
The invention of regions: political restructuring and territorial government in Western Europe

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Abstract. Regionalism has come back to prominence, as the political, economic, cultural, and social meaning of space is changing in contemporary Europe. In some ways, politics, economics, and public policies are deterritorializing; but at the same time and in other ways, there is a reterritorialization of economic, political, and governmental activity. The 'new regionalism' is the product of this decomposition and recomposition of the territorial framework of public life, consequent on changes in the state, the market, and the international context. Functional needs, institutional restructuring, and political mobilization all play a role. Regionalism must now be placed in the context of the international market and the European Union, as well as the nation-state.

What is a region?

For several years now regionalism has been back in fashion in Europe, both in the scholarly and in the political domains. There are books and articles about the new regionalism, the Europe of the regions, multilevel governance, the third level. Some even talk as if the nation-state itself were being replaced by a new level of government. Although this is good news for those of us who have a vested interest in the phenomenon, it is well to be cautious. The nation-state never monopolized political action in Europe in the past; and in the present it remains a powerful actor. The political, economic, cultural, and social meaning of space is changing in contemporary Europe. In some ways, politics, economics, and public policies are deterritorializing; but at the same time and in other ways, there is a reterritorialization of economic, political, and governmental activity. The new types of regionalism and of region are the product of this decomposition and recomposition of the territorial framework of public life, consequent on changes in the state, the market, and the international context. There is no new territorial hierarchy to replace the old one, but a diversity of new forms of territorial action. The territorial principle in politics is ever-present but often elusive. It takes a variety of forms and it structures social relations even where it does not give rise to regionalist political movements.

The very word 'region' has a multiplicity of meanings in the various social science disciplines and the historical traditions of European countries and is politically loaded and sensitive because the very definition of a region as a framework and a system of action has implications for the distribution of political power and the content of public policy. A region is necessarily a territorial demarcation, but within this there is scope for a variety of functional processes. It is also an institutional system, either in the form of a regional government or as a set of institutions operating in a territory. It may constitute itself as an actor in national and external politics, geared to the achievement of a social and economic project. It is only by appreciating the conjunction of these different logics within a territory that we can understand the regional phenomenon and its importance. Before proceeding to this, however, we need to analyze the historic construction of the ideas of region and of regionalism and its relationship with the process of nation-building and state-building and, particularly with the

development of the postwar interventionist welfare state. Then regionalism is examined as a contemporary phenomenon, in the context of continental integration and the changes being experienced by the west European state.

The state and the regions

The premodern state was a highly differentiated polity in which territories of various types and extents, and corporate groups would share a common suzerain but each would have its own specific relationship to the central power (Majone, 1995; Tilly, 1990; Tilly and Blockmans, 1994). There were overlapping spheres of authority in the governmental, ecclesiastical, and economic domains, and relationships depended not merely on military force but on complex compacts and customs. The 19th-century modernizing and consolidating state generally had little time for these principles or for regions, regarding them as obstacles to the forging of national identity and to the building of a modern and effective state. Bureaucratic administration, education, unified legal systems, and military service were all used to break down territorial and other barriers. Nowhere was this entirely successful, and territorial management continued to be one of the primary tasks of statecraft (Keating, 1988). In France under the monarchy, an extraordinary array of territorial institutions mediated between the central power and local society (Braudel, 1986) and even the republican regime had to tolerate a system in which the state's orders were modified at the periphery. The German empire had to recognize the federal principle and the autonomy of the federated units in much internal policy. The Spanish state was forced to recognize the Basque *fueros* until the 1870s and even after that had to concede them as a special fiscal regime. The United Kingdom was a union, with a single source of political authority but in which a territorially differentiated civil society maintained a high degree of autonomy from the state (Paterson, 1994).

This need to accommodate to territorial distinctiveness was widely seen, by modernizing liberal politicians, by the radical left, and by many social scientists (such as Deutsch, 1966), as a mere transitional phase towards a world of homogeneous nation-states. From the 1970s, however, as a new wave of regionalism affected European states, territorial management came to be seen as part of normal politics, a permanent task of the nation-state, which has undergone repeated waves of territorial assertiveness, each one questioning the existing structure of centre-periphery relations (Keating, 1988). Nation-building tensions in the 19th century were thus not a one-off process as the old order gave way to the new, but the first instance of what was to be a characteristic of modern politics. Specifically, we can identify three crises of territorial representation, coinciding with changes in the responsibilities and scope of the nation-state, and often with crises of the central regime or party system: in the late 19th century; in the 1960s and 1970s; and in the 1990s. The first two were played out in the context of the nation-state and resulted in new territorial settlements; the third is taking place in a new context, marked by global economic integration and European unification and thus escapes the confines of national politics.

