
The "Blue Banana" Revisited

Andreas Faludi

Abstract

This essay is about the "Blue Banana". Banana is the name given subsequently by others to a Dorsale européenne (European backbone) identified empirically by Roger Brunet. In a background study to the Communication of the European Commission 'Europe 2000', Klaus Kunzmann and Michael Wegener put forward the allegedly radical alternative called the "European Bunch of Grapes". However, the juxtaposition is questionable, and for two reasons. Firstly, Brunet's frame of reference was France and his point was that, other than how Kunzmann and Wegener present it, his Dorsale barely straddled French territory. It was thus an indictment of the dominant position of Paris and not a comment on European development. Secondly, and importantly, Brunet portrayed the Dorsale as a polycentric urban network with features similar to those which Kunzmann and Wegener ascribe to their Bunch of Grapes. So the implications of the two concepts for European development are the same: Much like the Bunch of Grapes, the Dorsale celebrates, if not urban networks as such, then the particular network in the Rhineland for forming the basis for its prosperity. If it had been the intention of Brunet to make recommendations applicable at the European scale, arguably he would have done much as Kunzmann and Wegener have: recommend polycentric development.

Keywords: DATAR, Dorsale/Blue Banana, European Bunch of Grapes, polycentric development, spatial planning

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1. Introduction

This essay reviews the meaning, or rather meanings, of the “Blue Banana”, which according to Williams (1996, p. 96) is a metaphor like the Dutch “Green Heart” as identified by Faludi and Van der Valk (1994). Labelling the Dorsale européenne (European backbone) which was identified by Brunet (1989) as “a blue banana” can be understood as a “speech act”, in the terms of Michael Loriaux (2008). As such it was responsible for perceptions of European space in terms of a core and a periphery. Its alleged opposite is the “European Bunch of Grapes”, which is another metaphor, or speech act, indicating the alleged counterfactual of a more evenly developed Europe by means of polycentric development (see Figure 1).

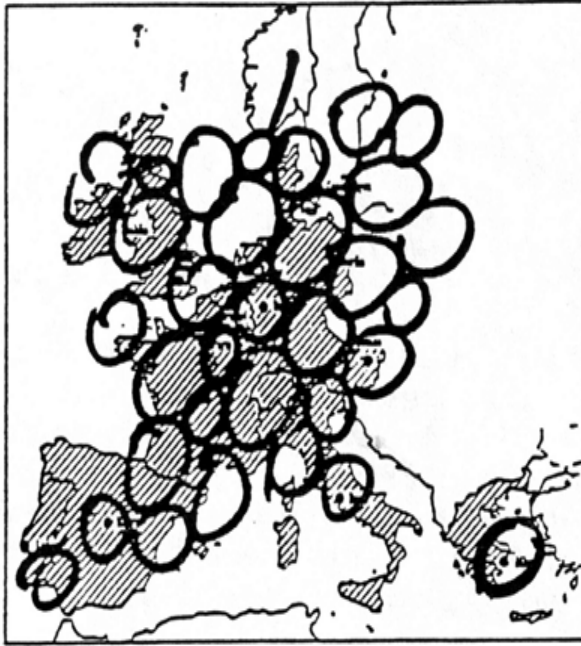
The European Bunch of Grapes is the brainchild of Klaus Kunzmann and Michael Wegener (1991a; b). They put it forward as the superior alternative to development along the lines of the Blue Banana. Describing the Bunch of Grapes as a radical democratic alternative, Ache (2004, p. 11) gives a twist to their argument. Conceivably not totally averse to it being characterised as such Kunzmann (2004, p. 47) underlines the opportunities for sustainable and endogenous development, which offers polycentric development on the lines of the Bunch of Grapes-metaphor in a French article based on a 2001 lecture given in Paris. The lecture must have made an impression on his expert audience. A publication of the French planning agency DATAR (Délégation à l’Aménagement du Territoire et à l’Action Régionale), edited by no less than the Délégué – the politically appointed liaison with the French prime minister to whom DATAR reports – Jean-Louis Guigou (2002, p. 93), advocated networked polycentrism (polycentrisme maillé) as the preferred scenario for France and for Europe. Although failing to give it as the source, the text quotes Kunzmann enthusiastically where his lecture ends by exclaiming:

Oui au polycentrisme et non à la banana bleu qui génère trop de disparités entre le centre et les périphéries. (Yes to polycentrism and no to the Blue Banana which generates too many disparities between the centre and the peripheries.) (Author’s translation)

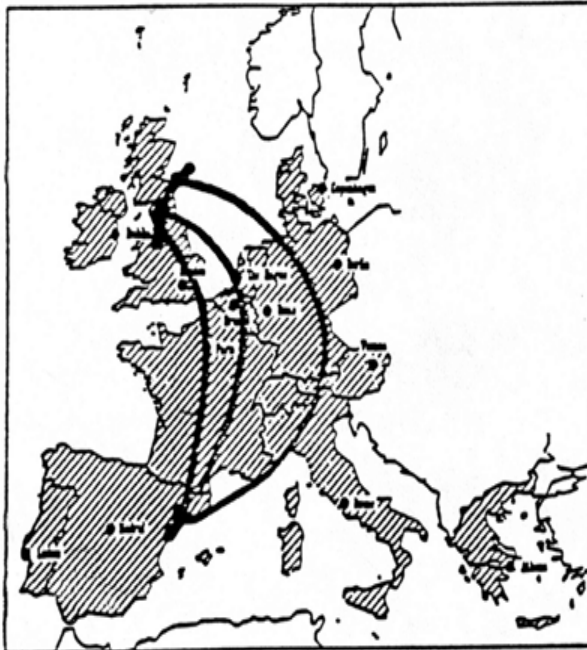
Scrutinising what Roget Brunet actually said, and doing so against the backdrop of the situation of French planning at the time, this paper makes three related points:

1. The author responsible for, if not coining the term Blue Banana – as will become evident the term made its debut only after his study (1989) was completed – then at least the analysis of European space in terms of the Dorsale européenne and the rest was no advocate of concentrated development. Other than Kunzmann and Wegener (1991a; b) who were advising the European Commission on matters of regional development, as the empirical geographer of fame, Brunet was not into proposing policy, let alone on the European scale. His intention was to document urban development as it was.

The European grape



is
the appropriate
fruity image
of
the European Urban System



not
the (blue)
banana

Figure 1. The Banana and the European Bunch of Grapes (Source: Kunzmann and Wegener 1991a)

2. Brunet's study (1989) commissioned by DATAR was seen as important for its implications for the situation of France and the concerns which it raised at a time of German unification and the fall of the Iron Curtain. The frame of reference of the contemporary Kunzmann and Wegener (1991a; b) study was in contrast to this, a European Community of twelve member states.
3. That Brunet (1989) analysed, as will become evident, the economic success of the *Dorsale européenne* in similar terms to Kunzmann and Wegener (1991a; b) and later also Kunzmann (2004), casts another light on the allegedly sharp contrast with the Bunch of Grapes.

In short the argument is that Brunet's object and objective were different from those of Kunzmann and Wegener. The latter referred to a somewhat different area and portrayed it as an overdeveloped, metropolitan core of Europe, which according to the rough sketches included Paris and the *Île de France*. In contrast to this Brunet identified a dynamic urban network barely straddling French territory. This *Dorsale européenne* represented a concentration of cities, people and added value with historical roots. Barely straddling French territory in the North and East it added weight to a key theme of French regional policy. In a work earning him no less than the Grand Prix d'histoire de l'Académie française (Prix Gober), Jean-François Gravier (1947) had defined this theme as "Paris et le désert français" (Paris and the French Desert). The underlying anti-urban ideology as well as the empirical propositions on which this work is based may have been criticised sharply (Marchand & Cavin, 2007; Provost, 1999), but the dominant position of Paris at the expense of the periphery has been considered problematic ever since. The Brunet study places these French discussions in a European context.

