

EU Regional Policy – Territorial Cohesion Objectives and Realities (DRAFT)

by

Sabine Zillmer¹ and Kai Böhme²

1 Introduction

European territorial development policy development and the collection of evidence of European territorial development are closely interrelated. Knowledge about European spatial development is highly necessary when it comes to the development of policy objectives as they have been formulated in documents such as the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) or the Territorial Agenda of the EU (TAEU) (Böhme & Schön 2006). Our contribution takes a critical look at the development of these and other documents, with a particular focus on the understanding of territorial cohesion.

'Territorial Cohesion' is an important buzzword of today's regional and territorial policy. What this actually might be is subject to discussion both in policy and academic circles. Chapter 2 provides a short introduction into some features of this debate. This is by no means a complete account of the present debate and does not aim at providing a definition. Indeed, the authors believe that a formal definition even might be the end territorial cohesion (see Böhme et al. 2008).

¹ Dr Sabine Zillmer is senior researcher at the Leibniz-Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS) in Germany and senior consultant at Spatial Foresight GmbH in Luxembourg.

² Dr Kai Böhme is director of Spatial Foresight GmbH in Luxembourg and associated senior consultant at Sweco (Sweden). In parallel to his consultancy and policy advice activities he is associated assistant professor at the University of Luxembourg and holds visiting research fellowships at the Department of Town and Regional Planning at the University of Sheffield (UK) and the Centre for Spatial Development and Planning at the Blekinge Institute of Technology (Sweden).

Although the understanding of territorial cohesion remains – consciously – somewhat blurred, the question is, do we have it or is Europe moving towards it? Chapter 3 provides some examples and reflections on territorial realities in the light of the territorial cohesion objectives. For that both European and national insights on territorial developments are brought together. It has to be noted, that the European picture of spatial structures and development is more than the mere aggregate of national spatial structures and developments. Furthermore, national spatial realities cannot be simply aggregated as they are based on different reference systems. Such an aggregation would lead to a patchwork pattern, which is hardly legible. Any trial for a European picture of spatial structures or developments, thus, needs more elaborated empirical approaches. While the evidence given e.g. in chapter 3 is certainly of high value for the understanding of European spatial development, at the same time the restrictions of any such empirical evidence need to be pointed out as well as the implications of previous experiences with European spatial development policies.

Finally, the paper returns to the policy level in chapter 4. Based on the debate about the Territorial Agenda the interplay between evidence and policy process is discussed. Here it is argued, that territorial cohesion is mainly a policy theme, and that it is a theme which requires interdisciplinary policy dialogues. For this evidence as the one presented in chapter 3 can certainly be useful, but it should not overshadow the policy dimension.

This paper, therefore, discusses territorial cohesion from different angles as there is the political understanding of the term, its empirical evidence and the political processes. The latter are closely linked to how territorial cohesion is understood, interpreted and aimed to be implemented.

2 Understanding of Territorial Cohesion

Various policy documents have been developed over the last decades, beginning with the Leipzig Principles and the ESDP. Successively other policy documents have also included different aspects which can be linked to territorial cohesion. Among them are the Lisbon Strategy, the Territorial Agenda, the Territorial State and Perspectives, the EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion as well as the recent DG Regio working paper on territories with geographical features. Last but not least the integration of territorial cohesion in the Lisbon Reform Treaty needs to be mentioned,

and it remains to be seen whether or how the EU2020 Strategy and 5th Cohesion Report and the follow-up of the Territorial Agenda will take on territorial cohesion. A discussion of these documents stresses how the understanding of cohesion has been shaped over time. Although all of these documents deal with the objective of territorial cohesion to one or the other extent, it still remains somewhat blurred what Europe shall look like if territorial cohesion should ever be achieved. This blurred perception is very much due to the observation made by Eser (2009: 19) that the term territorial cohesion “allows for coverage of a wider range of concerns.”

Starting more than 10 years ago with the ESDP, it explicitly refers to territorial dimension of EU policies. In this document, for the first time, balanced and sustainable development objectives are considered from a territorial perspective: “... sustainable development covers not only environmentally sound economic development which preserves present resources for use by future generations but also includes a balanced spatial development. This means, in particular, reconciling the social and economic claims for spatial development with the area’s ecological and cultural functions and, hence, contributing to a sustainable, and at larger scale, balanced territorial development” (CEC 1999: 10). This objective of a balanced and sustainable European development is made somewhat more precise, in as far as the ESDP relates this objective to the three fundamental goals of social and economic cohesion, preservation of natural and cultural diversity and territorially balanced competitiveness. In relation to spatially relevant policies, the ESDP, for the first time, mentions the objective of social and territorial cohesion and points out, that this objective is a task to be aimed at by the EU as well as the Member States (CEC 1999: 13). What at that time has been precisely meant by territorial cohesion can only be deducted from two out of three spatial development guidelines for shaping political interventions: The first aims at polycentric spatial development – ever discussed since the formulation of the ESDP – and the second at parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge by means of integrated transport and communication concepts (CEC 1999: 19-20).

The Territorial Agenda, decided in 2007, emphasized the strengthening of territorial cohesion as the main future task. According to the decision of the responsible European Ministers this aims at overcoming a number of challenges by means of a “permanent and cooperative process involving the various actors and stakeholders of territorial development at political, administrative and technical levels”

(Territorial Agenda 2007: 1). This asked for a stronger coordination of spatially relevant policies at different spatial levels, thus aiming at a cooperative approach of different actors, i.e. European institutions, member states as well as their cities and regions. In the Territorial Agenda, the objective of territorial cohesion has been made more specific in terms of six priorities, which not only included the two relevant guidelines already mentioned in the ESDP but extended them (1) by new forms of cooperation to be achieved between different types of regions, (2) by acknowledging the role of competitive and innovative clusters for economic growth in Europe and by (3) including ecological, climatic and cultural objectives.

On basis of the Territorial Agenda not only an Action Programme for the implementation of the Territorial Agenda has been developed which differentiates altogether 32 actions. However, no specified budget supports these actions. Their implementation, thus, depends on the member states' ability and willingness to contribute actively.³

The understanding of territorial cohesion has not been finalised with the development of the Territorial Agenda and its Action Programme. In 2008 the European Commission initiated a discussion by publishing the Green paper on Territorial Cohesion. It discussed different elements of territorial cohesion by differentiating between (1) a density dimension, thereby acknowledging the existence of spatial clusters of economic activity and asking for ways to overcome them, (2) a distance dimension, which deals with the infrastructure connection of regions of different localities, (3) a division dimension, which asks for overcoming spatial division by cooperation and (4) a dimension of geographic specificities, taking into account that territories differ in terms of local strengths and weaknesses (CEC 2008). These dimensions indicate the multi-dimensional character of the term territorial cohesion, which is also acknowledged by other authors. For instance, within the analyses of the European Spatial Observation Network (ESPON) a quite broad meaning of the term territorial cohesion as been adopted: "Territorial cohesion adds to the concept of economic and social cohesion by translating the fundamental EU goal of balanced and sustainable development into a territorial setting. It is both a

³ For further information on the Territorial Agenda and the Action Programme see the COPTA (Cooperation Platform for Territorial Cohesion) Website: www.eu-territorial-agenda.eu

multi-sector and multi-level concept that can be implemented at regional, national, transnational and European level” (ESPON 2006 Programme 2006: 15).

