“Chunnel Visions”: Unpacking the Anticipatory Geographies of an Anglo-European Borderland

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Abstract

This study examines the overlapping ways in which a cross-channel “Transmanche” region has been envisioned, mapped, promoted, and thereby made part of the fast developing European political and business discourse surrounding border regions. Originally conceived along the lines of connections opened up by the Channel Tunnel, the region links the English county of Kent, the French region of Nord-Pas de Calais, and more recently, through a larger partnership that created a so-called “Euroregion,” the whole of Belgium. This study unpacks three distinct future-oriented modes of visioning the cross-channel region: the infrastructural, predicated on the tunnel itself and the ties of new rail and road networks; the Eurocratic, predicated on EU funding and protocols; and the entrepreneurial, predicated on the business of promoting the region for economic development. By overlapping and drawing upon one another, these future-predicting and future-normalizing “Chunnel visions” have a material force and thus important practical consequences. Among them is the eclipse of other potentially more democratic and environmentally sustainable visions of the region.

Introduction

The Tunnel Link may help us prosper
Europe now is close to hand
Trans-Manche in one fell swoop becomes
The modern Conqueror of our land!
(Kent resident, quoted in Darian-Smith 1999: 117)

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The Channel Tunnel between England and France, and the associated cross-channel regional development initiatives are poetically envisioned as a modern day William the Conqueror in this passage. It may seem an absurd epigraph and idea with which to begin an article on Anglo-European cross-border initiatives, but this poetic vision was chosen to highlight the important cultural-political questions of identity, territory, and sovereignty that too often tend to be neglected in the regional science and policy-oriented literatures on borderlands. The use of the phrase “Chunnel visions” is meant to directly address this important cultural-political area of investigation where dreams, visions, and the truth come together all of their own in a blurry borderland. Indeed, it is one of this article’s main arguments that cultural visions packaged together in a set of anticipatory geographies have played a powerful role in shaping the progress of the cross-border regional integration developments between Kent, Nord-Pas de Calais, and, more recently, Belgium. In this regard, the author follows the compelling example of Eve Darian-Smith, whose innovative book, Bridging Divides: The Channel Tunnel and English Legal Identity in the New Europe (1999) already documents and analyzes the complex cultural negotiations of English identity that are bound up with the construction of the Channel Tunnel. Building on her work, and introducing a focus on the wider question of regionalization trends in the context of the European single market, this article will also be framed by a disciplinary approach concerned specifically with the geographical imaginations that are either implicit or explicit in the various anticipations of cross-border cooperation and integration between England and its neighbors across the channel.

Analytically, this article also poses a series of more political-economic questions about the implications of the recent Anglo-European borderlands developments. The notion of “Chunnel visions” is in this way also meant to evoke and question the limits of the somewhat tunnel-like approach to planning and development in the cross-channel region. In this respect, the worries about conquest articulated in the epigraph also help underscore the crucial concerns that need to be raised about governance, local political autonomy, and the changing meaning of sovereignty in the context of transborder development. Again, they do so in a hyperbolic fashion, but the fundamental questions surrounding political-economic governance still stand and are worthy of analysis. This is not to suggest they have not been considered before. Far from it, in fact. A whole host of commentators from either side of the channel have worried over this particular instance of European integration for some time. The problem is that these concerns have generally been framed solely in terms of national sovereignty. In this respect, this article makes two sets of claims: (1) that the preoccupation with national sovereignty itself is in many ways an anomalous distraction from the more crucial question of redeveloping democratic governance over development at a time when the major forces shaping political-economic life in Europe and elsewhere are becoming evermore transnationalized; and (2) that, while visions and plans of transnational and, specifically, of transborder, development may well offend nationalist sensibilities, their more serious implications emerge due to the hurried packaging of a series of economic development priorities in ways that systemically displace and diminish the very issue of democratic governance. Hence, this article does ultimately return to the concern with conquest, but only after reframing the problem in terms of transnational governance and democracy. Indeed, the word “governance” is used here rather than “government” or “sovereignty” because it enables a dialogue about new and old forms of political-economic authority without boxing in or limiting the understanding of these powers as a top-down, state-centric form of sovereign-like control. Avoiding what Michel Foucault (1978: 97) critiqued as the princely model of power, and what John Agnew and Stuart Corbridge call the territorial trap of state-centrism (1995: 78–100), the term “governance” describes ways in which dominant power relations take hegemonic form in trans-state-boundary contexts. Governance can thus be read as describing the net effects of systems of political-economic authority in a way that does not simultaneously present the resulting form of authority as either singular, spatially contained, or reducible to a discrete level or territory of government.

In order to examine how emerging modes of transnational governance are linked to new forms of geographic imagination, the three major empirical sections of this article unpack three major forms of anticipating Anglo-European cross-channel developments in the context of the Tunnel. The first of these modes of anticipation has been infrastructural, focused most directly on the opportunities and, though to a lesser extent, the threats presented by the so-called “Chunnel” for the regions on either side of the channel. The second mode of imagining the region’s integrated, transborder development has been bureaucratically inspired by the development of the European Union (EU) policies targeted at cross-border integration and cooperation. This mode of inspiring and imagining cross-channel regional development is termed Euroscep, but the resulting projects have also involved various local governments and public-private sector groupings that have also responded to EU funding opportunities. The third and most energetically anticipatory mode of imagining cross-channel developments has been entrepreneurial, with a large number of these anticipations taking cartographic form in diverse mappings that attempt to boost the cross-channel region’s economic advantages in one way or another. However, it is not just these boosterish visions that aspire to the seeming solidity and objectivity of a geographic reality represented in maps. All three modes of imagining this Anglo-European borderland make their claims on and arguments about future development through an appeal to the seeming objectivity of geography. It is these deeply perspectival cultural-political appeals, these “Chunnel visions,” that comprise anticipatory geographies and, as such, they tend to overlap one another like layers of paint in an artist’s impression of a future design.

More than just pointing to this artful overlaying, this study argues that by merging into one another these anticipatory geographies also serve to package together and thereby preemptively answer a series of arguments.
and questions about democratic regional development, arguments and questions that actually need unpacking before they can be adequately addressed. Indeed, in this regard, the artist’s impression metaphor is itself inadequate because it evokes the possibility of a single, master artist who can conceive, paint, and discern the final picture of a coherent cross-border region and who, therefore, might be somehow held accountable for what subsequently takes place. In reality, the process of geographical imagination and organization in the anticipatory geographies is far less singular and deliberate, and certainly not very accountable. As Markus Perkmann describes in his recent assessment of the wider development of European cross-border regionalism, it is generally a much more plural and unplanned process. Perkmann argues that when “[t]aking together the loosely coupled interaction patterns, the considerable number of participating actors and the broadly defined policy objectives, the outcome of Cross Border Cooperation governance has to be seen as a compounded effect rather than as the realization of deliberative strategies” (1999: 665, emphasis added). It is this compounded effect he described that is overdetermined by the overlaying of numerous imagined geographies and, as most rigorous semiotic theories emphasize, it is precisely in such moments of overdetermination that a certain displacement takes place, distracting observers from the different dynamics that the overdetermined image has condensated together (see Silverman 1983: 62, 90).