For these reasons it will be argued that the critique of the Blue Banana on which the European Bunch of Grapes is based misses its target. Also, Brunet identified the *Dorsale européenne*, not as a compact European metropolis but as an urban network with features reminiscent of what the European Bunch of Grapes stood for. That urban network has existed for a long time but has been marginalised in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. So, unless one applies it to the Middle-Ages, the Blue Banana cannot be said to be shaped by "the market logic of globalisation and competition" (Kunzmann 2004, p. 45). Nor does Brunet's *Dorsale/Banana* represent a cancerous form of development which, rightly or wrongly, Paris and other large metropolises are sometimes identified as. Discussing the *Dorsale européenne* as an urban network will provide the occasion also for introducing the work of Loriaux (2008) already referred to for having introduced the concept of speech acts. What Loriaux describes as the Greater Rhineland, coextensive with at least large parts of the Blue Banana, owes its past prosperity to its multilingualism and multiculturalism. It is a polycentric configuration, the competitive edge of which has been reduced by imposing territorial boundaries between France and Germany on it. The Blue Banana

now being relevant again is evidence of the successful deconstruction of this Rhineland frontier. It is a frontier that has caused much bloodshed throughout the centuries but now seems benign, with Strasbourg and in fact Alsace too, looking both ways (Western, 2012).

The paper begins by setting the context of the European Commission commissioning the Kunzmann and Wegener study and pursuing regional development policy. Uneven development was an issue for European integration. The efforts of the European Community to seriously tackle the issue forms the backdrop against which the European Bunch of Grapes was developed as a concept. After describing its policy impact, the paper details the critique of the Banana by Kunzmann and Wegener. Then comes an account of Roger Brunet's original study set in its French context. Michael Loriaux' (2008) inspirational interpretation of the Greater Rhineland's history and position forms the topic of the last section of this paper. Before launching into the argument, a short note on methodology is in order.

2. A Note on Methodology

The objective of this paper is to expose the genealogy of concepts and their roles in shaping planning policy. What this paper does not have the ambition of doing is to assess the validity of assumptions about regional-economic development on which either the Blue Banana or the European Bunch of Grapes concept is based. Assumptions underlying the Blue Banana have been the object of discussion by economic geographers (e.g. Hospers, 2003). Likewise, polycentric development has been discussed by Davoudi (2003), Krätke (1999) and others, with Gløerson (2012) giving an overview. Neither these discussions nor, indeed, the success in shaping European urban development according to the polycentric ideal represented by the European Grapes are at issue here.

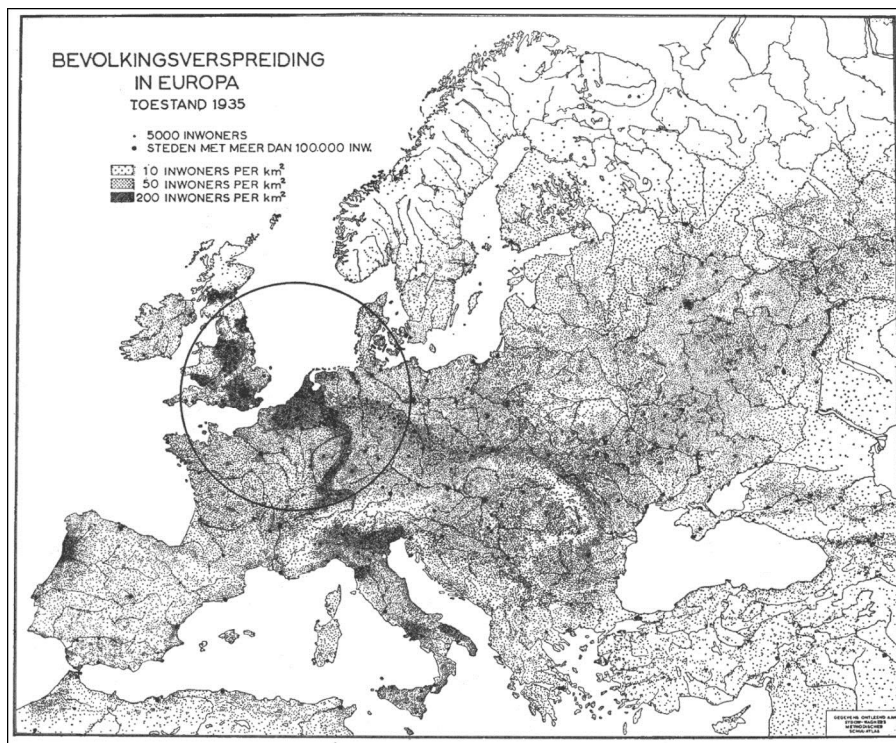
Clarifying the issues above does not require collecting primary data about development. Rather, the research method which this review paper employs is one of analysing relevant texts, in this particular case including French literature, for the meanings attached to concepts by their authors and by others. This includes discussing the respective roles of Kunzmann and Wegener and Brunet. Furthermore, the principal authors have been approached with and commented upon drafts versions of this paper. In interpreting the text and their reactions, the paper pays regard to the positions of the authors and the national and international contexts in which they operated.

In brief, the position of the key authors Kunzmann and Brunet is what Massardier (1996ab) describes as that of scientific entrepreneurs combining the roles of university professor, consultant and political adviser. As regards Brunet, a professor and frequent consultant at the time for DATAR, the context is of course French. When he published the study to which the world owes the concept of the Blue Banana Brunet was director of RECLUS (Réseau d'études des changements dans les localisations et les unités spatiales – Network for the Study of Changes in Location Factors and Spatial Units). Kunzmann, also a university professor,

occupied similar positions like Brunet did in RECLUS. Thus for many years he was leading IRPUD (Institut für Raumplanung) as an institute of applied planning research at the University of Dortmund. Brunet, a one-time professor at Reims and subsequently working in Paris, places where he already had the opportunity to work on issues relating to the Dorsale européenne in relation to the territory of France (i.e. Brunet, 1973), was at that time in Montpellier in the south of France where RECLUS was located. Kunzmann worked from, and was greatly concerned with, the Ruhr Area of which he is now an honorary citizen. Brunet was affiliated to the French Socialist Party when under President François Mitterand the French Left embraced decentralisation. With clear sympathies for green, grass-roots and regionalist movements, Kunzmann was once an expert critic against the move of the seat of the German federal government from Bonn to Berlin, considering that such a move might be detrimental to German polycentrism. Deeply rooted in German history and institutions, polycentrism is fundamental to his thinking. His apprehensions of European integration being a danger to German polycentrism (Kunzmann, 1993) has percolated through to thinking in the Federal Republic about European spatial development. The immediate context of his advocacy of the European Bunch of Grapes was uneven development in Europe discussed in the next section. Brunet himself was implicated in these discussions largely thanks to Kunzmann criticising the Blue Banana, but he was not directly involved. Kunzmann continued to be a frequent commentator on such matters and from 2000 to 2003 a member of the scientific advisory board of Datar. It is in this capacity that he gave the lecture ending in the condemnation of the Blue Banana on which Guigou quoted him in *France 2020* (see above).

3. Uneven Development in Europe

The memory of the European Coal and Steel Community as a peace project transcending frontiers crisscrossing the coal- and steel manufacturing basin of northwest Europe is fading. A key issue now is uneven development in the much enlarged territory of the European Union (EU). The Single Market and European Monetary Union are both held to be privileging core member states and regions. Since World War II European welfare states seek to rectify imbalances within their territories, and so does the EU for its common space. The objects of its concern are "least favoured regions" defined in terms of the GDP per capita adjusted for purchasing power, but also regions with "geographical handicaps": mountain regions, islands and thinly populated remote regions. As the Third Cohesion Report of the European Commission (CEC 2004, p. 27) posits, "...people should not be disadvantaged by wherever they happen to live or work in the Union." Published under a French Commissioner for Regional Policy, this formulation reminds of long-term French concerns for *égalité républicaine*: the integrity and cohesiveness of the Republic, also in a spatial or territorial sense. Under Jacques Delors, President of the European Commission from 1985 to 1995, such concerns were addressed, invoking a European model of society (Ross, 1995; Faludi ed., 2007) to justify such a policy.



