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The Territorial Dimension of European Integration[1]

Andreas Faludi

The situation around the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe is only the latest - but conceivably most serious – in a series of recurring crises. Against this backdrop, European leaders are at the time of writing preparing to celebrate the 50th anniversary of the Treaty of Rome in March 2007 with a Berlin Declaration. Less spectacularly, the Ministers of the Member States responsible for Territorial Development will hold an informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion at Leipzig in May 2007. Presently much more is known about the "Territorial Agenda of the European Union: Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions" which they intend to adopt than about the Berlin Declaration, the message of which is still being kept under wraps.

Ever since the preparation of the Treaty of Rome, institutional issues have made it difficult to address the territorial dimension of European integration properly. Control over its territory is a defining characteristic of the nation-state, so where European institutions impact upon it, existential questions arise. In this way, raising the territorial issue can take us to the very core of the debate about the nature of the enterprise of integration. If this does not happen, then this is because other issues, like the EU budget, are more in the public eye.

The 'Territorial Agenda of the European Union' is just the latest in a series of attempts to articulate the role of territory in European integration. It follows upon the European Spatial Development Perspective, or ESDP (CEC 1999). During its preparation the role of the EU, represented by the European Commission, gave rise to the 'competence issue' reflecting uncertainty about how to tackle territory at this level (Faludi, Waterhout 2002). The situation was made worse by divergent views of what planning at the EU level might entail anyhow. Naturally, the views reflected national planning traditions. One such view holds that planning is about managing urban growth by means of a comprehensive system of land use plans and regulations. The other view is that planning is about state intervention to promote development. This latter view, strong as it is in France, resonates at the level of the EU. Perhaps ill advisedly, it raises fewer worries about sovereignty. Be that as it may, the EU promotes development, with regional policy the most outspoken example, but there are for instance also the Trans-European Networks.

Innocent though it may seem, the promotion of development may nonetheless raise issues similar to those arising under regulatory planning. The point is that development initiatives should fit into some overall scheme reflecting an understanding of the territory concerned and whatever other initiatives are being undertaken. In other words, there should be coordination of relevant, so-called sector policies. At a minimum, EU funded projects should not counteract each other, nor any EU regulatory policies, of which there are plenty, in particular as regards the environment. Furthermore, potential synergies should be exploited. Failure to do so creates the 'costs of non-co-ordination' on which Robert et al. (2001) have done a study for the Commission. Giving coherence to EU policies is also a theme of the 'White Paper on European Governance' (CEC 2001). It still remains a challenge, admits the Secretary-General of the European Commission, Catherine Day (EuActive 2006). Consider though

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1   Der Originalartikel erscheint auf Französisch in der Zeitschrift: „Information Géographique".

that EU institutions may succeed. Consider the possibility that the EU formulates an "..indicative, periodic strategic orientation document … for the coordination of Community policies and their impact: the European Scheme of Reference for Sustainable Development and Economic, Social and Territorial Cohesion", as proposed by a Working Group (2001; 43) reporting to the Forwards Studies Unit preparing the above White Paper. Surely, having such a scheme would make the EU into a more effective driver of policy with the potential of effectuating a qualitative change in the nature of European integration as such.

This is for the future. Presently, there is no such scheme. Perhaps the Community Strategic Guidelines on Cohesion (Council of the European Union 2006) give a taste of things to come. So far, the enterprise of European planning has been seen more in the light of a view of planning as managing urban growth by means of regulatory planning. Doing so, some Member States, above all Germany, insisted that the ESDP should remain an informal document of the Member States. This view carried the day. Soon after the completion of the ESDP, the Commission therefore withdrew its support for the ESDP process.

The struggle over the competence for formulating something like the ESDP was somewhat pointless because as a strategic document inspired, as will become evident, by French thinking, the ESDP had no intention to regulate urban growth. As a strategic document, and even though the Commission stopped its support, the document nevertheless to this present day continues to shape the agenda (Faludi 2006a). By focusing on, amongst others, Europe's competitiveness and how European urban systems may affect it, the ESDP anticipated the Lisbon Strategy of 2000 aimed at making the EU "…the most competitive and dynamic knowledge-based economy in the world, capable of sustainable economic growth with more and better jobs and greater social cohesion" (European Council 2000). Its main plank is polycentrism, a 'bridging concept' under the umbrella of which all participants could rally (Waterhout 2002). However, the Commission now pursues this ESDP agenda under the flag of the new French concept of territorial cohesion (Faludi 2004; 2006b). As with cohesion policy generally, territorial cohesion policy is now in the service of the Lisbon Strategy, revived as it has been under Commission President Mañuel Barroso (CEC 2005; 2006). Cohesion policy, must square the pursuit of competitiveness with its traditional core business, compensating the losers for disadvantage suffered in the Single Market. The Ministers of the Member States responsible for territorial development, too, now subscribe to territorial cohesion policy being in the service of the Lisbon Strategy. Indeed, their 'Territorial Agenda' claims that such a policy is an essential element of any policy promoting growth and jobs.

