

ARTICLES

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TERRITORIAL COHESION IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERREGIONAL AND TRANSNATIONAL COOPERATION

Abstract: Territorial cohesion can be traced back to the making of the European Spatial Development Perspective. Therefore, the experience gained with the application of this ‘mother document’ (Faludi in Krupa *et al.*, 2008, p. 14) of integrative planning in Europe can contribute to the specification of territorial cohesion.

This paper draws on experience from the Interreg IIIC project ProgreSDEC, covering local and regional authorities from Greece, Italy, and Spain cooperating with each other in interregional and transnational projects. It looks both at the vertical and horizontal dimensions of European integration and explains three aspects of territorial cohesion. Talking about growing awareness, it should be differentiated between awareness relating to European issues – such as the European territorial and institutional environment – to the quality of planning, and to the endogenous ‘territorial capital’. Key terms of European integrative planning are interpreted differently. The paper discusses the reading of ‘polycentricity’, ‘landscape’, and ‘governance’, in particular. Territorial governance can be looked at as an institutional approach to develop integrative planning in the context of territorial cohesion. This notably turns the attention to regions as the focus of integration, in terms of balancing sectoral approaches, bundling spacious networks, and handling the demands from different levels.

Key words: EU, territorial cohesion, integrative planning.

1. INTRODUCTION

In the European context, territorial cohesion can be considered as the leitmotif of spatial planning. It has been on the agenda over the past decades, i.e. long before the European Council adopted the Lisbon treaty (in December 2007) and

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recognised it officially as an objective as important as social and economic cohesion.¹ Through this, 'the territorial dimension of European policies was emphasized. Since then, the time is ripe for opening intergovernmental discussion on a possible definition of the shared principles of EU territorial governance, capable of linking the Community cohesion strategy with the functioning of national planning systems' (Janin Rivolin, 2005, p. 26).

Having this in mind, the clarification of the term 'territorial cohesion' affords the occupation with the term 'territorial governance', which is increasingly used in the European context but still suffers from little specification. As the 'policy process in the EU is more and more organised around communication' (Kohler-Koch, 2002, p. 4), the matter of governance is more than the transmission of concepts in a hierarchy, as the usual term of multi-level governance suggests. Territorial cohesion involves both a vertical and a horizontal dimension, giving a wider perception of 'shared principles'. These often are associated with the term of 'Europeanisation', which 'follows soft and alternative paths of socialization and learning' (Giannakourou, 2005, p. 329). Europeanisation, therefore, is inevitably linked to EU territorial governance.

This paper takes over at this stage and looks at these issues under the particular context conditions found in three Mediterranean states and under the sectoral focus on spatial planning. In section 2 a short reference is made to the key terms of this paper, mentioning in particular the two core documents of European spatial planning, the *European Spatial Development Perspective* (ESDP; CEC, 1999) and its successor, the *Territorial Agenda* (TAEU; EU Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, 2007). Empirical evidence here stems from the Interreg III C project ProgreSDEC, conducted in the years 2005–2008. For a better understanding, in section 3 some basic information on the project background is given, before in section 4 the results are explained. Section 5 concludes.

2. THE ISSUE OF TERRITORIAL COHESION IN THE ESDP

It is not only the Lisbon treaty, but also the TAEU, which takes reference to 'territorial cohesion'. It aims to 'secure better living conditions and quality of life with equal opportunities, oriented towards regional and local potentials, irrespective of where people live' (EU Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, 2007, § 3). Although the term territorial cohesion is not ques-

¹ It must be admitted that the term 'territorial cohesion' itself came up after the adoption of the ESDP. Nevertheless, 'there is not that much difference between the substance of territorial cohesion and spatial development policy', as followed in the ESDP (Faludi, 2009, p. 17).

tioned and implicitly can even be traced back to the ESDP, a specification of such a universal definition still is missing. Hence, in the *Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion* many questions are raised (CEC, 2008, p. 13), among them those concerning the most appropriate definition and the most appropriate geographical scale. Furthermore, it is stated that territorial cohesion addresses the urgent need for an integrated approach to spatial problems.

