

## **Cohesion, coherence, cooperation: EU policy beyond hard territoriality<sup>1</sup>**

**Andreas Faludi, Delft University of Technology, OTB Research Institute for Housing, Transport and Urban Studies**

*Based on: Faludi, A. (2009) Territorial Cohesion under the Looking Glass: Synthesis paper about the history of the concept and policy background to territorial cohesion, European Commission - Regional Policy - Inforegio, [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/terco/pdf/lookingglass.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/pdf/lookingglass.pdf). A slightly different version has been submitted for publication in Town Planning Review.*

***Please do not quote without permission from the author***

### ***Abstract***

*EU regional policy bears witness to the ambivalence of the European constructs caused amongst others by the confusion between 'hard' and 'aspirational' territoriality. EU aspirational territoriality aims to promote cohesion, being a state of harmonious development in which the backwardness of the least favoured regions or islands, including rural areas has been reduced. To this end, the EU operates the Structural Funds. The paper traces the interplay between the aim of cohesion, so defined, and the modes of operation of cohesion policy. These modes are characterised by efforts to achieve coherence of relevant policies of the EU and the member states through mutual cooperation. It takes the reader from the launch era of European integration through the doldrums from the mid-1960s to the mid-1980s to the boom era under Commission President Jacques Delors and the present crisis of confidence. In so doing, it also traces the contribution of spatial planners, in particular the European Spatial Development Perspective adopted in 1999. The current situation is marked by uncertainty about the Lisbon Treaty – still under ratification – and the role which a new competence shared between the EU and the Member States for 'territorial cohesion' will play in future. The future of territorial cohesion policy will be decided amongst others in the debate about the future of cohesion policy as such, threatened as it is by renationalisation – the ultimate manifestation of the ambivalence with which European integration has to contend. Even if this does not come to pass, territorial cohesion policy will still have to move beyond basing itself on notions of 'hard' towards notions of 'aspirational' territoriality.*

Regional policy is a flagship policy of the European Union (EU). At the same time it bears witness to its ambivalence apparent also in foreign, energy and defence policy. The ambivalence in regional policy is about the EU's territoriality. Sack (1986, 19) defines territoriality as "...a spatial strategy to

---

<sup>1</sup> Paper for the Conference 'Reshaping Regional Policy: Cohesion, Governance and Competitiveness' held by the Presidential Committee on Regional Development, Republic of Korea, Seoul, 8-9 July 2009.

affect, influence, or control resources and people, by controlling area". Clearly, regional policy is such a spatial strategy, but it is not like the 'hard' territoriality of nation-states. Rather, regional policy, and the territoriality of the EU generally, "...is qualitatively different... in part precisely because it does not have the option of physical force. It is marked, rather, by the aspirational sense of the production of a space where inequalities are evened out..." (Bialasiewicz, Elden, Painter 2005, 345-346)

The aim of EU regional policy is thus to promote what is also called *cohesion*. The Single European Act of the mid-1980s thus stipulated a Community objective<sup>2</sup> of economic and social cohesion. Presently, territorial cohesion, about which more below, is presented as their complement. Cohesion is a concept underlying the Structural Funds, in particular the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF). From Article 158 of the relevant EU treaty<sup>3</sup> we can infer that cohesion is indeed aspirational in that it refers to an, as yet non-existent state of harmonious development of the Community in which it has succeeded in "...reducing disparities between the levels of development of the various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured regions or islands, including rural areas". In operational terms this means funding for projects in eligible areas, funding that is, however, conditional upon pursuing common objectives and taking what is called a programmatic approach, among others embracing modern approaches to their management.

There are also, albeit diffuse, broader associations of the concept of cohesion. It complements a putative 'European model of society'. (Ross 1995) Many concepts, not only in European discourse, but in politics and planning generally, are broad and thus subject to multiple interpretations, making them powerful and controversial at the same time. Said to be complementary to this European model of society (Faludi ed. 2007), territorial cohesion is in the same league. People understand territorial cohesion to mean the pursuit various goals: balanced development, but recently also competitiveness, sustainability and good governance. So the definition is a bone of contention. I for my part see its unique selling point in the governance dimension, its aim being the *coherence* of the policies of what planners call the sectors, so that they do not counteract, but rather mutually enforce each other in the pursuit of an agreed strategy or vision for the territory concerned.

Like cohesion, coherence is French transposed into Euro-English, an idiom comprising non-British concepts conveyed in English words. (Williams 1996) A look at the original language where it has a broad meaning is instructive. Thus, in *Le Monde* of 24 April 2009 a commentator discussed strikers, angry

---

<sup>2</sup> The European Union, or EU, emerged with the coming into force of the Treaty of Maastricht in 1993 as a roof over three 'pillars', of which the European Community of old is one. Strictly speaking, it is thus wrong to identify the EU with the European Community, often also called the Community, but it is common practice to use the two terms interchangeably, a practice which this essay also follows, the more so since, when referring to the period before 1993, to refer to the EU would be ahistorical.

<sup>3</sup> There are two treaties, one on the European Union and one on the European Community. Both have been amended by the Treaty of Nice. The reference here is to the Consolidated Version of the Treaty Establishing the European Community. See: [http://eurlex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002E/pdf/12002E\\_EN.pdf](http://eurlex.europa.eu/en/treaties/dat/12002E/pdf/12002E_EN.pdf).

about lay-offs, locking up their managers. Indisputably illegal, the sequestrations according to the author made managers nevertheless feel “...the objective solidarity of a firm, evident to the workers, which the managers in question evade....They manifest a demand for coherence...”<sup>4</sup> The new ethics, he continues, stands for solidarity, be it of the inhabitants of the planet or the members of a firm. There is thus a whole world of thought behind the concept of coherence in French.