Importantly, Delors also recognised Europe’s competitiveness to be problematic, and this long before it became the key concern of European policy that it is now under the EU master strategy “Europe 2020: Towards a Competitive, Sustainable and Inclusive Europe” (CEC, 2010). However, Delors wanted to temper the pursuit of competitiveness with equity considerations by means of a determined cohesion policy. So, like in France, the European model balances competitiveness with equity concerns. Under Delors, economic and social cohesion became the objectives of EU policy which also implied and still implies an element of spatial equity. Since the Lisbon Treaty, the two cohesion policy objectives have been supplemented with a third one: territorial cohesion. The instruments of cohesion policy are regional and social policy.

On the coattails of European regional policy, and before territorial cohesion came on the statute book, planners from a selection of member states (France, the Netherlands and later also Germany flanked by other northwest Europeans) sought to articulate an appropriate spatial framework, not only for regional policy, but also for the emergent policy of promoting Trans-European Networks. Another field that cried out for a spatial framework was environmental policy.

Planners usually conceive such spatial frameworks as integrating various policies in terms of their spatial impacts. This requires understanding where opportunities exist and where developmental pressures are high or low. Presently, thanks amongst others to the sustained effort of the ESPON (European Observation Network for Territorial Development and Cohesion), there is a vast amount of relevant evidence available. Mapping population density provides an indication of where development pressures exist. For instance, the first Dutch national planning document from 1960s included a map of population density in Europe (See Figure 2).

Figure 2. Map of population density in Europe (Source: Nota over de ruimtelijke ordening van Nederland 1960; the circle around the Netherlands having been added by the author)

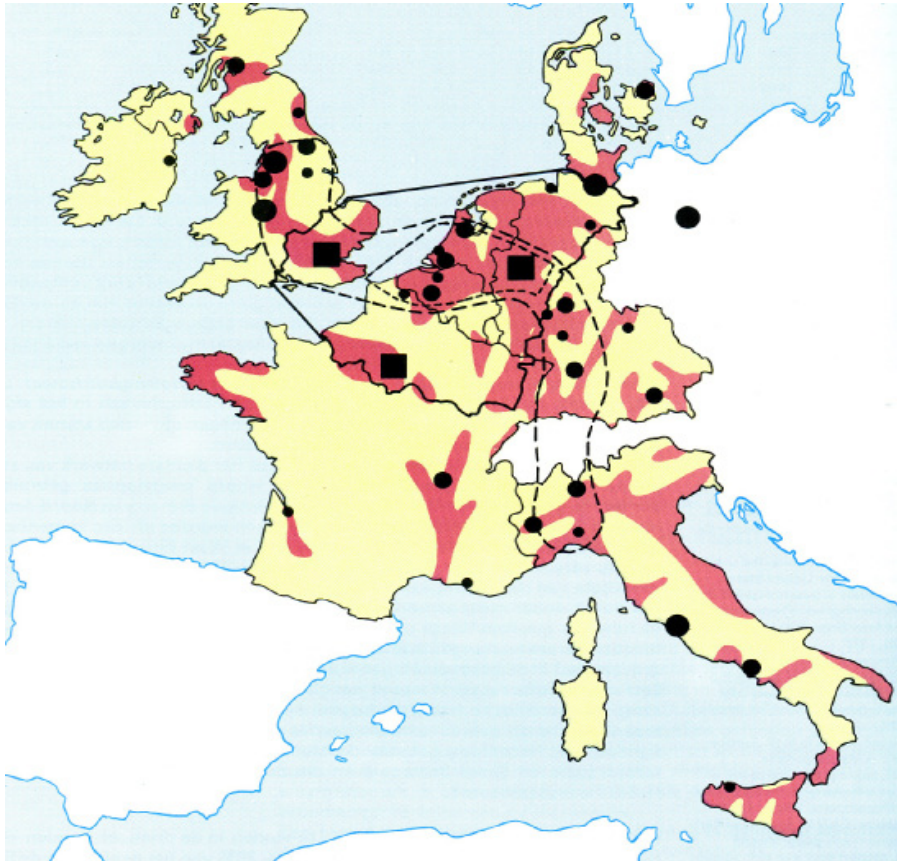


Figure 3. Various versions of the putative core of Europe. (Source: Rijksplanologische Dienst Jaarverslag 1978)

It revealed a pattern with a cunning resemblance to what would become the Blue Banana. Referring to Gottmann's term "Megalopolis" (1961) and the developments on the US Eastern Seaboard, the idea of a European megalopolis took root. It stretched across the territory of the Netherlands, leading Dutch planners to look from the vantage point of their country beyond its borders and to conceptualise its position in a wider transnational and European context (Zonneveld, 2010, 2012).

Involving planners from other countries seemed a natural consequence of the European megalopolis representing a vast urban network stretching across Dutch territory. Dutch planners understood the latter as itself featuring such a network, albeit once on a smaller scale. As they were trying to do in their own country, the idea was to keep the articulated pattern of Western Europe from coalescing into a 'sea of houses', being the doomsday scenario which served Dutch planners well in driving home their message of the need for national planning (Faludi & Van der Valk, 1994, p. 107). Dutch pioneers entertained the, as it turned out, vain hope that the European Economic Community would address the issue, but the 1957 Treaty of Rome establishing the European Economic Community left no scope for this. The Dutch kept up the effort, networking with colleagues in neighbouring countries. Soon, various versions of the shape of the European core existed which the Dutch National Spatial Planning Agency would document later (Figure 3).

However it took until the mid-1970s before there was any movement at all, until the 1980s before regional policy under Delors amounted to more than distributing funds from the Community to help member states finance their own regional policies and until the 1990s before at-

tempts at some form of planning came under way. Eventually this led to the ESDP (European Spatial Development Perspective) (CEC, 1999; Faludi & Waterhout, 2002) and its various follow-ups (Dühr, Colomb & Nadin, 2010; Faludi, 2010). A common thread was, and still is, the promotion of polycentric development receiving much emphasis in the ESDP itself (Waterhout, 2002). According to its follow-up, the “Territorial Agenda of the European Union” (2007) agreed on by the ministers of the member states responsible for such matters, repeating the words of the Third Cohesion Report already referred to, polycentric development should:

...secure better living conditions and quality of life with equal opportunities, oriented towards regional and local potentials, irrespective of where people live — whether in the European core area or in the periphery (p. 1)

The update of the Territorial Agenda, the “Territorial Agenda 2020” (2011) published with a view of influencing the pursuit of the “Europe 2020” strategy reiterates the point. There is no reference in any of these policy documents to neither the Blue Banana nor the European Bunch of Grapes. These two concepts figured earlier when the first steps towards a kind of planning role for the European Community were taken, steps that would trigger the making of the ESDP. This was when the European Commission worked on its Communication “Europe 2000” (CEC, 1991). The common practice in such situations is to call on consultants. It was in this context that the Blue Banana and its counterpart, the Bunch of Grapes, came to the fore as two, allegedly radically different alternatives. The occasion was the publication of the background report by Kunzmann and Wegener (1991a; see also Kunzmann & Wegener, 1991b).

4. The Bunch of Grapes

From his base at Dortmund University of Technology, Kunzmann had already been involved in European planning in the 1970s, doing work for the Council of Europe, not to be confused with the European Community, now the European Union. Through its European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning, better known by its French acronym CEMAT (Conférence Européenne des Ministres à l’Aménagement du Territoire) the Council of Europe had addressed planning issues as early as the late-1960s (Kunzmann 1982; see Faludi 2010) and thus long before the EU did. Michael Wegener is a German expert working from the same base and still participating in research for ESPON, lately in a scenario study for Europe 2050. Retired as the Jean Monnet Professor of European Spatial Planning that he had become later, Kunzmann continues to be in high demand as a speaker at international conferences.

