, the more the logic of territoriality, *i.e.*, the (unintended) tendencies of geographical fixity, impersonality, inclusion/exclusivity, and centrality, leaves its imprint on politics, policies and politics. In this way, unit variation can be charted more precisely. In a recent overview of the scholarly literature, Michael Keating argued that “[i]t is hard to know what has caused more confusion, the idea of the Westphalian state during the first three-quarters of the twentieth century, or the literature on its supposed replacement since then.”² By making territoriality variable, endless discussions based on the assumption of territorial sovereignty can be avoided. Instead, the conceptualisation of territoriality presented here allows for more empirical, refined, diachronic and synchronic comparisons of political systems at the local, regional, national or European level.

The variable understanding of territoriality helps to disentangle the concepts of national governments, territoriality, states and sovereignty. National governments can decide to use territoriality less as a strategy, or seek another form of governing than the state, and can found sovereignty on a non-territorial basis. The logic of territoriality applies to politics, policies and politics at every level. It can therefore be used as a

¹ Andreas, P. (2003), ‘Redrawing the Line: Borders and Security in the Twenty-First Century’, in *International Security*. Vol. 28, no. 2, p. 78.

² Keating, M. (2008), ‘Thirty Years of Territorial Politics’, in *West European Politics*. Vol. 31, nos. 1-2, p. 61.

comparative tool regardless of the territorial divide between Comparative Politics and International Relations. Moreover, it can indicate when a divide between the study of politics among states (International Relations) and the study of politics within states (Comparative Politics) is justified. When and where the logic of territoriality marks politics *in extremis*, then anarchy is the main characteristic of politics among those entities because territorial exclusivity and centrality preclude authority above them.

Political systems are usually based on a mixture of territorial, functional, personal and temporal bases of control. The more salient territory is in a political system, the more the logic of territoriality structures it. However, the logic of personality, functionality, and temporality are only mentioned just cursorily in this study. To obtain a full understanding of Europe's reconfiguration and to single out the political significance of territoriality, the logic of the others should also be spelled out more extensively.³ Another issue that needs further exploration is the application of the variable conceptualisation of territoriality on non-European politics. Western European history was marked by fights over the control of land, which has made territoriality a common strategy of control. In contrast, person-based loyalty was a more important means of control in Sub-Saharan Africa because of the abundant supply of land.⁴ Comparative research should show to what extent the logic of territoriality has had less of an influence on African history or elsewhere.

As Bartolini underlined in his Rokkanian reconstruction of European history, the variation of (territorial) boundaries is essential to understand the present-day political reconfiguration in Europe. The mechanisms of exit, voice and loyalty and their systemic counterparts (boundary-making, internal structuring and system-building) have been an effective heuristic instrument to map how the structural implications of territoriality are interlinked with the processes of polity-formation in

³ Cf. Blatter, J.K. (2001), 'Debordering the World of States: Towards a Multi-Level System in Europe and a Multi-Polity System in North America? Insights from Border Regions', in *European Journal of International Relations*. Vol. 7, no. 2, p. 178.

⁴ Rokkan, S. (1974), 'Politics between Economy and Culture: An International Seminar on Albert O. Hirschman's Exit, Voice and Loyalty', in *Social Science Information*. Vol. 13, no. 1, p. 37.

Europe. Moreover, better insight regarding the processes of integration and disintegration at the national and the European level can be obtained by focussing on the mutual dependence between external consolidation and internal cohesion. In addition, it provides a means to explore territorial boundaries instead of assuming them. Inspired by Bartolini's reading of Rokkan, a selection of origins and implications of changing political territoriality has been presented in the form of propositions in Chapter 5. The empirical evidence did not by and large refute the expected evolution in the (territorial) configuration of the European Union and the Netherlands. The cases of healthcare and security in Europe and the Netherlands illustrated the potential of Rokkan's ideas to link certain intentions, causes, preferences, interests and consequences in a meaningful way. The propositions thus passed a first plausibility test. They can therefore be a step towards drafting a full-fledged theory of political territoriality that not only maps, but also explains changing political territoriality in the European Union. The theoretical challenge is to phrase more refined hypotheses on changing political territoriality allowing to explore in more detail how the logic of territoriality as well as the Rokkan-Hirschman mechanism apply, also at the individual level. Qualitative longitudinal research on individuals' mental maps and behaviour should provide a better and more precise understanding of the dynamic interrelationships between exit, voice and loyalty and their systemic counterparts, as well as the implications of political territoriality.