Other authors have summarised this multi-dimensional character equally generally by differentiating between (1) territorial quality, which refers to living standards and accessibility across territory; (2) territorial efficiency, which deals with efficient use of resources and resilience issues; and (3) territorial identity, which acknowledges the relevance of social capital (Dühr et al. 2010: 188). The work of the Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency is complementing this approach, as it points out the multi-dimensional character of territorial cohesion by identifying different fields of interventions and objectives: In this context territorial cohesion is understood as (1) socio-economic convergence, (2) economic competitiveness, (3) rural potential, (4) spatial planning and (5) policy coordination (Evers et al. 2009).

While the four aims of the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion as well as other differentiations of the term point out different attributes of territorial cohesion objectives, they do not explain why spatial policies should aim at these different attributes. In relation to the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion this has, however, been discussed by a working group of the ARL laying out the rationales for territorial cohesion objectives (Böhme et al. 2008: 2-3). According to this position there are four such rationales, namely (1) reducing the costs of non-coordinated EU-policies, as they are conflicting at times; (2) making use of territorial diversity to contribute to the wider goals set in the Lisbon and Gothenburg Agendas; (3) ensuring balanced development in the Single Market, i.e. to counterbalance not only social and economic side-effects of the Single Market but territorial side-effects as well; and (4) achieving solidarity among the members of the EU to defend the European idea and achievements made so far as well as to further enhance them.⁴ The first of these rationales is e.g. closely linked to the policy coordination aspect of territorial cohesion pointed out by Evers et al. (2009). Especially the latter two are closely linked with the European Model of Society, which “is characterised by the reconciliation of market and distribution, recognition of diversity, and the cultural identity of society” (Eser 2009: 21).

⁴ For other arguments and a complementing discussion see also Dühr (2010: 9ff.).

In consequence of these different specifications of territorial cohesion different ways of measuring disparities can be found. They range from simple indicators such as GDP per capita to complex index measures. They can not only include indicators describing economic and/or social disparities but the awareness of – the utility of – territorial diversity. The potential variety of indicators reflecting territorial cohesion is e.g. illustrated by the indicators utilised by the European Commission in its 4th Cohesion Report, where not only GDP per capita but productivity and labour market indicators, economic structural change and demography issues have been discussed under cohesion objectives (CEC 2007). Besides socio-economic conditions territorial cohesion can also refer to the supply of public goods and services (Gatzweiler & Strubelt 2007: 49). As the precise understanding is not clear yet, no definite decision for appropriate indicators can be made. This becomes even more obvious once the variety of territorial challenges, which affect territorial cohesion, is recognised. They include issues such as economic globalisation, regional accessibility to participate in global markets, the role of permanent innovation processes for economic competitiveness, energy resources and supply, demographic change and climate change (Eser 2009: 28). At the same time, this variety of territorial challenges as well as recent spatial developments incline authors to question the validity of a concept such as territorial cohesion (Bürkner & Matthiesen 2007: 56f.). The following empirical evidence, consequently, employs different measures and aims at illustrating the difficulties when it comes to measuring territorial cohesion.

3 Empirical evidence on territorial cohesion issues

Against this political background our contribution discusses the empirical evidence of territorial cohesion. The empirical evidence focuses on territorial development rather than territorial impact assessment of relevant policies⁵. This following discussion instead aims to point out how cohesion achievements at one spatial level can affect territorial objectives at other levels. It shows the methods and indicators used to indicate the development of territorial cohesion. Finally, it indicates in how far the objectives of the Territorial Agenda have been realised by territorial developments.

⁵ The consideration of Territorial Impact Assessment focuses on a different problem which is worthwhile to be discussed separately. For a discussion of Territorial Impact Assessment see e.g. Schindegger & Tatzberger (2004).

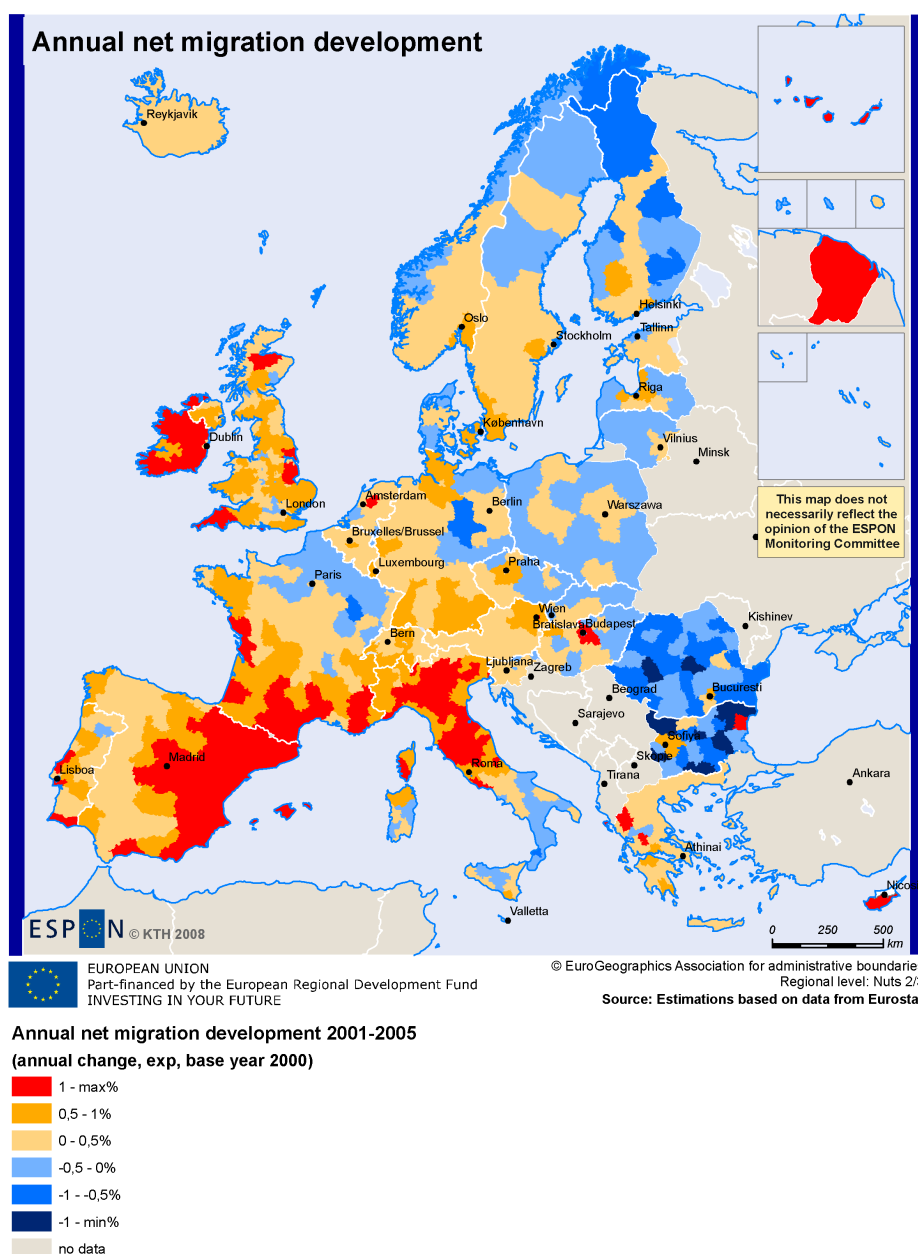
These issues can be illustrated by drawing on a number of EU wide and national studies.

