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# Is Region the Most Appropriate Space to Think Sustainable Development? A framework for research and implementation

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***IS REGION THE MOST APPROPRIATE SPACE TO THINK SUSTAINABLE  
DEVELOPMENT?***

***A FRAMEWORK FOR RESEARCH AND IMPLEMENTATION***

**Invited conference to Caenti International Conference of Territorial Intelligence  
Alba Iulia University (Romania), September 20-22, 2006.**

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**Abstract**

Whatever the challenge is for a rational observer, European regions and Regionalism have become common concerns in Europe for the last thirty years in the realm of European Union, not to speak of centuries in some European states.

Sustainable development is another controversial notion although it is largely used and has been introduced since the late eighties in European glossary.

In the line of the Caenti Alba Iulia conference program, the aim of this communication is to relate together those two concepts –region and sustainable development- with that of territorial intelligence.

In a world that continuously witnesses the disasters of state imperialism and aggressive competition, territorial intelligence dictates that regions should not behave and/or be considered as mini-states, i.e. territorial or sociocultural entities that establish their legitimacy on zero sum antagonisms. It is our view that the permanence of regions in the history and around the world is a proof that (a) region has a profound popular meaning, and (b) that a fresh conception of regional governance is a chance for the implementation of sustainable development.

As a provisional conclusion to these reflections, we suggest some guidelines of action for a group of benevolent people looking to implement a more friendly world on the basis of a regional leverage.

**Key Words**

Information, Communication, Culture, Governance, European Union, Regions, Territorial intelligence, Subsidiarity

## **Résumé**

Région, régionalisation, régionalisme sont des formes lexicales variées dont la floraison témoigne de l'importance que prend actuellement le territoire dans l'espace public européen. Le développement durable est un concept émergent depuis que la mondialisation a fait percevoir aux responsables politiques comme aux citoyens le danger et l'inanité d'une croissance débridée des activités humaines sur la planète Terre. L'intelligence territoriale est une notion introduite par les penseurs de toutes les disciplines des sciences humaines pour donner une cohérence conceptuelle aux tentatives de comprendre la complexité et encourager le développement territorial.

L'objet de cette communication est de fournir aux participants à la conférence européenne de Caenti à Alba Lulia (Roumanie, 20-23 sept 2006) des fondements théoriques et des axes de recherche mettant en relation les concepts de région et de développement durable avec celui d'intelligence territoriale.

Dans un monde que les technologies de l'information communication font rétrécir tout en faisant voir à la planète entière les désastres de l'impérialisme d'état et de la concurrence effrénée, le développement des régions en Europe est une chance pour voir émerger une autre gouvernance publique. Les régions considérées comme des foyers culturels et économiques rayonnants peuvent établir leur identité et régler leurs relations sur des logiques autres que les antagonismes à somme nulle, constitutifs de la pensée politique héritée des siècles précédents. Mais les régions sont-elles le meilleur échelon de cette mise en œuvre du développement durable à l'Européenne ? L'histoire et la raison nous conduisent à répondre : Oui, mais en coopération avec les autres échelons comme les départements, les pays, les villes.

## **Mots Clés**

Information, Communication, Culture, Gouvernance, Union Européenne, Régions, Intelligence Territoriale, Subsidiarité, Mondialité,

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

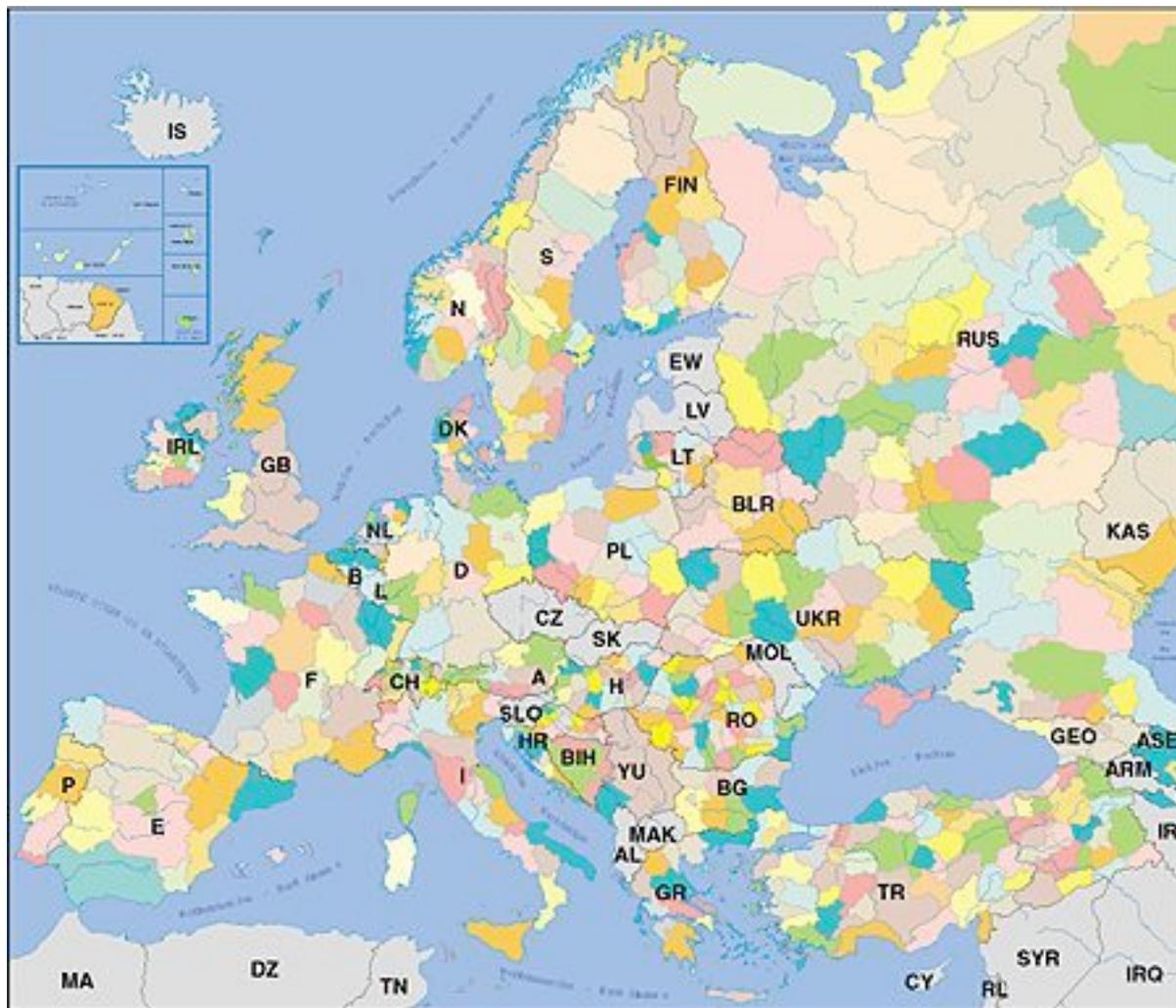
When one looks at a political map of Europe, one is puzzled by the complexity and intricacy of borders between more than 30 states on an appendix of the Asian continent<sup>1</sup>.



