

# Beyond Territorialism: Europe as an Archipelago

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## ABSTRACT

Under territorialism (Scholten, 2000), space is divided into territories over which states exercise territoriality (Sack, 1968). What territoriality the European Union (EU) exercises depends on whether it is intergovernmental or supranational. In either case, the representation of its territories is based on the map of member states. Under the intergovernmental view, their borders will be prominently present. A supranational representation might not even feature internal borders. The real challenge is to figure out how to represent territories under alternative views of the EU. Recognising that traditional statehood is breaking down –that we experience “the end of territories” (Badie, 1995)– such views see the EU as an “unusual polity” (Nugent, 2010). Of such views, the one of the EU as a “neo-medieval empire” (Zielonka, 2014) particularly challenges notions of the spatial representation of its territories. I propose to represent states as islands in a sea of overlapping functional relations.

## KEYWORDS

Territorialism, Territoriality, Neo-medievalism

## RÉSUMÉ

Sous le territorialisme (Scholten, 2000), l'espace est divisé en territoires sur lesquels les États exercent leur territorialité (Sack, 1968). La territorialité de l'Union européenne (UE) dépend de son statut, inter-gouvernemental ou supra-national. Dans les deux cas, la représentation de ses territoires se fonde sur la carte de ses États membres. Sous l'angle inter-gouvernemental, leurs frontières seront bien en vue. À l'opposé, une représentation supra-nationale ne fera peut-être même pas apparaître ses frontières internes. Le défi consiste à déterminer comment représenter les territoires de l'UE de façon alternative. Si l'on reconnaît que l'État-nation se fracture – que nous faisons l'expérience de « la fin des territoires » (Badie, 1995) – ces vues verront l'UE comme une entité politique inhabituelle (Nugent, 2010). Dans ce cas, la représentation de l'UE comme « empire néo-médiéval » (Zielonka, 2014) questionne plus particulièrement les notions de représentations spatiales des territoires. Je propose de représenter les États comme des îles dans une mer où se chevauchent des relations fonctionnelles.

## MOTS CLÉS

Territorialisme, territorialité, néo-médiévalisme

## 1. TERRITORIALISM, THE STATE AND THE EUROPEAN UNION

Scholte (2000: 46) argues that the “proliferation and spread of suprateritorial [...] connections brings an end to what could be called ‘territorialism’, that is, a situation where social geography is entirely territorial”. However, he continues, territory no longer constitutes the whole of our geography, a view which has far-reaching significance for what is called territorialism. After all, the latter “implies that macro social space is wholly organised in terms of units such as districts, towns, provinces, countries and regions. In times of statist territorialism more particularly, countries have held pride of place above the other kinds of territorial realms” (*ibid.*: 47). Under state territorialism so defined, space is divided into territories over which one each exercises territoriality. Sack (1968: 19) defines territoriality as “the attempt [...] to affect,

influence, or control people, phenomena, and relationships, by delimiting and asserting control over a geographical area”.

Meaning that the state is geographically based and bound, territoriality is one of the essential elements of statehood. Nugent (2010: 421) adds two others: *Sovereignty*, meaning that the state is above all other associations and groups within its geographic area and that its jurisdiction extends to the whole population of the area, and *legitimacy*, meaning that the authority of the state is widely recognised, both internally and externally. The latter refers to international relations theory recognising the state’s monopoly of governance, both as regards public decision-making as well as enforcement. However, under European integration, these characteristics of a state come under scrutiny. The focus here is on territoriality. Does the European Union exercise at least some of territoriality?

The answer depends on whether the Union is considered as an intergovernmental or a supranational formation. If intergovernmental, then territoriality would seem to be exclusively for member states. In fact, the Union might not be considered to have a territory at all; only member states would.

By definition, it being supranational would mean that the state’s monopoly of governance is broken. Elements of public decision-making as well as enforcement of territorial control shift to the level of the Union. The Union would thus have a territory of its own.

In either case, the representation of the European Union territory –or what goes for it– would feature the map of member states. Under the intergovernmental view, giving primacy to member states, their borders would be prominently present. Taken to its logical conclusion, a supranational representation might not even feature internal borders. After all, the European Union would be considered to have legal personality of its own.

## **2. TRANSCENDING TRADITIONAL STATEHOOD**

The real challenge is to figure out how to represent the territories of the European Union under alternative views, neither intergovernmental nor supranational, which do exist. Nugent accepts that the situation is changing, requiring such alternative views: “[The] realities of traditional statehood are breaking down in the modern world, most particularly under the pressures of international interdependence. So, for example, no modern state can now be regarded as being fully sovereign in a de facto sense, and the EU member states cannot even claim that they are fully sovereign in the de jure sense” (2010: 421-422). Recognising that traditional statehood is breaking down –that we experience “the end of territories” (Badie, 1995)– such views see the EU as an “unusual polity” (*ibid.*: 437). Of such views of the EU as a “neo-medieval empire” (Zielonka, 2014) particularly challenges notions of the spatial representation of its territories. Zielonka himself is less concerned with space. Referring to the present, he invokes Barbara Tuchman when she writes about situations in which nations going to war as the “march of folly”. Every attempt to make the Union a proper federation would thus be counterproductive. The strategy should rather be one of “creating more ‘Europes’ and not more Europe, meaning a single integrated continent” (*ibid.*: 48) The Union itself will survive, if at all, only in a weakened form. Cities, regions and non-governmental organisations will become stronger, making state borders fuzzier, thereby even further dividing loyalties. Invoking Saskia Sassen, Zielonka sees agglomerations and “global cities” filling the political and administrative vacuum left from the loss of power at national level. “Modern cities operate transnationally

