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## **EUROPEAN SPATIAL STRATEGIES AND LOCAL DEVELOPMENT IN CENTRAL EUROPE**

**Abstract:** This paper argues that development of local planning strategies must take into account the recent growth of spatial policy-making at the scale of Europe as a whole. This is especially emphasised in the case of the former communist countries of Central Europe and is illustrated with reference to Poland, the German-Polish border and other parts of the Baltic region. The context of EU enlargement and future integration of Central Europe is outlined to argue the importance in this context of the difference between Central and Eastern Europe. The paper also refers to new powers under the Maastricht Treaty concerning spatial policy, to networking and to the changing spatial structure of Europe.

**Key words:** European spatial policy, integration processes, spatial planning.

### **1. INTRODUCTION**

The aim of this paper is to direct attention to the relationship between the development of spatial strategies at the European scale and the development of land and property markets and planning policy frameworks at the local level in cities within former communist party states. It seeks to suggest that ideas and concepts that come from consideration of the European spatial scale, of macro-scale geopolitical issues, and of considerations of associated spatial policy can provide the parameters within which local development strategies and land markets can develop, and thereby help to overcome the sense of lack of context which can undoubtedly affect some local policy-makers. Reference is made to the location of cities such as Szczecin and others in the Baltic Sea region in order to illustrate some of the ideas presented.

Why consider Europe as a whole? Because, although some politicians like to believe otherwise, we are entering a period of pan-European economic and

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political forces and of jurisdiction, in which the removal of tariff and non-tariff barriers means that national territories no longer define economic space in the way that we are familiar with. Land and property markets, and pressures on the planning system for development or conservation and protection, will increasingly reflect this, not only within the European Union (EU) but also beyond it in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe, and especially in border cities and regions such as that of Szczecin.

Although the former communist party states of Central and Eastern Europe (CEE) are far from being fully incorporated in (Western) European economic space, Western Europe represents the model to which many former communist countries are aspiring. Several Central European countries, with the Visegrad group (Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia) in the forefront, have explicitly declared the goal of membership of the EU and are ambitious to achieve this within a decade.

Spatial policy-making in the EU is proceeding faster than is often realised in Western Europe, being seen by the European Commission as a necessary support to economic and political integration. It is important for spatial planners in Poland and other Central European countries to be aware of this body of policy-development, and to take it into account in the development of planning instruments, local development policies and the development of urban land and property markets. This paper aims to illuminate the new spatial context in which the development of spatial planning policies to direct these markets must take place.

A distinction between the processes of transition and transformation must be recognised. Transition refers to the formal institutional changes necessary for the introduction of democracy and a market economy. Transformation requires not only this transition but also achievement of the behavioural and structural changes necessary to function in conformity with the principles of democracy and a market economy. It is usually easier to identify whether the former has been accomplished. This paper seeks to contribute to one aspect of the latter.

## **2. STRUCTURE OF PAPER**

The central purpose of this paper is to argue that local planning, the development of urban land and property markets and transformation to appropriate forms of spatial planning and policy-making for a market economy needs to be developed in the context of the European supranational spatial structure. There is a danger that the word 'market' is equated with non-planning, and that 'planning' is equated with centralised direction. In fact, as experience in the UK and elsewhere in Western Europe has shown (THORNLEY, 1991; DRANSFELD and VOSS, 1993; WILLIAMS and WOOD, 1994), efficient operation of

the land and property markets depends on the existence of guidance in the form of both strategic and local spatial policies.

The paper goes on to outline the political and spatial context in which policy needs to be framed, and draw attention to spatial aspects of current policy development and policy initiatives at the European level of jurisdiction which are providing a framework and context for the design of markets at the local, municipal or regional scale. Attention is primarily given to the widest spatial scales of planning and strategic policy-making in the context of Europe as a whole. This is not because spatial planning at the local, municipal, provincial and regional levels is not important: on the contrary it is vital, but the European spatial scale is the one that is least understood.