Therefore, as a first attempt at unpacking what the overdetermined anticipatory geographies of the cross-channel region run together, the different geographical modes of imagining future borders development must be examined. Only after explaining and thereby denaturalizing what the geographical images have served to naturalize is it possible to discern how each mode of imagination may have borrowed—often tacitly and without question—from the others, and only then can more careful debate take place about the democratic establishment of cross-border development priorities. Before taking up each of the three sets of anticipatory borderlands geographies, the following section clarifies what precisely is implied by the concept of “geographical imaginations.”

Geographical Imaginations

Borders, states and societies are mutually formative—borders shape what they contain and are shaped by them—but border research undermines lazy assumptions that “state” and “society”, “state” and “nation”, or “state” and “governance” are synonymous or territorially co-terminous. Instead of becoming redundant in a “borderless” world, the increasing differentiation, complexity and contradictions of political borders make border research more important and more revealing of wider social change (Anderson and O’Dowd 1999: 602–3).

One reason why border research is so symptomatically revealing, as Anderson and O’Dowd argue, relates to the diverse geographical imaginations that are worked out at, around, or over existing borders in the context of globalization (see also Wilson and Donnan 1998). Not only do such changing visions of territory reflect the effects of heightened trade, intensified communications, interdependent environments, and displacements of traditional modes of governance, but they also serve to crystallize the cultural and ideological force of globalization discourse. These complex cultural aspects of globalization qua discourse tend to be “straw-manned” aside by commentators like Hirst and Thompson (1996), but nonetheless have widespread significance. Indeed, at the level of cultural politics, it is worth noting that the term “globalization”—along with a vast assortment of connected tropes and ideas—carries significant ideological clout as a vehicle for organizing political action in today’s increasingly integrated world (see Jameson 1998). As the struggles over the World Trade Organization (WTO) meetings in Seattle in 1999 revealed, such political action may vary drastically from outright acquiescence to bold resistance, but there is no escaping the obvious ideological functionality of the term.

Along with the cultural-political use of the term “globalization” tend to come a large number of geographical images, such as the globe—some of them used to explain, others just to dramatize, the overdetermined outcomes of evermore integrated and accelerated global relations. Among these are the geographical depictions of cross-border regionalization itself. While many of these depictions rest on claims about the reterritorialization of economic interdependencies, they also appeal to cultural discourses of globalization to naturalize their niche, as it were, in the new world reordering. Bob Jessop’s comments on cross-border spaces are especially pertinent in this regard. “It is certainly remarkable how older, cross-border trading blocs re-emerged after the Cold War,” he says; “But ‘natural economic territories’ are discursively naturalized’ as well as being economically and politically constructed” (Jessop 1999: 25). It is precisely in this process of naturalization that geographical imaginations of cross-border integration play such an important cultural-political role. Clearly, in the theoretical abstract it is quite easy to see how cross-border regionalization seems to reflect the joint dynamics of deterritorialization and referitorialization in one space. The geographical imaginations of such supposedly integrated transnational spaces—bordered spaces that simultaneously straddle traditional national borders—thus appear to make manifest both the depersonalization and reordering of territory at once. But what exactly are these geographical imaginations, and how can one come to terms with the way they both materialize and naturalize the complex dynamics and determinations operating in cross-border regions?

A simple and all-embracing answer to the question is that geographical imaginations consist of all the images of places, landscapes, territories, and other spaces that are imagined, inscribed, and then often used to guide action in the world at large (for a recent cultural study of such usage see Jarvis 1998). Here, however, the use of the term is borrowed from Derek Gregory’s sophisticated nuancing of the notion as a description of the varied forms of the spatial unconscious implicated in modern disciplinary practices (1994). According to Gregory, “geographical imaginations” function to name the often unexamined assumptions about space and spatial relations—about space being natural, static, universal, politically neutral, stage-like, container-like,
homogeneous, or some mixture of all of these—that have served to frame and animate diverse depictions of geographical phenomena in all kinds of literary, scientific, and political discourses. From modern maps of wilderness, to architecture, to catalogs of regional resources, these and many other forms of description are argued to be symptomatic of some particular form of geographical imagination. Much of Gregory’s account concerns the ways in which professional geographers and cartographers have shared (often tacitly) the same assumptions about space that are dominant in modern society at large (in particular, the assumption that space is not produced, but simply “is”). With this in mind, Gregory argues that geographers today nevertheless have a disciplinary responsibility to continually question the ways in which such assumptions function, and particularly the ways they function to frame processes and practices of marginalization and oppression in political and cultural discourse. In other words, while the common notion of a singular “imagined geography” may seem of a piece with more relativizing genres of recent cultural constructivism, and while it foregrounds the work of cultural creativity that goes into any geographically inflected description, Gregory’s eloquent essaying of geographical imaginations (in the plural) also insists on making connections between such moments of description and their political-cultural contexts of emergence, always asking what other geographical imaginations become framed out as a result of such powerful singular framings.

Stemming from Gregory’s argument, the concept of geographical imaginations is used here to elucidate three aspects of the anticipatory geographies of the cross-channel borderland. First, describing these “Chunnel visions” as forms of geographical imagination makes it possible to describe their basis in the cultural work of imagination and thus their profoundly perspectival character. That is, it raises critical questions about what the resulting images frame in and with what interests such enframing functions. Second, this approach also makes it possible to come to terms with the plurality of “Chunnel visions” and the ways in which they overlap and overdetermine one another. Finally, it makes possible an analysis of the ways in which such overdetermined anticipations of future borderlands integration may in fact serve preemptively to block other, perhaps more democratically accountable, imaginations of regional development. Certainly, this is a less disciplinary focus than Gregory’s. The geographical imaginations at issue here are not the work of professional geographers, except perhaps some of the cartographers in the Directorate General for regional policy at the EU (DG XVI) who draw the maps used by commission planners. It is also a somewhat more practical application of the notion of geographical imaginations than Gregory himself anticipates. It remains, all the same, a critical use of the idea that the projected compound image created by the geographical overlaying of images of territory—the effect described previously as akin to an artist’s impression—can also screen out other, less dominant geographical imaginations.