The two views of planning above are discussed first. Then the paper focuses on how the exponent of one of them, France, has shaped the development of the ESDP and EU territorial cohesion policy. Next comes the discussion of the Territorial Agenda, at the time of writing still due to be adopted, with potentially great consequences for European planning. The conclusions expand upon the significance of this initiative for cohesion policy generally.

Two views of planning

The arena for discussing European planning is EU regional policy. As indicated, it reflects a view of planning as promoting development. At the EU level, the other view of planning managing urban growth is not prominent. Whether the recent report by the European Environmental Agency (2006)

on 'Urban Sprawl in Europe' posing a threat to the EU's environment as well as its social and eco-nomic balance heralds a campaign orchestrated from EU environmental policy to table the issue of urban growth remains to be seen.

The view of planning as promoting development has been present from the very beginning. Thus the Spaak Report, called after the Belgian foreign minister Paul-Henri Spaak, which laid the foundations of the Treaty of Rome, advocated positive measure to support regional development. It recom-mended setting up an investment fund designed to promote balanced development. It also high-lighted the need for good coordination between existing and future regional plans and those plans due to be developed by Common Market institutions (Pierret 1984, 32). Before then, the Treaty on the European Coal and Steel Community had already foreseen in such positive measures, co-financed by national governments, in regions where its policies would lead to the down-scaling of industry. In fact, as Husson (2002, 25) recounts, the High Authority tackled industrial conversion in the Hainaut Region of Belgium thirty years before the European Community did.

The Spaak Report and the example of the European Coal and Steel Community notwithstanding, the signatories of the Treaty of Rome went no further than declaring in the preamble that they 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 fa-voured regions" (EEC Treaty 1957). They did not follow this through other than by granting tempo-rary relief to some regions from implementing measures to complete the, as it was then still called, Common Market (Pierret 1987, 32-34).

The debate shifted to the Parliamentary Assembly, later the European Parliament, adopting a resolu-tion, authored by a Dutch representative, asking the European Economic Community to engage in what for the first time was called 'regional policy', the aim being to help less developed regions and to arrive at a reasonable division of labour between the territories of the Community and to counter-act the manifest tendency towards over-concentration in more or less all the Member States. This was followed by similar initiatives by a French member of the Assembly in 1960 and a German one in 1963 (Husson 2002, 19-23). (Twenty years later, in 1983, the Belgian Member of the European Par-liament, Paul-Henry Gendebien, introduced a more far-reaching resolution advocating a general *schema européen d'aménagement du territoire*, which the Parliament adopted in December of that year; see Husson 2002, 42-45. The European Parliament has always been, and continues to be, sup-portive of the idea, but it does not, of course, have the right of initiative.)

The 1961 resolution in particular invited the Commission to organise a conference on regional pol-icy. Its First Vice-President, Robert Marjolin (a former close collaborator of Jean Monet) chaired this 'Conference on the regional economies', with President Walter Hallstein giving an opening speech spelling out the rationale of a common regional policy in terms that sound remarkably modern. As Husson reports, there was even talk of asking the Commission to study the problem of what was al-ready called *l'aménagement du territoire européen*. Having been the rapporteur of the conference, Georges Pierret (1984, 36) from the Bretagne recounts Marjolin as the second speaker having put his finger on the key issue: The highly developed core benefits more from the Common Market than pe-ripheral regions. Pierret describes the follow-up in the form of three study groups leading to Marjolin submitting official proposals to the Council of Ministers in 1965. Shortly before General de Gaulle had instigated his 'policy of the empty chairs', so this could not have come at a worse moment. In fact the initiative to introduce European regional policy seems to have contributed to neither Hallstein nor Marjolin receiving their second term (Pierret 1984, 39).

Funding for European regional policy became available only in the mid-1970s after the United Kingdom, together with Denmark and Ireland had joined. It was a way to let the UK derive benefits from its membership. The new regional policy merely amounted to giving financial support for Member States to pursue their national policies. This 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.

