Chapter 1
Debating the Urban Dimension of Territorial Cohesion

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Abstract The Territorial Cohesion goal was only included in the EU Treaty by 2009, with a view to promote a more balanced and harmonious European territory. One year earlier (2008), the European Commission (EC) published the 'Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion—Turning territorial diversity into strength'. Neither one, nor the other, clearly defines the meaning of the Territorial Cohesion concept. The later, however, proposes three main policy responses towards more balanced and harmonious development: (i) Concentration: overcoming differences in density; (ii) Connecting territories: overcoming distance; and (iii) Cooperation: overcoming division. Although not explicitly, this document identifies several 'urban questions' to be dealt when promoting territorial cohesive policies: avoiding diseconomies of very large agglomerations and urban sprawl processes, combating urban decay and social exclusion, avoiding excessive concentrations of growth, promoting access to integrated transport systems and creating metropolitan bodies. In this light, this chapter proposes to debate the importance of the urban dimension to achieve the goal of territorial cohesion at several territorial levels.

Keywords Territorial cohesion · Urban dimension · Polycentrism
Functional regions · EU cohesion policy

1.1 The Urban Dimension: A Key Pillar to Achieve Territorial Cohesion

With the entering into force of the Lisbon Treaty (2009), Territorial Cohesion became a reinforced political objective of the European Union (EU). In sum, this Territorial Cohesion rationale supports the longstanding EU political goal of achieving an overall harmonious and balanced development of the EU territory, by reducing disparities between its various regions and the backwardness of the least favoured ones, from a

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socio-economic standpoint (article 174 of the Treaty on the Functioning of the EU) (Dao et al. 2017).

As a concept, Territorial Cohesion is relatively new, and is still mostly an EU concept (Medeiros 2016a), echoing its French roots (Faludi 2004) and its formal introduction in the Amsterdam Treaty (1999) and, more recently, in the Lisbon Treaty (2009) (Servillo 2010). Also noteworthy, Territorial Cohesion is generally understood as a contested, illusive and vague concept (Colomb and Santinha 2014; Davoudi 2005; Faludi 2005; Zillmer et al. 2012). Indeed, being an umbrella concept (Faludi 2007) makes its meaning and fundamental analytic dimensions vary from author to author (Holder and Layard 2011; Medeiros 2014; Schön 2005; Van Well 2012). Fundamentally, this has been the case since the first published dissertations on Territorial Cohesion were presented, one being a study from the Committee of the Regions (COR 2003), and another a full dedicated section on the Second EU Cohesion Report (EC 2001). Here, while the former focused on the economic and social elements of cohesion, the later associated, for the first time, the notion of Territorial Cohesion with the EU goal of achieving a more balanced and harmonious development, following the rationale presented in the formulation of the European Spatial Development Perspective (ESDP) (EC 1999).

Crucially, the Second Cohesion Report introduced the 'urban element' in the Territorial Cohesion debate, namely, by invoking the advantages of achieving a more polycentric development (Faludi 2006), as a basis for a more balanced distribution of economic activities across the EU, as expressed in the ESDP. Since then, the EU Territorial Cohesion Policy rationale has emerged as a policy paradigm of the 'EU territorial development' (Clifton et al. 2016). At the same time, one started to see the emergence of distinct complementary elements to the common socio-economic ones when invoking the notion of Territorial Cohesion, such as environmental aspects (EEA 2010), soft spaces of spatial development (Luukkonen and Moilanen 2012), the valorisation of territorial capital (Vanolo 2010) and, ultimately, the need for a more spatially balanced and sustainable development process (González et al. 2015).

In a nutshell, many of the proposed definitions for the Territorial Cohesion concept encompass elements associated with economic, social and environmental aspects of development policies (see Medeiros 2016a). For instance, the components for understanding Territorial Cohesion in the Tequila Model are mostly associated with the 'economy-society-environment dimensional triad' (ESPON 3.2, 2006; Bradley and Zaucha 2017). Even so, a few (integrated and balanced territorial systems, compact city form—reduction of urban sprawl, efficient and polycentric urban systems, etc.) are clearly associated with an urban dimension of Territorial Cohesion. In a relatively older model, known as the 'star of territorial cohesion', the author proposed the 'polycentrism' and 'territorial cooperation' elements (later on associated with the notion of territorial governance) as key dimensions for the understanding of the Territorial Cohesion concept, alongside the socio-economic and environmental sustainability dimensions (Medeiros 2005) (Fig. 1.1).