If this discussion sounds overly abstract, an example will hopefully illustrate how such dynamics of geographical imagination are at work in the cultural construction of the cross-channel borderlands in ways that simultaneously reflect the changing patterns of governance in the context of globalization. The example comes from Darian-Smith’s analysis of the marketing of Kent as the “Garden of England” to would-be cross-channel tourists from the continent. This recent and ongoing marketing scheme, largely sponsored by Eurotunnel as part of the company’s constant bid to increase cross-channel traffic, has also served to commodify a landscape long seen as a type of English heartland; in other words, a geographical imagination that was previously allied with the dominant imagination of nation. Although she does not directly use the term, Darian-Smith effectively reads the “Garden of England” as a geographical imagination in a moment of flux. It is a moment in which the nationalization normalizing affect of the “Garden of England” landscape can be interpreted as being displaced. “With the building of the Tunnel,” she argues,

No longer can the sea stand in for the British nation’s isolationist status. No longer can the “naturalness” of English law shut out the expanding presence of the New Europe. With the breaking down of its landscaped boundaries, the garden image of England is being pulled apart, revealing and confirming the country’s lack of spatial cohesion and judicial sovereignty. And without its garden, the grandeur of the English home is being dismantled, suggesting that England—and by implication Britain—is in a sense becoming a subplot or periphery of the European mainland (1999: 70).

While some readers may contest the long leap to questions of law in Darian-Smith’s analysis, her symptomatic reading here of the “Garden of England” is telling. First of all, it connects the commodification of this geographical imagination to the devolutionary developments in governance that have made reference to a so-called “United Kingdom” evermore absurd. The branding of the “Garden of England” is in this sense a symptom of a disunited kingdom, a country in which a renegotiation of English identity as English, as no longer the unspoken but elevated norm of “Great British” identity can be identified. In this new context, Darian-Smith suggests that Englishness itself needs to be reinterpreted as a rather less hegemonic and more fluid identity, an imagined territory that is subject to further negotiation as a result of the parallel development of European networks of governance. Gone from this picture is the arrogance associated with the old island-nation imperialism. Instead, the far more prosaic and banalized marketing of the English rural idyll is sold to French and Belgian tourists. In this branding of the “Garden of England” the very norms of national belonging that the geographical imagination once served to consolidate—norms linking membership with whiteness, upper class privilege, and “this green and pleasant land”—are being disrupted and reworked in the context of continental capitalist reordering.

Other geographers have commented on the changing economy and geographical imagination of southeast England in much more detail than can be done here (see Allen, Massey, and Cochrane 1998). Instead, the point of what follows is to apply this same critical approach to the analysis of the varied
geographical imaginations of cross-channel spaces themselves. While the branding of the “Garden of England” may tell us much about the displacements of traditional English identities in the new Europe, the focus here is on what might very well be seen as their replacements, the new geographical imaginations of interregional cooperation and competition across national borders. By extending this critical mode of examination to these newer, less historically freighted, but no less compelling landscapes imagined by the promoters of cross-border regionalism, the goal is to pose questions about what new forms of privilege and what new hierarchies of belonging these nascent landscapes may themselves be consolidating. What do these geographical imaginations of cross-channel integration tell us about the limits of democracy, development, and citizenship in the so-called “Europe of the Regions”?

“Chunnel Visions” I: The Infrastructural Imagination

The construction of a road link between England and France, an idea conceived before the end of the last century, has become the object of renewed interest, especially since the introduction of the railways gave such great impetus to transport in these two countries. If one takes a look at the map of those new roads, abruptly intercepted by the sea, one grows convinced that their heads, at both sides of the Straits, are not more than half posts destined to be joined in a common and continuous transport system ... The creation of such a route is not an isolated concept; it is the complementary link of a great current of traffic among the nations, a current which extends across Europe in parallel branches, converging on the Mediterranean and then turning towards the Orient to penetrate into India (de Gammont [1857] quoted in Hunt 1994: 24–25).

While some might argue that geographical imaginations of cross-channel integration date all the way back to the Romans or to 1066 and William the Conqueror’s victory at the Battle of Hastings; and while others might dwell on the interregional links embodied in the Hugenot settlement of parts of southern England; or, by contrast, on England’s hold on Calais which formally lasted until 1802 when it was turned over to Napoleon’s control at the Peace of Amiens; it was actually only after that brief moment of more pacific relations between England and France in 1802 that the first technically feasible “Chunnel vision” was laid out. It was an infrastructural vision created by Albert Mathieu-Favier, a French engineer, who envisaged a tunnel for horse-drawn carriages under the sea, lit with oil lamps, ventilated by air shafts, and centered on a large artificial island to be constructed mid-channel. This island would be built on the “Varne bank,” thus transforming a previously unseen piece of underwater geology into a brand-new transborder space large enough to accommodate an international town as well as a “harbor of refuge” for shipping. This first geographical imagination of a truly transborder space and tunnel apparently interested Napoleon quite considerably. But it was all for nought when cross-channel hostilities broke out again in 1803, and the English commenced building a series of fortifica-

recently to include more English counties and French regions, overlapping the original Transmanche region in complicated ways (see Church and Reid 1999 for a valuable overview). Here, however, for reasons relating to the links with infrastructure and the material impact of such links on either side of the channel, the focus will be kept on the Chunnel-related Transmanche/Euroregion borderland alone (see Figure 1).

Figure 1. The Tunnel, Transmanche, and the Euroregion

The infrastructural underpinning of the cross-channel borderlands geographical imagination is significant because elsewhere in Europe—with the notable exception of Danish-Swedish cooperation around the bridge at Øresund (Ek 2000)—most cross-border regional development plans have been initiated on the basis of either postwar reconciliation, economic integration, environmental interdependence, or, more pragmatically and, as some would argue, cynically, with a simple desire to gain EU funding. The somewhat unique basis of this monumental piece of infrastructural innovation means that in contrast to most of these other European instances of cross-border integration, the Transmanche region had to be developed in the context of a highly uneven and divided social, political, and economic geography, marked by a long history of disconnection and division (not to mention a cultural geography emotionally inscribed by the legacy of events like the British retreat from Dunkerque). Thus, the initial plans for cross-channel cooperation were made by very different areas with contrasting regional identities, policy-making environments, and economies, and with few common understandings of regional interdependence.

The ironies of this infrastructure-led cooperative effort in a space of division can to some extent be explained as a result of the confluence of very different spatial scales of economic development. The forces driving the construction of the tunnel as a piece of infrastructure were European in scope. They included the large English and French banks (National Westminster, Midland, Banque Nationale de Paris, Crédit Lyonnais, and Banque Indosuez—the latter a product of another great piece of French international infrastructure investment in the nineteenth century, the Suez Canal). They also included large construction companies on either side of the channel (Bouygues, Dumez, SPIE/Batignolles, Société Auxiliaire d’Entreprises, Société Générale d’Entreprises, Balfour Beatty, Costain, Tarmac, Wimpey and Taylor Woodrow). In addition to the federal governments, there was also considerable coordinated European Community support, including that of DG VII, the Transportation Directorate General of the Commission, as well as the central role played by the European Investment Bank as the largest single supplier of financing to Eurotunnel. Certainly, local support was also involved, especially on the French side in economically depressed Nord-Pas de Calais where local communities were keenly in favor of the tunnel (even if only for the short-term jobs provided by the infrastructure development itself). However, there was just as much local opposition, ranging from Kentish farmers and suburbanites worried about new railway building to the residents of the port towns of Boulogne, Calais, Dunkerque, Dover, and Folkstone concerned about their loss of livelihood as ferry terminals. Moreover, on the English side there was also considerable xenophobic chauvinism at play, as Darian-Smith documents in detail. “Why is the Channel Tunnel like a mosquito?” enthused one Kentish critic of the infrastructure. “Because it bites you when unaware, injects a great tube into you, sucks out your life blood, and is likely to introduce infections!” (quoted in Darian-Smith 1999: 141). This “Chunnel vision” of the infrastructure as a penetrating vector of disease is usefully unpacked by Darian-Smith, who argues that such “othering” images condense traditional nationalist feelings about England as some kind of feminized *virgin invalida* with a long and related history of paranoia about rabies and European disease. It is hard to tell to what extent these island-nation passions extended beyond the old Tory rural communities to the stockbroker belt of West Kent and the large, and economically depressed, working-class towns of North Kent (the so-called Medway Towns) and Thanet. But clearly, the Kent County Council—traditionally both a “big C” and “little c” conservative council—was faced with some significant challenges as it began to ponder the possibility of cooperation across such a divided borderland with its no less traditionally socialist counterpart in Nord-Pas de Calais.