Spatial planners were largely absent in these debates. The only ones known to have expressed an interest in the European Economic Community generally were Dutch planners. In the mid-1950s, they were locked in a debate over national spatial planning. Regional policy – called 'industrialisation policy' at the time – was not their direct concern. Rather, the management of urban growth in this densely populated corner of Europe was. Dutch planners positioned the urban agglomerations of The Netherlands in their European context. They saw a role for the new European institutions, beginning with the European Coal and Steel Community, in managing this macro-scale of urban development. They also proposed that the European Economic Community in the making should get involved in the kind of strategic spatial planning that they were propagating for The Netherlands. One of the Dutch negotiators and co-signatory of the Treaty of Rome, Johannes Linthorst Homan, had previously been chairman of the Dutch national planning commission and involved in the European Federal Movement. He was disappointed by the failure of the Treaty of Rome to address planning, as indicated defined by the Dutch more as urban growth management than regional economic planning. However, Dutch spatial planners were also ambitious enough to want to coordinate regional economic policy, alongside with other sector policies, by means of some overall spatial plan. Indeed, they argued that planning was an essential element in any policy of industrialising the country.

In one form or another, Dutch planners have continued to advocate European planning ever since. They participated vigorously in the now defunct Conference of the Regions of North-West Europe, and most of Dutch national planning documents position The Netherlands in its broader European context. When it finally came to preparing the ESDP, the Dutch, alongside with the French and the Germans were its keenest proponents.

Although pursuing a similar concept of planning, the Germans have never been keen on a proper planning role for Brussels. Initially, they rather preferred voluntary cooperation in the framework of the Council of Europe. On their initiative, the Council of Europe started to concern itself with planning matters in 1970, forming the *Conférence Européenne des Ministres de l'Aménagement du Territoire* (CEMAT) (See BBR 2003). It adopted the so-called Torrelominos Charter, one that the Council of Europe duly turned into an official recommendation (Council of Europe 1984). Significantly, the English version of the charter talks about 'regional/spatial planning', thus acknowledging the existence of divergent views of planning referred to in this paper.

Currently, the discussion takes place in terms neither of regional nor spatial planning but of a new-style policy to achieve territorial cohesion. Materially though, the agenda has not changed much. The ESDP identified polycentrism and urban-rural partnership, parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge and sustainable development and the protection of natural and cultural heritage as the three 'spheres of activity' making up the European spatial planning agenda (CEC 1999, 11). This applied to the EU15 and now applies to the EU27. For this and other reasons, like its weak analytical base, the ESDP was in need of revision. The European Spatial Planning Observation Network (ESPON) was set up to provide the analytical base. In addition, there is the Community Initiative INTERREG, one strand of which specifically relates to the ESDP agenda. In the fullness of time, all

this would lead to the Territorial Agenda being prepared. Before discussing the latter, the paper highlights the French role in making *aménagement du territoire* a European concern.

The French role

Aménagement du territoire owes its existence to the wish to counterbalance the dominant position – described as cancerous by Pierret (1997, 30) – of Paris. The so-called *métropoles d'équilibre* were the first answer. Eventually, Datar (*Délegation à l'aménagement du territoir et à l'action régionale*; since 1 January 2006 named the *Délegation interministérielle à l'aménagement du territoire et à la compétitivité des territoires* or DIACT) was set up with a mission to „…co-ordinate the actions of the different ministries in the domain of central territorial development" (Balme, Jouve 1996, 225). Its golden age was under its Gaullist *délégué*, Olivier Guichard. *Aménagement du territoire* is about public action concerning the disposition in space of people, activities and physical structures based on a balanced notion reflecting the geographical and human situation in the area under consideration (Dupuy 2000, 11). It has its roots in French history. A collection of classical French planning texts (Alvergne, Musso 2003) starts with instructions issued to his roving inspectors by the minister of finance of Louis XIV, Jean Baptiste Colbert. They were to survey national resources and to assess the performance of provincial dignitaries in administering them. Another source of inspiration, not only for Datar, but also the famous *Commissariat général au plan*, with Jean Monet its first commissioner, has been Saint Simon (Bovar, Peyrony 2006, 25-26).

In 1968, General de Gaulle went for decentralisation. Pierret (1984) describes this as the result – amongst others – of pressure from Bretagne for greater say in running its affairs. General de Gaulle was rebuffed in a referendum. In the early 1980s President François Mitterand was more successful, and since then French regions play an increasingly important role in *aménagement du territoire*.