10.2 The EU is not going beyond territoriality

Territory has always been used as means of political control. This was also the case before 1648. However important the Westphalian treaties may have been for the salience of territory, they did not instantly herald the era of the ideal type state. Only two centuries later the logic of territoriality clearly marks certain policy-areas in West-European polities. Person-based imperialism and 'dynasticism' diminished the impact of security territories. Nevertheless, the more deeply entrenched and broadly embedded territory became in the national organisation of security, the more it became geographically fixed, impersonal, both inclusive and exclusive, as well as centralised. The various imperial projects and conflicting territorialities between the national and the sub-national level

hampered full centralisation within national security territories. In the case of healthcare, the logic of territoriality only started to leave its influence on national healthcare systems in the twentieth century. And however significant the logic of territoriality became during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, it always had to compete with territorial logic at another level or with another logic of a functional or personal nature, depending on the policy-area at hand.

European integration has started to weaken at the national level the logic of territoriality in both security and healthcare systems. The idea of a borderless Europe diminishes the salience of national borders. The free movement of goods, services, capital and people within the European internal market creates restrictions on the ways in which the Dutch national government can organise their own Dutch healthcare system, undermining the principle of territoriality. The logic of territoriality of the newly created European security territory and of the European health territory have started to conflict with the logic of territoriality at the national and the sub-national level.

Cross-border consumption of socially insured healthcare is still marginal in the European Union. In the Netherlands, the national territory continues to structure health institutions and behaviour. Study of Dutch healthcare shows that patient satisfaction with the domestic healthcare is still too high for large-scale exit behaviour. In addition, health consumers prefer healthcare provision within a close distance. Only those living in border regions, take into account cross-border healthcare as a 'natural' option. Indications of the emergence of a new cleavage between mobile and immobile health consumers and of interface regions seeking an exit from the national 'health container' are therefore still tentative. The continuous dominance of national territory is also visible in the organisation of security. The definition of and responses to threats are still mainly structured by national voice structures. Even though European integration (or globalisation for that matter) facilitates cross-border communication and mobility, challenges the salience of territory, and complicates the effectiveness of territoriality at the national level, national entities continue to dominate European politics. Exit behaviour by interface regions is still modest. However, the anticipated tendency contributing to person-based security distinctions has been

denoted particularly due to the increasing efficiency of technologies of surveillance within and outside Dutch and EU territory.

The European Union is not going beyond territoriality. Clearly, the EU is not based on the principle of territoriality, and European integration challenges that principle at the national level. However, the strategy of territorial control is still used, as the Schengen borders show. The Schengen borders visually indicate and clearly communicate where people share power, money and labour. However, Schengen borders are only temporary. Moreover, they are part of broader security zone consisting of new, candidate and potential EU members. The value-based and outer-oriented nature of EU security policies undermines the institutionalisation of EU borders, resulting in a relatively weak logic of territoriality within the EU. The low tendency of centralisation within the EU maintains the socio-geographical concentration of voice at a lower level. National identities and national voice structures continue to remain the focus of this concentration. Thus, the European Union remains an instrument for national governments to maintain their position vis-à-vis their people, rather than an entity powerfully competing for national citizens' acceptance. National governments remain therefore key to the evolution of the EU. The central position of national governments does not mean that the states remain the fundamental political organisation. The principle of territoriality has been undermined by European integration as well as the logic of territoriality at the national level. What this means is that national governments rule over partly de-territorialised less state-like entities.

10.3 Mobile vs. immobile citizens⁵

The expansionist, multi-level and diverse nature of the European Union is reminiscent of an empire. According to Joseph Colomer, this European empire is good for democracy.⁶ It provides security and trade agreements

⁵ This section has been inspired by Bartolini, S. (2005), *Restructuring Europe: Centre Formation, System Building and Political Structuring between the Nation-State and the European Union*. Oxford: Oxford University Press. Ch. 7; and Vollaard, H. (2007), 'Een Overspannen Unie?', in H. Vollaard & J. Penders (eds.), *De Spankracht van de Europese Unie: Gaan Democratie en Uitbreiding samen?* Den Haag: Lemma. pp. 217-228.