Based on this star model, we understand the concept of territorial cohesion as 'the process of promoting a more cohesive and balanced territory, by: (i) supporting the reduction of socioeconomic territorial imbalances; (ii) promoting environmental

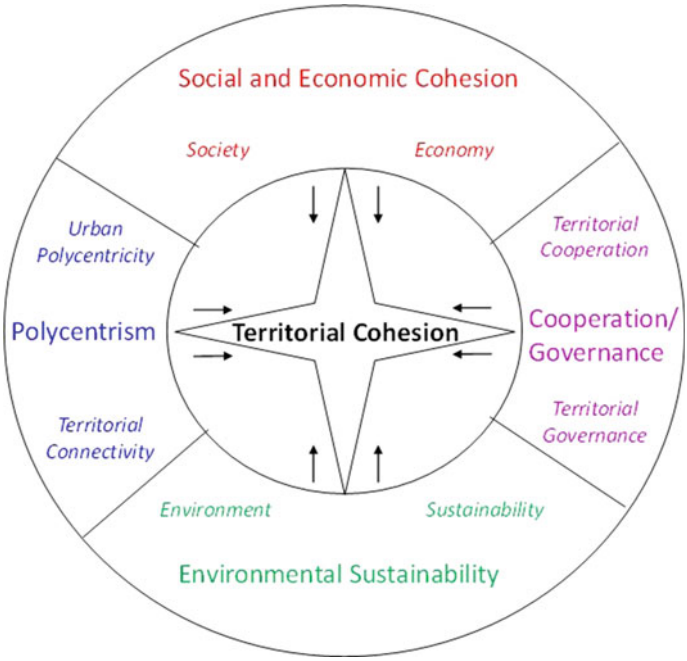

Fig. 1.1 The star of Territorial Cohesion. *Source* Medeiros (2016a)

sustainability; (iii) reinforcing and improving the territorial cooperation/governance processes; and (iv) reinforcing and establishing a more polycentric urban system' (Medeiros 2016a: 10). More acutely, for the morphologic polycentricity dimension, we proposed four main components, mostly associated with the urban systems characteristics in a given territory: (i) hierarchy/ranking, (ii) density, (iii) connectivity and (iv) distribution/shape.

Likewise, elements associated with this urban element of territorial cohesion are also debated in the Green Paper on Territorial Cohesion, namely, associated with the need to avoid excessive concentration (overcoming differences in density), and the need to correct urban sprawl and urban decay trends (EC 2008). Rather expectedly, the ESPON (European Spatial Planning Observatory Network) programme, established in 2002, supported the elaboration of several reports which discussed the main dimensions, components and respective indicators of the Territorial Cohesion concept (Abrahams 2014). The first, gave way to the elaboration of the already mentioned TEQUILA model (ESPON 3.2, 2006). Soon after, the INTERCO (2011) and the KITCASP (2012) reports proposed concrete indicators to assessing Territorial Cohesion trends. The former, identified one of its main Territorial Cohesion dimensions as the 'integrated polycentric territorial development', whilst associating it with territorial cooperation, migration, density and polycentricity-related indicators. Instead, the KITCASP project proposed the 'Integrated Spatial Development'

Table 1.1 The urban dimension of territorial cohesion in available literature

Model/Report	Dimension	Components
The Territorial Cohesion Star	Polycentrism	– Hierarchy/Ranking – Density – Connectivity – Distribution/Shape
ESPON Tequila Model		– Compact city form; Reduction of sprawl – Efficient and polycentric urban system – Cooperation between city and countryside – Integrated and balanced territorial system
ESPON KITCASP	– Promote polycentric and balanced territorial development – Encouraging integrated development in cities, rural and specific regions	– Improve settlements' performance in European and global competition and promote economic prosperity towards sustainable development – Contribute to reducing the strong territorial polarisation of economic performance, avoiding large regional disparities by addressing bottlenecks to growth – Smart development of city regions at varying scales – Development of the wide variety of rural areas to take account of their unique characteristics; and – Recognise and promote urban–rural interdependence through integrated governance and planning based on broad partnership
ESPON INTERCO	Integrated polycentric territorial development	– Population potential within 50 km – Net migration rate – Cooperation intensity – Cooperation degree – Polycentricity index

Source Several—own elaboration

main dimension of Territorial Cohesion to complement the economic (Economic Competitiveness and Resilience), social (Social Cohesion and Quality of Life) and environmental (Environmental Resource Management) related dimensions. When it comes to indicators, however, it proposes the use of population density/change, modal split, land-use change, house completions and access to services, which, in our opinion, are far less appropriate to asses this dimension than the ones advanced by the INTERCO project (Table 1.1)

Clearly, the Territorial Cohesion concept builds upon the notions of economic and social cohesion (Janin Rivolin 2005) whilst its urban dimension is still not sufficiently understood and clarified. As it turns out, however, the rising concerns on the implementation of urban development and regeneration policies in EU Member States (Colomb and Santinha 2014) could lead to an increasing need to highlight the importance of the urban dimension to achieve the goals of Territorial Cohesion Policies. For the most part, the urban dimension of Territorial Cohesion can be associated with the benefits related with a more balanced and harmonious distribution of the urban settlement across a given territory. This idea has strong connotations with the notion of 'Polycentricity' 'that encourages regions and cities, working with neighbouring territories, to explore common strengths and reveal potential complementarities, which brings added value that cannot be achieved by the individual regions and cities in isolation' (ESPON 2016: 1).