© 2001. Sa Majesté la Reine du chef du Canada, Ressources naturelles Canada.

<sup>1</sup> <http://atlas.nrcan.gc.ca/site/francais/maps/reference/international/europe/map.jpg>

When zooming at the level of European regions<sup>2</sup>, more than 200 coloured spots make it pointillist and quasi-unreadable.



Whatever the challenge is for a rational observer, European regions and Regionalism have become common concerns in Europe for the last thirty years in the realm of European Union, not to speak of centuries in some European states. That the Caenti program questions the notion of region seems relevant.

Sustainable development is another controversial notion although it is largely used and has been introduced since the late eighties in European glossary.

In the line of the Caenti Alba Iulia conference program, the aim of this communication is to relate together those two concepts –region and sustainable development- with that of territorial intelligence. After having put those concepts in perspective, we shall question their pertinence and suggest a tentative framework to think the appropriate territorial level of research and action for sustainable development in Europe.

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.a-e-r.org/VICARDS/index.html>

## 2. EUROPE, REGION AND SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT IN THE VIEW OF TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE

All these concepts have been explored and discussed for decades. Rather than to (re)define them, we wish to retain their significance as related to *territorial intelligence*, a term that we use as a motto.

### 2.1. Territorial intelligence

The expression *territorial intelligence* has emerged in the literature in the nineties and has become mundane and over exploited. Some confusion exists with the related expressions of economic intelligence or competitive intelligence. The two latter being from North American origin bear the connotation of information and competition, while territorial intelligence, of Latin origin, rather bears the connotation of understanding and comprehension.

The latest attempts to circumscribe territorial intelligence can be found in a state of the art review by Girardot (2006) published on the “official” European site for territorial intelligence, from which we excerpt the following definition:

“Traditionally Territorial Intelligence has been fed by economics, geography, Information and Communication Sciences and Technologies (ICST) and knowledge management. The links with economical intelligence and the ICST are often quoted in the current definitions of territorial intelligence. The systems of territorial intelligence require the use of traditional processes of information broadcasting and of information technologies and communication by the means of Intranet or Internet sites, documentation, geographical information systems and data analysis.

On-going research activities in Territorial Intelligence are mainly led by Jean-Jacques Girardot (<http://mti.univ-fcomte.fr>) as well as Philippe Dumas and Yann Bertacchini (<http://i3m.univ-tln.fr/>). Their definitions follow the same dynamics and assert that territorial intelligence:

- is linked to “all the multi-field knowledge that improve the understanding of the structure and dynamics of territories” [Girardot 2002]
- moves closer “the intelligence as a cognitive process and a process of information organization, and the territory as a space of significant relations” [Dumas 2004]
- or still “can be likened to the territoriality which results from the phenomenon of appropriation of the territory resources then in the skills transfers between categories of local actors of different culture” [Bertacchini 2004].”

Another trait of *territorial intelligence* is the reference to territory. This also may bear confusion esp. with the geographer since here “territorial” refers to both physical and symbolic dimensions of the territory (Rasse, 2001, Herbauts, 2006).