The first crisis of territorial representation arose in the late 19th century, with the penetration of the modernizing, bureaucratic state into traditional societies. The second territorial crisis had its origins in the postwar welfare settlement. After the Second World War, and especially from the 1960s, European states started to take regions more seriously, as part of their projects for modernization. In Germany federalization was imposed by Allied pressure as well as the desire on the part of Germans to immunize themselves from the excesses of Nazi centralization; but the form was shaped by German federalist traditions. In the other European states, regionalism stemmed from functional needs and the necessities of territorial management. In several states,

notably France, Italy, and the United Kingdom, the region emerged as a key level of action for the state. Territorial disparities were recognized as a problem (albeit marginal and temporary) which resisted the macroeconomic management of the Keynesian era, and the region was chosen as the most appropriate level at which to address them. Starting with general policies of industrial diversion, states proceeded, with more or less success, to more detailed intervention in the form of regional planning, growth poles, coordination, and that untranslatable form of integrated spatial intervention which the French call *aménagement du territoire*. States also used regions as a framework for cultural policies, with more or less generous concessions to the cultural particularities of particular regions (for example, in Belgium and Great Britain). In some cases, administrative deconcentration and executive agencies were used by states to enhance effectiveness and coordination at the regional level (as in France and the United Kingdom). Successive French governments sought to reinforce the power of the prefects in territorial coordination.

Although early regional policies were administered by the state with little local input, states came to seek collaborators on the ground, to help implement regional development policies and ensure their coherence with the actions of local governments and the private sector. In some cases the state's aim was to renew the local political class, either for partisan reasons as in Italy with the arrival of the centre-left in the 1960s or in France with the consolidation of Gaullism at the same time, or because the old elites and their networks of influence were insufficiently committed to modernization (Biarez, 1989). States would sometimes by-pass the old elites by setting up new regional institutions; this was particularly so in southern European countries, where it is difficult to reform the existing system of local government (notably in France). In Italy the establishment of regions, although provided for in the constitution, was postponed until 1970, when national political conditions were more favourable (Pastori, 1980).

This top-down modernizing regionalization was presented in a technocratic mode and largely depoliticized, but the political implications of state intervention in regions soon became apparent. In Spain the paranoia of the Francoist regime about anything that smacked of regionalism prevented the elaboration of coherent regional policies (Cuadrado Roura, 1981; García Barbancho, 1979). In the democratic countries, state intervention often served to destabilize traditional systems of territorial representation. The process rapidly politicized as regions came to be contested by the state; the traditional elites and notables; and the new modernizing elites from the regions themselves. Issues came increasingly to be perceived in a regional focus and the very definition of the region as well as the policy content of regional action became matters of political competition. This politicization was further reinforced by the increased mobilization of actors within the regions themselves.

The confluence of these diverse regional movements and the reaction to state modernization policies produced a wave of territorial protests in the late 1960s and the 1970s. This is not the place to discuss in detail the ways in which states regained the initiative in territorial politics (see Keating, 1988). Several states recognized the political dimensions of regionalism and moved from regional administration to regional government. At the same time, they accommodated and encouraged the more integrative types of regionalism; for example, in France and Italy the existing territorial elites, tied into the central state, were effectively given control of the regionalization process. Much of the regionalist impetus was absorbed by the parties of the left which sought again to reconcile these demands with their otherwise centralist policy prospectus. Regionalist movements never quite succeeded in integrating their diverse strands in a politically viable synthesis and the institutional results were often disappointing. The French regions set up in 1972 were weakly institutionalized and not until 1986 did they

become full local governments, directly elected. In the United Kingdom the devolution projects for Scotland and Wales failed and the English regional planning councils were abolished in 1979. The institutional development of the Italian regions after the law of 1977, expanding their functions, was disappointing. In Belgium and Spain pressures from minority nationalist and linguistic movements ensured a continued progress to regionalization and, indeed, federalization of the state. Yet even in Spain, where regional autonomy had been an integral part of the transition to democracy, the LOAPA law of 1981 represented an attempt on the part of the state to recover powers.

The new regionalism

From the late 1980s, there has been a third crisis of territorial representation, a new wave of regionalism. This new regionalism is no longer a phenomenon internal to states; rather the context is provided by the European Union and the global market. Its impetus can be traced to three sets of forces: functional change; institutional restructuring; and political mobilization. None is adequate on its own to explain the process or the form which it takes in particular places, but together they shape the meaning and dynamics of regionalism.

