The phenomenon of paradiplomacy is certainly not limited to the Mediterranean region. On the contrary, the praxis of paradiplomacy, and indeed of other nonstate diplomacies, has been going on all over the world. Moreover, even in Europe, we can observe more than one sphere of paradiplomacy, or better: a manifold of various partly overlapping spheres of paradiplomacy, depending on the vantage point that one takes. First, there is the geographical difference between on the one hand the Northern European model, of which Belgium, Switzerland, Germany and Austria can be considered the forerunners, and on the other hand the Mediterranean model and the Central European model, which is quite new and mainly geared toward the various European territorial policies. Second, we can detect the institutional and constitutional variations between federal models *stricto sensu*, with clear demarcations of competences and constitutional bandwidth for all constituent units (as in Germany and Belgium) and the many asymmetrical devolutions, in which the various constituting units have negotiated a different mode of distribution of competences (for example, as in Spain and the United Kingdom). Third, there are the functional differences between the minimalist model, which is limited to export promotion, networking and attracting foreign investment (as in the Polish and Romanian cases), and the maximalist model, which entails every aspect of diplomacy (for example, the Belgian regions, Catalonia and Quebec). Fourth and finally, we need to make a distinction on the basis of paradiplomacy’s finality. This can be of a political nature, aimed at more autonomy, in which diplomacy becomes a state-building or region-enforcing instrument (as in Catalonia, Scotland and the Basque Country), or on the contrary deriving from federalist loyalty and efficiency (as in Germany).

In sum, there is more than one substate reality, of which the Mediterranean region is not by definition the most representative. However, the Mediterranean substate diplomatic reality is a (geo)political reality *sui generis*, because it combines exactly all these overlapping spheres and thereby forms both the empirical material and the analytical playground to experiment with the chosen methodological model that combines geopolitical analysis and diplomatic studies.
There is more. The Mediterranean region was chosen because of its socio-historical characteristics. The Mediterranean can be considered the cradle of many a diplomatic practice, such as the principles of reciprocity and diplomatic immunity, the practices of gift-giving, permanent representations and the importance of diplomatic protocol. The Mediterranean is also one of the (although not the only) meeting points, battlegrounds, or tectonic hotspots where different cultures, different religions, different socio-economic systems and different models of governance come together, thereby necessitating the need for diplomacy, in practice but in theory as well.

This chapter therefore aims to elucidate the Mediterranean as a space for intellectual exchange, a place of encounters and as the site of diplomatic developments. The commotion of thinking, encounters and diplomatic intercourse is set within a particular temporal context, that of the so-called longue durée (long term), which was elaborated upon by Fernand Braudel in his study of the Mediterranean during the reign of Philip II.\textsuperscript{323} This longue durée covers the slowly evolving structures of geography, demography and incremental social change. Middle Eastern scholar Miriam Cooke paints a picture of the Mediterranean in which its uniqueness and complexity, as well as its role in the longue durée of human history, are done justice:

Unlike the Pacific and Indian Oceans, or the Black and Caspian Seas, the Mediterranean is both open and enclosed, with characteristics of both ocean and sea. In this basin and throughout recorded history, specific kinds of knowledge and art have been, and continue to be, produced and circulated through the medium of travelers, conquerors, pirates, refugees, merchants, scholars, and slaves from all the shores and islands. A site of political, economic, and cultural contestation, it has often occupied the center stage of world history. The networks and connections in the Mediterranean pre-date history and are alive and well today in the numerous conferences, both real and virtual, held by its hundreds of governmental and nongovernmental associations. Beyond its physical vitality and complexity, the Mediterranean serves as a metaphor to describe behaviors and cultures with which it bears comparison. It is the cradle of global religions; the battlefront of competing spiritualities; the special earth that has produced and circulated around its far-flung shores the grape, the olive, and the fragrance of thyme.\textsuperscript{324}

\textsuperscript{323} Braudel, \textit{La Méditerranée et le monde méditerranéen à l'époque de Philippe II.}