3.1 Territorial Cohesion – At Which Level?

The probably most well known source of such empirical studies and documents is the ESPON Programme, the European observation network for territorial development and cohesion. In general, these studies discuss territorial developments – and therefore also territorial cohesion – mainly from a European perspective. While the European perspective is not only useful but necessary to reflect upon, in order to keep all Member States ‘on board’, this is not sufficient as below discussion will illustrate. Such an exclusive territorial perspective is inclined to block out other spatial levels, which can face growing territorial disparities rather than territorial cohesion. This has already been confirmed by the findings of the 4th Cohesion Report: “Over the period 1995–2004 ... disparities in GDP per head between NUTS 2 regions narrowed across the EU ... convergence of GDP per head at regional level has occurred in some Member States over recent years but divergence in others. ... Taking a more territorial approach reveals that in all of these countries [with diverging regions], especially in the new Member States, a large part of the divergence in regional prosperity was a result of high concentration of economic activity and growth in and around the capital city” (CEC 2007: 9-11). Nevertheless, despite convergence between the Member States over the last two decades, considerable disparities persist.

The problem of the occurrence of opposing developments at different spatial levels can most easily be illustrated by comparing demographic developments. If, for instance, migratory balances at European wide NUTS 2 level are compared with migratory balances of cities and rural areas, it becomes rather obvious, that local and/or regional developments tend to be much more complex than is indicated by analyses which cover larger areas (see Figures 1 and 2). Even though both maps do not cover exactly the same period of time, the principal problem of opposing developments or possibly inappropriate conclusions from exclusive perceptions of one spatial level are apparent.

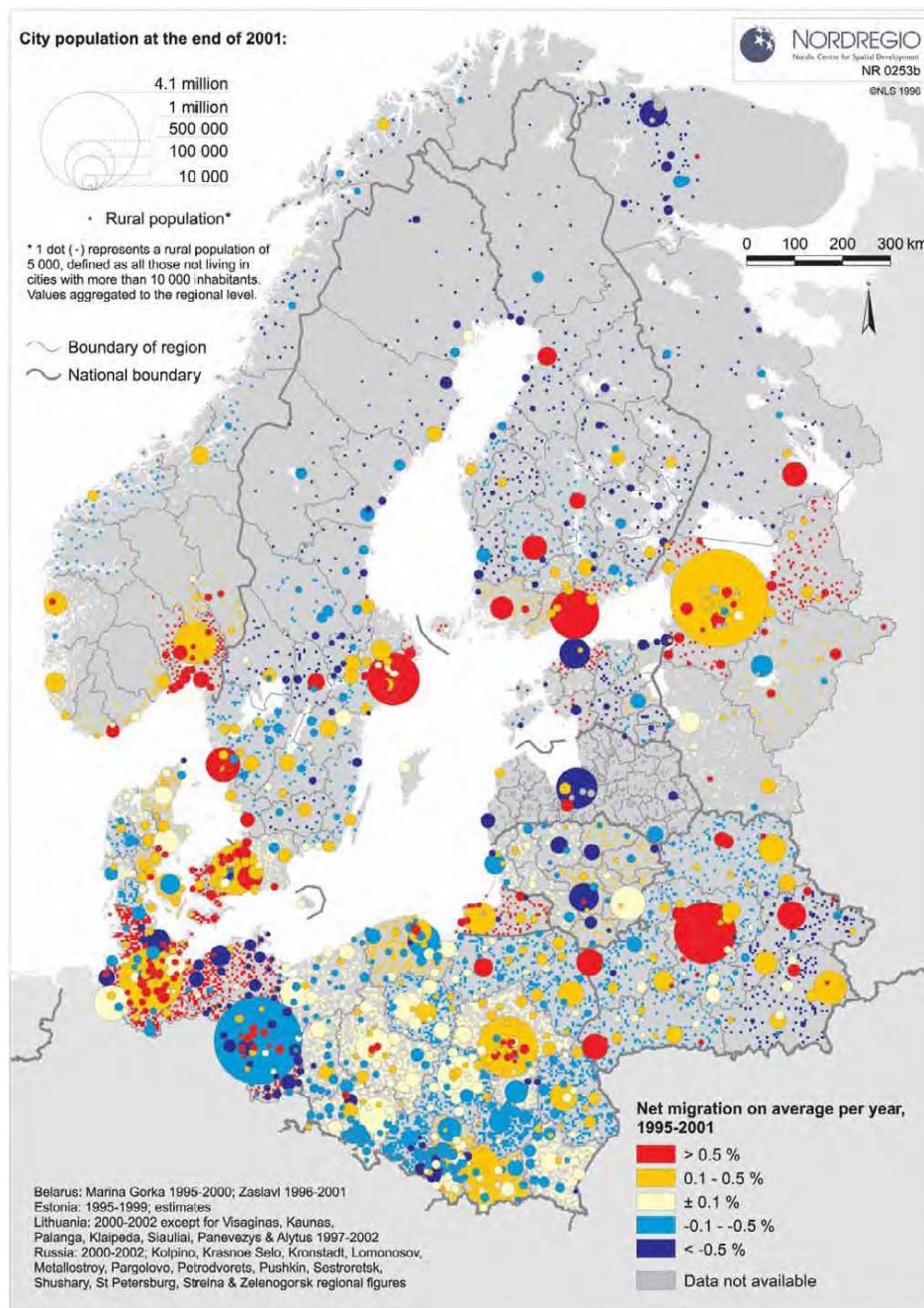
Figure 1: Migratory balances between 2001 and 2005



Source: ESPON 2013 Programme (2008: 11)

A detailed look at Finnish urban regions reveals that migration balances – which are obviously closely linked with overall economic development – depend largely on the type of region. In Finnish metropolitan areas and diversified university regions, migration balances have been largely positive in the years around the turn of the millenium, whereas especially the specialised industrial regions and small regional centres experienced net migration losses (Antikainen & Vartiainen 2006: 35).