Functional restructuring

The international market, modern communications technology, and the individualization of social life are sometimes presented as destroyers of territory as a principle of organization (Badie, 1995). Yet at the same time they encourage the invention of new forms of space (Amin and Thrift, 1994; Keating, 1996a). Economic restructuring follows two complementary logics, global and local. It is guided by factors such as the investment decisions of multinational corporations and international capital flows; but the impact of these is mediated by local factors and even global effects are felt as local ones. Globalization creates a tension between the aspatial rationality of the transnational corporation, with its multiple branches and ability to move investment around, and the spatially bound rationality of communities which depend on these investments (Keating, 1991). So firms escape territorial influences, while territories become more dependent on firms. Given global constraints, states are no longer able to manage their spatial economies by diversionary regional policies or strategic placing of public investments. Yet at the same time, it is increasingly recognized that economic development and the insertion of territories into the global economy depend on specific characteristics of territories. So modern development policies put more emphasis on indigenous growth, or the attraction of investment by qualities linked to the region such as the environment, the quality of life, or a trained labour force, rather than on investment incentives provided by the central state (Gore, 1984; Stöhr, 1990). Scholars have rediscovered the classic notion of the industrial district, characterized by networks of territorial interdependence (Dunford and Kafkalas, 1992; Morgan, 1992; Storper, 1995). Development itself is defined more broadly, to include quality of life issues. The new development paradigm gives an important role to the construction of identities, of territorially based systems of action, and territorial solidarities. These new regional systems of action are now placed more directly in confrontation with the international market (Courchene, 1995) because the intermediary role of the state has been severely attenuated as part of a general crisis of the nation-state (Camilleri and Falk, 1992).

Planning and programming, themes of importance in the 1960s, have come back onto the agenda, albeit in a less ambitious form (Wannop, 1995). Regions, as a level which is intermediary both in the territorial and in the functional sense, have reemerged as a key level in planning and programming. Functionally specific development agencies

have often been established at the regional level and there is a tendency in several countries to devolve manpower training to the regional level in order to exploit its linked with local and regional development policies.

Regions may also provide the territorial frame for the politics of cultural defence, especially where there is a cultural or ethnic specificity. On the other hand, it is not easy to territorialize the management of linguistic or cultural minorities, because the groups concerned are rarely concentrated within boundaries which correspond to regions in other functional senses. So only a minority in Wales is Welsh speaking; the same is true of Brittany and the Basque Country. In Belgium, regionalization and cultural autonomy are linked only indirectly because territorial regions have been established for territory-based functions and linguistic communities for person-based ones; they coincide only in the Flanders region (Fitzmaurice, 1996; Hooghe, 1991).

Social solidarity remains largely tied to the nation-state frame. The welfare state remains the responsibility of national states, but solidarity on the ground is managed by local governments. It may be, however, that the decline of class and other forms of solidarity is encouraging the reassertion of territory in this sphere as well, with the defence of the welfare state taking a territorial form in those places where a strong territorial identity exists.

Another functional role for regions is as intermediaries, in both the territorial and the functional sense. In the 1960s the French CODER (*Commissions de développement économique régional*) and British REPBs (Regional Economic Planning Councils) brought together regional interests and encouraged a dialogue with central government. Similarly, the system of regional deconcentration in both countries, with the prefects and regional offices, respectively, was intended to improve coordination of central government's own actions on the ground. In the 1990s this need for programming and coordination has reemerged, forcing even the British Conservative government to establish Integrated Regional Offices (Hogwood, 1995). Elsewhere there has been a stress on the need for larger regional units to face the competitive challenge of the Single European Market.

This functional logic does not itself explain the reconfiguration of politics on a territorial basis, or the institutionalization of regions. Intervening factors, including politics, tradition, and culture, will determine the nature of the linkage. Purely functionalist accounts of the reconfiguration of territory underplay the autonomous role of politics (Pintarits, 1996), as does, in a different way, the historical reductionism displayed by Putnam (1993). An adequate explanation needs to give some account of political mobilization and the strategies of political actors.

Institutional restructuring

The crisis of the nation-state and 'end of sovereignty' (Camilleri and Falk, 1992) have created new possibilities for territorial government. Most European states have decentralized their institutions of government in the interests of modernization and administrative rationalization. Although in some cases this represents a response to pressure from regionalist and local forces, it can also be a means for enhancing state autonomy by devolving the less gratifying functions or insulating central government from territorial pressures.

European integration is the other principal force for institutional restructuring (Bullman, 1994; Jones and Keating, 1995; Pintarits, 1996). Market integration may increase economic disparities, while depriving states of their traditional means of dealing with these in the forms of tariffs and subsidies (Dunford, 1994). In the single market, regions are in competition for inward investment and markets, as the other example of a large single capitalist market, the United States, shows. European Union policies have