The extent to which European integration in Western Europe has created a situation in which spatial relationships and spatial policy-making must be considered at the European rather than national levels is still not fully appreciated in Western Europe, and especially not in the UK. Some Polish commentators are addressing this theme, however (cf. KUKLIŃSKI, 1992; ROŚCISZEWSKI, 1993). There is a risk, nevertheless, that the importance of this scale is, as in Western Europe, not fully appreciated in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe: "a lot of efforts of different types must be undertaken to accustom Polish scientific, political and social opinion to think in terms of a European regional system" (KUKLIŃSKI, 1992, quoted in van de BOEL, 1993); especially as the new spatial relationships made possible by the political changes since 1989 must have had a bewildering effect on most people. The three countries that were then Poland's neighbours, the Soviet Union, Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic have all ceased to exist, to be replaced by seven others: Russia, Lithuania, Belarus, Ukraine, Slovakia, Czech Republic, Federal Germany.

### **3. THE NEW EUROPEAN ARCHITECTURE**

The case of Poland's situation is just one feature of what can be termed 'the new European architecture'. This is nothing to do with conventional architectural design, it is a term used to refer to the new political and spatial structure of Europe.

The 'old' architecture was the situation when Europe (or at least most countries) were either in the EC of 12, in EFTA or in COMECON; and when the boundary of Western Europe, in the 'Iron Curtain', was for practical purposes the limit of West European economic space, and therefore of jurisdiction over domestic policy-making. In this context, whatever eastern limit to the geographical concept of Europe that may be conventionally accepted (for example, the Ural mountains) was of little practical consequence.



Since the events of 1989, the EC has already been enlarged in a spatial sense, though not in a Treaty sense, as a result of German reunification in 1990. The experience of designing markets and of seeking to achieve transformation has been at its most intense (and disorientating for many former *DDR* citizens, including many who are responsible for aspects of planning and urban development in municipalities) within the new *Länder* (States) of Germany. Transition from separate communist party state to membership of the EC took under one year: transformation has some way to go still.

PHARE and TACIS are the two large financial and technical assistance programmes established by the EU to assist CEE countries. PHARE (French for lighthouse – symbolising perhaps a beacon or guiding light for the east?) is directed to the countries of Central Europe, and excludes all the former USSR other than the three Baltic states. This grouping includes all those countries that have, or are negotiating, formal association agreements with the EU known as ‘Europe Agreements’. These are linked explicitly to actual accomplishment of economic and political reform, and are intended to form the basis of a long-term relationship with the EU leading to adoption of the four freedoms of the single European market (free movement of goods, services, labour, and capital) and of EU environmental and regional development policies, but not necessarily monetary union (KRAMER, 1993). In 1994, Hungary and Poland tabled formal applications for EU membership, with the expectation that negotiations on these will get under way as soon as the enlargement process planned for 1995 is complete.

TACIS is, as the acronym suggests, directed at the countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS), or the former Soviet Union apart from the three Baltic states. These are a case apart from the Visegrad/PHARE group, with no comparable understanding acknowledging eventual EU accession being written into agreements, although it is not ruled out in order to offer encouragement to face the much greater problems of transformation. The ‘Partnership and Co-operation Agreements’ with the EU that Russia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, and Ukraine have signed are trade agreements, not free trade deals (KRAMER, 1993). A consequence of this different status *vis-à-vis* the EU is that European spatial policy development as a framework for the operation of a single integrated economic space is of much more immediate concern to the PHARE countries than the TACIS countries.

In the meantime, the EU has created the Single European Market (SEM) in 1993, extended to include all EFTA countries except Switzerland in 1994 to form the European Economic Area (EEA). Austria, Finland, Norway and Sweden have negotiated terms for full EU membership, with the aim of achieving enlargement to an EU of 16 member-states by the 1st of January 1995. At the time of writing only Austria has ratified the terms by referendum.



One consequence of enlargement will be that an EU of 16 will move closer, politically as well as geographically; to post-communist Central and Eastern Europe. Austria has close ties with Hungary; Sweden and Finland with the Baltic states and in the latter case with Russia, for example. The German-Polish border is clearly the focus of considerable pressure for improved communication and transport infrastructure as cross-border trade increases, and the whole is subject to a cross-border planning study, the Oderlandplan (van de BOEL, 1993, 1994, and see below).

