T.H. Marshall at the Limit: Hiding out in Maas-Rhein Euregio

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PLEASE SCROLL DOWN FOR ARTICLE
T. H. Marshall at the Limit: Hiding out in Maas–Rhein Euregio

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Abstract. The 1990s and early 2000s have witnessed a flourishing of cross-border institutional initiatives in Europe, most notably in the establishment of administrative cross-border regions (or euregios) along the dorsal spine of its former internal political borders. As self-confessed ‘laboratories of European integration’, they provide windows through which to observe the tensions inherent in the European project, in reconciling macroeconomic integration with the social and political goal of building an authentic transnational demos. Given the on-going problematic of democratic deficit in the euregios, this paper argues that, in order to grasp the stakes involved in creating new transborder regional governance structures in Europe today, one must shift from the political economic analysis pioneered by Alfred Marshall to theories of citizenship elaborated by T. H. Marshall. Reviewing the fraught experience of transboundary governance in the Maas–Rhein euregio, and drawing on T. H. Marshall’s tripartite evolutionary schema of citizenship based on civic, political and social rights, the authors reflect on the limits of Marshall’s conceptual enframing for understanding the dynamics of internal border regions which are increasingly assuming the exclusionary geopolitical logics of political frontiers. Building on this critique, they propose the idea of the ‘frontier political’ as a widening horizon of social rights to replace that of a cross-border politics rooted in a priori civic or political rights. They conclude that such a repoliticised arena, defined by qualities of partial invisibility and ‘hiddenness’ exemplified by the stark constellation of migrant detention camps located at both the inner and outer borders of the EU, offers a chance to rename the problem of euregional citizenship from the perspective of its multiple constitutive outsides.

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By some influential accounts, the dilemma of transboundary regionalism in Europe today has been framed in terms of the structural separation between the economic sphere of capital on the one hand and the persistent territorialisation of politics on the other (Sparke, 2000; Anderson, 2001). By foregrounding the political-economic dynamics of cross-border euregional interactions, these narratives grant structural agency to economic forces capable of ‘jumping’ geographical scales (Smith, 1985), whereas populations are increasingly conceptualised as remaining ‘stuck’ on one side of the border or another, subject to the caprice of footloose capital (Perkmann and Sum, 2002; Jessop, 2002).

These storylines, we argue, underplay the capacity of agents to make use of the border in negotiating their claims to power (Balibar, 2004). It is therefore to the potential socio-political determinants of citizenship in a transboundary context that we turn our attention in this paper. Section 1 unveils the context for the current predicament in Europe’s experiment with transboundary regionalism, focusing on a range of institutional initiatives promoted since the early 1990s towards that goal. In light of the latter, section 2 focuses on the governance dilemmas confronting the tri-cultural and tri-lingual cross-border Maas–Rhein euregion, comprised of portions of Flemish, French and German-speaking Belgium, The Netherlands and Germany. The section offers a brief sketch of the organisational framework of the public-law foundation (or Stichting) responsible for administering the euregio, while highlighting several domains in which it has proved difficult to achieve genuine cross-border co-operation—notably in the area of cross-border labour market integration.

Against the backdrop of these observed impediments, we suggest that it would be productive to shift our analytical lens from the regional political economy frame pioneered by Alfred Marshall to theories of citizenship elaborated by T. H. Marshall. Drawing on T. H. Marshall’s tri-partite evolutionary schema of citizenship—civil, political, social—section 3 reflects on T. H. Marshall’s conceptualisation of citizenship, arguing that rather than take Marshall’s ‘limits’ to citizenship for granted, they should serve instead as a starting-point for thinking about the constitutive ‘outside’ of citizenship, as embodied in the disruptive nature of social rights. Reworking T. H. Marshall for the euregios, we conclude by suggesting that the preconditions for a viable transboundary demos are rooted in an agonistic struggle along the frontier between visibility and invisibility (or, ‘hiddenness’). This struggle, we aver, requires strategies of representation which, rather than make the invisible more visible in the sphere of traditional electoral politics, revive a project of ‘hiddenness’ at/on the border. In such a manner, the aporias of institutionalised cross-border politics in Maas–Rhein can be made properly political objects of intervention, as they re-cognise and reappropriate a very old exclusionary logic at the heart of all forms of modern citizenship, whose legacy the euregios, as one piece of a wider European problematic, of necessity inherit.