Other than under the view of planning as urban growth management, *aménagement du territoire* can do without a statutory plan. It rather relies on covenants with the new regions (*contrats de plan Etat-Région, or CPERs*). Another of its trademarks are scenarios, in particular of the doomsday-type (Lévy 1997, 230). '*Le Scénario de l'inacceptable*' envisaging a dislocated and poorly articulated territory of France is the paradigmatic example (Bovar, Peyrony 2006, 27). This scenario is "inconceivable in a republican vision of the territory" (Alvergne, Musso 2003, 171). The scenario served to articulate the aims of *aménagement du territoire*: to reduce inequalities in wealth and financial potential, to abate the demographic haemorrhage affecting certain rural areas and small towns and to combat the growth of Paris, in other words: polycentrism, now, as the reader knows, a European concern.

Indeed, *aménagement du territoire* formed the template for EU regional policy. Datar simply succeeded in exporting it to Brussels (Lévy 1997, 230-231). The European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is "…modelled on the Datar…, which aims to limit the Regional inequalities in the Union with particular concern for social and spatial justice" (Bailly 2001, 195; see also Balme, Jouve 1996, 231). Delors' terms as Commission President were particularly important. One of the members of his cabinet responsible for working on regional police, Jean-Charles Leygues from France, joined the directorate-general responsible, described at the time as 'French' due to the dominance of French nationals on its staff.

In the late-1980s, Datar had its eye on the position of the *hexagon* in the wider European context. Amongst others, this was inspired by the famous study by Brunet (1989) on Europe's *dorsal*, later

dubbed the Blue Banana, and the threat to the position of Paris and the Atlantic coast. Datar advocated spatial scenarios for the European Community, for which purpose it proposed giving the Commission the power to produce a *schéma de développement de l'espace communautaire*. A one-time staff member of Datar, Jean-François Drevet, became responsible for the *schéma* in the form of 'Europe 2000' (CEC 1991), to be followed by 'Europe 2000+' (CEC 1995). He also worked on the ESDP, in reality a joint product of the Commission and the Member States.

This was because the Commission was trying to be helpful, but in the end it was disappointed by the attitudes of Member States towards it and embraced the new concept of territorial cohesion. That concept made its first appearance in Art. 16 of the Treaty of Amsterdam where it recalls "…the place that 'economic services of general interest' have in the common values of the Union and the role they play in the promotion of social and territorial cohesion of the Union." There were a number of key players behind this. Michel Barnier, Commissioner for regional policy (and also for institutional matters) from 1999 to 2004 being one of them. Another one was the past president of Limousin, Robert Savy. Prior to the Intergovernmental Conference of 1996/1997, the AER formed a working group chaired by him. It produced a report in 1995, '*Regions and Territories in Europe*' (AER, no year). This is when the broader campaign for territorial cohesion to be recognised as an aim of the Union started because the AER proposed to amplify the twin concept of economic and social cohesion by adding that of territorial cohesion. However, all that the AER got was the cursory mention in Art. 16.

Prior to the Intergovernmental Conference that would eventually lead to the Treaty of Nice, Savy hit the campaign trail again, but again without success (Husson 2002, 13). The next occasion was the Convention on the Future of Europe. In the run-up to the Convention – where Michel Barnier represented the Commission on the Presidium – Datar made the proposal to include territorial cohesion in what would become the Treaty on establishing a Constitution for Europe. Little is known about the relevant discussions during the Convention (Zonneveld, Waterhout 2005), but the final Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe identifies 'territorial cohesion' as an objective of the Union and a competence shared with the Member States. Had it been ratified, the Commission would undoubtedly have taken the initiative as regards territorial cohesion policy. In fact, only days before the French referendum, at an informal ministerial meeting in May 2005, about which more below, a Commission representative announced the coming of a White Paper on Territorial Cohesion.

Even in the absence of the Constitution being ratified, the Commission operates an implicit territorial cohesion policy (Faludi 2006a), and in their Territorial Agenda the Ministers of the Member States responsible for territorial development are now supportive of this.