Figure 2: Net migration in BSR cities and rural areas 1995-2001



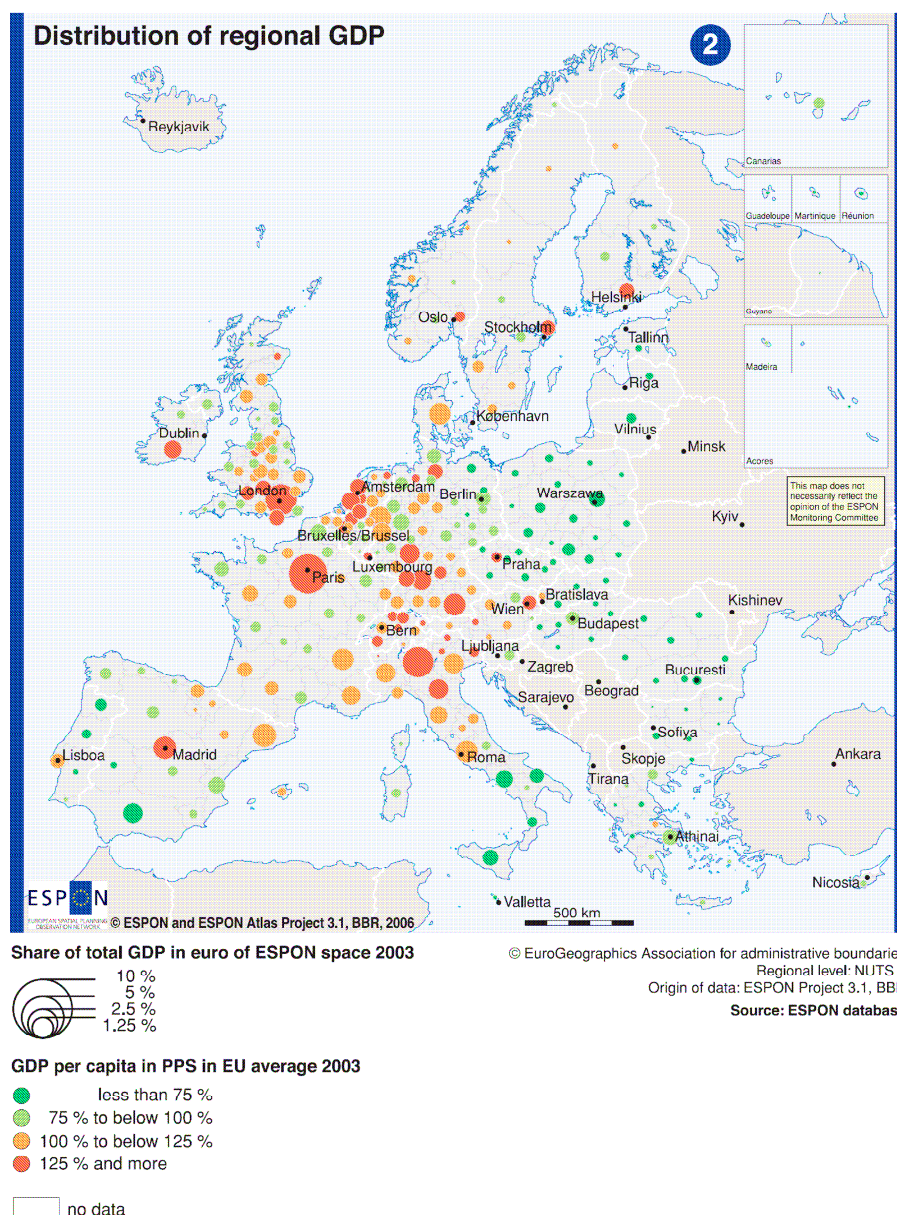
Source: Hanell & Neubauer (2005: 125)

3.2 Measuring Territorial Cohesion – Applications and Outcomes

In order to understand European territorial development and therefore also territorial cohesion better, various pictures are often applied to Europe. When the territorial concentration of economic activities and population is recognised this is frequently illustrated by pictures such as that of the Blue Banana or the Pentagon area. The opposite picture of a more balanced, polycentric Europe, which is more coherent

with territorial cohesion, has often been illustrated by the metaphor of a Bunch of Grapes (ESPON 2006 Programme 2006: 15).

Figure 3: Territorial disparities in Europe in terms GDP per capita



Source: ESPON Project 3.1 – ESPON Atlas (2006: 14)

Once real socio-economic data are depicted, such metaphors, however, are neither always that easily visible nor do they tend to illustrate reality adequately. Taking a one-dimensional indicator such as GDP per capita, one can recognise that the bunch of the EU's GDP is produced in the area of the Blue Banana or Pentagon (see Figure 3). However, even this area is anything but homogeneous: neither in terms of the level of GDP per capita achieved in the regions encompassed by these spatial pictures nor with regard to their absolute contribution to European GDP. This applies

particularly to a number of French, Belgium and German regions in this area, as some of them have GDP per capita levels well below the EU average. A closer look even reveals, that the Pentagon area's GDP contribution is highly dependent on that of very few metropolitan regions: London, Paris, Milan and to a lesser extent some German and Dutch regions. If relative gradients of GDP per capita levels are calculated, actually some of the highest gradients are located within the Pentagon area. These high gradients can mostly be found along the borders of the metropolitan regions (ESPON Project 3.1 - ESPON Atlas 2006: 16).

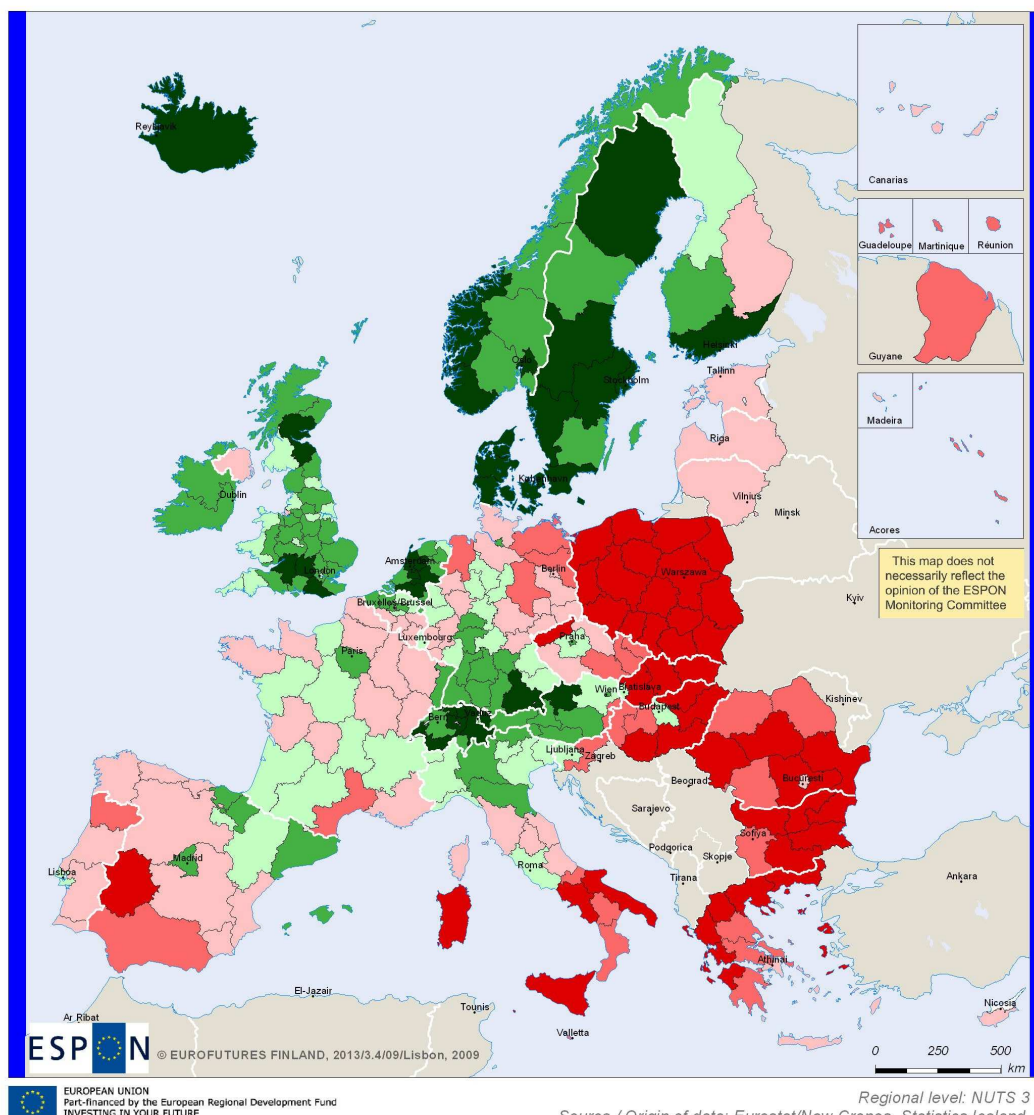
On basis of this single indicator it becomes even more difficult to depict such a territorial cohesion oriented metaphor as the bunch of grapes. While we find regions outside the Pentagon area which contribute to overall European GDP to no less extent than the majority of regions within this area, they differ even more strongly with regard to GDP per capita levels, as a comparison of metropolitan regions shows. Nevertheless, employing GDP per capita allows to identify some 'grapes' outside the economic core area, even though they are spatially very limited. They probably resemble more the holes of a Swiss cheese rather than a bunch of grapes.