These questions sound familiar to those who followed the making of the ESDP and its application. This phase of spatial planning in Europe, roughly covering a decade starting in the mid-1990s, was stamped by the rivalry between the Commission on the one side and the member states on the other about the degree to which the EU can influence spatial planning. As the formal competence in the field of spatial planning is with the member states, the ESDP is a legally non-binding document. Hence, it provides 'a policy framework for better cooperation between Community sectoral policies with significant spatial impacts and between Member States, their regions and cities' (CEC, 1999, § 22). The ESDP introduces 'territory' as a 'new dimension of European policy' but at the same instant states that 'spatial development policies [...] must not standardize local and regional identities in the EU, which help enrich the quality of life of its citizens' (CEC, 1999, § 1). In the core section of the ESDP several policy aims are developed which should serve as guidelines for balanced spatial development throughout the EU. Beside these precise spatial development objectives, the ESDP promotes in general an attitude of strengthened consideration of the European dimension in spatial development policies also at national and regional level. Furthermore, it intends to strengthen new forms of governance by emphasising the importance of cooperation between various actors, different governmental and administrative levels.

Different from the case of territorial cohesion, experience made with the making and application of the ESDP is in hand. Basically, three aspects are relevant here.

Firstly, the making of the ESDP was fuelled by the 'usual suspects' (Faludi and Waterhout, 2002), and so did the *Territorial Agenda* (TAEU), its successor, receive different support from the member states (Faludi, 2009). In particular the ESDP is renowned for reflecting a 'northwestern perspective' on spatial planning, because it can be traced back to the French strategic planning approach and the German comprehensive integrated planning approach. Influence of the UK can be noticed from the outline of a distinct multi-level-governance system, and its discursive nature is the north European share of the ESDP (Janin Rivolin and Faludi, 2005, p. 211). What is missing, is the perspective of the south European states, in particular Greece, Italy, and Spain.

According to the national involvement in the ESDP process, its impact on member states' spatial planning and policy varies. In those countries, which have strongly influenced the ESDP process, the need to change planning practices is

felt less urgently. In the remaining countries as well as in the new member states, the ESDP undoubtedly influenced the development of new planning approaches and institutions (ESPON 2.3.1, 2007, p. 154). Because of the fear of losing the share of structural funds and because of the general reluctance against a predominantly non-southern European strategy, most of the southern member states adopted a rather sceptic and defensive approach towards the ESDP, including its application.

Secondly, with the making of the ESDP the term ‘multi-level governance’ has become popular for describing and explaining the institutional set-up for governing in the European Union. The term emerged from discussions on European integration theories which were dominated by two perspectives. On the one side, the intergovernmental perspective conceptualised the process of European integration as controlled by the state governments. On the other side, the supranational perspective emphasised the self-enforcing mechanisms of supranational institutions and integration processes. With increasing integration in selected sectors and increasing competences of supranational institutions, the integration process eludes increasingly the control of state governments (cf. George, 2005, p. 112).

Due to the non-binding character of the ESDP, its influence differs at the different levels of spatial policy. Generally speaking, the extent to which it is taken into account varies according to the (national) administrative and policy-making systems. Moreover, it is very much dependent on the political support and on the relevance of its arguments and policy options (cf. Williams, 2000, p. 363). Having noticed this, it becomes increasingly important that the perception gains ground that documents such as the ESDP and the TAEU and concepts such as territorial cohesion deliver a European perspective on spatial development – and that they open new worlds, which the European and national bodies need to learn to understand and handle (cf. Böhme and Schön, 2006, p. 68).

From this point of view it is a striking experience that ‘the planning systems in the countries are not static, but borrow and mix elements from the other styles of spatial planning and thus are dynamic’ (ESPON 2.3.2, 2007, p. F-92) and – to conclude – return different national and regional perspectives to the European level of spatial planning.

Thirdly, this leads to the question, whether the Mediterranean states of Greece, Italy, and Spain can contribute considerable experience to the evaluation of ESDP application. Janin Rivolin and Faludi (2005b, p. 210) say yes, quoting Jaques Delors, who emphasised as early as 1989 that ‘local knowledge and the forces of auto-development’ are ‘as important as investments’. Indeed, this sort of contribution can be delivered by the member states in discussion, as it is their image that there is an ‘important gap between established plans and reality’ (Giannakourou, 2005, p. 320), namely spontaneous urban sprawl and unlawful

building as well as informal planning practices despite all the rules. In these countries, there is a 'greater tradition of alternative informal mechanisms and greater flexibility in conforming to the law', as Newman and Thornley (1996, p. 39) have put it. This is a result of the fact that the rigid planning systems are not so well established and that they have neither strong public support nor great political priority, a circumstance which makes them less effective.