through a variety of trans-border networks, often ignoring traditional interstate diplomacy. Their inhabitants are also transnational.... They are actors from a different, super-modern universe” (*ibid.*: 90). In fact, they sometimes work like the medieval Hanseatic League.

Zielonka envisages such diverse and decentralised networks, for instance for transport, energy, migration, tourism and sport. These could prove to be more effective and efficient than any attempt to bring all of them under one jurisdiction.

Importantly, he nowhere suggests a return to the rule of nation states. National sovereignty is meaningful only where national borders coincide with market transaction fringes, military frontiers and migration trails. Relying on the revival of the nation state is thus not the answer; networks are. Rather, instead of a return to a “Westphalian” order based on the recognition of state sovereignty, Zielonka foresees a new medieval order. What this means is the exercise of authorities resembling the medieval mode, with divided sovereignty, differentiated arrangements and multiple identities. Rather than continuing to rely on fixed and hard borderlines, the future will bring fuzzy borders. Rather than central redistribution, there will be several types of solidarity. Rather than imposing rules, the future is one of bargaining, flexible arrangements and incentives. It is in this respect, and only in this, that Zielonka invokes the Middle Ages as a model.

### **3. REPRESENTING THE NEO-MEDIEVAL EMPIRE**

How to represent this spatially? To start with, I propose to represent states as islands. Taking account of the international dependences addressed by Nugent and Zielonka, we can conceptualise the islands as forming an archipelago. The surrounding sea are the overlapping functional relations. That this is so should have implications on how states perceive themselves. A discourse of frontiers as barriers, to be crossed only at the pleasure of responsible authorities no longer fits. Islands must interact with the seas lapping their shores. Those seas form endless fields of opportunities to which the Freedom of the Seas guarantees seafarers access.

Indeed, Europe deserves better than being forced into the straightjacket of thinking of states and of their territories only in terms of containers. Europe as an archipelago comes down to viewing the space of the Union differently. It is the same with spatial planning. It may concern whether the islanders succeed in developing their lands purposefully and in integrated fashion. Importantly though, planning would also be about them managing their relations with the surrounding sea and with the other islands, including those far behind the horizon. Indeed, the sea forms an endless field of opportunity, certainly for the more daring seafarers.

Perhaps an even starker metaphor would be to represent states, not as islands but as ice floats. Sometimes, ice floats coalesce into larger ones. In the fullness of time, some disappear as, indeed, states disappear. There is nothing eternal about them. States are historic constructs and as such can be undone. However, for as long as they last, which, depending on their makeup, can be long, they provide a base.

To pursue yet another line of thought, maybe, we should see Europe as a cloud. The institutions of the Union do not fit into a box, not even a large one. The spaces they cover overlap, creating an apparently disorderly pattern: the Union itself; the European Economic Area; the Schengen Area including amongst others Switzerland; the Euro zone, but note that non-members Montenegro and Kosovo and mini-states not otherwise involved like the Vatican also

use the euro. There is also the Customs Union including Turkey. Likewise, some Cooperation Areas under INTERREG transcend EU's external borders, and so do macro-regions. In addition, there is the EU's Neighbourhood Policy, Maritime Spatial Planning and the Mediterranean Union. There are also various association treaties and the relation with African countries under the so-called Lomé Accord and, not to forget, French, and thus EU territories in the Caribbean, the Indian Ocean and the Pacific, including the tiny Island Europa in the Madagascar Channel. A cloud indeed.

#### **4. CHALLENGING PLANNERS**

Whichever metaphor one wishes to pursue, the planners' calling is to conceptualise spatial or territorial relations fitting the space of the Union as it really is, and not what territorialism tells it should be like. As metaphors, the archipelago, the Arctic sea with ice floats on it and the cloud, all conjure up a –realistic– picture of the very complexity, not to say disorderliness with which, in so doing, they have to cope. However, there is no more order to be had in today's and tomorrow's world. Attempt to impose one overall order will end in failure. What planners can do, however, is proposing strategic spatial visions to help coping with the interrelations between the constitutive elements of the Union and, since the Union is not a finished product, it means to prepare for change. Indeed, just as the shape of clouds is fluid, so is the EU: It is, and remains, in flux. At best, planning can help with rendering the process smoother. As, indeed, with Zielonka's neo-medieval vision of Europe, this sceptical view of their role may be disturbing, not in the last instance for planners with their love for order. Coping with permanent disorderliness stretches the imagination and ability to cope. So do all the challenges that Europe faces.

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