The approach to pursuing coherence is to elicit the *cooperation* of the multitude of public and private actors concerned. Article 159 of the EU treaty recognises the need for coherence through cooperation:

“Member States shall conduct their economic policies and shall coordinate them in such a way as ... to attain the objectives set out in Article 158. The formulation and implementation of the Community's policies and actions and the implementation of the internal market shall take into account the objectives set out in Article 158 and shall contribute to their achievement. The Community shall also support the achievement of these objectives by the action it takes through the Structural Funds....”

This article asks for no less than full cooperation so as to ensure the coherence of all relevant policies, firstly of the Member States and secondly of the EU – not just the Structural Funds, but the whole gamut of internal market policies. Article 159 thus seems to imply an obligation to aim for internal and external coherence, for vertical and horizontal coordination. However, by referring to Article 158, its scope remains that of policies to reduce disparities between the levels of development of regions.

So far the concepts in the title: *Cohesion* identifying our arena for discussion, and seeking *coherence* of policies as they impact upon territories by means of *cooperation* between the actors concerned describing the mode of operation. However, let it be said straight away that neither Member States nor the Commission have succeeded in achieving either policy coherence or full cooperation, and this not even as regards regional disparities. This is where the ambivalence of the EU construct becomes manifest. This ambivalence relates to the question of what the EU is: a federal (super-) state, a club of nation-states or something new, something that the American EU watcher Jeremy Rifkin (2004, 225) has described as a post-modern political institution. The latter notion would seem to complement its territoriality as being aspirational, rather than hard. Bob Jessop relates this new formation to a shift from the Keynesian welfare state to a Schumpeterian workforce post-national regime focusing on permanent innovation and subordinating social policy to the demands of the labour market. Policy making is shifting in all directions, in addition to which there is the shift to governance – in the terms of this paper the shift to a cooperative style so as to enhance policy cohesion. The Euro

---

<sup>4</sup> “...la solidarité objective d'une entreprise, évident pour les ouvriers, mais à laquelle les dirigeants en cause se dérobent...Elles manifestent une exigence de cohérence....”

polity is thus an "integral moment in the de-nationalization of the state, the de-statization of politics, and the internationalization of regimes - without being the highest level to which national state powers are shifted upwards, at which new forms of partnership are being organized, or on which the internationalization of policy regimes is occurring." (Jessop 2004, 68) This confident characterisation notwithstanding, it must be admitted that we are still at pains to understand what this all means, a point to which I shall return in the conclusions.

The paper traces the interplay between the pursuit of cohesion, coherence and cooperation throughout the history of EU regional policy. Another theme is the role of spatial planning. Internationally minded spatial planners play a role, albeit one that is often marginal, in EU regional policy. Dutch spatial planners are a good example. They conceptualised their dynamic urban agglomerations in their European context. When Jean Gottman (1961) discerned a 'megalopolis' on the Atlantic Seaboard of the US, they painted the prospect of a future Northwest European megalopolis. Like in the Netherlands where the rapid development of the west of the country was a planning challenge, they stipulated a technical planning imperative. The added incentive was that European institutions embracing planning would improve their standing nationally. It is safe to assume that what they had in mind was some form of, albeit broad plan, invoking a supra-national competence, but then many planners at the time were Euro-federalists. In terms of this paper, this means that they were willing to contemplate the transfer of some 'hard' territoriality to European institutions.

For my paper, the three stages in the evolution of the EU identified by Keeler (2005) serve as a framework. They are the launch era when the Treaty of Rome was coming into operation; the doldrums era after the 'empty chairs crisis' in the mid-1960s provoked by French President Charles De Gaulle resulting in the stagnation of integration, and the renaissance/boom era after the Single European Act of the mid-1980s culminating in the Maastricht Treaty establishing the European Union in the early 1990s. Without saying so in so many words, Hooghe and Marks (2008) invoking Keeler's three stages add a fourth one: the present crisis of politicisation and national boundary reconstruction.

### *1. The launch era*

New regional policies, also described as industrialisation policies, had become common in European states struggling with the problems of post-war reconstruction. (Drevet 2008) The European Coal and Steel Community (ECSC), forerunner to the EU, was in fact a successful attempt to formulate a joint industrialisation policy for its six members France, Germany, Italy and the Benelux countries.

The Spaak Report, called after the Belgian foreign minister Paul-Henri Spaak, a report that laid the foundations of the Treaty of Rome establishing the EEC, recommended an investment fund to promote balanced development. The

report highlighted the need also for coordination between existing and future regional plans, as well as those plans expected to be developed by the European institutions. So from the word go two of the rationales for cohesion policy, balanced development and good territorial governance – cohesion and coherence – were on the wish list. Cooperation with the actors in the field was not yet in the forefront of people's minds.

The Spaak Report notwithstanding, the Treaty of Rome went no further than declaring that the Member States were “[a]nxious to strengthen the unity of their economies and to ensure their harmonious development by reducing the differences existing between the various regions and the backwardness of the less favoured regions”, and giving the EEC the task of “reducing the differences existing in various regions and by mitigating the backwardness of the less favoured”. (EEC Treaty 1957) In operational terms, under discretionary powers given to it, the Commission merely granted temporary relief to some regions from implementing measures to complete the, as it was then still called, Common Market. The offer of cheap loans from the European Investment Bank apart, no positive measures were taken. Nothing was heard of regional policy, let alone that the aspirations of Northwest European spatial planners to have a share of the action were fulfilled.