In general terms, the role of urban areas in promoting Territorial Cohesion processes is strong and diverse, mainly in highly urbanised territories, as is the case of the EU territory. Strong because cites are innovation hubs and places where global challenges can be best tackled. For instance, they have the potential to produce renewable and clean energy and to reduce energy consumption and CO^2 emissions, 'as the density of urban areas allows for more energy efficient forms of housing and transport' (EC 2014b: 4). As a recent ESPON report asserts 'cities play an important role in regional development and as part of strategies to promote territorial cohesion. Cities are functional areas where population and economic activities are concentrated and around which flows of goods and persons are organised. They are nodes in urban networks at different scales from the regional to the global. In both these respects, cities and towns of all sizes play important roles as drivers of territorial development' (ESPON 2014a: 7). As the term implies, however, the urban future requires developing innovative, social inclusive, eco-friendly and intelligent intra-urban and inter-urban transport and energy systems, and wider civic participation (Nijkamp and Kourtit 2013). On the whole, the urban dimension of Territorial Cohesion encompasses at least eight main components, with evident inter-relationship (Table 1.2).

Unlike other parts of the world (read USA and China), Europe is characterised by less concentrated and more polycentric urban structures (Fig. 1.2), and by dense networks of small and medium towns (EC 2014b). There is, nevertheless, a more densely populated axis known as the 'Pentagon area', consisting of the urban areas of London, Paris, Milan, Berlin and Hamburg, characterised by higher levels of socio-economic development. Hence, at the EU scale, urban development policies should foster the territorial competitiveness of the EU territory also outside this area, as the 'polycentric and balanced territorial development of the EU is a key element of achieving territorial cohesion' (Territorial Agenda 2011: 7).

To some degree, making Europe more polycentric has the potential to 'unleashing regional diversity and endogenous development as well as territorial cooperation as means to optimise the location of investments and reduce regional disparities, to support balanced and polycentric urban structures, favouring compact settlements and smart renewal of cities, as well as a sustainable management of natural and

Table 1.2 Main Components of the Urban Dimension of Territorial Cohesion

Component	Main goal	Importance for Territorial Cohesion
1—Polycentric and balanced urban development	– Favour a more balance distribution of the population across the territories	– Increase the ability to explore the territorial potentials across the territories. – Mitigate the negative effects of excessive concentration of inhabitants (pollution, criminality, traffic jams, stress, etc.)
2—Functional Urban Areas	– Favour territorial complementarities	– Increase territorial efficiency
3—Integrated Urban Development	– Favour territorial efficiency and sustainability	– Increase environmental sustainability – Increase territorial efficiency – Improve territorial governance processes
4—Social Cohesive Urban Development	– Favour socio-economic cohesion	– Reduce poverty – Reduce social imbalances
5—Urban connectivity	– Favour territorial accessibility	– Increase urban mobility – Increase environmental sustainability
6—Urban morphology – compact vs urban sprawl	– Favour urban compactness vs urban sprawl	– Increase territorial efficiency – Increase territorial connectivity – Increase territorial sustainability
7—Urban resilience	– Favour urban capacity to face adversities	– Increase territorial resilience – Increase territorial sustainability
8—Urban Planning	– Favour the anticipation of future scenarios	– Increase territorial modernisation – Increase territorial organisation