varying effects on the different regions (Molle and Cappelin, 1988). The construction of the Community and the Union has modified the political relationships between states and regions. In the early years, it was used to justify the centralization of powers in the hands of central governments, with the doctrine that Community matters were foreign affairs and thus an exclusive central competence. Peripheral regional interests, for their part, tended to cleave to the central state, fearing the effects of market integration and the dismantling of protectionist measures. Now there has been a shift, at least in some prominent cases, from resistance to constructive engagement. Since the Single European Act, regions have increasingly insisted on their right to be heard, both by EU institutions and by national governments, in the preparation of European policies. The EU's own regional policy, started in the 1970s as a mere interstate transfer mechanism, was transformed in the 1980s into an instrument of genuine policy (Hooghe and Keating, 1994; Marks, 1992). The structural funds were doubled, and now represent the second largest item in the budget, accounting for a quarter of spending. The Commission insisted (with varying degrees of success) on the principles of additionality and transparency, to ensure that the regions, and not state treasuries, are the beneficiaries. A system of planning was put in place, with partnerships among the regions, states, and the Commission allowing direct links between regions and the EU. Although it remains true that states are still the prime actors, these EU interventions into the regions have nonetheless encouraged a powerful mobilization on the ground (Hooghe, 1996) and the emergence of new territorial actors, in a manner reminiscent of the impact of nationally based regional policies in the 1960s and 1970s. Some countries, such as Ireland (Holmes and Reese, 1995), have had to establish regional structures in order to qualify for funds. In others the needs of European competition in the single market have put on the agenda the issue of reinforcing regional institutions, or redrawing regional boundaries (Benz, 1992; Némery, 1993).

The new European and international context has had important effects on the representation of regional identity, taking it out of the framework of the state and encouraging a process of imitation and learning among regions in different states. Regional identity is sharpened by the comparison and its content is changed. Competition within Europe has consolidated regional identities and solidarities as political competition within territories is partially displaced by competition between them.

Regional mobilization

The construction of regions is the result of the confluence of these processes of functional and institutional restructuring with political mobilization in the regions themselves. Regionalism as a political movement can be analyzed on two dimensions—its relationship to positions on social and economic issues and its stance on the question of regional autonomy.

At one time, regionalism was seen as a conservative reaction to the modern state. In 19th century France it was often regarded as reactionary and antirepublican (Mény, 1982). The early demands of the Basque movement were for a return to the *fueros*, based on traditional authority and compact, rather than the recognition of a distinct nation (De La Granja, 1995). In 20th-century Christian Democratic thought, regionalism has served to reconcile tradition with modernity, as well as being a way of operationalizing the principle of subsidiarity (Durand, 1995). Yet, although the conservative strand was dominant in the first phase of regionalism, in the late 19th century, it was, even then, balanced by regionalist movements which stressed the themes of progress, democracy, reform of the state, and equality, for example the ephemeral *Félibrige Rouge* in France (Touraine et al, 1981), the progressive movements in Scotland

(Keating and Bleiman, 1979) and Wales (Morgan, 1980) or the *Meridionalismo* of Dorso and of Salvemini (Galasso, 1978).

After the Second World War, regionalism was taken up by modernizing elements, celebrated in France as the *forces vives* and including private managers, public sector planners, and professionals. More recently, a regionalism has emerged in prosperous, competitive regions, seeking either to modernize the state or, failing that, to free themselves from it and from the burden of less productive regions. A historic example would be the Catalan movement in its 'regionalist' phase in the late 19th century, when it sought to modernize Spain by 'catalanizing' it (Oltra et al, 1981; Vicens Vives, 1986). A contemporary example might be found in German Länder such as Baden-Württemberg, in Flanders, or even contemporary Catalonia, with their links to the 'Four Motors of Europe'. In Italy the Lega Nord plays on the drag to the prospects of northern Italy represented by the need to carry the Mezzogiorno and the state apparatus (Biorcio, 1997).

From the 1960s there was a new regionalism linked to the libertarian new left, to ecological movements, and to popular struggles against plant closures (Keating, 1988; 1992). This regionalism borrowed from earlier Gramscian ideas and contemporary national liberation movements in the Third World, stressing uneven development and internal colonialism (Lafont, 1967). It remains rather weak, however, because of the heterogeneity of its constituent elements and the difficulties of building an alternative paradigm of economic development. Social democratic movements also contained within them a historic regionalist stream, though this was for many years subordinated to the needs of jacobin state building and centralized economic and social management. From the 1960s, this stream slowly expanded and by the 1980s was an important element. The conversion of the social democratic parties to regionalism, however, had to await the foundering under the impact of globalization of the old social democratic model of centralized state management.

It is from the dialectic of these different regionalisms with the state that the dynamics of political regionalism are made. Each movement contains a mixture of distinct elements. Each state provides a distinct opportunity structure and set of incentives and constraints. Regionalism is not necessarily autonomist. There are integrative regionalisms, seeking the full integration of their territories into the nation and the destruction of obstacles to their participation in national public life. There are autonomist regionalisms seeking a space for independent action; and there are disintegrative regionalisms, seeking greater autonomy or even separation. Poor regions have often preferred centralization, especially when this is accompanied by good lines of access to the central state. For example, the Spanish regions of Andalusia and Extremadura, enjoying privileged links with the Socialist government in Madrid in the 1990s, were very cautious about further decentralization, especially in fiscal matters. When rich regions dominate a central state, of course, they too are liable to be centralist, as in France and the United Kingdom. By contrast wealthy regions which are not politically dominant are likely to be decentralist, as in Lombardy or Catalonia. There are also 'nationalist' movements in some of the historic territories of Europe. The division between nationalism and regionalism here is by no means clear, and is becoming less so as the state reconfigures (Keating, 1996a). In Catalonia and the Belgian regions there are strong nationalist or regionalist movements which generally aim for a new distribution of power within the state and in Europe rather than for the establishment of their own state in the classic sense.

