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What Europe? Fortress, different speeds, coloniser or archipelago

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**38th Congress of the European Regional Science Association
Vienna, 29th August - 1st September 1998.**

**What Europe?
Fortress, Different Speeds, Coloniser or Archipelago**

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Abstract

The paper starts with the introduction of a simple analytical tool that classifies regions according to their scale and accessibility. Those indicators are closely related to the strategies of European expansion and European integration and at the same time translate paradigmatic outcomes of those combined strategies; they are usually labelled as fortress Europe, different speeds Europe, coloniser Europe and, adding one more, an archipelago of European Regions. The paper concludes with some remarks about the advisable strategies for regional decision makers facing the European Game of expansion and integration.

1- Introduction

The paper tries to systematise the main features underneath the economic and political evolution of Europe. This is done not only by showing the perspective of Europe towards each one of its regions, but also trying to enhance the role of each one of the European regions in the process of European construction. From an analytical point of view the task is to systematise different development scenarios for the regional economies in regard to the processes of European expansion and European integration.

Islands are small synthesis of the world (Alison Hess,1990). Starting from this point of view the features of insularity – scale and access – are used to analyse the concepts of integration and expansion (section 2). Afterwards a conceptualisation of possible developments for European regions is presented distinguishing the processes of economic integration from the regional effects of expansion policies (section 3). and finally in section 4, what measures would be taken by regional policy makers in face of those global strategies.

2- Island Concepts to Evaluate European Regional Economies

2.1 - Scale e Access

A piece of land surrounded by water, where at least a sheep can graze and which can be reached from the mainland, by a sailing ship with its rudder in place, is a composition of some traditional demarcations of the island concept referred by Jean Hache (1987). These images are interesting because they highlight three important features of a island.

First there is a physical characteristic: *„A piece of land surrounded by water“*. Which necessarily demands some scale criteria because, at the end, all land is surrounded by water.

The minimum scale threshold is suggested by the phrase *„... where at least a sheep can graze..“* which is another way of saying that such *„...piece of land surrounded by water..“* can be inhabitable by mankind.

Finally, the statement *„...which can be reached from the mainland by a sailing ship, with its rudder in place..“* can be viewed not only as a implicit definition of some upper limit of scale, but also as a indicator of remoteness. Upper limit of scale because, by focusing

on the importance of external relations, they are in fact establishing a new level of identity whose contours are somehow constrained by those of the island.

Obviously scale and access are also attributes of other communities such as bounded peripheral regions or remote villages. Therefore, instead of studying islands as objects of study defined by physical characteristics, it seems wise to analyse insularity as a phenomenon common to many islands but also to other communities. Islands, under this perspective, are just handy objects of study where the interaction between the different elements of a multidimensional reality can be grasped more easily than in „insular“ areas of continents. One question must be addressed. What is, at the end, the marrow of insularity?

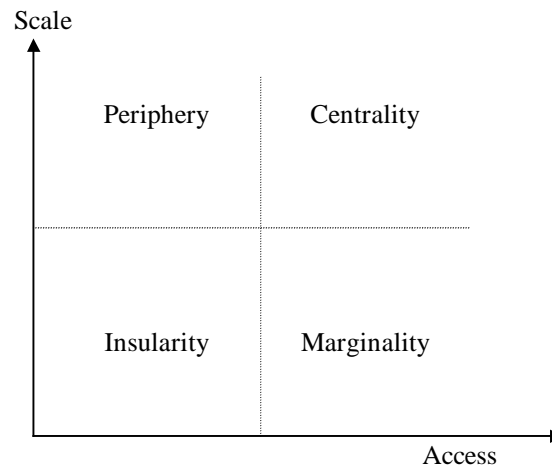
Dirk Godenau (1992) says that insularity is a social and economic phenomenon derived from a geographical status through two main variables: scale and access. From an economic perspective, insularity seems to be derived from a combination of some limiting factor and the remote location for its final demand. At the end, insularity can be taken as a technological specificity where resources are available, but bounded. Nevertheless, as stressed by Neil Turnbull (1992) technology is much more than a mean that transforms available and scarce resources into desirable outcomes; its real nature is of a mediator between the man and the world, at the same time constraining that relationship and yet being moulded by it. Under this broader perspective, technology involves also the functioning of formal and informal organisations, with their multiple social, geographical and cultural dimensions. Hence, bounded resources and respective remote demands shape not only the processing techniques but mainly the social structures and collective identities of insular territories. At the end, underneath the scale and access factors, there is not only a question of size or bounded resources, but a special feature of insularity: a compulsory spatial identity (Codaccioni, 1990).