The territorial intelligence movement is rooted in two major epistemologies of the late century: the socio-systems approach such as practiced by Morin (1991 for example) and the constructivism summarized by Gastil (1994) or LeMoigne (2002). Keeping those premises in mind, one of the major characteristics of the territorial intelligence is that it is an endless process, which deals with complexity, openness, multifactor reasoning and fuzzy boundaries. It can’t be reduced to simplistic or one-dimensional arguments. A tentative vintage definition that respects those principles of systems, complexity and constructivism could be:

*Territorial intelligence is the process of dynamically understanding the territory that makes up the territory.*

## 2.2.Regions in the EU

Regions are formally recognized by the UE and its bodies among which the European Commission. However it must be reminded that the quasi totality of European machinery is directed towards the state level, or in Brussels jargon, the “Member States”. Regions are not the focus.

Several institutions<sup>3</sup> in Europe are either representative of the regions (such as the Aer, *Assembly of European Regions*, or the Afcce, *Association française des communes et régions d'Europe*) or consultative for the European Commission (like the *Committee of the Regions*, instituted by the Maastricht treaty, 1992).

According to the Aer's *Declaration on the regionalism in Europe*, (<http://www.a-e-r.org/about-aer/members/1.html>)

"the region is the territorial body of public law established at the level immediately below that of the State and endowed with political self-government. The region shall be recognised in the national constitution or in legislation which guarantees its autonomy, identity, powers and organisational structures."

Regional competences vary from one country to another and 6 types of situation can currently be distinguished:

- *Constitutional regions* having the prerogatives of a State (Germany, Austria, Belgium, Switzerland...),
- *Regions with large political and administrative autonomy* (Spain, Italy, certain regions or autonomous islands in Denmark, the United Kingdom, Portugal),
- *Regions in decentralised States* (France, Holland, Poland, the Czech Republic),
- *Regions with a district, département or county-like nature* (Croatia, Denmark, Finland, Hungary, Greece, Lithuania, Norway, Romania, Sweden, Turkey, Ukraine),
- *Regional authorities made up of county delegations* (Ireland),
- Small States whose size corresponds to that of a region (Malta).

Some non-regionalised States remain in Europe.”

The following are a few examples of the denominations of regions in Europe: Germany, *Austria/Land*, *Spain/Comunidad Autonoma*, *France/Region*, *Hungary/Megye*, *Italy/Provincia autonoma & Regione*, *Poland/Wojewodztwo*, *Sweden/Landsting*, *Switzerland/Canton*.

## 2.3.Sustainable development in and out of Europe

Quoting the Caenti conference program,

“Since the European Council of Göteborg in June 2001, the sustainable development approach has been recognized as one of the main priorities of the European Union for the years to come. Now, it constitutes the basic framework from which the principles of good governance are defined. The community policies have to conform to them by respecting:

The participation of the citizens.

The global approach of territories and communities, characterized by an adequate balance between the economical, social, environmental and cultural dimensions.

The partnership of the territorial actors.”

On June, 9, 2006, the Council of the European Union has issued a new directive on the *Renewed EU sustainable development strategy*, emphasizing

- Involvement of citizens

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<sup>3</sup> Please see references in the webography at the end.

- Involvement of businesses and social partners
- Policy coherence and governance
- Policy integration
- Precautionary principle
- Making polluters pay

Official documents of EU mainly address the issue of sustainable development from the Brussels viewpoint. For example, the above mentioned *Renewed EU sustainable development strategy* cite the term “region” only once in page 25 to offer a prize to “regional and local authorities”. It mostly deals with “the Commission and the Member States”.

Henceforth, a sustainable development strategy has to be assessed from the regional viewpoint too. Such an effort has been made by Feder program and “member states”, like that report by Prager (2005) on *Le management stratégique des régions en Europe*, which offers a classical analysis in terms of competitive intelligence. A more comprehensive approach is needed and does not seem to be performed outside the sphere of territorial intelligence (Herbaux, 2006).

Sustainable development is also supported by national groups –les Verts- and intellectuals that question the issue of uncontrolled liberalism as well as unlimited expansion (Reeves, 2005 ; Lovelock, 2006; Hulot, 2006)

Three views of the sustainable development by the regions can be identified:

### **Sustainable development of a European region**

How regional policies and practices favour a well being state of citizens within regional area; how they take into consideration the future generations of its populations; how they implement citizens’ participation.

### **Regions for the sustainable development of Europe**

How the region contributes to general objectives of EU.

### **Regions for the sustainable development of the planet**

How the region participates to meeting the global challenges of the planet.

## 3. THE BASES OF A FRAMEWORK TO THINK REGIONAL GOVERNANCE

### **3.1.Theoretical: the permanence and modernity of regions**

The concept of region has spread over history as well as continents. It has a profound popular anchorage, whatever the actual form any region has taken. Several typologies have been proposed to categorize the regions, none being entirely satisfactory. However it is a useful guidance to recall the major ones in order to better assess the legitimacy of region as a node for territorial intelligence.