1. Governance Dilemmas in the Euregios

Since the early 1990s, the European Union has accorded special importance to the development of its former internal border regions as potentially key sites of economic dynamism resulting from the economic integration and enlargement of European space (Nijkamp, 1993; Cappelin and Batey, 1993; Krebs and van Geffen, 1994; Handy et al., 1995; Ehlers, 1996; Sidaway, 2001). Building on precedents established in the Benelux countries and along the Dutch–German
and Danish–German borders as well as lobbying by the Association of European Border Regions (Scott, 1998), just over one-fifth of Community Initiative funding has been allocated to cross-border co-operation. Thus, with the attainment of EU structural financing capabilities, these cross-border euregios have become eligible since 1990 for INTERREG funds in the co-financing of local cross-border initiatives, involving programmes of technology transfer, the construction of transport linkages, transborder industrial training and labour market development, the creation of joint leisure areas, and the establishment of consumer as well as small business advisory services.¹

Future cross-border planning efforts have also been ensured by the promotion in June 1997 of the Draft European Spatial Development Perspective. Supported by INTERREG IIc and III, the primary goal of the ESDP is to promote transnational co-operation among member-states’ planning and development agencies as a means of improving the impact of Community policies on spatial development (Nadin and Shaw, 1998; Faludi, 1997). Supported by a purposively ‘bottom–up’ planning approach, the policy assumptions guiding both INTERREG and the ESDP are that increased integration of spatial planning between member-states will contribute to an improved balance of development, resulting in heightened levels of socioeconomic cohesion and a more comprehensive vision for transnational regions within the European Union.

Lacking a clear competence for European-wide spatial planning, however, the administrative implementation of INTERREG and ESDP now involves a complex network of actors comprising the European Commission, member-states, regional and local authorities (CEC, 1991, 1994). Within the framework of this emerging ‘multilevel institutionalisation’ (Scott, 1998), subsidiarity conditions apply to the degree that member-states, rather than the Commission, are responsible for the allocation of funds. Recommendations on the distribution of funds and project evaluation are in turn the responsibility of joint monitoring groups made up of representatives from national, regional and local authorities of each country within a given joint co-operation area. Given the diversity of governance mechanisms between the Commission, member-states and the regions, and the largely voluntary nature of intergovernmental co-operation required for the administration of structural funds, there are significant differences in the administrative bodies that have been set up to initiate, plan and implement cross-border co-operation among the varied euregios (Martinos and Caspari, 1990; Hassink et al., 1995).

In north-western Europe, the variability of cross-border administrative mechanisms has translated into a wide range of operational outcomes in managing euregional networks during the 1990s. While intermunicipal cross-border cooperation under the aegis of Dutch–German–Belgian euregios, for example, has been facilitated in areas sharing similar legislative systems and can be considered a relative success in the domain of environmental management, fire and disaster relief, as well as tourism promotion, the overall record of economic, political, and cultural cross-border integration since the founding of the euregional programme has fallen below expectations (Breuer, 1984; Beerts, 1988; van Geenhuizen, 1994; Hamm and Kampmann, 1995). Similarly, despite the signing of a Benelux Agreement on cross-border co-operation in Brussels in September 1986, offering local authorities the possibility of collaborating within the framework of a public corporation or by formal administrative agreement, few municipalities have taken advantage of this legislation (Soeters, 1992).
For some observers, the constraints on increased transborder co-operation within the euregions are attributable to the lack of a harmonised and uniform tax structure, as well as the existence of uneven employment and social security regulations prevailing within different euregional sub-areas (Krebs and van Geffen, 1994). Others raise deeper issues of public accountability by pointing to the small number of policy-makers at the helm of euregional projects and their often erratic financing mechanisms, including the relatively uncodified manner of co-operation characterising relations within distinct euregional policy domains, at times based on public or civil law, at others on written declarations of intent or, in some cases, with no formalisation at all (Kessen, 1992; Corvers et al., 1994). A frequent and persistent source of bottlenecks to further cross-border co-operation is also attributed to cultural and linguistic differences, reflected across myriad workplace and leisure practices (van Beek, 1999).

2. Maas–Rhein Euregio’s ‘Empty Streets’

Established as an informal working group of cross-border partner regions in 1976 at the instigation of Queen Beatrix of The Netherlands, the Euregion Maas–Rhein constitutes one of the oldest institutionalised transborder regions in the European Union. In 1991, the Maas–Rhein Euregion acquired the juridical status of a foundation under the terms of Dutch private law, embodied in the Stichting Euregio Maas–Rhein. From this time on, the Stichting has served the development needs of a cross-border community of approximately 3.7 million inhabitants, encompassing the southern portion of the province of Dutch Limburg; the Province of Belgian Limburg; the Province of Liege; the German-speaking Community of Belgium; and the Aachen Regio.

The population under its jurisdiction, comprising Dutch, Flemish, Walloon and German languages and cultures, is the most culturally and geographically complex of the euregios lining the border of the Netherlands, Germany and Belgium. Housed in the seat of government of the Dutch Province of Limburg in Maastricht, the Stichting is the principal institutional interlocutor between provincial, national and European actors in the selection, implementation and management of cross-border initiatives within the euregio. The latter include the promotion of transborder economic co-operation, public transport, environmental protection, technology transfer and tourism (Vanneste, 1998).

Organisationally, the Stichting is comprised of an Executive Committee, which acts as its primary decision-making body, and is assisted by a consultative body, the Euregional Council. Established in January 1995, the Council represents one of the few instances of transborder parliamentarianism within the European Union; its 118 members, rather than being elected by popular suffrage, are nominated by the different political, economic and social actors found within each partner region, which include established political parties, chambers of commerce, labour unions and universities. The Stichting is further made up of a central bureau entrusted with managing public relations on behalf of the euregio, as well as co-ordinating various working commissions and steering groups engaged in the direct management of INTERREG structural fund budgets and projects.