But, if compulsory spatial identity is the core feature underneath the scale and access indicators which define the geographical features of insularity, which is then the divide from other geographical situations with different patterns of scale and access?

Figure 1 is an attempt to establish some loose divides between insularity and other types of geographical lodge phenomena: periphery, centrality and marginality. A central region has both accessibility and scale. A marginal region has access but has no scale. A

peripheral region has dimension but there are access constraints. Finally an insular region has neither access nor scale.

Figure I: Regions' Typology



Three ideas stem from this typology:

The first is that – as is proved by Roberto Camagni & al (1991), what is usually classified as periphery – as opposed to centre – can in fact be systematised in at least three different types of spatially rooted communities: insular regions, marginal regions and peripheral regions.

Another idea derived from the typology proposed above is that a modification of the access and scale features can stimulate processes of regional transformation: an insular region can become peripheral, marginal or even central.

A third point important to underline is that the characteristics of insularity are often positive and negative at the same time: isolation is both inaccessibility and protection; bounded resources represent a technological constraint but it is also an opportunity for a rent; smallness leads both to synergy and mutual interference, and specialisation is unstable (Hess,1990) and nevertheless an opportunity for competitive advantage (Porter,1990).

As a result policies over access that involve for instance transport regulation and institutional aid, and measures influencing scale such as vertical integration of value added chains, have to be optimised and not maximised as is often stressed by the political common sense (European Council,1986).

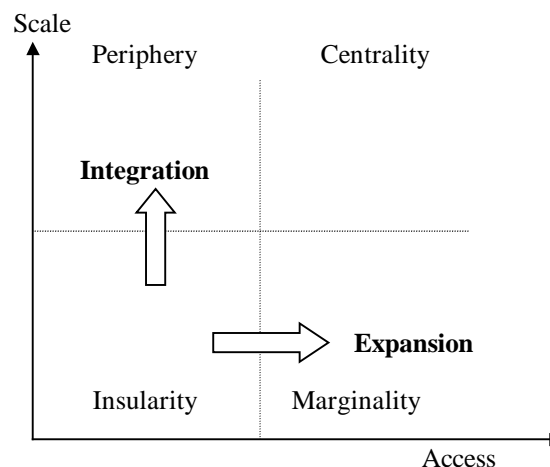
2.2 Integration and Expansion in the European Space.

Economic integration is a process that leads to the development of trade between the European regions. European expansion refers to the political mechanism which enlarge and reinforce the borders of Europe. For each European region these processes have quite different effects:

The economic integration increases the market dimension but often reduces the internal consistency of the regional economic tissue (Majoram, 1994), because there will be a greater dependency on a usually unique export activity. This dependency occurs not only along the import and export value chains but also in which refers to technology and respective „adequate“ infrastructures and institutions (Mansell, 1994). Using the framework proposed in Figure I, the integration process is commonly associated with the transformation of a „insular“ region into a „peripheral“ area (see Figure II).

On the other hand a process of European expansion – or reinforcement and enlargement of the border – can be accomplished either through a increase of internal accessibility or by a reduction of external access. Using once more Figure II it is possible to say that a process of European expansion is usually connected with the transformation of a „insular“ region into a „marginal“ area (see Figure II).

Figure II: Expansion e Integration



From a economic perspective we could say that, whereas a integration process leads to a enlargement of the market for remote regions which manage to sell their products to a bigger space, on the contrary a expansion process is associated with a bigger market for the central regions, sustained through subsidising and control mechanisms which secure the power over remote markets and institutions.

There are limits in remote areas for the integration and expansion processes. Actually, using the conceptual model presented above there are spatial constraints either to improve accessibility or to enlarge the market dimension for activities regionally rooted. On the other hand there are also limits in central areas for the integration and expansion processes as is demonstrated in phenomena some central congestion and disconnection of great areas.

3 - Possible Developments for European Regions

The evolution of the political map of Europe along the last two centuries demonstrate that the mechanisms of European expansion have been extremely unstable and disturbing. Equally the optimal equilibrium for central regions is far from the maximum concentration of movable activities.

It is then clear that the cisergetic nature (good and bad at the same time) of local attributes like scale and accessibility is also applicable to, related but more global, processes of expansion and integration. Therefore these processes must be as well optimised and not maximised. The problem is that, the same way as in the transformation of scale and access at the regional level, the effects of economic integration and political expansion do not have similar effects to all participants: central areas can gain more than remote ones, present generations more than future ones, consumers more than producers and so on.