The 'Territorial Agenda of the European Union'

While still expecting the Constitution to be ratified, Member States started working on a document called 'The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union'. It was to be 'evidence-based', making use of ESPON findings (Faludi, Waterhout 2005; 2006; Schmeitz 2005; Böhme, Schön 2006). They did this in the reasonable expectation that after the ratification of the Constitution the Commission would take the initiative, so they wanted to formulate an independent view. To this end, on 29 November 2004 the Dutch Presidency of the EU hosted an informal Ministerial Meeting on Territorial Cohesion. For such efforts to be undertaken, a Member State must feel strongly about the issues concerned, which the Dutch do. The French helped by organising a meeting of directors-gen-

eral from the 25 Member States a stone through away from the *Tour Eiffel* almost on the day after enlargement had taken effect, on 5 May 2004. The directors-general met again in October 2004 at Haarlem, and such meetings have become routine since.

As it should, the process involved the EU25, since 1 January 2007 the EU27. However, with the scheme of rotating EU Presidencies being what it is, the initiative remained in the hands of old Member States and will continue to do so until the end of 2007 when the Portuguese will hand over to Slovenia. In addition, it just so happens that the group now at the helm includes those that have been most active in developing the ESDP, such as The Netherlands, Luxembourg (playing host to the Coordination Unit of ESPON), and Germany – with France slated to take over in the second half of 2008. So this is why the agenda continues to be shaped by ESDP intimates.

To ensure that it would see ministers agreeing at Rotterdam in November 2004, a preliminary discussion document (Dutch Presidency 2004a) and the draft Conclusions (Dutch Presidency 2004b) were discussed in October of the same year. The Ministers at Rotterdam took note of demographic, economic, social and environmental problems, including the effects of climate change, global competitiveness and high energy prices. They stressed that territorial cohesion entailed strengthening competitiveness and reducing disparities, and combining the two, on the face of it contradictory goals became the main plank of the territorial cohesion agenda. However, the Ministers observed that the Lisbon Strategy took insufficient account of the diversified potentials of EU regions. Integrated spatial development approaches, enabling regions to exploit their endogenous potentials, can thus improve on the delivery of the Lisbon Strategy. Ministers highlighted the territorial impact of EU policies on Member States and their regions. Obviously, inconsistencies between them reduce policy effectiveness.

The document identified territorial cohesion as both a multi-sectoral and a multi-level concept. It recognised the need for regions and Member States to identify their unique development potential – what is now being discussed as 'territorial capital' (Zonneveld, Waterhout 2005; Waterhout 2007) – and their position in the European territory. The Ministers saw a need also to place spatial development strategies in a transnational and European context.

Clearly, they wanted to move territorial cohesion closer to the centre of EU discourse. They also fixed their own agenda. It was unsurprisingly to focus on territorial cohesion in relation to the Lisbon Strategy. They agreed on the need for a short 'evidence-based synthesis document' of the Member States, drawing on the results of ESPON and other research. This should offer the EU institutions, Member States, regions and other stakeholders insights into the 'territorial state of the Union'.

In May 2005, what was then called the EU Informal Ministerial Meeting on Regional Policy and Territorial Cohesion took place in Luxembourg (Luxembourg Presidency 2005a). It endorsed a scoping document on 'The Territorial State and Perspectives of the European Union - towards a stronger European territorial cohesion in the light of the Lisbon and Gothenburg ambitions' (Luxembourg Presidency 2005b). The document was based on the outcomes of the meeting in Rotterdam and on analyses of the territorial development of the EU and the spatial impact of its policies. ESPON had been the chief source. The document argued for territorial development policies to help areas to develop their territorial capital as part of the overall effort to increase Europe's competitiveness. The substantive priorities were to strengthen polycentrism and urban-rural partnership, promote clusters of competitive and innovative activities, strengthen trans-European networks, promote trans-European risk management and strengthen trans-European ecological structures and cultural resources. These pri-

orities were to be worked out between then and May 2007 when the German Presidency had announced that it would hold a meeting. Intervening presidencies agreed to support this agenda.

The UK followed Luxembourg in the EU Presidency chair. The UK is unenthusiastic about cohesion policy generally, wishing for it to be restricted to providing direct financial support for the new Member States. For the rest, the 'pumping around of money' – Member States paying into the Community coffers and then obtaining some of the same funds in return for observing priorities set by the EU – should come to an end. The territorial cohesion agenda is embedded in this form of 'multi-level governance', so it is reasonable to assume that the UK Presidency felt disinclined to take major initiatives as regards the Territorial Agenda process. However, it did call an informal ministerial meeting on 'Sustainable Communities' (Office of the Deputy Prime Minister 2006). This related to what is being called the 'urban acquis', the topic of the discussion on the second day at Rotterdam.