There is no consistent relationship between the placement of regionalisms on the left-right scale and the degree of integration or disintegration which they seek. Generally speaking, regionalism has since the 1960s moved to the left, though there

are exceptions such as the Christian Democracy of the Catalan CiU or the right-wing populism of the Lega Nord. Rather than being associated with reaction and resistance to modernization, it tends now to be seen as a form of democratic maturation (Sharpe, 1993). Rather than representing reaction, it generally represents a strategy of social modernization. The relationship between social class and territory has changed as capital has internationalized while labour has increasingly fallen back upon locally based forms of resistance, so that now labour movements are more favourably inclined to regionalism. Business, for its part, is ambivalent, appreciating the functional advantages of regionalized forms of policymaking, but fearing regional government as an attempt to regulate the labour market and reimpose social charges which they are succeeding in reducing at national and European levels.

There is thus a recomposition of political space in Western Europe, in which regions are emerging in two senses. They are political arenas, in which various political, social, and economic actors meet and where issues, notably to do with economic development, are debated. At the same time, they are constituting themselves as actors in national, and now European, politics, pursuing their own interests. We cannot, however, merely talk of regions emerging or reemerging. The region is not a natural entity, but a social construction, with a given territory, a political space, and a system of governing institutions (Agnew, 1987; Balme et al, 1994).

Regions as territory

A region is, of course, a territorial entity, but the definition of this territory varies greatly from one case to another. One way to define the regional space is negatively, as intermediate between the state and local government, although even here there are exceptions. Where there is a tradition of strong and autonomous municipal government, combined with a unitary state, as in the Netherlands or the Scandinavian countries, there is little space for regions. Elsewhere, regions can exist at several territorial levels. There are metropolitan regions, built around big cities with their hinterlands, unified by economic linkages, transport, and systems of functional interdependence. There are provincial-scale regions, drawn on the map of the whole state. Some of these cover vast areas whereas others are drawn on the basis of smaller historic units and others again are the leftovers from the construction of neighbouring regions. Even in the same country, regions may exist at different levels. In Germany, there are the *Flächenstaaten* (which themselves range from North Rhine Westphalia to the Saar) and the *Stadtstaaten* of Hamburg, Bremen, and Berlin. In Spain there are large regions such as Catalonia and Andalusia, and simple provinces turned into autonomous communities, such as La Rioja and Cantabria. Even at the European level, there is no consistent territorial definition of a region. The EU Commission uses the NUTS (Nomenclature of Territorial Units for Statistics) system, with three levels, but these are mere aggregations of national units and in the implementation of its own regional policies it uses a whole range of territorial units according to the task at hand (Hooghe and Keating, 1994).

Regions as political space

A region is a political space where it provides an arena for political debate, a frame for judging issues and proposals, and a space recognized by actors as the level where decisions may legitimately be taken. This does not necessarily correspond with governmental institutions. For example, Scotland constitutes a political space, with an internal debate and its own political agenda, although it lacks political autonomy. The French and Italian regions, on the other hand, although they have elected governments, are not political spaces but rather links in partisan national systems, or federations of local units. The German Länder, Belgian regions (more and more), and the Spanish

autonomous communities (especially the three historic nationalities) are both political spaces and self-governing regions.

The constitution of a political space depends on a number of factors. One is a sense of identity, which may itself be the product of ethnic or linguistic solidarity, or be founded on institutions and civic cooperation. Regional identity is not to be seen as a competitor to national identity, except in rather rare cases of minority nationalism. Instead it is an additional identity, to be mobilized and exploited for specific purposes. There is undoubtedly a historic dimension to this, but sense of identity is not merely a historic given, which persists independently of institutions. Even in historic nations such as Catalonia and Scotland, a process of nation-building is still at work to adapt historic identities to the needs of the contemporary world. In other regions, such as Brittany, there is a rich historical tradition which finds adaptation more difficult (Guillourel, 1991). In the German Länder, mostly devised artificially after the Second World War, a sense of identity has been constructed by political institutions and by policy. A similar process can be seen in France, where political entrepreneurs have used institutions to build some sense of regional identity strongly linked to themes of modernization and, in some degree, to Europe (Dupoirier, 1995; Dupoirier and Roy, 1995). In Italy there is a strong sense of local identity but much less identification with the administrative regions, even among supporters of the Lega Lombarda (Woods, 1995). The conditions for the production and reproduction of territorial identity are still poorly understood, in large part because of the weight of the diffusionist model of nation-building, which assumed that they were only transitional and would disappear with modernization. Much also depends on the constitution of the regional civil society (see below).