Across this picture of cross-channel division and difference, the Chunnel and the various associated anticipations of infrastructure development painted bold new lines of interlinkage and integration. This was a wholly new space in the making. In one the largest engineering projects ever undertaken in Europe, massive machines began boring right through the midst of the old patchwork geographies of regional distinction (and, on the English
side, with great symbolic irony, right underneath the cliffs named after Shakespeare, the island Eden poet). The actual earthworks aside, probably the most important question and driving concern that emerged from all the diggings related to the infrastructure anticipations on either side of the channel was, namely: would the tunnel link turn the immediate borderlands into a bypassed "corridor" region of economic decay, or would it foster a "crossroads" economic geography of new growth and development (see Holliday, Masou, and Vickers 1991: 169–88)? Darian-Smith deals effectively with the cultural dimensions of this question as it developed in debates in Kent and later in advertising for Eurostar (the Channel train) that actually played on the notion with the catch-phrase, "Now nothing comes between London and Paris" (see Darian-Smith 1999: 129–32). Here, the focus will be shifted to understand how these anticipations about the effects of the infrastructure shaped the emerging geographical imagination of cross-channel regional cooperation.

It was precisely as a response to the concerns about economic marginalization that local policymakers on either side of the channel began cooperating to plan the more optimistic "crossroads" alternatives. These largely entrepreneurial "Channel visions" will be further discussed in other sections, but it is worth noting at this point that the ways in which they were instigated as an effort to leverage local competitive advantage out of the larger-scale imperatives associated with infrastructure development. Using any one of a number of examples of how the infrastructural anticipations were mapped out geographically, it is quite easy to see both the difficulties and possibilities that faced these cooperative crossroads development plans. For instance, a map of the Channel Tunnel rail services expected to be running by 1995 anticipates the net effect of the new infrastructure in the form of a plan that collapses the complex regional geography of northwestern Europe into a diagram more akin to the maps of the Paris Metro and London Underground (see Figure 2). The massive scale of this map is such that the space between London, Brussels, and Paris is compressed into just three place names: Ashford, Fréthun, and Lille. While Lille would seem to serve at least as a partial hub, the other two towns are simply mapped here as stops on the fast train corridor. At the same time, it is the much wider reach of the services that is highlighted. Stretching from Edinburgh to Amsterdam and from Manchester to Mainz, this infrastructural imagination of the new networks appears eagerly European in scope. By framing the future in this way, the map is indicative of a wider, infrastructure-oriented geographical imagination that simultaneously shrank the significance and centrality of the borderland space itself. It would be wrong, however, to suggest that all the geographical imaginations rooted, or rather routed, in infrastructure eclipsed the borderlands. The transportation network vision was and remains far more flexible than this, and, as will be discussed in the following sections, both EU planners and business promoters have in part imagined the region through appeals to the new infrastructural possibilities.

More significant than any single map of the new infrastructure linkages has been the network logic unleashed by this mode of reimagining geogra-

**Figure 2. Channel Tunnel Rail Services, 1996**

Source: Corporate Location.

Thus, at the local cross-channel scale, the same focus on new networking possibilities is a common imperative underpinning a host of regional re-visions. Local planners and government administrators at all levels seem almost duty-bound to present their visions of transborder development in the language and logic of infrastructural networking. People and bounded places are gone from these geographic imaginations. In their place, quite literally, are lines portraying links and nodes depicting hubs. Take for example a map drawn during an interview the author had with a local planner in West Flanders in 1999 (Figure 3). The planner was asked to explain the rationale for the involvement of his region in the Transmanche Euroregion. The result was a map drawn quickly and easily, suddenly embracing not just Belgium, Kent, and Nord-Pas de Calais, but also the links with Zeeland in the Netherlands, Cologne in Germany, London, and Paris. Underpinning this busy remapping of northwestern Europe was an earnest interest in the impact of infrastructure. Like de Gaman with his picture of vast opportunities awaiting the final link in the transport system, this vision of a network-in-the-making also implies an opportunity in every link. When asked about the problem of the competition that might also come with the new links, the planner shrugged and simply drew more lines on the map suggesting that the network itself somehow superseded the processes of uneven regional development. The new questions, challenges, and geographic imaginations, he suggested, were all about positions in and expansions of networks. This argument and the accompanying map seemed to capture this point as well as exemplify the deep day-to-day influence of a geographical imagination underpinned by the logic of infrastructural investment.
to such concerns about unequal and asymmetrical outcomes that many local and European planners became involved in developing their Eurocratic imaginations of regional cooperation.

"Chunnel Visions" II: The Eurocratic Imagination

The prospective opening of the Channel Tunnel in conjunction with the emerging European high-speed rail system is stimulating the imagination of national and regional policy-makers in north-west Europe. After the launching of the single European market in 1993, the Channel Tunnel will bring down one of the remaining barriers to international travel and goods transport within Europe. In particular, it promises to eventually make the British Isles a true part of the European continent—ending a thousand years of insular seclusion and turning the much-cited megalopolis London-Milan from a conceptual idea into reality. Not surprisingly, hopes are especially high in the regions adjacent to the Tunnel terminals, Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais, where the first signs of land speculation can be observed (EC 1996: 13).