Within INTERREG, a Commission of Experts (Stuurgroep) provides aid in co-ordinating euregional projects with other institutional actors, including universities, municipalities, labour unions, employment agencies and chambers of
commerce. The Stichting’s commissions and steering groups, composed of experts from all five partner regions, are grouped according to four broad themes: structural policy-making, socioeconomic activities, socio-cultural activities and social issues (Stichting Maas–Rhein, 1996). The annual programme of INTERREG-funded projects within Maas–Rhein is broken down further into two general thematic axes, defined by socioeconomic and socio-cultural criteria. The funding of individual projects is subject to various co-financing arrangements involving the European Regional Development Fund (FEDER), the Maas–Rhein Stichting and public- and private-sector actors situated within the immediate cross-border environment. For any given project, the Stichting commits itself to half the financing, the remainder being paid either wholly by the partner region or via a burden-sharing scheme involving provincial governments and local economic agents.

Despite an elaborate organisational structure geared to channelling INTERREG structural funds into the Maas–Rhein Euregio, the experience of the Stichting and its partners in stimulating cross-border development has met with mixed success during the 1990s (Knippenberg, 2004). Perhaps reflecting the low level of R&D within the euregio as a whole, attempts at technology transfer within Maas–Rhein have met with ambiguous results. In the Aachen sub-area the Aachener Gesellschaft fur Innovation und Technologietransfer (AGIT) is a strong regional body responsible for promoting business start-ups and spin-offs, regional technology transfer and the marketing of the Aachen region. In South Limburg, two nationally designated organisations—the Innovation Centre and the Industriebank LIOF—are also engaged in technology transfer and consultancy. In Belgian Limburg, the Gewestelijke Ontwikkelings Maatschappij (GOM) is the main regional development body, focusing on attracting inward investment. The regional development organisation in Liege, the Société Provinciale d’Industrialisation (SPI) concentrates fully on real estate management offering inward investors suitable site locations. And the technology transfer agency at the University of Liege, INTERFACE, is considered the main technology transfer unit in this sub-area. Yet during the past decade, cross-border technology transfer and networking between these bodies have proved to be difficult and slow, reflecting an uneasy mixture of competition and co-operation marking their alliance (Hassink et al., 1995).

Thus, the whole euregio now stands at an economic crossroads, grappling with problems of industrial reconversion in its mining sector while searching for an appropriate developmental pathway drawing from new technologies and cross-border synergies. This is at a time when traditional forms of regional policy-making rooted in Fordist labour–state compromises supporting coal production and the attraction of inward investment are being supplanted by initiatives supporting the endogenous development of small- to medium-sized firms. Yet despite similar production structures throughout the euregio, attempts to co-ordinate economic reconversion efforts across the Dutch, German and Belgian sub-areas have remained negligible (Breuer, 1984).

In the Dutch sub-area, industrial conversion has largely been achieved by transforming state mines into a large chemical concern (Schreurs, 2003); Aachen has engineered its conversion on the basis of the largest European technical university in that city, which has led to the establishment of hundreds of small engineering and consultancy firms; and, over the past decade, manufacturing in the Belgian parts of the euregio has largely been supplanted by service industries (Hassink
et al., 1995). For some observers, the economic performance of these sectors in Dutch and Belgian Limburg illustrates a positive, on-going ‘peripheralisation’ of Flemish industry (Colard and Vandermotten, 1995). Nevertheless, others cannot avoid the overall conclusion that each part of the euregio has followed different restructuring strategies devised at national government levels, with a national orientation to prevailing knowledge networks (Corvers et al., 1994; Geenhuizen et al., 1996).

The relatively limited success of the Stichting in achieving cross-border socio-economic integration can partly be attributed to the fact that its mandate is restricted to a purely consultative role vis à vis member-states and the EU. This constraint is further reflected in that the Stichting is legally proscribed from intervening in matters related to spatial planning and the regulation of local labour markets (Stichting Maas–Rhein, 1996). With regard to the latter, this structural handicap is well illustrated by the difficulties confronting the euregio in forging a coherent and effective cross-border labour market. In the spirit of improved cross-border regional ‘transparency’, the Maas–Rhein Stichting was chosen by the European Union in 1992 to host a pioneering information dissemination programme targeting its cross-border working population (EURES)². In June 1996, the various organisations informally overseeing issues of cross-border labour mobility within the euregio were gathered into a consultative ‘round table’, thus expanding the potential scope for civil society participation in the co-ordination of cross-border labour market services beyond that provided by EURES.