#### 3.1.1. HISTORY

Historical empires whether Chinese, Roman, Islamic, Hispanic, British or French for instances have always been divided into regions. Region is pervasive in History, although not

always emphasized. In the modern times, region has become a renewed concept not only linked to the imperialistic necessity of administering manageable parts of large empires. Paradoxically at first glance, the emergence of regions is contemporary of that of globalization. This is an occurrence of one essential principle of “glocalization”: *the more the individual is exposed to global winds, the more he/she has to anchor his/her identity on a local ground.*

The participants in the *Colloque Territoire-acteur et mondialisation* (2003), which was held in Chambéry in October 2003, highlighted this dynamics between territory and globalization. They see the territory “like a space and a concept to be redefined. This globalization thus creates paradoxically possibilities for the local level”. Claude Courlet notes that “the economists rediscover the geography, with assertion of the new centrality of the local economies”. “The territory, escaping a simply administrative designation is defined by that of which it is able: a social place of proximity building itself to conceive horizons and projects [...] Consequently appear fundamental dimensions which one finds on the two levels of the local and the global: history, culture, collective psychology. And thus the territory, far from being a field of retreat, has to be a space of relations and openness instituting its own coherence and its bond with the world. The effect of proximity which characterizes the territory helps to create confidence and contributes to the visibility of the stakes, the initiatives and their carriers [...] Locus of human resources, it thus becomes a privileged site of constitution of the formal capital. By there, it will be the base of the governance of tomorrow.”

Even if we simplify a little too much, we can say that the European region is a world specificity. It corresponds to a history and a cultural configuration with null other similar. It must answer a unique ambition, that which emerges from the new world relationship since September 11. It was illustrated by the last Iraqi conflict, and the clash between European *public opinions* and the North American one. It aims at promoting a multiple culture, complex and Hegelian, in the sense that a higher authority is emerging from the confrontation of diversity. The European region, being based on the principle of subsidiarity, is the level which gets the best visibility for its various cultures and richness; it is allowing European Community, relying on each one of its citizens, to continue differently on the world scene. Recent examples (Iraq, Lebanon, Iran, ...), although still very frustrating, show the way to practice the research of peace by the consensus rather than by the force, the “shock and awe” set forth by MM. Bush and Rumsfeld. Although significant at world level, the European region does not obey a single model. The regions of the countries that we quoted in section 2.2 (Germany, Italy, Spain, United Kingdom, etc.) have different stories, which led some of them to be constituted almost like sub-nations; others have developed strong city-states since the Middle Ages (Bagnasco, 1995), especially along the axis Northern Italy – Baltic Hansas. The French regionalization that has been done in front of us for fifty years will be a new “French exception”. Regional nationalism is not its major dimension and should not become it. The French Catalan will not feel “Catalan” in the same way as the Spanish Catalan. From a certain point of view, French regionalization is more rational; it comes from the feeling that the transformations of our relations to space under the impact of technologies, to the authority under the influence of the ways of life, to the effectiveness of the public action, pushes us towards another organization of the nation to which we keep a now secular attachment. It has apparently inspired a way to regionalism in former centralized states of Eastern Europe. The development of the modern European idea follows the chaotic way of a permanent hesitation between the feeling of a national identity inherited from the theorists and politicians of the XIX<sup>e</sup> century and that of a membership to a common culture and geography, much older and more modern at the same time. This physical and mythical attachment with the ground, the territoriality, appears in the revival of the regional feeling and allows us to conclude that the two feelings are at the same time alive and complementary. Our forecast is that they will continue to act in the years which come and within the new Europe which is institutionally building itself to reach twenty five states today and more than thirty, tomorrow. The central

idea of this construction must remain that of the precursors, such as J. Monnet who had posed in his time that the “*project of European Union is not to link the states but to link the people*”.

A consequence of that historical sketch is a middle-term trend towards the weakening of states inherited from the XIX century Europe. Our hypothesis is that the relative institutional and political void left by the weakening of traditional states may be filled by a more active role of the regions grounded in their territorial intelligence.

### 3.1.2. LANGUAGE AND CULTURE

Linguistic difference from a population to another is a common criterion to establish a regional border. It is however highly controversial since some region may have several languages, and one language spread over several regions.

Example: in Europe, four main linguistic areas are recognized that do not delineate regions: ([http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions\\_of\\_Europe](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Regions_of_Europe))

#### “Germanic Europe

[Germanic Europe](#) is where the Germanic languages are predominantly spoken. This area corresponds more or less to north-western Europe and some parts of central Europe. This region consist of: United Kingdom, Ireland, Iceland, Germany, Austria, Netherlands, Denmark, Sweden, Norway, German-speaking Switzerland, Alto-Adige and the Flemish part of Belgium.

#### Latin Europe

[Latin Europe](#), where the Romance languages are spoken. This area corresponds more or less to south-western Europe, with the exception of Romania and Moldova which are situated in Eastern Europe. This area consists of Italy, Spain, Portugal, France, Romania, Moldova, French-speaking Belgium, and French and Italian speaking Switzerland.

#### Slavic Europe

[Slavic Europe](#), where the Slavic languages are spoken. This area corresponds more or less to Eastern Europe. This area consists of: Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovakia, Slovenia, Croatia, Serbia, and Bulgaria.

#### Celtic Europe

[Celtic Europe](#), where [Celtic languages](#) are spoken, or where they were recently spoken and the population has kept its Celtic heritage for non-linguistic reasons. The [Celtic nations](#) are: [Scotland](#), [Wales](#), [Cornwall](#) (within the United Kingdom), the [Isle of Man](#) (a [British Crown dependency](#)), [Ireland](#), and [Brittany](#) (within [France](#)). These are all nations where a [Celtic language](#) is spoken, or was spoken into modern times, and there is a degree of shared culture (see [Pan Celticism](#)).

#### Outside of this classification

Outside of these four main groups we can find :

[Greece](#) & [Cyprus](#): The only countries of "[Hellenic](#) Europe". They are sometimes associated with the Latin countries, due to the geographical and cultural ties to the [Mediterranean Sea](#), and sometimes to the Slavic-Orthodox part of Europe due to the importance of the [Orthodox Church](#) in both.

