***A Typology of Regions***

Regions can be classified according to many criteria. In this module, we use the following - widely spread - typology.

***Mirco-Regions***

"We are more and more Tuscans, Sicilians, Walloons and Welshmen, and less and less Italians, Frenchmen and Englishmen, or in other words we are becoming more and more Europeans."

A micro-region can be defined as a territorial area that is smaller than a state to which it belongs, but larger than a municipality. Typical examples of such micro-regions are provinces, districts, departments or even mega-cities. A special case of a micro-region is one that spreads across different states (cross-border region).

Micro-regionalism is related to macro-regionalism in the way that the larger regionalisation (and globalisation) processes create possibilities for smaller economically dynamic sub-national or transnational regions to get a direct access to the larger regional economic system, often bypassing the nation-state and the national capital, sometimes even as an alternative or in opposition to the challenged state and formal state-led regionalisms.

An example of where the typology of micro-regions are commonly used is the Assembly of European Regions (AER).

***Cross-Border Regions***

Since the end of the eighties, cross-border region building processes have gained momentum. A cross-border region is actually a special case of a micro-region, whereby the micro-region spreads across different states.

An example of a dynamic cross-border region in North America is the so-called "Cascadia", at the western edge of the US-Canadian border.

Cascadia, in fact, is presented as a rather flexible notion. Depending on the interests and agendas involved, different 'boundaries' of Cascadia are constructed. Mappings of Cascadia range from a conceptualisation that includes only the watershed of the Georgia Basin and Puget Sound to one called "Main Street", running from Vancouver south through Seattle to Portland and Eugene; to a depiction of a two-state, one province agglomeration of British Columbia, Washington State and sometimes even Oregon; to a much larger approach envisioning the cross-border entity as a "Pacific Northwest Economic Region", including five states, Washington, Oregon, Idaho, Montana and Alaska, and two provinces, British Columbia and Alberta.

Some scholars state that these presentations of variously scaled partnerships are not geopolitical in the sense that they represent areas of influence or conflict, but are rather geo-economic framings of the region.

***Macro-Regions***

Macro-regions, sometimes called international regions or world-regions, refer to large territorial units comprising different states. A former definition of macro-region is: 'A limited number of states linked together by a geographical relationship and by a degree of mutual interdependence' (Joseph Nye). This is a valuable definition, but seen the increasingly interdependent world, a more accurate definition is the one provided by Barry Buzan: "A spatially coherent territory composed of two or more states".

Typical examples are the 'Pacific region' or the 'Mediterranean region'. These entities are often characterised by their formal level of integration (cf. the European Union in Europe, Mercosur in Latin-America; see also chapter two). From a geographical perspective one can distinguish the following regional 'realms' in the world:

• Europe

• Russia

• North America

• Middle America

• South America

• North Africa/Southwest Asia

• Sub-saharan Africa

• South Asia

• East Asia

• Southeast Asia

• Austral Realm

• Pacific Realm

***Sub-Regions***

Within the realms of Macro-regions one can also identify smaller regional entities, sometimes called 'sub-regions'. In Europe for instance, one can refer to sub-regions that reflect old historical formations such as the Swedish, Baltic Empire, the Habsburg Empire ... But not only nations, also micro-regions can form a sub-region. The old Hanseatic project in Europe seems to be revitalised today as Hamburg/Bremen develops more links with Baltic states in response to the Southern German growth pole centred on Munich that in turn forms a 'growth-triangle' with Milan and Barcelona.

However, setting the boundaries of some of these realms is a daunting task, because they are susceptible to different interpretations. This is especially the case with Europe. Talking of 'Europe' can mean different things to different people.

"There is today much more to identifying 'Europe' than looking on a map: politics is more important than geography. How people choose to define Europe will have a significant impact on how they think both about security (in a broad sense) in Europe and Europe's relations with the outside world. The chosen definition will provide the basis of the answer to the crucial question: who is 'us' and who is 'them' politically speaking?" Quote For instance, to many people Europe means simply the European Union, thus, they are referring to the area covered by the EU member-states, or what in geography is called Western Europe. However, the impending wave of accessions will inevitably lead to a broader interpretation frame of Europe. Sometimes, Europe is used to describe the area stretching from the Atlantic to the Urals, which refers to the "whole" of Europe and, thus, includes two former Soviet Union Republics and parts of the Russian federation.

Another interpretation of Europe is the one, which refers to the area stretching from Poland to Portugal. The well-known argument of some famous Eastern European authors, such as Milan Kundera, Gyorgy Konrad, goes as follows: 'Our East-Central European countries belong to Europe, in fact, they are culturally and historically among the most important parts of Europe." The reference to Europe in the designation already states the fact that East and Central European countries form part of Europe. These kind of arguments were especially ventilated during the period prior to the fall of the Berlin Wall and placed the major dividing line between the Soviet Union and the Eastern European countries.

But Europe can also be seen as the European Security Area, represented by the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe and whereby Europe stretches from Vancouver to Vladivostok. This security Europe includes states, which do not belong to the geographic Europe.

Europe is, however, not an exception. A similar story can be told about the Middle East. There is no single agreed definition of the political and geographical boundaries of the Middle East. For instance, in some parts of Asia the region is referred to as West Asia, however, this does not include Egypt, the Sudan, and the Magreb, which are located in Africa but are generally conceived as countries of the Middle East. During the nineteenth century the European powers considered the East as the Eurasian region, which started where the Western civilization ended, namely the African continent and the Ottoman Empire. In those days, the Eastern Question was the term to describe the great strategic competition among Britain, France, Russia and Germany for access to and control over this region. And as the influence of the West expanded further into Asia, a distinction between the Near East and the Far East was made.