By opening a channel of communication with European parliamentarians, this round table attempted to increase the political leverage of local transborder actors vis à vis member-states. With the support of such a platform, a grouping of mayors from the five Maas–Rhein partner regions has promoted a political agenda seeking aid from their respective national governments specifically addressing the unresolved predicament of cross-border workers. However, as it involves only European and regional scales of territorial governance, EURES, despite all its goodwill, is incapable of influencing national labour market regulation affecting its partner regions. The Achilles heel of the euregio is that fiscal and social security issues remain a matter for policy-making at the member-state level. Given the prevailing national orientation of informational networks, the euregio’s labour market has thus consistently lacked transparency since its founding (van Dam and de Grip, 1991). For one Maastricht-based INTERREG manager, however, the Stichting “can only give signals”; the [euregional] Commission has “no decision-making powers of its own” (A. F. Evers, Coordinator for Provincie Limburg, personal communication, 1 August 2000).

In an effort to address such weaknesses, the Stichting has embarked on an ambitious restructuring plan, a core element of which is the transformation of the foundation’s legal framework from private to public law status. This is meant to produce a ‘harmonisation’ of territorial competencies by increasing the power of local actors within the Stichting’s Executive Committee and by more clearly “delineating the relationship between the foundation and the Euregional Council” (A. F. Evers, 1 August 2000). Under this framework, the structure of the Euregional Council is to be transformed into a bicameral consultative assembly, the one made up of political representatives, the other comprised of non-governmental groups. Four new commissions directly responsible to the Executive Committee and the Council are to be created to replace previous commissions and steering groups, the former composed of representatives of both the
Council and functionaries from the partner regions. Moreover, the Executive Committee of the Stichting is newly empowered to create temporary *ad hoc* working groups as the need arises. Taken as a whole, these changes are made to produce greater decision-making flexibility within the Stichting and to improve its democratic accountability with the cross-border community at large. According to one euregional INTERREG manager, the increased presence of local social actors within the top decision-making echelons of the Stichting is necessary because in the previous arrangement “politicians didn’t work well together with civil society . . . [There was] little trust of civil society actors” (A. F. Evers, 1 August 2000).

In determining the system of representation of political and civil society actors within the newly created Council, or Euregioraad, national political prerogatives seem once again to have trumped those of local social actors. An initial scheme to share the representation of political and civil society equally had to be abandoned, as “politicians wanted a greater voice in guiding INTERREG projects” and “Christian and Social Democrats wanted an equal number of seats” (A. F. Evers, 1 August 2000). Since all the political parties within the euregio could not be accommodated within the Euregioraat under the original framework, the initial system of representation has had to be shifted to one which is 70 per cent political, with the remainder of seats for the entire euregio allotted to civil society actors. Unsurprisingly, as a result of this, these actors have felt “. . . used, misused” (A. F. Evers, 1 August 2000).

Marginalised from active political participation in the workings of the Stichting, civil society actors can be forgiven for remaining unaware of the euregio’s existence. Indeed, in recent polls, 86 per cent of Belgians, 65 per cent of Dutch and 60 per cent of Germans had never even heard of the term ‘euregio’ (van Beek, 1999). The formal abolition of border controls between the three countries apparently did little to change the nature and intensity of cross-border interaction; almost 90 per cent of respondents stated that they crossed the border with the same frequency as previously, the remainder crossing only a little more often (van Beek, 1999). There is little to suggest, therefore, that the euregio concept, at least as reflected in the experience of Euregio Maas–Rhein, has any basis in popular support.

As if aware of its public relations problem, the Maas–Rhein Stichting produced a brochure which attempts to provide narrative coherence to the euregio

If the creation of the Maas–Rhein Euregio is to be restored within the context of the creation of Europe, and, especially with respect to trans-border co-operation, it is clear that from history one must search for its origins, this region having always known in the past a relatively high degree of homogeneity . . . Unfortunately, the treaties of Vienna (1815) and London (1839) had as their effects the arbitrary severing of the region in favour of three 19th-century modern nation-states: Belgium, Germany and The Netherlands . . . As a result, national borders have ripped apart inhabitants, cultures and lands in an overly brusque and capricious manner . . . So that the ancient and natural ties may be re-established and strengthened, it was high time that borders were made to disappear, the Euregio Maas–Rhein serving as one clear means to achieve this goal (Euregio Maas–Rhein, undated, 7–8; transl. from French by the authors).
And yet, despite attempts at narratively refiguring a euregional imagined community for Maas–Rhein, as in a late 19th-century lithograph, the streets of the euregio remain hauntingly ‘empty’.3

3. T. H. Marshall’s ‘Drama’ of Rights

In the first section, we suggested that the fitful emergence of an effective transboundary governance regime in the euregios has an important socio-political dimension which has been neglected in standard accounts of regional economic development theory. We elaborate here that the empowerment of cross-border regional actors through a language of citizenship may now be required. To accomplish this, a first step may be to shift from the political-economic lens of Alfred Marshall to that of T. H. Marshall, whose work established the foundations for an analysis of the evolution of citizenship rights in the post-war period. Writing during the high-water mark of decolonisation, T. H. Marshall famously posed the question, still relevant for our day, “whether there be valid grounds for the opinion that the amelioration of the working classes has limits beyond which it cannot pass” (Marshall, 1964, p. 73).