[Hungary](#), whose language is distantly related to [Finnish](#) and [Estonian](#). Due to its geographical location Hungary is more often related to other central or Eastern European countries.

[Finland](#) and [Estonia](#), whose languages are closely related and more distantly related to [Hungarian](#). Despite this connection, Finland is often referred to simply as a country of [Nordic Europe](#). However, because of its language and culture, it is not a Scandinavian country.

[Latvia](#) and [Lithuania](#), two linguistically [Baltic](#) countries (as opposed to the political concept which also includes Estonia).

[Malta](#), which has close linguistic ties to the [Arabic world](#), yet close cultural ties to Italy and [Catholic Europe](#).

[Turkey](#), which speaks an [Altaic](#) language that is not related to other European languages.

The [Basque Country](#), where the [Basque language](#) has continued while [Indo-European languages](#) have displaced other languages in Europe over the past 5000 years.”

We drastically condense the cultural typology of regions by associating it with linguistic divisions; it is a reminder of the combined importance of language and culture (the latter including religion, music, arts, food, lodging, clothing, etc.) in defining a regional

identification, although neither complete nor exclusive. Those dimensions of regional identity will be the prominent factors in our theory of radiating places (see 5.2 below).

### 3.1.3. PHYSICAL GEOGRAPHY

Following this theory<sup>4</sup>, regions would rest on natural borders such as rivers, mountains, and seas; peninsulas would make up regions. Counter examples are found in Catalogne and Catalunya which are separated by Pyrenees; Alsace and Baden-Württemberg by the Rhine river; on the other hand, the famous Oder-Neisse border has driven politics for decades, etc.

The argument of physical borders is so weak that we are not going to elaborate on it, mentioning only the fact that it is also a factor of unity. It will reappear in the following when considering the various programs of interregional cooperation (§ 3.3.2)

### 3.1.4. ECONOMIC POLES

Following the examples of City States of the Antiquity or the Middle Ages, strictly economic factors have been the rationale for numerous regions; the prominent economic factor is the cost of communication: physical communication facilities that make up local markets, and interpersonal communications that build up the trust without which no business is possible. Modern metropolis and industrial basins around which many European regions have grown up are the heirs of that antique cause.

Interestingly enough is the modern development of Ict (information and communication technology) that simultaneously reinforces the regional concept with the quest for identity and community ties and authorizes the dissemination of physical facilities, what we call “delocalization”.

The concept of “Industrial Districts” introduced initially by Marshall at the beginning of XX<sup>o</sup> century, highlights the importance of coordination to explain regional development. It is used nowadays to characterize the mix of socio economic conditions that builds up regional entities, especially in Northern Italy and Central Germany. They are taking shape elsewhere (Spain, France, e.g.). Those regions are generally considered highly successful, conduct dynamic strategies and have a major impact on the world scene.

### 3.1.5. FOR A RICHER APPROACH: THE RESULT OF A SOCIO POLITICAL PROCESS

Taking in account that none of the previous criteria can alone explain the present division of European Union into regions, whatever the strength of the regional movement is, we have to assume that actual regions are the result of a mix of those factors in a complex process of socio political nature. Following the techniques of modelling, the process of partitioning a wider area like Europe into regions could be thought as a global optimization game. At a given time, the regional deal would minimize some constraints like intercultural conflicts, environmental challenges, costs of communication and the like, while it would maximize resources allocations, international visibility, individual well being and the like. Such a view introduces the idea that regions would be essentially contingent and the optimum permanently subject to change. That view is consistent with the notion of territorial intelligence and will be reasserted here below.

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<sup>4</sup> This theory has been applied to regions, and even states, generally to justify imperialistic views. But it is also noteworthy that people in traditional tribes often designate themselves by the same word as their land.

### 3.2. Legal: the principle of subsidiarity

For us, the principle of subsidiarity and its corollary, the principle of proportionality, are the major juridical concepts that establish the legal, administrative and cultural bases of the powers and responsibilities of European regions. It has been constitutionally laid down in the Treaty of Amsterdam (1997) in the form of a *Protocol on the application of the principles of subsidiarity and proportionality*.

Although the treaty explicitly deals with the relationship between the Commission and the Member States (as usual!), the spirit of that text should be extended to the relationship between Member States and the Regions. For example, changing the names (Commission or Community for {State}, and Member State for {Region}), one can read (<http://europa.eu.int/eur-lex/en/treaties/selected/livre345.html>):

§ 3, “The principle of subsidiarity provides a guide as to how those powers are to be exercised at the {State} level. Subsidiarity is a dynamic concept and should be applied in the light of the objectives set out in the Treaty. It allows {State} action within the limits of its powers to be expanded where circumstances so require, and conversely, to be restricted or discontinued where it is no longer justified.”

Or § 6, “The form of {State} action shall be as simple as possible, consistent with satisfactory achievement of the objective of the measure and the need for effective enforcement. The {State} shall legislate only to the extent necessary. Other things being equal, directives should be preferred to regulations and framework directives to detailed measures. Directives as provided for in Article 249 of the Treaty, while binding upon each {Region} to which they are addressed as to the result to be achieved, shall leave to the {regional} authorities the choice of form and methods.”