As the above review shows, the application of the ESDP is a complex process which takes place within a multi-level system of spatial development policies and within the context of other interlinked European policies. Also, the ESDP has to be seen as part of an ongoing process of shaping European spatial policy which reached a next step with the adoption of the TAEU. However, this does not mean that the ESDP is becoming obsolete, but rather that it needs to be analysed which of the strategies and ideas reflected and promoted by the ESDP prevail, which change, and how this happens.

In order to evaluate the application of this strategic planning document, it is therefore necessary to identify its addressees and to assess 'how their decisions relate to the plan and its messages' (cf. Sykes, 2008, p. 550) – and how the ESDP 'wording' is interpreted. This is done in this paper.

3. THE CASE OF INTERREGIONAL COOPERATION IN GREECE, ITALY, AND SPAIN

The empirical base of this paper is delivered by the Interreg IIC project ProgreSDEC, the title being the contraction of 'progress' and 'SDEC', which is the French acronym of the ESDP. The project fostered interregional cooperation with a view to building relationships and to promoting exchange of experiences and good practices in the field of territorial cohesion, spatial planning, and economic development. The background of the project was laid by a rather vertically oriented research starting from the review of the ESDP process on the European level. In addition several steps of analysis have been carried out looking at the relevant national and regional planning systems and selected regional planning tools.

ProgreSDEC has been organised as a Regional Framework Operation (RFO). The RFO worked on two levels, one being regional, the other one local. The task of the regions concerned the initiation of exchange and cooperation between local authorities – and the reflection of this process with the RFO partners. The local authorities gained access to the Interreg funds and conducted so called 'sub-projects' in cooperation with partners from other regions. It was compulsory that at least one of them came from another member state. In such a complicated project activity the support of the regions to the local authorities

has been crucial (professional involvement, project design support, technical assistance) to ensure their participation.

The sub-projects can be regarded as case studies dealing with the interregional and transnational cooperation between actors on the same level. Hereby, the project ProgreSDEC did not only aim at deepening insights on European spatial policies by carrying out research and analyses, but it aimed at making an active contribution to the application of the ESDP at the regional and local level. For this purpose an exchange of experiences and joint experimentations of methods and procedures for territorial management has been initiated in the participating regions. The selection, promotion, and implementation of these sub-projects has been the heart of the project. The local experiences made here are used as valuable knowledge basis not only for the reflection of the ESDP, but also for the identification of general governance trends and changing planning attitudes on local and regional level.

Seven of the project partners were hosts to sub-projects: the Italian regions of Latium (lead partner of the project), Piedmont, and Sicily; the Greek regions of Western and Central Macedonia; the Spanish regions of Navarra and Madrid. These regions have been assisted in project outline and evaluation by the Leibniz Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning from Germany.

All in all, there have been 14 sub-projects with a total of 47 different sub-project partners. 27 of them are municipalities or groups of them, 10 provinces (for Italian regions) or prefectural authorities (in the case of Central Macedonia), 3 parks, and 7 other (from development agencies to public service consortia). The projects dealt with either management of the landscape system and sustainable development, polycentrism, urban renewal, or urban-rural relations. Goals which have been widely achieved concerned the compilation of tools (e.g. for the SEA = Strategic Environmental Assessment), awareness rising (e.g. concerning civil protection and alternative tourism), development and application of common methodologies (e.g. in respect of cultural landscape management), development of benchmarks (e.g. for cultural tourism or territorial observatories), and procedures of participation (such as virtual labs and cooperation between public and private actors) (cf. ProgreSDEC, 2008, p. 128).

The evaluation of the sub-projects made in the following section basically traces back to the analysis of two mostly quantitative questionnaires, which were distributed among the sub-project partners at the start and the finish of their projects. As three of the partners were involved in several projects, the number of questionnaires distributed amounted to a total of 52. The questionnaires were especially developed for the purpose of ProgreSDEC and covered the reflection of the project participation, concerning motivation, expected outcome, organisation, experience gained, and relevance of European policies. The evaluation results were communicated and discussed with the project partners to ensure

reliability. The evaluation of the sub-projects is framed by an evaluation of the respective national and regional planning systems as well as selected regional planning tools.

4. THE FINDINGS ON TERRITORIAL COHESION

In this paper the findings on territorial cohesion will be structured along the following issues: Europeanisation and awareness (context), relevance of European policies (contents), and territorial governance (process).