Citing the works of Alfred Marshall, T. H. Marshall placed his faith in the ability of the British working class to overcome these limitations by embracing the qualities of the skilled artisan, whose labour was not deadening or soul-destroying, and was “already rising towards the condition which he foresaw as the ultimate achievement of all”—namely, that of steadily becoming a “gentleman” (Marshall, 1964, p. 73). “Citizenship”, in T. H. Marshall’s view, would be defined by “full membership of a community”, evidenced by the ability to claim a “share of the social heritage” (Marshall, 1964, pp. 75–76).

T. H. Marshall thus attempted to recast Alfred Marshall’s hypothesis; whereas the latter asked if there were limits beyond which the amelioration of the working class could not pass (with limits set by natural resources and productivity), T. H. Marshall probed whether there are limits beyond which the modern drive towards social equality cannot or is unlikely to pass, with limits defined not economically but by those “inherent in the principles that inspire the drive” (Marshall, 1964, p. 77).

For T. H. Marshall, citizenship was made up of three constituent sets of rights, each of which could be mapped onto a distinct period of European history

(1) **Civil rights:** rights necessary for individual freedom: liberty of the person; freedom of speech, thought and faith; the right to own property and conclude valid contracts; the right to justice. Key institutions: courts of justice.

(2) **Political rights:** the right to participate in the exercise of political power, as members of a body invested with political authority or as an elector of the members of such a body. Key institutions: parliament and councils of local government.

(3) **Social rights:** a whole ‘range’ of rights: the right to a minimum of economic welfare and security; the right to share to the full in the ‘social heritage’; the right to live the life of a civilised being according to the standards prevailing in society. Key institutions: educational system, social services.
For T. H. Marshall, the ‘drama’ of the evolution of these rights since the Middle Ages would be one of a gradual fusion (on national territory) and functional separation and specialisation (with an associated abstraction from the local).

When the three elements of citizenship parted company, they were soon barely on speaking terms. So complete was the divorce between them that it is possible, without doing too much violence to historical accuracy, to assign the formative period in the life of each to a different century—civil rights to the 18th, political to the 19th and social to the 20th (Marshall, 1964, pp. 80–81).

For T. H. Marshall it would not be fortuitous, therefore, that the rise of modern civil rights emerged in tandem with nationalism and the nation-state. Unlike the ‘sentiments’ binding pre-feudal societies (Rothschild, 2001), citizenship would require bonds of a different kind, “a direct sense of community membership based on loyalty to a civilisation which is a common possession” (Marshall, 1964, p. 101). Citizenship, in this light, would itself be viewed as the product of a politics of representation derived from explicit visual metaphors.

Societies in which citizenship is a developing institution create an image of an ideal citizenship against which achievement can be measured and towards which aspiration can be directed. The urge forward along the path thus plotted is an urge towards a fuller measure of equality, an enrichment of the stuff of which the status is made and an increase in the number of those on whom the status is bestowed (Marshall, 1964, p. 86; emphasis added).

For Marshall, the principles of citizenship so defined and social class have been at war with each other since the 18th century. Civil rights would not pose an immediate threat to the nascent capitalist state, as it ensured the protection of that individual freedom which would serve as a complement to the economic freedom of the market. Civil rights thus did not conflict with capitalist inequalities; on the contrary, they were necessary to the maintenance of that particular form of inequality. The extension of political rights would be more threatening to the capitalist system, but remained relatively harmless so long as effective political power remained in the hands of a minority. It would remain for social rights truly to present obstacles to free-market capitalism, as they addressed core social externalities which the market was unable (or unwilling) to address.

For Marshall, the history of ‘rights’ would be one of a fitful but gradual encroachment of universal social rights onto the terrain of national inequality left by the invisible hand of free market capitalism. In his view, the gradual extension of social rights would be presaged in the emergent dawn of economic growth heralded by Fordism, an economic system infused with the hope of ‘lifting all boats’. The limits of inequality could thus be overcome through the workings of the nationally regulated market.

With the onset of the crisis of national Fordism in the 1970s and the subsequent transnationalisation of unequal economic and social relations in the 1980s and 1990s, Marshall’s original questions merit reposing and reframing in the context of the dilemmas of 21st century European transboundary regionalism: are “there . . . [still] valid grounds for the opinion that the amelioration of the working classes has limits beyond which it cannot pass?” (Marshall, 1964, p. 73). And are these limits beyond which the modern drive towards social equality cannot or is
unlikely to be superseded defined not economically but by those “inherent in the principles that inspire the drive?” (Marshall, 1964, p. 77). As a critical citizenship literature has recently acknowledged, Marshall’s early formulations and concerns, while useful in periodising key features of citizenship in modern Western societies, fails to specify sufficiently the relationship linking civic-political-social rights in a mutually constitutive relation (Isin, 2002). On this reading, the ‘ideal image’ of citizenship, deposited in the ‘social legacy’ of civic and political rights, would require the repression of social rights as its medium and presupposition.