The Austrian Presidency did not take the document further either. Rather, an expert meeting held in June 2006 considered the 'Governance of Territorial Strategies: Going Beyond Strategy Documents" (Austrian Federal Chancellery 2006). Meanwhile, the Germans were gearing up for the informal ministerial meeting at Leipzig. There, urban issues will be discussed on the first day, 24 May, when a 'Leipzig Charter' portraying integrated urban development as a task of European dimensions will be adopted. The Territorial Agenda will be the topic of day two, 25 May 2007.

The Finnish Presidency held the important directors-general meeting in November 2006. It discussed the draft prepared by a small expert group representing The Netherlands, Luxembourg, Germany and the ESPON Co-ordination Unit, augmented by others, including representatives of the new Member States.

Coordination of this process is in the hands of a Coming Presidencies Group, including the Portuguese and the Slovenians. Judging from the drafts available (the latest one dating from 8 January 2007; see: http://www.bmvbs.de/territorial-agenda; last accessed on 18 January 2007) the 'Territorial Agenda of the European Union: Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions' is to be a strategic document with concrete proposals for contributing to the EU agenda of promoting jobs and growth. The document insists though that, in so doing, account needs to be taken of the particular needs and characteristics of specific geographical challenges and opportunities. In short, the message is that geography matters.

The revamped January 2007 version starts by stating unequivocally – with a side-glance to the European Social Model, the topic of continuing debate (Giddens, Diamond, Little 2006; Giddens 2007) with relevance also for territorial cohesion policy (Faludi 2007 a, b) – that the Ministers responsible for Territorial Development in the EU Member States regard territorial cohesion as a prerequisite of sustainable economic growth and job creation. To this end, the Ministers reiterate the need for integrated territorial development policy reflecting the identities, needs and characteristics of regions and cities. The Ministers then focus on territorial trends and driving forces, putting climate change at the top of their list, to be followed by rising energy prices and, unusually only in third place, the geographical concentration of activities caused by market forces. The list continues with globalisation, enlargement, the interdependence with EU neighbours and the wider world, demographic change and migration, growing social imbalances and disparities and unsustainable development. Although having moved to third place, the traditional concern of EU regional policy with geographical concentration of activities reasserts itself in the following paragraphs where the emphasis is on the untapped potential of regions and cities outside the European core.

The next section of the document outlines priorities for strengthening the structure of the EU territory. Whereas the October 2006 version started with the theme of strengthening polycentrism and urban-rural partnership, the January 2007 version brings forward the promotion of trans-national competitive and innovative regional clusters as the first priority, to be followed by new forms of territorial governance between rural and urban areas, the promotion of ecological structures and cultural resources, the strengthening of trans-European technological networks, the promotion of trans-European risk management and only in last place the strengthening of urban development in a polycentric patters. Maybe this is indicative for a possible weakening of the discourse of polycentrism – which he calls the 'Europe in Balance' discourse – signalled by Waterhout (2007, 55-56). If so, then this is indicative of the substantive themes evolving beyond the ESDP agenda. The October 2006 draft discussed in Faludi (2006a) kept closer to the ESDP.

The Ministers also indicate key actions for addressing the territorial dimension. These are first of all to promote more territorially coherent EU policies. This message is for the consideration of the Commission and other EU institutions. From them, the Ministers ask for more attention to territorial matters. An important request specifically for the Slovenian EU Presidency is to take the Territorial Agenda of the EU into account in preparing the 2008 spring European Council traditionally devoted to discussing progress of the Lisbon Strategy. Other key actions relate to the provision of European tools for territorial cohesion, from EU comitology to a form of European Territorial Impact Assessment. Impact assessments of various kinds are the favoured new instrument for the Commission to achieve policy coherence. There is also the demand for more focus in the ESPON 2013 Programme on issues identified in the Territorial Agenda.

Further recommendations are addressed to the Member States. Territorial issues should play a more prominent role in the context of the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks and the mid-term evaluation of the Structural Funds Programmes 2007-2013 as well as the National Action Plans for implementing the Lisbon Strategy.

The Ministers themselves have a firm idea of where they are going: The Portuguese Presidency will organise a follow-up focusing on the first Action Programme under the Territorial Agenda, and the Ministers intend to facilitate the EU debate on key dossiers from a territorial point of view, up to and including the review of the EU budget scheduled to start in 2008. The Territorial Agenda as such will come up for review in 2010.

What transpires is, firstly, that the Ministers have come to accept that the EU – and thus the Commission – needs to have a territorial cohesion policy irrespective even of whether or not the Constitution in its present or amended form will be ratified.