The Parliamentary Assembly – forerunner of the European Parliament – heard pleas for the EEC to engage in real regional policy. It adopted a resolution with the aim to help less developed regions and also to arrive at a reasonable division of labour between the territories of the Community and to counteract the manifest tendency towards over-concentration in more or less all Member States. One can read into this the threefold ideal on cohesion, coherence and cooperation.

The 1961 resolution also invited the Commission to organise a conference. Its First Vice-President, Robert Marjolin (a former close collaborator of the founding father of the EU, Jean Monnet, and a proponent of indicative French national economic planning, called *planification*, which gave German economic liberals a headache; Ruck 2009, 26-27) chaired this ‘Conference on the Regional Economies’. Commission President Walter Hallstein gave the opening speech, spelling out the rationale of a common regional policy in terms that sound remarkably modern. As Husson (2002) reports, there was even talk of asking the Commission to study the proposition of an *aménagement du territoire européen* – European spatial/regional planning.

The rapporteur, Georges Pierret (1984, 36), recounts Marjolin as the second speaker putting his finger on the key issue: The highly developed core benefitting more from the Common Market than peripheral regions, an issue for the cohesion of Europe up until the present. Note that by that time President Charles de Gaulle had already set up the French planning agency DATAR (*Délégation à l'aménagement du territoire et à l'action régionale*) to combat overconcentration in France. Subsequent to this conference and in

pursuance of the Community method<sup>5</sup>, the Commission made proposals to this effect to the Council of Ministers in 1965.

## *II. In the doldrums*

However, shortly before the same Charles De Gaulle had instigated the 'policy of the empty chairs' causing the EEC to enter the doldrums, being the period of stagnation of the mid-1960s, so called because for months French representatives no longer attended EEC meetings.

Having himself been the midwife of *planification* after the war, De Gaulle's objection could not have been to the methods proposed. Rather, his objection must have been to the Community employing them. His aim was thus to counteract the Commission that in his eyes was arrogating to it rights of the Member States. The initiative for the EEC to become active in the area of regional policy could not have come at a worse moment! The 'empty chairs crisis' ended with the 'Luxembourg Compromise' giving Member States a veto in all cases where a Council decision is purported to pose a threat to vital national interests. European integration became far less dynamic a process than its advocates had hoped for.

The Commission – always good for taking initiatives that would increase its sway over the Member States – continued to study regional issues, forming even a directorate-general for this purpose, presently known as DG REGIO. Eventually, funding for European regional policy did become available in the mid-1970s, by which time De Gaulle had left the scene, opening the way for the United Kingdom, together with Denmark and Ireland to join the EEC. The UK could not profit from the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in proportion to its contribution, but it could do with assistance for its declining industrial areas. So to compensate the UK, a regional policy of sorts, which Drevet (2008) mocks for being neither regional nor communitarian but a mere financial transfer to national governments to support whatever regional policy they wished to pursue was introduced. This is yet again an example of the ambiguity of the European construct, with Member States agreeing to a common policy using common resources only to make sure that they, rather than any European institution remain in charge.

This restricted role of regional policy only changed when Jacques Delors introduced a programmatic approach, experimented with in the prior Integrated Mediterranean Programmes, and modelled on the evolving French regional policy. This policy I will discuss in the next section.

Meanwhile, the arena for discussing regional policy, this time with the active participation of spatial planners, shifted to the Council of Europe (CoE), set up

---

<sup>5</sup> Community method is a shorthand for the way in which to the present day EU policies come about, with the Commission, exercising its right of initiative, putting proposals before the Council of Ministers. Importantly, it is however this Council representing the governments of the Member States (presently in conjunction with the European Parliament under co-decisionmaking) that turns the Commission's proposals into EU law.

in 1949, with the European Convention of Human Rights its achievement. Pointing to overconcentration of population and the resultant regional disparities, the CoE even passed a resolution in 1961 pointing at the spatial dimension of human rights. “Harmonious geographical development” – cohesion – was thus considered a task for European institutions. (Déjeant-Pons 2003) In 1964, the CoE set up a working party which published ‘Regional Planning a European Problem’ (CoE 1968). Importantly, regional planning as conceived by the working party was not restricted to any regional level of government. Rather, in this context region was a generic term referring to any kind of territory.

‘Regional Planning a European Problem’ provided a fully-fledged analysis of, and a programme for, regional planning – both on the level of individual states as well at the international level, including the EEC. The main recommendation was however directed at the CoE itself: a permanent conference of planning ministers. The resolution declared regional planning to be one of the main axes of development of the European society of tomorrow. (CoE 1968, 90)

Importantly, because of the nature of the CoE which has no supra-national powers, regional planning was at the same time defined as an ‘intergovernmental’ task. This notion was to become important later when the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP; CEC 1999), too, was defined in such terms.

Germany hosted the first meeting of the permanent conference in 1970. It became known by its French acronym as CEMAT (*Conférence Européenne des Ministres responsables à l’Aménagement du Territoire*). CEMAT produced numerous publications and a ‘European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter’. (CoE 1984) The Charter identified common basic principles: balanced social-economic development; quality of life; responsible management of nature and the environment and a rational use of land. Beyond this, the Charter underlined the right of citizens to participate and the importance of horizontal and vertical coordination. The themes of cohesion, coherence and cooperation – including this time also the cooperation of citizens – are clearly present. The ministers decided to have these principles translated into a European regional planning strategy.