As indicated, the pair worked on the background study for the European Commission. Their study presented for the first time the European Bunch of Grapes as the alleged counterpoint to the Blue Banana. This happened not in the main text but in the conclusions. Known for his rough sketches which have become iconic, by way of illustration Kunz-

mann literally drew a Banana and a Bunch of Grapes (Figure 1). Later it will be clear that the area covered is not the same as that covered by Brunet's *Dorsale européenne* or Blue Banana.

The main body of the background study done in cooperation with a small group of international scholars discusses neither of the two concepts. In fact it is not about the shape of urban development at all. What it does offer is a great deal of material about various developmental trends, from population to environment and resources and about patterns of urbanisation from 1960 to 1990. In so doing, it quotes previous studies, amongst others those by CEMAT and also the one by Brunet, at that time probably still fairly unknown outside France.

From the empirical material, the background study distilled two mega trends: spatial polarisation and functional specialisation. The concluding chapter, "Cities in Europe in the 1990s" where the two concepts figure started with the plausible assertion that, barring major crises, the mega trends would continue. Note that this was, as mentioned, the time of German unification and the opening of the Iron Curtain, developments that in due course would lead to the demise of the Soviet Union. The conclusions also discussed the pressure, due to immigration, on European gateway cities and a threat to peripheral cities:

Even larger cities in the periphery such like Palermo, Dublin or Oporto are handicapped by their relative distant location. Unless deliberate efforts are made to locate attractive public institutions with European functions /.../ they are likely to become a group of 'forgotten' cities, for instance at locations for international information exchange and communication. They need to develop a distinct profile, a combination of services and attractions if they wish to play a role in the concert of the large European cities (Kunzmann & Wegener, 1991a, p. 56).

As indicated, special consideration for the periphery as a way of compensating for the asymmetric effects of the Single Market was, and continues to be, the rationale for many a European programme and the requirement for those concerned to strengthen their cases accepted wisdom. None of this, it will be argued, justifies the stark contrast drawn between the Blue Banana and the Bunch of Grapes.

The sketch illustrating the alleged contrast between the two, including the famous and often reproduced figure "The European Bunch of Grapes" came at the end of the report, in the section "Summary and Further Work". The section enumerated opportunities and risks. Opportunities existed for:

...London and Paris, the Euro-Metropolises and the major European conurbations and cities of European importance in the European core and the smaller and medium-sized cities in their hinterland fuelled by the unprecedented levels of exchange of people and goods. These cities will be able to continuously upgrade their economy to the most advanced technologies and services, polish their physical appearance and transport infrastructure and attract the most creative and innovative talents (op cit., p. 61).

There were risks attaches to the polarisation and specialisation mega trends. These trends were “...in direct conflict with the stated equity goals of the Community regional policy” (op cit. p. 61). The trends enforced the threat to the so-called gateway cities, faced as they were with a growing inflow of economic immigrants resulting from the attractiveness of a booming Europe, as well as to cities with a skewed economic profile. The authors added negative effects of growth to this.

Policy recommendations were not within the remit of their study, but Kunzmann and Wegener included them even so, identifying tangible and intangible factors contributing to the success of cities. In so doing, they were pointing out that the very thinking in such terms was

...built on the principle of competition... To be sure, the hope is that this competition is not a zero-sum game... Yet in reality some cities gain only very little (op cit., p. 62).

What followed were recommendations for Community regional policy: To encourage cooperation between cities, something that the subsequent ESDP and in fact many a Community policy has been, and continues to be, propagating. Another recommendation was to take another look at Community policies pursuing competitiveness:

The Single European Market aiming at allowing unrestricted competition in the whole Community territory will certainly give a boost to interregional exchange and trade, but may make life for peripheral cities which now have their undisturbed markets more difficult. The new high-speed rail and advanced telecommunication networks will bring the cities of Europe closer to each other, but by first linking the large already successful cities in the European core will put all those cities at a disadvantage which are not yet connected or never will be (op cit. p. 62).

Here came the one and only mention of the European Bunch of Grapes as representing

...a different and more ‘cooperative’ Leitbild for urban development in Europe than the ‘Blue Banana’ which is the pure expression of the competition between the regions of Europe (op cit., p. 63).

The German authors invoked the concept of “Leitbild” culled from German planning discourse. Like “Weltanschauung” and “Gestalt”, it is difficult to translate and thus better left in the original. It stands for a vision giving spatial expression to underlying values, with broad policy guidelines — “Leitlinien” — flowing from it.

The point is that, as far as the Blue Banan is concerned, the statement quoted above is misleading. Setting up the Blue Banana as the opposite of polycentric development fails to do justice to the study by Brunet, and this is the central proposition of this essay. As indicated, and as will be discussed in more detail below, the purpose of Brunet was to address, not a European but a French issue, unequal development due to the overbearing position of Paris. Before substantiating the claim that

setting up the Blue Banana as the opposite of polycentric development is misrepresenting the original intention behind it, the next section is about the impact of the European Bunch of Grapes on European spatial development policy.

5. Policy Impact

Whether the work done for the Commission by Kunzmann and Wegener has been to good effect is difficult to gauge directly from reading the Communication “Europe 2000: Outlook for the Development of the Community’s Territory” (CEC, 1991). The main text of the Communication fails to mention it altogether, but in the last section labelled “Towards a regional planning response”, the Communication at least acknowledges:

...horizontal studies which take a Community-wide approach on, for example, location factors for industry and services, urbanization and the functions of cities, and migration, as well as existing or developing Community programmes on specific issues such as the future development of the transport sector, energy and the environment (p. 35).

There is ample reference also to uneven development and to the need for taking compensatory measures, but the European Bunch of Grapes itself nowhere figures.

However, in the executive summary there is a map featuring, but without mentioning the term, a somewhat enlarged Banana, similar to the one in the background study in Figure 3. It covers Paris and also shows the “Nord du sud” along the Mediterranean coast, a complementary concept to be discussed when analysing the real meaning of the Brunet Study. The executive summary identifies this Nord du sud as a “growth region”, but the main text makes no mention of it (Figure 4).

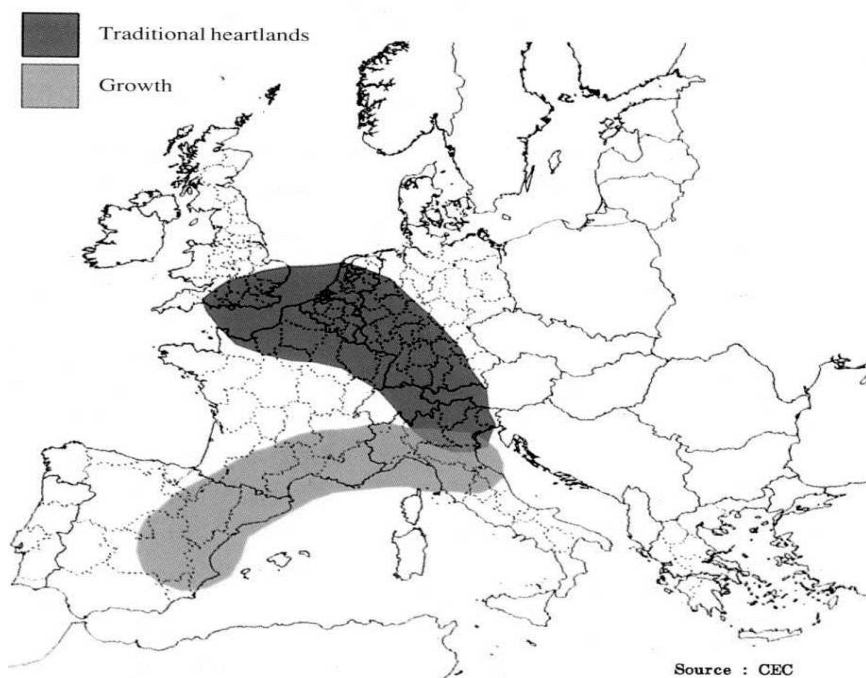


Figure 4. Traditional heartlands and a growth area (Source: Europe 2000, CEC 1991)

The attendant explanation in the executive summary gives another twist to the story. It refers to the “...traditional centre of Europe bounded by the triangle of Paris, London, Amsterdam, and including the Ruhr valley...” being complemented by (as shown in Figure 4)