As a response to the concerns about uneven regional development resulting from the Chunnel, the EU commissioned a study to predict the likely outcomes and impacts of the new network. The telltale influence of the infrastructural imagination is clear throughout the document. Overt references are included in the “problem statement” to the ways that the high-speed rail system is “stimulating the imagination” of policymakers. References are also made to the speculation that emerged in large part due to the huge investments in land made by Eurotunnel in anticipation of the new networks, hence pointing to prospective increases in land values. In addition, the actual regional science modeling undertaken for this EU study focuses on infrastructure as the independent variable. In a vast range of models of future dynamics varying from predicted freight flows, to forecasts of journey times by car, to changes in value added by sector, the study attempts to simultaneously anticipate and map the likely impact of the infrastructure on regions as far away as País Vasco (the Basque country of Spain) and Piedmont (Italy) and as near as Kent, Nord-Pas de Calais, and parts of Belgium (EC 1996). After over three hundred pages of charts, maps, and graphs, the concluding results are presented in several maps of the net impacts. One of these is worth reproducing here because it both captures something of the broad-brush Eurocratic approach to reimagining all of Europe’s regions, and indicates the way in which the notion of a cross-channel borderlands of anticipated crossroads development possibilities crystallized as a Eurocratic geographic imagination (see Figure 4).

This map is interesting for several reasons. Pitched as it necessarily is at this vast pan-European scale, it draws attention to negative impacts not in particular parts of Kent or Nord-Pas de Calais, but along a giant arc of southern Europe, Ireland, and along the coast of the North Sea in the Netherlands, Germany, and Denmark. Not surprisingly, perhaps, given its treatment of infrastructure as the independent variable and its bracketing aside of diverse
whole countries has an ironic resemblance to the old geopolitical maps that used to cover the walls of European war rooms. Here, however, the old geopolitical imaginary is completely erased and in its stead comes a new kind of geoeconomic cartography, mapping not armies but spaces of economic growth, not trenches of conflict but zones of cooperation and commonality. And yet, with all this said, the map seems at first glance to still reflect the same seeming insensitivity to the spaces and places of everyday life (see Sparke 1998 for a more detailed discussion of the relationships between geoeconomics and geopolitics in borderlands).

It is misleading, however, to suggest that the EU response remained pitched only at this very wide, placeless scale. Indeed, long before this macrostudy was released in 1996, the EU had already awarded Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais interregional development funds (INTERREG) to address the local asymmetries associated with the Channel and borderland development challenges. Prior to the first award to the Transmanche border region through INTERREG I for 1992–1994, these funds had never been awarded to a maritime border region. Building on the infrastructural argument that the Channel made a difference and on the accord already signed in 1987 between Kent and Nord-Pas de Calais in anticipation of the Channel’s completion, the regional authorities on both sides were successful in persuading the commission that they merited funding. It also helped in this regard that the Kent County Council as well as the Conseil Régionale de Nord-Pas de Calais were able to point to zones of economic depression within the region. To be sure, Kent’s 9.6 percent unemployment rate in 1993 was nothing compared to the 13.2 percent in Nord-Pas de Calais. Nor, as a quite prosperous service-sector county, did Kent depend on a declining manufacturing base, which represented 27 percent of the employment in Nord-Pas de Calais in 1991 (Church and Reid 1996). Nonetheless, parts of Kent such as Thanet and the Medway Towns were (and remain) relatively impoverished and, as such, are already designated for funding under objectives 1 and 2 of the European Regional Development Fund. These “holes” in the doily of southeast England’s touted prosperity (Allen, Massey, and Cochrane 1998: 55–56) actually turned out to be a compelling basis for Kent’s inclusion in the funding, and hence for the whole package of Eurocratic support for the cross-border development plans. This can be attributed to one of the very basic ideas behind the INTERREG program: that supporting transfrontier cooperation does more than build trans-European links from the ground up. In addition, a guiding geographical understanding of EU commissioners has been that border regions have historically been the economic peripheries of European nations—areas perpetually ravaged by war and marginalized by capital-centric economies. In theory, therefore, aiding cross-border development does more than just support European integration. It also fulfills the equitable regional redevelopment goals of the European Regional Development Fund. This is why the EU attaches such considerable importance to the INTERREG program, and why, while the program only received 1 percent of the structural operations budget in 1994, it was nevertheless the largest of the 13 community initiatives proposed by
the European Commission itself (as opposed to initiatives launched by the Council of Ministers at the direct behest of member states). Thus, it is important to note the significance of the Transmanche region’s reception of INTERREG funding, making Kent the only region in Britain at the time to receive this kind of EU program support.

Church and Reid (1996: 1304) note that between May 1992 and the end of 1993, the Transmanche cross-border development project had a total budget of almost US$50 million (ECU54 million), of which 60 percent came from local, regional, and federal governments. By April 1993, 39 percent of these collective funds had been spent on land management and environment projects, 37 percent on tourism promotion, 13 percent on education and training initiatives, 7 percent on economic development, and 4 percent on transport and infrastructure improvements. This breakdown is worth noting in part because in the subsequent round of INTERREG II, the direction of funding changed significantly. The bid that was successfully submitted funded projects in the cross-border region for the 1994–1999 period. The outline of program support provided by the EU provides a revealing glimpse into the language and logic of EU grant-speak.

INTERREG II: France/United Kingdom

Nord-Pas-de-Calais/Kent: Outline of Programme—Sheet N° 95.00.10.008

The European Commission has approved a Community Initiative programme to support cross-border cooperation between the Nord-Pas-de-Calais region (France) and the county of Kent (UK). Special attention is given to the coastal employment basins (Dunkerque, St Omer, Calais, Boulogne-sur-Mer and Berck-Montreuil on the French coast; Ashford, Canterbury, Dover, Shepway, Swale and Thanet on the English coast) and to the principal points of access in the region (ports, international rail stations, Channel Tunnel).

The Community cofinancing will amount to 47.34% of the total investment, the remainder being provided by the national authorities and the private sector. The Community finance is being provided by the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) and the European Social Fund (ESF).

The programme involves 5 key measures:

- Development of an integrated cross-channel region with high quality communications links.
- Improving and promoting the cross-channel region’s attractiveness in a context of sustainable development.
- Supporting economic and technological development in the region while minimising the negative aspects of the restructuring of ferry traffic.
- Training and education linked to the development of cross-channel links.
- Technical assistance (notably for administrative coordination).

This programme forms part of the implementation of the INTERREG Community Initiative, one of whose aims is to encourage cross-border cooperation within the European Union. It covers the period 30/01/1995 to 31/12/1999 (Inferegio 2000).

A number of points can be made about this program summary. Certainly, at one level its geographical imagination seems underpinned by a concern for addressing the inequities of uneven development. The focus on the coastal areas and the ports hit by the declining ferry traffic would appear to be consistent with such concerns. However, there is also a peculiarly geostategic, or at least geosymmetric, aspect to this area focus on the coast. It is as if in the absence of a terrestrial boundary the logic of physical proximity is used as some kind of surrogate for actual cross-border interdependence. Obviously, the declines in port towns on either side of the channel did have a certain symmetry, but Kent’s more impoverished areas also include the unfunded Medway towns, just as in Nord-Pas de Calais the whole metropolitan area around Lille, Roubaix, and Tourcoing did not receive special attention despite local concentrations of unemployment. Nevertheless, the geosymmetric imagination of Transmanche redevelopment priorities has persisted, and it is further reflected in the mapped projections of the borderlands in pamphlets put out by municipalities and other institutions explaining the opportunities offered by the INTERREG funding (see Figure 5).