Thus we think of the European socio political structure as a hierarchy, where subsidiarity circulates up and down between the structured and visible levels: European Community, State, Region, Department/Province (or equivalent in each national setting), City or agglomeration.

### 3.3. Pragmatic: what regional institutions do

Besides theoretical and legal approaches, some examples of current regional achievements will reinforce the legitimacy of our interest for the European Region.

#### 3.3.1. REGIONS AS LABORATORIES FOR A RENEWED CITIZENSHIP

The extraordinary development of regional idea in XX<sup>o</sup> century Europe has proven that regions are contemporary nodes of communication, confidence, relationship, experimentation. All those achievements make up a locus of the implementation of sustainable development paradigm.

#### 3.3.2. REGIONAL INITIATIVES

Interreg Jurassien

<http://www.arcjurassien-ctj.org/INTERREG/index.htm>

<http://www.interreg3afch.org/introduction.php>

Arco Latino

<http://www.arcolatino.org/>

CRPM (Conférence des Régions Périphériques Maritimes d'Europe).

<http://www.crpm.org/fr/index.php>

CIPRA (Alpine regions)

[http://www.cipra.org/datenbankseiten/willkommen.asp?n\\_lid=3](http://www.cipra.org/datenbankseiten/willkommen.asp?n_lid=3)

COTRAO (Mediterranean Alps)

<http://w3.are-regions-europe.org/INTERREGIONAL/F-COTRAO.html>

### 3.3.3. A COUNTER EXAMPLE OF RESISTANCE TO REGIONALISM

Difficulties of former communist states to conceive and implement regionalism.

<http://geoconfluences.ens-lsh.fr/doc/etpays/Europe/EurScient.htm#haut>

Partnership between states and recently created regions is to defined and implement. It needs time, probably at least one generation. The new regional architecture of Central European regions is probably on an evolutionary cycle similar to what has been witnessed in France and other strong states during the XX<sup>o</sup> century.

Some are questioning the possibility of a European view of regional governance.

<http://geoconfluences.ens-lsh.fr/doc/etpays/Europe/EurScient.htm#S1>

## 3.4. Conclusion: What a European region is

The present partition of European Union into some 200 administratively recognized regions is an undeniable fact. It has legal, historical, socio political and cultural legitimacies, albeit their levels of recognition and permanence may be diverse. As a coordinating body, we have to take present European regions as given, and deal with them. But we also have to accept a dynamic view of the mapping and a constructivist approach to regionalism. In addition, other levels of subdivision of states are also candidates for territorial recognition. We now have to address the question: is the European Region the optimal level to think sustainable development?

## 4. WHERE TO SET THE CURSOR FOR TERRITORIAL INTELLIGENCE IN ACTION

After having reviewed the theoretical and practical roots of regionalism in Europe, we are in a position to compare advantages and drawbacks of the four major levels of administrative division already existing in Europe. We hope to have demonstrated that the European region is a meaningful conceptual level for the implementation of sustainable development. This doesn't yet answer the question whether it is the "most appropriate" one. We have to compare with other possible levels of socio political action. Let four levels be considered in this paper, respectively, the state, the region and the sub-region as defined either by department, or agglomeration or city. Without entering complex and long considerations about the definitions of these four levels, we can draw the following table (Table 1) of perceived advantages (+) and drawbacks (-) of each of those with respect to the principles of sustainable development.

| Administrative level, territorial scale | Plus  | Minus   |
|---|---|---|
| State                                   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Monopoly of international relations</li> <li>▪ Level of relations with world organizations (Un, Ocde, Wto,</li> <li>▪ Treaties signature</li> <li>▪ Law maker; adaptation of EU regulations</li> <li>▪ National solidarity (SS, Taxes,</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Bureaucratic</li> <li>▪ Far from citizens</li> <li>▪ Weight of historical heritage</li> <li>▪ Souvenir of nationalism</li> <li>▪ Involved in world conflicts</li> <li>▪ Tendency to imperialism</li> </ul> |
| Region                                  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ EU project partnership</li> <li>▪ International visibility</li> <li>▪ Decentralized policy and decision making level</li> <li>▪ EU Statistical level</li> <li>▪ Close to citizen</li> <li>▪ Political recognition</li> <li>▪ Visibility of objectives and achievements</li> <li>▪ Node for European relations</li> <li>▪ Node of territorial solidarity</li> <li>▪ Capable of arbitrating local conflicts; visibility of the glocal challenges</li> <li>▪ Trans-boundary relationship</li> <li>▪ Sustainable development conscious</li> <li>▪ Size adequate for project mgt</li> <li>▪ Representative democracy</li> </ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Not consistent throughout EU</li> <li>▪ No formal international recognition</li> <li>▪ Diversely perceived</li> <li>▪ Fiscal resources irregularly available</li> </ul>                                    |
| Local department, province              | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Close to citizen</li> <li>▪ Citizens' trust</li> <li>▪ Strong historical background</li> <li>▪ Local expertise</li> <li>▪ Eligible for European relations</li> <li>▪ Creativity, proximity and experimentation</li> <li>▪ Visibility of objectives and achievements</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Suboptimal for economic decisions</li> <li>▪ More or less democratic</li> </ul>  |
| City, agglomeration                     | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Closest to citizens</li> <li>▪ Social laboratory</li> <li>▪ Density of communication</li> <li>▪ Strong personality in Europe</li> <li>▪ Major defender of local interest</li> <li>▪ Direct democratic decision making</li> <li>▪ Visibility of objectives and</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ Suboptimal for broad challenges</li> <li>▪ Low level of policy making</li> </ul>   |