However, two CEMAT meetings further down the line, in 1988 at Lausanne, a draft written by an enthusiastic expert from Luxembourg did not even get a hearing. Meanwhile, due to cost-savings, the CoE had curtailed the activities of CEMAT. In the margins of Lausanne, the Dutch and the French minister decided to shift the discussion to the arena of the European Community, then undergoing its revival under Jacques Delors.

Before discussing the revival, I point out another important development. This is because in parallel to CEMAT, the European Parliament, as the Parliamentary Assembly was called since its members had been directly elected, continued its lobby for regional planning. A major initiative came from a member from the Walloon Region of Belgium, P.H. Gendebien. His report

(European Communities – European Parliament 1983) invited the European Commission “to implement an overall European regional planning policy which will give expression to the political determination to effectively administer and to preserve the territory of Europe as a common domain”. This proposal went beyond support disadvantaged regions. Three objectives were stipulated: coordination of existing Community measures; promoting balanced and integrated regional development; pursuing a proactive policy to guarantee the lasting survival of the European heritage. Gendebien also set out the procedures to be followed and proposed the formation of a unit under the responsibility of one of the Commissioners.

When the Commission did not respond – the European Parliament had less clout than today – the latter passed two further resolutions. In a presentation to the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning of the European Parliament in 1986, the chairman of CEMAT at the time, the Dutch planning minister, advocated for both the European Community as well as the Council of Europe, each in its own area of responsibility, to engage in spatial planning.

As far as the Community was concerned, this was still to no avail. This was why, as mentioned, at the CEMAT meeting at Lausanne, a new Dutch minister and his French counterpart decided to take an initiative which was to bring spatial planners into the arena of the newly conceived cohesion policy. By that time, the Single European Act had become a fact. Before discussing this, I take stock by pointing out how the ambivalence of the European construct manifests itself in the way European institutions deal with the issue of regional policy. Thus, we see the European Parliament, and even more so the CoE altogether outside the European Community articulating a far-reaching rationale completely in line with the basic ideas underlying European integration, whereas the Commission itself is constrained by a reluctant Council representing the Member States. As a consequence, the Commission must confine itself to administering puny regional funds to be used according to the priorities, not of the Community, but the Member States individually.

### *III The boom era*

Coinciding with the two terms, from the mid-1980s to the mid-1990s, of Jacques Delors as President of the European Commission, the boom era inexorably raised the question of the role of the regional planning programme formulated previously, as we know with a dose of spatial planning in it. What was the impact of this programme to be on Community policies, in particular cohesion policy under the Single European Act?

This question was the more urgent since cohesion policy became serious business. After all, being the main recipients, the ‘cohesion countries’, in particular Spain, had made acceptance of the Single Market contingent upon a doubling of the Structural Funds and the addition of a Cohesion Fund. They had re-iterated what had already been a rationale for proposing European regional policy: the fact that countries in the core stood to benefit



disproportionately from the Single Market and that others needed assistance in order to be able to compete.

Importantly though, with most of their regions meeting the eligibility criteria, the purpose of the cohesion countries was fulfilled, and so they became hostile to programming the use of the funds according to common criteria, in particular those that, as was the case with spatial planning, bore a Northwest European stamp. Add to this the tradition of intergovernmental planning that had evolved in CEMAT, and you have two forces arrayed against any real spatial or regional planning at Community level. This constellation formed the background to the story of the ESDP. (Faludi, Waterhout 2002)

The different approaches to planning created more problems. It had been no accident that CEMAT had called the outcome of its deliberations the 'European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter'. The idea behind French *aménagement du territoire* was to achieve balanced development by means of state funding for projects, based on a spatial strategy, in the French case at the time driven by concern about centralisation in and around Paris. Land use planning was not at issue. In fact, the programming of French state funding did not need a statutory plan. As against this, the majority of the Member States thought in terms of land-use planning, bringing planning within the orbit of the sovereign control of nation-states over their territory: hard territoriality. The French initiators – including French Commission officials – of what would eventually become the ESDP were after something else: a spatial strategy or framework for the governance of the Structural Funds. That framework might influence the management of funding programmes, but it would never take the form of a land-use plan of any description. Land-use planning could safely be left to the Member States and their subnational authorities. The difference between these approaches continues to the present day.

The first and already controversial step was to insert into the regulations pertaining to the ERDF a clause allowing the Commission to formulate the first spatial planning document of sorts pertaining to the EU12, as it then still was, called 'Europe 2000' (CEC 1991) followed by 'Europe 2000+' (CEC 1994). Meanwhile, the ministers of spatial planning and/or regional policy (designations differed, and continue to differ, as between Member States) started their informal meetings in 1989. No dedicated formation of the Council of Ministers dealt with the Structural Funds, and so this informal meeting may have been thought of as forerunner of a regional planning council. However, it never came to this. Remarkably, to this present day, the Structural Funds and cohesion policy generally are dealt with by the General Affairs Council, the senior formation of the Council of Ministers consisting of the foreign ministers! One could not think of a better illustration of the fact that, rather than a common concern, the governments of the Member States consider the EU to be an international club where their foreign policy representatives thrash out compromise positions.