Of further note in the programming outline for INTERREG II is the persistence of the more strategic interest in infrastructure (in the appeal to “high quality communications”) and the heightened and still more strategic logic of “promoting the cross-channel region’s attractiveness in the context of sustainable development.” Church and Reid note that under INTERREG II there

Figure 5. Transmanche à la INTERREG

Source: Kent City Council.
was a new funding breakdown: 25 percent for strategic planning, 24 percent for economic development, 23 percent for tourism promotion, 16 percent for the environment, and 2 percent for technical assistance (1996: 1,305). The considerable decrease in funding on Environmental projects would seem to indicate that the reference to "the context of sustainable development" either presumed sustainable development was already somehow present and did not need continued support, or, more likely, that the whole notion of sustainable development is here, as elsewhere, being rapidly emptied of meaning and turned into just another synonym for sustainable business development. In any event, the point that needs to be stressed is the clear shift toward a more business-oriented and business-promoting strategic anticipation of the region's future.

No single reason would appear to account for the shift toward more emphasis on Chamber of Commerce-styled economic promotion within the context of Eurocratic programming. Perhaps the increased role of the central (Conservative) government authorities (Church and Reid 1999: 647) accounts for some of the change on the English side. Perhaps the increased emphasis on "value for money" (Church and Reid 1999: 650) by evermore impoverished local governments also played a role. More important than any of these immediate influences on policy making, however, were and are the combined effects of two sets of more systemic forces. The first of these is what might be called the "level playing field" effect enabled by the new networks, infrastructure investments, and the combined cultural and material impacts of the European Single Market agreement itself. While the single market levels the playing field for business at a pan-European level, the investments in the Channel and other associated infrastructure projects have had a similar effect at a local level, creating the possibility of business "whipsawing" (playing one possible location against another) and overshadowing all new policy-making initiatives with the specter of interregional competition. It is against the backdrop of this local level playing field effect that much of the more recent cross-border cooperative programming needs to be understood. There is not a little irony in this insofar as much as the European Regional Development Fund planning is conceived as a response to previous periods of uneven development and peripheralization in Europe. The problem is that this response is most often directed toward big infrastructure projects and other regional promotion schemes that, while addressing the more visible markers of peripherality, also serve to unleash new rounds of interregional competition (see Amin and Thrift 1995). A major reason for this effect relates, in turn, to the second major systemic influence in which Eurocratic imaginations of cross-border cooperation operate, namely, the absence of meaningful cross-border democratic governance, or what might be called the local democratic deficit effect. While the infrastructure and market really do begin to create a new cross-border space for business, there is no clear corollary in terms of local democracy. A good illustration of how this democratic deficit effect comes together with the level playing field effect in influencing the cross-border cooperation agenda can be glimpsed in the tensions animating the development of the Anglo-Franco-Belgian Euroregion.

Although the cross-channel Euroregion does not receive significant EU funding itself, it has clearly built upon the success of both the Transmanche INTERREG proposals and INTERREG funding for transfrontier cooperation between Nord-Pas de Calais and the Belgian regions of Wallonia and Flanders. It should be noted in this regard (and as further evidence of what was described previously as a geosymmetric Eurocratic imperative) that the protocols of INTERREG funding require that the regions cooperating on both sides of an international divide are of the same NUTS III territorial classification. Thus, by assembling the rather odd regional collection of an English county, a French region, and the three component parts of the Belgian nation-state (Wallonia, Flanders, and Brussels-Capital), the Euroregion does not even qualify for the main form of INTERREG funding. Nevertheless, the whole idea of the Euroregion, including its very name, is Eurocratic to the core, including both its "Channel vision" and the tensions this geographic imagination of the borderlands is imagined to contain. "The Euroregion is a crossroads of the Anglo-Saxon, Roman and Germanic cultures. We are a Europe in miniature," summarizes Jan Béglin, a representative to the Euroregion from the Brussels-Capital region, with typical Eurocratic finesse (First Forum of the Euroregion 1996: 142). Formalized in June 1991 by a joint declaration of the five regional political authorities, and then used as the basis for establishing a so-called European Economic Interest Group, the Euroregion has five working groups organized around the same five areas as the Transmanche INTERREG planning: transport and telecommunications, economic development, land management and environment, education, and tourism.

By December 1996, enough planning conversation had been sustained in these five main areas to put together a "Forum of the Euroregion" in Lille. What becomes most apparent in a careful reading of its proceedings are the tensions between the objectives of establishing meaningful and egalitarian principles of cross-Euroregion governance and the influence of the combined level playing field and local democratic deficit effects. Here, for example, is an excerpt from Marie-Christine Blandin's plenary address. The Socialist president of the Conseil Régionale de Nord-Pas de Calais does not shy away from describing quite directly the tension-filled context of cross-border cooperation:

We have set ourselves two objectives: pooling the most promising experiences relating to the struggle against exclusion and the creation of activities, and stressing the importance of identifying regulatory disparities while establishing the principle of interregional solidarity and a Code of Proper Conduct to protect us from situations of destructive competition with a commitment to a better social and environmental future. This is an immense task (tâche) in a liberal world in which certain enterprises are seeking profit and pursuing nomadism rather than territory and responsibility. It is an immense stain (tache) when local leaders choose unscrupulous competition over constructive partnership (First Forum of the Euroregion 1996: 135, translation modified by author).
Blandin’s articulation of the tensions through the poetic use of the French words tâche and tache is more carry than most of the others in the forum (so carry, in fact, that it seems to have been missed by the transcribers and translators) and might be explained away as just an attempt to put a more party political gloss on the day’s events for the local audience. But this would be to miss the numerous principled attempts to set out other progressive, socially, and regionally redistributive goals throughout the proceedings. Blandin, after all, was also speaking as the outgoing president of the Euroregion itself, and her words were echoed by many others, including the incoming president Luc Van den Brande from Flanders. “A good neighbour’s code must be developed,” he said. “Good neighbours do not stimulate de-localisation of companies. Good neighbours do not exclude others from the market of authorities either. Good neighbours are not obstructive when others also intend to organize their transport flows better. Let us come to clear binding agreements about these matters between the politically responsible persons and the five member regions of the Euroregion” (First Forum of the Euroregion 1996: 146). Notwithstanding these repeated appeals for good neighboring, good governance, and privileging cooperation over competition, the difficulties of doing so in such a complex and divided landscape ultimately overshadowed some of the other attempts to address the tensions in the proceedings. In a summary of the top three priorities for the Euroregion in 1996 (transportation, water, and work and employment), the concluding paragraph diplomatically alludes to the problems of gaining acceptance of more redistributive approaches to unemployment in the Euroregion.

The development of thought in the five regions on the topic of employment meets with the same difficulties of understanding the question due to differing experiences and approaches in each of the regions. An initial extension draft of the Nord-Pas de Calais procedure on the arrangement and reduction in working times is now being put together, but it is causing reservations as to financing in certain regions which consider that they lack competence in this field (First Forum of the Euroregion 1996: 86).