Once more complex indicators such as an index made up of the so-called economic Lisbon indicators⁶ is utilised, the picture becomes even more blurred (see Figure 4):

1. A considerable number of regions within the Pentagon area is among the European regions with a medium to low performance.
2. A considerable number of regions with predominantly high Lisbon performance indicators are located outside the Pentagon area. These are mostly located in Scandinavia and Great Britain but also in other parts of the EU territory.
3. In large parts of Europe no 'grapes' are visible. Especially in the majority of the New Member States even the capital regions show predominantly low Lisbon performances. Or in other words: Even the holes of the Swiss cheese become rather rare.

⁶ These indicators include GDP per capita in PPS, labour productivity, employment rate, employment rate of older workers, gross domestic expenditure on R&D, dispersion of regional employment rates and long-term unemployment rates.

Figure 4: Economic Lisbon Indicators



ESPON
 EUROPEAN UNION
 Part-financed by the European Regional Development Fund
 INVESTING IN YOUR FUTURE
 © EUROFUTURES FINLAND, 2013/3.4/09/Lisbon, 2009

Regional level: NUTS 3
 Source / Origin of data: Eurostat/New Cronos, Statistics Iceland, Landesverwaltung Fürstentum Liechtenstein, Statistics Norway, Statistik Schweiz
 ©EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries

Composite Lisbon performance ca. 2006

Average quartile for all seven mapped indicators:

- 1.0 – 1.5 (High performance, most indicators in the best quartile)
- 1.5 – 2.0
- 2.0 – 2.5
- 2.5 – 3.0 (Medium performance)
- 3.0 – 3.5
- 3.5 – 4.0 (Low performance, most indicators in the worst quartile)
- No data available

For each of the seven variables, all regions are ranked from 1 through 287 and then divided into quartiles (1 through 4). Composite performance calculated as the average of these seven quartile rankings.

Composite performance based on following seven regionalised Lisbon short list indicators:

1. Gross Domestic Product in PPS per capita (ca. 2006)
2. Gross Domestic Product in PPS per person employed (ca. 2005)
3. Employment rate, total (ca. 2006)
4. Employment rate, 55-64 years (ca. 2006)
5. Total intramural R&D expenditure (GERD) as a percentage of GDP (ca. 2006)
6. Dispersion of regional unemployment rates (ca. 2006) ¹
7. Long-term unemployment rate (ca. 2006) ²

Precise data years vary substantially per region. For exact information, see final report of ESPON 2013 project 2013/3.4/09/Lisbon, 2009.

¹ Coefficient of variance [$s^2 = \frac{\sum (x - M)^2}{N-1}$] of NUTS 3 unemployment rates within each NUTS 2 region.
² Persons unemployed for 12 months or over as a share of the economically active population.

Source: ESPON 2013 Programme (2010: 19)

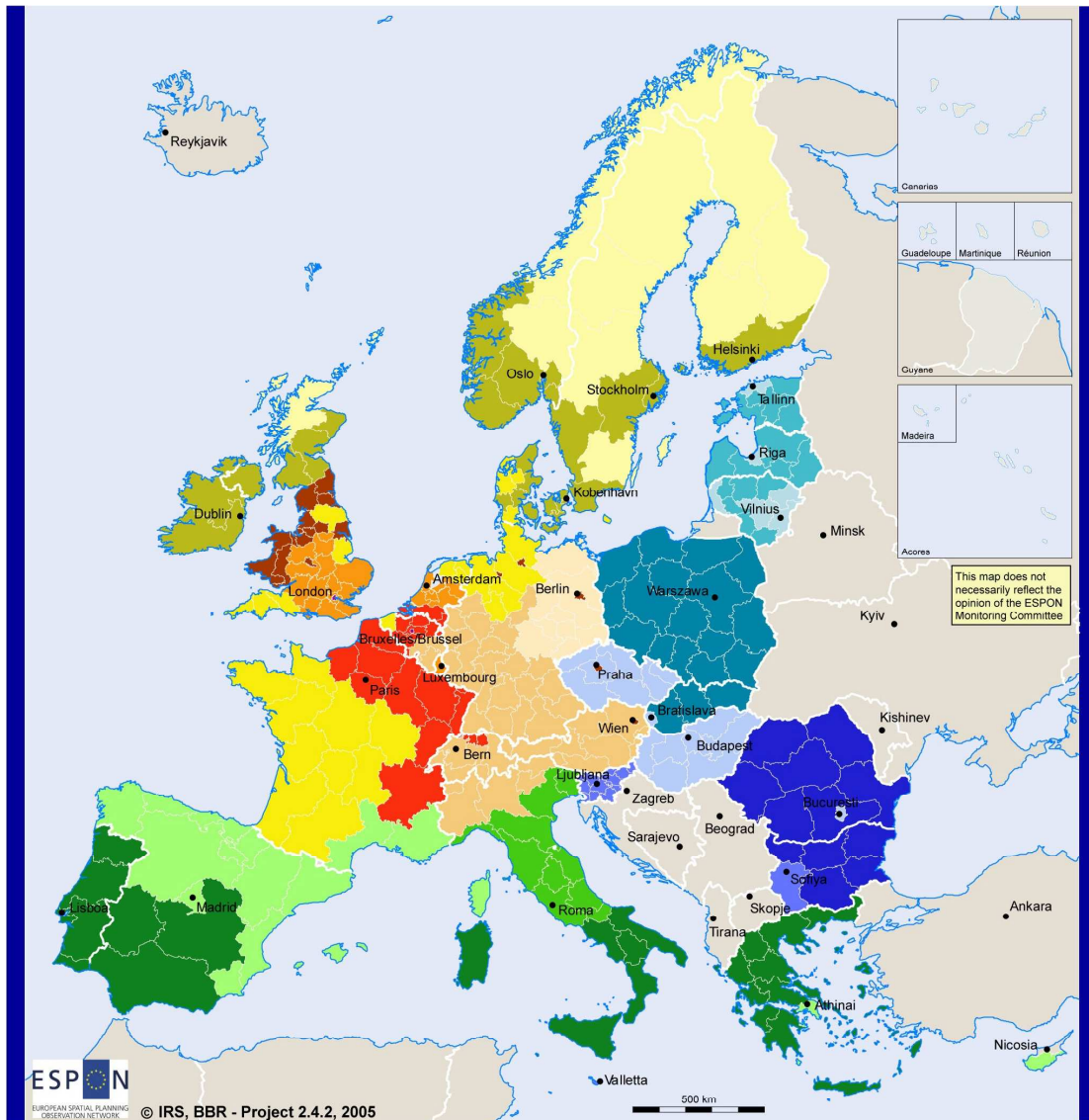
If only the territorial pictures of these two indicators, GDP per capita and index of economic Lisbon indicators, are compared, it becomes apparent, that territorial