Were we to recast Marshall’s dramaturgy of citizenship rights by thinking of their intertwining as ‘citizenship-as-alterity’ (Isin, 2002), the ‘limits’ of social rights, rather than an external barrier to full citizenship, would constitute an internal borderland of subjects—working-class men and women, children, the disabled, cultural ‘foreigners’—who, in an analogous process to those subjects located in the colonial sphere, were placed in an antagonistic relationship with the high metropolitan ‘social heritage’ of civic and political rights.

Crucially, rather than be grasped as subject to forces external to social conflict (i.e. the ‘invisible hand’ of the market, globalisation, international law, human rights regimes), the question of citizenship could then no longer be divorced from the struggles of excluded groups to transform the very terms on which civic and political rights are premised. In this respect, we would recognise that it is precisely by shunting such struggles from public view that the vocabulary of citizenship defined by a pre-existing ‘social legacy’ is reconstituted and clarified as an ideal removed from internal fissures and transformative change, producing in turn the fiction of a stable and objective horizon towards which the excluded can only strive (and mostly unsuccessfully at that). This, we argue, is the underlying model of citizenship advanced in Maas–Rhein’s promotional brochure: a myth of ‘origins’ rather than of process, emphasising ‘homogeneity’ over heterogeneity and difference. “Ancient and natural ties”: the ideal social legacy towards which all euregional inhabitants should strive.

3.1 Borderspace as Hiding Space

However, granting political as well as theoretical agency to citizenship’s ‘alterity’ requires more than a genealogical investigation of the various displacements of its horizon enacted by subaltern groups over the course of European modernity (Pred, 1995). We support identifying the moments of rupture when the ‘political unconscious’ of citizenship has shown itself in the constitution of the ideal citizen (Isin, 2002). Yet we believe such moves nevertheless work from a Foucauldian analytics which operates on the basis of an archeology which privileges a particular visual and representational vocabulary defined ‘in the last instance’ by the nation-state and its sub-national, urban-based spaces as the primary territorial container for the diffuse assemblages of power/knowledge structuring conditions of socio-spatial inequality and emancipation. We believe that such an intervention is thus unhelpful for grasping the peculiar problematics of transborder regions and thus requires locating a specificity to the transboundary regional question that will allow for a creative reworking of terms and concepts.

We propose that one such pathway may be to apprehend cross-border euregios from an alternative vantage-point from that of the all-seeing bird’s-eye view, one which, following the panoptic demands of nation-state cartographies, has as its ultimate rationality the production of an illusion of all-inclusive social and
territorial cohesiveness. Rather, we prefer to grasp cross-border regional space as a ‘space of hiding’. We believe this quality of invisibility, ‘hiddenness’, or ‘coming into hiding’ (Bull, 1999), more accurately reflects the lived political experience of the inner European borderland. Indeed, the lived space of the European border provides for a repertoire of strategies and tactics, of selective engagement and evasion whose moral compass is oriented to the insight that alterity, while undeniably embodying a material dimensionality, is also the bearer of an “excess givenness” which cannot be fully reduced by the stigmata of Othering strategies (Mensch, 2005, pp. 9–10).

Elsewhere, we have located a geo-history of such hidden spaces in the creation of a European double boundary between internal metropole and external colony in the late imperial 19th-century (Dussel, 1994; Balibar, 1998; Mignolo, 2000), in which the tensions between the two sets of borders generated an epistemological practice from a subaltern perspective at the edges of the modern/colonial world system (Kramsch and Brambilla, forthcoming). In this paper, we suggest that such ‘border thinking’, while originally theorised from a putative exteriority of the modern/colonial world-system (notably Latin America in the work of Walter Mignolo), also found its syncopated resonances and echoes within internal European metropolitan borderlands (see also Balibar, 2004; Kramsch, 2007). Such an intuition would make us alive to the role played by both internal and external borderlands within the horizon of European modernity as sites of cleansing, expulsion and the renationalisation of ethnic groups. The internal borderland would, of course, be haunted by class struggles (as well as the 'Jewish question'), while that of the external borderland became thoroughly entangled within the European colonial and interimperial arena.

As intimated in the title of their now-classic The Hidden Frontier: Ecology and Ethnicity in an Alpine Valley (1974), John Cole and Eric Wolf suggested that in tracing the discrepant notions of citizenship in two villages straddling an old Austro-Hungarian imperial divide internal to metropolitan Europe—St Felix in German-speaking South Tyrol and Romansch-speaking Tret in Trentino—it was not analytically sufficient, as was the case for traditional anthropological approaches of the time, to consider communities in terms of “'closed' systems ... a replica of the nation writ small, containing within its boundaries the significant features of the nation writ large” (Cole and Wolf, 1974, p. 20). Significantly for Cole and Wolf’s broader dialectical argument, in relation to larger societal systems within which they are embedded the internal borderlands of Upper Anaunia reveal an internal morphology which

Exhibit both spheres of patterned coherence and spheres of contradiction and disjunction; they contain autonomous, peripheral, and secessionist spheres, as well as those held in tight control. These spheres and their organisation—their location, scale, and scope within the total society—have their own ‘structural’ history of growth and development, of integration, and frequently of disintegration, too (Cole and Wolf, 1974, p. 22).