Source Own elaboration

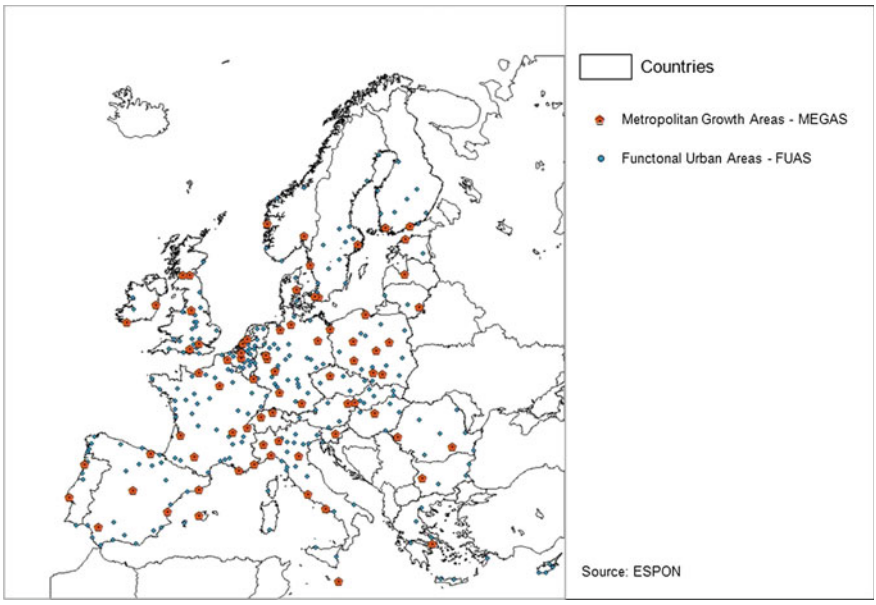

Fig. 1.2 The European Urban System—own elaboration based on ESPON data

cultural resources' (ESPON 2014b: 12). This policy goal is achieved, at the EU level by reinforcing second-tier cities, and a more developed network between cities at all territorial levels, together with a growing interdependency of urban and rural areas.

The potential for a more resource efficient habitat has long been recognised. Nevertheless, the policy response at the national and European levels to integrate sectoral initiatives has been slow, at best (EC 2014b). As Nijkamp and Kourtit postulate (2013) 'cities increasingly act in a system of connected networks that serve as strategic alliances for the development of our world. In this perspective, urban agglomerations are not necessarily a source of problems, but offer the integrative geographic action platform for creative solutions and new opportunities'. Indeed, the realisation among national governments and international agencies of the importance of urban centres to sustainable development has rapidly gained currency in recent years (Satterthwaite 2016).

Similarly, the notion of functional cities relates to the concept of Territorial Cohesion as it facilitates the identification of adequate urban influential areas with potential functional complementarities, which is required to better define sound Territorial Cohesion policies. This concept resonates with the term of Functional Urban Areas (FUA), which 'can be described by its labour market basin and by the mobility pattern of commuters, and includes the wider urban system of nearby towns and villages that are economically and socially dependent on an urban centre' (URBACT 2014: 13). These FUAs can also extrapolate national borders, thus making a case to function as cross-border FUAs, whilst contributing to reinforcing territorial governance

processes across administrative boundaries. As the ESDP points out 'promoting complementarity between cities and regions means simultaneously building on the advantages and overcoming the disadvantages of economic competition between them' (EC 1999: 21). As seen in both Figs. 1.2 and 1.3, the identification of FUAs varies from source to source, but they entail common criteria of being associated with large urban agglomerations.

At the urban level, there are also concrete measures which can lead to an increase in levels of Territorial Cohesion. These include, for instance, the correction of urban sprawl processes, as it contributes to high and unsustainable energy consumption rates (Territorial Agenda 2011). This goal is closely related with the need to implement sound and strategic urban planning, linked with wider regional planning strategies, as proposed by the UE Urban Agenda (2016). Additionally, urban development policies should favour the implementation of socio-economic cohesion, environmental sustainability, sound governance and urban resilience measures, in an interconnected way.

In combination with the urban elements already debated, the contribution of Integrated Sustainable Urban Strategies for promoting Territorial Cohesion is also paramount. For one, this policy rationale represents the potential to improve environmental sustainability development paths. On the other hand, and according to the EU Integrated Territorial Investment rationale, it promotes sounder territorial governance processes, as it allows for local authorities to initiate wider partnerships with other local authorities (Glinka 2017). For instance, the Polish experience so

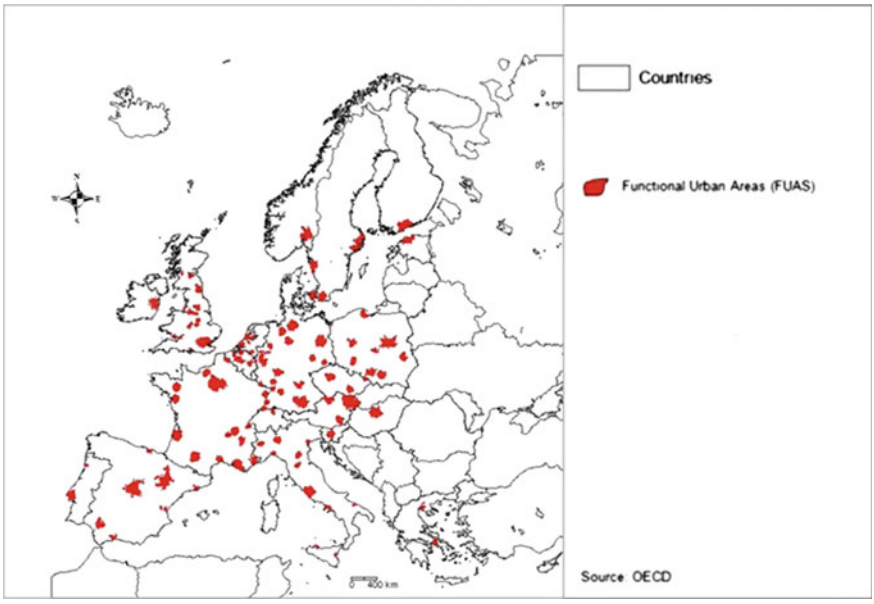

Fig. 1.3 Functional Urban Areas in Europe—own elaboration based on OECD data

far on the implementation of Integrated Territorial Investments has been reserved only for regional capitals and their functional areas. As such, a new mechanism (Integrated Territorial Agreement) was designed to be implemented in medium-sized towns and their functional areas, in order to better exploit their development potential and to mitigate their development bottlenecks (Kamrowska-Zaluska and Obracht-Prondzynska 2017).