The new European architecture is therefore taking shape with three main building blocks:

(1) countries now in the EU or EFTA forming a western crescent of the EU from Greece *via* Western Europe to Finland;

(2) a Central Europe of countries benefiting from PHARE with close political, economic and infrastructure links to EU member-states, and aspiring to full EU membership early in the next century under their 'Europe Agreements';

(3) the countries of the former Soviet Union in the CIS, benefiting from the TACIS Programme, but with a much longer road to follow in their transformation process and considerable ambiguity on the part of both the EU and themselves regarding any question of EU membership.

Some of the boundaries between these groups may not be certain yet, and some countries may fall outside these broad blocks, but the macroscale political geography of Europe can usefully be simplified in this way. EU norms, such as environmental protection standards, funding procedures, access to markets, etc, can more appropriately be applied to the PHARE group than the TACIS group since they correspond to norms that they are explicitly aspiring to, as a matter of government policy.

The third grouping, the TACIS group, of course raises the question of the limits to Europe. Before any future applications for accession can be considered, the EU must decide where Europe ends and achieve congruence between its political and geographical definition. The Ural mountains are traditionally held to mark the boundary of Europe but have no practical or jurisdictional significance in this context. If Russia is a European country, it follows that Europe has a Pacific coast.

MERRITT (1991) tackles this issue by posing the rhetorical question "Should the EC perhaps contemplate a Community that one day stretches from the Atlantic to the Bering Straits?", arguing that the former USSR can neither be left outside an enlarged EC nor can it be integrated, and quoting the first EC ambassador to the USSR as envisaging in the long term two enormous economic blocks, separate but with close connections (MERRITT, 1991, pp. 44–45). The border between PHARE-land and TACIS-land (e. g. the River Bug) may become the effective border between Western and Eastern European economic areas, leaving cities like Szczecin well placed near an internal border in the western part.

#### 4. NEW SPATIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Architects must think about spatial relationships. The new architecture is not just about political developments way above our heads. It is the framework within which new spatial relationships are being forged, and these in turn define the parameters within which economic activity is stimulated and markets are developing.

Much has been heard of the European Blue Banana (BRUNET, 1989) and many are concerned, seeing a form of spatial inevitability or predestination, dooming peripheral locations to remain outside the economically prosperous heartland of Europe. It is contended that this is false reasoning, based on conditioning as a result of Anglo-French preoccupation with national core-periphery relationships in the context of their respective dominant capital city regions. Germany has up to now provided an alternative, spatially dispersed model. KUNZMANN (1992) offers two more optimistic alternatives, the 'Japanese Corridor' and the 'Grape' metaphors (Commission of the EC, 1992; KUNZMANN and WEGENER, 1991; WILLIAMS, 1993a, b).

Such spatial metaphors may seem fanciful but they do serve a serious purpose in focusing attention on the spatial structure of Europe as a whole. The point is that we are still learning to think European, and that the ability to do so is now a necessary foundation to the formulation of development strategies that will stimulate land markets and real estate development. Although characteristic of national thinking, it is absurd to think of a simple core-periphery model at the European scale. Indeed, several cores or axes of development can be identified, not least the Göteborg-Copenhagen-Hamburg axis and the *Via Baltica* in the Baltic Sea region.

In the future, new locations in Central and Western Europe may emerge as new infrastructure is developed, or location decisions of European significance are taken. The Channel Tunnel is clearly an example of infrastructure development that will alter European spatial relationships, as would fixed links between western Sweden, eastern Denmark and from there direct to Germany across the Fehmarn belt. This will encourage the growth of a potential new core of development in the western Baltic Sea region. Further south, the opening of the Main-Donau canal in 1992 is also a case of new infrastructure of potentially great long-term significance for Slovakia and Hungary, for example. Among location decisions, the relocation of the German capital to Berlin is of major European, not merely German, significance, just as much as the decision in 1993 to locate the European Monetary Institute and eventual European Central Bank in Frankfurt-am-Main.