Secondly, as indicated, the draft suggests that the Territorial Agenda should be discussed at the European Council during the Slovenian Presidency in 2008, which would be the first time that territorial issues would receive attention from this elevated body. Fortunately, Slovenia as the only one of the new Member States to have introduced the euro, commands much good will and has taken spatial planning initiatives in the past, so Slovenia is ideal placed to do so.

The impression of Member States wanting to do business with the Commission, this time not only, as has been the case in the ESDP process, as a source of funding for their cooperation on territorial matters, but also as an actor in its own right is enforced by the request for measures to ensure in-depth dialogue on territorial cohesion within the structures of EU 'comitology' – the system of official committees advising the Commission. The related request to establish a territorial cohesion contact point

in the Commission only serves to further re-enforce this impression. The inadequate level of Commission resources available to deal with territorial cohesion policy is a problem not often appreciated.

The November 2006 draft also invited the Commission to publish a Communication on territorial cohesion, a plan that the Commission had shelved in the wake of the referenda on the Constitution. The January 2007 draft no longer does so, apparently because a high-ranking Commission official present at the November meeting cold-shouldered the idea of doing so without the Constitution being ratified. Surely, in this respect it is relevant to note that all drafts of the Territorial Agenda express the hope that territorial cohesion will be included in whatever form the Treaty on establishing a Constitution for Europe – where it occupies a more important position than ever before – will take.

Conclusions

25 May 2007 will be almost to the day ten years after the meeting of the spatial planning ministers of the EU15 in Noordwijk in 1997 gave its blessing to the first official draft of the ESDP. (At Noordwijk, too, one of the two days was devoted to discussing urban issues.) The venue, Leipzig, also evokes memories (Böhme, Schön 2006). The 'Leipzig Principles' of 1994-vintage laid the foundations for the ESDP. Once again, Member States are the standard bearers of the idea of paying attention to the territorial dimension of European integration. In the changed circumstances of the present, with little prospect of the Constitutional Treaty being ratified any time soon, the Commission looks upon this Member State initiative with more sympathy than before.