1.2 EU Policies and the Urban Question

By today, approximately 72% of the EU population dwell in urban areas (cities, towns and suburbs). In spite of this, the EU does not have any formal Council formation dedicated to urban policies. Even so, 'there is an explicit agreement at European level on the character of the European city of the future and the principles on which an ideal European city should be based' (EC 2014b: 6). In practice, the urban question has been addressed by EU Cohesion Policy, directly or indirectly, namely, through the launching of the URBAN Community Initiative (CI) in 1994 (Chorianopoulos and Iossifides 2006), the national Operational Programmes and, more recently, the Integrated Sustainable Urban Development Strategies. In almost every way, the URBAN CI 'presented an innovative way of addressing area-based urban challenges, effectively leading the way for a sea-change in thinking on urban regeneration in many member-states, both in terms of content and process' (Carpenter 2006).

Also noteworthy is the growing recognition from the EC of the importance of the role that cites should play to promote the process of territorial development within the EU, which was crystallised in 2012, when the 'Directorate General for Regional Policy' was renamed 'Directorate General for Regional and Urban Policy', and when at least 50% of EU Cohesion Policy (2014–20) funding was directly allocated to EU urban areas. Furthermore, a growing number of voices argue that the conception and implementation of EU policies need to be adapted to urban realities, and that cities need to be adequately involved in these processes. Alongside, 'an increasing number of sectoral EU policies explicitly target urban areas: Energy, Information Society, Environment, Climate Action, Education and Culture, Transport, etc. support initiatives such as European Capital of Culture, Smart Cities and Communities European Innovation Partnership, Green Capital Award, Covenant of Mayors and Mayors Adapt' (EC 2014b: 7).

At an initial phase, the main concerns of the EU towards urban-related policy measures were centred in reducing the excessive concentration of activities and inhabitants in the most urbanised areas of the EU, and in contributing to urban renewal and physical regeneration of decaying industrial sites. At the same time, in 1994, 'the Commission launched the URBAN Initiative, aimed at social and economic regeneration of cities and at improving the environment. URBAN has sought to maximise the involvement of the grassroots, empowering local communities and encouraging local people to determine priorities and to take responsibility for their own areas' (EC 1996: 110).

As time went by, social-related concerns were added to the EU Urban Policy measures, with the goal of mitigating existing high levels of poverty and exclusion within EU urban areas. Again, the EC recognised the importance of cities as key locations for the pursuit of a strategy for cohesion and sustainable development, and as economic centres for the development of the surrounding suburban and rural areas. Finally, it postulated that 'networks of large cities can stimulate a more balanced and polycentric form of development in which medium-sized towns and cities can play a key role' (EC 2001: 3), following the ESDP rationale to promote a more polycentric territory.

By the mid-2000s, the URBAN CI was on its second phase, and covered 44% of the EU population who lived in urban areas, with over 50,000 inhabitants. In general, this CI 'has focused, in particular, on creating and improving local social capital, in part by including active learning measures as an integral part of programmes'. Moreover, it 'acted as a catalyst for regeneration and, in some cases, has had a major leverage effect on investment' (EC 2004: 159).

For the 2007–2013 EU Cohesion policy programming period, the EC developed, in cooperation with the European Investment Bank (EIB) and the Council of Europe Development Bank (CEB), the Joint European Support for Sustainable Investment in City Areas, an innovative financial instrument better known as JESSICA, to promote urban development in the following thematic areas[1]:

- Urban infrastructure: including transport, water/wastewater, energy;
- Heritage or cultural sites: for tourism or other sustainable uses;
- Redevelopment of brownfield sites: including site clearance and decontamination;
- Creation of new commercial floor space for SMEs, IT and/or R&D sectors;
- University buildings: medical, biotech and other specialised facilities;
- Energy efficiency improvements.