Advances in telecommunication, motor way and high speed rail infrastructure in CEE, as they come about, will generate interest among potential devel-



opers and have a dramatic effect on the development of land markets in the locations directly benefiting. For example, Wrocław in Poland would be an excellent place in which to make a long-term (say 50 + years) investment in real estate. Why? Because the city lies on the cross-roads between the routes linking Berlin to Krakow and Prague to Warsaw, both of which are proposed as motor ways and possibly high speed rail links. Similar reasoning could be applied to Szczecin, if ideas for improvements to the transport infrastructure along the German and Polish Baltic coasts and between Szczecin and both Berlin and Warsaw are implemented.

The city of Szczecin, once the Baltic port for Berlin, then for over 40 years on the periphery of Polish national space, now has the opportunity to take advantage of its location in building a development strategy. KUNZMANN (1992) argues that border cities are among the best placed to benefit from new development opportunities arising out of European integration.

This is supported by an anonymous Polish government official, speaking to Simpson in 1989 as the 'Berlin Wall' was breached, who was quick to recognise that:

[...] if Szczecin were to be a free port serving Berlin, that would mean tremendous growth for the entire area [...] growth in trade would have a big effect on agriculture of the region [...] a period of tremendous transformation all along the Baltic coast (SIMPSON, 1992, p. 163).

The same official also saw dangers, since much of the finance for investment would be German:

And then perhaps our children will say to us, "Whatever happened to Poland?" Because it will be swallowed up completely [...] we'll be working for somebody else (SIMPSON, 1992, p. 164).

How can the benefits, but not the disadvantages, of this new situation be harnessed? In other words, how can the authorities retain some control over development as the pressures envisaged above build up? The answer lies in the formulation of appropriate spatial planning instruments and policies, plus the governmental structures to support them in a democratic way.

## **5. NETWORKING AND POSITIONING**

The above quotations illustrate the next step in the argument. Successful development of markets depends on building links and networks, and on a sense of spatial positioning. This is increasingly true of Western Europe as the com-

petition between cities and regions becomes a pan-European phenomenon in the SEM. Given that so much more may depend on external stimuli rather than existing internal economic strength, it is likely also to be so for cities and regions of CEE.

There is now a whole range of city networks, formal and informal. Some have direct subvention from the EU as part of its regional development or aid programmes, for example the ECOS (Eastern Europe City Co-operation Scheme) and Ouverture programmes, while others are given EU funds as agents in European integration, for example Eurocities. ECOS and Ouverture fall within the PHARE Programme, and promote technical advice, trade and academic networking, and technology transfer for the benefit of municipalities in CEE. An account of one such network, the Baltic Gateways project linking North Tyneside near Newcastle with Esbjerg (Denmark), Rostock (Germany, ex-DDR), Gdynia (Poland) and Klaipeda (Lithuania) is given in Williams (cf. WILLIAMS, 1993c; SCOTT, 1993).

Spatial positioning is a term given to an approach more characteristic of French than Anglo-Saxon thinking: a form of conceptualisation of the location in European space of a city or region, akin to SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, to identify for example transport missing links, trade and tourism opportunities, from which a development strategy is formulated (WILLIAMS, 1991). KUNZMANN (1992) has drawn attention to the process of spatial specialisation (e. g. for finance industries, research and high-tech, or cultural industries). This is a good example of the directions such an approach may lead to.

The French strategy for the development of *Europoles* (DATAR, 1990) is a good example of the application of the spatial positioning approach. The differences between French conceptualisation and Anglo-Saxon pragmatism in strategy spatial policy-making are shown most vividly, however, if one looks at the respective programmes for road and high speed rail infrastructure associated with the Channel Tunnel (HOLLIDAY et al., 1991).