...a secondary important centre of development extending from the prosperous regions of southern Germany and northern Italy westward to rapidly growing parts of southern France and the areas around Barcelona and Valencia. In the 1990s, this concentration has come increasingly to take the form of two arc-shaped centres of development (CEC, 1991, p. 13)

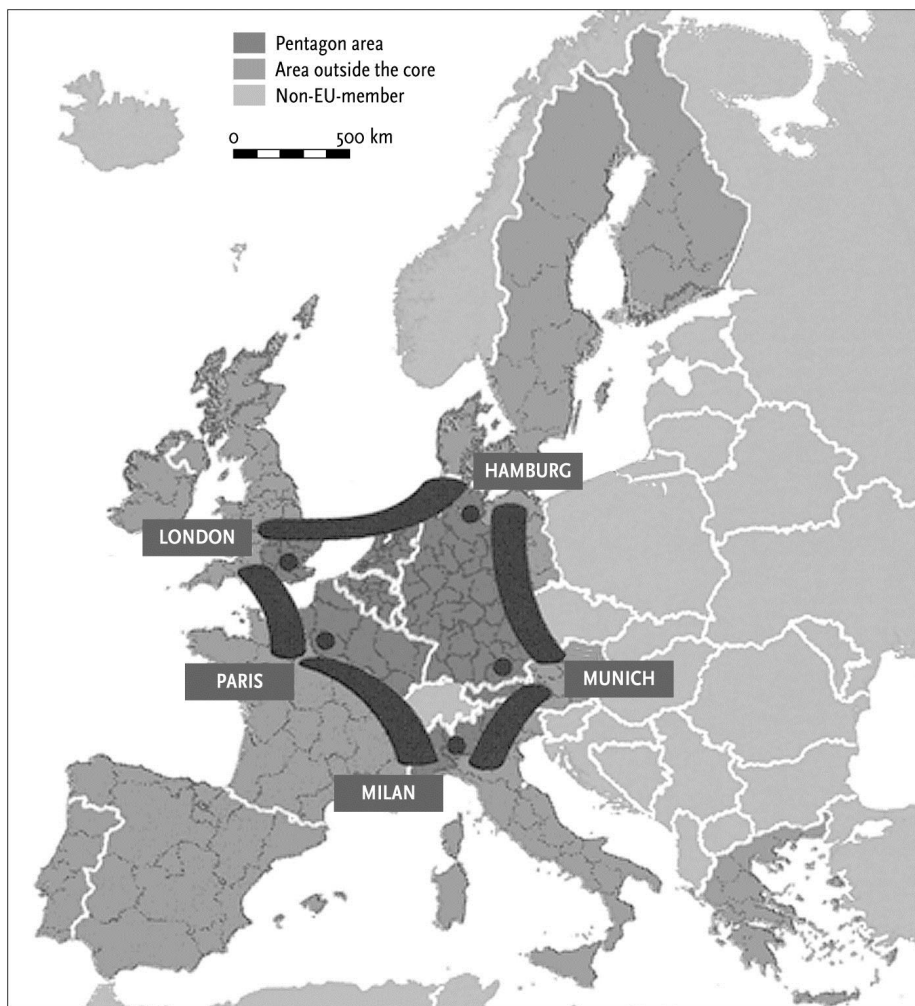
Without mentioning it, this description of the spatial development of the European Community of twelve as it then was comes close to invoking, but is not the same as, Kunzmann’s and Wegener’s Blue Banana concept or the Nord du Sud à la Brunet.

In pursuance of initiatives taken by France and the Netherlands, Member States reacted to the publication of “Europe 2000” by formulating the ESDP, a process that took many years. The ESDP promoted polycentric development at various levels. In his study of polycentric development as a concept, Gløersen (2012) credits the Kunzmann and Wegener study to have been a source of inspiration. Indeed, the European Bunch of Grapes as the alleged antidote to the Blue Banana was, and continues to be, well known. However, Waterhout (2002) emphasises another factor contributing to the adoption of polycentric development. It was a “bridging concept” between opposites pursued by different Member States.

Thus, during their Council Presidency as early as 1990 the Italians favoured an investment strategy based on a one-dimensional, centre-periphery view of Europe. “Clearly, with the Single Market in the offing, they feared further deterioration of their economic position in relation to the northwestern part of the European Community” (Waterhout, 2002, p. 90). The Dutch position as against this — the Dutch held the Council Presidency in 1991 — was that Europe’s competitiveness depended as much on the well-being of its core as of the periphery. Regions, especially those in the periphery, needed to make better use of their endogenous potential, a view emulated by the Delegué of Datar calling it a “Copernican Revolution” in planning (Guigou, 1995, p. 86). It is of course being traded as common wisdom now and is enshrined in EU Cohesion policy. Polycentric development derived its popularity with planners from across the European Community from the fact that it combined the Italian and the Dutch concerns. Polycentricity was thus

...the outcome of a political, rather than a theoretical, debate /.../ As such, the viewpoints /.../ have been linked together /.../ As a consequence, the exact meaning of the concept /.../ remains vague... (Waterhout 2002, p. 96)

Vagueness was thus a condition of achieving consensus during the intergovernmental negotiations leading to the ESDP. Invoking Héritier (1999, p. 17), Waterhout identified this as the



...way to reach a consensus in bargaining processes /.../ to settle for a framework decision, phrased in such vague terms as to allow actors with diverging views to interpret it according to their individual interests. (Waterhout 2002, p. 97)

Figure 5. The London-Paris-Milan-München-Hamburg Pentagon following the ESDP (Source: Schön, 2000)

The term bridging concept in the title of the paper by Waterhout came from Eising and Kohler Koch (1999, p. 278). Academic authors have criticised polycentrism for precisely the vagueness which gives it its strength in political bargaining. Generally, the Banana, as against this, has been styled as a kind of doomsday scenario, like the “scenario d’inacceptable” playing a prominent role in energising French “aménagement du territoire” (Alvergne & Musso eds., 2003). The function of such scenarios is to define a worthwhile challenge for planners, which is what the role of the French scenario as well as the Blue Banana as presented by Kunzmann, but importantly not the one by Brunet has been.

Another conclusion is that polycentric development can be viewed at various levels, from the micro to the macro. Since this essay relates to the structure of European space as such, it focuses on the macro-level. On that level, the adoption of polycentric development as a “Leitmotief” led to the recommendation in the ESDP to promote so-called Global Economic Integration Zones outside a ‘pentagon’ marked by London, Paris, Milan, Munich and Hamburg at its corners, this being the new definition of the European core (Figure 5). There is no mention of the

Blue Banana, but the reader should note that this pentagon is very much like the Blue Banana according to Kunzmann and Wegener and Europe 2000. It will become evident soon that it is unlike the Blue Banana à la Brunet.