In this context, for these authors, the national or international system is not isomorphic with the combination of factors on the level of [the cross-border] village or valley. What macrosystem and microsystem offer each other and demand from each other is of necessity different (Cole and Wolf, 1974, p. 22).
Appropriating the insights of Cole and Wolf in a less functionalised register, we
would aver that the dilemma of imposing national or sub-national regional spatial
imaginaries onto the fraughtly fissured euregios is that, while gesturing towards
the great popular national and regionalist movements of anti-capitalist and
anti-statist struggles of the 19th and 20th centuries (Hadjimichalis, 1987), they
fail to account for the peculiarly contradictory, disjunctive and autonomous ener-
gies of cross-border space. In short, such moves do not take into account the peculiar hiddenness of the European borderland. Thus, they are not capable of pro-
viding a frame of meaning with which to induce the domain of the cross-border
political, one which would keep any sedentary or a priori notion of citizenship
unsettled and on the defensive, and therefore always open to political contesta-
tion, invention and renewal (see also Laidi, 1998).

To activate this frame now is to re-cognise that Europe’s internal borderlands,
unlike previous functional-technocratic regional plans or Marxist-inspired region-
alist social movements, constitute the sites of what we might call the realm of the
frontier political. This socio-spatial category, rather than deriving its legitimacy
from the individualistic civic as well as political rights informing traditional
forms of national representative governance (either of the ideological Left or the
Right), draws on the legacy of struggle over repressed social rights at both colonial
and metropolitan antipodes to include new figures and figurations of the political
that extend beyond the territoriality of the nation-state (Elias, 1965; Mensch, 2005,
p. 13). This, we intuit, is to a large degree achieved today by actors playing on
degrees of presence and absence, visibility and invisibility in the shadows of eur-
regional and state institutions alike. Rather than be conceived of as a fully formed
method, it is in ‘search of method’ (Sartre, 1963), one capable of articulating the
melancholy memory of earlier regional formations by way of a ‘cunning’ which
escapes the sly entrapments and wounding opacities of both euregional bureauc-
racies and their Brussels-based affiliations.

As a matter of course, this requires an altogether different set of map-making
skills, ones which foregrounds precisely what the euregional map passes over
and shunts from sight. A powerful example of just such an exercise in counter-
mapping is provided by the French-based organisation Migreurop, whose
website provides a cartographic representation of Europe and its surrounding
‘near abroads’ featuring identifiable detention centres for foreign migrants
either processing asylum requests or awaiting deportation hearings. Not coinci-
dentialy, a high proportion of camps are located along the former internal (as well
as currently external) borders of the European Union, with central and eastern
European countries playing a prominent role in filtering applicants, as is increas-
ingly the case for the entirety of the North African Maghreb.

Interesting for our purposes, a large cluster of detention centres is located
within or near the Maas–Rhein tri-borderland, comprised of ‘closed camps’
that operate both as sites for the processing of asylum applications as well as
those devoted to deportation hearings and third-country ‘rendition’ programmes.
Perversely echoing the now-infamous ‘grape’ pattern of economic growth devised
by German planners as a contribution to pan-European visions for spatial plan-
ning and development (Faludi, 1997; Jensen and Richardson, 2004), the spatial
concentration of detention camps thickens in its westward extension, following
the borders of The Netherlands, Belgium and France until arriving at the entrance
to the Channel Tunnel, site of the most well known of the transit camps, Sangatte
(Clochard, 2004).
We propose that it is in the space of such borderland detention camps, many of which are ‘hiding in plain sight’ in the euregios, that a future transboundary citizenship is being condensed and secreted. As these detention centres serve as decision-making nodes both for admittance onto and expulsion from EU territory, they embody the very old contradictions of the European frontier: between liberty and security, freedom and justice, citizenship and subject (or, in an older 19th century language, simply between that of moral reform and punishment; see also Balibar, 1998). Thus, contradictions that were the medium and presupposition of nation-building passions then are received here to suggest that such frontier logics are operating at the very heart of the EU today.

In this context, T. H. Marshall’s evolutionary drama of rights is being pulled and stretched in ways he could scarcely have imagined, as the institutions normally devoted to screening and legitimating potential citizens in the realm of social rights—as in the case of migration and asylum control—are increasingly situated within the borderland peripheries and passage-points between nation-states or are disembedded from EU territory proper and projected into former colonial contact zones: Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia, Libya (Blanchard et al., 2005). To grasp what is at stake in these remappings of European political space, then, will require more than a reproduction of a nationally bordered spatial imaginary at the level of the cross-border region or the establishment of ever more accountable institutions of representative governance at the level of transboundary politics. Nor will the realm of the frontier political be sufficiently revealed by exposing with panoptic efficiency the workings of new forms of biopolitical governmentality at the ‘vanishing-points’ of European sovereignty (Gregory, 2006). Rather, it will demand a political realm and analysis attentive to partial invisibility, hidden affiliations and constestations that will come knocking on the doors of euregional administrators in the form of unsettling strangers huddled in their tiny pirogues way out on the night-time sea, pinpricks of lights twinkling temptingly on the horizon, out of sight and out of mind, at least for now.