Returning to the first meeting, the Italians organised a follow-up, and so did the Dutch in 1991. By that time the Germans had started their campaign for European spatial planning to be treated as a joint member state responsibility,

the intergovernmental rationale as formulated previously by the Council of Europe. Thus, German planners argued for voluntary co-operation. Ultimately this led to the ESDP, whatever its merits, to be sidelined by a disappointed Commission replacing it with its newly conceived territorial cohesion policy.

This is something of a puzzle. Surely, it must have been clear that the sovereign right to control national territory – ‘hard’ territoriality in the terms introduced above – was not put into question by French-style initiatives of the Commission. A matter of the legal right to self-determination, sovereignty remains a well-established principle, unimpaired by the EU. "The main unresolved issue pertains to the implications ... for autonomy in the sense of action possibilities – ‘actual’ independence or ‘real’ sovereignty....: [A]ll that is obvious is that the implications are contradictory and that internationalization tends to deprive nation-states of some action possibilities while supplying them with others." (Goldmann 2001, 181)

In this sense, clearly, EU cohesion policy nowhere affects sovereignty but it circumscribes what Member States can do through the conditionality – the requirement to observe common objectives – of obtaining Structural Funds. So the real purpose behind the actions of those who questioned whether there was a Community competence for spatial planning or, as the term went at the time, spatial development policy must have been to deprive the Commission of the means to exercise its powers more effectively. For the Germans, the reason was constitutional: spatial planning being a competence of the German *Länder* which the federal government could not give away to the Community; for the recipients of the lion share of the Structural Funds it was the fear that any EU policy in the matter would result in more restrictions on their freedom to use European money as they wished or, worse still, to siphon off some of the funds to concerns other than the plight of ‘least favoured regions’ defined in terms of GDP per head of the population.

Be that as it may, from this moment onwards tension was ripe. Whilst relying on technical assistance and administrative support from the Commission, the Member States (some more than others) were guarding against the Commission. Having sustained the process until its final conclusion at Potsdam in 1999, the Commission called its support a day, re-framing the issue in terms of the pursuit of territorial cohesion. In Commission eyes the very concept of spatial planning had been tainted. Territorial cohesion avoids the connotations, never intended by the Commission, of land-use regulation.

On the positive side, the ESDP articulated something of a planning strategy for the EU as it then was. The issue was that of overconcentration in the highly developed core. Already in 1989, a French study had identified that core, subsequently dubbed the ‘blue banana’ (Fig. 1). This was a reaction, not only to overconcentration as such, but also and in particular to the changing geography of Europe due to the fall of the Iron Curtain. In the ESDP, this core was renamed the ‘pentagon’ London-Paris-Milan-Munich-Hamburg. The answer to concentration was the promotion of a polycentric system of cities, like in the Gendebien Report. There were also proposals for urban-rural partnership; parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge throughout

Europe; prudent management of the natural and cultural environment. On this basis, the ESDP formulated sixty policy options as a kind of menu for stimulating the 'Europeanisation' of national, regional and local planning.

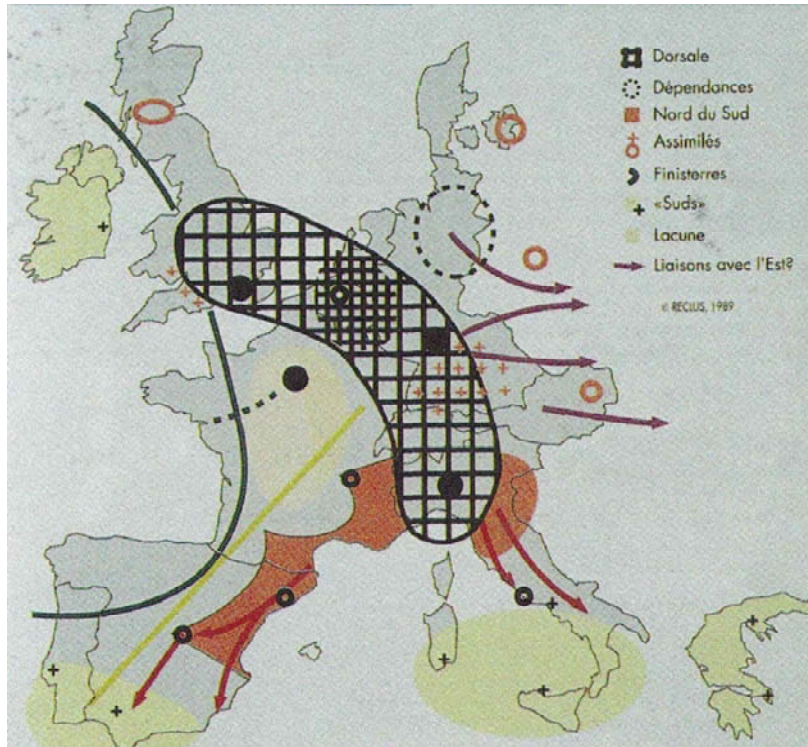


Figure 1: The 'blue banana' (Source: Brunet et al. 1989)

In addition, there was consensus on the need for what the ESDP called a 'spatial planning approach', in reality meaning the pursuit of more coherence between sector policies as they were affecting space or territory at various scales. The ESDP made this point forcefully.

Even though informal, the ESDP did have an, albeit diffuse influence (Waterhout 2008). A transnational strand was added to the Community initiative INTERREG. Presently, INTERREG has been mainstreamed as a third objective of cohesion policy, European territorial cooperation. This is now the mainstay of any European spatial planning remaining and is being praised for the learning that it engenders. (Dühr, Stead, Zonneveld eds. 2007; Faludi 2008, Faludi ed. 2008a) There is also a European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON). (Faludi ed. 2008b) During its first programming period ending in 2006 it attracted 600 researchers working on European-wide data bases and research such as has never seen before and with effects on the policies both of the EU, as well the Member States and their regions.