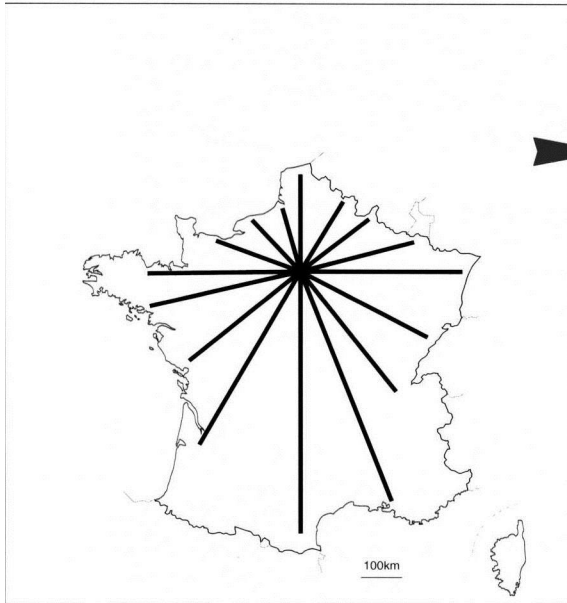
One of the key strategies in the ESDP was to promote Global Economic Integration Zones outside the pentagon, thereby increasing Europe's competitiveness. However, being no "masterplan" (Faludi & Waterhout, 2002), the ESDP leaves the question of where such zones should develop unanswered. Co-operation and initiatives from below are both keys to formulating the requisite transnational development strategies. The policy of encouraging co-operation between stakeholders is of more general applicability:

As well as city networks at regional level, the need for complementing co-operation also applies to city networks at interregional, transnational or even European level. /.../ Promoting complementarity /.../ means simultaneously building on the advantages and overcoming of disadvantages of economic competition /.../ However, complementarity should not be focused solely on economic competition but be expanded to all urban functions, such as culture, education and knowledge, and social infrastructure. (CEC, 1999, p. 21)

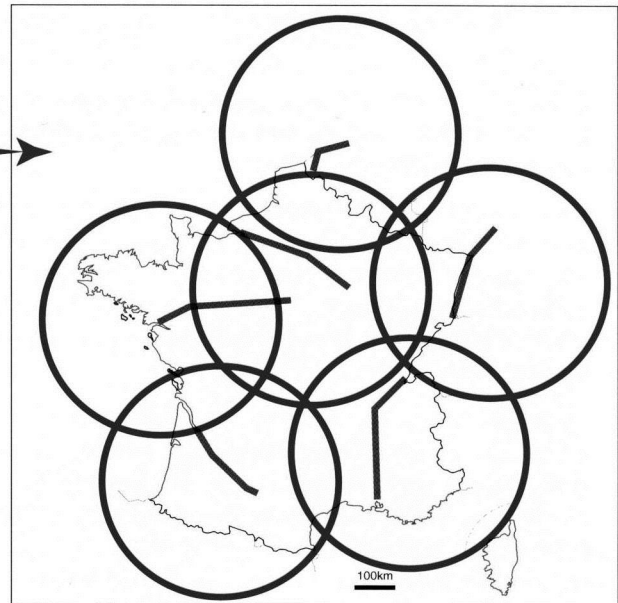
Note that the policy envisaged in the ESDP did not relate to European funding for the development of would-be Global Economic Integration Zones. Rather, cities and regions aspiring to form a Global Economic Integration Zone were encouraged to take requisite initiatives. The notion found some echo in the northwestern parts of Europe. With the accession of first ten and later another three new members, most of them in Central and Eastern Europe, other potential Global Economic Integration Zones have come into the picture, for instance one along a north-south axis stretching from the Baltic Sea through Poland, the Czech Republic, Slovakia through Hungary to the West Balkans, but the talk about Global Economic Integration Zones has abated since.

Polycentrism as a concept was pursued in immediate ESDP follow-ups, starting with a document produced by the French in 2000 (French Presidency, 2000). Accompanying this report are parallel studies (Baudelle, Guy & Ollivero, 2002; Baudelle & Guy, 2004) commissioned by Datar. Datar itself formulated four spatial scenarios for France in 2020 in the study already mentioned for making reference to the European Bunch of Grapes. As indicated, one of the scenarios — the preferred one — is identified as "networked polycentrism" (polycentrisme maillé) (Guigou, 2002). Another one, obviously not the preferred one, is that of a Banana expanding to coincide more or less with the area identified as such by Kunzmann and Wegener. The preferred scenario also positions the French territory in a polycentric configuration of "petites europes", or "little Europes" (Figure 6).

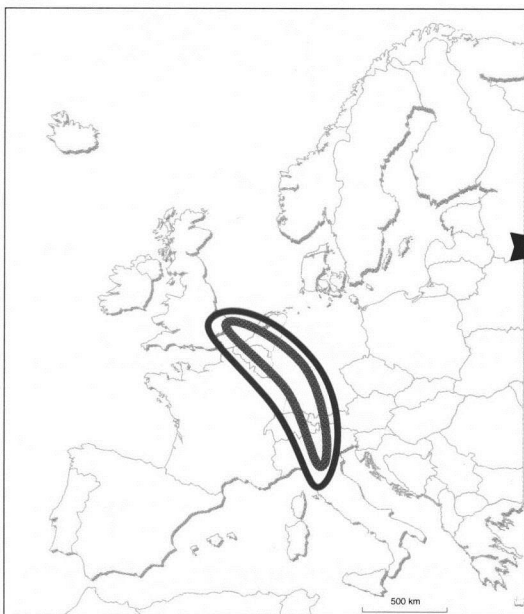
**La France centralisée
hiérarchie spatiale monocentrée
MONOCONCENTRATION**



**La France à espaces polarisés
à partir des grands axes fluviaux
POLYCENTRISME**



**EUROPE MONOCENTRÉE
banane bleue**



EUROPE POLYCENTRIQUE

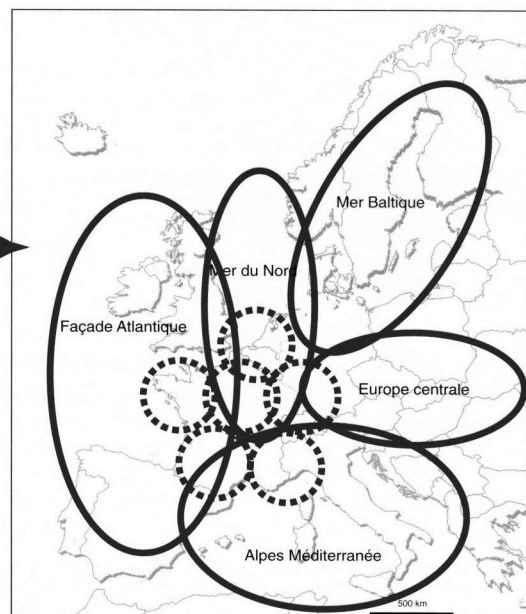


Figure 6. Four scenarios for France and Europe (Source: Guigou 2002)

Given the compromise character of polycentric development, it is of no surprise to find that it was, and continues to be, criticised. Waterhout (2002) gives an account of the immediate reactions and, having participated himself in the ESPON study 1.1.1 proposing different conceptualisations based on Europe-wide data, Gløerson (2012) gives a more up-to-date account. Meanwhile, it has become common to distinguish between functional and morphological polycentricity (Meijers, 2008; Burger & Meijers, 2012), with Kunzmann's European Bunch of Grapes of the latter type. But, and this is the main point of this paper, the European Bunch of Grapes is not really the counterpoint to the Blue Banana which it purports to be. To demonstrate this, it is necessary to look at Brunet's original meaning when he identified the *Dorsale européenne* which others later renamed the Blue Banana as the core of Europe.

France engages in *aménagement du territoire*, a deliberate form of regional economic development that has been a formative influence on EU regional policy. The initial concern has been the territorial imbalance in France already referred to, with Paris allegedly draining the rest of the country. As indicated, this view is epitomised in the title of a foundational text "*Paris et le desert français*" by Jean-François Gravier (1947). Gravier articulated an issue virulent ever since Louis XIV subjugated provincial notables. The issue reappeared during the struggle between jacobins and girondins and was later rekindled by staunch republicans and Catholic royalists, eventually leading to the attempt to roll back the French Revolution under the wartime Vichy regime in France. It was there, under Vichy, where Gravier served before enlisting in the post-war Ministry of Reconstruction and Urbanism. Suspect though Gravier's antecedents may be, in "*Les grand textes de l'aménagement du territoire et de la décentralisation*" (The Great Texts of Regional and Decentralisation Policy) Christel Alvergne and Pierre Musso (2003, p. 112) credit Gravier with having — this rather than a critique of his antecedents being the concern here — formulated the very rationale for *aménagement du territoire*. Key concerns of *aménagement du territoire* are: equitable service provision; coordination of sector policies and a strategic vision. So conceived, *aménagement* was the counterpoint to the Plan Monnet (after Jean Monnet of subsequent European fame) and the French economic planning institution called *Commissariat général du Plan*. Monnet was less concerned with how proposed policies for economic sectors affected territory.