4.1. Europeanisation and Awareness

The ESDP – and the TAEU – do not only promote certain spatial development objectives, but they likewise aim at widening the perception of national, regional, and local actors towards the European territory. They help the various actors to position their territory in the European context. In this sense, both documents can be described as instruments for Europeanisation, such as, of course, the more sectoral directives and policies of the EU. Against this background, in this chapter the focus is on the effects of interregional and transnational cooperation on planning, as it can be derived from the experience gained in the ProgreSDEC sub-projects.

When the sub-projects started, 72% of all sub-project partners attempted to reflect on the current practices through comparison with experience from other European regions and to evaluate the planning practices (cf. figure 1). This matches the bottom-up perspective, which is followed in many theoretical considerations on European multi-level governance. The application of European directives and policies as an equivalent to the top-down perspective, on the other hand, seemed to be less important (45%), even more so the promotion of own best practices in a wider (interregional and transnational) territorial scale (34%).

With the experience of ProgreSDEC this has changed considerably, as the achievement of reflection and application issues turned out to be of similar relevance (61 and 59%, while promotion of best practices ended up third again with 39%). It seems that sub-project partners became aware that the application of top-down measures is just as important as horizontal cooperation and exchange – this being a first hint what ‘Europeanisation’ can be perceived as.

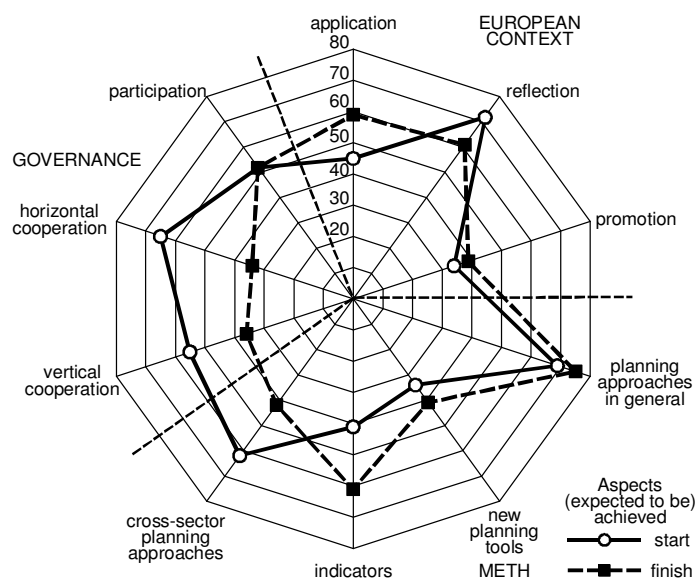


Fig. 1. (Expected) effects of ProgreSDEC sub-projects on planning

Source: survey conducted by Piedmont Region and Leibniz Institute for Regional Development and Structural Planning (IRS), own compilation (Given are the percentages of those sub-project partners who regarded it *ex ante* 'very important' that the sub-project will deliver results in the respective issue (start) and who regarded the project *ex post* in the respective issue as 'successful' – finish), $n = 37$ (start) resp. 45 (finish)

Looking at the methods, sub-project partners focused on the general improvement of planning approaches at the end of the project even slightly more (75%) than at the beginning (69%). In comparison to other effects examined, this one turned out to be the most important one. Taking into account that two-thirds of respondents stated that the outputs matched or even exceeded their expectations, the experience of interregional and transnational cooperation in ProgreSDEC must have left its mark. The percentages of the other effects covered by the questionnaires give an impression, what can be perceived as 'improved planning approaches', i.e. application and reflection in a wider European context, participation as an element of governance, and indicators as a methodological approach to improve planning practices.

Indeed, the definition of indicators turned out to be of particular importance to the sub-project partners (61% compared to 41% at the beginning). The relevance of indicators outscored both of the other two methodological answer options. From the experience gained in the sub-projects, it can be shown that time was too short not only to develop new tools (34% to 41%), but also to develop cross-sector planning approaches – the latter in contrast to the expectations (from 62% down to 42%).