#### *IV. Crisis*

As indicated, merely assisting with the intergovernmental ESDP was not enough for the Commission. The concept of territorial, alongside with economic and social cohesion in the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe (later to become the Treaty of Lisbon) was designed to justify Community – and thus Commission – involvement. Introducing territorial cohesion into the discourse was a French initiative designed in the first instance to counteract the liberalisation of public services considered essential to sustain the standard of living in thinly populated French regions. (Faludi 2004; 2006) Under the French Commissioner for regional policy at the time, Michel Barnier, this became the more comprehensive concept that it is now, and a stand-in for any European spatial planning for which the European Community was said to be lacking a competence. Importantly, reacting to the adoption of the Lisbon Strategy of making Europe the most competitive region globally (European Council 2000), competitiveness was factored into the equation. In fact, the ESDP had already put polycentric development forward as a way of enhancing the competitiveness of Europe, so this was no break with previous thinking. This emphasis on competitiveness came in handy when the Sapir Report (Sapir et al. 2004) severely criticised cohesion policy and the Barroso Commission of 2004-2009 sought to revive the Lisbon Strategy by focusing on growth and job creation. (CEC 2005)

Before continuing, I need to look into the Constitution and the Lisbon Treaty. The Constitution was proposed by a Convention on the Future of Europe – with Barnier representing the Commission on its presidium – and was eventually signed in Rome in October 2004. Its rejection by French and Dutch voters in 2005 threw not just EU territorial cohesion policy, but the whole European project into disarray.

With the Lisbon Treaty in the process of replacing the Constitution<sup>6</sup>, the competence issue as such may be settled because that treaty identifies territorial alongside with economic and social cohesion as a goal of the Union and as a competence shared between it and the Member States, meaning that the Community method applies. However, the provisions in Article 175 requiring Member States and the Community – now called the Union – to coordinate their policies are unspecific and have so far not been operational. This as against Article 174 specifying, like its predecessor, Article 158 in the Treaty establishing the European Community, the regions that are to benefit from cohesion policy: least favoured regions; rural areas, areas affected by industrial transition, and regions which suffer from severe and permanent natural or demographic handicaps such as the northernmost regions with very low population density and island, cross-border and mountain regions. The cards appear to continue to be stacked against achieving any comprehensive policy coherence and in favour of funding for special categories of regions.

---

<sup>6</sup> In full: Treaty of Lisbon amending the Treaty on European Union and the Treaty establishing the European Community, signed at Lisbon, 13 December 2007 (<http://eur-lex.europa.eu/JOHtml.do?uri=OJ:C:2007:306:SOM:EN:HTML>).

As an added problem, cohesion policy is undergoing review, with the Commission pursuing territorial cohesion as one way of countering the imminent threat of its re-nationalisation posed by net-contributors to the EU budget, like the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands, supported by Austria, Germany and France. These net contributors want to do away with the 'pumping around of money': net-contributors having to reclaim part of their contribution under Commission tutelage. Presumably not quite unintentionally, this would take away a major instrument of Commission influence on national policies.

As indicated, making the pursuit of competitiveness into one of its key concerns, the Commission responded to this threat by reorienting cohesion policy to serve the Lisbon Strategy. This reorientation is also evident in EU territorial cohesion policy as laid out in the Commission's 'Green Paper' (CEC 2008), as well as in the Territorial Agenda of the European Union (2007; see Faludi 2009a,b) of the Member States.

### *Conclusions*

Uncertainty concerning EU territorial cohesion policy continues. As mentioned, this relates to the future of cohesion policy undergoing fundamental review with a view to the period after 2013. Will cohesion policy be retained and, if so, what will the role of territorial cohesion policy be? Will it barely be tolerated, as is the case now, or will it, as it potentially might, become a mainstay of cohesion policy? The answer depends amongst others on the Commissioner for Regional Policy taking office in late-2009 and his/her standing, as well as on the status and orientation of the new Commission as a whole.

The possible limitations constituted by the wording of the EU treaties notwithstanding, the imperative of more coherence of EU policies reaches beyond cohesion policy. Territorial cohesion policy could thus become the vehicle for co-ordinating all sector policies with territorial impact. This is a tall order, especially in view of the notorious difficulties of coordination efforts at Brussels.

However, the inventiveness of the Commission should not be underestimated. Asked by the European Council to formulate a Baltic Sea Strategy, it pulled its act together, with many directorates-general providing an input and the Territorial Cooperation Unit of DG Regio taking the lead. Already, there is talk of such strategies for the Danube River Basin, the Alpine Region and possibly also for the Mediterranean. Conceived as the formulation of macro-regional strategies, territorial cohesion policy may thus become a vehicle for EU policy generally.

Such strategies are certain to be examples of territorial governance beyond the divide between communitarian and member state competences. Indeed, what is needed is a dynamic understanding of EU governance, the role of space/territory in an integrating Europe, and the role of spatial

strategies or visions in the context of the shifting target which is the European project.

These are no issues unique to regional planning. In fact, experts of all kinds find it difficult to come to an agreement on them. However, there is a consensus emerging that one needs to surpass thinking in terms derived from the nation-state and, worse still, anachronistic ideas about how it should function, rather than how it functions under conditions of globalisation. In terms of the introduction to this paper, there is a need to go beyond the 'hard' territoriality associated with nation-state control over circumscribed jurisdictions towards 'aspirational' territoriality. However, I admit that the shape of this aspirational territoriality remains still to be determined.