When ascending to power, Gaullist modernisers under Olivier Guichet, former *chef de cabinet* (chief of cabinet) of Général de Gaulle when the latter was in opposition, instituted *aménagement du territoire* as presently constituted. As President of the Fifth Republic, in his waning days De Gaulle took a further step, staking his political future on decentralisation to newly created regions. He lost the referendum, a setback for French regionalism and the end of De Gaulle's political career. It was only under socialist President François Mitterrand in the early-1980s that, by agreeing to decentralising state power to the regions, the traditionally jacobin left addressed territorial issues (Lacour & Delamarre, 2005, p. 56). By that time, the *Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire*

oire et à l'action régionale set up in 1963 was coordinating sector ministries in determined efforts to recalibrate territorial imbalances. Being attached to the Prime Minister as DATAR was, turned out to be a disadvantage when Jacques Chirac "cohabiting" with the Socialist President Mitterand held this office. Concurrently, Chirac was also Mayor of Paris and being a friend of the regions Datar was thus in danger of being sidelined (Burnham, 1999).

In this situation, DATAR reinvented itself as the conduit between Paris and Brussels. Many French regions were beneficiaries of the EU regional policy that was emerging under Delors, so this was a good strategic position. From this vantage point, DATAR also sought to articulate the precarious position of the French territory in a wider Europe. With the fall of the Iron Curtain, the French saw the centre of gravity in Europe about to be moving east. The expectation was that Germany, already the economic powerhouse of Europe, would become dominant. It was in the context of such perceptions that Brunet's Blue Banana saw the light of day.

The occasion came in the wake of a research project, for which DATAR had commissioned a team of researchers at RECLUS, with Brunet, already mentioned as the famous geographer and successful "policy entrepreneur" and key proponent of a politically engaged empirical geography making use of quantitative methods that he was in charge. At one time, when still at the University of Reims, Brunet had been responsible for coining the term hexagon as the loving signifier for the French territory. He was also famous for the innovative use of maps for which he has developed a system of diagrammatic expressions, the chorèmes (Brunet, 1987).

As a renowned university professor representing the new, quantitative geography, Brunet was also a successful consultant building up the large research institute RECLUS already mentioned. His many research commissions kept it going. He was also very well connected to DATAR, in particular its "intellectual pole" (Massardier, 1996ab). This pole assembled DATAR's academic researchers in a more or less cohesive group, one somewhat isolated from the influential senior administrators coming from the Grand Écoles, being the elite schools preparing the top echelon, including the state engineers, of the French civil service. Given his DATAR connections, it was no surprise that Brunet got the commission to do the study on "Les villes européennes" (The European Cities). Plotting towns and cities with 200.000 inhabitants and more in the European Community, together with Switzerland and Austria, the study identified the European core area, which it called the Dorsale européenne (Brunet, 1989) (Figure 7). Importantly, and this seems to have been the point of commissioning the study, this Dorsale européenne no more than straddled French territory in the north (Pas de Calais) and the east (Alsace), thus bypassing Paris. The reader should note that it has a different shape than either Kunzmann and Wegener or Europe 2000 invoke under the name Blue Banana. To reiterate, both these sources cover Paris which Brunet's Dorsale/Blue Banana – this was the whole point of his exercise – did not.

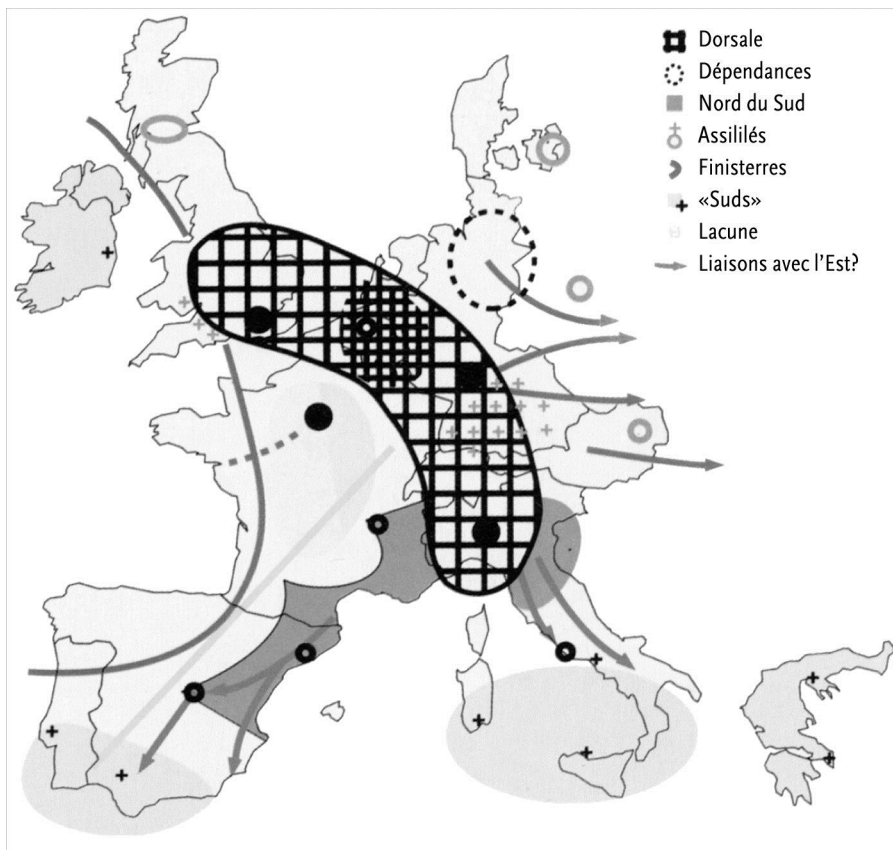


Figure 7. *The Dorsale européenne* (Source: L Brunet 1989)

In a European perspective, the Dorsale européenne showed that Paris was in danger of becoming marginalised, a danger even more virulent for the Atlantic Coast, soon to become the object of one of the first inter-regional cooperation initiatives (Poussard, 1997). The reason is that for strategic reasons Paris has for long time in history preferred to be protected eastwards and northwards by less developed areas in the Champagne and Picardie, areas that still show low population densities.

How did the Dorsale acquire the name of Blue Banana? There are various, not necessarily incompatible versions of the story. The paper follows the one coming from Brunet himself in a personal communication to the author. He presented his study to the Ministre de l'Aménagement du territoire at the time, Jacques Chérèque, during a press conference at the premises of DATAR, the institution, it will be remembered, that had commissioned the work. It was at that occasion that Chérèque compared the Dorsale européenne with a banana. Within days, the weekly *Le Nouvel Observateur* presented the work in an article signed by Josette Alia (1989). It included an illustration in which for no particular reason the Dorsale was coloured in blue.

Probably unintentionally, Chérèque's remark about the Dorsale "looking like a banana" represented something like a speech act (a theoretical concept already mentioned which will be further discussed in the next section). The effect was greatly enforced by the article that not only gave it its colour, but greatly enhanced its popularity by popularising the idea of the Blue Banana as signifying a threat to France. It after all taught a wider public to appreciate that Paris was not the only great city

in Europe and was even ranking after London and that, furthermore, the French territory was largely being bypassed by the main European concentration of wealth.

The concept received more attention in the quality press, with *Le Monde* devoting an article to it even before the study was presented (Massardier, 1996b). After the press conference, the *Alia* article mentioned came out under the title of Blue Banana. It encapsulated the new spatial or territorial conceptualisations and fears of the time — retroactively Brunet speaks about a shock effect — and it is thus worth recalling its content.

The opening sentences read: “Take a map of Europe and erase the borders. What remains? A new space.” Indeed, European integration creates new spatial configurations, so this was anything but shocking news. The ominous conclusion was that “notre Hexagone” had disappeared from the map. In its stead, the study by Brunet had shown a banana reaching from London to Northern Italy, “where the real heart of Europe beats”. This was of course more or less the same configuration that had been identified, albeit with variations, in previous studies of urban development in Europe. What the article was ambiguous about was the position of Paris. It said without further explanation that the capital belonged to what it called the European megalopolis. This seemed unexceptional, had it not been that the core area dubbed the Blue Banana only straddled French territory, thus bypassing Paris.