Cross-sector planning approaches can be regarded as the methodological counterpart of procedural approaches to integration. And here the achievements finally turned out to be lower than expected, too. This in particular holds for horizontal cooperation, which fell from 65% to 34%. In a similar way the achievements in respect of vertical cooperation (36% compared to 55% at the beginning) were disillusioning. In both cases it can be shown that governance on the one hand is an attractive aspect of planning, but on the other hand difficult to 'implement'. In other words, there seem to be considerable limitations to an implementation of integrated policies on the local scale which most of the sub-project partners belong to. The institutionalisation of integration has not gone far enough to become stronger than sectoral approaches.

Finally, most sub-project partners have been successful in increasing awareness of and participation in planning processes by third actors or the public (52% in both questionnaires). The reason for this might be that participation is a local issue, which is easier to achieve in a short-term project than horizontal or vertical cooperation, and that participation is the *conditio sine qua non* for all attempts to develop or strengthen governance networks – more formalised co-operation structure might follow soon.

Concluding, the major issue of the sub-projects is awareness in different aspects:

- reflection: current practices in a European context (awareness of the European territorial and institutional environment),
- indicators: measurement of objectives and their respective performance (awareness of the quality of planning),
- participation: communication to or with third actors respectively the public (awareness of the regional or local 'roots').

4.2. Perception of ESDP Objectives

As far as the contents of planning are concerned, the analyses and work of ProgreSDEC show various ways how the ESDP objectives are used in local and regional planning and how the responsible actors directly or indirectly deal with these objectives. For instance, the analysis of regional planning systems and selected planning tools confirms a wide application of ESDP objectives. In some cases a direct and explicit application can be observed. Although in many further cases the ESDP is not explicitly mentioned, a considerable coherence with ESDP objectives can be noticed. In particular, in the regions of Navarra and Central Macedonia the ESDP explicitly guides the regional strategies and through this all subordinated planning tools. A coherence to ESDP objectives is given in strategic plans as well as in sector plans. It is in the nature of strategic

plans that they aim at broader objectives like balanced and sustainable development and promote an integrated and intersectoral approach. Therefore, a close relation to the ESDP objectives often is inherent and easily to achieve.

Strategic planning and integrated objectives as promoted by the ESDP in many regions gain in importance due to increasing tensions between centre and periphery respectively urban and rural areas. Therefore, it is often the regional level which promotes strategic plans. The subordinate municipal planning is meant to apply to the strategic direction and to realise the broad, integrated objectives with concrete implementation steps. Two difficulties result from this. Firstly, the application and implementation of 'soft' tools like strategic plans and integrated planning approaches depends on the cooperation of the authorities from all spatial levels and bears the risk of conflicts over competencies. Secondly, the perception of the meaning of objectives and the adaptation to specific local situations might vary and raise the need for clarification and intensive discussion amongst the relevant actors.

The need to discuss key terms and concepts of spatial planning was also strongly evident in the sub-projects. What sub-project partners were looking for was most of all a possibility of enlarging their knowledge on planning approaches and instruments rather than building formal institutional networks. However, in the course of the sub-projects it often proved to be difficult to achieve a common understanding of concepts and objectives. A basic obstacle was linked to communication in a strict sense, i.e. the fact that the whole operation had English as official language, which many local planners do not speak and understand fluently. But also in a broader sense communicating the meaning of key terms turned out to be difficult due to the different administrative contexts, different approaches to planning issues, different policy tools and, thus, different 'institutional languages'. In the end, the broad objectives drawn from the ESDP were often not applied as guiding framework for joined discussion and joined local planning activities in the sub-projects but rather as an umbrella for separated activities and diverging ideas on these objectives. Nevertheless, in the few cases where the sub-project partners worked on a common definition of key words and concepts, this proved to be fruitful.

Two out of the three ESDP-guidelines – 'polycentric spatial development and a new urban-rural relationship' and 'wise management of the natural and cultural heritage', unlike 'parity of access to infrastructure and knowledge' – received high attention in ProgreSDEC. In the sub-projects they were subject of intensive debates and in the regional planning tools selected for a detailed analysis they played prominent roles as topics. A further, third issue which turned out to be important for the whole operation of ProgreSDEC is the one of 'governance'. The reflection on governance and the ESDP-guidelines can be summarised as follows:

1. Polycentricity is widely applied but with different meaning at different levels. As long as the regional level was looked at, polycentricity turned out to be a matter of regions. Therefore, in many regional plans the outstanding role of cities and metropolitan regions as motors of spatial development is highlighted and many objectives focus on the relatively abstract relationship between cities and their hinterland. On the other hand, polycentricity understood locally corresponds to urban-rural relationship in terms of the built environment. Hence, local rather than regional authorities concentrate on the relationship of small cities and their immediate surrounding landscape. They touch issues like the support of good accessibility and a balance between green areas and built areas within conurbations.