Notes

1. This programme, which ran in two stages throughout the 1990s, has become the largest single scheme (worth 2.9 billion euros in its second, 1994–99, phase), in a series of what are labelled ‘Community Initiatives’. A third stage, extending from 2000 to 2006, had a budget of 4.9 billion euros. Such Community Initiatives comprise the largest share (over 90 per cent) of the wider EU Structural Funds. INTERREG programmes operate through a wide range of community and state apparatus: local, regional and national governments; planning and development agencies; universities and research institutions; the European Commission and the Association of European Border Regions. These in turn are incorporated in a formal network of information, expertise and knowledge funded by the Commission. Thirteen offices of ‘Linkage, Co-operation and Assistance’ (LACE) for eastern European border regions are conceived as key nodes in this network. Border regions are hereby visualised as ‘anticipatory geographies’ (Sparke, 2000), as ‘laboratories in miniature’ of European integration (Virtanen, 2004). Relative isolation and marginality are thus rescripted as centrality within a wider project of cohesion and harmonisation.

2. Convening employers, an interregional labour council and various regional employment agencies, including political representatives at the provincial and EU level, the Stichting-operated steering committee responsible for EURES attempts to provide the Maas–Rhein’s cross-border labour force with the same information available to public- and private-sector firms, with the ultimate aim of improving cross-border mobility (Stichting Maas–Rhein, 1996). Within the framework of a bi- and multilateral co-operation program promoted “on the ground” by a working staff of self-designated “Euro-counsellors”, EURES seeks to improve communication and dialogue between those bodies concerned with the provision of employment within the partner regions,
as well as offering the cross-border labour community information relating to employment supply and demand, changing labour market conditions and variable quality of life issues.

3. When queried about the willingness of the inhabitants of the German part of the euregio to cross to the French-language city of Liege–Verviers, a tour guide recently commented to the authors: “When they go to such a city they are simply not interested in the culture or the food. They treat the place as if it were an exotic destination, like Thailand” (H. A. Dux, Alsdorf, 27 November 2003, personal communication; translated from German by the authors).

4. With a book title that could very well have acted as a response to T. H. Marshall’s queries from the vantage-point of the contemporaneous colonial antipodes, C. L. R. James, in his delightful treatise on cricket, destroyed any pretensions as to a pure British ‘legacy’ to which the colonial had to submit in the realm of sport. As James reminds us, “beyond a certain limit dark could not aspire” in cricket; but the very identity of cricket could no longer be placed geographically in England, as it, like the nationalism for which it became its seedbed, “contained elements of universality that went beyond the bounds of the originating nation” (James, 1963, pp. 141, 218).

5. As the phrasing suggests, the term ‘frontier political’ is not to be confused with ‘political frontier’; whereas the former denotes the ‘hidden’ outside institutionalised politics, the latter is more closely associated with fixed territorial boundaries and limits that contain and fortify this legitimate, institutionalised realm.

6. Bialasiewicz et al. (2005, p. 342) helpfully remind us that all acts of constitution-building are predicated on foundational acts of exclusion and violence, an insight which we share in our conceptualisation of the ‘frontier political’. In examining the constitutional logics underlying “Europe’s many spatialities”, however, they largely assume the Derridean impulse of “bringing into daylight . . . à mettre au jour, en lui donnant le jour], that which one claims to reflect so as to take note of it, as though it were a matter of recording what will have been there” (Bialasiewicz et al., 2005, p. 343; Derrida, 1987, p. 457). The implicit and ‘unspoken’ contradictions observed between state-territorial and non-territorialisable (or ‘aspirational’) logics of the EU constitution thereby erupt in their analysis as self-defeating ‘paradoxes’, the ambiguities of which were rightly condemned in their view by French and Dutch electorates voting against the referendum in May and June 2005. By our reading, Bialasiewicz et al.’s ‘unpacking’ of the EU constitution and its electoral consequences shoehorns the realm of the excluded political back into the realm of institutionalised politics, whose domain is circumscribed by state-centric territoriality. In so doing, we believe a crucial quality of the European ‘frontier political’ is lost: a space of hiding-at-the-border which grasps the paradoxical aspects of EU constitutionalism and its contending spatialities as intrinsic to modern state sovereignty. Rather than a Derridean mettre à jour, this borderland savoir requires an imaginative mettre à nuit of European sovereignty in order to push its constituent ambiguities further, reopening a space for what is yet to come, from a geographical ‘beyond’ ushered in by this founding constitutional aporia. It is in this sense, we argue, that ‘hiddenness’ acquires a properly political dimension.

References


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