Notwithstanding this, the question is not to know what combination of integration and expansion suits better each one of the European regions. Actually such attitude will always be particular and loser, at least in a environment of non-co operative game between regions. On the contrary what we have the challenge to think is a European Spatial Idea better for all the Europeans and for the world. This reflection seems to be of great importance when Europe is at a turning point of its history. There are in fact urgent problems to address: the unemployment, the European competitiveness and the European site in the world (Jacques Santer, 1995 & COM, 1996).

The President of the European Commission and the Commission itself stress that to face those problems it is necessary: to defend the idea of a Community based on institutions and not only on functions; to reinforce the powers of the Commission as the promoter of the European interests above the particular ones; and to present global solutions to those

concrete problems (employment, common currency, single market and external comprehensive policy. Will this political attitude be effective in terms of its own aims which are to create a Single European Market regulated by strong institutions and competitive in regard to other economic spaces? A simple observation of the reality allow us to identify some obstacles to the development of those goals. Probably deviations from those purposeful targets:

- Firstly the attempt to balance the power between the Commission and the Member States can lead to a increase in the power of both and a reduction of autonomy at the regional and local level. In Europe, where the local level has a important role (Maillat, 1992) on employment, competitiveness and even external policies, the decrease of the local and regional power can be a real problem.
- Secondly, as reported by the *Economist* (1996) the world tendency is not to the end of the Nation-State by to its reconfiguration. From this perspective the European Union will continue to be a space for a game between nations then a environment for a game between companies and individuals as the Commission would like with the development of the Single Market, the creation of the single currency, the definition of a external policy and with employment policies which assume erroneously that there is employment mobility within the European space. Actually the permanent mobility within the European space: less than 2% of European citizens live in another Member State and most of them changed during the big migration movements between the fifties and the seventies COM (1995, p.41).
- Thirdly the outcome of the Information Society and the related development of trade, pressures the elimination of borders not only between European countries but also between European and non-European nations. In a continuous process of European integration and expansion it appears that those are the more important factors that influence the transformation of each one of the European regions. Nevertheless if we accept that the European integration and expansion is mainly a reaction to the global changes then it is doubtful that a purposeful policy against the mainstream will have good results.

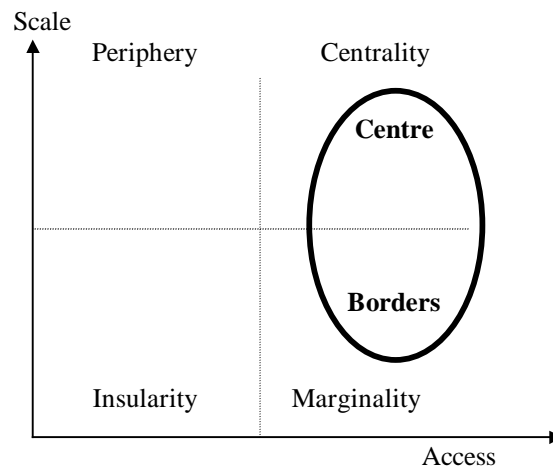
From this point of view it is important to ask again the question of Jacques Santer (Santer,1966) What Europe do we want?. Using the framework adopted in Figures I and

II the alternatives foreseen for Europe can be presented in a simple and clear form.:
Fortress, Different Speeds, Coloniser or Archipelago

A - Fortress

With a strong and rich Centre and subsidised and dependent borders. This has been the model adopted in the process of European Expansion. First towards Greece, later involving Spain and Portugal, after towards East German and Finland, and in the near future reaching Malta, Cyprus, and former East European countries and regions.

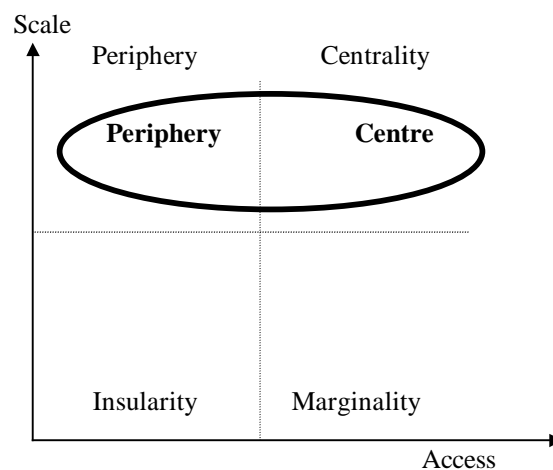
Figure III a): European Fortress



B - Different Speeds Europe

With a centre developed and peripheral regions strongly integrated in the centre through value added chains that use cheaper resources from the periphery and link them with the design, transformation and distribution activities located in the centre, where most of the value added is generated and/or concentrated. Present images of this model are the restructuring of the auto industry where innovation and marketing is controlled by the centre whereas the production and assembling became a peripheral and lower value added task.