In any case, we can be sure that the unhelpful debate about whether the EU does, or should have, a spatial planning competence is but a reflection of the idea that control over territory is a defining characteristic of the nation-state and that relinquishing it would undermine its sovereignty. This is patently untrue. 'Hard' territoriality is softer than one thinks. In exercising it, nation states let alone sub-national authorities are not autonomous. Also, a return to an idealized situation (if ever it existed) when hard territoriality was for real is patently impossible. In fact, what the concept of governance stands for is the diffusion of control, and the need to cooperate across levels and sectors. In this, state authorities, as much as the institutions of the EU, are merely the nodal points in a complex network.

What also follows is the need to re-conceptualise the role of space/territory. Although jurisdictions continue to be the objects of statutory land-use planning – hard territoriality – they are no longer the exclusive reference frameworks. Rather, the reference frameworks are what, with a term speaking to the imagination, Allmendinger and Haughton (2009) call 'soft' spaces. Such spaces are the configurations relevant to the real and shifting processes around us. This is like Healey (2007) and Davoudi and Strange (2009) basing themselves on leading-edge geographers, talking about relative rather than absolute space, relative space being the products of social constructions.

In fact, if one goes, not by the legal definition but by the real reach of its influence and responsibility, the EU as such is also a 'soft' space: Beyond the territories of the twenty-seven members, there is the European Economic Area where EU law applies; there is Switzerland which is constantly negotiating its participation in the EU space; there are recognised and would-be candidates getting ready to accept EU law and in the process becoming part of EU space; and there are multifarious other arrangements extending the reach of the EU north, south, east and west creating the differentiated reach of the EU documented by Didelon, Grasland and Richard (2008).

At this point it seems fitting to remind ourselves that Bialasiewicz, Elden and Painter (2005, 349), on whose distinction between hard and aspirational territoriality I draw, relate the latter also to the issue of the external borders of the EU. This 'external' territoriality is ambiguous. Any delimitation runs the risk of excluding potential Europeans. "To reflect its 'aspirational' understanding,

Europe's territorial limits must also be ... aspirational: open to those who might *become* Europeans..."

Closer to home, it is necessary to re-think the nature of 'soft' spaces. There is a need to rid oneself from the fixation on strictly delimited sections of the surface of the globe. Of course, authorities exercise jurisdiction over fixed areas of land, and hard territoriality will thus continue to play a role, but it is no longer at the core of neither the problem nor the solution. Rather, 'soft' spatial or regional policy is the order of the day. In this, spatial strategies or visions remain relevant, but there need to be many of them. In terms of Graham and Marvin (2001), they should relate to the many spaces into which the environment is splintering. This is a confusing prospect, but no more confusing than the splintering reality of Europe and the world.

### *References*

Allmendinger, P., Haughton, G. 2009. 'Soft spaces, fuzzy boundaries, and metagovernance: The new spatial planning in the Thames Gateway', *Environment and Planning A* 41(3) 617-633.

Bialasiewicz, L., Elden, S. and Painter, J. 2005. 'The Constitution of EU Territory', *Comparative European Politics* 3: 333—63.

Brunet, R. 1989. *Les Villes européennes*, Rapport pour la DATAR, Délégation à l'Aménagement du Territoire et à l'Action Régionale, under the supervision of Roger Brunet, with the collaboration of Jean-Claude Boyer et al., Groupement d'Intérêt Public RECLUS, Paris: La Documentation Française.

CEC - Commission of the European Communities. 1991. *Europe 2000: Outlook for the Development of the Community's Territory*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

----- . 1994. *Europe 2000+: Cooperation for European Territorial Development*, Luxembourg, Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

----- . 1999. *European Spatial Development Perspective: Towards Balanced and Sustainable Development of the Territory of the EU*. Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

----- . 2005 *Working Together for Growth and Jobs: A New Start for the Lisbon Strategy* (Communication to the Spring European Council). Luxembourg: Office for Official Publications of the European Communities.

----- . 2008. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee: *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion – Turning territorial diversity into strength*, COM (2008) 616, Brussels. [http://ec.europa.eu/regional\\_policy/consultation/terco/index\\_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/consultation/terco/index_en.htm) (Last accessed 8 October 2008).

CoE – Council of Europe. 1968. *Regional Planning a European Problem*. Report of a Working Party set up under Resolution 289 (1964). Strasbourg.