An example (actually British in origin) of spatial positioning which could easily be dismissed as mere rhetoric is the Northern Arc concept, promoted by the regional development agency for the north of England, which directly targets the Baltic Sea region. The concept is to get people to think along the axis from Northern Ireland *via* northern England to Denmark and other Baltic port-cities as far as St Petersburg, bypassing the traditional core regions (the Blue Banana) to develop city networking, telecommunications, improved sea links, etc., and to promote trade and economic linkage (WILLIAMS, 1993c).

Szczecin is clearly capable of fitting into this concept. Helsinki, on the other hand, feels threatened although its prosperity may be supposed to give it many advantages over cities in former communist party states. This is because it is not only peripheral but potentially bypassed. St Petersburg, whose population ex-



ceeds that of the whole of Finland, is the magnet at the eastern end of the Baltic Sea. Spatially, it is analogous to an anchor store at the end of a shopping mall. Meanwhile Estonia is transforming itself rapidly and potentially successfully (LASS, 1993). It stands to benefit from the *Via Baltica* concept, a concept which is at present no more than a vision of a future trans-European transport route linking St Petersburg with Tallinn, Riga, Vilnius, Warsaw and from there to Berlin and Western Europe. Since Helsinki is in a practical, though not of course literal, sense an island dependent on sea and air links, it recognises the need to develop a strategy to address the consequences of its position within the new European architecture. The Helsinki Gateway concept, seeking to capitalise on its location at the meeting point of the different divisions of the new Europe and on its experience of western finance and eastern trade, is an attempt to do so.

## 6. EUROPEAN-SCALE POLICY DEVELOPMENT

Space does not allow a full review of spatial policy-making at the European and EU levels. A key study was the Europe 2000 project *Outlook for the development of the Community's Territory* (Commission of the EC, 1991). This was largely concerned with the then 12 member-states and not with issues beyond the EU's external border. It was followed up by a series of Trans-national studies which are leading towards the production of the Europe 2010 study, which will address the question of spatial relationships not only within the EU of 12–16 member-states after 1995 but also in relation to the CEE countries. Consideration of the supranational spatial scale is not confined to the Commission. The Dutch government has made a particular contribution, not least with the Maastricht negotiations in mind, with the *Perspectives in Europe* study (RPD, 1991).

The Maastricht Treaty (the Treaty of European Union), which came into effect on the 1st of November 1993, confers on the Community powers over 'town and country planning' and 'land use' in Art. 130s(2) (WILLIAMS, 1993d). As an indication of the terminology used in Art. 130s(2) of the Treaty, set out below are the equivalents of **town and country planning** and **land use** in seven of the other eight EU official languages:

- D – *Raumordnung, Bodennutzung*;
- DK – *fysisk planlægning, arealanvendelse*;
- E – *ordenación territorial, utilización del suelo*;
- F – *aménagement de territoire, affectation des sols*;
- I – *assetto territoriale, destinazione dei suoli*;
- NL – *ruimtelijke ordening, bodembestemming*;
- P – *ordenamento do território, afectação dos solos*.

Sooner or later the equivalence of these terms will have to be tested, and it will be interesting to see the outcome. In the event of a legal dispute over their meaning, the principle that the French version takes precedence will apply in any judgement by the European Court of Justice. Meanwhile, spatial planners in Central Europe using other languages may be wise to think how their terminology corresponds in meaning to the sense of *aménagement de territoire*.

The Treaty, more significantly, contains a section (*Title XII*) on *Trans-European networks* (WILLIAMS, 1994). This provides powers to promote communication networks of all kinds, from city linking to telecommunications and conventional transport infrastructure. There is a clear expectation that countries aspiring to EU membership (both EFTA and CEE) will develop corresponding strategies.

MAGGI et al. (1992) draw attention to the vital importance of transport infrastructure for economic development, and the severe reduction of competitive advantage suffered by locations affected not only from missing links in networks but also from missing networks. They go on to examine the freight, airline, high speed rail, inland waterways and telecommunications sectors. All are of significance in relation to the design of local development strategies in Central Europe.