Figure III b): Different Speeds Europe



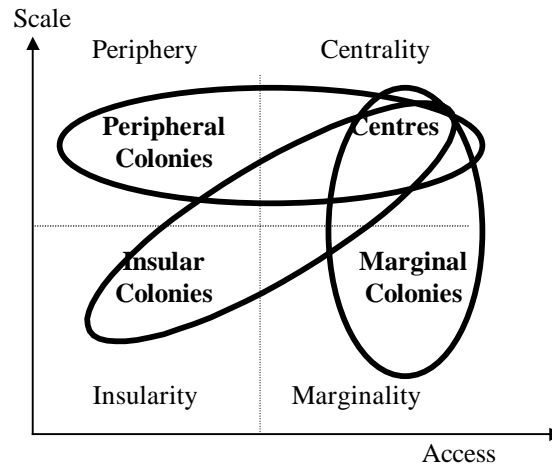
B – Colonial Europe

A centre divided between different European countries each one with its own colonial

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space more peripheral, insular or marginal according to the political and economic culture of the coloniser. This model was adopted by the European Countries until the II World War.

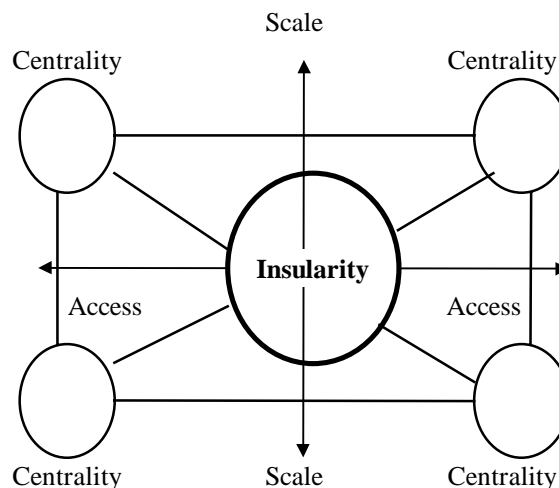
Figure III c): Colonial Europe



D - Europe Archipelago

This last idea of Europe foresees the concept of scale and access not at the European level but at the global level. From this perspective each marginal region can be a centre and each centre a marginal zone. To some extent this idea already exists in the European Centre where cities, more than regions or countries, are connected between each other and with the World in a teleological space. The idea is just to enlarge the concept beyond Lotharingia into actually centralised, peripheral or marginal cities and countries.

Figure III d): Europe Archipelago



Certainly these for models coexist within Europe. What is important to stress is that

according to the political actions and economic dynamics one or another image of Europe is reinforced. With many independent and interactive actors the question is not to know what model they (we) choose but instead which strategy is more suitable for the development of particular regions within the European game.

4) What strategy for the development of a remote region?

Using once more the conceptual model presented before it can be said that the process of regional development is often a combination of both integration and expansion. Integration reinforces the dependency on external markets Expansion decreases the autonomy of the region because their policies become partially influenced by the providers of public funds. Integration is usually supported by export firms and workers whereas expansion is normally push forward by importers and local politicians. of the region.

It would be possible to think that the combination of the two strategies will support the development of remote areas. Nevertheless, because the expansion subsidies are usually to support politicians and importers what really happens is a destruction of the economic and social tissues. On one side the exporters more and more dependent on value added chains controlled elsewhere; on the other side the importers and politicians them also increasingly dependent on external support.

Looking at different regional development processes François Vellas (1988) says that a wise management of the integration process has been the best strategy and Andrew Gillespie (1990) remind us that such wise management of the integration process is mostly done through the design of the information-decision systems within each value added chain. From this perspective it is not so much important to analyse the role of each region from the central point of view but instead the analyse the strategy of remote areas regarding the value added chains rooted in their territory, more precisely their information-decision systems.

Hopefully if every European region undertakes with success such policy the result would be a Europe Archipelago – like there is nowadays in Lotharingia – rather than a Fortress, different speeds or colonial Europe.

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