However, a cautionary note is in order: The authors of the Territorial Agenda and the handful of Commission officials responsible for territorial cohesion policy do not carry enormous weight. So whether the implementation of the National Strategic Reference Frameworks will in fact pay attention is a moot point. Those in sector ministries and/or the directorates-general of the Commission viewing territorial cohesion as unhelpful to the growth-and-jobs agenda will have to be won over. The issue will come to a head during the debate, scheduled to start in 2008, concerning the comprehensive review of the EU budget, as foreseen in the budget compromise of December 2005. This discussion will be no minor matter. A fundamental reform of cohesion policy for after 2013 is on the cards. This will indeed be the supreme moment for European territorial cohesion policy to demonstrate that it can make an essential contribution by generating 'Community added value'. In particular it must demonstrate that the Lisbon Strategy cannot do without paying attention to territory. If successful, the Territorial Agenda may play a role in cohesion policy, in albeit modified form, to be allowed to continue. What this all means for the European enterprise remains to be worked out.
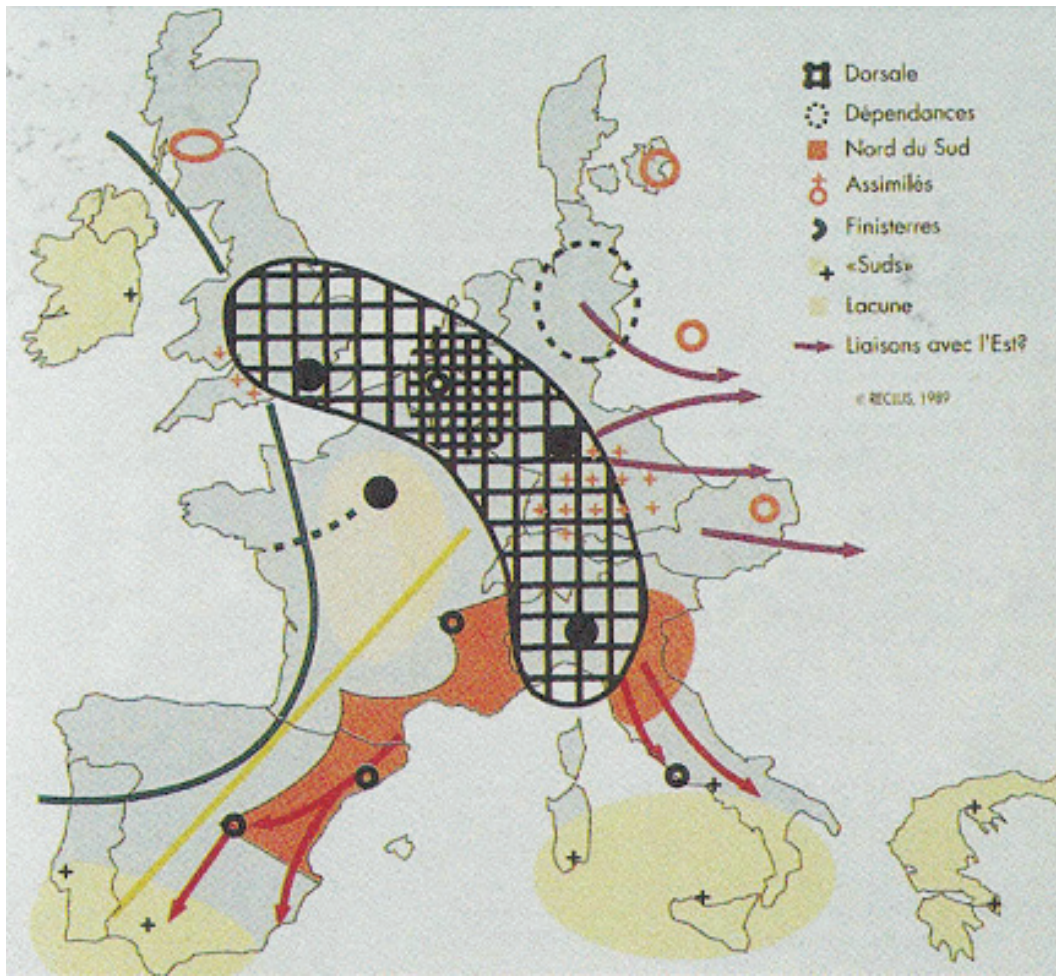
Fig. 1:   The backbone of Europe (Blue Banana), the North of the South and the Atlantic Arc. [2]
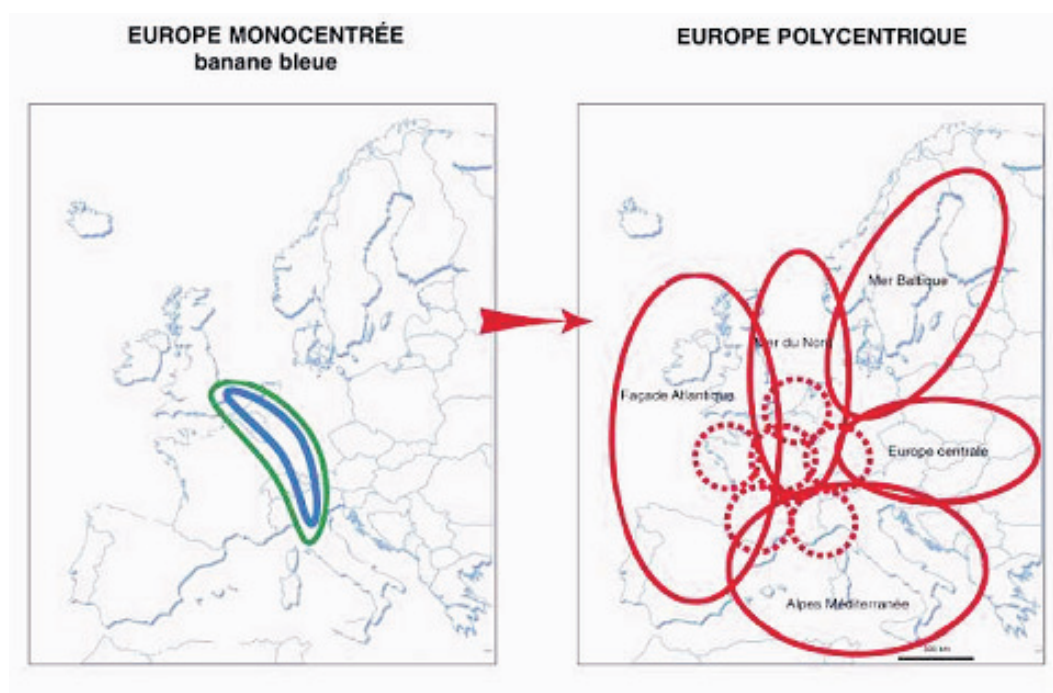
Fig. 2:   Position of France in a monocentric and policentric Europe.[3]

Literature

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