The party system plays an important role in the construction of political space. Where there are separate parties, or the statewide parties adapt themselves to the local situation, as in Catalonia, the Basque Country, Scotland, or Corsica, political issues and debate may be regionalized, Belgian political elites have pushed for regionalization, to the point of federalization, as a strategy to enhance their own status and power, dividing the party system in the process. In France the party system is not regionalized, except in Corsica. In Italy the regional structures of the parties in the former regime of the *partitocrazia* were weak compared with the provincial structures (Dente, 1985). In Spain, by contrast, regional political elites are strengthening their influence within the national parties and a regionally based political class may be emerging. In Italy of the 'first republic', electoral behaviour was markedly regionalized and increasingly so in the 1980s, but territory served as a resource in clientelistic linkages to the centre, rather than as the basis for a political regionalism or autonomism. The Lega Lombarda/Lega Nord explicitly introduced regionalist themes into the Italian political debate and challenged the territorial basis of centralized power. Later these themes soon foundered in a generalized populism (Schmidtke, 1993) and a pronounced antigovernment rhetoric (Savelli, 1992), but recently territory has been reemphasised as the Lega has moved to separatism (Biorcio, 1997).

In those cases where there are elected governments, the regional electoral system is also important. A system such as the French, proportional representation based on departmental lists, makes the construction of governing majorities difficult and favours the expression of departmental demands rather than a debate on regional priorities. Italy's regional electoral system was changed in 1995 to favour majority governments and clearer responsibility, but the system remains very opaque (Torchia, 1995). The existence of regional media is another element which helps the construction of a regional political space. Of course, the existence of distinct regional issues favours a debate focused on the region, but even matters of central government or EU competence

are perceived differently in some territories. Regions may also be used by new social movements, either because their concerns are linked to territory, or because the region, as a new arena, is not strongly colonized by existing political movements. The obvious case of this is the environmentalist movement but one could cite others.

Regional government

Just as there is a variety of regionalisms, so there is a variety of types of regional administration. In some cases, it is no more than deconcentrated administration of the central state. In the United Kingdom the territorial administrations in Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland are part of the central government and headed by national ministers. In France a system of state regional administration coexists with that of the regional councils themselves. One form of regional administration is the functional one, driven by the functional needs we have identified rather than by a political impulse from below, and consisting typically of ad hoc agencies insulated from local political pressures. This style is particularly common in economic development matters, allowing development strategy to be insulated from social considerations and distributive politics. A variant of this is the tripartite agency, with representation from government, business, and unions, in a generally weak form of 'regional corporatism'. Regional agencies may also establish themselves where there is a lacuna in the institutional or functional coverage of the state. Where regions are weakly institutionalized, lacking, for example, elected governments, they may become a kind of constitutional no man's land. In this free space, where there is neither hierarchical bureaucratic control nor horizontal control by elected governments, corporate interests may establish themselves. Examples would be the quangos in the United Kingdom, especially in England, colonized by the technocracy (Hogwood and Keating, 1982), at least before being brought more directly under central control by the Thatcher government (using a mixture of hierarchical control and patronage appointments). States may also assign social policy functions to the regional level in order to insulate them from political pressures, especially in matters where it is difficult to control expenses, such as health services (Sharpe, 1993). These ad hoc structures, however, have proved unstable and, as regional policy issues have become politicized, they have either been abolished (as in the United Kingdom) or evolved into elected regional governments (as in France, Italy, and Belgium).

There are several models of regional government. The strongest is represented by federalism, as in Germany, Austria, Belgium, or Switzerland; Spain may also be evolving in a federal direction (Moreno, 1997). In a federal system, competences are guaranteed constitutionally, and the federated units have the right to participate in national politics through territorial second chambers of the legislature, or systems of institutionalized cooperation. Then there are systems of strong regionalism, as in present-day Spain. During the second republic (1932–39), Spanish governments, seeking a formula to reconcile the need to accommodate the historic nationalities with their desire for unity, and to avoid a federalization which would have weakened the central state, invented the formula of the *Estado Integral* (Hernández, 1980). The same compromise between unity and diversity also underpins the present Spanish constitution, with its *Estado de las Autonomías*. In France and Italy there are much weaker regions, with limited competences and autonomy. There is also the formula of asymmetric regionalization, adopted by some unitary states in order to respond to demands from specific territories, while retaining a unitary constitution. Italy and France have special status regions (Sicily, Sardinia, Val d'Aosta, Trentino-Alto-Adige, Venezia-Friulia-Giulia, Corsica). In the United Kingdom, Northern Ireland had its own parliament from 1922 to 1972 and the Labour Party is committed to special status for Scotland and Wales.