There is no doubt that Kent was one such “certain region” and that, as well as lacking competence and experience, it might equally have been noted that such a traditionally conservative county council also lacked the political will to depart from the laissez-faire approach to unemployment that remains dominant in the United Kingdom even after Thatcher. Indeed, in Kent even the language of unemployment and work is eclipsed by the vocabulary of business and economic development. It cannot be overlooked that it is this same business-oriented vocabulary that ultimately came to dominate the lists of shared goals emerging from the forum. There are no great speeches from Kent’s representatives or anyone else arguing for this more entrepreneurial approach to imagining the future of the Euroregion. There is no evidence of argument, polemic, victory, or defeat. The actual agenda items emerging from the workshops, the actual areas where commonalities and agreements could be made, are all ultimately articulated in the familiar neoliberal terms of business boosterism. After thus nodding dutifully to the notion of building on cooperation “and not just on the basis of rivalry and competition,” the list that emerges at the conclusion of the proceedings of target areas on which to cooperate in the years ahead reads as follows:

... promotion of a Euroregional valorization of the infrastructures and public regional investments; common promotions on foreign and far-away markets, for example in the field of tourism; formation of “critical mass” to attract major equipment and thus exert a lobbying effect before national governments and the European Commission” (First Forum of the Euroregion 1996: 148).

These are all very cooperative ventures, to be sure. They link the five parts of the Euroregion together with a common mission and vision. Yet it is important to note that it is also an extremely narrowed vision, a marketized tunnel vision on Euroregional promotion that is a far cry from talk of reduced working times or establishing the basis for sustainable development. It is rather a promotional “Channel vision” of infrastructure, investment, and entrepreneurial development, a vision that instead of reigniting in competition with social-democratic governance, simply displaces it on to other scales—cooperating locally, as it were, to compete globally and continentally. It is no wonder that the logo designed for the Euroregional promotional materials by a Nord-Pas de Calais team takes the form of a thumprint (see Figure 6). In an interview conducted by Darian-Smith, Stephen Barber of the Kent County Council suggested that the thumprint design merely linked a geographical imagination of the region as an abstract space with the idea that it might have a unique destiny in the new Europe (Darian-Smith 1999: 174). Certainly, the graphic of the region abstracted into orbit above Europe evokes this special destiny, albeit in a tellingly scale-jumping way. Darian-Smith, however, also points out that the thumprint recalls the French idiom donner un coup de pouce (to give a boost of the thumb), which is to say, to give a boost in the right direction. Three years later, it was made very clear what this direction had become. The director of the Euroregion office in Brussels stated in no uncertain terms that “interregional competition is now the name of the game” (de Potter 1999). When asked who the region’s competitors were, he replied, “Paris, London, Cologne, Bonn. We are the five gypsies fighting these giants.”

"Chunnel Visions" III: Entrepreneurial Anticipations

Following massive investments in infrastructure, the cross-Channel Region is now a highly competitive business location and a gateway to the world’s biggest marketplace—the Single European Market. The world’s most impressive feat of engineering, the Channel Tunnel combined with major ports, excellent motorways and close proximity to international airports gives the Cross-Channel Region unbeatable communications. the lifeline of modern business. The advantages of the Cross-Channel Region have already been recognised by many world-class businesses, nearly a thousand foreign owned, which have chosen to locate here. Whether in manufacturing or services, the Cross-Channel Region provides a welcoming business environment and a center of excellence in
chemicals, food-processing, high-tech and automotive engineering, metallurgy, paper and packaging, as well as state-of-the-art healthcare and biotechnology industries—all supported by world-class logistics and telecommunications facilities. The Region’s inward investment agencies, working together, provide close support for newly arrived businesses. Many companies have already benefited from financial incentives to assist their relocation or expansion in the Region—another reason to target this part of Europe for your next move (Region Transmanche promotional packet).

It should already be clear how the geographic anticipation of an integrated cross-channel borderlands has been imagined in ways that bring together infrastructural, Eurocratic, and entrepreneurial imperatives at once in “Chunnel visions” of crossroads opportunities. Each imperative appears to be framed by the others, and the above quotation compiled from the claims of a regional advertising brochure captures the resulting overdetermined image of future entrepreneurial possibilities. Paid for with INTERREG funds, focused on the benefits for business from the new infrastructure investments, and gung ho in boosting the region’s business-friendly climate, the advertising is unabashed in its geographic imagination of Transmanche as a gateway to prosperity. Gone is any mention of sustainable development. In its place come shallow evocations of a lifestyle landscape, a geographic imagination of a space of well-being for the wealthy and, although they might not get any time off to enjoy it, their workforce.

The Cross-Channel region offers real quality of life, vital to the well-being of your workforce, your management and your family...Hundreds of miles of coastline and waterways provide endless leisure and recreational opportunities. From sailing to windsurfing to the more restful pastimes of cycling and walking, the Region offers many ideal ways to relax. These include championship golf courses for those who prefer to combine business with pleasure (Region Transmanche promotional packet).

Combining business with pleasure seems indeed to be the very essence of the ludic landscape depicted in the accompanying photographs.

This same brochure also includes another mapping of the region (see Figure 7), depicting it as the very epicenter of the new Europe. This geographic imagination of centrality is matched by a predictable set of claims about the region being the “business artery” and “communications heart” of Europe. "With the European Union rapidly expanding, you now have an opportunity to locate your business in the Cross-Channel region, where the commercial and political capitals of London, Paris and Brussels are as little as an hour away" (Region Transmanche Promotional Packet). Like real estate advertising that claims a house has easy highway access without mentioning the resulting noise of living near a busy road, these “crossroads” claims about the cross-channel region downplay the alternative future of becoming a mere corridor, a clogged artery filled with heart-racing, unhealthy, nonlocal traffic. Of course, this should hardly be surprising. Produced as these geographic imaginations were to attract foreign direct investment from the
United States, Japan, and other parts of Europe, the upbeat attempt to inspire investor confidence in the region's future prosperity is entirely predictable. What is really more notable about all this entrepreneurial anticipation is that it was not actually initiated by entrepreneurs. While it never mentions the fact, it owes its existence instead to EU funding and local governments. The local businesses are not the ones coming forward to lead the regional promotional initiatives. In fact, it is not even clear that local businesses on either side of the channel even know about the Cross-Channel Region or Région Transmanche.