cohesion is anything but easy to measure. While territorial cohesion appears to be achieved for part of the European territory if one indicator is applied, just the change of an indicator or set of indicators can reveal new/other disparities within the European economic core area and 'grapes' disappear. If again other indicators, which reflect e.g. demographic developments or the educational situation, are considered, even from a European perspective the picture changes again. While it is possible to observe catch-up processes of countries with low GDP per capita levels, contributing to EU-wide territorial cohesion this does not hold for many other indicators, see e.g. ESPON Project 3.1 – ESPON Atlas (2006):

- Population growth as a result of natural growth and/or positive migratory balances occurs in many regions with an already relatively high population density, whereas population decline can also be observed in already sparsely populated regions.
- The level of education, usually measured in terms of the share of the population with tertiary education, still reveals patterns which are largely dominated by national education systems.
- Regional economic specialisation has its very own and specific pattern, which makes use of regional resources and specifics. In this case it needs to be asked, whether territorial cohesion is useful at all and if so, what would it have to look like?

Taking these different outcomes of different indicators, it is not amazing that, if an even larger number of indicators are linked together, the European picture differs again. The cluster analysis method applied in Figure 5 groups regions for any set of indicators in a way that the differences for any given number of clusters are minimised within any cluster while the differences between the clusters are maximised. Figure 5 gives an idea of the diversity of the European territory for such a more comprehensive analysis. This analysis aimed at the identification of homogeneous territories. If the number of clusters had been further reduced, distances within the clusters would have increased considerably.

Figure 5: Cluster analysis results for all RCE themes



© EuroGeographics Association for administrative boundaries
 Regional level: NUTS 2/3
 Origin of data: ESPON 2.4.2 IRS, BBR, own calculations

Source: ESPON database

- | | |
|--|--|
| Eastern Germany | Ceuta and Melilla (ES) |
| Western Germany and Alpine Region | Northern Spain and Southern France |
| Scandinavia | Northern and central Italy |
| Western France and Northern Germany | Southern mediterranean Region |
| Southern Scandinavia, Scotland and Ireland | Czech Republic and Hungary |
| Southern England and Southern Netherlands | Slovenia |
| Eastern France and Belgium | Rumania and Bulgaria |
| Northern England and Wales | Baltic capital regions |
| London, Bruxelles and Kobenhavn | Baltic States |
| | Poland and Slovakia |
| | no data |

Source: ESPON Project 2.4.2 (2006: 204)

In this analysis altogether 24 indicators covering economic, Lisbon objectives, labour market, demographic, environmental, hazard and accessibility issues have been combined. The outcome is a European picture, which reveals partly national differences but most of all, it shows, how strongly the European territory differs once a multi-dimensional approach is taken. However, this result can also be used to illustrate the complexity of territorial cohesion: It is obviously much more than just convergence of economic development in terms of e.g. income or productivity levels. It must also be about the utilisation of the variety of resources and conditions existing in European regions.

These different levels of indicator complexity illustrate the variety of potential different approaches to measure territorial cohesion – just depending on what is understood by territorial cohesion. Actually, these examples only give a first and tentative glimpse on how territorial cohesion could be measured and understood in empirical terms. The comparison of above maps and their different outcomes for a European picture of territorial cohesion lead to the following conclusions:

1. Territorial cohesion, also from an empirical point of view, is much more than convergence but includes use of resources, environment etc. issues as well, for which variety might resemble territorial cohesion much more appropriately.
2. The empirical picture of territorial cohesion depends a lot on the statistical methodology applied and indicators included in the analysis.
3. Political stakeholders can actually find and interpret empirical evidence for and against territorial cohesion, just depending on what they are looking for.
4. Any serious measurement approach first needs to clarify the relevant territorial cohesion aspects and levels before it is analysed.

3.3 Territorial Cohesion Realities – A National Example

To what degree we finally have territorial cohesion or are moving towards it, can be discussed more easily by identifying selected policy objectives and discussing them for a limited geographical area. By differentiating the six priorities of the Territorial Agenda (TAEU), this territorial diversity has been emphasized as part of the territorial cohesion story. In order to illustrate these priorities, in the following this is

investigated from a national perspective, locating the German regions in terms of their territorial cohesion achievements⁷.

The *first priority* of the TAEU stresses the role of networks in a polycentric territory as precondition for success in global competition. The results of the ESPON 2006 Programme indicate a functional polycentricity for Germany – also before the development of the TAEU. This is considered to be the result of a relatively balanced distribution of the German cities in terms of their size. This spatial distribution of cities is favourable for the TAEU's request of polycentric networks between regional centres in order "to ensure their added value for other cities in rural and peripheral areas as well as for areas with specific geographic challenges and needs" (Territorial Agenda 2007). One result of this polycentric network is, however, that Germany has no metropolis which is internationally equally important as Paris or London, although there are several German cities which represent vital European economic centres of the 'second row'. Their functional specialisation can be considered to be favourable for cooperation as aimed for in the Territorial Agenda.

The *second priority* of the TAEU focuses on cooperation and networks between urban and rural areas. As compared to other European countries Germany has a particularly tight urban net – which is certainly very much a result of its polycentric structure discussed above. Due to the good accessibility of the cities they are always close by. In addition, the large majority of regions, which are rural from a German perspective, are relatively densely populated in European comparison. The support of partnerships between urban and rural regions aims at ensuring an integrated development of the rural regions avoiding that they fall behind. Since the German regions have less rural characteristics than those of other European countries, they tend to be less endangered by marginalisation. A consolidation of the already existing disparities can however not be ruled out, especially as many (east) German rural regions as well as regions with only small urban centres are considerably affected by population losses (see e.g. Figure 2).

⁷ The following discussion shows results from the research project "Deutschland in Europa" carried out under the lead of the Institute for Regional Development in collaboration with Spatial Foresight, Spiekermann & Wegener and Raumkom on behalf of the Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning. For more results see the English summary (Kujath et al. 2009b) or the detailed German version (Kujath et al. 2009a).