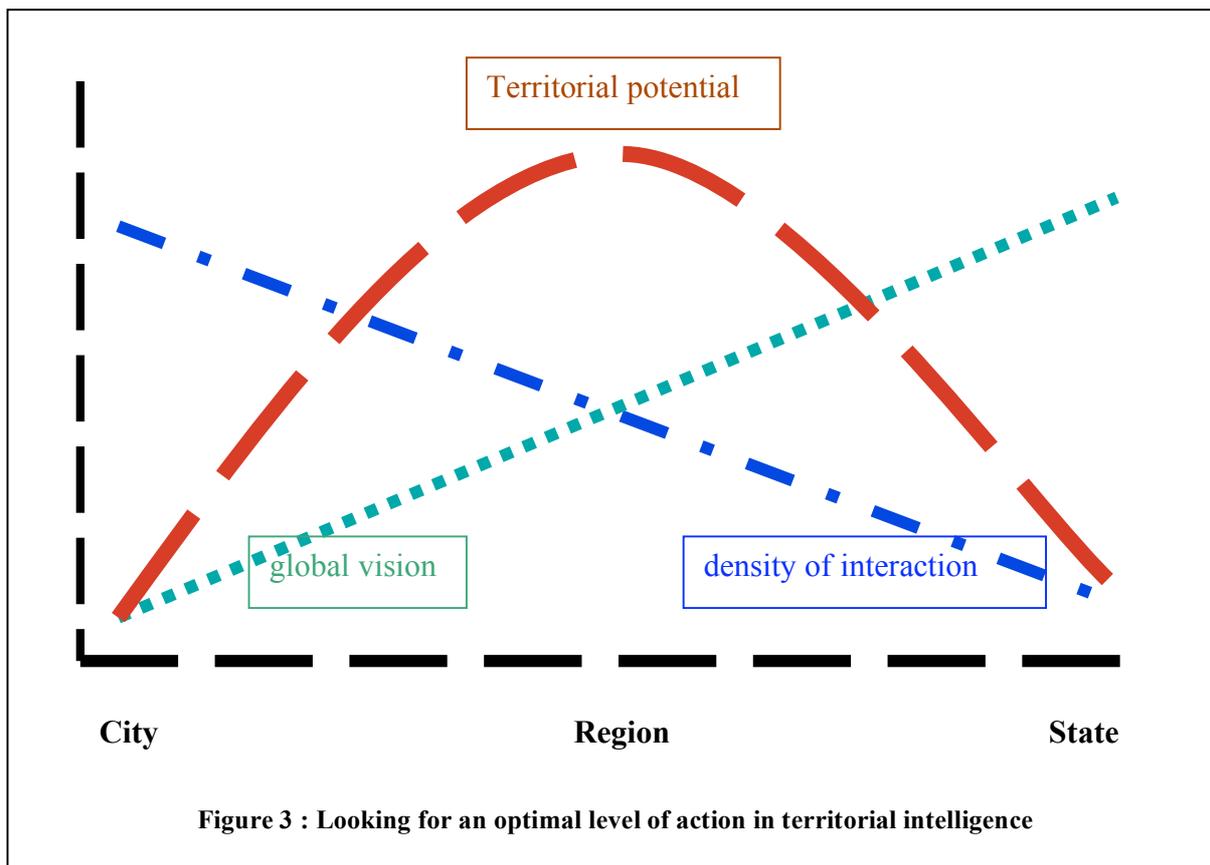
|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  | achievements<br>▪ Locus of glocal issues |  |
|--|--|--|

Table 1: The advantages and shortcomings of each possible levels of territorial governance.

Another way to solve that problem of optimizing the level of territorial governance might be conceptually found in solving the twofold equation that makes up territorial potential. Considering what we have said about the key factors of territoriality, i.e. (1) the importance of close interactions between actors, and (2) the necessity to encompass a global view that is inherent to the “sustainable development approach”, we propose the following symbolic equation:

$$\text{Territorial potential} = \text{density of interaction} * \text{global vision}$$

Since (1) density of interaction decrease from the city level to the state level and (2) global vision increases from city to state, a graphical resolution of that equation is displayed in figure 3 below.



It follows that the optimal level, **from that standpoint**, can be placed in the region.

## 5. CONCLUSION

### 5.1. Region and a new world governance based on the regions

In the face of vanishing states in Europe, the role of lower territorial levels is going to shape new modes of governance and relationship between public administration and the citizens. The European Region, the Department/Province, the City/Agglomeration are all possible candidates for that role. After weighing the pros and cons of each of them, we think that the major node for XXI<sup>o</sup> century governance, prone to develop sustainable development approach, is the European Region.

This judgement must be accompanied by two strong political conditions: (1) regions shall not behave as mini-states with all their prejudices; (2) regional policy is grounded in an ethics that is stemming from the concern for sustainable development.