This is reflected in proposals for transport infrastructure which have been put forward by the EU Commission. Alongside proposals within the EU itself, proposals for high speed rail network take into account links into Central and Eastern Europe, and studies are proceeding of the environmental and socio-economic impact and level of demand for high speed rail plus air and sea transport infrastructure to the east of the EU.

## 7. CROSS-BORDER PLANNING

One category of European policy development that is in most respects no different from any other form of city or regional planning strategy is that of cross-border planning. Until recent years, this was quite limited outside obvious cases such as the Aachen agglomeration, but in a number of critical locations (including the Channel Tunnel area), cross-border planning now has a high profile.

One such study, the Oderlandplan, is designed to form the basis of a regional development strategy for the whole of the German-Polish border along the Oder-Neisse line from Görlitz to the Baltic Sea (van de BOEL, 1993, 1994). The Oderlandplan area covers 34 German *Kreise* and 5 Polish provinces, with about 2.5 million population. KUNZMANN (1992) argues that one of the main categories of city expected to be among the winners in the competition between



cities are those near internal borders, or where formerly closed or restricted borders are opened up. A test of the Oderlandplan and others of this type will be whether this proves to be the case. Van der Boel argues that this could be so, but that one counterforce is Polish resistance to a sense of being taken over economically by Germany.

Relating to this planning study is the studies undertaken by the German Federal Government following reunification: the *Raumordnungskonzept für den Aufbau der Neuen Länder*, and the later *Konzept für Raumordnung* or *Guidelines for regional planning – general principles for spatial development* (BMBau, 1993) covering the whole of the Federal Republic. There is an emphasis on border areas, especially between Germany and both Poland and the Czech Republic, and on the need for strategies to overcome the danger of poverty lines emerging along these border areas. Szczecin is clearly identified as an area in need of development programmes, and marked accordingly on the graphic representation of the guidelines.

## 8. LOCAL STRATEGIES

Consideration of the macro spatial scale should not be taken to imply that nothing can or should be done at the local or regional scale. On the contrary, it is argued that the key to the development of a successful strategy at this level lies in learning to appreciate the implications of the new spatial structures and relationship that follow from the new architecture of Europe, the parameters for development that this implies, to work within the opportunities and constraints presented, and to join in the competition between cities by lobbying for infrastructure, investment and development that will help to overcome disadvantages of location or communication.

Spatial planning is a form of land use planning which can be at all spatial scales or scales of jurisdiction, concerned with allocation of land uses and location of development. At the local scale, urban land and property markets need certainty and guidance especially in relation to new spatial relationships and infrastructure projects, and a realistic indication of parameters and degrees of freedom. British experience of moving towards a free-market concept of non-planning has not proved a success, nor is it welcomed by many major development interests.

Finally, markets need entrepreneurs and actors in the process: developers and professional advisers. Many western companies (retailers, house builders, property developers, etc.) are watching closely for good real estate investment and development opportunities. As all planning authorities know (and the 'edge

city' debate concerning the problems of excessive development on the urban periphery and lack of investment in traditional city centres in the USA illustrates), the most obvious opportunities may lie in highly accessible locations on the transport networks.

In a study of the European expansion plans of British firms of chartered surveyors (real estate consultants), several expressed great interest in the challenge offered by former communist countries, although only a few had taken any steps to establish networks of offices (BLAND et al., 1993). Of those who had, Poland, the Czech Republic and Hungary were the main targets.

The Brussels partner of one major British-based international firm of chartered surveyors and real estate consultants interviewed in the above research project went so far as to assert that the establishment of markets in land and property will happen when firms such as themselves move in, and not before. So when they move in, we know that the task of designing markets and the process of transformation is complete!

#### EU ABBREVIATIONS

CEE	Central and Eastern Europe
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
COMECON	Council for Mutual Economic Co-operation
EC	European Community (to 1993)
ECOS	Eastern Europe City Co-operation Scheme
EEA	European Economic Area
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union (from 1993)
PHARE	Pologne et Hongoire Assistance pour la Réstructuration Économique
SEM	Single European Market
TACIS	Technical Assistance for the Commonwealth of Independent States

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