With regard to the realisation of competitiveness and innovation (*third priority*) Germany is one of the leading European countries. This, however, does not hold for all German regions, especially not in northern and eastern Germany. The economically strong regions are among the top European regions as regards competitiveness and innovativeness of their enterprises. This is in line with the priority of the TAEU aiming at stronger profiles and specialisations of urban regions and is mirrored in the functional specialisation of the German economic centres as well as the role, which the high-technology industry plays for quite a number of German regions. Since these industries are usually connected with a high intensity of R&D activities innovativeness is also strengthened in these regions. Yet, from this perspective Germany will be highly affected by the demographic change: A considerable decrease of labour supply, especially of the highly qualified labour force, needs to be smoothed, since this is an important prerequisite for the development of competitive and innovative regional clusters in Europe.

The fourth priority of the TAEU considers three types of Trans-European networks: transport, information and communication technology and energy networks. Generally speaking, Germany is well equipped with transport infrastructure and has in some areas one of the best accessibility levels of Europe. Disparities are however considerable and, depending on the chosen indicator, the European periphery can already be found in Germany. The development of the Trans-European networks is not automatically accompanied by a simultaneous development of local and regional networks. This results in local accessibility deficits which can even be found in centrally located German areas. Despite the high transport accessibility largely achieved, the majority of German regions falls behind in terms of their economic performance. For the respective West German regions, which have the highest European accessibility potentials, this might be explained with sinking additional utilities stemming from high accessibility potentials. However, another explanation might be the rather slow uptake of high-speed communication networks over the last decade, which are also considered to be essential for economic development and high productivity.

Considering the cross-border effects of environmental risks and of global climate change the TAEU aims in its *fifth priority* at “joint transregional and integrated approaches and strategies [which] should be further developed in order to face natural hazards, reduce and mitigate greenhouse gas emissions and adapt to climate

change” (Territorial Agenda 2007). Analyses with indicate regard to natural and technological risks indicate that German regions, including several agglomerations, are affected by such risks. The technological risks which Germany faces are the result of its high level of industrialisation. Although many natural risks could be reduced by implementing respective protective measures, there are still regions which face relatively high flood risks. This is repeatedly shown by the floods of the major German rivers.

The above mentioned issue of the variety of regional specifics has been the content of the *sixth priority* of the TAEU: specific spatial values and local characteristics shall be utilised for the individual development and be strengthened by an integrated spatial development policy. The use of ecological resources is however accompanied by a European wide danger for the natural inheritance and nature’s variety, especially where human interventions in natural areas are considerable and further increasing. Apart of a few mountain regions this holds in particular for Germany, with its high settlement density and high level of fragmentation.

The reflection of territorial developments against these six political priorities supports above conclusions in section 3.2, especially the first of these conclusions, as the sixth priority of the TAEU stresses the use of the variety of regional specifics, thereby supporting the overarching objective of territorial cohesion. This reflection, furthermore, shows that – for one and the same territory – a precise thematic differentiation leads to varying results concerning the realisation of the territorial cohesion objective.

4 Processes

Above empirical considerations point out that, firstly, territorial cohesion is neither well understood nor easy to ‘measure’ and secondly, regional and national specifics with regard to socio-economic structures, past development paths and cultural and environmental resources imply strongly varying spatial structures with not only possible contradictions of territorial cohesion at different spatial levels but possibly different understandings of what shall be actually be aimed at. In order to contribute to the objectives of the TAEU – and thus territorial cohesion – a lot of clarification is necessary. This can only achieved through appropriate processes connected with the TAEU. Indeed, we believe that the policy processes around territorial cohesion are currently more important than the various attempts to measure it. At last territorial

cohesion is and remains a policy aim. In order to illustrate some critical aspects of these policy processes we would like to recall some of the reflections on them related to the TAEU and its Action Programme debated during the Swedish EU Presidency in 2009.⁸

Relation between Member States and EU Commission

For a long time the intergovernmental cooperation has been – apart of the EU Commission – an important engine for the development of European territorial objectives, albeit partially contradicting positions on the relation between the intergovernmental cooperation and the EU Commission. With regard to territorial cohesion the Lisbon Treaty has considerably strengthened the role of the EU Commission. Most likely, already the next cohesion report will stress how the EU Commission intends to shape this new competence. This will also affect the intergovernmental cooperation: Will it stop to contribute on territorial cohesion or will new modes of collaboration be found, and if so, which kind of collaboration?

Both spatial policy processes, that of the intergovernmental cooperation and that of the EU Commission, are fragile, since they lack a permanent and strong political and institutional foundation. Thus, both processes need to be continued, to contribute to an institutional setting with actors who can help each other.

Interdisciplinary dialogue

One of the major features of the Territorial Agenda is the interdisciplinary dialogue which is necessary to accommodate the territorial dimension of policy making. This applies to all levels of administration and policy making. Various initiatives have been undertaken in this respect at both the EU and national level. Experience of action 2.4 (ministerial contributions to key dossiers) moreover illustrates the challenges faced in making progress at the political level. At the same time there are some policy fields which are more easily approached than others.

The influence on other sector policies is a key element of territorial development policies, therefore it needs to be further strengthened despite the challenges involved. The question is, how to best secure a continuous dialogue with the relevant

⁸ These conclusions are mainly based on a study conducted by Kai Böhme on behalf of Sweco for the Swedish Ministry for Economic Relations. See Böhme (2009).

sector policies and which arguments are most effective in such a dialogue. With regard to the best arguments, often reference is made to the idea of evidence based policy and consequently the need to support territorial policy arguments with sound evidence with regard to the territorial impacts of various policies (Böhme & Eser 2008).

Often this is followed by the perceptions that policy developments need to wait until ESPON can provide the necessary data and evidence. This line of thinking clearly underestimates the expertise and ability of territorial policy makers at EU level (e.g. the Network of Territorial Cohesion Contact Points, NTCCP) and overestimates the importance of factual knowledge in policy processes. Although scientific evidence can serve as important tool in policy processes, it mostly has a time delay with regard to data availability which makes difficult to use for immediate policy action. The current policy debates on the economic crises and recovery processes are just one example for this.

Experience from interdisciplinary dialogues at national and regional level illustrate the high level of expertise of territorial policy makers. Overall, intergovernmental co-operation on the Territorial Agenda is driven by a network with access to significant expertise and links to various decision making processes. Surely this network has reason enough to be self-confident and would be well advised to act that way.

Be precise

Concrete results which are usable and which illustrate the benefits of the work undertaken in respect of the territorial development policies are in demand. This is so because many positions on the subject have the tendency to remain at such a level of generality that often breeds familiarity and the feeling that nothing new is really happening. The reasons for this are many. In some cases not enough information on concrete examples or proposals is released. In addition, the need to encompass the entire European Union with its diversity of territorial development dynamics and governance structures etc. implies that a rather high level of abstraction is seen as necessary. Last but not least, the constant challenge remains to strike an acceptable balance between concreteness and (political) acceptance.

The afore mentioned territorial impact assessments can certainly contribute to illustrating territorial effects of sector policies more concretely. However, for this they need to develop into sufficient communication tools which neither results in platitudes

or the blackbox of marco-economic models. Possible, marco-regional strategies such as the one for the Baltic Sea or the Danube area provide good platforms for more concrete and detailed discussions. The advantage is that these strategies have a geographic focus which implies that less stakeholders and particular interests are involved and that issues at stake can become more concrete as they get more detailed. However, this demands that conflicts of interests among the various stakeholders are put on the table and sorted out instead of just agreeing on formulations which cover-up any potential conflicts.