2. Access to infrastructure and knowledge has been tangent only marginally to the interests of the sub-project partners, which mostly are working on the local level of planning. This matches results from other research on the peculiarity of (southern) EU member states (cf. ESPON 2.3.1, 2007, p. 135) and, apart from that, basically seems to be a topic relevant on a regional or even national rather than a local scale. In those cases, where this objective has been addressed in sub-projects, 'access' is not understood in a comprehensive way as it is promoted by the ESDP, but rather in a mere technical, infrastructure related way, i.e. concerning infrastructure investments and national and international transport networks.

3. Natural and cultural heritage have been of major importance to most of the sub-project partners and the regional project partners, which again is a peculiarity of the member states involved in this study (cf. ESPON 2.3.1, 2007, p. 135). Integration has gone further than the combination of natural and cultural issues – it even involved development and, therefore, contributes to a new conceptualisation of landscape and its natural, cultural, and economic assets. But, narrowing down this wider context to the concept of landscape, it turns out that concrete policy tools vary a lot from member state to member state and from region to region. The adaption of the concept ranges from a more holistic approach (landscape as the place where interactions between human activities and natural processes take place or cultural, economical and ecological values are confronting each other) to a stricter one (the portion of land which stays outside urban and urban-like areas). For the work in sub-projects even the reference to supposedly shared documents like the European Convention on Landscape did not completely provide a common ground because in most cases this agreement has not been transferred into actual planning tools yet.

4. The issue of governance for most of the sub-project partners was inherent to their work since their projects aimed at developing or strengthening institutional structures, networks or participation. It became also apparent from the analysis of regional planning tools that institutional aspects are widely acknowledged as being important for spatial planning and development. However, when

it comes to the definition of what governance or even territorial governance means, no general answer can be given. Some of the sub-project partners faced this problem and developed a joined understanding of the term governance, some did not.

Concluding, planning as promoted by the ESDP does no longer set strict regulations but defines framework conditions for action which allow for the flexible implementation of planning objectives. This, however, requires an intensive discussion of objectives and concepts and their adaption to the local context. This apparently includes common understanding and the agreement on key terms. In the end, these findings can help to promote 'action spaces that, on the one hand, are the expression of endogenous and self-determining regional forces and initiatives and that, on the other hand, are responsive to overarching EU goals and objectives' (Gualini, 2008, p. 17). Therefore, new institutional arrangements are required in order to give weight to the 'soft' territorially different approaches.

4.3. Territorial Governance

With the increasing use of the adjective 'territorial' in the debate on European policies the focus on governance changed. Hence, among planners the debate on governance nowadays rather stresses its territoriality than its multi-level character. As a result, territorial governance is defined 'as a process of the organization and co-ordination of actors to develop territorial capital in a non-destructive way in order to improve territorial cohesion at different levels' (ESPON 2.3.2, 2007, p. 13) or meant to 'create opportunities for innovative economic potential for development, building upon experiences of successful partnership and political cooperation in a functional regional context' (EU Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, 2007, § 17).

Thus, governance is not seen as a policy but rather a process with the distinct objective to pursue territorial cohesion. Furthermore, it is related to the potential of a territory, i.e. 'territorial capital' as the ESPON researchers have put it. Governance deals with the representation of interests by different actors and, therefore, with space in a dynamic context.

To secure the link between governance and its topics in the course of ProgreSDEC, each of the sub-projects has been defined according to a specific objective which it aims to reach. What is of interest here are the processes of integration and transformation that need to take place in order to reach these objectives. Against this background, it is striking that the discussion on objectives and concepts in the sub-projects turned out to require a considerable amount of time – more than expected. It can be concluded that within the context

of these projects institutional arrangements had to be found. Due to the concentration on the application of methods and tools, which the sub-project partners intended, this happened mostly in a horizontal dimension – both interregionally, as long as cooperation within the sub-project as a whole is concerned, and innerregionally, as regards the process in the sub-project partner's region itself.

But the vertical dimension of planning, basically still dominant in European governance processes, remained influential in the background. It turned out in the course of the sub-projects that the coordination of distinct sectoral policies involved the consideration of top-down approaches, which in sectoral disciplines still prevail. So, governance both in its vertical and horizontal dimension has become one of the key issues in ProgreSDEC and its sub-projects.