It was in part an attempt to bring entrepreneurs on board with plans that were supposedly being developed for their benefit that the various local governments involved in the INTERREG and Euroregion schemes organized a conference in Lille in 1997. Titled "Transchannel Business Opportunities / Transmanche Offres de Coopération," the conference was also sponsored by the EU through the DG XXIII (the directorate responsible for enterprise policy, distributive trades, tourism, and cooperatives). Gwyn Prosser of the Kent County Council explained his own government's rationale for supporting the conference by invoking the geographical imagination of the gateway. "Transchannel '97," he writes, "demonstrates Kent County Council's ongoing commitment to the support of the local business community. In particular, the help provided to Kent companies to take advantage of Kent's gateway position between the UK and the rest of Europe. Future success for business is closely tied to success in finding new customers, suppliers and trading partners and thus the importance of events like Transchannel '97" (Transchannel Conference Pamphlet 1997). In the same manner, Ranieri Bomassei, director of DG XXIII, prefaced the pamphlet with his own anticipations of entrepreneurial activity and opportunity.

The SMEs play an important role in the European economy thanks to their considerable potential in terms of job creation. Helping SMEs to co-operate across the borders and thus accept the challenge of competition in the European Union and the internationalization, is one of the priorities of Directorate-General XXIII. This particular event shows the willingness of companies and their intermediaries to find opportunities for economic and employment development through cross-border technological partnerships and the development of the new activities (Transchannel Conference Pamphlet 1997).

The only problem with all this entrepreneurial imagining is precisely the lack of willingness. Organizers of the conference from the Agence Régionale de Développement Nord-Pas de Calais attested in dispirited tones that it had been terribly difficult to get business representatives, especially from Kent, to actually come to the conference (ARD interview 1997). A few English firms have their names scattered among the lists of business contacts, but apparently persuading them to attend the two-day meeting was practically impossible. The telling irony in this, of course, is that while the entrepreneurial geographical imagination of the region has successfully framed the eurocratic and infrastructural imagination of other possibilities, the resulting narrowed "Channel vision" of crossroads economic development has still
not caught on among actual businesses. They would not even take the fast Chunnel train to a conference on business opportunities for which they did not have to pay.

The irony of this empty entrepreneurialism is important, and if it were more commonly noted, it might preempt the likely future attempts to further reduce cross-channel policy-making initiatives to the business of regional boosterism. It should also be noted that this empty entrepreneurialism bespeaks an essentially empty region. It is not just a space divided by a large mass of water; it is also a region where the anticipated crossroads effect has really yet to take off. There is plenty of signage, and the on- and off-ramp infrastructure is almost completely in place, but most of the traffic is still just passing through. However, it would be wrong to suggest that there is absolutely no business interest in this entrepreneurial anticipation. One notable exception to the general disinterest is Olivier Cadic, a much cited French businessman, chief executive of the Info Elec software company that moved to Ashford because of low taxes and cheaper labor costs, and self-appointed promoter of cross-channel development. However, Cadic’s “Chunnel vision” is not about developing a networked region that actually integrates both sides of the channel together as a successful business crossroads. Instead, his whole project has been to publicize the whipsaw possibilities for French businesses moving to Kent. As president of a group he established for the purpose of publicizing these possibilities—La France Libre d’Entreprendre—Cadic has repeatedly recommended to fellow French business leaders that they should move or threaten to move to Kent—while maintaining links to French markets with Tunnel and Transmanche infrastructure improvements—a way of lobbying for more neoliberal tax reduction and deregulation measures in France. “To be competitive, we must all move to the United Kingdom,” read a headline citing Cadic in the Electronique Internationale Hebdo trade journal (quoted in Hodge 1998: A6). “You see the word ‘liberté’ on every public building in France, but I wasn’t free until I came here” (Hodge 1998: A6). Cadic’s “Chunnel vision” is no doubt quite extreme, but it is poles apart from Blandin’s Euroregional hopes of controlling corporate nomadism through cross-border cooperation. Far from cooperating with the French by raising labor standards and wages on the English side, the Kentish boosters of the cross-channel region are quite happy to cite Cadic and underline precisely how much cheaper labor and other social costs are in Kent (Financial Times 2000).

The Implications of Imagination: An Anticipatory Conclusion

The changeable nature of cross-border spaces suggests that to some degree they are based on “imaginary” spaces envisioned by politicians, especially in a region where economic and cultural transfrontier links are relatively limited compared to elsewhere in Europe (Church and Reid 1999: 654).

Clearly, Church and Reid’s conclusions about the imaginary quality of the spaces of the cross-channel borderlands are in many ways further corrob-
These suggestions certainly inspire other geographical imaginings of cross-channel development possibilities, but in the meantime, the “Chunnel visions” outlined here remain accountable less to geography than to that ultimately unaccountable place of possibility, the future.

Endnotes

1. For reasons of focus and specificity, the current analysis has been limited to only one particular cross-channel borderland; however, given recent devolutionary developments in the United Kingdom, something more should be said about England’s other borders with Scotland and Wales, not to mention the fraught borderlands between Northern Ireland and Ireland. Indeed, as Raphael Samuels argues in his posthumously published volume, Island Stories: Unraveling Britain, the whole historic development narrative of modern British can be usefully retold as a “four nations history.” As such, it must necessarily include a series of histories of cross-border integration and disintegration. “The borders of Anglo-Saxon England,” he thus noted, “were fluctuating and shadowy, open to seaborne invasion from without and internecine warfare from within. Offa’s Dyke was less a frontier than a crossing point, allowing raid and counter raid on either side of the border, and encouraging a symbiotic relationship between English and Welsh warlords, complementary and antagonistic at the same time…” (Samuels 1998: 23). Following Walter Benjamin’s inspiration, Samuels’ larger historiographic goal in proceeding this way is to adumbrate a counter-history of cross-border national formation in order to remember how a singular national territory was once patched together out of geographic flux and plurality at a time of impending deterritorialization. Learning from Samuels’ unraveling of Britain along its internal borders, and yet moving the analysis of border crossings and national discourse formation to an external and regional relationship, the article seeks to foreground examples of cross-border deterritorialization that are coeval with the contemporary dynamics of deterritorialization.

2. There are extensive literatures on governance that inform this usage. These range from international organization analysis (Rosenau and Czempiel 1992), to work on disciplinary normalization (Hunt and Wickham 1994), to institutional economic studies of relational contracting in group enterprises, clans, and strategic alliances (Hollingworth, Schmitter, and Streek 1994). Across these literatures, governance is commonly employed as a way of describing the systematic organization of political and economic relations without reducing such systems to compartmentalized treatments of the market, the state, and nationally defined civil societies (for a useful discussion of the distinction between “governance” and “regulation,” see Jessop 1995).

3. I have discussed the overdetermined, palimpsest-like quality of geographical imaginings in much greater detail elsewhere with regard to cartographic imaginaries in particular (see Sparke 1995).

4. Therefore, there is clearly a difference between this use of the notion of geographical imaginaries and the more fantastic, and sometimes Lacanian-inspired, notion of imaginary geographies. This is a crucial difference, and elsewhere I have critiqued the monologic and, ultimately, masculinist construction of Lacan’s notion of the “imaginary” as it has been applied to geography (Sparke 1994a). Elsewhere, I have outlined the many limits and risks associated with putting psychoanalytic cultural analysis to work in the forms of sociopolitical analysis pursued in the present article (Sparke 1994b).
References