In addition, concerns were placed on the environmental problems derived by the growth of suburbanisation processes, and the consequent decline of city centres, 'with shops and other businesses closing down. This calls for effective management of land-use and public transport as well inner-city renewal to slow down or even reverse the trend' (EC 2007: 53). Also, the JESSICA instrument has contributed to the revitalisation, modernisation and adaptation of urban areas with a view for them to become more sustainable over time (Tarnawska and Rosiek 2015). It has been found, however, that despite all EC efforts to elevate the urban dimension of EU policies, 'most cities have so far had a limited role in policy design and implementation and there are few signs of active participation of local residents' (EC 2010: 234). This EC financial assistance for projects is offered in the form of loans, guarantees or equity for urban investment projects, which are to be implemented by public or private investors or in public–private partnerships, thus allowing for leveraging additional financial support (Dąbrowski 2014). On a positive note, JESSICA provides a sustainability and recyclability logic, by ensuring 'that resources will be reinvested in a constant way,

[1] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/funding/special-support-instruments/jessica/#2

to facilitate the implementation of projects aiming to sustainable urban development' (Patlitzianas 2011: 371).

For the 2014–2020 policy phase, the EC will direct financial support for sustainable urban mobility, regeneration of deprived communities and improved research and innovation capacity in urban areas, whilst a minimum of 5% of the European Regional Development Fund (ERDF) is earmarked for Integrated Sustainable Urban Development. Moreover, an urban development network (UDN) will be created in order to review on-the-ground deployment of European funds and the boosting knowledge-sharing performance between cities involved in integrated sustainable urban development and in Urban Innovative Actions. Finally, the URBACT III programme, acting as a European exchange and learning programme for promoting sustainable urban development, was financially strengthened and expanded, thus further enabling European cities to work together to develop better solutions to urban challenges. In synthesis, this programme has acted as an amplifier for participatory approaches with 'practitioners, city managers, elected representatives and stakeholders from other public agencies, the private sector and civil society' (URBACT 2014: 9).

Curiously, a more 'neoliberalist' vis-a-vis 'cohesive' vision for EU urban development is envisaged in the sixth EU Cohesion Report, which claims that the productivity of cities increases with its size, as larger cities are endowed with higher levels of human capital, larger share of high productivity sectors, 'greater supply of local public goods, as well as "shared", or common, facilities such as public laboratories and universities' (EC 2014a: 19) thus profiting from 'agglomeration benefits'. In a sense, the 'polycentric and balanced urban rationale' seemed to have given way to a 'growth and competitiveness rationale', very much coined with financial crisis eras.

On the most recent (seventh) EU Cohesion Report, however, the focus on the need to promote sustainable cities regained the EC attention, which highlighted the cities' potential solutions to current environmental challenges: 'while urban areas in the EU generally face more environmental challenges than other places, they can often prove to be more resource and energy-efficient than other areas where low density settlements, energy-intensive buildings (e.g. detached houses) and the level of dependency on the car for transport are generally more common. Housing in cities tends not only to occupy less land but also more frequently takes the form of apartments and townhouses, which generally require less energy to heat and cool' (EC 2017: 110). Moreover, EU Cohesion Policy started to pay particular attention to the specific socio-economic characteristics of EU functional areas and the promotion of the already mentioned Integrated Urban Development Strategies (van der Zwet et al. 2017).

In parallel, the ESPON programme supports a vision for a more open and polycentric European territory towards 2050, as increasing urbanisation levels and regional disparities are expected to occur in the following decades. Worse still, rising urbanisation is expected to lead, in many places, to uncontrolled urban sprawl processes. In this context, 'to improve its Territorial Cohesion, Europe needs to become more open and polycentric, fulfilling the original aim of the Treaty of Rome (1956) saying

that Europe has to become an open Community of equals with common strong institutions, and as well the aim of later Treaties to opt for a harmonious and balanced territory' (ESPON 2014b: 12).

1.3 The Rising of the EU Urban Agenda

The idea to forge the elaboration of a dedicated EU Urban Agenda is not new. Indeed, by 1997, the EC sponsored a Communication 'Towards an urban agenda in the European Union'. Later on, by 2011, the 'European Parliament adopted a resolution arguing for a strengthening of the urban dimension of EU policies and the intergovernmental co-operation on urban development policies, calling for a joint working programme or European Urban Agenda' (EC 2014b: 8). Reflecting the same preoccupations, by 2013 the Committee of the Regions (CoR) launched its own initiative opinion entitled 'Towards an integrated urban agenda for the EU' (EC 2014b).

In sum, the urban question has become a key focus and an increasingly important issue within EU policies in recent years (Partidário and Correia 2004). It is also worth underlying that, since the first document adopted by the EC related to urban and territorial development, known as the Leipzig Charter on Sustainable European Cities (2007), was published, the initial focus placed on solving issues related with deprived neighbourhoods, within the context of a city, has shifted towards the need to promote a smarter, more sustainable and socially inclusive urban development, during the Informal Ministerial Meeting on Urban Development Declaration, which took place in Toledo, in 2010.

After several other EU initiatives, which discussed urban issues on a formal level, the Pact of Amsterdam, also known as the 'Urban Agenda for the EU', was adopted in 2016, during the informal meeting of EU ministers responsible for urban development. By providing objectives, thematic priorities, actions and operational frameworks, this 'Agenda' highlights 12 thematic priorities, and 'creates a new model of multilevel and multidimensional cooperation for urban policy stakeholders, whose aim is to strengthen the urban dimension in European Union policies' (Olejnik 2017: 177–178).