⁶ Colomer, J.M. (2007), *Great Empires, Small Nations: The Uncertain Future of the Sovereign State*. London: Routledge.

at an efficient scale. In this way, it facilitates the establishment of democratic, small-sized communities that no longer have to bear the costs of defence and trade agreements. Moreover, the desires of individual citizens can more easily be met due to the expected homogeneity of identity and interests in those small-sized communities. And, as has been argued by others, if a citizen would become dissatisfied, he or she can switch relatively easily to another community of their choice within the borderless European Union.⁷ In contrast, as was discussed in Chapter 1, still other express concerns about how weakening territorial boundaries may lead to less pressure to share power, money and labour. In this way, changing political territoriality would be detrimental for democracy and solidarity, which are fundamental for political legitimacy in Europe.

The closed nation-state did offer the framework in which mutual loyalty could be developed (if necessary, by force and indoctrination) among the residents to share power, money and labour. In other words, the external consolidation of a geographically fixed entity provided the internal cohesion necessary for democracy and solidarity. European integration has de-consolidated the territorial boundaries of the EU member states, offering exit options to (dissatisfied) regions and mobile citizens. Furthermore, the creation of a new European territory has introduced a conflicting logic of territoriality, clashing with remaining tendencies to exclusivity and centrality within the Member States. The unequal distribution of exit options challenges the fundamental value of equality in democratic welfare states. Moreover, various rounds of enlargement keep the logic of territoriality weak at the EU level. The unfixed nature of a multi-level Europe hampers the state-like locking-in process which is the basis of the democratic welfare system. European integration has been a mission to spread political and economic freedom, rather than the creation of a closed community in which labour, money and power are equally shared.

At first sight, nothing appears to have dramatically changed up until now. People rarely vote with their feet. Consumption of healthcare is still done locally. Most Europeans do not want to move because of their

⁷ Guéhenno, J.-M. (1998), 'From Territorial Communities to Communities of Choice: Implications for Democracy', in W. Streeck (ed.), *Internationale Wirtschaft, Nationale Demokratie: Herausforderungen für die Demokratietheorie*. Frankfurt: Campus. pp. 137-150.

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social networks, their family and friends.⁸ Therefore, cross-border issues concentrate mostly at the local level in interface regions, as the cases of cross-border patient mobility and criminality in the German-Belgian-Dutch Euregion Meuse-Rhine illustrated. The law of social and geographical proximity mitigates the European challenge to the territorial framework of EU members in which functional choices used to be made. However, the unequal distribution of exit options may exert pressure as soon as dissatisfaction with the provision of public goods increases, particularly because European exit does not necessarily involve emigration. The market-making forces within the EU area offer more choice within national and European markets, but limit the interference of governments in providing services and goods to their citizens. Multilingual, eloquent and affluent citizens, shortly called here “upper-class mobiles”, can seek satisfaction from private, non-insured healthcare providers, or private security agencies in the European market. While the upper-class mobile enjoy exit options within the European market, immobile citizens can only resort to social mobilisation to voice their dissatisfaction. The support of the mobile upper-class for the voice of the immobile class would be less significant, because they can more easily use the exit options instead. In addition, governments may listen more to dissatisfied upper-class mobiles, because governments need their wealth to remain internationally competitive. If governments pay less concern to the voice of immobile citizens, than as a consequence they will have less information about how to recover the system if the immobiles are dissatisfied. Meanwhile, “underclass mobiles” compete for jobs and benefits in the borderless European market. They have no interest and skills in organising their democratic voice, but instead just look for a satisfactory job. The immobile citizens would thus become threatened by both upper-class and underclass mobiles.

The immobile citizens may seek ways to counter mobility at the European level, calling for restraints on market-making. European democracy has, however, bleak prospects. The mobile upper-class has no interest for investing too heavily in European democracy, since they enjoy exit options. Due to its continuous enlargement, the European Union

⁸ European Commission (2006), *Eurobarometer Survey on Geographic and Labour Market Mobility* (64.1).

lacks a geographically fixed image. A fixed image would have had a locking-in effect, in which the residents feel they have belonged together in past, present and future, in other words, to develop mutual loyalty necessary to share power, money, and labour. The large size of the European Union hampers the organisation of voice for relatively small monolingual groups of immobile citizens, let alone to make their voice heard. The lack of the locking-in effect would therefore lead to the socio-geographic concentration of voice, such as in national democracies. Immobile citizens may use person-based nationalism to maintain the boundaries of communities of solidarity and democracy, binding the upper-class mobiles to share their power, money and labour, and keeping the under-class mobiles out to prevent competition for money and labour. Support for nationalist and old-left parties throughout Europe illustrates this tendency.⁹ This support makes national governments aware of the dissatisfaction among immobile citizens about their delivery of service.