### 5.2. A new paradigm of public governance: mundiality and ethics

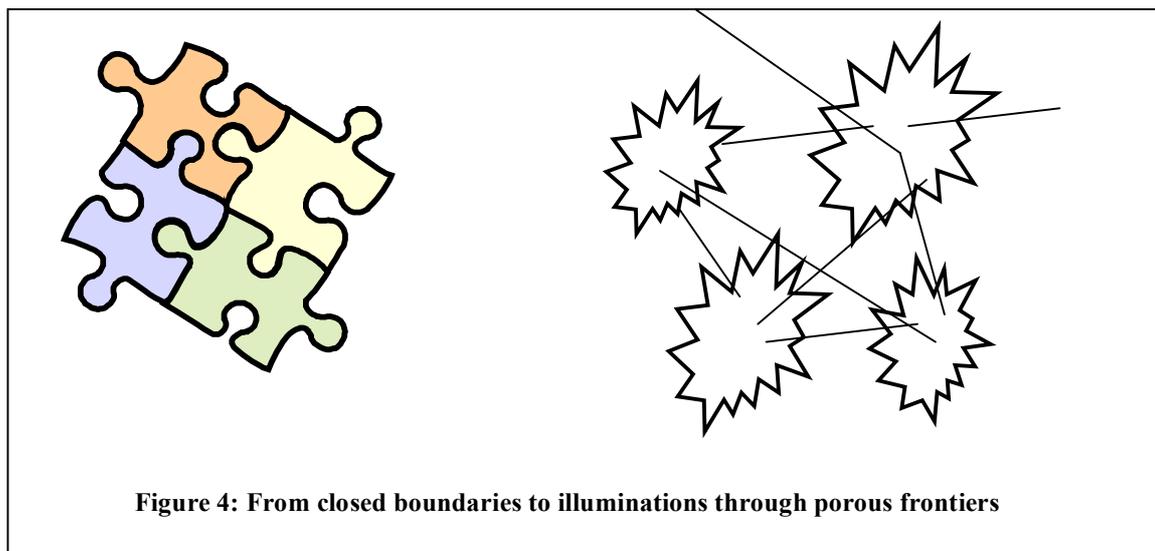
In a world that continuously witnesses the disasters of state imperialism and aggressive competition, territorial intelligence dictates that regions should not behave and/or be considered as mini-states, i.e. territorial or sociocultural entities that establish their legitimacy on zero sum antagonisms. It is our view that the permanence of regions in the history and around the world is a proof that (a) region has a profound popular meaning, and (b) that a fresh conception of regional governance is a chance for the implementation of sustainable development.

After several authors, we propose the term of “mundiality” to qualify a new paradigm of public governance. Mundiality is a sense of actively pertaining to the world in a community in constant becoming (Dumas, 2006). It is consistent with our definition of territorial intelligence (see § 2.1<sup>5</sup>). It is obviously different from “mundialism” or “globalization”.

In that view, a territory is not defined by its limits, but by the proximities it generates. Frontiers are no longer the horizon. Ricoeur (2004) explains how the world map can be transformed from a juxtaposition of physically bounded pieces of land into a network of radiating nodes (Figure 4). Those nodes, than we can equate with our regions, interact through reciprocal illuminations. In that context, identities are not eternal characteristics, but rather living, evolving and narrative clues that are rooted in history and project themselves in a promise, attached to a horizon. A horizon that is never touched, but is made of successive plans, from the closest very mobile, to the farthest very stable. This model of radiating territories implies two corollaries: the need of translation between cultures, and the acceptance of one's lost in the relation with other. Translation (not only linguistic) can be supported by Ict, acceptance of lost supposes an ethics of government relationship. Examples of radiating factors are the cultural activities such as alimentation, cooking (recipes), music (folklore), clothing (fashion), and the like. Interesting enough is that those activities do not necessitate linguistic translation, but only cultural translation.

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<sup>5</sup> « Territorial intelligence is the process of dynamically understanding the territory that makes up the territory »



The other prerequisite for renewed regional governance aiming at sustainable development is an ethics. This has been clearly identified by the Caenti project and does not need to be elaborated here beyond stressing its importance. Sketch of ethical rules for regional governance:

- Behave with other regions on the basis of mutual respect, exchange and radiation of cultures rather than domination.
- Behave with Departments and Cities (i.e. subdivisions of the region) according to subsidiarity principle.
- Act for what you think is fair, i.e. is useful for your regional community, and especially the poorest of them. Don't act in function of your immediate interest.

### 5.3. Proposals

In this paper, we have raised many questions. Some of them have had firm answers; some are still open to debate and controversy. As a provisional conclusion to these reflections, we wish to suggest some guidelines of action for a group of benevolent people looking to implement a friendlier world on the basis of a regional leverage. Quoting Prince Wilhelm of Orange-Nassau, "There is no need to have much hope to start some endeavour, nor to succeed to persevere".

### 5.4. Some guidelines for action at the regional level

... as an opening for further discussions and a program of research.

- How to build up an interregional network organization
- Contagion as a mode of expansion and dissemination of regional ideas
- Organization and measurement of EU support

- Region vs. state: typologies, share of responsibilities, of resources
- Region vs. communities (cities, agglomerations, other administrative or sociocultural levels); redefinition of roles and responsibilities
- Evaluating and controlling regional governance according with sustainable development
- Redefining regional lobbying and citizen participation
- World openness, especially to circum European regions
- How the spirit of mundiality infuse governance of the regions
- Educational concern
- Caenti: a think tank for XXI° century regionalism?

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