Leaving this ambiguity aside, the article characterised the Blue Banana as a doomsday scenario for France, warning that the Banana grew and blossomed “without us”. It was there, in the Banana, that decisions were being taken. One surmises that what was meant were the three major European headquarters Brussels, Luxembourg and Strasbourg, none of them by the way a world city on the scale of London or Paris. As Hein (2004) points out, there are many others European headquarters spread all over the territory of the EU, but the article did not discuss those. It rather pointed out the company headquarters located in the same area, the likes of Bayer at Leverkusen, of Mercedes-Benz at Stuttgart, of the Roche Group at Basle and Nestlé at Vevey on the Lake of Geneva, with presently the European Central Bank at Frankfurt, not a European metropolis either, giving added strength to the area.

The article also pointed out that the Banana was an area of high productivity with great achievements. So, like “BosWash”, (i.e. the US Eastern Seaboard), the original megalopolis, it could hold its own in global competition. In fact, the article did refer to the Gottmann study (1961) popularising the term.

The author also asked herself — this being important for the argument here — why France had such a modest share of the Banana presented as such at the premises of DATAR which, it should be remembered, was different from that to be presented later by Kunzmann and Wegener which included Paris. Answering, she touched upon themes still being discussed in relation to competitiveness, starting with the key message of “Paris et le desert français” that the centralisation of the French political systems led to clustering in and around Paris. Important for the

appreciation of Kunzmann's critique of the Blue Banana, other than this pattern, but like Brunet himself, the article in *Le Nouvel Observateur* identified the Blue Banana as polycentric, consisting of many medium-size towns with a tradition of autonomous local government. Indeed, in a later paper, Brunet (2002) points out that this pattern goes back as long as to the period between the eleventh and thirteenth century. At that time, the Alpine passes rather than the Rhone Valley became the favourite north-south passage. Already then the powerful, centralised French State had no time for Jews, nor later on for Protestants. This contrasted with the Rhineland and more generally speaking Germany where many sovereigns small and large knew how to attract the merchant class.

Au contraire, Paris a pompé ses alentours et plutôt cherché à s'entourer de glacis protecteurs (On the contrary, Paris has drained its hinterland and rather sought to surround itself with a protective boundary) (Brunet, 2002, p. 15.)

Because of the network character of the Banana, the prospects of the Alsace were positive, Alia (1989) continued, and so were those of the South where the RECLUS study had identified a Sun Belt, called the Nord du sud, which was, of course, where French regional policy had successfully promoted tourism development and implanted research institutes, including RECLUS itself. However, due to its outdated administrative structures and the emptying out of its interior which decades before Gravier had fulminated against, France as such was under threat.

So these are the reasons why attacking the Blue Banana as representing a predatory form of development is a case of mistaken identity. If anything, in the French context which the Brunet study referred to it is the development of metropolitan Paris that can be portrayed as such. Also, to the extent that the Banana was as successful as people claimed, in the view of Brunet it was so precisely because of its polycentrism that the advocates of the European Bunch of Grape celebrate. Finally, while it may be centrally located in Europe, in relation to the national territories, not only of France, but also of Germany, the Banana is marginal. This is where the work of Loriaux (2008) becomes relevant.

7. Deconstructing the Rhineland Frontier

The object of Loriaux's (2008) study "European Union and the Deconstruction of the Rhineland Frontier" is what the author calls the "Greater Rhineland" which consists of Belgium, Luxembourg and parts of the Netherlands, France, Switzerland and Germany. It is thus largely, but not entirely, coextensive with the Blue Banana. Also Brunet focuses mainly on this part of the Banana and neither on southeast England nor on northern Italy. Loriaux shows how during the course of history this Rhineland has been bifurcated by a border resulting from the formation of nation-states, a development accompanied by associated myths of identity and common origin. He constructs a powerful narrative focusing on specific historical episodes when deliberate speech acts cre-

ated new divisions. Thus, for reasons not relevant here, Julius Caesar claimed that beyond the Rhine lived a people different from the inhabitants of the lands which he had just conquered for Rome. This

... gave birth to three discursive mythical offspring: Germania, Gallia, and the Rhine frontier that separates them. The distinction between “Gaul” and “German” is questionable... and the claim that the Rhine separated them is simply false. And yet the clause was prelude to, and justification for, enormous investment in manpower, both military and industrial, to “bring to light” the human geography it claimed to describe. (Loriaux, 2008, p. 16)

Without going into detail, suffice it to say that there were further ‘speech acts’ creating nations with identities and common languages and claims to birth rights to imaginary ancient homelands. Successively, they led to the suppression of a multi-lingual, multi-cultural civilisation, vestiges of which are still to be found in officially trilingual Luxembourg and in the continuing survival of regional languages. This was a civilisation based on towns and cities dotting the trade route between the Mediterranean and the Low Countries. Stroking well with Brunet’s argument above, the story is fascinating. So is Loriaux’ argument that, being about deconstructing this artificial Rhineland frontier, European integration is riddled with contradictions between a ‘Carolingian’ discourse of unity and an ‘Ossianic’ one, so-called after a mythical bard, the fake discovery of whose poems about the roots of the Scots fired the imagination of many a Romantic author throughout Europe, enticing them to search for the origins of fictitious nations. Loriaux claims that the awareness

...that the terms we use so casually are rooted not in “nature”, but in the poetic imagination, has the effect of freeing deliberation and debate from a vocabulary of obfuscation and reveals ... the contours of a Europe that is ... about deconstructing frontiers so as to bring to light a civilizational space that is ... intensely urban, cosmopolitan, multilingual, and less hierarchical than in the past. (2008, p. 2)

This is not the occasion to pursue this further. The purpose has merely been to cast light on what the Blue Banana, to which Kunzmann juxtaposes his European Bunch of Grapes, really is. It is a part of Europe where ideals that Kunzmann would presumably subscribe to have perhaps been approximated.

8. Conclusions

What has been invoked above as the deconstruction of the Greater Rhineland is part of a wider process transcending the view of national territories as containers (Faludi, 2013). A view of macro-space being filled with territories-as-containers, what is described as territorialism, is unfortunately underlying a widespread appreciation of the European construct as a combination of nation-states, each with its own territory. Nation-states are characterised by exercising control of territories, what is called territoriality, but in the EU territoriality becomes the object of

negotiation and compromise. As a consequence of such developments, territorial configurations change. Nowhere is this more evident than in the area covered by the Blue Banana.

It will be clear, therefore, that nothing in this paper can be construed as a critique of the ideas underlying the European Bunch of Grapes as the normative statement as which it was intended. The political intention behind it may indeed be unexceptional, certainly as reflection of German predilections for polycentric development in Europe, paying due attention also to the position of towns and cities outside the core. The point has merely been that the critique of the Banana as the opposite of the Bunch of Grapes is a case of mistaken identity, and well for two reasons.

First, the Blue Banana does not represent the cumulative outcome of globalisation let alone of any deliberate policy to favour the European core over the periphery. Rather, what Brunet did is present his Dorsale as an analytical concept highlighting the outcome of a historic urban pattern to underline the threat which this pattern presents to the position of Paris, a position which in turn is the result of a long-standing, deliberate policy deeply rooted in French institutions of favouring the core of the country.

The second reason is that, if the Dorsale was the wake-up call as indicated, then this was so precisely because it was not the cancerous metropolitan core of Europe as which it was being portrayed thereafter. Rather, identifying the prosperous Dorsale was a wake-up call because of its nature as an urban network with features reminiscent of the European Bunch of Grapes. Not being in the business of making recommendations, Brunet himself did not emphasise this, but going by the way in which *Le Nouvel Observateur* commented on it, this is how it was received. Anyhow, saying “...non à la banana bleu qui génère trop de disparités entre le centre et les périphéries” (...no to the Blue Banana which generates too many disparities between the centre and the peripheries) therefore means shooting at the wrong target.

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