

# EUROPEAN MACRO-REGIONAL STRATEGIES AND SPATIAL RESCALING

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## Abstract

European integration is creating new territorial boundaries for various policy fields with the consequence that governance is becoming more multi-level in nature and where a wider range of actors are involved. European integration does not however by definition imply that powers are simply shifting to the European level: Europe is not so much suppressing state borders as changing their meaning and impact for different social, economic and political systems (Bartolini, 2005; Keating, 2009). European integration brings with it changes in powers across existing layers of decision-making but also new scales of intervention, new actor constellations, and variable geometries of governance. These changes are all part of the general process of spatial rescaling (or territorial rescaling). The emergence of 'soft spaces' – multi-area sub-regions in which strategy is being made between or alongside formal institutions and processes – is another phenomena associated with contemporary rescaling (Haughton et al, 2010). These spaces are often overlapping, characterised by fuzzy boundaries and have a strong emphasis on pragmatism or 'getting things done' (Allmendinger & Haughton, 2009).

The development of European macro-regional strategies, starting with the strategy for the Baltic Sea Region in the summer of 2009, marks an important point on the European integration map. Indeed, Metzger & Schmitt (2012) argue that the emergence of these European macro-regions might be regarded as one of the most radical innovations in European territorial management since the development of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) in the 1990s. This paper discusses the background to the recent emergence of these European macro-regional strategies and considers them in the light of processes of rescaling and the creation of 'soft spaces'. Attention is primarily focused on the European Union Strategy for the Baltic Sea Region and on issues related to environmental policy.

## References

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