The institutionalization of regions depends not merely on their constitutional status, but also on the institutional context. Where municipal governments are strong or constitutionally guaranteed, they present an institutional competitor to regions. In France regions are faced with competition from the departments and the big cities, who were the main winners from the decentralization programme of the 1980s. There is a rivalry between the Generalitat of Catalonia and the city of Barcelona. In Italy regions have found it very difficult to insert themselves in the space remaining between the communes, the provinces, and the state (Cassese and Torchia, 1993). In spite of the Europeanization of regions, state traditions still play an important role. In France, Italy, Spain, and the United Kingdom there are strong traditions of centralization, rooted in political practice and the state bureaucracy. Certainly there exists a territorial basis to power, especially in France, but this is less of an autonomous power than a resource to be used in national politics. In France regions have to coexist with a parallel state administration, with which they share competences. In line with French administrative tradition, public policies are contractualized between the state and the region, with the result that regions often end up not only adopting national priorities but even subsidizing activities which are officially the responsibility of the national government, such as universities and railways. The interlinking of state and regional actions continues all through the implementation process and only a personalized power focused on the territorial notables, can overcome this institutional weakness. In Italy the state possesses important parallel competences and has continued to legislate in detail on matters of regional responsibility (Ministro per gli affari regionali, 1982). Relationships between state and region have been sectoralized, with detailed intervention by sectoral ministries (Merloni, 1985); recent reforms abolishing some central ministries and giving regions general competences are intended to address this problem (*Le Regioni* 1996).

In Germany, by contrast, the national government does not have a territorial administration of its own, except in narrowly defined spheres such as military matters, and so depends on the Länder for the administration of national as well as regional policies. According to German tradition, public policies are negotiated between the federal government and the Länder, whose power is institutional rather than, as in Southern Europe, personal or partisan. The Länder retain an important degree of autonomy as to the details of administration, prompting some people in Spain to advocate a similar system of a single administration there.

Regions are an intermediary level, both territorially and functionally, and their power depends on their ability to integrate various levels of action, on their knowledge and mastery of decisionmaking networks (Balme, 1996; Le Galès, 1997). Regions can position themselves strategically in relation to these, or they can be marginalized. The power of integration depends also on the existence of partners at the regional level within civil society. Where there are regional organizations of business or unions then forms of concerted action are possible, although a strong regional corporatism may be impossible because of the weakness of the actors (Anderson, 1992; Streek and Schmitter, 1991), all the more so in a world of diffused authority.

Regions need resources to pursue policies, but also a margin of freedom in their allocation. Tax-raising powers give them a greater freedom in those cases where they have a substantial tax base. Otherwise, freedom to levy taxes merely reinforces their dependence on the market as they are obliged to maintain their tax base by attracting investment. It is not necessary for regions to dispose of large financial resources. Big budgets may even be a source of weakness if they are accompanied by heavy administrative burdens and subject regions to pressures from clients. The power to integrate often depends on the ability to allocate resources at the margin and influence other actors.

Regions as civil society

Regions do not exist merely in the sphere of government but can also be a principle for the organization of civil society. Given the retreat of the state and its diminished ability to represent on its own the principle of territorial unity, a greater weight falls upon civil society. There is some evidence that the two are linked in that regional government operates best where there is a well-developed civil society, a sense of identity, civic traditions, an associative life, and relationships of confidence and exchange within the territory (Putnam, 1993; Putnam et al, 1985). The origins of this civil society and the mechanisms for transmitting it across history are less clear. Only in France has there been a serious effort to trace continuities and discontinuities in political and social behaviour within particular places across time. Although it is obvious that the conditions for the institutionalization of regions are better in some places than in others, there is nonetheless always a margin of manoeuvre for political entrepreneurs in the construction of new systems of action (Piattoni, 1997). In Wales a new identity may be replacing the old, oriented more to economic development and the insertion of the territory into Europe than to the former historic and cultural issues (Jones, 1997). In Wallonia a sense of identity and political movement were constructed after the Second World War (Hooghe, 1991; Wils, 1996).

In some territories the institutions and practices important for identity formation and representation are regionalized—for example, sports and recreation bodies, cultural activities. Interest groups may be regionalized, encouraging sectoral or other interests to be cast in a territorial frame. This may modify the expression of class interests in important ways. It is not that regional identity and organization necessarily attenuate class conflict, as many on the left used to fear, but where employers and unions have a territorial basis for organization they may add a territorial dimension to their demands. Class interests, recognizing the new opportunity structures created by the opening of territorial politics, may in turn be encouraged to adopt a regional dimension to their own action. So there is again a dynamic process in which identity is constructed by action and this in turn reinforces identity.

A region is a construction, of history and of present-day actions. Its invention depends on the confluence of these distinct elements. Where these meanings coincide in space we may speak of strong regionalism. Here political institutions can build on a distinct culture and identity, and at the same time exploit a functional rationality. In other cases, the region may take a different form, depending on whether it is viewed as social identity, as economic system, as functional unit, or as institutional system. In these cases the constitution of the region is not only problematic, but may be subject to political and social conflict. In yet other cases politics and social action may be largely deterritorialized and it is difficult to talk of regions at all.