However, European market-making policies and anti-discrimination laws limit the possibilities national governments have to respond to these sources of dissatisfaction. The planning of welfare facilities will be further handicapped by the increasing mobility of users. Moreover, governments can more easily avoid responsibility for worsening healthcare or security by blaming multi-level Europe, new member states, or 'the' market. Mobility and enlargement in the EU area has put immobile dissatisfied citizens under pressure, while offering more options to the mobile ones. Pressing for more mobility and enlargement may therefore unleash political conflicts within the national context, where immobile citizens could protest against the open border policy inflicted by European integration (and globalisation for that matter). Euroscepticism may be the first warning signal of overstressing the European loyalties of immobile citizens.¹⁰ Perhaps, mobility and enlargement may evolve into 'disintegration by stealth.'¹¹ The continuous

⁹ Cf. Kriesi, H. et al. (2006), 'Globalization and the Transformation of the National Political Space: Six European Countries compared', in *European Journal of Political Research*. Vol. 45, pp. 921-956.

¹⁰ Vollaard, H. (2007), 'L'État de la Question: Frontières et Limites de l'Intégration Européenne', in B. Geremek & R. Picht (eds.), *Visions d'Europe*. Paris: Odile Jacob. pp. 317-334.

¹¹ I am indebted to Peter Mair for this well-chosen expression.

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(threat of) EU enlargement weakens the development of voice structures and mutual loyalty at the EU level. The national governments therefore remain in a key position to seek a balance between the pressure for more European integration and the democratic voice of the EU's immobile citizens. That balancing act will be different for the various governments. Governments of poorer Member States may face less voice from their immobile citizens, since they have larger groups of under-class mobiles seeking work in richer areas in the EU. Whereas, governments of the richer Member States may still be able to provide sufficient healthcare and security for upper-class mobile citizens to prevent them from using their exit options, as well as offering their immobile citizens other options to help temper their national voice.

10.4 Imperialism and disintegration

The European amalgamation of fully-fledged democratic welfare systems is unprecedented in history, but European integration may overstretch the loyalties of its immobile citizens. As if it is not enough, the European Union also has an expansionary nature. Stein Rokkan has emphasised the significance of timing in the trajectories of polity-formation. Certain external consolidation is necessary to allow for internal cohesion. De Gaulle's veto of UK membership in the early 1960s did, for instance, help to strengthen the internal cohesion of the European Communities, which would otherwise have been severely jeopardised by the external de-consolidation of early enlargement. Despite the after-effects of the external de-consolidation following the 1973 enlargement, the European Communities were able to obtain the necessary cohesion in the 1970s and 1980s to survive the de-consolidating shocks after the end of the Cold War. The EC member states worked to strengthen their mutual cohesion to face potential external de-consolidation. The EU exerted influence on a large-scale in domestic politics of candidate member states to mitigate the impact of their accession. The EU's enlargement has given it an imperial flavour. A tendency towards geographical fixation is however discernable. The Schengen borders resemble the still visible Hadrian Wall. The launch of the European Neighbourhood Policy in 2003 indicates the EU is not willing to accept new member states immediately after the big-bang enlargement of 2004. Moreover, the stalemate between Russian and

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Western spheres of influence blocks the EU's enlargement eastward at least in the short time. That allows time for consolidation, and the resultant geographical fixity will lead increasingly to structuring the EU according to the logic of territoriality. The EU and its Member States both badly need this consolidation. As long as the US government and NATO function as credible security guarantors for most of the EU members, the latter do not have to bear the entire burden of their security. And as long as the EU political community has not been consolidated, the tendency towards a common defence remains limited. If the EU can no longer rely on the military power of the USA in the near future, the cohesion among its members will be seriously challenged. But, as was pointed out before, at one time in the past the integration of France and the location of its borders were also highly unexpected. That may also apply to the European Union and its boundaries in the future.