Apart from that, cooperation within the ProgreSDEC partnership and the sub-projects made aware that there is a considerable interrelationship between spatial planning in general and socio-economic development. Discovering and shaping the links between both disciplines and their respective approaches to solve spatial problems is of prime importance for the – European, national, regional, and local – issue of sustainability. ProgreSDEC with its interregional and transnational approach provided local authorities with the opportunity to exchange knowledge and experiences with partners from other regions in the field of spatial development, its policies and tools. In the same instance it advanced approaches to integrate spatial planning and economic programming, as to the goals set in the EU guidelines (ESDP and TAEU).

It can be shown that integration as it is understood here, i.e. regarding content in the first place, consequently is followed by the attempt to support it through institutional integration of actors on different levels of administration and political power and of different disciplines and sectors – which is a matter of governance, as mentioned before. The complexity of spatial issues and the necessity for integration of both contents and institutions not surprisingly turned out to be the highest in metropolitan areas:² In these places development pressure is relatively high and the necessity to preserve the demands of comparatively 'weak' actors and issues (such as landscape compared to the built environment) is more obvious than elsewhere. For this reason – and probably because of the national relevance of these regions – metropolitan regions turned out to have more regional regulations and administrative power than other regional bodies.

It can be added that in rural regions and the countryside a necessity of two-fold integration exists, too, and that the sub-project partners attempted several approaches to tackle this. The majority of sub-projects were concerned with the future of landscape and rural areas in the face of development necessities and development pressure. Among others, tourism was discovered as an integrative

² In ProgreSDEC these have been Madrid, Rome and Thessaloniki.

rather than a sectoral issue, as it affords to define the territorial capital of the regions and to manage both the requirements to boost tourism based development and to preserve the local resources.

Based on the experience made in the sub-projects, it can be shown that on the local level two – interlinked – institutional approaches have been pursued. Firstly, due to the rather practical purpose of the sub-projects, local authorities looked for tools and methods which can make it easier to define quality in planning when facing a complex structure of demands and conflicts of land use. This explains the high relevance assigned to the development of indicators (cf. figure 1). Therefore, sub-project partners had to leave traditional government procedures aside and extend the range of institutional arrangements they are familiar with to governance models, which increase the variety of institutional frameworks at hand. As a consequence, municipalities developed an influence beyond the limits which otherwise restrain them as territorially bound entities.

Secondly, local authorities uttered a considerable demand for external expertise and scientific support for the development of planning tools, as the capacity to support integrated socio-economic development – or ‘balanced spatial development’ as many sub-project partners put it – with such a high pretension is limited. In the vertical direction, the dominance of EU-structured sectoral policies is strong and prevents the shaping of the horizontal dimension. Even in those cases, where horizontal relations within one region have developed, it proved to be difficult to transfer the experiences between actors with different professional or organisational background. To manage cooperation between tourism, environment, development, planning, transport, etc. external expertise seems to be essential.

It remains to be seen in further research activities who finally gains the experience and expertise and who guarantees its distribution among local authorities and other actors. As far as ProgreSDEC is concerned, it has been the regional RFO partners who developed accompaniment activities for the local sub-project partners. So, here it has been the project architecture which demonstrated that on the regional level support and guidance for local activities can be provided. Hence, it is no surprise that, as a conclusion from ProgreSDEC, some RFO partners intend to develop a strategic coordination of local activities on the regional level. As some of the analysed examples show, integrated and cooperative planning approaches require strong commitment and willingness to share competencies of all involved actors. A lack of willingness and capability for cooperation might otherwise lead to fragmented planning results.

ProgreSDEC has been an attempt to integrate a traditional top-down approach, where the higher level public authority defines the framework and the rules for interaction, with a bottom-up one, where local actors are called upon to give substance to this interaction. But the more policy processes become complex, stratified, and dense, the less local authorities (especially the smaller

ones) have the instruments, the knowledge, and the competences to deal with them. In a time characterised by the scarcity and fragmentation of resources, the need for an actor which is both independent from the single stakeholders and capable of coordinating the different interests, is obvious. The experience gained shows that regions can serve as activators of such policy processes at the local (and regional) scale. Therefore regions seem to deliver an appropriate scale to territorial governance.