In a brief overview, however, the EC still lacks the legislative powers, financial resources, organisational capacity and political power to develop a dedicated 'EU Urban Policy'. As such, the assistance given by the EC to urban issues will continue to be based on supporting 'urban policy experimentation, dissemination of best practice and a gradual raising of urban issues on the policy agenda' (Atkinson 2001: 399). In a different prism, the future of the EU Urban Policy will depend on specific crisis conditions, the policy integration/disintegration (read Brexit) trends and the empowerment and resource capacity of urban/regional authorities, amongst other factors (Delladetsima 2003).

Furthermore, the re-orientation of the EU structural and investment funds for the 2021–2027 programming period would certainly affect EC initiatives directly

involved in urban policy affairs, as occurred in previous programming periods (Lang and Török 2017). In this regard, EU Cohesion Policy is of critical importance to finance Urban Development Policies as it is viewed as 'one of, if not, the largest integrated development policies in the Western world, and one of the largest of such programmes anywhere in the world' (Mccann and Vargam 2015: 1255). It is also crucial to point out that these increasing political concerns over the 'urban question' are not exclusive of the EU. In the bigger picture, the United Nations have recently (2016) defined 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDG), one having an exclusive urban focus: Goal 11—Make cities and human settlements inclusive, safe, resilient and sustainable (Caprotti et al. 2017).

Regarding the EU territory, presently, the EU Urban Agenda seeks to improve the quality of life of citizens in urban areas, in a new working method to ensure maximum utilisation of the growth potential of cities and to successfully tackle social challenges. More concretely, 'partnerships are set-up around 12 priority themes (air quality, circular economy, climate adaptation, digital transition, energy transition, housing, inclusion of migrants and refugees, innovative and responsible public procurement, jobs and skills in the local economy, sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions, urban mobility, urban poverty) with European and urban relevance. Within these Partnerships, problems will be identified and solutions will be recommended through action plans (these are addressed to the EU, the Member States and the cities). The action plans will contain actions and also examples of good projects to be scaled-up and transferred across the EU. Actions could be a proposal to amend an EU Directive, or a proposal for the new European Structural and Investment Funds (ESIF) reinforcing cooperation on shared issues (…)'.[2] In a complementary way, the URBACT Programme helps cities to develop pragmatic solutions that are new and sustainable and that integrate economic, social inclusion, integrated urban development, environmental and governance urban-related topics[3] (Table 1.3).

Regarding the EU Urban Agenda strategic rationale, it follows the ESDP vision to promote a more polycentric and balanced development of the EU, with a view to achieving economic, social and territorial cohesion. Additionally, it supports the logic of an integrated urban policy approach. For this, the ESPON programme has developed a wealth of knowledge and evidence relating to the territorial dimension of the European urban fabric, since 2002 (ESPON 2014a). On top of this, the EU Urban Agenda 'is aimed at promoting cooperation between Member States, cities, the European Commission and other stakeholders in order to maximise the growth potential of cities and to tackle social problems and so to improve the quality of life in urban areas' EC 2017: 133). Crucially, it defined 12 priority themes and cross-cutting issues, with a widespread concern to current policy preoccupations, mostly related with the rise of migrant inflows, environmental, governance and urban mobility concerns (Urban Agenda 2016):

- Inclusion of migrants and refugees;
- Air quality;

[2] http://ec.europa.eu/regional_policy/en/policy/themes/urban-development/

[3] http://urbact.eu/

Table 1.3 URBACT intervention areas

Urban Dimension	Component
Environment	• Abandoned Spaces • Energy Efficiency • Food • Housing • Low Carbon • Risk Prevention • Urban Mobility • Waste
Governance	• Capacity Building • City Branding • City Management • City Planning • Cross-border Cooperation • Financial Engineering • Knowledge Economy • Participation • Social Innovation • Urban–rural • Youth
Integrated Urban Development	• Abandoned Spaces • Capacity Building • City Planning • Culture and Heritage • Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods • Energy Efficiency • Financial Engineering • Housing • Low Carbon • Strategic Planning • Urban Mobility • Urban Renewal • Urban Sprawl • Urban–rural
Economy	• Circular Economies • City Branding • Culture and Heritage • Employment • Entrepreneurship and SMEs • Food • Health • Knowledge Economy • Local Economic Development • Research and Innovation • Sharing Economy • Waste

(continued)

Table 1.3 (continued)

Urban Dimension	Component
Inclusion	• Ageing • Culture and Heritage • Disadvantaged Neighbourhoods • Education • Employment • Health • Housing • Migrants • Minorities • Participation • Poverty • Roma • Sharing Economy • Social Innovation • Youth

Source Own elaboration

- Urban poverty;
- Housing;
- Circular economy;
- Jobs and skills in the local economy;
- Climate adaptation (including green infrastructure solutions);
- Energy transition;
- Sustainable use of land and nature-based solutions;
- Urban mobility;
- Digital transition; and
- Innovative and responsible public procurement.