- . 1984. Recommendation (84 2) on the European Regional/Spatial Planning Charter. <https://wcd.coe.int/com.instranet.InstraServlet?Command=com.instranet.CmdBlobGet&DocId=681644&SecMode=1&Admin=0&Usage=4&InstranetImage=45302>. (Last accessed 24 October 2007).
- Davoudi, S., Strange, I. (eds) (2009) *Conceptions of Space and Place in Strategic Spatial Planning*, London: Routledge.
- Déjeant-Pons, M. (2003) 'The European Conference of Ministers responsible for Regional Planning (CEMAT)', in: *Raumordnungspolitik des Europarates – The Council of Europe's Spatial Planning Policy (Special Issue)*, *Informationen zur Raumentwicklung*, Nr. 7.2003, Bonn: Bundesamt für Bauwesen und Raumordnung.
- Didelon, C., Grasland, C., Richard, Y. (eds) 2008. *Atlas de l'Europe dans de Mond*, Paris: La Documentation Française.
- Drevet, J.-F. 2008. *Histoire de la politique régionale de l'Union européenne*. Paris. Edition Belin.
- Dühr, S., Stead, D., Zonneveld, W. (eds) 2007. *The Europeanization of Spatial Planning Through Territorial Cooperation (Special Issue)*, *Planning Practice and Research*, 22(3).
- EEC Treaty. 1957. Treaty establishing the European Economic Community (non-consolidated version). [http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/eec\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/scadplus/treaties/eec_en.htm).
- European Communities – European Parliament. 1983. Report Drawn Up on Behalf of the Committee on Regional Policy and Regional Planning on a European Regional Planning Scheme (Rapporteur: Mr. Paul-Henry Gendebien) Document 1-1026/83. [http://aei.pitt.edu/5250/01/001765\\_1.pdf](http://aei.pitt.edu/5250/01/001765_1.pdf).
- European Council. 2000. Presidency conclusions—Lisbon European Council, 23 and 24 March. [http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/ec/00100-r1.en0.htm).
- Faludi, A. 2004. 'Territorial cohesion: Old (French) wine in new bottles?', *Urban Studies*, 41(7), 1349-1365.
- . 2006. 'From European spatial development to territorial cohesion policy', *Regional Studies*, 40/6, 667-678
- . (ed) 2007. *Territorial Cohesion and the European Model of Society*, Cambridge MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- . 2008. 'The learning machine: European integration in the planning mirror', *Environment and Planning A*, 40(6) 1470-1484.
- . (ed.) 2008a. *European Territorial Cooperation and Learning*, *disP*. 72, 44(1), 3-84.
- . (ed) 2008b. *European Spatial Research and Planning*, Cambridge MA: Lincoln Institute of Land Policy.
- . 2009a. A turning point in the development of European spatial planning? The 'Territorial Agenda of the European Union' and the 'First Action Programme', *Progress in Planning* 71 (2009) 1-42.



- , 2009b. 'The Portuguese, Slovenian and French Presidencies 2007-2008 - A sea change in European spatial planning?', *European Journal of Spatial Development*, Nr. 36: <http://www.nordregio.se/EJSD/refereed36>.
- Faludi, A., Waterhout, B. 2002. *The Making of the European Spatial Development Perspective: No Masterplan (The RTPi Library Series)*. London: Routledge.
- Federal Ministry for Regional Planning, Building and Urban Development 1993. *Guidelines for Regional Planning: General Principles for Spatial Development in the Federal Republic of Germany*, Bonn.
- Hooghe, L., Marks, G. 2008. 'European Union?', *West European Politics*, 31(1-2), 108-129.
- Goldmann, K. 2001. *Transforming the European Nation-State*, London, Thousand Oaks, Delhi: Sage Publications.
- Gottman, J. 1961. *Megalopolis*, New York: The Twentieth Century Fund.
- Graham, S., Marvin, S. 2001. *Splintering Urbanism: Networked Infrastructures, Technological Mobilities and Urban Conditions*, London, New York: Routledge.
- Healey, P. 2007. *Urban Complexity and Spatial Strategies: Towards a Relational Planning for Our Times*, London, New York: Routledge.
- Husson, C. 2002. *L'Europe sans territoire: Essay sur le concept de cohésion territoriale*, DATAR/éditions de l'aube, Paris.
- Keeler, J. 2005. 'Mapping EU studies: The evolution from boutique to boom field 1960-2001', *Journal of Common Market Studies*, 43(3), 551-582.
- Jessop, B. 2004. 'Multi-level governance and multi-level metagovernance: Changes in the European Union as integral moments in the transformation and reorientation of contemporary statehood', in: I. Bache, M. Flinders (eds) (2004) *Multi-level Governance*, Oxford University Press, Oxford, 49-74.
- Pierret, G. 1997. *Régions d'Europe: La face cachée de l'Union - Une aventure vécue*, Éditions Apogée, Rennes.
- Rifkin, J. 2004. *The European Dream: How Europe's Vision of the Future Is Quietly Eclipsing the American Dream*, New York: Tarcher.
- Ross, G. 1995. *Jacques Delors and European Integration*, Cambridge UK: Polity Press.
- Ruck, M. 2008. '1968 und die westdeutsche Planungseuphorie der langen 60er Jahre', *Forschungsberichte* 4 08, Amsterdam: Duitsland Instituut, University of Amsterdam, 21-41.
- Sapir, A. and P. Aghion, G. Bertola, M. Hellwig, J. Pisany-Ferry, D. Rosita, J. Viñals and H. Wallace, with M. Butti, M. Nava, P.M. Smith. 2004. *An Agenda for a Growing Europe: The Sapir Report*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Sack, R.D. 1986. *Human Territoriality: Its Theory and History*, Cambridge UK: Cambridge University Press.
- Territorial Agenda. 2007. *Territorial Agenda of the European Union: Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions – Agreed at*

the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion on 24 / 25 May 2007.  
[http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original\\_1005295/Territorial-Agenda-of-the-European-Union-Agreed-on-25-May-2007-accessible.pdf](http://www.bmvbs.de/Anlage/original_1005295/Territorial-Agenda-of-the-European-Union-Agreed-on-25-May-2007-accessible.pdf).

Waterhout, B. 2008. The Institutionalisation of European Spatial Planning, Amsterdam: IOS Press.

Williams, R.H. 1996. European Union Spatial Policy and Planning, London: Chapman Publishing.