However, the range of institutional arrangements found to manage these regional policy processes is wide, due to the differing legal frameworks constituting regional authorities. In some cases the development of strategic planning tools, the provision of a set of guidelines, and the establishment of new bodies to manage the implementation of such regional policies can be observed. New approaches of this sort require an institutional change and often additional expenditure on the part of the regional level.

Therefore, in a regional context regions as new spatial focus have gained in significance for political and planning tasks (cf. Priemus and Zonneveld, 2004, p. 293). Otherwise, in a European context regions still have to fulfil top-down rules with only minor possibilities to influence the European policies within a bottom-up process. To sum up, European approaches take and give decision making power at the same time.

In other words, regional planning systems have a common problem with their 'sandwich' position between European planning and policy on the one hand and the municipalities and their competencies, e.g. in urban planning, on the other hand. A similar situation arises in the relationship to sectoral policies, where the horizontal coordination task is hampered by low competencies and political support, which still is a general problem, as a recent study confirms (ESPON 2.3.2, 2007, p. 15).

5. CONCLUSION

Territorial cohesion has two dimensions. The first one reflects the relationship of different levels in planning (European, national, regional, local), i.e. multi-level governance, the second one reflects integration of different sectoral approaches and/or actors on the same level. Whereas the first dimension has a vertical direction, the second dimension has a horizontal direction. This paper looks at both dimensions and explains three aspects of territorial cohesion:

1. 'Awareness' is a key factor of territorial cohesion for three reasons. Firstly, local or regional authorities become aware of their particularity in a European respect when reflecting current planning practices in transnational projects

(‘awareness of the European territorial and institutional environment’). Another, second type of awareness can be observed, when planners become acquainted with indicators of planning quality, i.e. measurements of objectives and their respective performance (‘awareness of the quality of planning’). Thirdly, the term ‘awareness’ relates to participation issues and, therefore, endogenous potential (‘awareness of the regional or local roots’).

2. European terms of integrative planning are defined differently depending on the local and regional background. This applies in particular to ‘polycentricity’, ‘landscape’, ‘access to infrastructure and knowledge’, ‘governance’, and ‘integration’. The interpretations found in sub-projects reveal a certain integrative understanding (a sort of ‘quality of planning’), but it can be shown as well that – when it comes to implementation – sectoral approaches seem to prevail because of their institutional strength.

3. The issues of both ‘awareness’ and ‘quality’ can explain why local and regional planners leave traditional government procedures aside and extend the range of institutional arrangements they are familiar with to governance models, which increase the variety of institutional frameworks at hand. This ‘territorial governance’ takes account of the fact that European politics give and take influence to the regions. Therefore it is taking place in regions rather than single municipalities.

Concluding, territorial governance can be looked at as an institutional approach to develop integrative planning and development on a regional level in the context of territorial cohesion. This results in a process of cooperation, which requires the involvement of ‘all stakeholders of territorial development’, as it is stated in the TAEU (EU Ministers for Spatial Planning and Development, 2007, § 5). If decision making turns out to be managed this way, the question arises how the relation between new fashioned governance and old fashioned government develops. This, in particular, accounts for cases, where the introduction of new approaches goes along with the change of planning levels (from local to regional).

Territorial cohesion and – along with it – territorial governance do not necessarily need to be a matter of European scale. But they should. The basic reason for this is delivered by the ongoing virtualisation of communication and transport and the development of the network society. Both processes contribute to the diminishing importance of physical distance, as the actors’ networks usually do not stick to the territory marked by administrative or political responsibilities. The concern of integrated planning, therefore, increasingly is questioned in a spatial structure with blurry boundaries and replaced by selected coalitions of opportunity. The experience from the Mediterranean states shows that even in case of weak planning tradition or institutional fragmentation, as it can be found here, European policies can contribute to a perspective for terms such as ‘territory’ or ‘territorial cohesion’. The value of this experience goes beyond

these states, as recent research on the knowledge society shows that in a time where spatial boundaries lose their barrier effect, regions become important as a place where the different spacious networks of the actors are bundled (cf. Kujath and Stein, 2009). Territorial capital is a territorial resource, which remains.

Transferring this into the issue of spatial planning in the European context, Europeanisation can mean the development of a European identity and its integration into national, regional, and local identities, be it through the application of European directives, the reflexion of policies against a European background, or the promotion of experiences. It has to be made sure that the process respects the endogenous character of territorial capital.

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