In essence, the EU Urban Agenda aims at strengthening the urban dimension of EU policies, and supporting a greater coherence between urban and regional development agendas, whilst fostering the urban dimension in the context of Territorial Cohesion. From this general perspective, it builds on the Leipzig Charter's (2007) prerogative of making greater use of Integrated and Sustainable Urban Development Policy approaches.

1.4 Recommendations for Cohesive Urban Policies—Conclusive Remarks

As Storper and Scott (2016: 1114) claim, 'the current period of human history can plausibly be identified not only as a global but also as an urban era. This is a period in which population, productive activity and wealth are highly and increasingly concentrated in cities'. As previously explained, the concept of Territorial Cohesion builds

bridges between several territorial development dimensions which include, in our understanding, a marked urban dimension, which we designate polycentrism.

Indeed, according to the latest Territorial Agenda (2011: 4), 'territorial cohesion is a set of principles for harmonious, balanced, efficient, sustainable territorial development'. Europe being a markedly urbanised territory, this development goal requires an 'urban development focus'. Likewise, worldwide, more than 50% of human beings already dwell in urban areas, and this trend is on the rising. These potential 'Territorial Cohesion Urban Development Policies' should promote a more polycentric pattern vis-à-vis a concentrated/monocentric one, in order to 'act as centres contributing to the development of their wider regions' (Territorial Agenda 2011: 5). One way of achieving this is to concentrate public investment in medium towns located in less developed areas, in an urban development strategic rationale coined as 'Territorial Cohesion Cities' (Medeiros and Rauhut 2018).

In a complementary way, territorial cohesion processes will benefit from encouraging urban integrated and multilevel development strategies, which take into account all territorial levels in territorial planning instruments, and development policies. Associated with this policy rationale is the concept of functional regions, which aim to better explore territorial complementarities and to tackle common territorial needs, beyond a large or medium-city administrative border, whilst contributing to a wider integration of their peri-urban neighbourhoods, and/or peripheral rural regions. At the same time, urban integrated development strategies should support cross-border and transnational functional regions, as a means to reducing border barriers and to promoting cross-border and transnational planning, geared towards the Territorial Cohesion policies' main goals.

Understandably, the world being more and more urbanised, the contribution of urban development policies tends to gain increasing critical importance to the achieving of Territorial Cohesion trends worldwide. For that, there is a need to strengthen potential synergies between sustainable urban development, social integration, innovative economy, territorial connectivity, and multilevel and sound urban governance and planning processes. The key challenge here is to ensure a more balanced and polycentric urban pattern across territories, in order to avoid excessive concentration of people and activities in a few very large urban agglomerations, which favours the occurrence of negative environmental (pollution) and social (criminality, poverty) impacts, whilst limiting the potential to better exploring the territorial capital of vast depopulated territories.

From a governance point of view, the coordination between the local- and city-regional levels should be strengthened, as well as the partnerships between larger, medium/small cities and rural areas (Leipzig Charter 2007), as a means to boost territorial efficiency. This prevailing vision in which 'there is a need to enhance the complementarity of policies affecting urban areas and to strengthen their urban dimension' (Urban Agenda 2016: 4) needs to be considered by the metropolitan, regional and national planning instruments, as the main tool to achieving Territorial Cohesion processes. Moreover, urban authorities should increase their cooperation with stakeholders, including the ones related with civil society, knowledge institutions and local communities.

On a critical note, whilst the EU Urban Agenda acknowledges the need to support urban areas of all sizes, we propose a concentration of public development investment in the already mentioned 'Territorial Cohesion Cities', a concrete policy measure to achieve Territorial Cohesion processes. Understandably, the complexity of urban challenges requires a tailor-made approach to the characteristics of each territory. Moreover, the need to promote sound and strategic urban planning processes in the EU Urban Agenda is not associated with the prerequisite to reducing urban sprawl processes vis-à-vis a more compact, planned and efficient urban morphology vision.

In all, we can conclude that urban development policies are gaining a major role in achieving Territorial Cohesion processes, with increasing worldwide urbanisation processes. For this goal to become a reality, however, cities located on less developed areas should experience higher development levels when compared with the ones located in more developed areas, in a baseline scenario. Thus, since medium towns, or second-tier cities, have the potential to be more efficient in making the most of the regional territorial capital than smaller urban areas, we suggest that available EU and national public funding should be concentrated for their development, thus contributing to achieving a more polycentric, balanced and harmonious development, towards the EU Territorial Cohesion policy goal.

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