Play up your successes

Capitalisation has developed into a new key word in European regional policy. This should not only be considered by various programmes and projects, but also by the policy development. While a significant amount of communication occurs between those working with territorial policies at European level, it seems that little of this is communicated outwards. In order to spread the word more effectively better capitalisation is needed. Communicating what has already been achieved may provide a useful first step here.

The dissemination of success stories of European territorial policies in the Member States and regions could also strengthen the confidence of the policy stakeholders. Particular attention needs to be devoted to the dialogue with the 'non-believers', i.e. those not already convinced of the importance of the territorial dimension. As long as the communication is mainly directed to the 'territorial policy community' it will remain somewhat occult to the outside world. We need to go back to Faludi's 'roving band of planners' (Faludi 1997), who wander about from town to town and to not leave any occasion of dialogue. Indeed, suitable opportunities for dialogue need to be identified and used to successfully enter into dialogue with other sectors.

The larger picture

Despite all the debate about European territorial policies and their application and implementation, one may not lose sight of the larger picture. Indeed, a lot has been achieved already (Faludi & Waterhout 2002). Furthermore, the Hungarian EU Presidency in 2011 is preparing for the next highlight and regained momentum.

Reinvigorating the political momentum implies that there is also a need for a new informal ministerial meeting at a later date to be determined. Such a meeting needs to have something politically relevant to decide on, something new to deal with and

should be forward looking with the adoption of a more long-time perspective. This in turn needs to be communicate in accordance of the previous paragraph in order to spread long-term perspectives, objectives and approaches to achieve them to a wider public.

5 Conclusions

Having taken a brief look at the understanding of territorial cohesion, the evidence based behind it and some policy process, the question remains what is actually needed: An update / adjustment of the evidence or the objectives? We conclude with the implications these empirical findings have for regional policy. It is pointed out that besides an update of policy objectives in the light of future challenges especially action plans are needed in order to enhance the realisation of EU territorial development objectives. Empirical evidence has been provided excessively. Especially at the moment, the utility of additional empirical evidence is quite limited due to data limitations in the light of economic crisis. Furthermore, existing knowledge on necessary details and understanding, e.g. of links with sector policies also limit the value added of additional empirical analyses with regard to territorial cohesion.

References

- ANTIKAINEN, J. & VARTIAINEN, P. (2006): A Patchwork of Urban Regions - Structures and Policies in Support of Polycentricity. *Positioning Finland in a European Space*. Helsinki, 30-40.
- BÖHME, K. (2009): The EU Territorial Agenda & its Action Programme: How to reinforce the performance. *A study carried out by Sweco and commissioned by the Swedish Ministry of Enterprise, Energy and Communication*. Stockholm.
- BÖHME, K. & ESER, T. W. (2008): Territorial Impact Analysis of EU Policies. In: FALUDI, A. (Ed.): *European Spatial Research and Planning*. Cambridge, , Massachusetts, 249-270.
- BÖHME, K., ESER, T. W., GASKELL, F. & GUSTEDT, E. (2008): The Territorial Cohesion Principles - Position paper to the EU Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion. Position Paper from the ARL, 78, Hannover.
- BÖHME, K. & SCHÖN, P. (2006): From Leipzig to Leipzig. Territorial Research Delivers Evidence for the New Territorial Agenda of the European Union. *disP*, 165, 2/2006, 61-70.
- BÜRKNER, H.-J. & MATTHIESEN, U. (2007): Territorial Cohesion, Brain Drain and Digital Divide. In: SCHOLICH, D. (Ed.): *German Annual of Spatial Research And Policy 2007 - Territorial Cohesion* Berlin, Heidelberg, Springer, 53-62.
- CEC (1999): *ESDP European Spatial Development Perspective*, Potsdam.

- CEC (2007): *Growing Regions, growing Europe - Fourth report on economic and social cohesion*, Brussels.
- CEC (2008): Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion - Turning territorial diversity into strength. Communication from the Commission to the Council, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions and the European Economic and Social Committee, Brussels.
- DÜHR, S., COLOMB, C. & NADIN, V. (2010): *European Spatial Planning and Territorial Cooperation*, Routledge.
- ESER, T. W. (2009): From Disparities to Diversity - Territorial Cohesion in the European Union. In: KILPER, H. (Ed.): *German Annual of Spatial Research and Policy 2009 - New Disparities in Spatial Development in Europe*. Berlin, Heidelberg, Springer, 19-35.
- ESPON 2006 PROGRAMME (2006): Territory matters for competitiveness and cohesion - ESPON Synthesis Report III. Luxembourg.
- ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME (2008): Territorial dynamics in Europe - Trends in population development *Territorial Observation No.1*.
- ESPON 2013 PROGRAMME (2010): Lisbon Update.
- ESPON PROJECT 2.4.2 (2006): *Integrated Analysis of Transnational and National Territories Based on ESPON Results - Final Report*.
- ESPON PROJECT 3.1 - ESPON ATLAS (2006): ESPON Atlas - Mapping the structure of the European territory. Bonn.
- EVERS, D., TENNEKES, J., BORSBOOM, J., VAN DEN HEILIGENBERG, H. & THISSEN, M. (2009): A Territorial Impact Assessment of Territorial Cohesion for the Netherlands. The Netherlands Environmental Assessment Agency.
- FALUDI, A. (1997): A Roving Band of Planners. *Built Environment*, 23, 281-287.
- FALUDI, A. & WATERHOUT, B. (2002): The Making of the European Spatial Development Perspective. London.
- GATZWEILER, H.-P. & STRUBELT, W. (2007): Regional Disparities - Reasons Enough to Run a Cohesion -Oriented Spatial Policy? In: SCHOLICH, D. (Ed.): *German Annual of Spatial Research And Policy 2007 - Territorial Cohesion* Berlin, Heidelberg, Springer, 41-51.
- HANELL, T. & NEUBAUER, J. (2005): Cities of the Baltic Sea Region - Development Trends at the Turn of the Millenium. Nordregio Report 2005:1.
- KUJATH, H. J., ZILLMER, S., PFLANZ, K., BÖHME, K., MUSCHWITZ, C. & SPIEKERMANN, K. (2009a): Deutschland in Europa - Ergebnisse des ESPON Programms 2006 aus deutscher Sicht. *Forschungen*, Heft 135.
- KUJATH, H. J., ZILLMER, S., PFLANZ, K., BÖHME, K., MUSCHWITZ, C. & SPIEKERMANN, K. (2009b): Germany in Europe - Assessment of the ESPON results of 2006 from a German point of view. Special Publication, Federal Office for Building and Regional Planning, Bonn.
- SCHINDEGGER, F. & TATZBERGER, G. (2004): *Territorial impact assessment (TIA) A certain tool or a whole kind of tools (contribution for first Interim Report of ESPON 3.1)*, Vienna, Austrian Institute for Regional Studies and Spatial Planning (ÖIR).
- TERRITORIAL AGENDA (2007): Territorial Agenda of the European Union - Towards a More Competitive and Sustainable Europe of Diverse Regions. Agreed on the occasion of the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development and Territorial Cohesion in Leipzig on 24 / 25 May 2007.