Regional autonomy

In this reconstruction of political space, regions may constitute themselves as actors, able to pursue defined interests. Where they do so they face an opportunity set which has been modified considerably by the changes in the political and economic context. This affects the understanding of autonomy, and of the power of regions as actors in complex systems. Traditionally regional autonomy was considered as a question of the bilateral relationships between the regions and the state in a zero-sum game. Nowadays the game is more complicated, as regional space has been opened up by economic and political change.

First, with the European Union, there is a third level of politics (Bullman, 1994) and a set of triangular relationships among the regions, the states, and the decision-making organs of the EU (De Castro Ruano, 1994; Jones and Keating, 1995; Petschen, 1993). Regions seek to influence the policies of the EU by direct contacts; by using

their influence within their own states; through interregional lobbies; through the partnerships established by the Commission for the implementation of its regional policies; and in the new networks created by EU activities (Engel, 1994; Keating and Hooghe, 1996). At one time, some regions believed that it was possible to compensate for an exclusion from influence in domestic politics by establishing direct links with the Commission and thus by-passing the nation-state. The evidence, however, shows that it is those regions which are best integrated into national circuits of influence who have most influence in Brussels. Power resources are cumulative and it is not easy for regions to substitute one for another. Europe, however, has opened up territorial politics to new influences so that regional politics is increasingly Europeanized, while national politics is both Europeanized and regionalized. Discussions about politics at the regional level are now usually replete with references to the European dimension and the internal market. At the same time, regions are engaged in complex systems of paradiplomacy, as they seek markets and technology, recognition and diffusion of their cultures, and to raise their political profile. Traditional roles and relationships have been changed in important ways (Hocking, 1997) and again autonomy is no longer a matter of bilateral exchange.

A second element transforming our understanding of autonomy is the relationship between the region and the market. In an open economy, regions depend on the continental and global market for investment, markets, and resources. The paradox of institutional decentralization is that, the more autonomy regions gain from their own states, the less they are protected from the market and thus the more dependent they become upon the market. Even for states, there is no real independence nowadays; rather there are strategies for managing interdependence. The relationship with the market varies widely from one region to another according to its resources, its ability to attract investment, its level of economic development, and its technological and human assets.

In this new context, regions must be seen not merely as government institutions, but as systems of action (Balme, 1996; Kohler-Koch, 1996). Rather than talking of regional autonomy as a bilateral relationship, or merely reformulating it as a trilateral or multilateral one, it is better to talk of governmental capacity at the territorial level (Keating, 1991), that is the capacity to formulate and implement a developmental and social project. The nature of the development project differs from one region to another, according to the balance of social forces. In one place, there is a project geared to the international market, in another one with a higher social content, seeking to influence the impact of the market on the region. In one place, there is an emphasis on cultural development; in another an effort to use culture as an instrument of collective action. In regions with strong regional governments, where there is a political and functional space, and a capacity to reach legitimate decisions, the leadership of the project may be assumed by political forces. Elsewhere it may be determined by a combination of internal pressures, from firms, unions, social movements, and external constraints. In some limiting cases the external context may even be determinant, leaving no room for regional politics.

Conclusion

In a world where the link between territory and political power has been attenuated and power is dispersed in networks and multiple spheres of authority (Camilleri and Falk, 1992; Keating, 1996a; Lenoir and Lesourne, 1992) it is tempting to talk of the 'end of territory' (Badie, 1995). Yet territory is being reinvented, as the European state restructures, collective identities are reformed, and new systems of collective action emerge in state and civil society. New forms both of autonomy and of dependence come about.

In some cases, there emerge powerful regions, with political institutions and a vibrant territorial civil society. Here the regional principle imposes a territorial order and structures social relations. Regions constitute themselves as actors to intervene in the new complex systems of production and distribution. In other cases, large cities play this role. Elsewhere strong states may survive, albeit in competition with new territorial and sectoral powers and penetrated by them. Finally, there are territories where there is no capacity to impose a territorial logic and which are disaggregated or reduced to dependants of the state or the international market. Territory either becomes a link in a chain of dependent relationships, as in the old clientelist systems of Italy (1870–1922 and 1946–92) or Spain under the Restoration; or else territory, as an element in social organization, is destroyed altogether. The invention of regions is thus a sporadic and partial process, not a wave sweeping across Europe and transforming the architecture of politics in a uniform manner. So there will be no Europe of the regions, if by this is meant a new territorial hierarchy on the lines of the old state-centred system. This poses a number of normative issues. A regionalized Europe is likely to be a more unequal one, as regions exploit their competitive advantages in the market and the political arena. Policy, as it retreats to networks spanning public and private sectors, the state, and the continental arena, may become increasingly divorced from the democratic legitimation that continues to be organized on a territorial basis. Social solidarity, which remains rooted in the nation-state, may become divorced from the politics of competitive development, and consequently be downgraded. Yet we cannot reinvent the old nation-state; territorial restructuring has gone too far for that and responds to powerful economic and social forces. Rather, we must explore the need for new forms of democratic accountability and policy integration in the new territorial order. This will not be easy.

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